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9 December 1958

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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9 DECEMBER 1958

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

USSR - Removal of secret police chief Serov underscores Khrushchev's control.

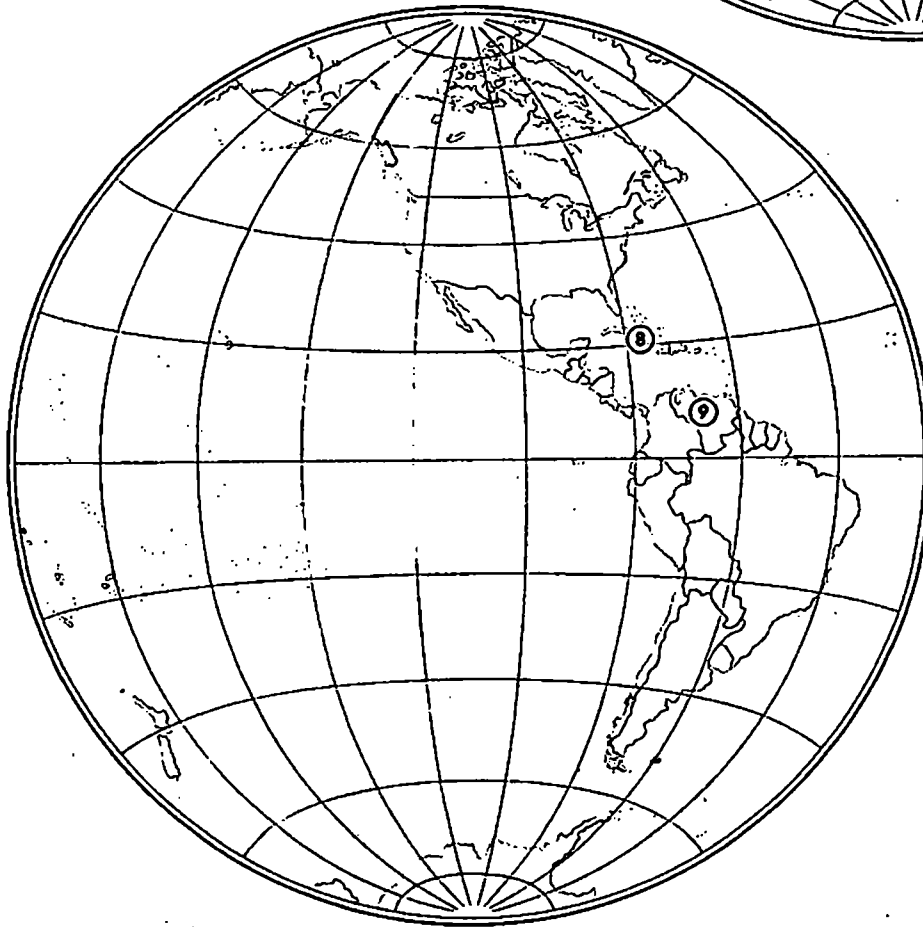
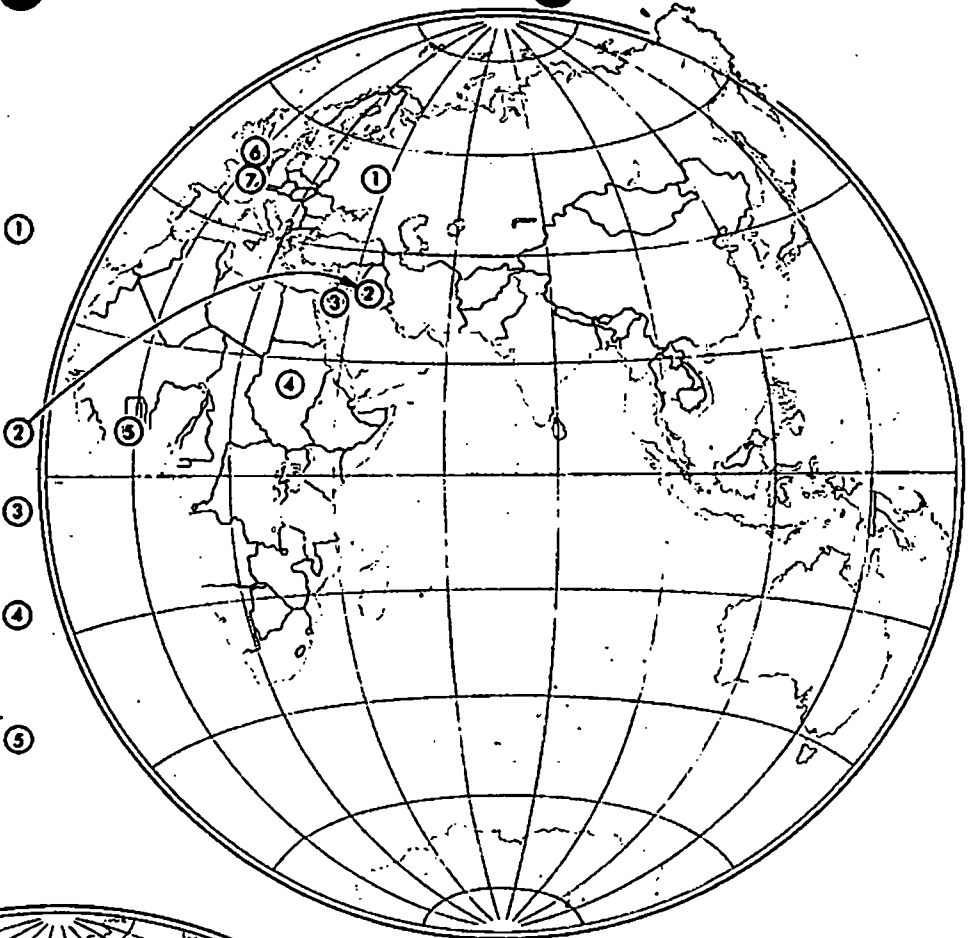
II. ASIA-AFRICA

