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The President's Daily Brief

October 2, 1974

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Top Secret 25X1

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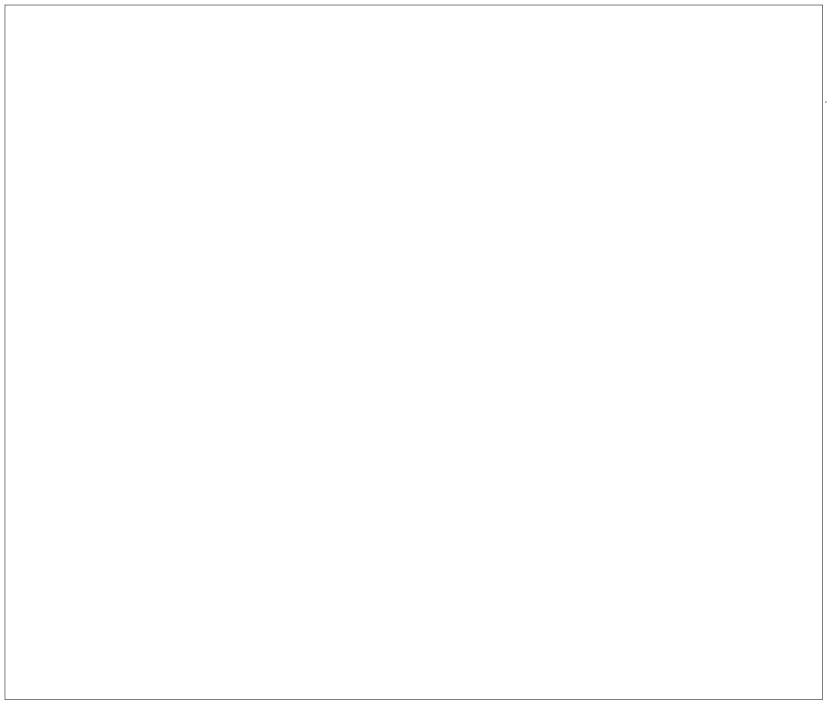

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CHINA

All active members of the Politburo except Mao were present to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Ailing Premier Chou En-lai presided and made a speech at a reception on September 30, but he was apparently still not strong enough to join other Chinese leaders for a walk in Peking's parks the following day.

The huge leadership turnout was highlighted by the return to public view of several long-absent military officials who were under severe attack earlier this year and by the rehabilitation of a considerable number of civilian and military officials purged during the Cultural Revolution. The new round of rehabilitations includes a number of provincial party leaders and central ministers who fell early in the Cultural Revolution, as well as several figures active in the early purges who were themselves disgraced in later phases of the convulsion. This suggests that an attempt is being made to build the widest possible consensus among the second-echelon leadership in anticipation of a transition period in which China's two top leaders are no longer active.

Peking's major publications issued a joint editorial that gave heavy play to the unity theme but offered little in the way of policy guidance. The editorial made it clear that the divisive anti-Confucius campaign, which has been toned down since this summer, is to remain in low gear. Although the campaign is to continue "for a long time," its main emphasis is on study rather than on attacking party officials, and the campaign is to be used to boost production.

Consensus and continuity were also apparent in the brief treatment of foreign affairs in the National Day joint editorial. A reference was made to Mao's "revolutionary policy in foreign affairs," a code phrase for the opening to the United States. The editorial also incorporated the slogan "dig tunnels deep"--a reference to possible war with the Soviet Union that was a prominent propaganda theme in 1972 and 1973, but has appeared less frequently recently as the Chinese stressed the notion that Moscow was merely "feinting" to the East while preparing for war in the West.

We examine today at Annex the question of the Chinese leadership and succession in greater detail.

ETHIOPIA

There are signs of increasing dissension among factions in the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee that now runs Ethiopia.

Armed forces units in the capital were placed on alert yesterday during an emergency session of the committee, according to press reports. Air force jets made several passes over the Fourth Division Headquarters, where the ruling military group usually meets. Air force officers, who have been among the more radical members of the committee, have been eclipsed by moderates in the past few months. The flyover suggests the air force is trying to reassert its influence.

The current discussions of the military committee reportedly center on the issue of whether the military should take over operation of the government from civilians. Late yesterday, the committee announced that it will continue to rule through a civilian cabinet.

The status of General Aman was probably also discussed. On September 28, the committee announced that Aman had been replaced as chief of staff of the armed forces but that he retained the posts of titular head of government, prime minister, and defense minister.

