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MAGSAYSAY'S PROSPECTS AS AN ASIAN LEADER

- I Ramon Magsaysay, to be inaugurated as Philippine president on 30 December, already being assessed as a possible leader of an anti-Communist Asian coalition.
- A. His popular appeal, at least in the Philippines, already proven.
 - B. As defense secretary, he demonstrated capacity to get things done despite great obstacles.
 - C. Most American officials in Manila and Washington are "sold" on Magsaysay, but some remain skeptical because of his inexperience in broader governmental field, let alone international field.
 - D. Already Rhee and Chiang have been secretly extending feelers in his direction to lead an Asian defense alliance. They would, of course, hope to form the nucleus of any coalition and exert behind-the-scenes control.
- II Seems probable that at least for the short term Magsaysay's popularity has reached its peak, and may decline. There is almost certain to be some disillusionment as he wrestles with problems insoluble on short-term basis.
- A. Land tenure problems, basis of Huk appeal, defied solution during American rule.
 - 1. Real attacks on the problem will meet strong resistance of Nacionalista old-guard.
 - B. Magsaysay will inherit almost empty treasury.
 - C. Unemployment has been growing in Manila as result of decline in value of exports, reduced US aid.
 - D. Magsaysay may have to face a further reduction in US aid.
 - 1. FOA aid this year is \$16 1/2 million; FOA proposed 15 million for coming year, and State upped this figure to 25 million. The Budget Bureau is now thinking in terms of only 10 million.

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2. If Magsaysay gets less US aid than Quirino did, it would be a heavy blow to his prestige.

E. Governmental corruption has become endemic and cannot be immediately eliminated simply by a change at the top.

III It will probably take him a minimum of six months to establish his capacity to meet domestic problems, assuming he has it.

A. To branch into wider fields, he must have support of his reactionary party colleagues.

1. In the past they have shown little interest in international cooperation, have even shown a streak of anti-Americanism.
2. On the international plane, he will be competing with Romulo, who regards himself as the only Filipino capable in such matters; Romulo might take his Democratic supporters into opposition, thus complicating achievement of Magsaysay's domestic program.

IV Of Asian leaders, apparently only Rhee and Chiang are looking to Magsaysay for leadership.

A. Association with these two would queer any appeal that Magsaysay has for Burmese and Indonesians. Latter already reported to regard talk of Magsaysay as Asian leader as presumptuous.

1. Fact is, in eyes of Burmese and Indonesians any Filipino is suspected to be American puppet.
2. Magsaysay's label as "American candidate" did not help to alleviate suspicion.

V Would seem best chance for Magsaysay as Asian leader would be to move slowly.

A. If he can establish Philippines as truly independent and going concern in Southeast Asian eyes, suspicions may be overcome.

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- B. First moves toward coalition should probably be economic and cultural, rather than military.
- C. Eventually, ties of this nature might lead to defensive alliance.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

- I He was born the son of a school teacher of little means in 1907. As a youth, he studied engineering for 4 years at the University of the Philippines.
- II After school, during the depression, he became a mechanic in a bus company. By 1941 he had risen to become the company's manager.
- III When the Japanese took over, he became a guerrilla leader with several thousand troops under him.
- IV MacArthur appointed him military governor of Zambales province when the war ended.
- V In 1946, he was elected to the Philippine House as a Liberal Party representative. Later he headed the committee on National Defense and visited the US twice.
- VI Quirino appointed him secretary of defense in 1950.
- VII It was as secretary of defense that Magsaysay rose to fame.
 - A. With US advice and equipment he forged an effective Philippine combat force and broke the backs of the Communist Huks.
 - B. He also gained much prestige by a resettlement project on Mindanao for defeated Huks.
 - C. But he became disgusted with the corruption of Quirino's regime and resigned last February.
- VIII On 28 April this year he accepted a Nacionalista Party offer to run as its candidate for president.
 - A. He put on an exhausting campaign which won the support of the youth and peasants of the Philippines.
 - B. On 10 November he defeated Quirino by about 2 1/2 to 1.
- IX Magsaysay is regarded as completely honest and extremely vigorous. He is blunt and appeals to the "little man."
 - A. He shows keen interest in establishing democracy and social welfare in his country. Although lacking in experience in governmental affairs, he has a quick grasp of complicated problems

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- B. He is extremely pro-American and anti-Communist and is more interested in results than methods.
- C. He neither smokes nor drinks, saying he has been too busy all his life to acquire "these modern habits."

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