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10 December 1960

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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10 DECEMBER 1960

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Soviet central committee plenum postponement may indicate some indecision at the top level on how to treat certain issues closely tied to success of Khrushchev's policies.

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Czechoslovakia may provide arms for Ethiopian gendarmerie.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Situation in Laos.

③

Government reacts firmly to demonstrations during De Gaulle visit to Algeria.

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10 December 1960

DAILY BRIEF**I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC**

USSR: The unprecedented announcement that the Soviet central committee plenum scheduled for 13 December has been put off until January may reflect Khrushchev's desire for additional time, particularly in view of his current illness, to prepare for the high party gathering. This step comes on the heels of the prolonged Moscow conference of Communist parties, which discussed Sino-Soviet differences, and at a time when there are signs that important changes in agricultural administration are being contemplated. The postponement, therefore, may be indicative of some element of indecision at the top level of the Soviet Government on how these issues closely tied to the success of Khrushchev's policies should be treated at the plenum.

Bloc-Ethiopia: Czechoslovakia is negotiating with Ethiopia concerning the supply of 15,000 rifles and 4,500,000 rounds of ammunition,

the rifles are a German-designed World War II model. They may be destined for the gendarmerie, which is poorly equipped at present. Earlier this year, Soviet offers to provide substantial amounts of arms for the Imperial Bodyguard and the gendarmerie were turned down by Haile Selassie.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Laos: Premier Souvanna Phouma has flown with six cabinet members to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. His further intentions are not clear. The Vientiane area remains in a state of confusion, with Captain Kong Le still in control of the city itself and with forces loyal to Colonel Kouprasith and General

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Phoumi establishing a defense perimeter around Camp Chinaimo, a few miles to the south of the city. Captain Kong Le issued a blistering statement over Vientiane radio on 9 December attacking Phoumi and the "US imperialists and their Thai agents" in terms virtually indistinguishable from those used by the Communists. [redacted] (Page 2)

*Algeria: President de Gaulle arrived in western Algeria on 9 December for a six-day tour in an atmosphere of considerable hostility. Violence and strikes erupted in Algiers and Oran. The government was prepared for trouble and has reacted firmly. By the evening of 8 December extraordinary measures had been taken, including detention of known agitators, searching of Europeans' automobiles, and surveillance of airfields. The reinforced security police had orders to fire if necessary. On 9 December, both in Oran and Algiers, the security police were effectively assisted by mechanized army units, although the government had apparently hoped to avoid using the army. Although there were general strikes in Algiers and elsewhere, no public buildings or essential utilities have been captured by the demonstrators. The government has announced that most of the 400 demonstrators arrested will be sent to internment camps. This action, coupled with the apparent lack of leadership among the rioters--the leaders of the Front for Free Algeria have "disappeared," and there are no indications that Pierre Lagaille's arrival in Algeria is imminent--may make it difficult for the rightists to regroup. [redacted]

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DAILY BRIEF

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~~SECRET~~ [redacted]Czech Arms for Ethiopia

[redacted] negotiations are in progress with the Ethiopian Government involving the supply of 15,000 rifles and 4,500,000 rounds of ammunition. The rifles are not the standard military model which the Czechs have supplied the Cubans, but the German-designed Mauser 7.92, a World War II rifle. This would suggest they are destined for the gendarmerie rather than the Imperial Bodyguard or the army.

Haile Selassie has been seeking for some time to acquire arms for the poorly equipped gendarmerie. However, Soviet offers in the spring of this year to supply arms--including tanks--for the Imperial Bodyguard and the gendarmerie were turned down by the Emperor, largely because of a US promise to increase its military assistance to Ethiopia.

If this arms deal is consummated, it will be the first time the Ethiopian armed forces have received aid from a non-Western nation since 1948, when Prague supplied some weapons, including tanks and mortars. Last year Czechoslovakia granted Ethiopia a line of credit of \$10,000,000 under which military equipment could be acquired. Haile Selassie has relied almost entirely on United States assistance in equipping his army and bodyguard, and American aid to the police is under negotiation. [redacted]

[redacted]

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~~SECRET~~The Situation in Laos

[In the face of the mounting confusion in the Vientiane area, Premier Souvanna Phouma, members of his family and six of his ministers on 9 December took refuge in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Press accounts of his arrival in Phnom Penh attribute Souvanna's flight to expectations that a major struggle for control of the capital was imminent between the Communist-dominated Pathet Lao and rightist forces led by Col. Kouprasith. Souvanna earlier in the day had told [redacted] that he was powerless to head off impending armed strife and that he planned to fly to Phnom Penh at the first sign of a clash between Kong Le's forces in Vientiane and those of Kouprasith, located a few miles south of the town at Camp Chinaimo.]

[No fighting has apparently occurred as yet, but Kong Le's paratroopers are reported to have established themselves in a blocking position on the road between Vientiane and Camp Chinaimo. [redacted] estimates that this position is manned by about 100-150 of Kong Le paratroopers, supported by 4 armored cars and an M-24 tank. He estimates that Kouprasith's force at Chinaimo consists of about 1,300 men, including 200 paratroopers taken from the pro-Phoumi garrison at Luang Prabang.]

[In an interview with [redacted] on 9 December, Kouprasith expressed concern over his ability to defend his area, running from Chinaimo south to the Mekong River boundary between Laos and Thailand. He fears that the Pathet Lao may attack, either alone or in conjunction with Kong Le. Kouprasith stated that he did not at this point intend to move toward Vientiane, but was uncertain what Kong Le would do.]

[Kouprasith will shortly receive reinforcements from Phoumi, including possibly another company of paratroopers and infantry elements drawn from the Phoumi force which took Pak Sane on 8 December. Thai Premier Sarit has reportedly granted Phoumi permission to move these troops toward Vientiane on the Thai side of the river. [redacted] pro-Phoumi forces in Luang Prabang have been ordered to mount an offensive against Vientiane as soon as possible; the resultant weakening of the Luang Prabang garrison would make it more vulnerable to any attack by Vientiane or Pathet Lao forces.]

[The nineteen National Assembly deputies who slipped off to Chinaimo before Kouprasith's coup on 8 December are now en]

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route to Savannakhet from Udorn, Thailand. With about an equal number of deputies already in Savannakhet, there is now an assembly quorum making possible a vote of no confidence against the Souvanna government.

Souvanna's intentions are unclear. Should he choose not to resign, from his safe haven in Phnom Penh he could conceivably challenge the legality of any assembly vote in Savannakhet on the ground that it was taken under duress. For some weeks, he has publicly been on record that his government would not recognize any action taken by King Savang in view of the fact that Phoumi's rebel committee controlled Luang Prabang. He might thus attempt to continue his government in exile and seek to focus international attention on his predicament, either through a UN appeal or through some other action.

There have been indications that the bloc may try to get the Laotian situation before an international forum. On 7 December Soviet Ambassador Abramov intimated an appeal would be made to the UN Security Council and on 8 December North Vietnam issued an official statement possibly intended to provide background for any such move. In this statement, Hanoi charged that US-Thai "intervention" in Laos "threatens the security" of North Vietnam and called on participants of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina to "adopt effective measures to check US imperialism." Moscow promptly rebroadcast a summary of this statement which, like those before it, also may be intended to cast an air of foreboding over the Laotian situation in hopes of discouraging support for Phoumi.

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