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The President's Daily Brief

November 5, 1974

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OAS

Concern over a possibly inconclusive vote on removal of Organization of American States' sanctions against Cuba has replaced the near agreement that Latin American leaders thought they had reached last month. To revive the consensus, the foreign ministers' meeting that opens at Quito this Friday will most likely try to redraft the resolution for lifting sanctions in terms that will ensure a favorable vote.

Only a few weeks ago, most Latin American governments were confident that the coming conference would rescind the ten-year-old sanctions so that any government could associate with the Castro regime without violating OAS policy. Several governments had suggested that, although they had no intention of establishing relations with Havana, they would still vote to lift the sanctions.

The erosion of the consensus has occurred for a number of reasons. Some of the governments, especially of the smaller countries, are most comfortable in following the US lead in international affairs, and they have been disoriented by the lack of advocacy or opposition to lifting the sanctions. They have wondered if Chile and Uruguay, which have presented new charges of Cuban subversion, are acting as US surrogates.

The emphasis is likely to return to the need to end the divisiveness produced by the Cuban issue and to give the inter-American system a boost. Once the delegations arrive at Quito, the majority probably will be receptive to any formulation that does these things without seeming to hand a victory to the Castro regime. Most Latins agree that failure of the Quito meeting to deal with the problem would damage regional institutions. Only Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay are likely to hold to a hard anti-Cuba line under any circumstances.

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Cuban efforts to overthrow Latin American governments are at a low ebb. Tangible support of armed revolutionaries is negligible

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Havana's shift from violent to more conventional methods in recent years reflects a fundamental shift in Castro's view of Cuba's role in the hemisphere. He now collaborates with governments and groups that conform to his loose definition of "patriotic and independent," having withdrawn from his previously intimate relationships with the revolutionary factions of the 1960s.

Castro is not likely to endanger the gains he has made in the region for the sake of any marginal revolutionary group. He could decide to support armed revolutionary groups in a few countries if these groups should become well organized and seemed to pose a significant threat to their host governments. Since this seems unlikely, the outlook for the next few years is for a continuation of the present tendency.

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USSR-CHINA

Soviet Ambassador Tolstikov delivered a protest to the Chinese foreign ministry in mid-October concerning the continued detention of the three helicopter crewmen seized on Chinese territory last March.

Tolstikov's protest is the first known Soviet diplomatic approach on this matter since June. As a Radio Moscow broadcast makes clear, this effort has been no more successful than others in obtaining release of the prisoners or even of gaining access to them.

There is little that Moscow can do to influence the Chinese.



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NOTE

Portugal-USSR: Portuguese Minister Without Portfolio Cunhal, head of the Portuguese Communist Party, returned to Lisbon on Sunday after a six-day official visit to the USSR, the first by a Portuguese government delegation. According to the press, President Podgorny "pledged" Soviet assistance in shoring up Portugal's economy, but qualified his commitment by noting that any aid would have to be "with regard for available resources." This suggests the Soviets will be tight-fisted in supplying any meat or grain, items that are high on Lisbon's shopping list. Further talks about a trade agreement will be held next month.

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ARAB SUMMIT MEETING

An influential Egyptian editor warned on the eve of the Rabat summit against pursuing the kind of unanimity that "turns into complete paralysis." The Arabs ignored the warning.

By prejudging the ultimate sovereignty of the West Bank, they effectively foreclosed the possibility of any early progress on that front and may indeed have complicated the prospect for progress elsewhere. The question the summit had initially been intended to resolve--who should negotiate with Israel for the return of the West Bank--was rendered academic by the preemptive judgment on who should eventually rule the territory.

There would appear to be another message, deeper and more central to the overall issue of negotiations: that no Arab leader, however flexible and realistic in outlook, will place himself in the position of thwarting the Palestine Liberation Organization, and that the PLO has won a role as leader instead of follower in matters involving the core issue in the Middle East peace efforts.

The summit was a major foreign policy defeat for President Sadat and a major triumph of tactical maneuvering for Yasir Arafat. By going beyond the immediate issue of Jordan versus the PLO as negotiator for the West Bank to the broader and more central question of which party ultimately governs there, the PLO basically turned Sadat's own arguments against him.

During months of preliminary negotiations on the Jordan-PLO dispute, Sadat used vague promises of long-range satisfaction for the Palestinians as an inducement to the PLO to acquiesce in a decision that deferred its short-range aspirations and granted a leading role to Jordan in the negotiations. Sadat had wanted to evade the question of sovereignty, concentrating instead at the summit on a formula that would satisfy the PLO without excluding Jordan from a meaningful role or predetermining the fate of the West Bank.

