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14 March 1956

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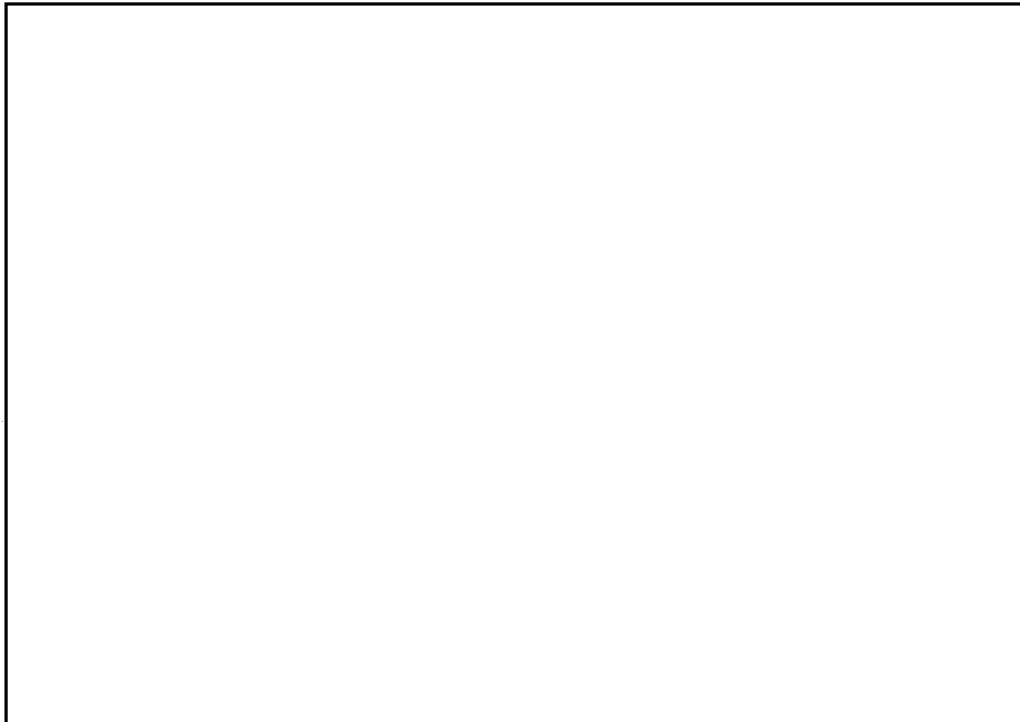
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State Department review completed

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1. STALIN'S "CRIMES" REPORTEDLY AIRED AT SECRET SESSION OF 20TH PARTY CONGRESS

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[REDACTED]

Ambassador Bohlen reports that he has heard from two different sources, and has received indirect confirmation from others, that Khrushchev delivered a lengthy speech on Stalin's "crimes" to a closed session of the 20th Party Congress at which no foreign representatives were allowed.

In order to justify the attitude of the present leadership, Khrushchev discussed in considerable detail Stalin's actions during the purge period, charging him with having decimated the party and executed many of its outstanding leaders without cause. He said Stalin "murdered" 5,000 of the best Soviet military officers, thus undermining the defensive capacity of the country, and disregarded repeated warnings, including some from Churchill, of the imminence of Nazi attack.

Khrushchev is said to have announced that statues and other signs of the glorification of Stalin will be gradually eliminated, and Bohlen comments that there is some confirmation that statues of Stalin are beginning to be removed in Moscow.

Bohlen believes the reports are probably accurate in substance and thinks it logical that the party elite would receive more convincing justification for the attacks on Stalin than were contained in the formal speeches at the congress.

Comment It now appears that Stalin's entire career will eventually come under critical review. Thus far, however, official public criticism of Stalin since the party congress in both the Soviet Union and the Satellites has been aimed primarily at the tyranny of his later years. Only in the Soviet republic of Georgia, where the people took great nationalist pride in Stalin, did the party newspaper mention the anniversary of his death. On 9 March the Georgian radio announced that a new monument to Stalin would shortly be erected in a Georgian village.

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4. EGYPT, SYRIA AND SAUDI ARABIA OFFER TO REPLACE WESTERN AID TO LIBYA

Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia have offered to provide economic aid to Libya to replace American and British assistance, according to the British embassy in Tripoli. The Libyan ambassador to Britain returned to London on 12 March to discuss this offer and the Soviet aid offer with British Foreign Office officials.

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Comment

An Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi offer could be intended to complement earlier reported Soviet offers of aid to Libya, to exclude both Soviet and Western aid, or to help Ben Halim get what he wants from the West.

When Ben Halim was seeking Western arms aid last fall, he asserted that Egypt had offered Libya all the arms it needed. After Western aid was assured, the Cairo press claimed Ben Halim had obtained Egypt's permission to use an Egyptian arms offer to spur Western agreement to his requests.

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5. USSR REPORTEDLY HAS OFFERED ECONOMIC AID
TO THE SUDAN

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Representatives of East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia reportedly called on the Sudanese minister of defense in February and indicated general willingness to furnish whatever equipment is needed.

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Comment Following the Sudanese announcement of independence on 1 January, several bloc countries made overtures for diplomatic relations. The USSR was reported last fall to have consulted Egyptian prime minister Nasr regarding a Sudanese request for arms. Prime Minister Azhari stated publicly on 22 January that the Sudan had sent delegations to Czechoslovakia and other Eastern and Western European countries to shop for arms.

The Sudan is seeking financial aid from Western sources for water projects which depend in large part on Sudanese-Egyptian agreement on division of the Nile waters.

In the last few days, Prime Minister Azhari has denied rumors that the USSR is offering the Sudan a long-term loan which can be paid back in cotton or other products.

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7. DEATH OF POLISH FIRST SECRETARY BIERUT

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The death of Boleslaw Bierut, first secretary of the Polish United Workers (Communist) Party, in Moscow on 12 March is unlikely to have any significant effect on the

stability of the party, whose present leaders have cooperated smoothly since World War II. There does not appear to be any strife or factionalism within the party important enough to prevent an orderly transfer of authority to a new first secretary.

The principal power in Poland has been concentrated largely in the hands of Bierut and politburo members Jakub Berman and Hilary Minc. The fact that both of the latter are Jewish may make it undesirable for either to succeed Bierut in the light of Poland's anti-Semitism. Berman may continue to wield his power from behind the scenes and Minc is concerned chiefly with economic, rather than political, matters. Logical candidates for first secretary are Edward Ochab and Franciszek Mazur. Both were active in the prewar Communist Party, and both have been prominent members of the politburo and secretariat for several years.

Bierut was 64 years old at the time of his death and had reportedly been in poor health for some time. There is no evidence that he was in disfavor in Moscow. [redacted]

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8. LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT CRISIS

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
Prospects for establishing a stable government in Laos have diminished as a result of Premier Katay's second failure to form a cabinet, nearly a month after he resigned following the installation of a newly elected assembly. Personal enmities among the major party leaders in the 39-man national assembly have been skillfully exploited by Bong Souvannouvong--a minority deputy who is sympathetic to the Pathet Lao--to engineer Katay's defeat. Bong has accomplished this despite Katay's superior strength as leader of the largest pro-Western party.

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Bong, who refers to the Pathets as "our compatriots who wish to work with us for the good of the nation," seeks the premiership on the pledge that he will solve the Pathet Lao issue within three months or resign. Although he is not likely to become premier, his activities have tended to stimulate a latent neutralism in the assembly.

Meanwhile, general impatience over the unresolved Pathet Lao situation is moving toward the point where overtures from Peiping or Hanoi to arrange a settlement might appear more attractive to the assembly.

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