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NSC BRIEFING

16 January 1956

FRENCH POLICIES

- I. Dissension among center groups continues complicate formation French government:
 - A. Mollet and Mendes-France want Republican Front (minority) government.
 - 1. They opposed broad "National Union" non-extremists as incapable of strong policies.
 - 2. Have not rejected Communist support for domestic program.
 - 3. Anticipate right-center support for pro-West foreign policy.
 - 4. Socialist 14 January Congress gave strong support Mollet-Mendes-France position.
 - B. Right-Center not willing give Republican Front blank check:
 - 1. Popular Republicans insist on majority-based government.
 - 2. Pinay forces resigned to Socialist premier but object to take-it or leave it attitude Republican Front leaders.
 - C. Most party positions to be outlined in meetings this week.
- II. Extremists prepared exploit center weakness:

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- A. Communists maintaining pressure for Popular Front (not necessarily participating in government, but having voice in program).
 - 1. Some observers fear early use of widespread strikes to embarrass a new Republican Front government.
 - 2. Expected to support Republican Front government so as to be able make propaganda claim Popular Front exists

Meanwhile on extreme right

- B. Three day closed-door Poujade meeting 14-17 January to decide policy.
- C. Increasing evidence fascist influence:
 - 1. Reliably reported backed by WW II collaborationist money.
 - 2. Support from French settlers North Africa.
 - 3. Anti-parliamentarian and racist lines apparent in first issues new Poujade weekly.

III. Assembly housekeeping chores will delay naming new premier:

- A. New Assembly expected meet Friday 19 January must first:
 - 1. Validate credentials
 - 2. Set up assembly machinery (committees, secretariat etc)
 - 3. Elect assembly president.
- B. Faure expected to resign between 23 and 25 January.
- C. Coty will then name first candidate for premiership.

- IV. In nearby Laos, a new government (little different from present one, and under the same premier) will be formed next month on basis of 25 Dec '55 election results.
- A. Despite rebel Pathet Lao denunciation, election brought heavy vote.
 - B. Pathet morale believed low and royal government apparently hopes to regain control two northern provinces through extension partisan activity there.
- V. In Cambodia, former King (now Prince) Sihanouk remains fully in control, even though he has resigned premiership and is off for a holiday on Riviera.
- A. His replacement cabinet submitted resignation after three days in office, but will stay as caretaker until Prince's return.
 - B. Sihanouk currently stressing Cambodia's neutrality, but pointing to dependence on US for support of armed forces.
 - C. Along neutrality line, Prince is believed to be sympathetic towards a Soviet bid for diplomatic relations, as well as possible trip to Peiping.