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The President's Daily Brief

March 7, 1974

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

March 7, 1974

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ISRAEL-SYRIA

The Israelis are watching concentrations of Syrian troops near the cease-fire line, and are worried by reports that President Asad is under pressure for having released the Israeli POW list.

An Israeli press dispatch yesterday indicates that Israeli units in the Golan Heights are on alert. In addition, the Israelis are now conducting daily aerial reconnaissance of the Heights under heavy fighter escort.



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ISRAEL

No significant change in Israel's negotiating position is likely to result from the new cabinet appointments Prime Minister Meir announced yesterday.

Domestic critics, however, will cite the similarity between the new cabinet and its predecessor as evidence of further hardening of political arteries in Tel Aviv.

In presenting a new cabinet to President Katzir, Mrs. Meir was bolstered at the last minute by a promise of participation by the National Religious Party. If Religious Party ministers rejoin, Meir will have essentially the same team as before and will command a majority of votes in the Knesset.

There were only five new ministers among the 16 she named. The most noteworthy of these is Yitzhak Rabin, former Israeli chief of staff and ambassador to the US, who was named labor minister. Meir is said to value highly Rabin's views on relations with the US.

Three cabinet posts--Religious Affairs, Welfare, and Interior--were left open for their former incumbents from the National Religious Party. The post of transport minister was also left open and no mention was made of a new communications minister.

President Katzir has given Meir until Sunday to fill the vacancies.

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UK

An agreement between the government and union officials has ended Britain's coal strike and will enable the country's workers to resume a five-day work-week.

The executive board of the mineworkers union voted 25 to 2 to accept the government's \$230-million pay package, and union members are expected to approve the agreement without delay. The president of the National Union of Mineworkers has said he expects the miners to be back at work on Monday.

Prime Minister Wilson paved the way for the settlement by telling negotiators to disregard wage ceilings imposed by former Prime Minister Heath. The government's offer--a wage increase of about 30 percent--was more than twice the amount proposed by the previous government.

The Trades Union Congress has promised that other unions will not demand increases as large as those granted the mineworkers. Nevertheless, Wilson's voluntary wage restraint policy appears headed for trouble.

Railroad workers recently rejected a 7-percent pay increase and are holding out for 12 percent. Workers in the shipbuilding, engineering, and automobile industries may also be encouraged to increase their demands in future bargaining.

Resumption of coal production will only partially remedy the serious economic problems that Britain faces. The end of the strike will limit the drop in industrial production--the main source of exports--to about 25 percent for the first quarter of the year. Transportation bottlenecks and shortages of materials will prevent full industrial production until the third quarter.

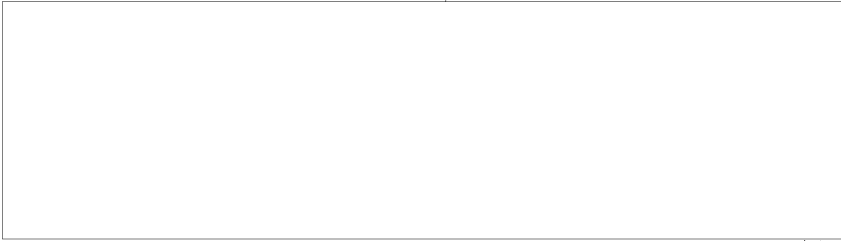
Britain's trade deficit--already the largest in the world--will increase this year, despite the end of the strike. Exports will not return to last year's level for several months. Meanwhile, rising prices for oil and other imports--grain, wool, and rubber, for example--add to Britain's trade problems.

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JORDAN

King Husayn has sent two special envoys to discuss with King Faysal, President Sadat, and President Asad Husayn's current views toward the Palestinians and their role in the peace negotiations. The King's emissaries met Faysal yesterday and are to see Sadat today before proceeding to Damascus.



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The Saudi ambassador in Amman, however, who was almost certainly briefed on the envoys' mission, told Ambassador Pickering that the two Jordanians would spell out Husayn's position on the role of the Palestinians. He said the envoys will inform the Arab leaders that Jordan is willing to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinians, but that Jordan still wishes to exercise its "responsibility" to arrange Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank through the current disengagement process.

If the Saudi ambassador's account is accurate, Husayn has hardened his views on negotiations concerning the West Bank. In late February, the King reportedly had decided to offer to let the PLO negotiate with Israel for the return of the West Bank. It would now appear that Husayn has reverted to his earlier position of insisting that the fedayeen participate at Geneva only at some "later stage."

An offer from Husayn to recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians, however, would represent a compromise that could open the way for some form of cooperation between Jordan and the fedayeen organization.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LIBYA

A Libyan Foreign Ministry official told the US Chargé in Tripoli this week that his government is interested in better relations with the US. The official suggested that Major Umar al-Muhayshi, a member of the Revolutionary Command Council, come to Washington for the announced purpose of contacting Arabs in the US who might be interested in working in Libya. If the US agreed in principle to the talks, the official said that the visit could take place as early as next week. The Libyan did not give reasons for the demarche.

While the suggestion is a sharp departure from Tripoli's past refusal to discuss bilateral problems with US officials, it appears consistent with Qadhafi's recent tendency to moderate some of his actions.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia's first general strike began today. The walkout by 85,000 members of the Ethiopian labor confederation came despite strong attempts by the beleaguered government to head it off.

The strikers are demanding increased wages and other benefits. Union leaders have told workers to stay off the streets; no disturbances have been reported so far. Militants, however, reportedly plan to demonstrate, and this may lead to violence.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CAMBODIA - NORTH VIETNAM

A high-level Khmer Communist message of March 1 stated that Cambodian insurgents received part of a "second shipment" of arms, ammunition, and vehicles from the Vietnamese Communists on February 25. It is too early to tell whether this shipment is a portion of the 900 tons of military equipment and 296 vehicles that Hanoi agreed late last year to give to the Khmer Communists, or whether it is additional aid.