Iraq - Qasim regime arrests leading figures in UAR-backed plot; possibility of action against Iraqi Government remains. Cairo radio blames plot on United States.

Jordanian Government unable to meet army payroll for December.

Sudanese requests for American aid may come to several hundred million dollars.

UAR delegate, with support from bloc individuals, trying to dominate All-African Peoples' Conference now meeting in Accra.



III. THE WEST

- ⑥ Adenauer to confer with Macmillan in London on 12 December.
- ⑦ French scientist claims nuclear device ready for testing.
- ⑧ Number of Cuban military officers reported defecting.
- ⑨ Venezuela - Betancourt presidential election victory may increase possibility of coup attempt.

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~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

9 December 1958

DAILY BRIEF

SIRAB

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

no
***USSR:** The removal of General Serov as chief of the Soviet secret police is apparently intended to head off the growth of entrenched power outside the Communist party and to underscore Khrushchev's control in preparation for the upcoming party congress. Although there have been no recent signs of friction between party and police, Serov's release will pave the way for a reduction of police power in line with Khrushchev's statement to Senator Humphrey last week. [redacted] (Page 1)

II. ASIA-AFRICA

no
Iraq: Two of the leading figures in the UAR-backed plot against the Qasim regime were arrested on 8 December and other participants were under investigation, [redacted]

[redacted]

Baghdad radio announced on 8 December that a "serious" plot engineered by "foreigners" had been uncovered. Cairo radio has blamed the plot on the United States. The possibility still remains that disaffected army and tribal elements might act against Qasim regardless of UAR support. [redacted] (Page 2)

[redacted] **Jordan:** The government insists that it will be unable to meet the army payroll due on 27 December unless it either draws on its reserve funds of about \$20,000,000 or obtains further budgetary support from the United States. [redacted]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

no
Sudan: Foreign Minister Khayr has asked the United States for a \$43,050,000 long-term loan to "help complete" cotton acreage expansion schemes. He has also inquired about military aid, the availability of Export-Import Bank loans, US agricultural surpluses, and other forms of American aid. On the basis of projects discussed by Khayr thus far, Sudanese requests for US aid may come to several hundred million dollars. It appears that the new government is no closer to an agreement with Egypt on the Nile waters question than the Khalil government. [redacted]
 (Page 3)

no
All-African Peoples' Conference: Nasir's chief representative at the nongovernmental meeting of African nationalist movements now in session in Accra is making a vigorous effort to bring the conference under UAR control and secure the adoption of extremist resolutions. He is being helped by individuals from the Sino-Soviet bloc, but opposed by Ghana's Prime Minister Nkrumah, who is trying to steer the conference along a more moderate course. [redacted] (Page 4)

III. THE WEST

no
West Germany - Britain: In response to an urgent request from Adenauer, Prime Minister Macmillan has agreed to meet the West German chancellor in London on 12 December, apparently to discuss Berlin. [redacted] (Page 5)

no
France: A French Atomic Energy Commission scientist says France has a nuclear device ready, but the government is awaiting the proper psychological moment for a test. Although recent reports have indicated that the French have had some difficulty in separating plutonium into usable form, it is estimated that enough fissionable material now exists to permit explosion of a crude device should the government, for political reasons, decide to do so. [redacted] (Page 6)

