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Note
Memorandum

CONFIDENTIAL

[Ottawa], May 8, 1961

SUMMARY OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND
PRIME MINISTER DIEFENBAKER, OTTAWA, MAY 1, 1961

The *Prime Minister* invited the President to lead off the discussion with a general review of world conditions but *Mr. Bourguiba* preferred to take up areas and topics seriatim. He thought that Tunisia's general position on international developments had become well known through statements and votes in the United Nations. *Mr. Diefenbaker* agreed and expressed appreciation for the constructive role Tunisia had played in the Security Council and in the General Assembly.

Congo: In reply to the *Prime Minister's* enquiries, the *President* preferred not to make specific predictions as to the course events would take in the Congo. He was not very optimistic and thought that disputation would continue for a long time; the present divisions would go on until there is wide agreement and strong leadership in the country. The *Prime Minister* wondered just who the leaders were who could bring the Congo to stability and the *President* gave his view that they did not yet exist but were sure to show up later.

In response to an enquiry from *Mr. Diefenbaker* about Mr. Tshombe's detention, *Mr. Bourguiba* said that nothing was surprising in the Congo and that anything could happen; the Congolese behaved like children and the logic of more advanced countries did not apply to them. The problems of the Congo, basically those of tribalism and national disorganization (for which the Belgians carried a grave responsibility) had been aggravated by the introduction of the Cold War into that country and by the reflection of the ambitions of certain outside African leaders.

At a later stage, the *Prime Minister* commented on the amazingly high proportion of the Tunisian armed forces which had been committed to the U.N. operation in the Congo – about 3,300 out of total forces of 25,000. The *President* agreed that it was indeed a high proportion; the reason Tunisia had allocated so many to the U.N. operation was to give full support to Mr. Hammarskjöld and to the capacity of the United Nations to maintain its authority. Tunisian participation was not particularly because of sympathy for the Congolese themselves, who did not seem to deserve it.

Cuba: *Mr. Diefenbaker* said he would be interested to learn of Tunisian reaction to the Cuban situation. *Mr. Bourguiba* recognized this as a particularly difficult problem. The reaction in Latin America had been a confusion of nationalism with a certain rancour against the United States. There was a danger that Castroism would spread and gain momentum in all Latin America and this could provide a springboard for international communism. The United States would have to be very careful if a worsening of the situation were to be avoided. The *Prime Minister* enquired how, in the *President's* opinion, this worsening should be prevented. *Mr. Bourguiba* said this could only be done by not permitting new developments whereby Latin American bitterness would increase. It was important to move in time and prevent a foothold for communism; at a later stage it might be too late. *Mr. Diefenbaker* wondered what was the proper stage at which to stop communism. Was it possible that the effort to stop it might, in fact, be responsible for strengthening communism? *Mr. Bourguiba* said that communism profited from rancour and resentment; when a dominated country reacted against domination, communism is given an opportunity. Preventive action was the important thing.