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DOCUMENT NO. 35
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
 DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010
AUTH: HR 16-2

DATE 6 JUN 1980 REVIEWER: 25X1

11 February 1960

 Copy No. C 67

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Czechoslovakia-Guinea: Czechoslovakia is taking steps to establish weekly air service to Conakry, Guinea, via Zurich, Marseilles, Casablanca, and Dakar, according to the US Embassy in Prague. The Czechs have officially requested permission to overfly West Germany. Last fall, the Czech civil airline succeeded in establishing regular service to India via Cairo. The service to Guinea, which would be the bloc's first entry into air transport service in tropical Africa, would support bloc economic activity in the area. In addition, Conakry provides an ideal point for extension of service to South America.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Laos: The stringent qualifications for candidates contained in a recently promulgated electoral ordinance are tailored to limit the participation of pro-Communist candidates in the 24 April National Assembly elections. A provision for runoff elections in districts where no candidate wins a majority on the first ballot is also aimed at limiting Communist electoral success. Hanoi radio has already broadcast a protest by the Communist-front Neo Lao Hak Zat against the new ordinance, suggesting that the NLHZ may boycott the elections; [conservative elements in Vientiane reportedly are apprehensive over the possibility of accelerated armed dissidence.]

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Tunisia-USSR: The reported visit to Tunis of a Soviet deputy foreign minister, Vladimir Semenov, may presage an early exchange of diplomatic representatives between the USSR and Tunisia. President Bourguiba said publicly last November that he intended to establish relations with the USSR in 1960.

OK In reply to a Tunisian request last month for Soviet technical and economic assistance, made during routine trade negotiations, a high Soviet trade official stated that consideration of the request would be delayed until the USSR had an embassy in Tunis.

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Watch Committee Conclusions: [The following developments are susceptible of direct exploitation by Soviet/Communist hostile action which could jeopardize the security of the US in the immediate future:]

W¹⁰ Neither Israel nor the UAR appears to be preparing for large-scale hostilities as an aftermath of the recent border incidents in the Lake Tiberias area.

[Iraqi political groups continue to maneuver for power, and an attempt to assassinate Qasim could occur at any time.]

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III. THE WEST

Cuba: The Castro government will probably expand its economic relations with other Sino-Soviet bloc countries in addition to the substantial trade contracts with the USSR which will evidently follow Mikoyan's visit.

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N An East German trade delegation is in Havana to negotiate a barter agreement with Cuba, and Poland and Communist China recently bought sizable quantities of sugar from the Castro government.

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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

New Laotian Electoral Ordinance Aimed at Communists

The new electoral ordinance promulgated by King Savang on 5 February is intended to limit Communist participation in the National Assembly elections scheduled for 24 April.

[REDACTED] the provisions governing qualifications for candidates, including education and residence requirements, will disqualify a considerable number of those whom the Communist-front Neo Lao Hak Zat (NLHZ) might put up for election. Of the nine NLHZ deputies from the previous assembly, only five would be able to qualify.] In addition to limiting pro-Communist candidates, these provisions will also reduce the number of non-Communist candidates. Many observers attribute the NLHZ success in the 1958 supplemental elections to the plethora of non-Communist candidates.

The Communists will also presumably be hurt by the provision for two-stage elections in districts where the winning candidate fails to win a majority in the first round of voting. This device will guard against the possibility that NLHZ candidates will squeak through to victory in districts where the conservative vote is divided among several candidates.

Hanoi radio has already broadcast an NLHZ protest against the new electoral ordinance and its demand that the less restrictive 1957 electoral law be used instead. The NLHZ may throw its support to its neutralist ally, the Santiphab party, particularly if the NLHZ finds it impossible to enter a substantial number of its own candidates. [NLHZ and conservative sources in Vientiane reportedly feel that the NLHZ will not participate if Prince Souphanouvong and other leaders are not released from prison.]

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Conservative elements are also reported apprehensive over the possibility that the new election restrictions will lead to accelerated armed dissidence by the Communist insurgents.

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