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SOVIET UNION

1. American Embassy in Moscow comments on Pravda editorial:

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.

3.3(h)(2)

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:

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.

3. Prisoners presumably released under amnesty being re-employed locally:

3.3(h)(2)

[redacted] a group of people had been "taken away from the construction" and had been gathered together at the settlement where "the order" was read to them. The official also said that "the contract forms have already been drawn up and today we are beginning to sign them on one by one."

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Comment: [redacted]

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prisoners released under the recent amnesty proclamation will be required to remain in the area of their former imprisonment and continue to work at the same jobs.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

4.

Chinese Communist drive into

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Southeast Asia:

[redacted] the invasion of Laos is directed by Peiping, and clearly connected with long-formulated Chinese Communist plans for a

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drive into Southeast Asia. [redacted] with the large amounts of American equipment now at hand, France and Vietnam have the materiel to defeat the Communists in Indochina, but [redacted] there were no Vietnamese troops to use it.

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SECURITY INFORMATIONComment: [redacted]

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[redacted] Chinese Communist aid to the Viet Minh has recently more than doubled in quantity and Chinese Communists for a long time have been providing advice on strategy. So far, however, there is no evidence that the present campaign is a prelude to a Chinese Communist invasion of Southeast Asia.

5. Thai political refugee reportedly organizing Thai government-in-exile:

[redacted] Tiang Sirikhan, an influential leftist politician who fled from Thailand last December, is in Rangoon organizing a Thai "government-in-exile" consisting of supporters of exiled former

Premier Pridi, [redacted]

3.3(h)(2)

[redacted] in addition to maintaining liaison with leftist elements in Burma and Thailand, Tiang might be in contact with the new "Free Laos Government."

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Comment: Tiang was arrested in 1948 on charges of fomenting a separatist movement in northeast Thailand, but was later released for lack of evidence. At the time of his disappearance, the Thai police announced that Tiang had fled to Burma, but later intimated that he may have gone to Indochina.

Tiang was a staunch supporter of Pridi, whose name has frequently been mentioned in connection with Communist plans to take over Thailand.

NEAR EAST - AFRICA

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

[redacted] 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.

7. Egyptian Communists invite Wafd to join political united front:

[redacted] Yusuf Hilmi, head of the Communist-front organization "Partisans of Peace," met on 24 April with Wafd leaders to discuss formation of a political united front of Wafdist,

Communists and others opposed to the Nagib regime, [redacted]

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Comment: Egyptian Communists, numbering but a few thousand, have not exerted much influence in the past. They participated in anti-British guerrilla activity in 1951-52 in the Suez Canal Zone when they associated themselves with other extremists, including some Wafd adherents.

Their current effort will probably not result in an alliance, but it may bring about public demonstrations; and at this critical point in the Suez negotiations, Nagib and his associates are greatly concerned over public opinion and inclined to follow it.

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WESTERN EUROPE

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

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.

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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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