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19 May 1980

# CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

DOCUMENT NO. 8  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.  L1  
 DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S 01996  
NEXT REVIEW DATE:  
AUTH: HR 70-2  
DATE: 5-11-80 REVIEWER:

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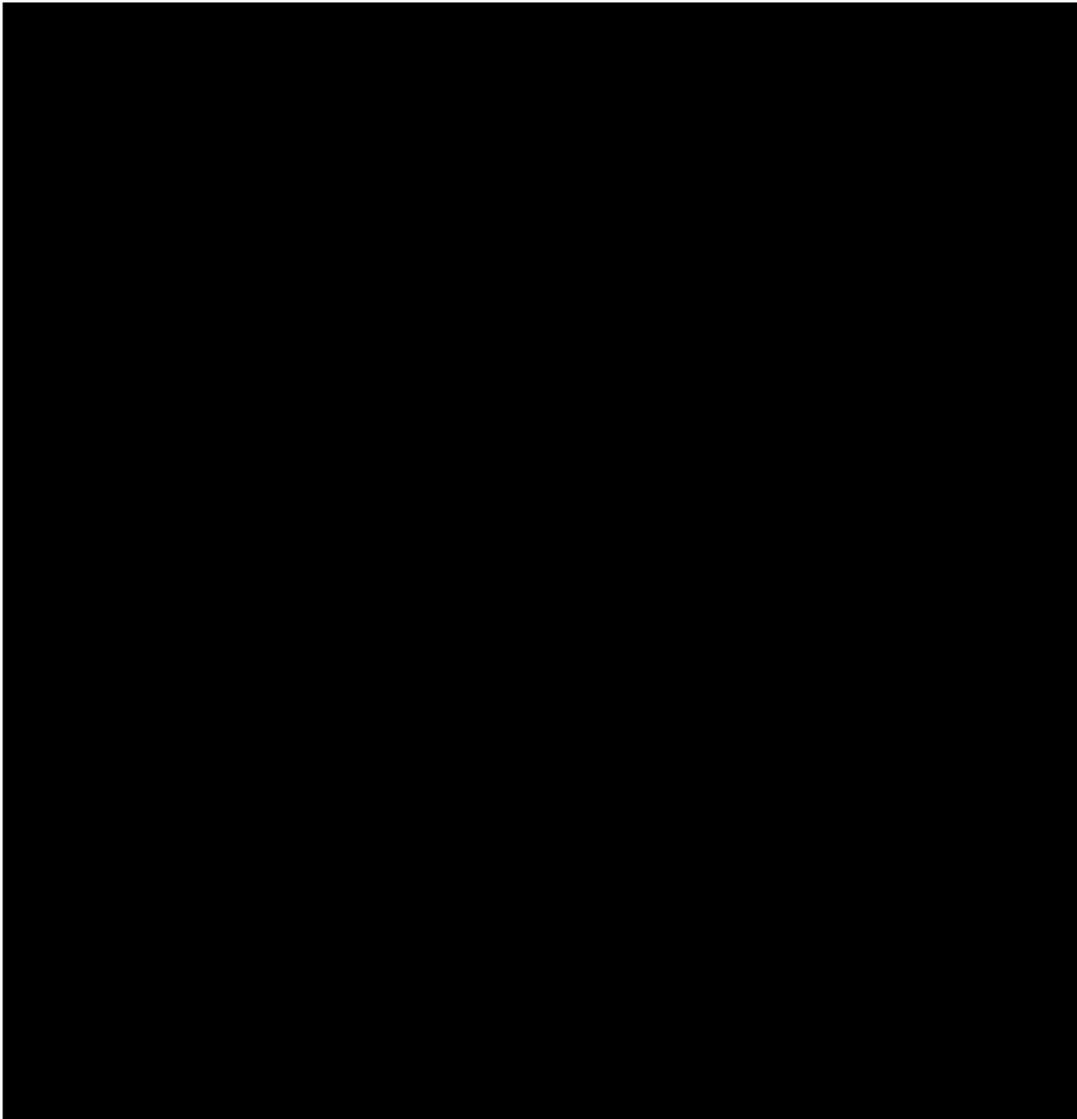
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T H E W E E K I N B R I E F ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PART I  
OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST



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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

