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The President's Daily Brief

May 23, 1974

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY
THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

May 23, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Premier Chou En-lai has had to change his operating style because of his years, but he still seems very much in charge of China's day-to-day affairs. (Page 1)

[redacted] inside Israel sometime this week. (Page 2)

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EC countries are preparing to make good on their proposal to offer wide-ranging cooperation to the Arab states. (Page 3)

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The Soviets apparently are preparing for several major space events in the coming weeks. (Page 5)

In South Vietnam, increased Communist military action is continuing in the northern provinces but falling off in most other areas. (Page 6)

The Khmer Communists apparently intend to pursue their campaign against isolated Cambodian government enclaves well into the rainy season. (Page 7)

Portuguese officials are worried that self-determination for the African territories will have widely differing results. (Page 8)

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CHINA

Age has finally caught up with Chou En-lai, China's 76-year-old premier, forcing a change in his operating style. Chou still seems very much the man in charge of China's day-to-day affairs, but he has cut down on protocol functions in order to concentrate on more pressing matters.

Foremost among the issues requiring Chou's attention is the anti-Confucius campaign, now in its tenth month. The premier has been deeply involved in the repeated attempts to keep the campaign from getting out of hand. Central Committee directives setting strict limitations are finally having some impact in the provinces. Unauthorized political wall posters have been removed, and provincial media have in some cases called for obeying party instructions "to the letter."

There is still much to do. At least some of the attacks on provincial leaders may not have official party sanction, and factionalism, including armed conflict, remains a problem in a number of places. Additional stages in the anti-Confucius campaign probably will include the fall of some high party leaders.

Chou's lower public profile has led to speculation outside of China that the premier is on the losing end of the campaign and has been pushed into the background by his political opponents, led by Mao's wife, Chiang Ching. It is far more likely that pressure from his opponents kept Chou in a more active role for longer than he originally intended and that he did not begin to reduce his public appearances until he felt he had the situation in hand.

The Chinese have been at obvious pains to quell rumors of Chou's political demise. He has been mentioned in the Chinese media more frequently than he would be if he were in trouble. In addition, at least two foreign visitors have been officially described as visiting China at Chou's invitation, an unusual formulation.

Chou's health could, of course, continue to decline and force a further curtailment of his activities. This could introduce a period of uncertainty, since Chou has been instrumental in keeping domestic affairs on a relatively even keel and in executing Mao's policies toward the US.

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FEDAYEEN

Fatah, the largest fedayeen organization, reportedly is planning to launch a terrorist operation

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The relatively moderate stand on Middle East settlement issues taken in private recently by Fatah leaders would not preclude sponsoring a terrorist operation within Israel.

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EC - ARAB STATES

EC countries are preparing to make good on their proposal, announced on March 4, to offer wide-ranging cooperation to the Arab states. The changes of government in London, Bonn, and Paris, as well as adverse US reaction to the proposal, prevented earlier action.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher, West Germany's new foreign minister, said publicly on May 19 that he believes the Euro-Arab dialogue will begin "in the next few weeks...the time is ripe for it." A senior West German official visited Cairo this weekend; he may go to other Arab capitals as well.

In Brussels this month, Belgian political director Davignon told a number of Arab ambassadors that the EC foreign ministers would probably take up the question of EC-Arab cooperation early in June. He suggested that they would decide to begin negotiations with the Arab states. Preliminary discussions are likely to take place at a meeting of the political directors of the Nine in Bonn on May 27-28.

On the Arab side, a committee of 11 foreign ministers, formed in March to develop a policy on EC-Arab cooperation, early this week expressed interest in a dialogue. The Arabs--in Cairo for a meeting of the Arab League Defense Council--listed topics they would like to discuss with the Europeans. These include:

- European assistance in establishing an industrial base in the Arab world,
- a flow of European technology,
- a balanced system of trade,
- balanced prices for raw materials, and
- ways to ensure stability in the value of Arab capital investments and to guard against the effects of future "monetary shocks."

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USSR

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USSR

The Soviets are apparently preparing for several major space events in the coming weeks. [REDACTED]