The message asked the Khmer Communist Central Party Committee to draw up a plan for distributing the equipment "according to need." This suggested that the insurgents may not commit the bulk of the new arms and ammunition--which total approximately 110 tons--to one specific battlefront. According to the message, the insurgents should have less difficulty in moving this latest consignment because they have resolved their fuel problems "somewhat."

In a high-level message of January 29--the previous known intercept on Vietnamese aid--the Khmer Communists stated that the transfer of equipment from the eastern part of the country to insurgent forces in the western regions of Cambodia and in the Phnom Penh area was almost complete.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

SOUTH KOREA

President Pak believes he can deal effectively with any unrest that may follow the reopening of Seoul's major universities this week. His confidence stems in part from assurances made by security and education officials that dissident leaders have been neutralized by the government's new emergency powers.

Pak's hand has also been strengthened by the government's anti-Communist campaign, which is focused on Pyongyang's recent sinking of a South Korean fishing boat and other "provocative" acts.

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believe that North Korea's hostility toward the South is undiminished and that tough domestic policies are warranted. The same feeling is said to be evident on some campuses.

Pak is not yet out of the woods. Some student protests are likely this spring; they could provide a catalyst for political protests by intellectuals, Christians, and workers. Urban workers, who have been hit by a 10-percent rise in retail prices so far this year, are currently the object of a campaign by Christian social action groups to increase their political awareness.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

JAPAN

Opposition to ratification of a treaty with South Korea providing for joint oil exploration in the Korea Strait has surfaced within Prime Minister Tanaka's own Liberal Democratic Party. The party's small left wing claims an important agreement with Seoul is inappropriate now because the two countries have not yet recovered from the rupture caused by the Kim Tae-chung kidnaping last summer. Leftist parties are also expected to oppose the treaty because of strong protests from China and North Korea. All opponents of the treaty say they want to examine its impact on Japan's vital fishing industry.

* * *

Tanaka's proposed civil aviation agreement with Peking is also still in trouble. The Liberal Democratic Party's right wing and traditional factional opponents of Tanaka and of Foreign Minister Ohira have joined in imposing a requirement that the existing civil aviation arrangements with Taipei be revised before the government concludes a new treaty with Peking.

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GUATEMALA

The Guatemalan Government announced last night that General Laugerud won a plurality of votes in the election on March 3, according to late press accounts. The announcement came a few hours after police used tear gas to break up demonstrations by supporters of opposition candidate General Rios Montt.

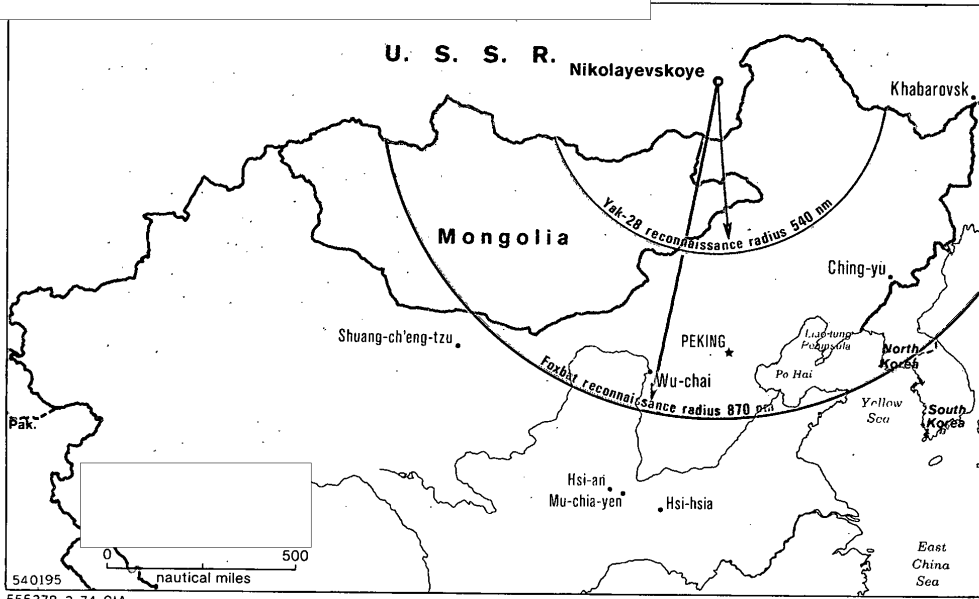
These moves could lead to widespread disorder.

Earlier, Rios Montt had threatened publicly to "paralyze the country" if he were cheated of his victory. He reportedly encouraged his followers to use whatever tactics they felt appropriate to protest the government's fraud in the election.

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Soviet Foxbat Aircraft Moved Near China Border

Combat ceiling 77,000 feet
Speed 1,600 knots



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NOTES

USSR: The high-speed, high-altitude MIG-25 reconnaissance aircraft has been observed for the first time in the eastern USSR. [redacted]

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[redacted] three MIG-25s at Nikolayevskoye, a Soviet tactical aviation airfield near the Sino-Soviet border. Should these aircraft replace the YAK-28s now stationed at Nikolayevskoye, they would significantly increase Soviet reconnaissance capabilities against northeastern China. While the YAK-28 has a maximum reconnaissance radius of 540 nautical miles, the MIG-25--with external fuel tanks--can operate up to 870 nautical miles at considerably higher speeds and altitudes. This capability, if the Soviets chose to use it, would permit operations over all of Manchuria and considerably south of Peking.

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