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12 September 1953

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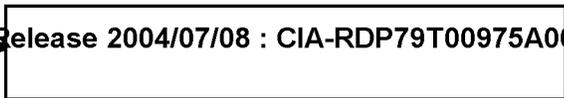
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State Dept. review completed

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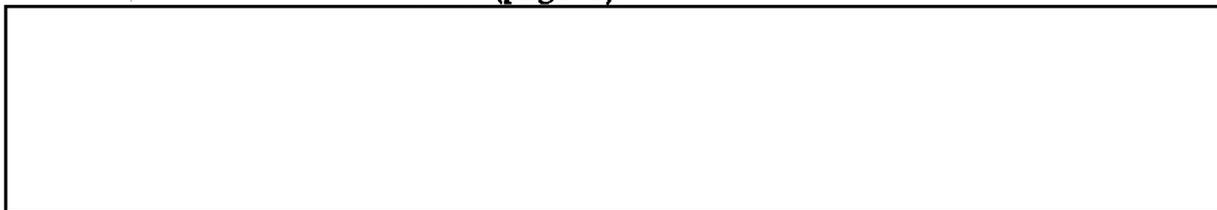
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SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. Comment on Cambodian attitude toward Viet Minh:

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[redacted] Cambodian premier Penn Nouth stated on 10 September that his government had "no quarrel with communism so long as it does not attempt to impose itself by force on our people." He also promised Viet Minh elements in Cambodia that they would not be pursued if they returned to Vietnam.

Penn Nouth's attitude is entirely consistent with the Cambodian view that the Viet Minh is a Vietnamese problem which has to a small extent involved Cambodia; there are perhaps as many as 1,000 regular Viet Minh troops in Cambodia. The three Associated States have consistently maintained isolationist attitudes with respect to each other. Cambodian and Laotian troops are under no obligation to serve outside Cambodia and cannot be expected to join in the fighting against the Communists in Vietnam.

SOUTH ASIA

2. Comment on Communist victory in Nepalese elections:

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[redacted] The unexpected Communist victory in the 9 September municipal council elections in Katmandu, capital and only important city of the strategic border state of Nepal, indicates greater voting strength and a greater degree of cohesion than the Nepalese Communist Party has previously demonstrated.

The Communists ran as individuals rather than as members of their party, which is banned, and won six of the 18 seats in the council, more than the number won by any party. With the probable help of the National Congress Party, which won four seats, they will be in a position to control the council on many issues.

It is likely that both Prime Minister Koirala and the Indian government will take steps to curtail Communist influence in the council, though their ability effectively to suppress it entirely is doubtful.

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5. Israeli attempt to divert Jordan river creates new crisis:

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[REDACTED] General Bennike, the chief of staff of the UN Truce Supervision Organization, is disturbed at Israel's attempt to dam and divert the Jordan river in the demilitarized zone near the Syrian border. According to Ambassador Moose in Damascus, Bennike fears that without the support of the US and the other Western powers his position will be undermined if he issues a judgment unfavorable to Israel.

Comment: Syrian-Israeli relations have entered a critical stage during the last 10 days as a result of the new construction project. Israeli spokesmen have insisted that the dam will not lessen the volume of water currently available to the Arabs, but UN observers believe that Israel is attempting to divert the water to its own territory.

Both countries have posted guards in the general area. Damascus authorities, moreover, have indicated that they plan to take the new dispute to the Security Council if General Bennike's decision should favor Israel.

WESTERN EUROPE

6. Reports of Soviet troop withdrawals from Austria appear unfounded:

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[REDACTED] American embassy and military observers in Austria have seen no reliable evidence that Soviet forces are to be withdrawn from Austria. Minor movements of Soviet troops have been going on within that country during the past few weeks, but the number of troops in Austria is believed to be substantially unchanged.

Comment: Recent reports of Soviet troop withdrawals from Austria may have grown out of misinterpretations of normal summer maneuvers or of the confirmed withdrawals from interzonal checkpoints.

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7. Pella states Italian occupation of Zone A must precede round-table conference on Trieste:

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Premier Pella told Ambassador Luce on 9 September that he would not object to a round-table conference of interested parties on the Trieste issue provided Italy would participate on an equal basis with Yugoslavia. "Equality" he explained would involve Italian occupation but not annexation of Zone A of the Free Territory. He also said that Yugoslav claims were now too excessive for him to negotiate directly with Tito.

Pella also complained that the Allies' so-called "impartiality" toward Italy, a member of NATO, and the Communist dictatorship in Yugoslavia could be interpreted by the Italian public only as partiality for Tito.

The premier also stated that only 4,100 Italian troops had been disposed near the Yugoslav frontier since 29 August, and that all would be pulled back gradually after Italian public opinion had calmed down.

Comment: On 7 September a spokesman for Pella told Ambassador Luce that a de facto occupation of Zone A by Italy would pave the way for Tito-Pella negotiations. The day before, however, Tito had stated categorically that Yugoslavia could not accept such an occupation.

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