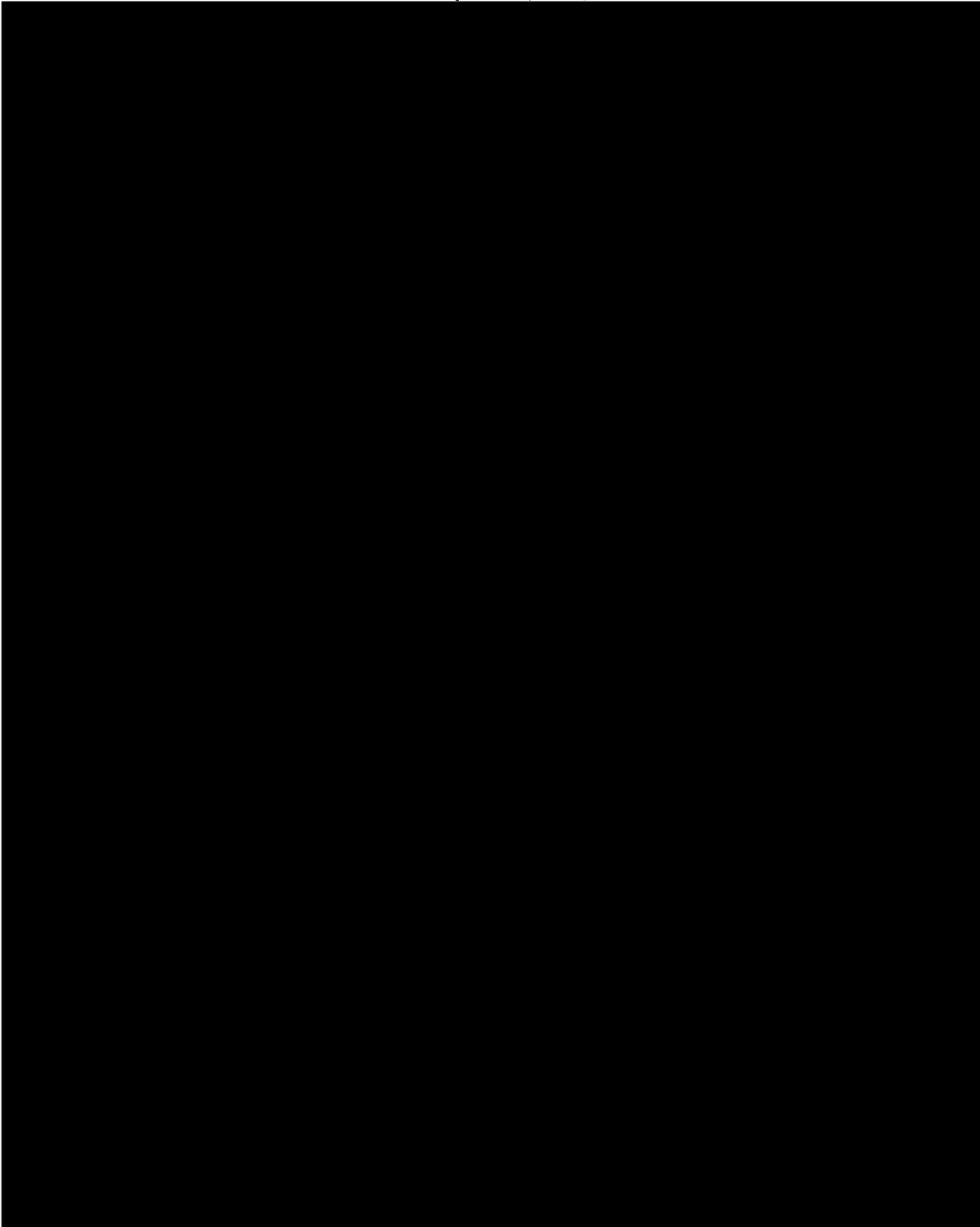
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PART I (continued)



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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

