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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

20 January 1960

DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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N USSR-Cuba: [In an effort to focus increased attention on the opening of the Soviet exposition in Havana on 30 January, Moscow plans to send Deputy Premier Mikoyan to the inauguration ceremony and is arranging a number of performances by prominent Soviet artists. The American ambassador in Mexico reports close liaison there between the Cuban and Soviet embassies, with renewal of diplomatic relations a possible early objective.]

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

O1K Southeast Asia: Malayan Prime Minister Abdul Rahman is pushing for a meeting this year of Southeast Asia's political leaders in an effort to organize formally his proposed Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty Organization (SEAFET). Interest in Malaya's proposals has been expressed by the Philippines, South Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, and Laos. To date, Cambodia has rejected the concept, and Indonesia has been unenthusiastic. Rahman is thinking in terms of a nonpolitical and nonmilitary grouping with economic and cultural aims, including the development of common facilities for transportation and commodity distribution.]

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Israel: Israel has decided that it must step up its purchase of arms and military equipment during the current year in order to "maintain the balance of power in the Middle East in view of the continuous arms flow to Arab countries." While an Israeli Foreign Ministry source refused to say what types of arms will be sought or which sources the Israelis consider most promising, he did indicate that Israel would renew its requests for US arms. Foreign Minister Meir has been in Paris, where she may have sought new French military aid commitments.

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Tunisia: The Tunisian Government plans to send a mission to Czechoslovakia and Poland to study the possibilities of technical cooperation. It also approached the USSR for technical and economic aid during renegotiation in Tunis last week of the Tunisian-Soviet commercial agreement. President Bourguiba on 10 December--in a public statement critical of America's economic aid--paved the way for Soviet bloc economic and technical assistance. Despite his interest in such agreements with the bloc, Bourguiba probably intends to maintain a policy of Western-oriented nonengagement.

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Algeria: The Algerian rebel Revolutionary Council, meeting in Tripoli, has announced a reshuffling of the rebel provisional government together with the creation of a three-man "war cabinet." Although the influence of leftist militants is increased notably, the moderate Ferhat Abbas continues as premier and the changes appear to have been prompted more by considerations of efficiency than of ideology. Announcement of the reorganization has been followed by a statement keeping open the possibility of cease-fire negotiations with the French, but emphasizing the rebels' willingness to continue the war indefinitely if necessary. The rebels may plan to transfer some of their supply operations from Tunisia to Morocco, where the Ibrahim government seems to be more sympathetic to the Algerians than is President Bourguiba.

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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

Malayan Proposals for Southeast Asian Friendship And Economic Treaty

Malayan Prime Minister Abdul Rahman is going ahead with his plans to call an early meeting of Southeast Asia's political leaders in an effort to organize formally his proposal for a Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty (SEAFET).

Malaya's interest in the new grouping stems in part from its marked distrust of the larger Afro-Asian schemes which it sees being exploited by both Communists and Arab extremists. Malayan leaders hope that SEAFET can become an effective counter by limiting its membership strictly to Southeast Asia and by restricting itself to practical economic and cultural activity. [The proposals carefully avoid any hint of political and military entanglements and stress instead consultations to promote interregional trade and economic development, including common facilities for transportation and for commodity distribution, educational and technical exchanges, and similar relatively noncontroversial matters.]

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Rahman apparently anticipates close cooperation from President Garcia of the Philippines and Premier Sarit of Thailand, who have themselves voiced similar ideas. [South Vietnam, Laos, and Burma also have unofficially indicated considerable interest in the Malayan proposals, but Burma's position may be altered by general elections now scheduled for 6 February. Rahman, who is reportedly very anxious to encourage Burmese membership, may postpone proposing a firm date for the first SEAFET meeting until after the new government is formed and can be consulted. Cambodia and Indonesia have apparently rejected the proposals, although Rahman is hopeful the Indonesians will join once the organization is established.]

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Rahman originally proposed SEAFET during a visit to the Philippines in January 1959. Malayan action on the proposal dragged, however, during the extended state and federal election campaigns and the subsequent governmental reorganization.

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Tunisian Government Seeks Technical Assistance From
Soviet Bloc

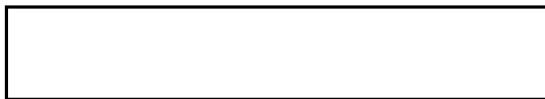
The Tunisian Government plans to send a mission to Czechoslovakia and Poland to sound out possibilities for technical cooperation, according to the semiofficial daily press. The Tunisians also approached the USSR for technical and economic assistance during the renegotiation last week of the Tunisian-Soviet commercial agreement concluded on 17 January. The chief Soviet negotiator informed the Tunisian press that this approach would be transmitted to the Soviet Government.

President Bourguiba on 10 December, in a public statement critical of American economic assistance, paved the way for overtures for bloc assistance. He had told a press conference on 12 November that he intended to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1960, a subject which also may have been discussed last week. During commercial negotiations last summer and fall, Tunisia agreed to exchange ambassadors with Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Bourguiba's approaches to the Soviet bloc will to some extent meet the criticism of strongly nationalistic Tunisian officials who have advised that Tunisian national interests suffered as a result of Bourguiba's pro-Western policy. He is also motivated by the need to provide full employment to the chronically underemployed Tunisian labor force and may hope that Western nations will be prodded by these approaches to the bloc to increase economic assistance. Although he apparently has taken the initiative in seeking bloc economic aid, Bourguiba probably intends to maintain his policy of Western-oriented nonengagement. [redacted]

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Algerian Rebels Announce Changes in Government

The Algerian Revolutionary Council, meeting in Tripoli, has announced a reshuffling of the rebel provisional government and the creation of a three-man "war cabinet." The reorganization removes from the cabinet Foreign Minister Lamine-Debaghine, Minister of Culture Madani, and Minister of Supply Cherif. The first two have long been unpopular with their colleagues for their pro-Nasir views, while Cherif is generally held responsible for the severe supply shortages recently experienced by rebel forces in Algeria.

Although the changes--especially the staffing of the war cabinet--increase notably the influence of leftist militants, they appear to have been prompted more by considerations of efficiency than of ideology. The three-man "interministerial war committee" will probably play a major role in the supervision of rebel military operations. All three of its members, including Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Belkacem Krim, were formerly military commanders in Algeria.

Announcement of the reorganization has been followed by a statement keeping open the possibility of cease-fire negotiations with the French but emphasizing the rebels' willingness to continue the war indefinitely if necessary. [There are also indications the rebels plan the transfer of certain supply operations from Tunisia to Morocco, where the Ibrahim government appears more sympathetic to the Algerians than Tunisian President Bourguiba and French border barriers are less imposing than along the Algeria-Tunisia border.]

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