

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
11 December 1967

MEMORANDUM

Soviet TASS Statement on Spread of War
Into Laos and Cambodia

1. The TASS statement of 10 December is primarily an official expression of concern over the possible expansion of the war into Laos and Cambodia. The statement was probably evoked at this time by a combination of circumstances, the most important being statements by, or attributed to, US political figures, and extensive speculation in the US press to the effect that the war would be expanded.

2. Since the White House meetings on Vietnam with Saigon embassy officials in November, Soviet propaganda has shown clear apprehension over the possibility of an expansion of the US war effort in Indo-China. Soviet media have quoted statements about Cambodia attributed to General Westmoreland at the time of these meetings. They have also alluded to President Eisenhower's recent comments, and have cited the resignation of Secretary McNamara as indicating an intention on the part of Washington to expand the war effort. Although the propaganda

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line on these statements was not unexpected, there does appear to be a note of uncertainty on Moscow's part concerning US intentions regarding the war. The TASS statement records at a more authoritative level the foreboding note sounded in Soviet media over the past several weeks, and is doubtless intended to call to the attention of US Government officials the fact that Moscow is watching this situation very closely.

3. The statement of 10 December also serves Soviet purposes in its bilateral relations with the two countries involved. It trades on the anxieties of Prince Sihanouk, who has recently been expressing worry over US intentions toward his country. The Soviet statement will certainly be welcomed by the Prince and enhance his appreciation of Moscow.

4. The TASS pronouncement also serves Soviet interests in its Laotian policy. Moscow has been critical of Souvanna Phouma who has recently been more frank in his denunciation of the North Vietnamese presence in northern Laos. A Moscow broadcast in Lao to Laos on 1 December criticized Souvanna in an unusually direct manner for his attitude toward the Pathet Lao and his acquiescence

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in US bombing of "the liberated areas." The statement of 10 December is at least implicitly critical of the Laotian Government in that it mentions only "the patriotic forces" of Laos who are protesting against "US interference" in the internal affairs of that country.

5. The most recent previous official TASS statement on the Vietnamese war was on 23 August. It was worded more strongly than the present statement. The last official Soviet Government statement on the war was made a year ago, on 10 December 1966. It was occasioned by the bombing of Hanoi and was also more stiffly worded than the present TASS statement. For instance, it called attention to the pledge made at the Bucharest conference in July of that year that "volunteers" would be forthcoming if Hanoi asked for them.

Memo Control Form

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CLASSIFICATION OF MEMO (OCI)

NOTICE NO Unnumbered COVER SHEET DISSEM AUTHORIZATION

MEMO NO Unnumbered DATE 11 Dec 1967 Due D/OCI Review COB today
Dates: Dissem COB 11 Dec 67

SUBJECT: Meaning and purpose of Soviet Warning on Laos and Cambodia (TYPESCRIPT)

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: D/OCI for Gov Harriman

PURPOSE: Typescript memo.

ASSIGNED TO: Sov/ GRAPHICS none COORDINATE OUTSIDE OCI ---

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