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The committee's rescission yesterday of appointments made two days earlier of officers well regarded by Aman appears to substantiate reports that Aman has lost some status.

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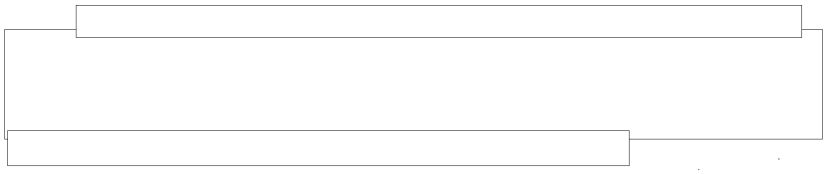

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NOTE

World Grain Production: The world grain situation for 1974/75 has tightened further. We now forecast a decline of 4 percent in grain production from last year's record level. World wheat production is estimated to fall about 5 percent, while the supply of feedgrains, especially corn, will be even shorter than wheat. Production of corn in the major exporting countries is likely to be down by 11 percent.

ANNEX

THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION EXAMINED

Premier Chou En-lai's return to the hospital some time in August suggests that we may be on the verge of the post-Chou era in Chinese politics. The Chinese themselves seem to be considering the possibility with considerable realism, but with apprehension as well, believing as they do that his international prestige and legendary administrative abilities are irreplacable assets. They are, moreover, aware that Chou's death or permanent incapacity could further roil the troubled waters of Chinese politics.

Chou Not Yet Down for the Count

The Premier is, however, not yet out of the picture. He has made three appearances in the past two weeks. He talked with Imelda Marcos for over an hour on September 20;

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Whether he will again tackle many of his duties as Premier and senior vice chairman of the party will obviously depend on the progress of his recovery.

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As long as Chou is not permanently hospitalized, he is likely to retain a large measure of influence, even if he is not so immediately engaged in day-to-day duties as in the past. But some of Chou's influence has derived from his well-known ability to

master the detailed problems of running the Chinese bureaucracy, and this aspect of his authority is certain to be diluted in any event.

It is equally important that Mao can now no longer count on Chou to carry on with current Chinese domestic and foreign policies after the Chairman's own demise. Mao Tse-tung has put a great many eggs in Chou's basket in the past several years, but he is now forced to consider the real possibility that, even should Chou outlive him, the Premier may not have the physical capacity or the willpower to carry through on difficult and controversial programs. In the past two months we have seen the first veiled signs that concerns of this sort have begun to trouble Mao. Chou's uncertain health itself makes him a less useful instrument to the Chairman. Mao must consider that the prospect of the Premier's demise will almost certainly intensify jockeying for position at lower levels--a development he cannot afford to ignore, but may now have to manipulate without Chou's assistance.

Despite all these uncertainties, Chinese policy is unlikely to change greatly in the shorter run even if the Premier is incapacitated or dies. Mao remains the core of Chinese politics. Chou has pursued the policies with which he has been identified in recent years in tandem with the Chairman, not in opposition to him, and there is no evidence that the "great helmsman" desires a marked departure from the current line, domestic or foreign. On the contrary, he seems anxious to nail down present policies even more firmly.

Interim Successors

Most of Chou's duties as premier have already devolved--on a temporary basis at least--on two lesser and slightly younger Politburo members, Li Hsien-nien and Teng Hsiao-ping. Both appear to have Mao's trust, although neither is likely to monopolize the Chairman's ear to the extent that Chou has in recent years. Both also appear to lack the broad, long-term perspective that has characterized Chou's--and Mao's--view of the world and of China's internal development.

Li is a long-time lieutenant of Chou, concerned primarily with economic and financial matters. Teng, a somewhat more complicated personality with a solid reputation as an administrator, was for many years secretary general of the party and was the second

most important man purged during the Cultural Revolution. He had a number of disagreements with Chou in the early 1960s, but the Premier was instrumental in arranging for Teng's "rehabilitation" in early 1973; Teng has been singing a "chouist" tune on policy matters since his return to prominence, and he has a well-established record of opposition to Moscow. Neither man is likely to press for major departures in policy should Chou become incapacitated, but both are more likely to be followers rather than initiators in the style of the Premier.

