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SOVIET UNION

1. Ambassador Bohlen expects new Soviet diplomatic move against German rearment:

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Ambassador Bohlen expects some new Soviet diplomatic maneuver on Germany designed to block German rearment. The maneuver might take the form of an answer to the Western note of 9 September. Bohlen believes, however, that the move may be delayed until the Kremlin can observe developments at the London conference. If these developments appear to indicate that no agreement will be reached, the Soviet government may well consider that continued silence would best serve its purpose. On the other hand, Bohlen believes that if agreement is reached, the USSR may seek to time its maneuver in such a way as to block ratification, particularly in France.

Bohlen reports that there has been no sign of any major shift in the basic Soviet determination to retain control over East Germany at all costs. He warns, however, that the USSR may advance some plan which would give lip service to the principle of free elections without actually agreeing to them, in an effort to confuse and mislead public opinion. He sees a hint of such a step in a Pravda article of 17 August which suggested that the Indochina election formula might be applicable to Germany.

Comment: The Pravda article, which suggested the use of a weak international observation commission for German elections, was reprinted in the French Communist paper L'Humanité on 20 September.

FAR EAST

2. Influential Japanese newspaper endorses Soviet position on atomic weapons:

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The English edition of Asahi, Japan's largest newspaper, on 27 September editorially endorsed the Soviet proposal

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for a ban on the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons as an acceptable first step toward international control. It

said Washington's attitude that the Russians must first agree to international inspection was "not satisfactory," since it ignored the "moral" aspects of the problem.

The American embassy in Tokyo notes that this is the first time a major Japanese newspaper has openly supported the Soviet position on control of atomic weapons.

Comment: Japanese intellectuals, a large majority of whom are leftist in their thinking, tend to accept Soviet propaganda at its face value. They have great influence in the Japanese press.

While the Asahi generally follows the neutral line of the Left Socialists, the view it now has openly expressed on atomic matters enjoys widespread support among all shades of Japanese political opinion. The editorial apparently appeared only in the English edition and, therefore, may have been designed to emphasize the Japanese view outside Japan without further arousing the Japanese public.

WESTERN EUROPE

3. French political leader foresees overthrow of Mendes-France:

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Former French premier Pinay told Ambassador Dillon on 24 September that he felt Mendes-France would be overthrown as a result of a foreign

affairs debate in late November. Pinay, who is strongly pro-EDC, expressed his extreme concern over the actions of the French government against police officials and the press and radio, and said he considers Mendes-France to be completely untruthful and untrustworthy.

Comment: If the current London talks on German rearmament result in an agreement that Mendes-France

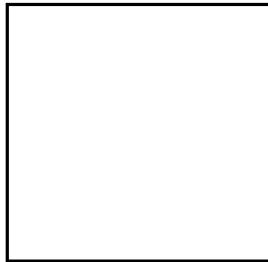
is willing to present to the assembly, the pro-Atlantic Pact deputies will find it difficult to attack him on that issue. Rightist opposition may, however, be strong enough to overthrow him on some other issue before the end of 1954 unless he can satisfy the Socialists and Popular Republicans on social questions as well as on German rearmament.

The non-Communist press has expressed considerable concern over the recent changes in the semiofficial French news agency and the removal of Police Commissioner Dides. The American embassy in Paris believes it "is quite possible that the police actions were initiated by Interior Minister Mitterrand as the first step in curtailing anti-Communist activities in the French government."

LATE ITEMS

4. Comment on Egyptian seizure of Israeli ship:

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Reports that Egypt has seized an Israeli merchant ship in the Red Sea suggest that Israel may be seeking to embarrass the Nasr regime and attract world attention to the Arab blockade of the Suez Canal. The ship apparently was trying to pass through the canal in what would be the

first attempt by an Israeli vessel to do this since 1949. Reports on the incident conflict and it is accordingly unclear whether the vessel had passed through the canal southbound or was seized as it approached Suez northbound.

Cairo claims that the ship was seized because it opened fire on fishing vessels in Egyptian territorial waters. Israeli reports make no mention of shooting.

Both Egypt and Israel have stated that they will lodge protests with the UN Security Council. By bringing the principle of freedom of navigation through the canal before the Council at this time, Israel may hope to force the West again to support that principle publicly in opposition to the Arabs.

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