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5 January 1956

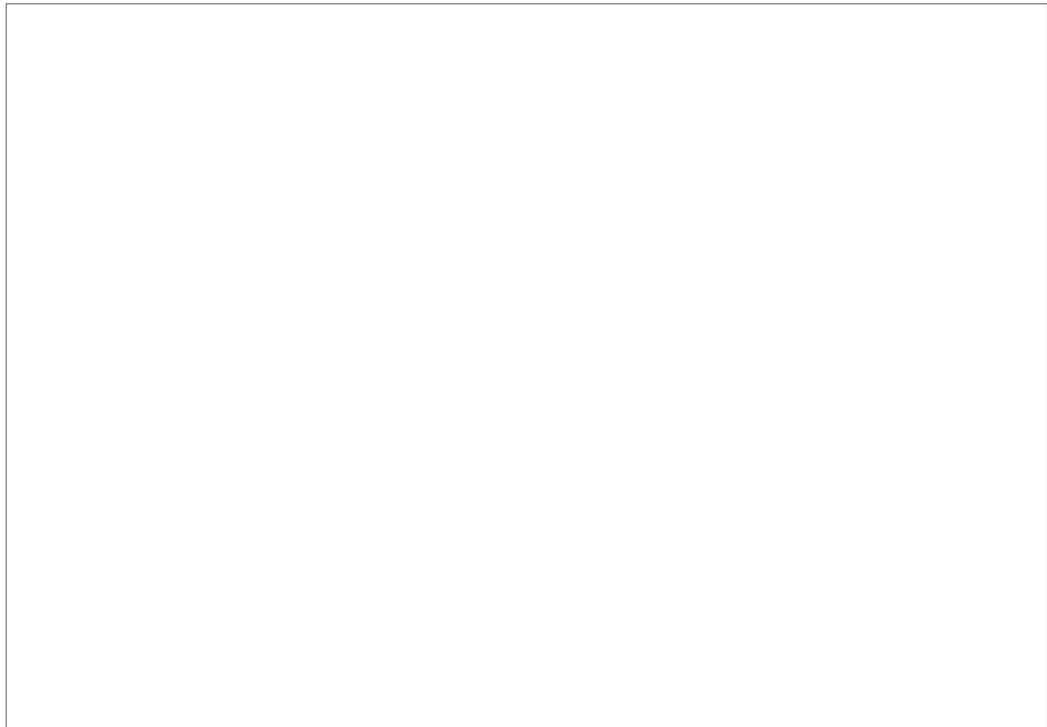


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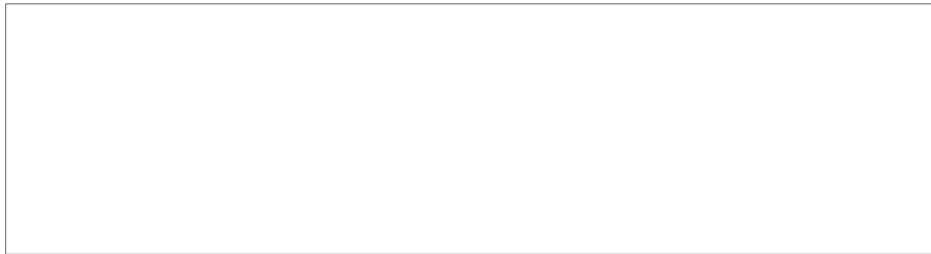
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1. USSR REPORTEDLY ASKS LIBYA FOR USE OF AIRSTRIP

The American embassy in Tripoli comments that these airstrips are numerous and that most of them would need only minor repairs to handle aircraft up to Dakota size. The ostensible purpose of the airstrip would be to provide unrestricted access for Soviet planes ferrying diplomatic personnel, their supplies, equipment, etc. It could also be used to observe United States air force and British army operations and for actively supporting the North African nationalists. In the absence of any evidence to confirm or deny [redacted] the American embassy views it "with considerable reservation."

Comment

Libya is dependent on payments it receives from Britain and the United States in return for base rights. If the USSR has made such a request in connection with establishment of its diplomatic mission in Libya, Prime Minister Ben Halim may see an opportunity for further bargaining with the West. Ben Halim has indicated that he believes Egypt successfully maneuvered the West into an offer of financial aid for its high dam project.

