



The President's Daily Brief

22 September 1971

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Peking's decision to curtail sharply the traditional National Day celebrations on 1 October is most likely due to some major internal political developments. (Page 1)

Cambodian forces are continuing their drive to reopen Route 6 to the long-isolated town of Kompong Thom. (Page 3)

In South Vietnam, new acts of violence have increased dangers of serious disorders as the date of the presidential referendum approaches. (Page 4)

Israel Egypt
(Page 5)

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Brandt's meeting with Brezhnev last weekend makes him optimistic about Soviet policy toward Western Europe and West Germany. (Page 6)

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries meets today to plan strategy for obtaining a direct share in the ownership of Western oil companies within their borders. (Page 7)

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COMMUNIST CHINA

Several foreign press services, attributing their information to diplomatic observers in Peking, have reported that preparations for the major rally scheduled for National Day celebrations on 1 October were inexplicably suspended last week.

The cancellation of these festivities is unprecedented. Peking's decision does not appear to have been taken by a plenary session of the party central committee but by a smaller group of central politburo figures.

The most obvious explanation for the regime's reluctance to put on its traditional show with its mandatory leadership turnout is that a key member of the ruling politburo might be seriously ill. Mao Tse-tung last appeared on 7 August and his designated heir, Defense Minister Lin Piao, has not been seen since early June. Premier Chou En-lai, Madame Mao, and other important civilian politburo members have made public appearances in the past few days. Despite the fact that frequent public absences by both Mao and Lin are not unusual, Mao has never missed a National Day celebration and his absence from the rostrum would immediately trigger intense speculation concerning his health. At least one Chinese spokesman has already denied that Mao is ill.

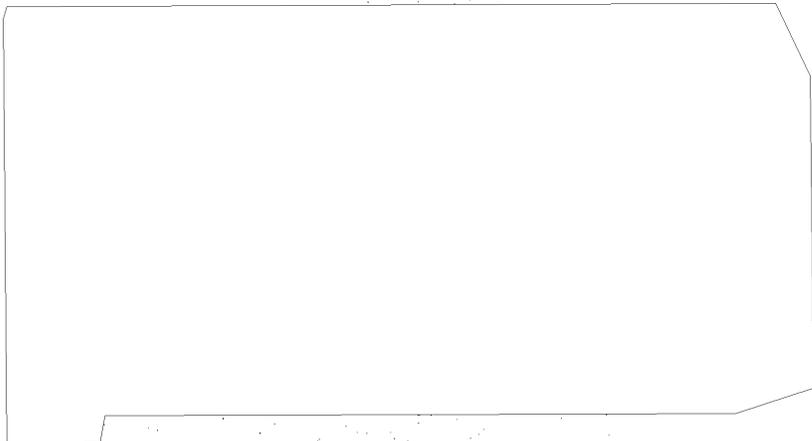
Another possible explanation is that the jockeying for position that has been under way within the ruling politburo over the past two years has taken a new turn. Since last March four civilian members of the 25-member politburo have dropped from public view for varying lengths of time and all appear to be in serious political trouble as a result of a prolonged investigation into extremist policies associated with the Cultural Revolution. Recently, there have been tenuous indications that the investigation has broadened to involve key military figures. Over the past week, none of the central military leaders on the politburo has made public appearances, a possible indication that they are involved in further behind the scenes maneuvering in Peking.

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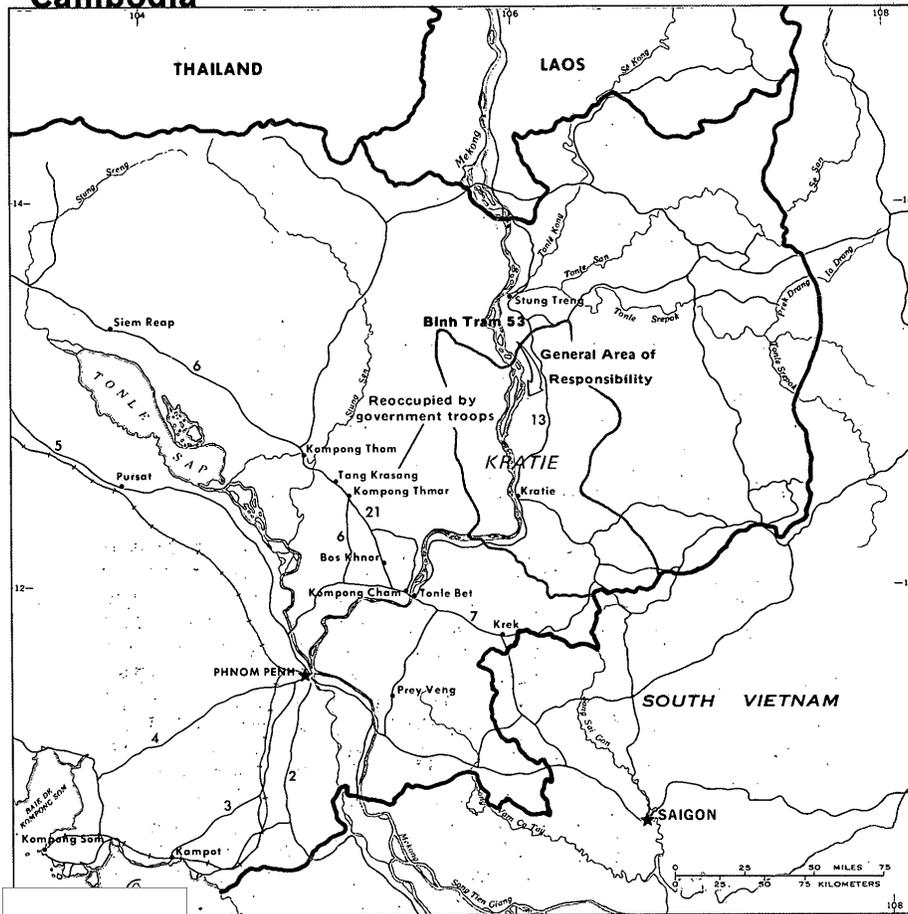
The nonappearance of China's ranking military authorities and the cancellation of preparations for the 1 October rally have coincided with the nationwide standdown of most military flights since 12 September. Thus, there also may be a relationship between this unprecedented suspension of flight activity and internal political developments.