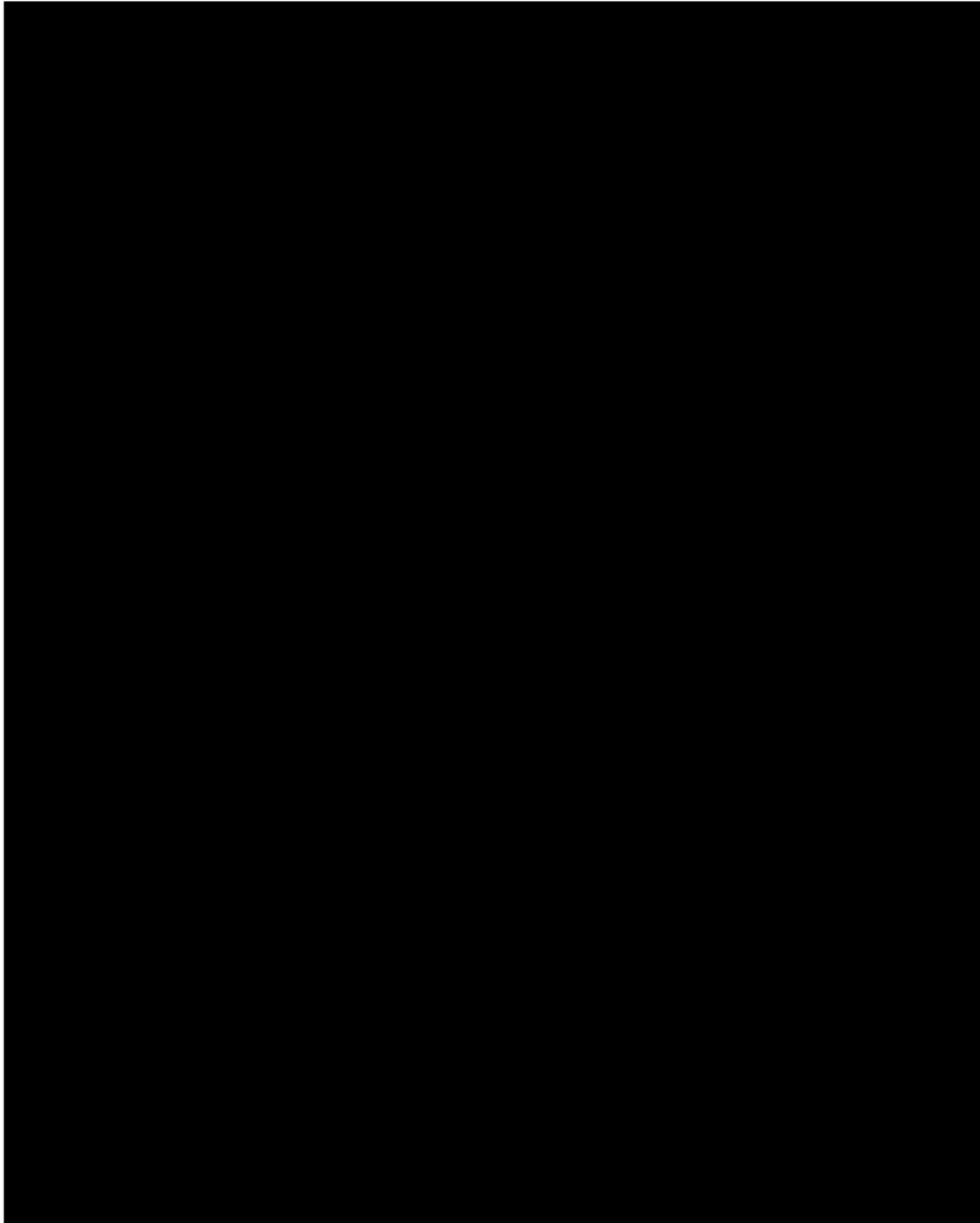
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PART II (continued)



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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

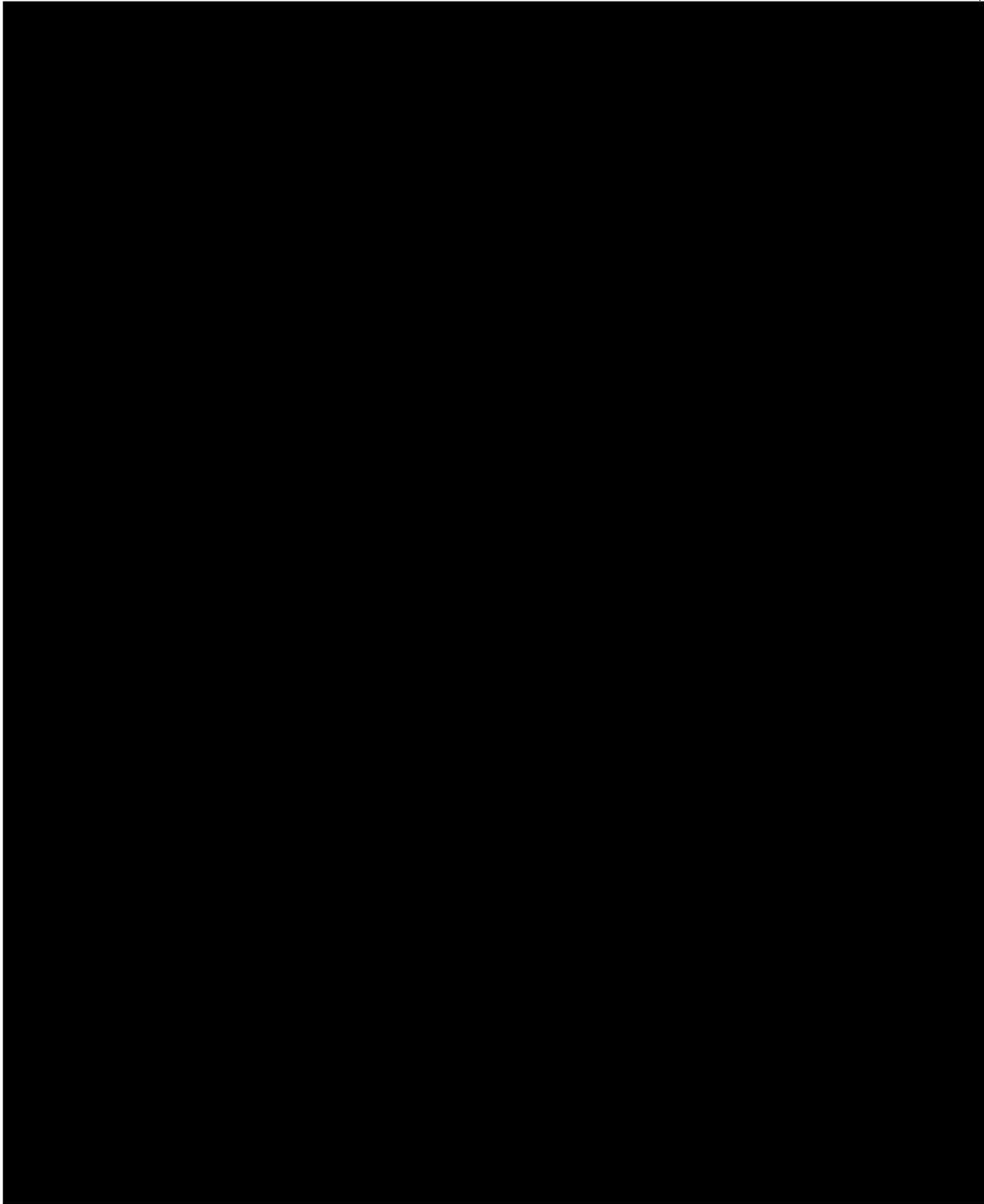
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PART II (continued)