2. ETHIOPIA MAKES OIL AGREEMENT WITH
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Comment

Communist exports of petroleum are prominent in Moscow's trade with underdeveloped countries. In the first six months of 1955, Ethiopian-Soviet bloc trade amounted only to about \$100,000.

The Czechs have shown increasing economic interest in Ethiopia by their large trade mission and by their expensive exhibit at the Jubilee Fair in November.

Communist interest in Africa has increased recently as demonstrated by the Soviet Union's diplomatic representation in Libya and its request for similar privileges in Liberia. (Concurred in by ORR)

3. PARAGUAYAN POLITICAL TENSION INCREASES

[REDACTED] There are numerous indications of continued uncertainty in the Paraguayan politico-military situation, according to Ambassador Ageton in Asuncion.

Troops were confined to barracks over the holiday and chauffeurs assigned to foreign military missions have been recalled for Paraguayan army use.

The reported leader of the abortive army-police rebellion on 21 December, Epifanio Mendez Fleitas, Central Bank president and a leader of the ruling Colorado Party, has resumed energetic political activity. Moreover, the two military commanders involved in the conspiracy have been freed and no action has been taken against Police Chief Ortega, who was also involved. The selection of replacements for these men is a source of friction between the army and the Colorado Party.

Top Communist leaders, including Oscar Creydt and Obdulio Barthe, have reappeared in Asuncion, but the government is hesitant to take action against them at this time because of its distrust of Ortega's police. Ageton comments that the current political confusion offers the Communists an opportunity for advantageous political maneuvering.

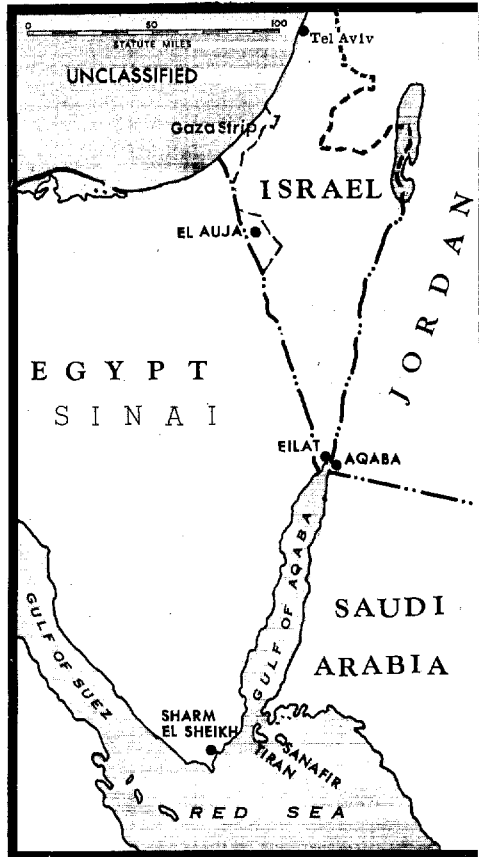
Comment

President Stroessner's hesitancy in acting against the Mendez group probably reflects his uncertainty as to the extent of Mendez' support in the army. Stroessner is also being pressed by Argentina to get rid of this pro-Peron group.

While Ortega is not known to be a Communist, he has protected Communist friends, and the Communists are so well placed in the police that few surprise raids against Communists can be made. [REDACTED]

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 4 January)



5 JANUARY 1956

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No significant military activity has been reported.

High Israeli officials in Tel Aviv have urgently requested American help in obtaining delivery of "at least" the 12 Mark IV Mystere jet planes which Israel has on order in France. According to the American embassy, the fear of Egyptian air superiority and the possibility that Egypt might bomb Israeli cities have brought "near panic"

in some quarters and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion is reportedly "extremely nervous and upset over it."

Ambassador Lawson believes that the Israeli government has made a "sober reappraisal" of the raid at Lake Tiberias on 11-12 December and that similar raids are unlikely in the future. The British ambassador also believes that Israel is not at the moment contemplating aggressive action.

negotiations for procurement

of arms from the Soviet bloc were continuing, and that tentative arrangements had been made for delivery in January of 2,000 small arms. Additional deliveries were scheduled to be completed in March. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It is not clear at this time whether or not Syria has contracted for the more important items [REDACTED] some 60 T-34 medium tanks complete with replacement parts, 40,000 shells and 2,000,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition. [REDACTED]