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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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State Department
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3. USSR reportedly renews UN support of Syria on dispute with Israel:

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According to the Syrian foreign minister, Syrian ambassador Zain al Din in Washington has received assurances that the USSR will accept any UN resolution approved by Syria on the disputed Israeli canal near the Jordan River.

Comment: This Soviet support of Syria is the eighth instance in the past year indicating Syrian-Soviet cooperation on UN matters.

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On 22 January Vyshinsky cast the veto, which he had apparently promised Zain al Din, on the Western proposal for settling the Israeli-Syrian dispute. This vote has increased Soviet popularity in Syria and may complicate current Syrian-American economic aid negotiations.

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FAR EAST

4. Japanese agitation for release of war criminals strains relations with US:

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Continuing agitation for the release of lesser Japanese war criminals convicted by American military courts is a serious irritant to United States relations with Japan, according to Ambassador Allison. The recent Philippine and Formosan amnesties have accentuated the issue.

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Allison notes that Prime Minister Yoshida has publicly promised to seek the prisoners' release and that the re-opening of the Diet will bring widespread public clamor directed at the United States for speedy action.

Comment: The Japanese government desires to have these war criminal cases, which number 323, considered from a political rather than a judicial viewpoint.

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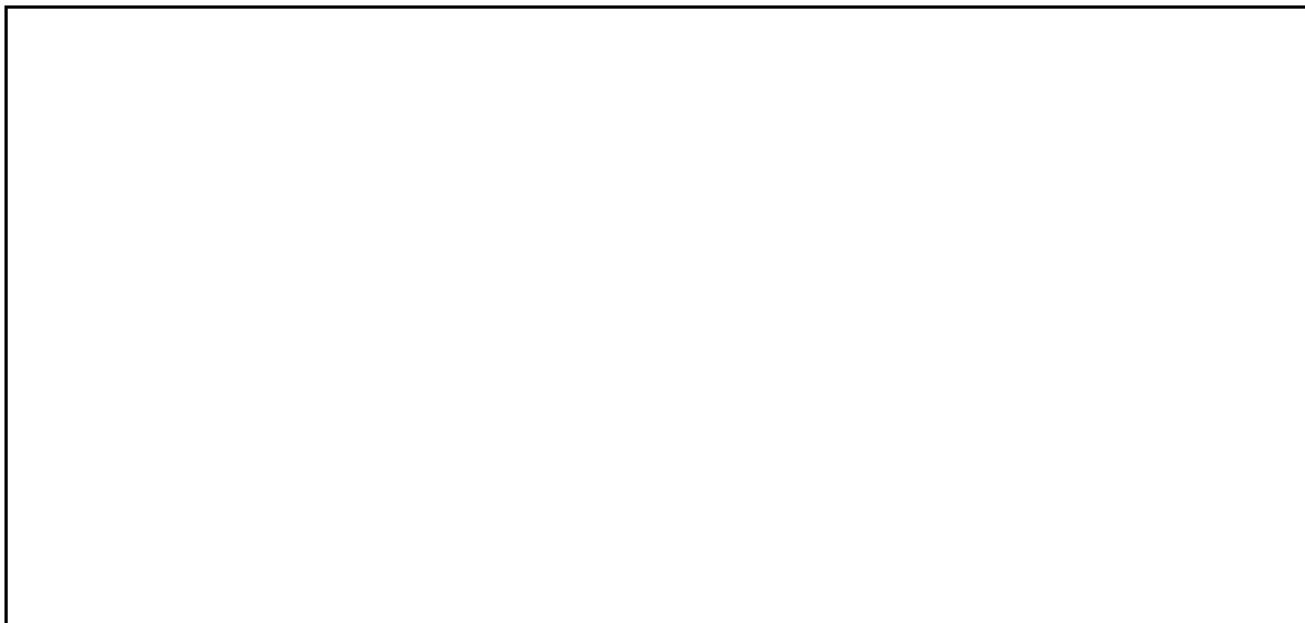


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7. Britain sending armored squadron to Jordan:

[Redacted box]
In response to a Jordanian request for assistance under the Anglo-Jordanian treaty, Britain is moving one armored squadron from the Suez area to supplement its small garrison at Aqaba. The squadron, consisting of about 20 tanks and 100 men, will engage in training exercises with the Arab Legion.

No publicity is being given the move, but the Foreign Office expects a sharp protest from Israel, which has been informed.

Comment: Britain had anticipated a Jordanian request for assistance, and as early as October 1953 was prepared to commit a brigade from the Suez Canal zone.

About 400 British troops have been stationed at Aqaba since 1949. A British jet squadron is based at Amman.

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WESTERN EUROPE

9. French government reportedly sees need to educate public and parliament on Indochina:

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[Redacted]

Secretary for the Associated States Jacquet's executive secretary admitted to the American consulate in Hanoi on 25 January that the French government has to hold out the prospect of an early end to the Indochina burden to gain any public acceptance of its policy.

He stated that "no member of the present French government" has any illusions as to the possibility of negotiating a satisfactory peace with the Viet Minh, but that responsible ministers fear the government may have "to eat its words" unless it can educate the public, press, and parliament on the "realities of France's position" in Indochina.

Comment: Many responsible and informed politicians who agree that negotiations with the Viet Minh would probably be fruitless nevertheless advocate other nonmilitary solutions such as five-power talks. Military victories giving some hope for a successful conclusion of the Indochina war would put off growing pressure for an early solution.

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10. Embassy comments on possibility of widespread strikes in France:

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[Redacted]

The American embassy in Paris believes that the 24-hour labor demonstrations planned for 29 January by both the Communist and non-Communist unions could lead rapidly to a new political and social crisis in France if the rank and file shows a desire for nationwide strike activity. Although the planned demonstrations are not expected to develop into a widespread strike, the embassy states that they could strengthen the Communist united-action campaign and improve prospects for more extensive action later.

The embassy believes that a widespread strike might get out of the control of the national labor confederations and lead to a showdown with the government. This estimate is based on the new sense of relative autonomy developed by the bulk of local unity-of-action committees, and the new Communist labor tactic of remaining in the background.

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