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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

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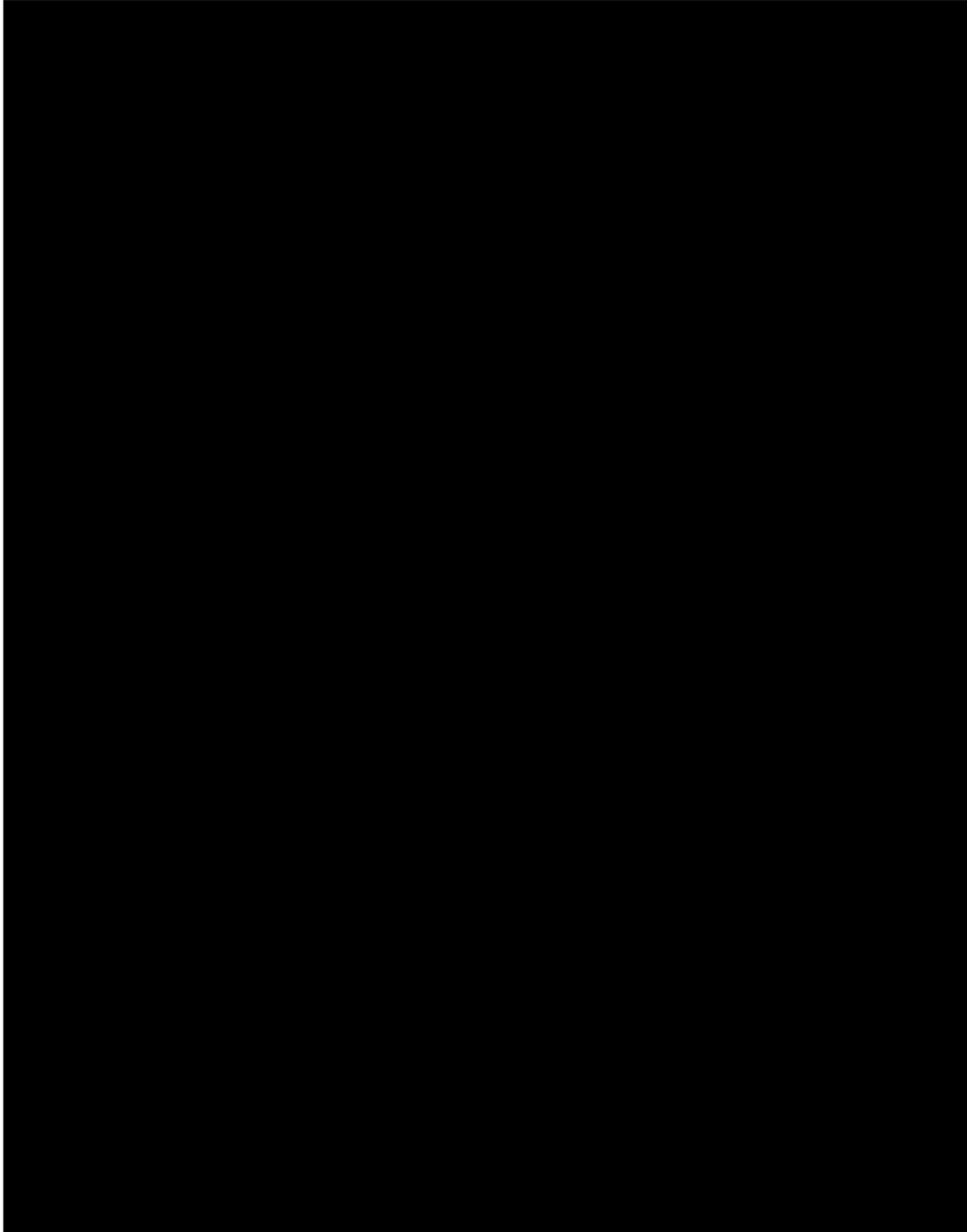
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PART II (continued)



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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