Chou's party responsibilities are also likely to be fragmented should he fade further from the scene. Thus far, no obvious stand-ins for the Premier have emerged in this field, but many of his duties are probably being performed by two men from Shanghai who rose to prominence during and after the Cultural Revolution, Chang Chun-chiao and Wang Hung-wen. Both are suave, bright, and apparently competent, but neither has more than a mere fraction of Chou's long experience in party affairs, and they may lack the Premier's famous instinct for adjustment and compromise.

Although both were associated with the manic phase of the Cultural Revolution, neither now seems wedded to the "radical" approach to policy questions characteristic of the late 1960s. Both seem to have developed ties to the more "conservative" old-line party administrators as a complement to their initial links to the "radical" wing of the party. They appear, however, to operate under some disability. Although Chang has apparently been slated for the vacant job of party secretary general for over a year, he has not been formally named to the post, apparently because of some sort of opposition. Wang has been rumored to be ultimately destined for Mao's position as party chairman--he is now the third-ranking member of the party--but he is only 39 and a considerable number of older party officials resent his meteoric rise. Both Wang and Chang appear to have Mao's trust, but he probably recognizes that they do not have the experience and--in Wang's case at least--the perspective of Chou En-lai.

In these circumstances, it is likely that greater day-to-day responsibilities for the management of Chinese policy will revert to Mao. Should this in fact happen, the strain could well begin to tell fairly quickly on the Chairman, who is approaching 81 [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] Moreover, in overseeing Chinese policy, Mao will find himself without Chou's unique combination of skill and foresight, and without a fully reliable institutional instrument capable of implementing his policies.

Input of the Cultural Revolution and the Anti-Confucius Campaign

The party and government bureaucracies are still rent to some degree by factionalism engendered during the Cultural Revolution; both have lost some of their elan, and, in each, several crucial posts have remained unfilled for a number of years. The military, the third leg of the tripod supporting the Chinese state, is also fissured; it played an extremely important role during the Cultural Revolution, but it has since been badly tarnished by the putative coup attempt mounted by former defense minister Lin Piao in 1971. It is a major target of the current anti-Confucius campaign. The divisions within these three institutions have clearly been exacerbated by the anti-Confucius campaign, which has tended to revive factionalism in the provinces and at the national level.

At this point, the campaign itself is merely sputtering along. It has been in low gear since early summer; significantly, this waning began in June when Chou became seriously ill. Given the uncertainty regarding Chou's active future, it would be surprising if important forces in Peking were not anxious to compose differences--to the extent possible--rather than to continue to push ahead with a movement that is in many senses divisive. Those who believe they may ultimately become victims of the campaign obviously have personal reasons to argue for such a course of action. But Mao's acute sense of his own mortality tends to cut in the other direction; he almost certainly believes he has little time left to imprint indelibly his own order of priorities on the leadership, the bureaucracy, and the Chinese populace.

In the past two months, both these lines of thought have been evident in the Chinese press. A number of authoritative editorials have strongly stressed the theme of unity in political matters, arguing forcefully against "entanglement" in divisive issues. At the same time, a series of articles--some almost certainly emanating from Mao himself--couched in the Aesopian language of historical analogy have touched directly on the sensitive succession question, arguing that after the death of the supreme leader current "progressive" policies are likely to be reversed unless the struggle is carried through to the end.

In fact, these two lines of argument are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A close reading of the editorials calling for unity suggests that an attempt is being made to damp down the quarrels between "left" and "right" within the Chinese leadership which have helped fuel the anti-Confucius campaign--while pushing ahead with the effort to reduce the military's influence in politics, perhaps an even more important aspect of the campaign. This order of priorities is not surprising. Both Mao and Chou--and presumably other civilian leaders as well--were shocked by Lin Piao's attempt in 1971 to "step outside the system" and settle political quarrels with the help of military muscle. The Chairman would certainly wish to ensure that this episode cannot be repeated once he himself is gone.

Internecine sniping between "left" and "right," however, has by no means died out. The so-called "radicals," who have fallen on evil days since their period in the sun during the Cultural Revolution, have been attempting to shore up their position by making use of their continued access to the press to issue covert and carefully worded appeals to their supporters in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy; they, like their putative opponents, are obviously anticipating the eventual demise of both Chou and Mao. In particular, Chiang Ching, Mao's wife, has successfully warded off attempts to circumscribe her control of cultural affairs by claiming that any criticism of her is, in effect, a criticism of Mao. Some of her manifestos, couched in esoteric, historical analogy, have been picked up by Western newsman and commentators, who have probably attributed to her greater strength than she actually possesses. In fact, while she seems to have hit upon some effective defensive ploys, "leftist" rhetoric has had little impact on policy decisions. Except for some relatively minor adjustments in the educational sphere, Chinese policy has been impervious to "radical" pressures.

