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The President's Daily Brief

September 6, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PORTUGAL

The removal of the pro-Communist Vasco Goncalves from the leadership leaves the armed forces divided into opposing factions, but may improve Admiral Azevedo's chances of forming a new government. There has been no public reaction from the rival factions.

A communiqué issued after a rump session of the Armed Forces General Assembly last night said Goncalves had "declined" the post of chief of staff of the armed forces. It is clear, however, that he was forced out by anti-Communist officers in the army and air force. Goncalves and three of his closest supporters were also purged from the Revolutionary Council, which has apparently regained most of its former power as Portugal's dominant policy-making body.

Goncalves' removal may have been part of yet another attempt by President Costa Gomes to arrange a compromise that would not make any faction a complete winner or loser. In addition to the pro-Communist officers purged from the Revolutionary Council, Commander Vitor Crespo, a loyal supporter of Major Melo Antunes, also was dropped.

A membership list for the revamped council also failed to include Antunes and Major Vitor Alves, leaders of the anti-Goncalves drive. The assembly's communiqué said the council would have to decide later whether these two, along with Goncalves' labor minister Costa Martins, would be asked to rejoin its membership.

Separate lists for the revised council apparently were drawn up by the individual service assemblies earlier this week. The members, all previously on the council, reflect the predominant political leanings of the services they represent. The anti-Communist faction generally associated with Antunes appears to have a majority, although that could be changed by the switch of only a few votes.

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This apparent effort at a compromise may defuse the situation, which had moved dangerously close to a violent confrontation, although there has been no indication of how either the Antunes or Goncalves factions are reacting to the announced changes. General Carvalho was quoted as saying after the meeting yesterday that it contributed nothing to restoring unity or tranquility in Portugal.

The principal demand of the Antunes group and the democratic political parties--the ouster of Goncalves--was met, however, and Prime Minister - designate Azevedo may now receive greater cooperation in forming a government. Socialist leader Soares' demands for elections and a separation of civilian and military responsibilities, together with his strong criticism of the Communist Party, will pose problems, however, if Azevedo continues to press for a government that includes the Socialists, Communists, and Popular Democrats.

With yesterday's decisions failing to resolve decisively the factional power struggle, there also remains the possibility of the rightist forces of former president Spinoza playing the spoiler role.



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EGYPT

Egyptian officials seem confident that the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement is generally supported within Egypt, despite the outcry in other Arab countries.

The US embassy in Cairo reports that government officials were reasonably certain throughout the negotiations that Egyptians would stand behind President Sadat. This confidence was evidenced by the government's unprecedented willingness to bare the details of the accord, including concessions that a few years ago would have been unthinkable.

Most provisions of last year's disengagement were kept from the Egyptian public, and the government has never openly acknowledged making concessions in that accord.

The government's confidence appears thus far to have been well placed. The embassy believes that, although some opposition is inevitable, most Egyptians will welcome a period of relatively assured stability. The business community is already expressing pleasure that the agreement provides a better atmosphere for commercial planning uninterrupted by threats of war.

Egyptian officials, nevertheless, are distressed by the absence of Arab support for the new agreement. Only the Saudis are fully backing Sadat. Syria's virulent attack rankles Cairo the most, but Jordan's lack of enthusiasm is a distinct disappointment. Algeria has so far not reacted even privately; Kuwait and the other Gulf states with large Palestinian populations also have remained silent.

