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The President's Daily Brief

May 13, 1974

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

May 13, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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[Redacted] Laos (Page 1)

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The press of domestic business may have forced aging Premier Chou En-lai to cut back on protocol duties. (Page 4)

Fighting was light on the Golan front over the week-end. (Page 5)

In Portugal, consultations between the ruling junta and a wide range of political leaders have increased as the junta prepares to name a provisional government this week. (Page 5)

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LAOS

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VIETNAM-CAMBODIA



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FEDAYEEN

Fedayeen leaders are continuing the meetings begun last week to complete agreement on settlement issues. Significant differences apparently remain over whether to attend the Geneva conference and work for the establishment of a Palestinian state made up of the West Bank and Gaza, despite a report late last week that agreement had been reached on these issues. The meetings are being attended by leaders of all fedayeen organizations except Ahmad Jabril, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, which carried out the April massacre on the Israeli village of Qiryat Shemona.

Agreement on going to Geneva and accepting a truncated Palestinian state probably will hinge in large measure on the success of current Syrian-Israeli disengagement negotiations. Even if the leaders unanimously acquiesce on those two points, agreement by some of the radical fedayeen figures will be largely tactical. Such individuals as George Habbash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine will not easily lower their sights from the annihilation of Israel. They probably would agree to negotiate and to establish a Palestinian state only as short-term measures designed to gain time and avoid being left behind by more moderate fedayeen leaders.

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CHINA

The press of domestic business may have forced aging Premier Chou En-lai to cut back on some of the ceremonial aspects of his dealings with visiting foreign dignitaries. A member [redacted] around Mao and Chou has suggested that the 76-year-old Premier may pass up some purely protocol duties to concentrate on more important matters.

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These comments were [redacted] in explanation of Chou's failure to attend a banquet on May 9 given by visiting Senegalese President Senghor. The official explanation was that Chou was feeling slightly indisposed, due primarily to old age.

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There is no reason to believe that Chou intends to pass up substantive discussions with foreign visitors. Indeed, Chou met with Senghor for several hours the afternoon before the banquet, at which time he reportedly apologized in advance for having to miss that evening's activity.

[redacted]

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Domestic politics appear to be making greater demands than before on Chou's time [redacted] The anti-Confucius campaign is now characterized in the provinces by increasing factional strife that seems to reflect serious differences at the top over major policy and personnel issues. Judging from the more moderate tone of the propaganda in recent weeks and the steady flow of official instructions emphasizing the orderly conduct of the campaign, Chou seems to be devoting considerable time to this problem. If, at the same time, he is beginning to feel his age, a reduction in his ceremonial duties is not surprising.

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The Chinese are anxious to make it clear that Chou's lower public profile does not signal any change in his political status. The official party newspaper noted expressly that Bhutto was visiting China at Chou's invitation, and Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien remarked at the Senghor banquet that he was speaking on behalf of the Premier.

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NOTES

Israel-Syria: Fighting was light on the Golan front over the weekend. Only sporadic artillery fire occurred in the Mount Hermon area and in other sectors of the front. Israeli air activity was restricted to defensive patrols and reconnaissance missions. No Syrian air activity was detected.

Portugal: Consultations between the ruling junta and a wide range of political leaders have increased as the junta prepares to name a provisional government this week. General Spínola is expected to be sworn in as President early this week and the provisional government will be named shortly thereafter. There is no evidence of serious dissension between the junta and the young officers who carried out the coup and who are now organized as the "Movement of the Armed Forces." For the time being the junta is making the decisions, and members of the Movement appear to be ensuring that no significant deviation from the junta's program develops, a task they may continue during the life of the provisional government.

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