



The President's Daily Brief

November 28, 1975

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BANGLADESH-INDIA

Bangladesh leaders have been trying to lower tensions with India since the attack on the Indian High Commissioner in Dacca on Wednesday. In addition to expressing regret over the incident, the President of Bangladesh is sending a special delegation to New Delhi to discuss ways to improve bilateral relations.

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[redacted] Dacca [redacted] has decided that diplomacy is its only real defense against India. Dacca will make every effort to reassure New Delhi that it wants friendly relations. [redacted] the decision could be reflected in future statements by Bangladesh leaders who, in the recent past, have pointedly referred to "outside forces"--obviously India--as being behind Dacca's problems.

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For the present, Bangladesh officials continue to express fear of imminent Indian military intervention in their country. They also accuse the Indians of giving aid and sanctuary to Bengalee armed dissidents operating in northern Bangladesh.

Officials in New Delhi deny that their government is about to intervene militarily in Bangladesh but warn that intervention would be almost a certainty if communal violence should flare across the border.

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CHINA

High-level meetings in Peking apparently are either under way or have already concluded.

Between November 10 and 20, VIP aircraft flew to a number of provincial capitals and returned to Peking. [redacted]

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The American Liaison Office in Peking notes that on November 24, "scores" of limousines picked up Chinese officials in front of the Great Hall of the People. The Chinese foreign minister last week canceled his first round of talks with the visiting French foreign minister, and Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping did not meet the French minister until Monday.

The purpose of the meetings can only be speculated. There is no evidence that they are related to your visit, although this is a possibility. Just before former President Nixon's trip in 1972, some high-ranking officials were brought from the provinces to Peking, presumably for a briefing.

The meetings may be concerned with China's Fifth Five-Year Plan which is scheduled to begin in January. A conference of officials of the Bank of China reportedly was under way in mid-November to discuss financial allocations for the new plan. The banking conference could be one of a series of meetings dealing with the nation's economy.

It is unlikely that the meetings are connected with the health of Premier Chou En-lai or Chairman Mao Tse-tung. [redacted]

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PORTUGAL

The abortive Portuguese military rebellion has claimed its first political victims--Army Chief of Staff Carlos Fabiao and security chief Otelo de Carvalho, both of whom resigned yesterday.

The government announcement did not link the resignations with the leftist rebellion, but the anti-Communist majority in the Revolutionary Council had sought their dismissal for weeks because of their open encouragement of leftist dissident groups within the armed forces.

General Fabiao, once one of Portugal's most highly respected officers, has received much of the blame for the increasingly divisive political factionalism in the army. He has been replaced temporarily by an obscure infantry lieutenant colonel.

Carvalho's resignation was largely pro forma, since he was stripped of his commands earlier this week. The mercurial Carvalho is widely credited with having planned and executed the April 25, 1974 coup. He had become the standard-bearer of the radical left, however, and in recent weeks the Communists also rushed to his defense as he came increasingly under attack for his failure to support government policies.

President Costa Gomes has announced that the government will withhold judgment on who was responsible for the paratroopers' rebellion pending an official inquiry. Meanwhile, 51 officers and enlisted men captured during the uprising are being held.

In the absence of formal charges, the Socialist and Popular Democratic parties have rushed to seize the political initiative by blaming the Communists.

Communist Party members discreetly avoided direct participation in the mutiny, but military officers believed to have close ties to the party appear to have played a major role. The Communists are also vulnerable because of their strident calls for the government's resignation just prior to the rebellion.

On Wednesday Costa Gomes said legislative assembly elections, scheduled for early next spring, would be held as promised.

SPAIN

The limited pardon issued by Spanish King Juan Carlos on Wednesday appears to have done little to reduce chances for an open break between his government and the leftist opposition.

Many leftists have reacted angrily to the King's royal pardon. Riot police yesterday broke up two demonstrations staged to demand total amnesty for political prisoners.