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DAILY BRIEF

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OK
Cuba: Mounting discontent in the Cuban armed forces has reportedly resulted in the defection of 68 officers, following the government's preventive actions against a military conspiracy on 27 November. Some officers have sought asylum in foreign embassies and others are said to have joined the rebel group operating in Las Villas Province. Meanwhile, the rapidly expanding rebel movement is again reported proceeding to establish a provisional government in rebel-dominated Oriente Province. (Page 7)

OK
*Venezuela: Romulo Betancourt's apparent victory in the presidential elections--based on an unofficial count, as of 2300 hours EST on 8 December, of about 85 percent of the estimated total vote--may have somewhat increased the possibility of a coup attempt because of the traditional military hostility toward him and his party, the leftist Democratic Action. Such an attempt, however, does not at present appear to have the backing of the majority of the armed forces necessary for its success. Demonstrating students, who favored the candidacy of runner-up Larrazabal, have touched off disturbances in the capital which might lead to armed forces intervention. All candidates have stated they would respect the outcome and not include Communists in the coalition government which they have agreed to establish. (Page 8)

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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Soviet Secret Police Chief Removed

The removal of Ivan Serov as Soviet secret police chief, announced on 9 December, appears to be another move on Khrushchev's part to prevent the growth of entrenched power not completely responsive to his control. The announcement stated that Serov was to be transferred to other work but gave no indication of his new job or his successor as chairman of the Committee of State Security (KGB).

There have been no good indications of friction or disagreement between Khrushchev and Serov. In his conversation with Senator Humphrey on 1 December, however, Khrushchev stated that he intended to reduce the role of the secret police still further, and Serov's removal will probably pave the way for new moves in this direction. There have been some suggestions that the new criminal code slated for enactment in the near future--possibly at the 22 December session of the Supreme Soviet--will limit secret police powers in criminal proceedings.

There has been no information to suggest, however, that the party and secret police have come into conflict over this issue or in connection with the current campaign for vigilance against "capitalist spies." The question of Khrushchev's own power, rather than policy disputes, seems to be the basic consideration in Serov's ouster.

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(II. ASIA-AFRICA

The Iraqi Situation

Iraqi Prime Minister Qasim announced over the Baghdad radio on 8 December that "a serious plot" to overthrow his regime on the night of 9-10 December had been uncovered. Qasim accused local "corrupt elements and foreigners" of being at the bottom of the plot. Qasim said nothing about the nationality of the foreigners, but Radio Cairo quickly charged they were Americans. The Iraqi prime minister added that the "evidence, and the money and the arms" used to carry out the plot "are now in our possession."

Qasim moved against suspected elements about 7 December when he ousted the director of police and forced the resignation of the director of military intelligence. On 8 December two of the plotters' principal contact men with UAR agents in Baghdad were arrested [REDACTED]. On 7 December Qasim had a long conference in Baghdad with the commander of the 2nd Division, stationed at Kirkuk. Several weeks ago this officer expressed his uneasiness over the increasing Communist direction of the government and intimated that he and the other divisional commanders would take action to remove Qasim around 10 December if Qasim did not crack down on the Communists.

About an hour prior to the Baghdad radio announcement, UAR agents in Baghdad informed Cairo that the conspiracy would proceed as planned, despite the arrest of the two contact men. It is still possible that disgruntled elements in southern Iraq may proceed with a tribal revolt as planned. It is also possible that an attempt may be made to assassinate Qasim, whose office has appeared to be infiltrated by antiregime elements. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Sudan Seeks Broad American Aid Program

Foreign Minister Khayr has based his application for a loan on projects whose scope indicates that Sudanese requests for US aid may ultimately reach several hundred million dollars. Khayr requested an initial \$43,050,000 long-term loan for projects which over the next seven years would add over two million acres to the 600,000 already planted in long-staple cotton. He also inquired about the possibility of military aid, the availability of Export-Import Bank loans, US agricultural surpluses, and other forms of American aid.

Khayr explained that Khartoum had discussed loans for these projects with the International Bank but had become discouraged by the bank's insistence on a Nile waters agreement with Egypt as a precondition. He said he was not sure such an agreement could be achieved soon and was fearful that further Sudanese delay on Nile River developments would permit the UAR to encroach further on Sudanese water rights. Khayr's approach to the United States at this time may be designed to test Western support prior to the possible visit of a Soviet economic delegation, previously scheduled for last month and now temporarily postponed.

Since the total cost of the cotton expansion projects is about four times the loan request, Khartoum presumably would consider this only a first installment.