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The precise roles played by the individual leaders in the deliberations are not yet known. Much of the evidence thus far indicates that the die was cast during the preliminary foreign ministers' conference and that Arafat arrived at the summit confident he could force through his maximum position.

The summit itself seems to have concentrated on the cosmetic: the effort to bring King Husayn along, the attempt to induce Arafat to patch up or paper over his differences with Husayn, and the further effort to establish specific negotiating roles for Jordan and the PLO. Although a time-consuming process, the first two apparently were not difficult to accomplish. Husayn gave in with good grace, in the interests of preserving some standing in the Arab world and of obtaining the increased subsidies that are apparently his payoff; for Arafat, magnanimity was not hard to affect.

A decision on the third is still to be made, and when it comes, it will be anticlimactic. Unless the Arabs decide to allot Jordan a role in the future governance of the West Bank, the decision will do no more than put a further gloss on a one-sided PLO victory. If the Arabs maintain that the fate of the West Bank is a foregone conclusion, the Israelis would be no readier to negotiate a PLO takeover with Jordan than they would with the PLO.

Military Matters

Military matters were clearly an important agenda item. The allocation of major subsidies to the front-line states, the call for a unified military command, and the intended military character of the follow-up talks to be held by the front-line leaders all point to an expectation that increased military preparedness is necessary to match the harder line adopted for dealings with Israel. References to economic warfare, however, were muted until the last moment, when King Hassan's summation speech veered sharply to warn that the Arabs' financial might constitutes a potent weapon against Israel and the West.

Sadat doubtless feels discomfiture at the resounding failure of his months-long attempt to arrange a resolution of the Jordan-PLO dispute. He nevertheless hopes to capitalize on the summit's decision in order to demonstrate to the US and, through it, to Israel that the Middle East will never see peace until Israel ultimately accepts the PLO as an entity and a legally constituted neighbor.

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Syria's Position

President Asad is less disconcerted by the summit's outcome. Foreign Minister Khaddam's deliberations immediately preceding the summit point to a conscious Syrian attempt to ensure that the situation developed as it did. The Syrians had several motives:

--Asad saw no prospect for early progress on the West Bank under any circumstances and chose to close off that front as an object of concentration for the near term in an effort to force the Israelis to look again to the Golan front.

--Syria's primary aim was to limit Egypt's freedom to negotiate unilaterally with Israel. The Syrians may have hoped that a setback for Sadat's Jordan-PLO policy would effectively nip any further expectations Sadat might entertain that he could stray from the fold.

The assumption that Sadat and Asad thus intend, each for his own reasons, to use the summit as a means of direct or indirect pressure on the US leaves unanswered the question of what they expect next in negotiations. Both probably recognize that prejudging the sovereignty of the West Bank complicates the negotiations on that front.

It can be argued that both should feel fortified by the solidarity forged at the summit to press for an all-encompassing settlement in a Geneva context, recognizing that this has been made more difficult but believing that the Arabs are now in a better position to force their will. On the other hand, having satisfied the PLO, they may feel free to let the West Bank question gestate for a while and turn toward interim agreements on the Golan and Sinai fronts.

Sadat has consistently resisted pressure for a resumption of the Geneva conference until Arab strategy could be unified at the summit. With this now accomplished as far as most of the other Arabs are concerned--undoubtedly at some cost to his standing among the Arabs--Sadat may feel that his freedom of action on negotiations has been constricted and that he has no choice but to bow to pressures, particularly Syrian, to go for the all-or-nothing approach.

At the same time, Sadat has seemed to try to clear the way for a move to keep negotiations on an interim basis outside Geneva. He has stated publicly that so long as he remains committed to a final settlement that includes all Arab demands, Egypt should

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have "freedom of movement" to pursue the negotiations by partial stages. The recovery of any part of any Arab territory, the line goes, in the end aids all Arabs.

Outlook

We think Sadat still would like to proceed by stages; for domestic reasons, he needs further evidence of progress for Egypt. The question, however, is whether he can.

The problem is less the obstacles imposed by other Arabs, even the now ascendant PLO, than the strong objections posed by Syria. Indeed, the position of Syria and Asad's perception of his own prospects for progress on the Golan Heights may well be the key to further movement in the negotiations. The Syrians' anxiety would probably be diminished, as would their pressure for a reconvened Geneva conference, if they were assured that interim negotiations on the Sinai would be accompanied by similar moves on the Golan Heights.

Rabat has heightened the possibility of war by limiting both Israeli and Arab negotiating options. Having in a sense created their own logjam, the Arabs might ultimately decide that the only way to break it is to reopen hostilities.

At the same time, there is no evidence that the Arabs believe the military option serves their interests any better now than it did before the summit. They probably believe that the pressure is now more heavily on the US and Israel to move; the time span of their patience may therefore be shorter. But it does not yet seem to have run out.

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