The uncertainties inherent in this general situation are clearly intensified by the possibility that Chou will die before Mao. A powerful voice arguing for "moderation" and relatively pragmatic policies will be lost, and Mao will have to take into account a somewhat different balance of forces among his associates and underlings. Even so, his own charismatic authority should still provide considerable drive to Chinese policy. It is his own death--in the event that Chou dies first--which promises to be the real watershed in Chinese politics.

Factors for Short-Term Immobility After Chou--and Mao

Chou's early incapacitation should not in itself prove crippling to China, but the odds would be less than even that the Chairman will be able to achieve to his own satisfaction a full consensus on the issues now troubling Chinese politics. Among the major questions now under debate are:

--how to provide an acceptable definition of the legacy of the Cultural Revolution which assesses the gains and losses engendered by that upheaval;

--how to remove the military from political administration without alienating influential military commanders and to "rehabilitate" and restore to authority experienced old-line officials purged during the Cultural Revolution without overly upsetting younger officials who were promoted as a result of those purges;

--how to preserve the revolutionary fervor that brought the communists to power, while training and encouraging technical experts who can modernize China and expand its industrial base; and

--above all, how to cope with the wide range of problems deriving from the presence of a hostile Soviet Union on China's northern border.

This last problem is one that seems to be particularly troubling to the Chairman recently. While it is highly unlikely that any influential figure is arguing for a rapprochement with Moscow, propaganda associated with the anti-Confucius campaign suggests that Mao believes that some important individuals--perhaps within the military--think it is in China's interest to reduce the present high level of Sino-Soviet tension. Paradoxically, Mao seems willing to risk the divisiveness caused today by the anti-Confucius campaign in order to weed out or neutralize such suspected opposition and, thereby, ensure that the Chinese leadership will present a united front to the Soviet menace after his death. Since the Lin Piao affair, Chinese officials at all levels have frequently expressed apprehension that Moscow would try to meddle in Chinese domestic affairs, attempting to exploit leadership differences, once Mao was no longer on the scene.

In fact, arrangements the Chinese are known to have made in the wake of the Lin imbroglio, together with less definite signs that these arrangements are being modified in the wake of Chou's illness, indicate that Peking expects to establish some sort of collegial leadership once the Chairman and the Premier have either died or become permanently incapacitated. In the absence of a leader of Mao's unique stature or of an obvious primus inter pares such as Chou, the Chinese would almost certainly find it expedient to resort to some kind of consensus policy-making. But in these circumstances the chances are good that Chinese policy will in fact be no policy at all. In the initial succession period, there will almost certainly be no single individual--and perhaps no group of individuals--with sufficient authority and firmness of purpose to reverse current policy trends or even to push ahead in directions already charted. Even while Mao and Chou are on the scene, the Chinese have been unable to agree on a formally designated party secretary general or a minister of defense; such impasses are likely to be multiplied in the early succession period. A general immobility on policy issues--at least the major ones--might persist for several years.

Moreover, persistent difficulties facing the Chinese--population pressure coupled with the limited availability of arable land, industrial modernization, and the security of a Chinese state militarily inferior to the superpowers, to name but a few--are surely not going to vanish in this period. The political history of the past decade indicates there is a wide range of views within the regime on how best to tackle these problems; differences in approach are almost certain to be intensified and exacerbated by personal frictions and even hatreds arising from the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. In such a situation, a struggle for supremacy is quite likely, and policy questions could easily become entangled in the fight for personal advantage. In short, a period of partial immobility could be followed--although this is of course by no means certain--by a period of rapid and wide swings in policy of the sort that characterized China in the late 1950s and 1960s.

The Long-Term Prospect is Better

In the longer perspective, however, and despite these immense obstacles, the trend is likely to be in the direction of "moderation" and relative pragmatism. And even if pulling and hauling does develop, it is most unlikely that China will come apart at the seams. The regime survived the enormous strains of the Cultural Revolution intact and has absorbed the blow of the Lin "coup" (mounted by Mao's designated successor) with relative ease. The forces that pull China together are much stronger than those that push it apart, and this will continue to be true when neither Chou nor Mao is politically active.