

The President's Daily Brief

1 September 1971

46



~~*Top Secret*~~

50X1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

1 September 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Two articles published recently in authoritative North Vietnamese journals provide some hints that the party line on the war is in flux. (Page 1)

Some of the contingency measures adopted by the Indian armed forces are reviewed on page 2.

An assessment of the Cambodian political situation appears on page 3.

The French are still lobbying against MBFR negotiations. (Page 5)

The two Soviet Mars probes have passed the halfway point. (Page 6)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NORTH VIETNAM

Two authoritative political articles have been published recently that are markedly different in tone from other Hanoi pronouncements of the past several months. They could mean that the party line on the war is in flux.

Both articles commemorate the 1945 August Revolution in North Vietnam. The first was published in the party theoretical journal and was broadcast in summary form by Radio Hanoi in mid-August; the second appeared in the army monthly magazine and was broadcast on 29 August. Both articles are replete with customary Marxist jargon, some of which reflects Hanoi's continuing concern over its international position in the wake of contacts between Washington and Peking. In their treatment of the war, however, both articles omit any reference to the 19th party Central Committee plenum, which took place sometime around the turn of the year and which called for an increased Communist war effort. Nor does either article tout the battles in southern Laos and Cambodia last spring as "strategically significant" Communist victories--a hitherto standard bit of jargon that implied that Hanoi viewed those battles as a springboard for further Communist military gains in the not-too-distant future.

The concept that the Vietnamese Communists are pointing toward large-scale military action in the war--a theme that has pervaded their propaganda since at least last March--is conspicuously weakened in these two articles. The army magazine even picks up an odd line which has appeared once or twice in other recent publications to the effect that the worst of the fighting is over. Both articles, in addition, have long passages emphasizing the unvarying "correctness" and "creativity" of the Vietnamese Communist party line. The North Vietnamese have in the past reverted to such topics either when there seemed to be differences within the leadership to be papered over or when a policy shift was in preparation.

Hanoi's other, less authoritative media have continued to replay the themes omitted in the party and army journals. If the shifts in the theme begin to appear in the other media, the impression that a policy change may be in the wind will be strengthened. The comprehensive reports that traditionally are given by government leaders in connection with the national day celebrations on 2 September may provide further clues.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

INDIA-PAKISTAN

Indian forces are in an increased state of readiness but they have not assumed the state of alert which would be preliminary to immediate hostilities. [redacted] leaves have been canceled as of 1 September, but personnel already on leave will not be recalled. A rear area brigade in the west has left its normal station, which may mean that units are moving closer to the West Pakistan border.

50X1

India also is taking protective measures for its aircraft and personnel at five airfields near the border with West Pakistan. [redacted]

50X1
50X1

[redacted] the construction of aircraft revetments and personnel trenches that began in February at these fields is still continuing.

Caution rather than a decision to go to war seems to have dictated these moves. If New Delhi expected combat soon it would move its armored units in central India closer to the front, but there is no sign so far of such a move. Moreover, flooding in the east during the current monsoon would seem to preclude major operations there until the dry season, which normally begins at the end of September.

India also is taking precautions to assure adequate petroleum supplies. The government asked three foreign refineries it had previously prohibited from producing beyond about 75 percent of capacity, to expand production and to camouflage all their bulk storage areas.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CAMBODIA

50X1

observations on the key political problems confronting Sirik Matak upon his return to Cambodia on 30 August:

--One of Matak's first tasks will be to help Lon Nol avert a showdown with the National Assembly over its impending interpellation of Finance Minister Sok Chhong on the government's economic policies. Although Chhong is said to have the firm backing of the cabinet, he has made clear his desire to quit. Thus, it is possible that Lon Nol and Matak will placate the Assembly by accepting Chhong's resignation or even reshuffling the cabinet.

--Matak also is likely to be called on to reduce the bad blood between Lon Nol and Chief of State Cheng Heng, who believes the prime minister is no longer fit to govern. Although Matak should be able to patch things up temporarily between the two leaders, he may have less luck in disabusing First Deputy Prime Minister In Tam and other senior officials of their similar belief that Lon Nol must go. Matak must tread carefully, however, to protect his own position from opponents--particularly Lon Nol's brother Lon Non--who are intent on forcing him out of the government.

--Phnom Penh's increasingly strained relations with Saigon will also demand Matak's attention. Public reaction to mistreatment of Cambodian civilians by South Vietnamese troops is again creating pressure for a reduction of Cambodia's military dependence on South Vietnamese forces. For the moment, Lon Nol's recent request for the elimination of a ten-mile corridor along the border in which the South Vietnamese can operate without high-level Cambodian coordination should reduce public concern. As long as the present lull in the fighting continues, however, anti-Vietnamese sentiments in Cambodia are likely to grow.