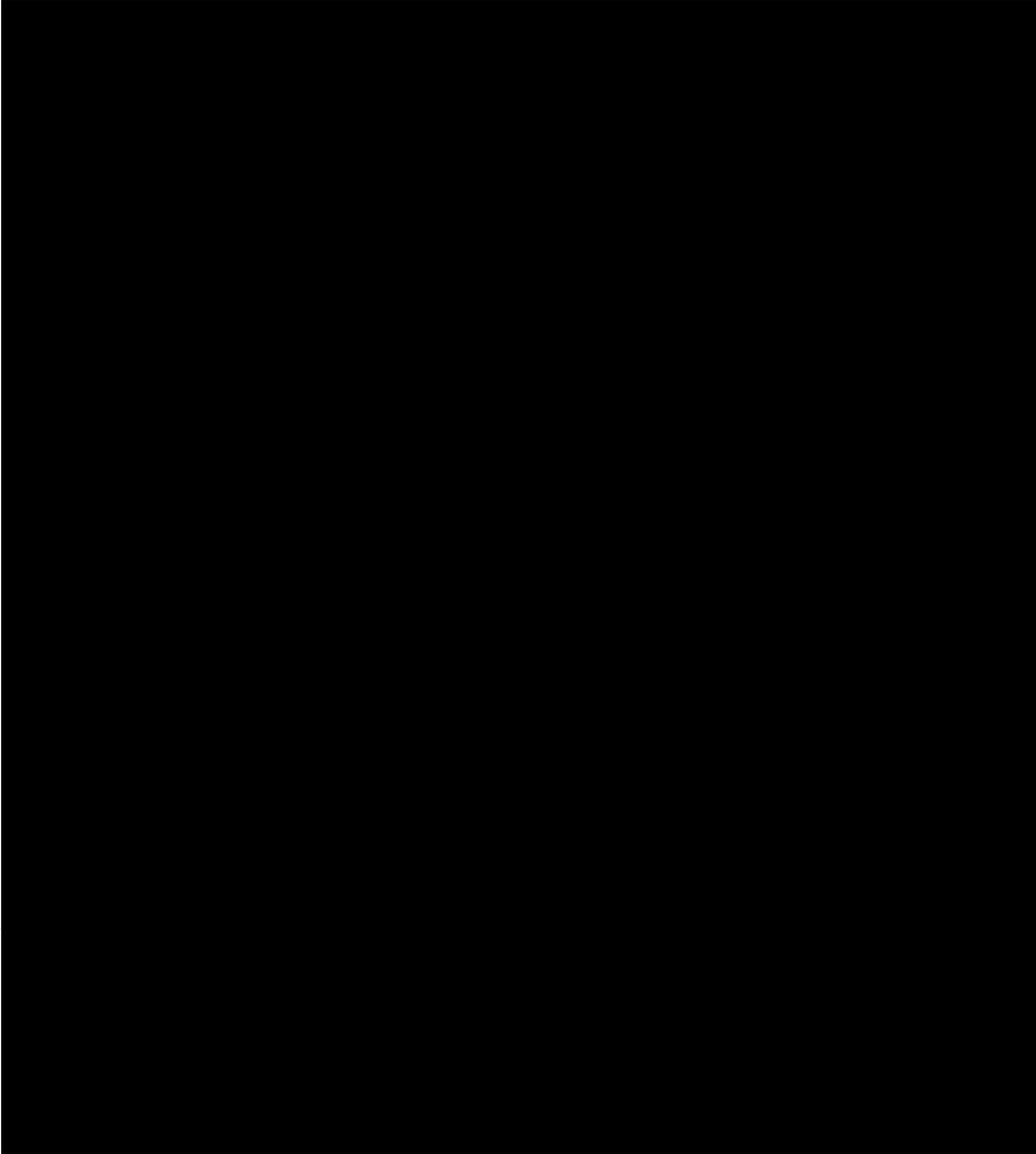
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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

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PART III

PATTERNS AND PERSPECTIVES



IRAQ: NATION OF MINORITIES . . . . . Page 7

Although Iraq is overwhelmingly Moslem in religion and largely Arabic in culture, its population is composed of numerous mutually antagonistic groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmans, Yezidis, Assyrians, Sunni and Shia Moslems, and Christians. The long history of minority frictions, added to the instability of the present revolutionary government, could lead to widespread disorders should a new attempt be made to overthrow Qasim. [REDACTED]

PART IV

OTHER INTELLIGENCE ISSUANCES

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THE WEEK IN BRIEF

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IRAQ: NATION OF MINORITIES

Religious institutions and ethnic differences play a primary role in shaping the life and outlook of Iraq's population. Although over 90 percent of Iraq's 6,500,000 people adhere at least nominally to Islam, the State religion, sectarian and ethnic differences made the country a nation of minorities.

Each of Iraq's numerous religious groups, both Moslem and otherwise, has its own religious laws, social habits, and traditions. The religious community system, which gives its members a sense of cohesion, at the same time nourishes antipathies and social differences, which act as forces for separatism within the

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national framework of the Iraqi state.

