

The President's Daily Brief

October 15, 1976



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LEBANON: *Syrian troops continued a slow but steady advance toward Sidon yesterday.*

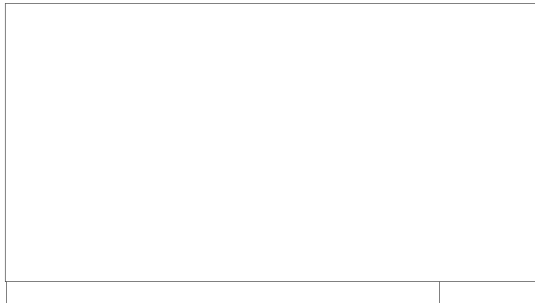
They overran Palestinian positions as far west as Liba. They also intensified attacks on leftist-Palestinian strongholds near Alayh in what appears to be a major drive toward west Beirut. If the Syrians are able to block the main coastal road between Sidon and Beirut and break through Palestinian defenses along the southern outskirts of the capital, the Palestinian-held western sector of the city will be completely blockaded.

The Palestinians and their leftist allies--outgunned and outmanned--have not tried so far to stand up to the Syrian drive. They are engaging instead in delaying tactics and are gradually retreating toward more defensible positions.

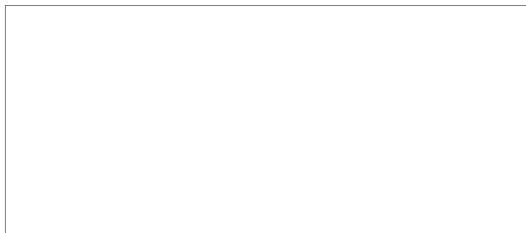
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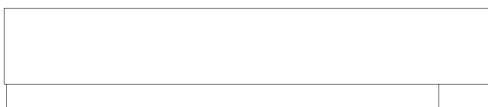


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The Palestinians and leftists, who presumably are unaware of the disarray among their adversaries, appear to be taking action to preempt Christian attacks on their positions inside Beirut.

Palestinian appeals apparently prompted a decision to convene an Arab League foreign ministers meeting today.

There seems to be a growing feeling in most Arab circles that a summit has little chance of success and should be postponed. Although a number of Arab governments--including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia--have issued statements supporting Palestinian appeals for a return to negotiations, most of these governments are not prepared to challenge Syria openly, especially at a summit meeting.

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USSR-CHINA: *Soviet "journalist" Viktor Louis has written a story--almost certainly authorized by high-level Soviet officials--expressing Moscow's delight over the ouster of the Chinese leftists, particularly Mao's widow, Chiang Ching.*

Louis' article, which was written for the London Evening News and France-Soir, appears to be directed at Chinese moderates. Louis is apparently telling them that if they are inclined toward less hostile relations with the USSR, they should give a positive sign to Moscow. He says that the Soviets want a signal within the next month and he implies that the diminution of anti-Soviet propaganda might be one such sign.

Louis claims that older Soviet leaders are inclined to give the Chinese more time to sort themselves out but are under pressure from younger, less "sentimental" officials who have no first-hand

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knowledge of dealing with the Chinese. He implies that this could be China's last chance to prevent Soviet hardliners from getting Moscow to take "irreversible" decisions on China.

The Soviet correspondent makes an appeal to members of the Chinese military, especially the older ones, whom Louis credits with appreciating the Soviet role in China's development and understanding Soviet military might.

Louis' effort probably reflects Moscow's growing unhappiness with the failure of the Chinese to respond to its conciliatory gestures since Mao's death.

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RHODESIA: Prime Minister Ian Smith and black nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo have announced their delegations to the conference in Geneva called to shape an interim Rhodesian government. Two other invited black leaders, Robert Mugabe and Bishop Muzorewa, are still trying to form their delegations.

As part of his efforts to make up a delegation, Mugabe, secretary general of the militant Zimbabwe African National Union and spokesman for most of the guerrillas, went back this week to Mozambique, where most guerrillas are based, for further consultations between the military commanders and nationalist political leaders.

