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SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. French air supply effort in Indochina criticized:

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Airfield runways at the French posts of Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, and Lai Chau are unsuitable for even critical landings by C-119 aircraft, and the one at Na San is barely marginal,

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The planes which have been dropping supplies have averaged about 10,000 pounds per flight. This could be increased by 3,000 pounds by shifting operations from the limited facilities of the Hanoi airfield to one in the Haiphong area.

Further hampering the air supply effort is the French command's order limiting planes to 65 hours flying time per month, whereas their minimum capability is 120 hours.

Comment: The French have often been criticized for inefficiency in their air operations in Indochina. The heavy rains which have now begun are expected severely to limit or entirely to curtail transport landings at the several isolated French outposts, making troops there largely dependent on air drops for supplies.

2. French appointment in Indochina may aggravate Vietnamese mistrust:

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The American consul in Hanoi reports that Minister Letourneau has approved the appointment of a personal enemy of the present Vietnamese governor of Tonkin as France's representative in that area. The official in question is regarded by his own colleagues in Tonkin as totally incompetent.

Observing that the appointment was apparently based on seniority, the consul points out that the United States, as well as France and Vietnam, cannot afford an added element of friction in French-Vietnamese relations in the wake of the recent French military reverses and the piaster devaluation.

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EASTERN EUROPE

3. Comment on Tito's anti-Italian speech of 17 May:

President Tito's sharp attack against Italy in his speech on 17 May foreshadows a tougher Yugoslav attitude on Trieste. His renewed claim to the city of Trieste and his threat to defend Zone B by force of arms if necessary demonstrate Yugoslavia's unwillingness to reach a compromise solution with Italy along a general ethnic division compatible with Italy's minimum demands.

This outburst may have been designed partly to divert popular attention from pressing economic problems to a highly unifying international issue. It also reveals Tito's uncertainty over suspected "big-power" plans to influence the Italian elections next month at the expense of Yugoslavia.

WESTERN EUROPE

4. Auriol favors East-West conference without agenda:

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French president Auriol told Ambassador Draper on 15 May that he favored four-power talks without specific prior conditions and without an agreed agenda. He feels that the West should not be "afraid" to talk with the Russians at any time on this basis.

Comment: Auriol is a leader of the Socialist Party, which has been calling for four-power talks. Despite the constitutional limitations on the powers of the president, he presides over cabinet meetings and wields a strong personal influence on French policy.

While French official thinking has opposed four-power talks unless certain conditions are fulfilled beforehand, Churchill's 11 May proposal received strong public and parliamentary support. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Assembly on 13 May unanimously passed a resolution calling on the government to press for a four-power conference as soon as possible.

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5. Letourneau plans to resign from French cabinet:

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Minister for the Associated States Letourneau told the American embassy in Saigon on 16 May that he planned to resign on his return to Paris this week. He apparently felt that his resignation might cause the downfall of the Mayer cabinet.

Angry at the failure to consult him on the devaluation of the piaster, he said he had told Premier Mayer that the government seemed to be formulating policy on the advice of neutralist elements which had consistently advocated withdrawal from Indochina.

Comment: While Letourneau's resignation would be greeted with satisfaction in many French political circles, it would cause the government considerable embarrassment, particularly if he carried out his threat to attack its Indochina policy in the National Assembly.

6. France opposes embassy status for high commissions in Bonn:

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According to a French foreign ministry spokesman, France cannot accept the American proposal to raise the Allied high commissions in Bonn to embassy status and to establish a mixed Allied-German board to review the sentences of war criminals.

Alleging that the American high commissioner has intimated that both the German mission in Washington and the US high commission in Bonn might be raised to embassy level, the spokesman declared that this was a matter for the three occupying powers to decide, and not the United States alone.

Comment: Chancellor Adenauer had suggested while in Washington that the Allies give their high commissions embassy rank following West German parliamentary ratification of the EDC treaty. He said that some such concession prior to the September elections was of the utmost importance as a sign of Germany's new status.

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