Under the monarchy these forces were for the most part suppressed. Iraq's minorities have bitter memories of the Assyrian massacres of 1933, and Kurdish uprisings of 1922, 1927, 1930, 1932, and 1943, as well as numerous tribal uprisings. Since the 1958 revolution, tensions between the various communities have increased with the continuing instability of the revolutionary regime.

The Arab Moslems are basically divided into the two antipathetic sects--Sunnis and Shias, each with its own shrines, leaders, and even religious law courts.

Sunni Moslems

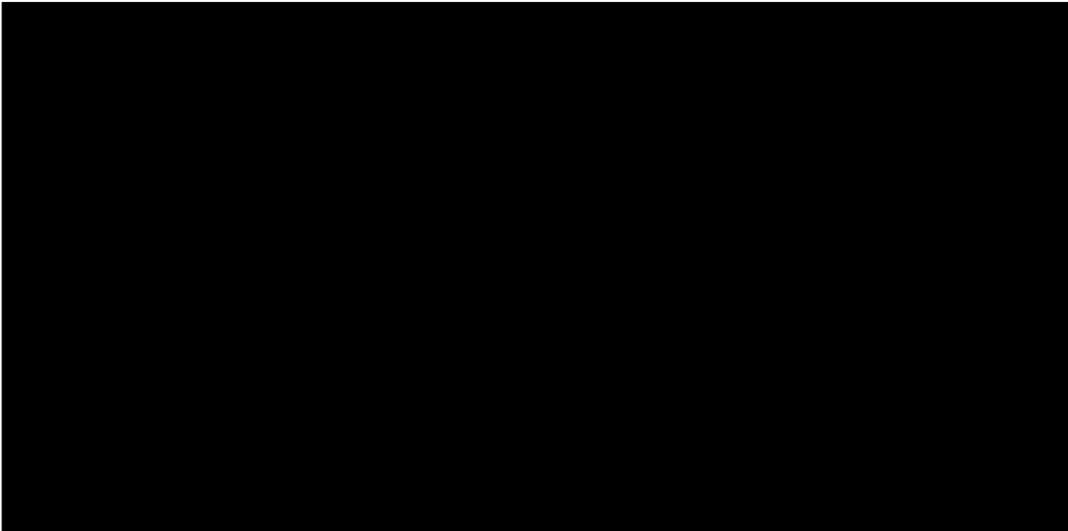
The Sunni Moslems are composed of Arabs, Kurds, and Turkomans whose sole meeting ground is a common religion. The Sunni religious community has no priesthood or religious hierarchy which might serve to unify its members, although there are a number of religious offices for dealing with and guiding Sunni spiritual life. The Sunnis are "orthodox" Moslems who claim to stand for the original simplicity of Islam. They regard the Ko-

ran supplemented by the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad as the sole and sufficient repository of the Moslem faith.

The Sunni Arabs, politically dominant since the time of the Ottoman Empire, regard themselves as superior to their Kurdish and Turkoman coreligionists. The Arabs of the sect number about 1,250,000 and inhabit the Western half of the country. The nomadic Arab Bedouin tribes are mainly Sunnis.

Iraq's estimated 800,000 Kurds are concentrated along the northeastern borders with Turkey and Iran. They speak various dialects of Kurdish, an Indo-European language distantly related to Persian. Dour and somewhat fatalistic, they are noted for their warlike behavior and despise the Arabs. Their social organization is based on tribe and clan, but a Kurdish leader in modern times--the so-called sheik--has been either a holy man or the head of a family renowned for its holiness, rather than a tribal chief.

Although the Kurds are often stereotyped as a single cohesive element, tribal rivalries keep them in almost constant turmoil. The most important tribes are the Babans, Barzinjis, Baradostis,



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Zibaris, and Barzanis. The Zibaris and Barzanis are presently at odds with each other, and the Iraqi security forces are attempting to umpire the fighting.

It is doubtful that the Kurds could be unified into an effective force. Dreams of a Kurdish state carved out of parts of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran nevertheless are still nurtured by many Kurds, who have been encouraged by Soviet propaganda and agents. However, Mulla Mustafa, leader of the Barzanis who returned from refuge in the Soviet Union with some 800 followers after the 1958 Iraqi revolution, has followed a policy of supporting the Qasim regime.

Qasim has sought to emphasize Kurdish participation in the Iraqi Government and cultural autonomy by such gestures as the founding of a Kurdish Academy, a medical school in the Kurdish center of Mosul, and broadcasts in Kurdish over Radio Baghdad. Indeed, Qasim's emphasis on Arab unity and the brotherhood of Arabs and Kurds has disturbed many Kurdish leaders, who fear being engulfed in a larger Arab mass.

The Turkomans, numbering about 100,000, are village and town dwellers also living in the northeastern part of the country and are descendants of the pre-Ottoman Turkish invaders of Iraq. Speaking Turki, a dialect of Turkish, many Turkomans have been government functionaries since Ottoman times, while many others are small shopkeepers. During the Kirkuk disturbances of July 1959, many Turkoman shops were burned and their owners killed by Communist-led mobs. Politically the Turkomans look toward Turkey; however, they too have been the object of Qasim's solicitation.