The political opposition has been calling on Juan Carlos to grant a general amnesty for the roughly 2,000 Spanish political prisoners as a token of his commitment to reform.

The Socialist Workers Party--the largest non-Communist opposition group--pointed out that Franco had approved several pardons similar to the King's and charged that the decree showed only that nothing has changed. Opposition Christian Democrats were disappointed, but were more willing to look on the pardon as a "positive step" which might be followed by others.

The decree has come under heavy criticism for its vagueness. Much will depend on how the Justice Ministry interprets the law.

It will not apply to terrorists, Communists, anarchists, and separatists. The Communists will probably view their exclusion as confirmation that the government is trying to isolate them from the rest of the left. To counter this the party is trying to stir up opposition to the government that will attract broad support.

The Communists have had little success in this effort so far, and the Communist-dominated Workers Commissions reportedly have now postponed plans for a national general strike within a week or ten days of Franco's death.

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The Communist Party and the Workers Commissions plan instead a series of local "days of struggle," beginning next week, to help create a more favorable climate for a general strike.

The government has continued to crack down on dissidents. The latest edition of the leading political weekly magazine was seized for containing a speculative article on the King's liberalization plans, and new arrests of dissidents have been reported.

LEBANON

President Franjiah has moved to defend himself against recent heavy attacks by his Muslim, leftist, and Christian critics.

In a statement [redacted] Wednesday Franjiah said he would disregard criticism of him personally, but that attacks on the office of the president were harming the country and should cease. He said contradictory charges by some that he has not been assertive enough and by others that his powers should be curbed prove that he is maintaining a proper, middle-of-the-road policy.

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Franjiah said the government is prepared to consider seriously any "well-studied plans" for political, social, or economic reforms. His less-radical Muslim critics--including Prime Minister Karami--may at least be willing to test him with specific proposals.

The first test apparently will come from Ghas-san Tuwayni, a Christian member of the cabinet and a political independent. He reportedly has proposed a detailed program that over a three-week period would implement a cease-fire and launch specific social and economic reforms. The success of this plan, if it wins cabinet approval, will hinge on the willingness of the country's political leaders to have their private militias act as a national guard in patrolling Beirut.

Leaders of the right-wing Phalanges Party may welcome both Franjiah's speech and Tuwayni's initiative. They will see Franjiah's willingness to speak up for Christian interests as providing at least some assurance that they will be able to resist giving up too much in any negotiations that might follow a cease-fire. A cease-fire, at a minimum, would provide another opportunity to rearm.

The Phalangists, like the other Christian groups, remain pessimistic that the Muslims will temper their political demands to the extent necessary to allow agreement on fundamental issues. Any negotiations without preconditions would buy time,

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however, and would allow the Christians to contend that they were heeding the advice of foreign mediators who counsel a more conciliatory attitude.

[redacted] even the ultra-conservative Maronite monks may have become slightly more reasonable as a result of urgings from the Vatican early this month. There is no chance the monks will endorse proposals for political reform, but even reduced opposition from them would give conservative Christians like Franjiyah more freedom to negotiate. Maronite religious orders and lay groups are a principal source of arms and funds for the Christian militias.

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The tentative signs of political progress have combined with heavy rains to reduce the fighting in Beirut. Government spokesmen are cautiously optimistic that commercial activity can resume on Monday.

NOTE

Large-scale population relocations involving one-half million people are under way in Cambodia.

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300,000 people from southeastern Cambodia are to be relocated--100,000 of them into the sparsely populated northeast and the rest to the north and northwest. The northwest region is also scheduled to receive an additional 200,000 people from southwestern Cambodia beginning this month.

This new forced migration is probably part of a broad effort by Phnom Penh to increase agricultural production. Over the short term, the human cost will probably be high. As was the case in the initial relocations last spring, these transfers appear to be taking place abruptly with little if any preparations to provide housing and other facilities.

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