



The President's Daily Brief

March 11, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CHINA

Peking's most authoritative statement to date on the campaign to criticize Teng Hsiao-ping has linked Mao Tse-tung directly to this effort.

The statement was contained in a People's Daily editorial, which comes closer to establishing an official position on the campaign than previous, less official pronouncements. The editorial quotes Mao on the need to "narrow the target" of the attack, implying that Teng alone should be criticized, but leaves the door open for criticism of other officials who are associated with Teng and who, like him, were returned to public office after being ousted a decade ago.

While the editorial stops short of calling for Teng to be overthrown, stating only that he should be criticized, Teng is separated from other officials who, the editorial notes, should be "helped" to correct their past mistakes.

The party's left wing undoubtedly will use the editorial's statement, which is linked directly to Mao, that it is unpopular to "reverse previous verdicts"--a reference to the rehabilitation of officials overthrown during the Cultural Revolution--to broaden the attack on Teng to include many of the rehabilitees who once again hold important party, military, and government positions. The editorial nevertheless calls for people to remain "coolheaded" and strictly prohibits the kind of disruptive political activity that characterized the Cultural Revolution.

These prohibitions, which are at the operative heart of the editorial, strongly suggest that more moderate-leaning members of the leadership still retain a major voice in defining the scope of the campaign. These leaders almost certainly prefer at the least to limit the attacks to Teng himself and to keep the campaign from gaining enough momentum to encompass large numbers of rehabilitated officials and to undercut major domestic and foreign policies.

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In a briefing for foreign diplomats in Peking on March 6, a university official stated that Teng is the only target of the current attack and implied that he could remain in power if he agreed to admit his mistakes. He added, however, that Teng had not yet done so. The general low-key tenor of his comments suggests that Peking is making a concerted effort to play down the campaign for foreign audiences--and that important elements in the leadership are concerned about the possible impact that indications of political instability may have abroad.

In the meantime, the party's left wing continues its active pursuit of Teng. The Ministry of Culture, which is closely associated with leftist political leaders, has withdrawn from circulation all films in which Teng appears. Posters have been sighted in Shanghai and in Kwangtung Province calling for Teng's ouster. [redacted]

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Equally important, there are signs that civilian leftists are courting the military as allies in the current campaign. The military was conspicuously absent during the campaign's initial stages, but some units are now beginning to participate in the criticism of Teng.

Military support would give a boost to those who are most actively pursuing the current campaign because at present they do not appear to have the muscle to enforce their demands. The support of the military is equally important to those who would like to keep the current campaign from getting out of hand. Thus far, the military has not decisively tilted toward either side.

JAPAN

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LEBANON

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The Israelis are closely monitoring the situation, but top government leaders have so far refrained from any comment that would inflame the situation. Israeli press articles suggest that the leadership is unsure of the implications for Israel of recent developments in Lebanon, and has not decided on what, if any, action it should take.

Successes already achieved by the rebel Muslim forces have sparked concern among Lebanese Christians that the rebels intend to form a renegade Muslim army encircling the core Christian area of the country.

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Prime Minister Karami yesterday tried to gloss over the deepening controversy between Christian and Muslim leaders over the Muslim mutineers. Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt--an outspoken supporter of the Muslim rebels--apparently has so alienated Christian leaders on the mutiny issue, however, that they have refused to participate in further political talks until the problem is solved.

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NOTES

The Soviets have begun construction of a new class of small, surface warship.

The boat is some 145 feet long and is armed with launchers for surface-to-air missiles and anti-ship missiles. The sizes of these launchers do not equate to known Soviet systems, suggesting that they may be for new or modified weapons. The size of the new boat suggests that it is a follow-on to the Osa-class coastal defense patrol boat. The array of armaments on the new boat, however, offers significant improvement over the Osa.

* * *

Saudi Arabia and South Yemen announced in a joint statement yesterday their intention to normalize relations, capping a reconciliation process initiated by Cairo in 1974.

The communiqué said the two countries would refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs. It also expressed both countries' opposition to "foreign interference" in the Arabian Peninsula. This reference is broad enough to encompass both the Saudi objection to the Soviet presence in South Yemen and Aden's opposition to Iran's military role in Oman.

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[Redacted] South Yemen's willingness to negotiate probably was dictated by economic necessity. The prospects for making South Yemen into a moderate state, however, are not very promising.

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