

~~TOP SECRET~~CD/Ed
3.3(h)(2)
3.5(c)

8 May 1955

Copy No. 94

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

DOCUMENT NO. 28
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
 DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 9/1/80 REVIEWER:

Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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GENERAL

1. USSR appears ready to end London disarmament talks:

Soviet ambassador Malik made it clear at the UN disarmament subcommittee talks in London on 5 May that the USSR is not willing to compromise on any

point and will accept no disarmament schedule but its own. He insisted that the Western position is unacceptable because it provides for the prohibition of nuclear weapons too late in the program and it gives the control organ "improper powers" to interfere in the domestic affairs of the signatory powers.

Soviet officials at London have suggested informally to Western officials on three occasions in the last two weeks the possibility of recessing the talks, with Malik on the latest occasion making it clear that the only problem was that no power wanted to bear the blame for a break-off.

Comment: Moscow apparently considers that it is gaining no substantial propaganda benefit from the London talks. Moscow probably expects to shift the disarmament question to the level of a foreign ministers' conference, as indicated in Soviet propaganda and implied by a remark of Mikoyan during the Moscow talks with Austrian leaders.

FAR EAST

2. Nehru has twice requested Peiping to release American airmen:

Indian prime minister Nehru told Ambassador Cooper on 5 May that he had written to Chou En-lai several weeks before the Bandung conference requesting the release of American airmen imprisoned in China. Nehru again raised the question when he and Chou met in Rangoon enroute to Bandung, and Chou said Peiping would consider the matter further on his return.

Nehru also extracted from Chou an admission that he did not believe the United States government sabotaged the Indian airliner which crashed on the way to Bandung on 11 April. Chou said he thought the Chinese Nationalists were guilty.

Comment: This is the first indication that Nehru has actively urged the release of the airmen in recent months. India took considerable pains to demonstrate its neutrality in arranging for the visit of UN secretary general Hammarskjold to Peiping in this connection last January, and has been reported unwilling, because Hammarskjold has failed thus far to achieve the release of the airmen, to make further approaches to China.

Nehru's remarks suggest that he is willing to press China on various matters more strongly than is generally believed.

The Chinese Communists will presumably continue to charge the United States with ultimate responsibility in the airliner incident, on the grounds that the Chinese Nationalist government is an American instrument. Evidence is still inconclusive as to whether the Chinese Communists themselves sabotaged the plane.

3. Nehru judged to believe early hostilities in China area unlikely:

[Redacted] Indian prime minister Nehru seems to believe, on the basis of his questioning of Chou En-lai at the Bandung conference last month, that the Chinese Communists will not initiate hostilities soon. Nehru told Ambassador Cooper that, while he did not obtain any definite statement of Chinese Communist intentions, Chou said, "We are not engaged in hostilities, but Chiang Kai-shek is sending planes over China."

Comment: Chou En-lai's bid on 23 April for Sino-American negotiations suggested in itself an intention to refrain from major military action while the possibilities for negotiations were being explored. Small-scale military action may be resumed at any time, however, in order to keep up some degree of pressure for negotiations.

SOUTH ASIA

4.

NEAR EAST - AFRICA

5. Arab leaders fear Communist takeover in Syria:

[redacted]

Charles Malik, Lebanese ambassador to the United States, told the State Department on 4 May that he had received a personal message from Faris al Khouri, a former Syrian prime minister, urging that the Arab and Western powers take immediate action to prevent a Communist takeover in Syria.

Malik said his independent assessment confirms the fears expressed by Khouri that the Communists might eventually seize power by means of the "united-front" technique. Malik believes that the combination of the Arab Socialist-Resurrectionist Party (ASRP) and the Communists is likely to win the present struggle for power in Syria.

Comment: These fears, or substantially similar ones, have also been expressed recently by Syrian president Atasi, Lebanese president Chamoun, and Iraq's minister to Lebanon, Ahmad al Rawi.

These Arab leaders are probably exaggerating the situation, but the power of the ASRP, which has apparently been infiltrated by the Communists, is growing as a result of the increasing instability in the Syrian government.

6. Showdown in Egyptian council reported imminent:

[redacted]

A showdown between Egypt's Prime Minister Nasr and Minister of National Guidance Salah Salim is "coming soon," and may result in Salim's resignation or dismissal.

The prime minister is reported to be "most concerned" over Salim's "extremist attitudes and intransigency."

Comment: Salah Salim, Nasr's strongest rival, is believed to represent the generally anti-Western sentiment of many of the "Free Officers"--the main source of the regime's army support. In view of the numerous domestic and foreign problems facing the regime, Nasr would be unlikely to move against Salim unless confident of adequate support for such a move in the Revolutionary Command Council and the army.

Accordingly, Nasr may adopt an increasingly independent position in his relations with the West in his efforts to undercut Salim and prepare for a possible showdown.