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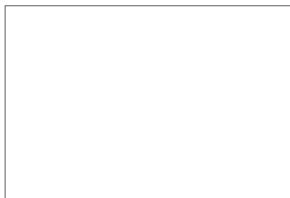
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NOTE:

GENERAL**1. Communists at Geneva to emphasize foreign troop withdrawal from Korea:**

Communist negotiators at Panmunjom told [redacted] on 19 February that the purpose of the Geneva conference is to arrange the speedy withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea and that all Chinese troops will be withdrawn.

The Communists also indicated they might submit a unification proposal calling for a provisional government based on a joint assembly of the North and South Korean legislatures. They conceded, however, that the selection of a head of state for a unified Korea would be "extremely difficult."

[redacted] expressed the opinion that the Communists are interested in unification only on their own terms and that in the event of withdrawal of foreign troops they would attempt to take over South Korea "by infiltration, subversion, and disorder."

Comment: The standard Communist position is that the Korean problem should be settled by the Koreans themselves after all foreign troops have withdrawn. By pressing for immediate withdrawal, and by opposing attempts to make it contingent on unification, the Communists would be in a good position to impede discussion of unification at Geneva.

An agreement on joint withdrawals would offer the Communists substantial advantages, both by ridding the northeast Asian mainland of American troops and by reducing international pressure for a negotiated unification of Korea.

FAR EAST**2. Rhee assumes direct control of new Joint Chiefs of Staff:**

Seoul radio on 18 February broadcast changes in a presidential order which place the new Joint Chiefs of Staff under direct command of President Rhee. In the original concept, the JCS was subordinate to the defense minister.

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Comment: This move places the top military organ firmly in Rhee's hands, and is in keeping with the president's recent maneuvers to gain greater control over the army. The order may also be an effort to offset the political ambitions of the new army chief of staff, General Chong Il-kwon.

Recent top-level command changes by Rhee complicate the chain of command and may make it more difficult for the United Nations Command to control the South Korean army.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

3. General Navarre sees his plan proceeding on schedule:

In a briefing for Governor Stassen on 20 February, General Navarre stated that the schedule and scope of his plan were unaffected by recent military developments in Laos. He said that he had expected the present campaign season to be difficult since the opposing forces are more or less in balance, but he anticipated that his present clearing operations would enable him to throw an expanded force against the Viet Minh next fall.

Navarre said the enemy could not attack Luang Prabang with any chance of success and that it would suffer heavy losses if it were to strike at Muong Sai. In view of their supply difficulties, Navarre "felt rather certain" that Viet Minh forces would be recalled from northern Laos to attack Dien Bien Phu.

Comment: Navarre's estimate regarding prospects for the future is in accord with others he has made recently. Early reports of a press conference on 19 February (see item 4 of Current Intelligence Bulletin, 20 February) stated, apparently erroneously, that Navarre had been pessimistic and had said that he did not expect to be able to inflict decisive defeat on the Viet Minh next year.

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4. French officials say Ho Chi Minh still alive:



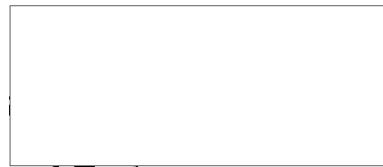
They base their conviction, however, solely on Viet Minh radio statements of Ho's presence at key political or propaganda meetings.

The reporting office comments that the veneration of Ho in Viet Minh propaganda both for internal and external consumption continues undiminished, and that in view of the impending Geneva negotiations, it is doubtful that Communist leaders would pursue this build-up if Ho were dead.

Comment: Ho Chi Minh was last seen by a non-Communist in May 1947, but an editor of the New York Daily Worker claims to have interviewed him in March of last year. Ho's public statements are almost invariably broadcast in Morse. In the rare cases of voice broadcasts, it has not been possible to determine whether or not the speaker was actually Ho.

SOUTH ASIA

5. Afghanistan hopes eventually to join Turkish-Pakistani pact:



The Afghan ambassador in Washington stated on 18 February that Afghanistan would wish to join an association such as that now being discussed between Pakistan and Turkey, if and when it settled its differences with Pakistan. The ambassador added, however, that in this event Afghanistan would ask the United States to guarantee its frontiers, since it could not jeopardize its security simply for military aid.

Comment: Afghanistan's 1931 treaty with the USSR, automatically renewed each year, forbids either party to enter a political or military agreement which might be directed against the other. Afghanistan would probably not be willing to denounce or violate this treaty without firm guarantees and substantial foreign military aid.

The Afghans may be expected to continue to explore the possibility of extracting benefits from a Turkish-Pakistani pact, however, and as a result are likely to make additional moves toward settling their Pushtoonistan dispute with Pakistan.

NEAR EAST - AFRICA

6. Egypt offers military aid to Sudan:

President Nagib has announced that Egypt will give the Sudanese defense force five training planes and arms for 1,000 men on the convening on 1 March of the Sudan's first parliament.

Egypt will also offer free military training to Sudanese officers and noncommissioned officers.

Comment: This offer is evidence of Egypt's intention to extend its influence vigorously in the Sudan.

Egypt's efforts to gain prestige with the Sudanese army, a 5,000-man force commanded by British officers, will almost certainly bring strong reactions from Britain.

7. Moroccan terrorists reportedly plan to assassinate sultan:

Security precautions for the sultan's trips outside his palace have been extremely rigid since the Moroccan terrorist attempt on his life last September. The French have recently shown greater optimism on their ability to control terrorism, but the resident general asked the US air force in Morocco to provide six bullet-proof vests not later than 22 February.

A successful attempt on the sultan's life would probably provoke widespread disorders and force the French to undertake a new campaign of repression.

LATIN AMERICA

8. Ousting of Brazilian labor minister by army pressure predicted:

Brazilian president Vargas is expected to dismiss Labor Minister Goulart as a result of army pressure.

The American embassy comments that although the situation remains tense, no disorders are expected.

Comment: Goulart's projected dismissal suggests that Vargas believes that the army, long opposed to the opportunistic labor minister, might now be sufficiently aroused to stage a coup if he were retained. Previously, Vargas, with an eye to the October congressional elections, had supported Goulart's efforts to build mass labor support, even with Communist participation, in order to free the administration from dependence on the army.

While Goulart's dismissal would normally be expected to strengthen Finance Minister Aranha, spokesman for the conservative cabinet members, Vargas' past practice when confronted with serious conflict has been to dismiss the leaders of both factions.

The selection of General Zenobio da Costa to replace War Minister Cardoso probably stems from Cardoso's public espousal of the recent army protest against Goulart. Zenobio is generally regarded as more pro-Vargas and has a considerable following among the junior officers. He is believed favorably disposed toward the United States.

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