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The President's Daily Brief

October 23, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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Table of Contents

Portugal: A demonstration in Lisbon this evening is intended by its Communist and far-left sponsors to be a major challenge to the Azevedo government. (Page 1)

Lebanon: There is no word on the fate of the two USIA officers kidnaped yesterday in Beirut. (Page 3)

Spain: Public and private accounts of the status of General Franco's health are still at odds. (Page 4)

Spanish Sahara: Spanish leaders are disagreeing over the government's policy. Morocco is assembling its marchers, and Algeria is talking of a military response. (Page 5)

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PORTUGAL

A demonstration of "popular power" in Lisbon this evening is being orchestrated by its Communist and far-left sponsors as a major challenge to the Azevedo government.

Short of a complete government capitulation, the present Communist and far-left campaign seems bound to lead to bloodshed sooner or later. Since the April 25, 1974 coup, each successive Portuguese government has been reluctant to use force--probably to avoid inevitable comparisons with the harsh methods of the Salazar-Caetano era.

Many of Portugal's current leaders also believe that the use of force against military and civilian indiscipline would only make the sponsors of these activities appear to be more powerful and influential than they are. There are obvious limitations to this argument, and as time goes on the need to restore order--and therefore risk a confrontation--becomes more pressing.

The Communist-dominated trade union confederation, Intersindical, yesterday appealed for massive participation in the demonstration, which it billed as a protest against government efforts to turn Portugal to the right. The confederation said government and military leaders were creating a situation reminiscent of that in Chile when "the people's government" of Salvador Allende was overthrown.

The demonstration is expected to include the same leftist front organizations that created violent incidents in Porto last week. No plans have been announced for government security forces to oppose or control the demonstration, even though several Portuguese papers reported on Tuesday that it might be used as a springboard for a leftist coup attempt.

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In another act of defiance against government authority, thousands of left-wing soldiers and civilians yesterday seized control of the Catholic radio transmitter outside Lisbon. The station, which was wrested from church control by leftist workers several months ago, was taken off the air last month by Prime Minister Azevedo because of its hard anti-government line. Demonstrators occupying the transmitter site vowed to resume "revolutionary" broadcasts.

The seizure probably was designed to complicate President Costa Gomes' scheduled audience with Pope Paul yesterday. The government's handling of the church radio issue reportedly was one of the principal items on their agenda.

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LEBANON

The two USIA officers kidnaped in Beirut yesterday are still missing. There is no word on who abducted them or what demands the kidnapers may make. Lebanese Prime Minister Karami is taking a personal hand in coordinating an intensive search for the two US officials.

The fighting in Beirut persisted yesterday, and kidnappings and roadblocks set up by private militiamen are still common in all parts of the city.

The political subcommittee of the national dialogue committee met again yesterday, but neither leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt nor Phalangist leader Pierre Jumayyil attended. Jumblatt was still in Damascus, and Jumayyil sent a deputy to the meeting.

Prime Minister Karami, in a speech to the Lebanese parliament on Tuesday, conceded his government's inability to force the parties to accept a settlement of the conflict and appealed to parliament to find a solution. The US embassy believes the question of parliament's role will become a major topic of discussion over the next few weeks.

Karami supports Interior Minister Shamun's contention that the recommendations of the dialogue committee must be endorsed by parliament as the legally competent body. It remains highly unlikely, however, that the divided and politically impotent parliament will take the lead in ending the conflict.

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SPAIN

Public and private accounts on the status of General Franco's health are still at odds. Official statements emphasize his recovery, while private assessments dwell on the irreversibility of the damage done to his health.

The conflicting reports may be due to Franco's apparent determination to resume normal activity against the wishes of his doctors, who have warned that doing so could be fatal. None of the optimistic medical bulletins issued to date has been signed by doctors, as was the case during Franco's serious illness in 1974.

Prince Juan Carlos told Ambassador Stabler yesterday that he believes the government should make a determined effort at this Friday's Council of Ministers meeting to persuade Franco to resign so that Juan Carlos can succeed to the throne.

Many high officials in the government and military fear a "power vacuum" in Spain at a time when the Spanish Saharan problem has become critical and a wave of terrorism continues at home. They would prefer that Franco step down now and, if it becomes apparent that he will not recover fully from his heart attack, they may well initiate proceedings to have him declared incapacitated.

There is no evidence of unusual military preparations in Madrid. The city is calm, life is normal, and there is markedly less apparent unhappiness among civilians and security forces over the prospect of Franco's death than was the case in 1974. This does not reflect hostility toward Franco, but rather a preoccupation with the problems that will survive him.

Madrid radio broadcasts, while playing down the seriousness of Franco's heart attacks, have repeatedly assured listeners that, in any case, institutions will survive and there is a "valid successor" standing in the wings.

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SPANISH SAHARA

Since General Franco's latest illness, disagreements have surfaced among Spanish leaders over the government's policy toward the Spanish Sahara.

Prime Minister Arias reportedly favors ceding the Sahara to Morocco in return for guarantees regarding Spanish interests in the territory. Other officials, led by Foreign Minister Cortina, favor granting self-determination to Spanish Sahara--a solution that Algeria supports--but this faction appears to be losing ground.

[redacted] 25X1
Arias sent Jose Solis Ruiz--a high cabinet official in charge of Franco's political organization--to see Moroccan King Hassan. [redacted] 25X1
Spain would allow Saharan exiles living in Morocco to participate in a referendum to determine the Sahara's future, if the UN approved. [redacted] 25X1
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[redacted] 25X1

This dialogue may account for the optimistic public remarks Solis made when he returned to Madrid [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] Madrid is committed to end the dispute rapidly and is determined to do so. [redacted] 25X1

Many pitfalls, however, remain. The UN may not endorse the Spanish-Moroccan agreement, and Arias is reluctant to act against UN rulings. Morocco may renege on past offers to grant Spain economic concessions.

Foreign Minister Cortina, meanwhile, has threatened to resign over the Sahara issue, and more trouble in the Spanish cabinet is possible at a time when a unified leadership is critical to a peaceful transition to the post-Franco period.

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The Algerian Position

Algeria [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] will intervene militarily if Morocco launches an 25X1
attack against Spanish Sahara.

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Algerian officials have indicated they would prefer a transition period in Sahara in which Spain plays a major role, followed by a referendum offering a range of options from independence to union with Morocco and Mauritania. The Algerians believe that the Saharans would choose independence in any fairly conducted referendum.

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Spanish forces in the Sahara, meanwhile, continue to improve their defenses along the border with Morocco. Press sources indicate that Spain is increasing the number of military obstacles--including new minefields--to check any advances. By doing so, Madrid apparently is signaling Rabat that it intends to respond forcibly to any Moroccan test of strength.

Moroccan Marchers

The movement of Moroccan volunteers toward assembly points in southern Morocco is [redacted] under way. The first contingent is expected to be within 20 miles of the border with Spanish Sahara [redacted]

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Rabat has still not announced the timing of the final leg of the march from the border to El Aaiun [redacted]

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King Hassan will deliver a speech today directed to the people of Spanish Sahara.

If the Moroccans do cross the border, clashes could occur with Spanish forces or with armed elements of indigenous Saharan political groups that want independence. The Spanish-backed Saharan National Union Party and the Algerian-supported Polisario Front [redacted] will stage a counter-march north to the border.

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Both groups probably have been provided with arms. Should either become involved in clashes with the Moroccans, the 12,000 to 15,000 Moroccan troops now in southern Morocco might well intervene.

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