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26 August 1959

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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26 AUGUST 1959

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

USSR--Latvian deputy premier fired in latest shake-up reflecting Moscow's increasing concern with nationalist and localist tendencies.

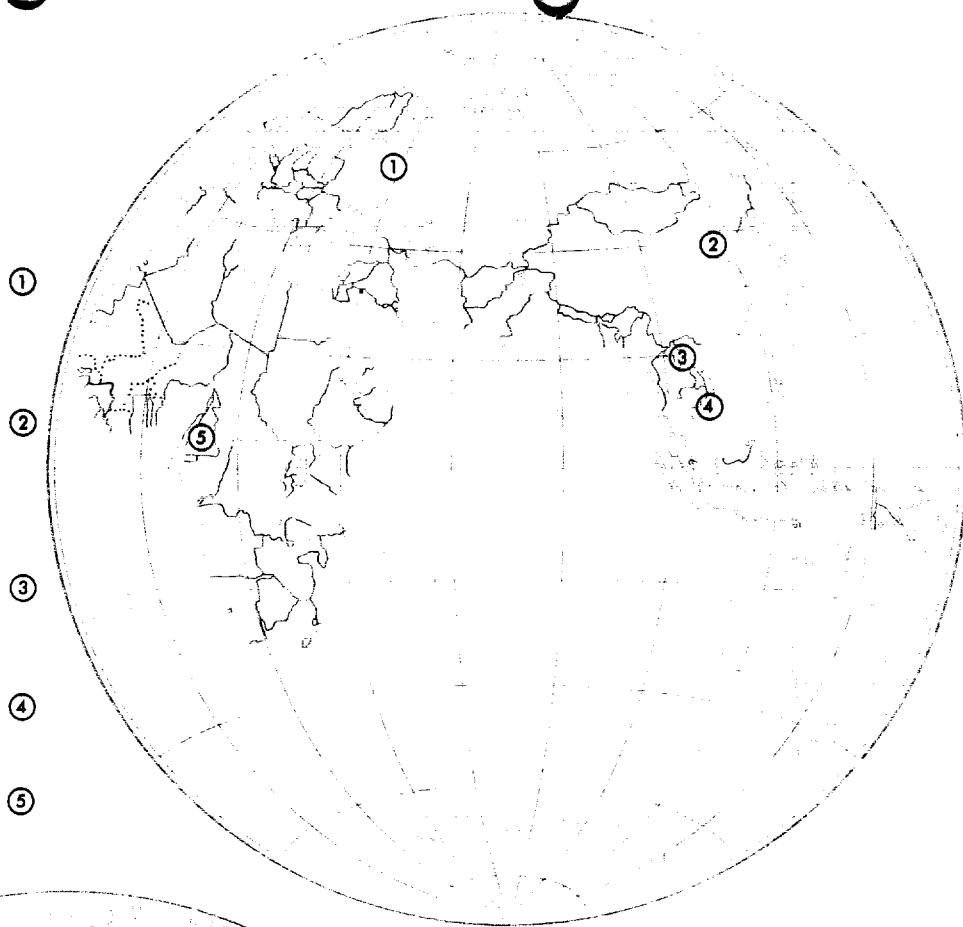
Chou En-lai reaffirms resumption of Chinese Communist drive for economic achievement; secret party meetings may still be under way, possibly on military problems.

II. ASIA-AFRICA

American officials in Laos assess capabilities of Communist forces in Laos.

South Vietnamese elections expected to result in government victory, but may be marked by incidents of terrorism.

Cameroun--Terrorism increasing; security forces capture Czech-made arms.



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

26 August 1959

DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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USSR: Charges of nationalism have been placed against another ranking Soviet official. Latvian Deputy Premier Eduard Berklav has been fired for "placing narrow, national interests above those of the Soviet state." Berklav was also accused of advocating the increased production of consumer goods and the retention of the bulk of Latvian production for use inside the republic. Since last December, there have been major personnel shake-ups affecting leading government and party functionaries in six of the fourteen Soviet republics and in several oblasts of the Russian federation. These reflect Moscow's mounting concern with nationalist and localist tendencies which have come to the surface in the past year.

