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3.3(h)(2)

22 February 1954 3.5(c)

Copy No. 84

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

DOCUMENT NO. 56
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
 DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2009
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 6-1 DEC 1979 REVIEWER:

Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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GENERAL**1. Pravda editorial reviews Berlin conference:**

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The initial Pravda editorial reviewing the Berlin conference treats the agreement to hold a Geneva conference as a victory for the Soviet Union in that the West was forced to agree to Communist China's participation. In listing the conferees at the forthcoming Geneva meeting, the editorial includes China together with the four powers and adds other "directly interested countries."

Regarding the German and Austrian questions, the West is blamed for the failure to reach agreement, but the article adds that these problems "remain on the agenda." The editorial concludes that the Berlin conference had a definite significance by "helping the examination of certain urgent international questions."

Comment: By listing China with the great powers in contrast to a special category for the other countries, Pravda is attempting to obscure Soviet failure to win equal status for Communist China.

The references to the German and Austrian questions suggest that the Soviet Union intends to pursue them at a subsequent meeting, possibly at Geneva. Similarly, by not regarding the conference as having totally negative results, it suggests that the USSR does not want to appear to be closing the door to further negotiations.

[REDACTED]

2.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

3. French army minister would accept internationalization of Indochina war:

Pierre de Chevigne, French secretary of state for the army, indicated to the American consul in Hanoi on 18 February that he would not be averse to internationalization of the Indochina war. He said that American equipment alone could not alter the present equilibrium, and "remained unresponsive" to the suggestion that "the progressive build-up of the Vietnamese army might be a substitute for internationalization."

De Chevigne said that he saw no solution other than total war or a negotiated settlement, and added that nothing was to be gained now by seeking an arrangement with the Viet Minh alone.

Comment: Heretofore, official French spokesmen have been unanimous in vigorous opposition to internationalization of the conflict.

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4. French expect heavy attack on Muong Sai:

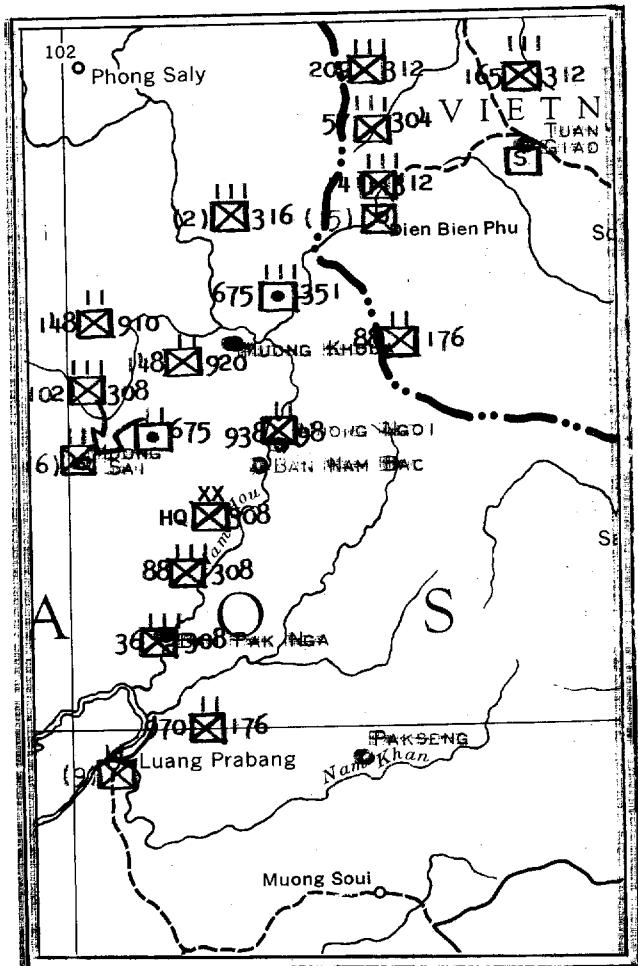
The Viet Minh is bringing up 120mm mortars to the Muong Sai area (see map), and a heavy attack on this French-held point in northern Laos appears probable,

An attack on Luang Prabang, on the other hand, is now believed less likely, since only regional units are currently in the area.

There is increasing evidence of a growing Viet Minh supply problem in northern Laos. Food stocks at the Tuan Giao depot are said to be low. The enemy is reportedly forming six new coolie contingents to speed up supplies for the 308th Division and other units in northern Laos.

Comment: The French garrison at Muong Sai, about 60 miles north of Luang Prabang, consists of six infantry battalions, and the American army attaché reported on 19 February that an artillery battalion and a 120mm mortar company are being airlifted there from Luang Prabang. The opposing enemy force is believed to include five infantry battalions and a 75mm pack artillery element.

Supply difficulties may largely explain the recent lack of progress of the Viet Minh invasion force, the bulk of which was last reported to be about 30 miles north of Luang Prabang. The necessity of neutralizing the potential threat to its flank posed by the Muong Sai garrison may also have been an important factor.



Approved for Release: 2019/08/02 C02993985

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LATIN AMERICA

5. Costa Rica not to attend Caracas conference:

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Costa Rican president Figueres informed the secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS) on 19 February that his government had decided not to send a delegation to the Inter-American Conference at Caracas. In a conversation with American ambassador Hill, Figueres praised the United States for its moral leadership in the world struggle, but added that it has "the wrong idea in Latin America," where it hesitates to "take stern action against hemispheric 'bandits.'"

Ambassador Hill comments that Figueres' decision is "partly idealistic, but also a grandstand play for the support of liberal elements in the hemisphere."

However, the governor of Puerto Rico, after a telephone conversation with his friend Figueres, reports the latter as believing that he has left the door still open.

Comment: The Costa Rican action, a gesture protesting against the Venezuelan dictatorship, would be the first outright refusal of an American state to attend a regular inter-American conference. As such, it would set a precedent which might undermine the basis of the OAS as the supreme hemisphere consultative body.

The situation is somewhat relieved by private assurances to the American embassy in Montevideo that Uruguay, the other holdout, will attend the conference.

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