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1. FRENCH ELECTIONS INCREASE PARLIAMENTARY INSTABILITY

Comment on:



The 50-percent increase in Communist representation in the French National Assembly and the unexpected success of the extreme right Poujade antitax candidates in the 2 January elections rule out the possibility of a stable majority when the assembly convenes on 19 January.

While the extremists of both right and left will control about the same percentage of seats as in 1951, the center is more widely split, and the bitterness of the electoral campaign will make agreement on a government coalition difficult. Under attack from both extremes, the center parties will be obliged to rely on majorities whose composition will fluctuate depending on the issue.

The urgency of the Algerian problem will probably force the Faure-Pinay coalition to reach some compromise with the Mendes-France forces. There are indications that influential members of Pinay's Independent-Peasant bloc want to try to bring the Socialists into the government to discourage any attempt to form a popular front with the Communists. The increase in the Socialists' popular vote has fostered a rumor that President Coty will ask them to make the first attempt to form a government.

The Poujade group picked up even more seats than its leader claimed during the campaign. Its deputies will probably be a source of disorder when the assembly convenes, but they will probably be isolated as the

Gaullists were in 1951. The right wing of the Faure-Pinay forces can be expected eventually to try to influence them to work with the government.

The wide range of views on key issues--Algeria, government subsidies to industry and agriculture, aid to church schools, European integration and defense spending--will continue to plague any center coalition; and both Communists and Poujadists will be in a position to exploit these differences. [redacted]

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2. VIET MINH CONGRATULATES LAOS ON ADMISSION TO UN

The Viet Minh has sent a message congratulating Laos on its admission to the United Nations, [redacted]

Ambassador Yost points out that this gesture is "at least curious," coming concurrently with violent Hanoi radio attacks on the Laotian government and with the increased preoccupation of Chinese Communist propaganda with the improved American position in Laos.

The ambassador sees a possibility that Viet Minh premier Pham Van Dong will re-extend an invitation--first brought up at Bandung--for Laotian premier Katay to visit Hanoi. Yost believes Katay might accept such an invitation.

Comment The Viet Minh's congratulatory message may have been intended to cause confusion in Vientiane over the government's policy toward the Communists and possibly to underscore, for the Laotians, the Soviet role in the success of their UN bid.

In addition, with the government having successfully held its elections for a national assembly and with Pathet Lao morale reportedly low, the Communists may feel it advisable to lay the groundwork for a possible shift in policy. They are in a position to offer a superficially attractive deal involving an agreement to disband the Pathet Lao armed forces in return for Communist participation in the government.

3. LIBERIA CONSIDERING SOVIET OFFER TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

President Tubman of Liberia informed Ambassador Jones on 2 January that he "cannot afford to reject" the Soviet Union's proposal for the exchange of diplomatic representatives informally advanced by its delegation now in Liberia for the presidential inauguration. Tubman said that in replying to the Russians, he would offer to request legislative authorization and to "give consideration to their request as soon as an appropriation is available."

Comment

Some high Liberian officials were reported in September to be considering the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR, but Tubman recently expressed his determination to resist any Soviet move in this direction.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 3 January)

No significant military activity on the Arab-Israeli borders has been reported. Israel claims that Egyptians opened fire on Israeli patrols and that two Egyptian Vampire jets violated Israeli air space in the Gaza area on 2 January. These are daily events, according to the American army attaché in Tel Aviv.

The same attaché reported that on 1 January an unidentified "brigade" was observed in the process of receiving combat equipment and departing by bus for an unknown destination. He suggests that this unit may have been called up for routine training or rotation purposes.

The attaché also reports that an Israeli broadcast of 31 December announced that conscripts "with letters A to K inclusive" were to report on 1 January 1956 instead of 1 April as originally scheduled. This acceleration of call-ups may be in line with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's announcement on 2 January that another year had been added to the military draft period of 2-1/2 years' service.

In reviewing his government's foreign and defense policy before the Knesset on 2 January, Ben-Gurion warned that war could break out at any time. He also stated that Israel would not give up the principle of retaliation for Arab incursions on Israel's frontiers. (Press)

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[redacted] an initial contingent of Egyptian naval officers has left for training in the Soviet bloc--probably in Poland--and a larger group of naval personnel is scheduled to go very soon. Delivery from the Soviet bloc to Egypt of a small number of destroyers, submarines, motor torpedo boats and mine-sweepers may follow completion of this training.