One of the key people Mugabe wants at Geneva is Josiah Tongogara, ZANU's top military commander, who has been in a Zambian jail since March 1975. Tongogara is now standing trial for the assassination of one of his rivals, and Zambian President Kaunda has refused Mugabe's request to release him.

Tongogara reportedly is highly respected by the ZANU guerrillas, who make up most of the insurgent forces. Mugabe and other senior ZANU officials are said to want Tongogara associated with any

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agreement that might be reached at the conference in order to ensure acceptance by guerrilla commanders in the field.



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EASTERN EUROPE: *Eastern Europe will probably import record amounts of grain this year.*

We estimate the 1975/76 grain harvest at less than 85 million tons, down almost 3 million tons from last year. The potato crop--much of it used for fodder in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Poland--also was down.

Eastern Europe is likely to import as much as 14 to 15 million tons of grain in 1976/77, mostly from Western sources. A record 8.5 to 9.0 million tons, valued at roughly \$1 billion, may be acquired in the US, compared with 6.5 million tons in 1975/76.

Purchases in the West will depend on the amount of grain available from the USSR. We would expect the Soviets to provide 2 to 3 million tons.

Most of the imported grain will be used to feed livestock. Since 1974, shortages of feed have resulted in a decline in livestock numbers, and meat production has failed to keep pace with rising demand. There is unlikely to be any improvement in food supplies before late 1977.

Most of the grain will be purchased by Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Poland, where severe drought has cut the grain harvest

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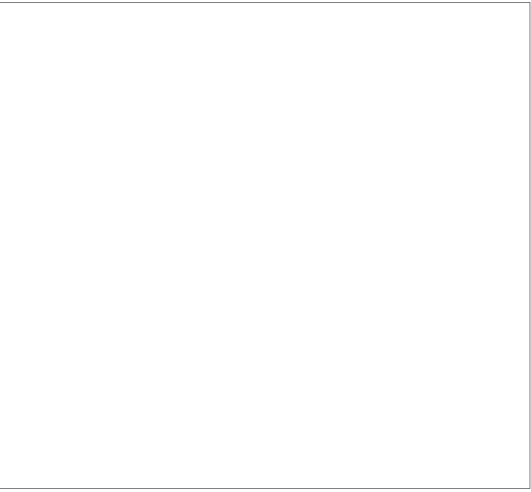
by roughly 20 percent and caused
even more serious reductions in
fodder and forage crops.

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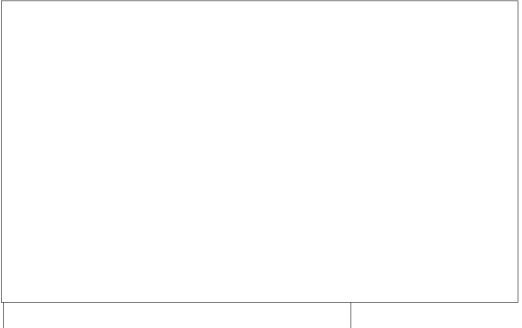
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NOTES

Cuba is preparing for what apparently will be the strongest propaganda blast at the US in years.

The bodies of some of the victims of the Cuban airliner crash last week off Barbados were put on display yesterday in Havana's Revolutionary Square for public viewing--a tactic intended to arouse popular indignation. The display is being complemented by a campaign in the media blaming Cuban exiles for the crash and accusing the US of complicity. Hundreds of thousands of Havana residents are to congregate in Revolutionary Square this morning to hear a "funeral oration" most likely to be delivered by Prime Minister Castro.

Havana may believe that linking the US publicly to such an act of terrorism will create pressure on Washington to bring the exiles into line and put a damper on further terrorist activity.

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The Soviet spacecraft, Soyuz 23, was launched yesterday from the Tyuratam test center with two cosmonauts aboard.

The spacecraft probably will dock with Salyut 5--a military space station in orbit since June 22--sometime today.

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