Shia Moslems

Iraq's Shia population is approximately 3,800,000, outnumbering Sunni Arabs and Kurds together. They are mostly farmers and are concentrated in southeastern Iraq. The split between the Sunnis and Shias began in the first century of Islam; the Sunnis called for an elected caliph--commander of the faithful--while the Shias advocated a hereditary succession through the Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law Ali. Shia Islam became the state religion of Persia in the 16th century, and Persian cultural influence has been strong among the Shias of Iraq ever since.

The gulf between the Shias and their Sunni compatriots is deepened by a number of strange Shia practices--the passion play each year commemorating the death of Ali, their cult of saints, practice of temporary marriages, and the concept that some day a last "Hidden Imam" will reappear to rule the world and give his faithful adherents their due.

Shia resentment of the Sunnis is especially strong in the predominantly Shia areas around Diwaniya and Nasiriya, centers of unrest during periods of political or economic crises. The influence of religious leaders among the Shias is much stronger than among the Sunnis. The mujtahids, earthly representatives of the Hidden Imam, guide their followers in all aspects of life and have representatives throughout the Shia communities. The more revered mujtahids reside in Karbala and especially Najaf; they can, when they wish, exercise considerable political influence.

It is these divines who have aroused the greatest resistance among the Shias to policies of the Qasim regime which they considered pro-Communist.

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They have encouraged their followers to attack known Communists. Iranian influence in Najaf and Karbala is strong; these cities are the most important centers of Shia pilgrimages after Mecca, and thousands of Iranians visit and study there every year.

In the southern Iraqi marshes are found the nominally Shia marsh dwellers called the Madan, an Arabic term synonymous with yokel. In the eastern part of the country are some 60,000 Lurs, Shias who speak a dialect of Persian. Claimed as Kurds by Kurdish nationalists, the Lurs are not politically conscious.

Heterodox Moslem Sects

In some districts of the Assyrian plains and foothills, several obscure Moslem sects exist. Among the more important of these are the Sarlis, Shabaks, and Kakais, all speaking Kurdish dialects. Another group is the Qizilbash (Red Heads), who have many adherents among Turkoman villagers. Although Moslems, they revere the Virgin Mary, and practice confession, absolution, and communion.

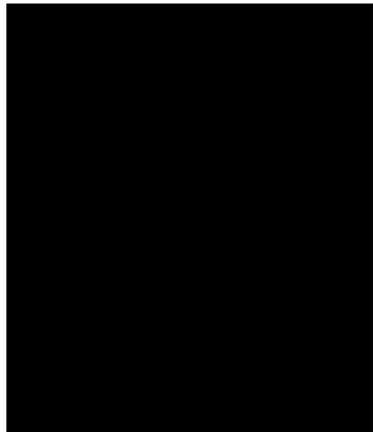
The Christians

Iraqi Christians are indigenous inhabitants, except for the majority of Assyrians and some Armenians. Most speak Arabic in addition to their community language and mix freely with their Moslem neighbors. The principal Christian sects are Jacobites, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Armenian Orthodox and Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Protestants.

The Jacobites are survivors of the Monophysite community organized in Syria and Mesopotamia in the 6th century. They are presumed to number fewer than 100,000, located principally in the plain south-east of Mosul.

The Nestorians, who are often referred to as Assyrians, date from 5th century divisions in the early Christian church. They number a little over 30,000. During the period of the British mandate, they were formed into a special military guard group known as the Assyrian Levies, which was used in suppressing Kurdish revolts. Following the disbanding of the Levies in 1930, tension arose between the Nestorians and the Iraqi Government. In 1933 the Iraqi Army carried out a series of massacres in which hundreds of Nestorians were killed, and many emigrated to the Jazira section of north-eastern Syria. They have never become reconciled to living under Moslem domination.

Forming the largest Christian church in Iraq, the Chal-



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ASSYRIANS

deans are Uniates, having recognized papal supremacy in the 18th century in order to secure French protection. The country's 100,000 Chaldeans are mostly peasants residing in villages on the Mosul plain, their native language is Syriac.

Iraq's Armenians, both Orthodox and Catholic, are mostly urban dwellers and recent arrivals in Iraq, having migrated from Turkey following World War I. Estimates of their number