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~~SECRET~~UAR Pressing for Control of All-African Peoples' Conference

Mursi Saad al-Din, Egyptian member of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Secretariat, who appears to be Nasir's principal representative at the current meeting of African nationalist organizations in Accra which ends on 12 December, is making a vigorous effort to bring the conference under UAR control and to secure the adoption of extremist anti-Western resolutions.

Al-Din, with the help of a Pravda correspondent and other Sino-Soviet bloc personnel present in Accra in various capacities, is endeavoring to persuade the delegates to pass an uncompromising resolution "guaranteeing" to expel or destroy all "colonialists."

[redacted] he has lined up the delegates from all French African territories--most of whom, however, are apparently not representative of dominant political elements in their homelands--in support of his position and against the more moderate stand favored by Ghana's Prime Minister Nkrumah, who promoted the gathering. Nkrumah seeks a resolution recommending Gandhi-style passive resistance and nonviolence.

Al-Din has approached at least one African--a moderate nationalist observer from Angola--with an offer of arms, other supplies, and trained leaders to assist in an armed uprising against the Portuguese in Angola. Al-Din made this approach with the assistance of Felix Moumie, exiled leader of the Communist-influenced Union of the Cameroun People, which has been waging guerrilla warfare in Cameroun since 1955. Both Al-Din and Moumie, who is financed by the UAR, are reported to have sharply criticized Nkrumah and predicted the early end of his career as a pan-African leader.

Nkrumah, who hopes the conference will enhance his own prestige but not alienate the West, has restricted the Solidarity Secretariat's delegation, including a Peiping representative, to observer status, largely excluded extremists from the steering committee, and apparently blocked the seating of Moumie as an official delegate. In his opening address, Nkrumah pointedly warned against a new colonialism "in a different guise"--a reference presumably aimed at the USSR. [redacted]

[redacted]

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III. THE WEST

Adenauer-Macmillan Meeting

In response to an urgent request from Chancellor Adenauer, Prime Minister Macmillan has reluctantly agreed to a 12 December meeting in London, probably to discuss Berlin. A high-level Foreign Office official feels that the meeting is "premature," and Macmillan fears such a meeting might create an impression of undue anxiety.

British officials feel that Adenauer is motivated by his suspicions of British "softness" on Berlin. Adenauer is attempting to determine to what extent London might make European disengagement the basis for high-level talks with Moscow.

The chancellor has apparently taken a new position which calls for a solution of the Berlin question without linking it to broader negotiations on the German problem or European security. He will probably attempt to enlist Macmillan's support for this approach prior to the 14 December meeting of the British, American, French, and West German foreign ministers in Paris.

Adenauer's preference for separating Berlin from any general East-West talks has led to the collapse of the limited bipartisan policy with the Social Democrats in Bonn. In his 6 December Berlin election speech Adenauer was sharply critical of SPD leaders for their advocacy of European security plans. The SPD, however, will probably interpret its West Berlin victory on 7 December as a mandate to proceed with its disengagement proposals.

British officials feel that Adenauer has gone too far in his criticism of West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt. Brandt may follow up his election success with further attacks on Bonn's "inflexibility" in opposing negotiations on Berlin within the context of a German and European settlement.

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Early French Nuclear Explosion Rumored

A French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) scientist who spent the week of 25 November at the modern-weapons testing ground at Colomb Bechar in the Sahara reportedly said on his return to Paris that France now has a nuclear device ready for testing but that the government is waiting for the proper psychological moment. He is under alert to return to the Sahara on 24-hour notice. Another CEA official, however, is reported to have stated recently that France would definitely not be in a position to explode an atomic bomb for at least another year because of fissionable material shortages, and a similar view was expressed in mid-September by a CEA scientist who said an early test was not desirable from a scientific point of view.

Because of technical difficulties in operation of the chemical separation plant facilities, France is not believed at this time to have enough usable plutonium to explode a 20- to 40-kiloton device but it is estimated to have enough fissionable material to permit explosion of a crude device.

Political considerations might lead De Gaulle to press for an early explosion, regardless of its scientific merits, as soon as the responsible technicians consider it practicable. One primary consideration would be to anticipate the intensifying world pressure for a cessation of testing. De Gaulle also might hope to use a test to silence army opposition to a relatively liberal Algerian solution, to reinforce his demands for a more authoritative voice in Western councils, and to achieve a position of greater prestige in East-West negotiations.