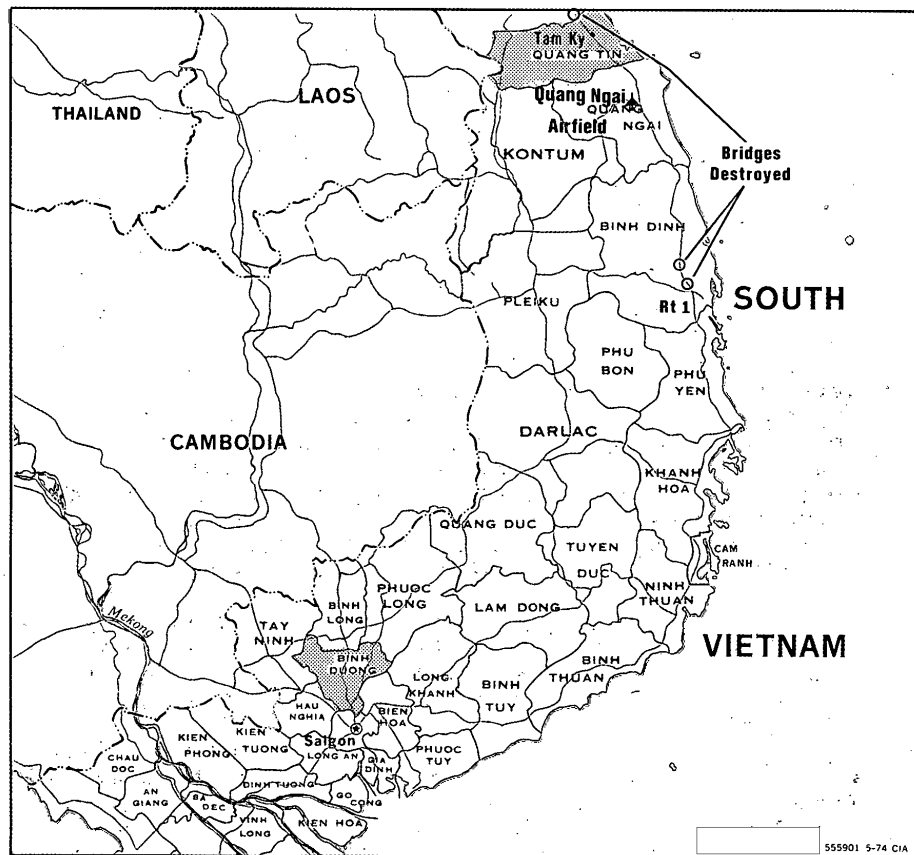
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The evidence suggests that a lunar probe, possibly carrying a Lunokhod rover vehicle, may be launched next week. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets probably will also attempt to orbit a manned Soyuz spacecraft and a large Salyut space station in the coming weeks. The mission of these spacecraft cannot yet be determined. The Soyuz--with two cosmonauts aboard--might, for example, remain in orbit a few days testing equipment related to the joint Apollo-Soyuz mission scheduled for next year, or it might instead link up with a Salyut space station for a protracted mission.

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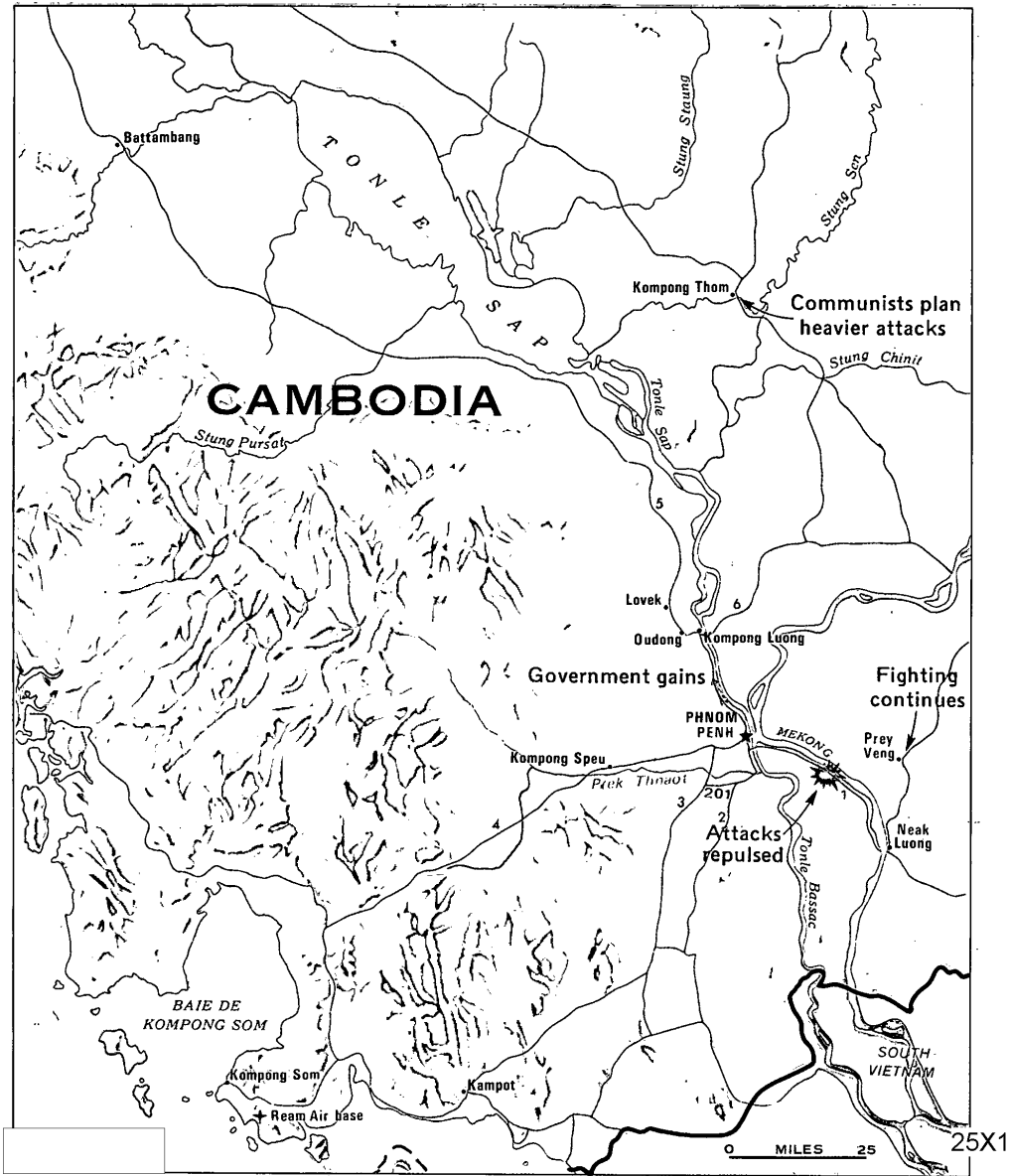
SOUTH VIETNAM