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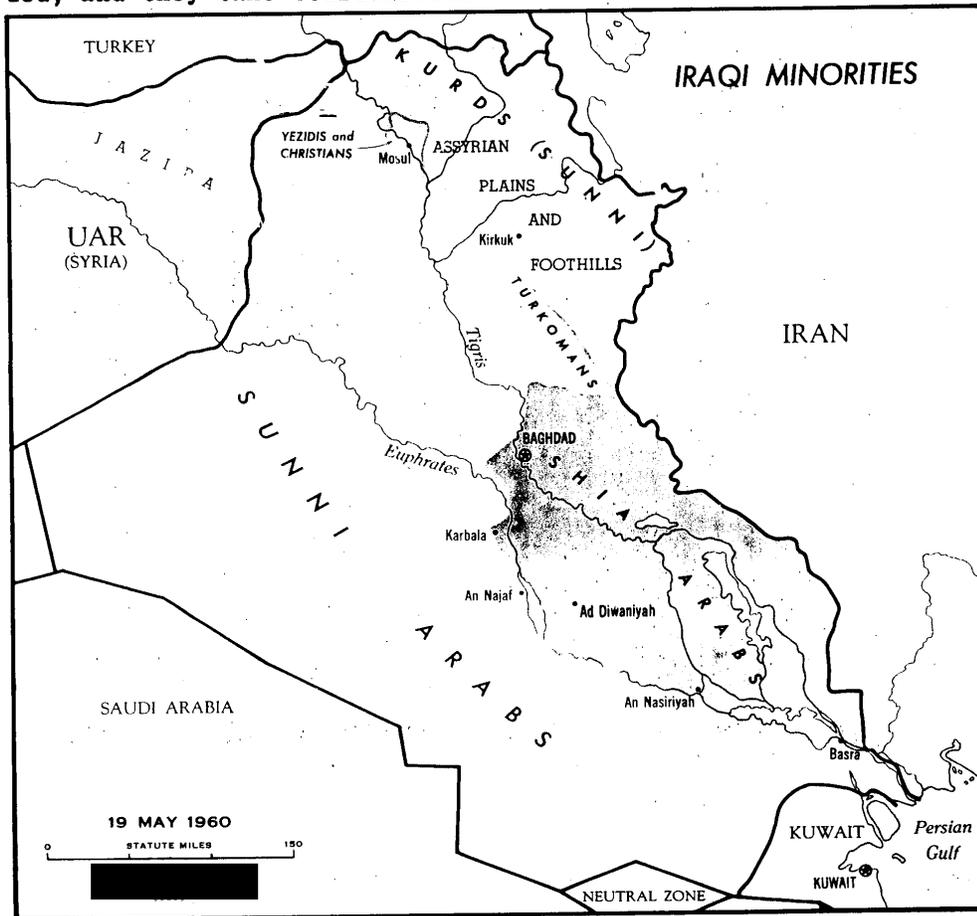
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range from as low as 4,000 to around 15,000. While relations with their neighbors are generally good, they resist assimilation. They form a large part of Iraq's body of professional and artisan classes, especially as mechanics in the oil fields.

Minor Groups

The 50,000 Yezidis, who live almost entirely in the Mosul area, are often called "devil worshippers," but this is inaccurate. They regard Satan, whom they never mention by name, as a fallen angel who will someday be reconciled with God, and they take considerable

The Yezidis are a racial as well as a religious minority, being probably of Kurdish origin. In times of trouble, they side with their Kurdish neighbors. Despised by the majority of Iraqis and at the bottom of the social scale, they have participated less in the country's development than any other minority. Their taboo on pronouncing the sound "sh," because it exists in the word for Satan, has impeded their education. Since the revolution, they have sided with the Qasim regime and have cooperated with the Kurds in fighting the Bedouin Shammar tribesmen.



pains to propitiate him. Their rites show signs of Christian Moslems, and Zoroastrian influences.

The 7,000 Sabaeans, also called the Mandaeans, are a pagan sect of ancient origin and diverse elements. Their

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distinctive characteristic is the importance they place on baptism and frequent ceremonial ablutions, for which reason they always live near fresh water. They are urban dwellers scattered among the towns south of Baghdad; they enjoy a high reputation as silversmiths and boat-builders.

Although most of the Iraqi Jewish community emigrated to Israel in 1950-51, some 8,000 to 10,000 remain, mostly in Baghdad. Their lack of numbers has made them politically insignificant. Most are engaged

tries disrupts the growth of a real Iraqi nationalism. Kurds look to their compatriots in Turkey, Iran, and Russia, depending on the internal Iraqi situation. Christians identify themselves with Christian groups in other Arab countries. Tribesmen belonging to larger tribal federations often seek assistance from outside their frontiers to further their interests. Differences in religion, language, culture, and ethnic origin are accentuated by the religious community system.

Age-old antagonisms lie just beneath the surface. Incidents which would pass almost unnoticed in the West often spark violence such as the Turkomen massacres in 1959, the perennial Kurdish turmoil, Kurdish-Arab tribal raids, and Sunni-Shia rivalries.

These factors add to the already increasing strains resulting from the revolution--strife between Communist and anti-Communist elements, economic depression, agrarian disorganization, subversive efforts by outside powers, internal political maneuvering, and near administrative chaos--could end in widespread insurrection and civil war if Qasim's grip should slip.

in commerce and banking.

Minorities as Political Force

Iraq's inchoate national symbols and traditions derive largely from Arab Islamic culture and ideals. However, the influence of groups having ethnic ties in neighboring coun-

tion, subversive efforts by outside powers, internal political maneuvering, and near administrative chaos--could end in widespread insurrection and civil war if Qasim's grip should slip.

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