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NO: G-342

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RPTD INFO: Amembassy MOSCOW UNN

NEA

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REF: CERP D-III-A-1

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Russian Wheat for Tunisia

RMR

According to article appearing in "La Presse" of April 7, 6,000 tons of Russian soft wheat shipped from Novorossisk, USSR arrived at Bizerte April 6 aboard a Greek flag vessel and that second shipment bringing 4,000 tons of wheat is expected at La Goulette on the 10th of this month. Article reports that wheat was of excellent quality, weighing 83 kilos per hectoliter and notes that this is the first time since independence that Tunisia has received wheat from the USSR.

Further, according to the article, STONIC (GOT cereal agency) bought the wheat from "Compagnie Continentale d'Importation" in Paris.

Comment: Above information has been generally confirmed by STONIC official who states that in view of shortage of soft wheat in Tunisia (Tunisia is traditional importer of soft wheat) calls for bids were let by STONIC with the "Compagnie Continentale" being the lowest bidder. It will be noted that Soviet-Tunisian Agreement (Embassy Despatch No. 173 of 9/21/59) does not provide for Tunisian import from the Soviet Union of wheat. The French Assistant Commercial Attache states that it is his understanding that "Compagnie Continentale" is an "international concern" which buys and sells grains in world markets. However, according to the Attache's information, the wheat was purchased directly from the French company and not through bids.

461.7241/4-860

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INCOMING AIRGRAM

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AF-16

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Date Sent: November 2, 1961

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EUR-15 INFO: Anembassy WASHINGTON A-9
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Cu-6 ARMY-M1 AIR-2 TR-5 FRB-2

CIA-16 Ref: CERP, Tunisia, D-11
USIA-15
NSA-4

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A Soviet delegation, variously described as "commercial and "economic" has recently concluded a stay of some days in Tunisia at the invitation of the Chamber of Commerce of Tunisia and of the Tunis Fair Committee. The delegation was composed of Mr. Bolchakov, Vice President of the State Committee of the USSR for cultural exchange, Mr. Bakhtov, Chief of the Commercial Treaties Department of the Ministry of Foreign Commerce of the Soviet Union, and Mr. Yazev, Counselor of Embassy at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delegation arrived at Tunis about October 16, 1961 and departed on October 26. It made an extensive visit in the south of Tunisia including stops at Sfax, Gabes and several towns in the Sahel.

On October 26 the delegation was received by President Bourguiba and at a press conference later the same day Russian Ambassador Kouliev was reported to have stated, "The members of the delegation have related to the President of the Republic their impressions after the stay they have just completed in Tunisia. An exchange of views has taken place also on the prospects of our political, economic and cultural relations between the Chief of State and the Soviet delegation."

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COMMENT: Since the composition of the three-man delegation involved Soviet cultural, commercial and Foreign Ministry officials it is perhaps a misnomer that the delegation has been called alternately commercial and economic. The presence of the delegation during its approximately 10 day stay

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in Tunisia was little marked in the press or elsewhere, nor has the Embassy heard of any specific results in the economic and commercial fields with regard to conversations between the delegation and officials of the GOT.

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Central File: Decimal File 461.7241, International Trade And Commerce. Trade Relations, Treaties, Agreements. Customs Administration., Import Tariff. Import Duty., Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics And Tunisia, Trade Relations. Trade Agreements, Treaties, Conventions. Commercial Relations., April 8, 1960 - November 2, 1961. April 8, 1960 - November 2, 1961. MS Commercial and Trade Relations Between Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union and the U.S., 1910-1963: RG 59, State Department, Central Files, Commercial Relations (411.61 and 461.11), United States-Soviet Union, 1950-1963. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5106469328/GDSC?u=camb55135&sid=bookmark-GDSC&pg=1. Accessed 1 May 2024.