Increased Communist military action is continuing in the northern provinces, but falling off in most other areas. The new attacks, consisting largely of rocket and mortar shellings, have been directed at the provincial capital of Tam Ky, the Quang Ngai airfield, and several other military and civilian targets in the northern coastal area. Only scattered ground contacts have been reported in this region, however.

Communist attacks have decreased significantly in the central provinces. Route 1--the only north-south land link--remains blocked, however, because of the destruction of three bridges.

Senior South Vietnamese military officers are cautiously optimistic over the situation in the provinces just north of Saigon. In a recent assessment, they stated that elements of the North Vietnamese 7th and 9th divisions have made little headway thus far in moving against several GVN outposts and district capitals in Binh Duong Province. The officers expect further fighting, but are confident that government operations will keep the Communists off balance.

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CAMBODIA

The Khmer Communists apparently intend to pursue their campaign against isolated government enclaves well into the rainy season. According to a recent message, the Khmer Communist Central Committee has instructed regional forces to continue attacking widely separated provincial centers and supply lines through July. Among the targets specifically mentioned were the provincial capitals of Prey Veng and Kompong Thom, the southwestern reaches of Route 4, and the government base at Lovek northwest of Phnom Penh.

At the moment, the Communists are focusing their attention on Kompong Thom. Intercepted messages reflect a continuing buildup of insurgent units in the area and outline plans for a major push against the city's southern and western sectors in the near future. While preparations for this attack are being completed, the Communists are harassing Kompong Thom's defenders with sporadic shellings and ground probes.

East of Phnom Penh, Prey Veng City also remains under some pressure, but government units there have been getting the best of the skirmishing along the city's perimeter. On the capital's northern front, government forces have capitalized on Communist withdrawals to advance several miles north on Route 5. These troops have destroyed several barricades the Communists placed across the Tonle Sap River to prevent the movement of foodstuffs to Phnom Penh.

Phnom Penh itself has been hit by several rocket attacks in the past few days. These attacks have caused little damage, however. Ten miles southeast of the city, government units have repulsed attacks against defenses along Route 1.

PORTUGUESE AFRICA

Portuguese officials are worried that self-determination for the African territories will have widely differing results. Although they are optimistic about the prospect for peaceful political settlements in Angola and Portuguese Guinea, they have grave reservations about what may be in store for Mozambique.

In a talk with the US ambassador in Lisbon on May 20, General Costa Gomes, the number two man in the junta, said he fears a referendum on self-determination in Mozambique would result in a vote for independence and would be followed by civil war. He bases his fears on the rapid deterioration in relations between Mozambique's blacks and whites in recent years and the bitter ethnic rivalries within the territory's African majority.

Costa Gomes was clearly less concerned about the future of Angola and Portuguese Guinea, where there is less racial and ethnic antagonism. In Angola, none of the three rival liberation groups are politically or militarily capable of forcing Lisbon to negotiate independence on their terms. Prospects for ending the war in Portuguese Guinea are fairly good. The two sides will begin cease-fire negotiations in London on May 25. Lisbon recognizes that the insurgents form the only organization of any consequence there, and the Portuguese might be willing to make significant concessions.

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NOTES

Middle East: Fighting was at an unusually low level yesterday on Israel's northern front. Only intermittent exchanges of tank and artillery fire occurred between Israeli and Syrian forces. Damascus reported that its forces shelled an Israeli settlement some eight miles north of the Jordanian border, but there have been no Israeli reports of casualties or damage at the settlement. Israeli air activity also was light, with only a few reconnaissance flights detected. Israeli naval patrol boats were operating off Beirut yesterday, but there were no Israeli air or sea attacks against the fedayeen facilities inside Lebanon.

India: Firm government action has in effect ended the nationwide rail strike that began on May 8. Employees are returning to work and train schedules are approaching normal, even though the strike is not over officially. Prime Minister Gandhi still refuses to resume negotiations with the rail unions until the strike is formally called off. Union leaders, meanwhile, are divided over whether to fight on or accept defeat. Although industrial production was hurt by disruptions in transport, the overall economic effects of the strike were not as serious as was anticipated.

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