

The President's Daily Brief

21 February 1972

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The pattern of appearances at the opening ceremonies during President Nixon's trip to Peking suggests that Premier Chou En-lai is in a particularly strong position. (Page 1)

Vang Pao's military operation toward the Plaine des Jarres has come under increasing Communist attack. (Page 2)

Moscow is continuing to try to interest Tokyo in helping develop Siberian oil fields. (Page 3)

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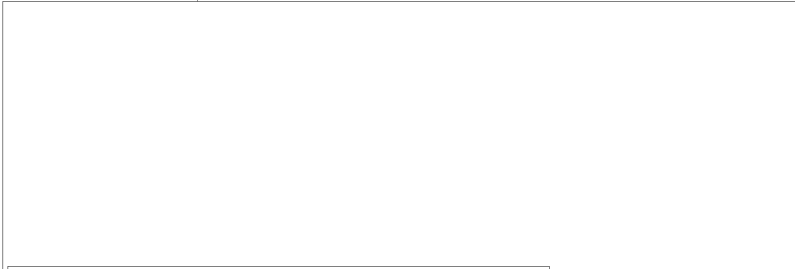
CHINA

Thus far, one striking aspect of the ceremonies and events connected with President Nixon's visit is the pattern of appearances of the Chinese leaders. The two Politburo members (other than Premier Chou himself) who have been present at the airport, the banquet and the first plenary talk--Li Hsien-nien, and Yeh Chien-ying--have long been close associates of the Premier. In contrast, Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, and the two ranking leaders in Shanghai--Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan--have yet to make an appearance. This trio was closely associated with the more extreme aspects of the Cultural Revolution and does not have the ties to Chou evident in the case of Li, Yeh, and the members of the foreign ministry who have thus far been prominent.

The "radical" trio has been in partial eclipse for some time; Yao and Chiang Ching have each made only one appearance, and Chang none at all, in the past six weeks. It is of course possible that these leaders are in effect boycotting the visit, but it is hard to see what this would gain them when Mao himself has set his seal on the trip by receiving the President during his first hours in Peking. One or all members of this trio may yet show up before the week is out--in Hangchow or Shanghai if not Peking--but the Premier seems to be in an especially strong position as the talks with the US begin.

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LAOS



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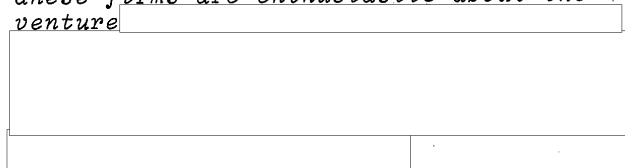
Over the weekend the Communists launched a number of probes and attacks by fire against Vang Pao's forces moving toward the Plaine des Jarres. The irregulars' offensive has slowed, but their presence southeast of the Plaine has forced the Communists to divert troops from the Long Tieng area, where Vang Pao's tactical situation continues to improve.

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USSR-JAPAN

The semi-official Soviet-Japanese economic co-operation committee will meet in Tokyo this week. The Soviets will primarily be trying to interest Japan in helping to finance and sharply expand production at West Siberian oil fields and to build a pipeline from Irkutsk, near Lake Baikal, to Nakhoda on the Sea of Japan. Soviet plans call for Japan eventually to receive nearly one million barrels of oil per day via the pipeline.

Moscow attaches considerable political as well as economic importance to the talks; and hopes to build on the impetus provided by Gromyko's recent visit to Japan. Japanese firms are enthusiastic about the venture



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NOTES

South Vietnam: Military activity increased somewhat over the weekend in scattered actions. Communist rocket and mortar attacks hit three US air bases and Kontum city in the western highlands. Other attacks, many of which were in response to intensified allied patrolling and artillery and air strikes, were directed at provincial security forces in northern coastal regions and small outposts in the delta, where two hamlet chiefs were killed.

Malta:



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