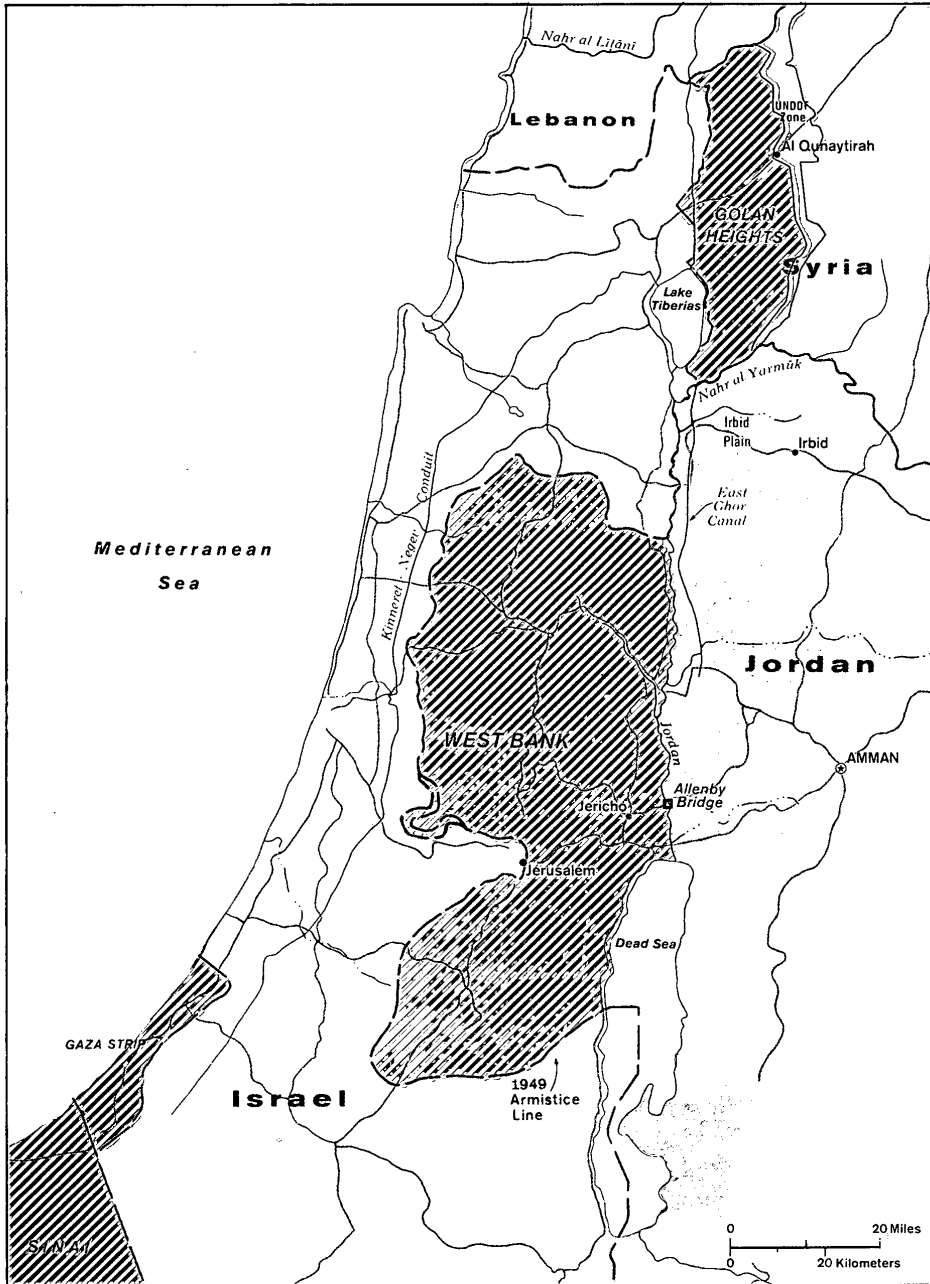
Opposition from outside Egypt does pose a possible threat to internal stability. Radical Arabs who feel threatened by Sadat's policies, or even the Soviets, could use the disengagement to stir up subversive elements inside Egypt.

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For the present, however, the stridency of Arab and Soviet attacks has apparently served to close Egyptian ranks around Sadat. Sadat won prolonged applause from his audience of political and legislative leaders during his defense of the agreement on Thursday night, and these same leaders followed the speech with a resolution strongly endorsing his policies. Approval is to be expected from this usually tame group, but this resolution was uncharacteristically enthusiastic in expressing support.

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JORDAN

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Jordan has completed work on its military fortifications in the Jordan Valley,

[redacted] in the southern part of the valley, the most effective defensive positions are on the road leading from the Allenby Bridge, where approximately seven large concrete bunkers have been built into the hills. Jordanian armor has been shifted from exposed positions west of Irbid into the nearby foothills where they have cover and concealment, as well as room for maneuver. An Israeli attack across the Jordan Valley into the high ground of the Irbid Plain would now have to contend with well-placed static defensive positions as well as a mobile armored force.

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Work on the Jordan Valley defenses began last spring out of concern that Israel might attempt to outflank Syrian defenses on the Golan Heights with a drive through northwestern Jordan. The overall system consists of concrete bunkers and pillboxes, minefields, and trenches built on key routes from the Jordan Valley. Two infantry divisions, reinforced by two armored battalions, are responsible for defense of the valley running from the Golan Heights to the Dead Sea.

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Yugoslavia

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Forces loyal to Sudanese President Jaafar Numayri yesterday easily quashed a coup effort mounted by an officer with reported ties to an extremist Muslim organization.

According to the US embassy in Khartoum, Numayri's position was never in jeopardy. Shortly after Lieutenant Colonel Hassam Uthman, the leader of the abortive coup, seized a radio station in the capital and announced Numayri's overthrow, loyalist troops quickly took control of important installations in the area and routed the outmanned dissidents. Numayri charged in a subsequent radio speech that the coup leader and his supporters had received financial aid from abroad. The most likely foreign source would be Libya. If Tripoli did have a hand in the coup effort, it may have hoped to block Sudanese efforts to forge closer ties with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

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