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~~SECRET~~Situation in Cuba Continues to Deteriorate

The rapid deterioration of the Cuban Government's position has become increasingly apparent since the discovery of a military conspiracy on 27 November. Mounting discontent in the armed forces caused more than 65 officers to defect between 4 and 6 December. Some of the officers reportedly have joined the rebel group operating in the mountains of Las Villas Province in central Cuba, and others have sought asylum in foreign embassies. Some 30 or more junior officers were previously arrested for participation in the conspiracy. Maj. Gen. Martin Diaz Tamayo, former Cuban Army G-3, who has been considered a likely leader of a military junta should President Batista be ousted, was relieved of his command and subsequently resigned from the army after the conspiracy, although he was apparently not directly involved.

The expanding rebel movement, which has consolidated its control over almost all of Oriente Province and has challenged the government's position in two other eastern provinces, is again reported planning to establish a provisional government in Oriente. Previous plans to constitute a government failed to materialize--most recently in late September--but the rebels have so improved their position that the attempt may now actually be made. Manuel Urrutia Lleo, Fidel Castro's choice for president, is reported [redacted] to be en route from Caracas, Venezuela, to Castro's headquarters in the Sierra Maestra.

President Batista extended the suspension of constitutional guarantees for 45 days on 7 December and requested additional powers under a "state of national emergency," which is expected to be approved on 9 December. [redacted]

[redacted]

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~~SECRET~~Venezuelan Election Results

Unofficial Venezuelan election returns--based on about 85 percent of the total estimated vote as of 2300 hours EST on 8 December--indicate that Romulo Betancourt, chief of the left-ist Democratic Action party (AD), has won the presidency by a substantial margin over former junta president Admiral Wolfgang Larrazabal. Rafael Caldera, the Christian Democratic candidate, ran a weak third. A preliminary count also indicates that the Venezuelan Communist party, one of three supporting Larrazabal, will poll only about 4 percent of the total vote. Pro-Larrazabal students demonstrated in Caracas on 8 December, in protest against Betancourt's lead.

The three presidential candidates formally agreed on 6 December to respect the election outcome and to establish a coalition government with a minimum reform program which would include: extension of control over the foreign-owned oil industry and an increased government share in the existing 50-50 profit sharing formula with the oil companies; a similar revision of government relations with the two US-owned iron-mining companies in Venezuela; development of a national oil enterprise with its own tanker fleet; and establishment of diplomatic and commercial relations with "all nations." The last provision, publicly voiced by each of the three candidates, clearly suggests that formal ties will be considered with one or more Soviet bloc countries.

The declaration is probably designed to reassure the public that multiparty unity remains intact despite electoral competition and to remind dissident military elements of civilian strength against a coup attempt.

Betancourt's victory reportedly may somewhat increase the possibility of a coup attempt because of the traditional military hostility toward him and his party. Such a move, however, apparently does not at present have the organized backing of a majority of the armed forces necessary for its success. Nevertheless, disturbances such as those touched off by the pro-Larrazabal students in the capital could get out of hand and lead to armed forces intervention.

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LATE ITEM

Bedouin Coup Reported Imminent in Jordan

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] an attempt by the important Bani Sakhir Bedouin faction to seize control of the government appeared imminent -- possibly as early as 9 December. The coup reportedly would involve the arrest of Prime Minister Rifai and officers of rival factions in the army and the installation of Bani Sakhir leaders in key government positions. Reports are in conflict as to whether King Husayn would be retained.

Until now the Bani Sakhir faction has formed the main source of King Husayn's support in the army; it controls the army's armored brigade, several infantry units, and tribal auxiliaries which it has trained and armed. The commander of the armored brigade on 5 December moved two tank regiments from their camp in East Jordan into the Jordan Valley, and possibly to the eastern outskirts of Jerusalem, without proper coordination with the army headquarters staff. Deputy Chief of Staff Shara, a member of a rival officer group, expressed misgivings on 8 December, adding that the tanks might be used to intimidate the population in West Jordan in conjunction with a Bani Sakhir move in Amman.

Although the Bani Sakhir group has been the chief prop of the monarchy, its key role has increased the ambitions of the leaders, who may now fear that their power is destined to be reduced by the lifting of martial law and proposed reforms in the army. On 4 December the King admitted he was disturbed by reports that this previously loyal group was plotting against the regime in conjunction with unidentified elements in Syria and Saudi Crown Prince Faysal. Increased Saudi activity among the Bani Sakhir has been reported in recent months.

The Bedouin may also want to see Amman disengage itself from West Jordan and its burdensome refugee population. Any significant change in the status quo in this area could invite an Israeli advance into West Jordan. [redacted]

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Executive Offices of the White House

Special Assistant for National Security Affairs

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