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SOVIET UNION

1. American Embassy in Moscow comments on Pravda editorial:

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Ambassador Bohlen reports that Pravda's reply to President Eisenhower's speech and the publication of the speech itself without deletions or attempts to "soften the vigor of the comment on Soviet policies" are unparalleled in Soviet history.

The main purposes of the article, according to the Ambassador, are to avoid the appearance of rejecting the President's peace overtures and to shift back to the West the blame for world tensions and the responsibility for initiating further conversations.

He comments that although the reply may have been timed to coincide with the NATO meeting in Paris, a week could easily have been devoted to its composition. It bears evidence of group workmanship, and does not appear to have been prepared primarily for propaganda purposes.

The American Embassy, in common with members of the diplomatic corps consulted, feels that in the public exchange the United States has come out distinctly the winner.

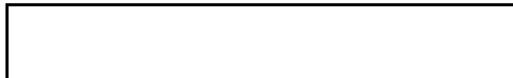
2. Molotov is noncommittal in interview with British Ambassador:

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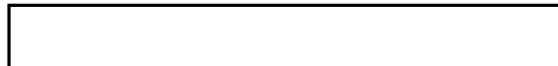
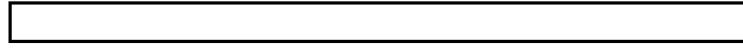
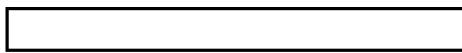
Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov was non-committal on specific issues in his 24 April interview with the British Ambassador. The discussion concerned safe conduct for one British citizen and the Russian wife of another, denunciation by the USSR of the Anglo-Soviet fisheries agreement, the pound-ruble rate, and diplomatic travel restrictions.

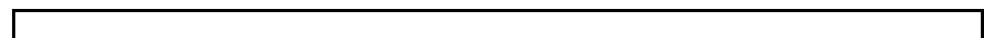
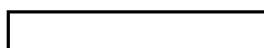
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The British Ambassador received the distinct impression that the new Soviet leadership had not yet considered questions of this type, and that Molotov was clearly unwilling to commit himself to anything which might serve as a precedent for the future.

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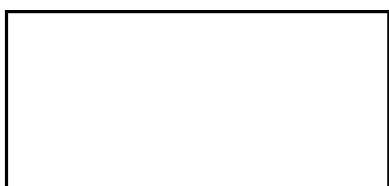




NEAR EAST - AFRICA

6. Progress made toward settlement of Anglo-Saudi Arabian dispute:

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Saudi Arabian acceptance of arbitration as a means of settling its dispute with Britain over the Buraimi oasis is a step forward, according

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to the US Consul General in Dhahran. The Saudis have not specifically referred to "arbitration," but clearly accept it in agreeing "to refer the dispute to a body of competent neutral and unbiased persons."

The Saudi acceptance is embodied in a draft statement agreed on by King Ibn Saud and the British Ambassador in Riyadh; it is still to be approved by London.

Comment: Saudi objection to arbitration and insistence on a plebiscite have been the main obstacles to settling this dispute involving the Trucial Sheikdoms on the Persian Gulf.

The British Foreign Office is cautiously optimistic, even though not completely satisfied with the statement.

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WESTERN EUROPE

8. Bidault believes USSR may permit free all-German elections:

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[Redacted]

At the 25 April tripartite meeting in Paris, French Foreign Minister Bidault said he feared that the Soviet Union may accept the Allied proposals for free all-German elections. This, he warned, would make it difficult for the French Government to deny public demands for accepting the Soviet position that a unified Germany be neutralized.

Bidault urged that the West forestall such a Soviet move by submitting early offers for four-power talks with disarmament first on the agenda, followed by the Austrian and then German questions. A cessation of hostilities in the Far East would be a pre-condition for such talks.

Comment: There has been no hint of a change in the Soviet position on Germany.

The USSR never replied to the Allied proposal of last September calling for a four-power conference to discuss the single issue of the formation of an impartial commission to investigate the feasibility of free all-German elections.

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