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Cambodia



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CAMBODIA

The light enemy resistance that the Cambodian Army's Chenla II operation has encountered since it was launched a month ago has prompted Lon Nol to reverse his earlier decision to halt the drive at Kompong Thmar, at the junction of Routes 6 and 21. Four battalions of the Chenla II task force have now occupied Tang Krasang; they are expected to continue the effort to clear the remaining 15 miles between there and the long-isolated town of Kompong Thom.

The success of the Chenla II operation has stimulated the high command to begin mapping campaigns to reopen sections of other key highways during the next dry season. A senior army officer recently told the US defense attaché that Phnom Penh's plans call for reoccupying Route 15 north of Prey Veng, reopening Route 7 from Krek to Tonle Bet, and clearing Route 3. The officer also said that Lon Nol is still talking about trying to retake Kratie Province, although other Cambodian leaders recognize that this would be a very difficult undertaking.

The Communists' failure to offer any significant opposition to the Cambodian units on Route 6 has been in keeping with the conservative military posture they have maintained during most of the rainy season. Relying on economy of force tactics, they have focused primarily on harassing a number of other main lines of communication.

[redacted] the Communists also have been strengthening their supply apparatus (Binh Tram 53) in northern Cambodia in preparation for the dry season. This will enable them to increase military pressure in Cambodia and southern South Vietnam during the dry season.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Many opposition groups and some political elements not previously aligned against the government are likely to hold the government responsible for yesterday's attempted assassination of Senator Dat. They will cite both the fact that Dat, an expert on South Vietnam's constitution and a prominent Northern Catholic, was preparing to offer a formal resolution calling on Thieu to resign and the previous harsh police treatment of antigovernment demonstrators. It is questionable that the government would use such a crude form of intimidation. It seems at least equally likely that either the Viet Cong or non-Communist opposition elements staged the attack in order to intensify opposition to the government.

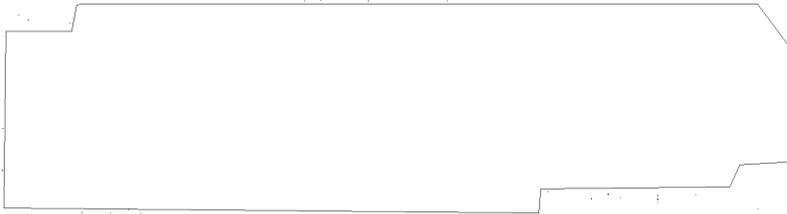
The bombing of the home of labor leader Tran Quoc Buu is much less likely to be blamed on the government. Buu has in general supported Thieu, and his initial reaction was to suggest that the Viet Cong were responsible. The incident, nevertheless, will add to the tension in Saigon political circles.

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EGYPT-ISRAEL



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WEST GERMANY - USSR

Brandt came away from his meeting with Brezhnev last weekend with an expectation of further improvement in bilateral relations even before ratification of the 1970 reconciliation treaty between Bonn and Moscow. Brandt conveyed to diplomats of The Big Three his impression that the Soviets are prepared to put the finishing touches on long-pending trade and commercial air agreements. He also anticipates that negotiations will begin on cultural and scientific-technical agreements and that a commission will be set up to promote trade.

Brezhnev reiterated Soviet interest in early German ratification of the 1970 treaty.

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The Soviet leader, however, gave no hint of a willingness to facilitate matters by prodding the East Germans to be more forthcoming in the inter-German talks. (Bonn continues to make ratification conditional on completion of a Berlin agreement, including detailed arrangements on access to be worked out by Bonn and Pankow.) Brandt's close adviser, Egon Bahr, later told the Western diplomats that he anticipated no breakthrough in his talks with the East Germans as a result of the Crimean talks.

Brezhnev projected an impression of flexibility on general East-West questions and avoided exerting any pressure on Brandt. Brandt said he was convinced that Moscow wants a Conference on European Security, though not necessarily "in the near future." On the question of Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions, Brezhnev merely restated the standard Soviet position that the negotiations should not be limited to the US and USSR or to the area of Germany, and that foreign and indigenous forces should be included.

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NOTE

International Oil: The 11 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) meet today to plan strategy for obtaining a direct share in the ownership of Western oil companies within their borders. The OPEC organization has been developing a proposal which is expected to call for an initial 20-percent ownership of oil facilities and production for member governments. Today's meeting is expected to focus on this basic proposal, leaving such matters as the involvement of OPEC governments in transport, refining, and marketing for another time. The meeting also may consider the impact of recent currency revaluations on OPEC's price and revenue agreements with Western oil companies.

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