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Communist China: Premier Chou En-lai's address at the Supreme State Conference in Peiping on 24 August reaffirms Chinese Communist intentions to resume the drive for record-breaking economic achievements this year. The absence of Mao Tse-tung and almost half of the 26-man party politburo from the conference suggests that secret party meetings may be continuing. Since the five members of the politburo believed responsible for military affairs are among those not reported at the Peiping conference, a discussion of military problems may be under way.

II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Laos: The US army attaché in Laos points out that present Communist forces, although operating in small units and scattered groups, retain the initiative and the ability to gather.

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[sufficient strength to take individual Laotian army posts.] The consensus of American officials in Laos is that, if the Laotian Communists exert their full potential throughout the country, the Laotian Government would at best be able to hold only certain strong points, while large areas of the country, including all Laos contiguous to Communist China and North Vietnam, would come under Communist control. [Top-level Laotian officials, who expect continuing international support, are confident, but morale is low in some of the fighting units, and the poorly informed population in provincial areas is highly susceptible to rumors and propaganda spread by Communist partisans.]

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South Vietnam: South Vietnam is preparing to hold National Assembly elections on 30 August. While a government victory is assured because of various control measures and the absence of organized political opposition, Communist-instigated acts of terrorism aimed at discrediting the Diem regime are possible before and during the election despite stringent security precautions.

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Cameroun: Terrorism has greatly increased recently in the southwest area of Cameroun, the French-administered UN trust territory scheduled to become independent next January. The terrorism is believed inspired by the extremist wing of the Communist-influenced Union of the Cameroons Population. For the first time some small arms of Czech manufacture have been captured by security forces operating against the terrorists. Prime Minister Ahidjo's government apparently believes such weapons are coming from supplies given to Guinea by Czechoslovakia last spring and may be prompted to ask France to bring the matter to the attention of the UN Security Council.

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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Soviet Officials Removed on Charges of Nationalism
And Localism

The current wave of dismissals of leading Soviet functionaries on charges of nationalism and localism has spread into Latvia with the ouster of Deputy Premier Eduard Berklav. In an article published in Moscow on 24 August, republic Premier Vilis Latsis revealed that Berklav was fired last month for placing "national interests" above those of the Soviet state, openly attacking the party line on heavy industry, and demanding increased consumer-goods production for Latvia. Latsis hinted that other Latvian officials have been fired for "nationalist narrow-mindedness."

Various manifestations of nationalism and localism have led to major personnel shake-ups since last December in six Soviet republics and in several oblasts of the Russian federation (RSFSR). Most cases reflect problems which have grown out of Khrushchev's reorganization of industrial management and the increased authority accorded to local officials. In Latvia, Belorussia, Moldavia, and the RSFSR, the trouble has been caused chiefly by financial corruption and by the diversion of state funds and materials to local use. In Turkmenia and Uzbekistan, nationalism was evident in the continued promotion of local nationals over Russian cadres. In all cases, the shake-ups reflect Khrushchev's determination to fire any official whose performance threatens fulfillment of the Seven-Year Plan.

Pravda on 14 August published a long article by the head of the central committee's department of party organs for the RSFSR, warning that the party will call to account any functionary who tolerates localism. The author cited by name several provincial officials who have been removed or warned to put a stop to such practices, and berated the Soviet Control Commission for its failure to correct the situation. Four days after the article appeared, the chairman of the RSFSR Control Commission was removed from office.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Situation in Laos

[The US army attaché in Laos points out that the Laotian Army has not yet demonstrated any offensive strength and the initiative remains with the Communist forces. This enables present Communist forces, which are operating in small units and scattered groups, to build-up sufficient strength to take individual Laotian army posts.]