(continued)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

--It probably will not take Matak long to become aware of the gradual erosion of public respect and admiration for Lon Nol, and the two leaders can be expected to work together to reverse this trend. It is conceivable, however, that Lon Nol--who probably is aware of his declining popularity, and who is still concerned about his health--may well decide to retire from political life in the not-too-distant future.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

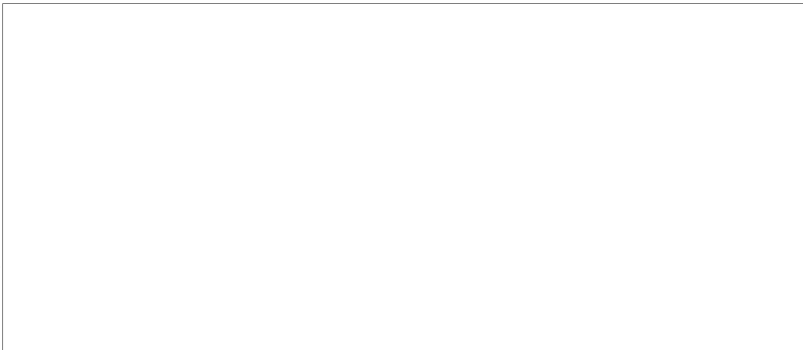
FRANCE

Now that the Berlin agreement has cleared the way for other European security issues, the French have been busy reiterating their opposition to Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations.



50X1

the French are now advocating the buildup of "strong, closely co-operating European national forces."



50X1

Paris realizes that it cannot avoid some form of security discussions but it will continue to press for an agenda which emphasizes political topics rather than force reductions. This approach is in accord with the French argument that detente must precede technical and military discussions such as MBFR.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

USSR

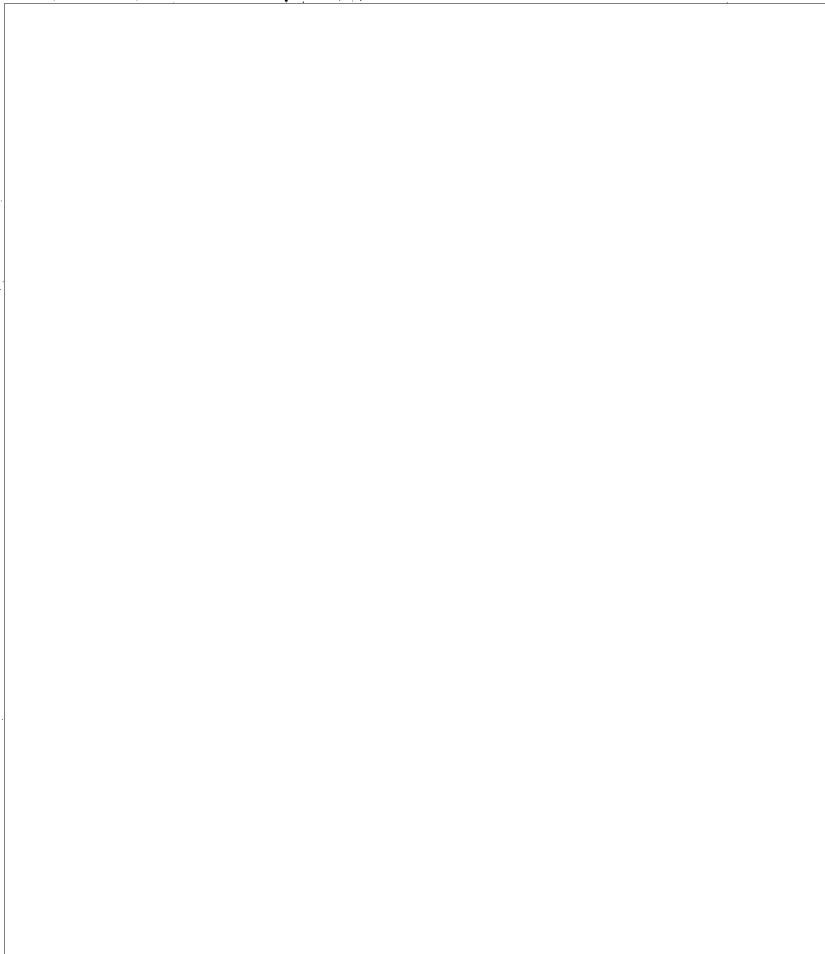
The two Soviet Mars probes launched in May have passed the halfway point

50X1

The probes are likely meant either to land a scientific package or to put a payload in orbit around the planet. The first should reach Mars in late November and the second a few days later.

Completion of the probes' missions would mark the first successes for the Soviet Mars program. Two probes in the early 1960s failed

50X1

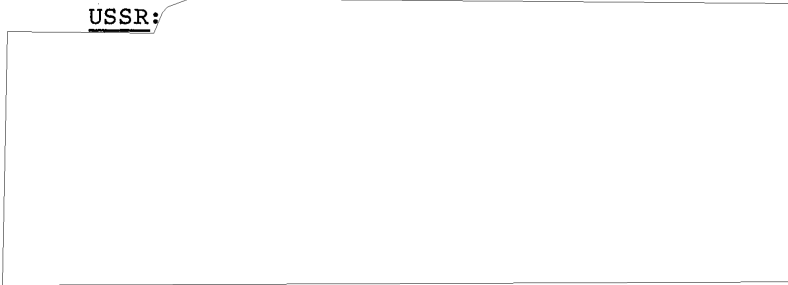


50X1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTES

USSR:



50X1

USSR:



50X1

Top Secret