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31 October 1960

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CENTRAL

INTELLIGENCE

BULLETIN



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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DAILY BRIEF

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USSR: The Soviet party central committee is scheduled to meet on 13 December to consider agricultural matters, according to a TASS announcement. Soviet agricultural production has for the second straight year been well below the annual levels required to meet the Seven-Year Plan goals. The December meeting will undoubtedly review proposals for improving the organization of agricultural management, and may signal a shake-up in agricultural leadership. It may also consider other matters, particularly the results of the meetings of Communist bloc leaders scheduled for November.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Laos: The Pathet Lao is demanding participation in a coalition government as one of its major conditions in the peace talks with the Vientiane government, according to one of the government negotiators. Souvanna Phouma, in a recent conversation with the American ambassador, gave the impression that he had not ruled out Pathet participation in an expanded government of national union. Soviet Ambassador Abramov, meanwhile, has left

OK

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Vientiane for his resident post in Phnom Penh, and has stated he does not intend to return to Vientiane for several weeks.

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El Salvador: Military elements opposed to the six-man junta which assumed power following the 26 October ouster of President Lemus are planning to stage a coup within the next few days, according to sources of the US Embassy in San Salvador. The US Army attaché there reported on 28 October that the junta continued to appear in complete control, but added that even an abortive new coup attempt could result in considerable bloodshed. The embassy, in commenting on the junta's appointments to government positions and the return to El Salvador since 26 October of many Communist and pro-Communist student and labor leaders, notes that these "further strengthen the far-left, pro-Castro tinge of the new government." OK

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DAILY BRIEF

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Situation in Laos

[Minister of Finance Inpeng, a member of the Laotian Government negotiating team in the peace talks with the Pathet Lao now in progress in Vientiane, states that the Pathets now are specifying participation in a coalition government as one of their major conditions for a settlement. In previous sessions of the talks, the Pathets had seemed to soft-pedal demands for participation in a coalition government while concentrating on appeals for joint military action against Phoumi. It is possible that they have taken Vientiane's lack of aggressiveness toward Savannakhet to indicate an eventual reconciliation between the two, and are therefore entering their bid for a place in any government of national unity which might result.]

[Premier Souvanna Phouma, in a recent conversation with Ambassador Brown in Vientiane, indicated willingness to reorganize his government to include Phoumi partisans, but not Phoumi himself, if the Savannakhet Revolutionary Committee was dissolved--a move which Phoumi has thus far shown little disposition to make. Souvanna added that this might be followed by inclusion of one or two members of the Neo Lao Hak Sat (NLHS), the Pathet Lao's legal political front, to make the resulting government one of national union. Souvanna later qualified his remarks by saying that NLHS inclusion in the government was merely one "conception" which might lead to a comprehensive solution of the crisis in Laos.]

[Soviet Ambassador Abramov and his party left Vientiane on 28 October to return to Abramov's resident post in Phnom Penh as ambassador to Cambodia. Prior to departure, members of the party told Brown that Abramov would return in a few weeks but that there were no plans for the establishment of a resident staff in Vientiane at least until next year.]

[The possibility of renewed attacks by Vientiane forces, possibly in collaboration with the Pathet Lao, on Phoumi's forces between Pak Sane and Thakhek continues to be the subject of conflicting reports. The principal indicator of any build-up for attacks on Phoumi has been reports of the movement of a sizable number of trucks.]

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[southward from Vientiane. The American Army attaché in Vientiane does not believe there is yet sufficient evidence to support the thesis of a heavy build-up of the forces of Captain Kong Le and the Pathet Lao for an attack southward toward Thakhek.]

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[a recent reconnaissance by a company of Phoumi's troops revealed nothing of significance. The Vientiane forces were reported to be digging defensive positions north of the Ca Dinh River. The vulnerability of Phoumi's force to an attack is suggested, however, [that Phoumi's commanders at Thakhek are defensive minded, lacking the stomach to fight.]

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[A four-day Buddhist festival--That Luang--beginning on 1 November and during which all government offices will be closed may provide a much-needed lull in which the various figures in the present conflict can reassess their positions. On the other hand, any of the parties involved might use the lull to take surprise action--for example, a renewed offensive by Kong Le against Phoumi or even a coup d'etat against the Souvanna government.]

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Countercoup in El Salvador May Be Attempted

An attempt may be made within a few days to unseat the six-man junta which assumed power in El Salvador following the ouster of President Jose Maria Lemus on 26 October, according to US Embassy sources. Military elements believed to be involved in the plot are reportedly led by General Manuel Cordova, army chief of staff under the Lemus regime and a reputed intriguer. While General Cordova is not believed to have a strong personal following, it is likely that he would be supported in a coup attempt by some military units outside the capital.

The US Army attaché in San Salvador reported on 28 October that the junta's control of the government continued to appear firm and he noted a widespread feeling among both civilians and the military that no countercoup would be attempted. He added, however, that a force of 200 men, 25 staff officers, and sufficient arms and ammunition were available in the capital for use by the dissidents, and even an abortive attempt to oust the present government could result in considerable bloodshed.

The alleged countercoup plans of the military group possibly are connected with recent indications that the new Salvadoran Government may be more tolerant of leftist activities than its predecessor was. On 27 October a number of exiled Communists and pro-Communists--including such figures as Jorge Shafik Handall, a well-known Communist in the national university in 1957, and Juan Jose Vides, a Salvadoran Communist party official in 1956--were permitted to return to El Salvador. In commenting on 28 October about a series of new appointments by the junta of leftists to high positions in the government, the US Embassy described the move as further strengthening "the far-left, pro-Castro tinge of the new government."

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