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# CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

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issues now that monetary reform has been implemented and the divisive pressures that threatened to split the RLP have been contained, at least for the time being. It also appears likely that ex-Premier Souvanna Phouma will be appointed ambassador to France, thus removing from the scene one of Phoui's principal rivals within conservative ranks.

The government may now turn its attention to the reforms and antisubversive measures necessary for successful

competition with the Communist-dominated Neo Lao Hak Zat (NLHZ) in the national elections in late 1959 or 1960. Since their electoral debacle in May, conservative politicians have been preoccupied with intramural political maneuvering in Vientiane --merging conservative parties into the RLP, forming an anti-Communist government, and undertaking monetary reform. During this period the NLHZ has had practically a free hand in the provinces, and it is making gains in almost every sector of Laotian society.

## DISCONTENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Considerable discontent has developed among various groups in South Vietnam with the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem. Criticism is directed primarily against the President's relatives and close associates, but his authoritarian tactics are also under fire. There is no alternative strong leader to hold divisive forces in check, and Diem's sudden removal from office would probably lead to political chaos.

Criticism of Diem's authoritarianism is being heard increasingly among influential Vietnamese, including members of his cabinet. These critics feel Diem's unwillingness to delegate authority is hampering progress and seriously weakening the regime. There is also growing resentment within the National Assembly, which feels it is being used as a rubber stamp for legislation imposed from above.

The activities of Ngo Dinh Nhu, the President's brother and chief political adviser, are responsible for much dissatisfaction within the governmental structure. Nhu, head of

the semicovert Can Lao party, which controls all political activity in Vietnam, is building a network of commissar-like agents strategically placed throughout the government. This system stifles initiative, and rewards on the basis of political reliability rather than ability.

Nhu's efforts to strengthen Can Lao influence within the armed forces and security services are particularly dangerous in view of growing resentment on the part of professional officers over political interference. The military in general is considered loyal to Diem, but the possibility of an eventual coup by disgruntled elements cannot be discounted.

Other factors working against the regime's popularity in commercial, labor, and professional circles, as well as among the masses, are bureaucratic red tape, heavy-handed control measures, curtailment of press and civil liberties, and venality among civil servants. Regionalism--friction between Vietnamese of northern and southern origin--and

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mounting discontent over Vietnamese repression among tribal groups in the highlands are also potential trouble sources. Remnant dissident sect bands and the Vietnamese Communist underground provide a nucleus of armed opposition to the Diem regime.

Against this backdrop of adverse conditions, Diem is determinedly pushing several ambitious programs--notably agrarian reform, resettlement, land development, and limited industrialization--which hold

promise of mitigating many of the regime's present problems. The chief immediate threat is the ever-present danger of Diem's assassination. In 1957, Diem narrowly missed assassination when bullets intended for him seriously wounded a cabinet member; subsequently, other attempts on his life have been reported. Despite constitutional provision for the vice president to succeed in an emergency, divisive forces are so strong that a debilitating power struggle would probably occur.

IRELAND'S FOREIGN POLICY

Ireland has taken an unusually active role in international affairs since 1955, when it was admitted to the United Nations, and on several occasions has taken a position which diverges sharply from that of other Western nations.



AIKEN

a general war. Consequently, the government shows a growing tendency to seek compromises through the UN on controversial problems.

Minister of External Affairs Frank Aiken, who is mainly responsible for Ireland's more aggressive approach, believes the UN's chief value is the opportunity it affords small nations like Ireland to influence the great powers. His proposal for the phased withdrawal of foreign forces from Europe, his insistence that the Chinese UN representation question is a matter for discussion in the General Assembly, and his most recent suggestion that the possession of atomic weapons be limited to the US, the UK, the USSR, and France are admitted attempts on his part to break down increasing rigidity on these issues.

While Irish foreign policy is still directed toward the traditional desire for neutrality and is firmly anti-Communist, the De Valera government is increasingly concerned with the inflexibility of the East-West power blocs and the threat of

Ireland has also taken a more active interest in colonial problems since joining the UN. In a speech before the UN General Assembly in September 1957, Aiken suggested setting up a UN investigative commission in Algeria; and at the height of the Middle East

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