The consensus of American officials in Vientiane is that if the Laotian Communists exert their full potential for revolution throughout the country, the Laotian Government would at best be able to hold only certain strong points. Large areas, including all of the territory contiguous to Communist China and North Vietnam, would pass under Communist control.

[the morale of top-level Laotian officials is quite good. They are confident of handling the present situation and feel they can rely on international assistance in the event the situation becomes more serious. However, morale is extremely poor in some fighting units, and two Laotian companies are believed to have deserted. The poorly informed population in the provinces is highly susceptible to rumors and propaganda spread by Communist partisans. By mid-August, the people in several of the central and southern provinces had been shaken by rumors that the Communists were on the outskirts of the provincial capitals.]

On 25 August, the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issued a public statement on the Laotian situation, repeating its accusations that the US and Laotian governments are solely to blame for the current crisis. The statement asserted that as a signatory of the Geneva agreements and a country neighboring on Laos, North Vietnam "cannot remain indifferent. . .to a situation which directly threatens the security of North Vietnam and peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia." Rejecting any thought of UN action, Hanoi again called for reactivation of the ICC and strict adherence to the Geneva agreements as the only solution to the present grave situation. Unlike pronouncements attributed to the NLHZ leadership, this statement did not include certain demands (e.g., for a coalition government) which would automatically result in giving former members of the Pathet Lao a privileged position in the Laotian community and therefore may represent minimum Communist objectives.]

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National Assembly Elections in South Vietnam

Against a backdrop of official concern over spreading Communist insurgency in neighboring Laos, South Vietnam is preparing to hold National Assembly elections on 30 August. [Elaborate government control measures and] the absence of opposition parties assure that the 123 seats at stake will be filled predominantly by candidates espoused by the Diem regime. The majority of those elected will probably be members of the government's mass political party, the National Revolutionary Movement, and the remainder largely "independents" who comprise the bulk of the more than 400 candidates.

The government is anxious for the elections to appear as democratic as possible [but apparently is prepared to take steps such as intimidation and marshalling of military votes to defeat candidates considered inimical to national interests.] Included in this category are several candidates backed by the various labor unions in South Vietnam which do not enjoy the administration's full confidence and are suspected of Communist penetration.] Next to considerations of political reliability, the government is interested in improving the quality of the unicameral legislature above the level of the initial National Assembly elected in March 1956.

Despite stringent security measures, Communist-instigated acts of terrorism aimed at discrediting the Diem government are possible during the election period. The assassination of two American MAAG members last July highlights the increasing aggressiveness of the well-entrenched Communist underground in South Vietnam.

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Terrorists Step Up Activities in Cameroun

Terrorist attacks against the French-supported regime of Camerounian Prime Minister Ahidjo have greatly increased in southwest Cameroun during the last two weeks, according to the American consul general in Yaoundé. The terrorists appear to be adherents of the extremist wing of the outlawed, Communist-influenced nationalist movement, the Union of the Cameroons Population (UPC), whose exiled leaders are engaged in a last-ditch effort to induce the UN to order new elections in this French trust territory before it becomes independent. Independence is now scheduled for 1 January 1960.

The latest upsurge of terrorist activity, ending a month of relative calm which followed a series of attacks in late June and early July, now includes isolated pistol attacks, often in daylight, on police and other officials. More disturbing to Camerounian and local French authorities, however, has been the verification for the first time that the terrorists possess military weapons of foreign origin. Recently security forces operating against the terrorists captured two automatic pistols and a quantity of ammunition manufactured in Czechoslovakia. Local authorities presume that these have come, via the British Cameroons, from stocks given to Guinea by the Czechs last spring. Guinea and Ghana have in recent months been the stanchest supporters of the exiled UPC extremists who now operate principally from Conakry and Accra.

The Ahidjo government is apparently considering asking France to raise the matter of foreign intervention in Cameroun in the UN Security Council. Paris would probably be reluctant to take such action, however, in view of its present desire to keep further UN involvement in Cameroun to a minimum and to avoid exacerbating its already very difficult relations with Guinea.

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