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31st May, 1949

Copy No. **21**.....

CABINET

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNISM

FOREIGN OFFICE INFORMATION ACTIVITIES WITH SPECIAL

REFERENCE TO ANTI-COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA

Memorandum by the Foreign Office

I. Terms of Reference

The general directive laid down by the Cabinet when they decided to authorise anti-Communist propaganda was as follows:-

"To oppose the inroads of Communism by taking the offensive against it, basing ourselves on the standpoint of the position and vital ideas of British Social Democracy and Western civilisation, and to give a lead to our friends abroad and help them in the anti-Communist struggle."

It will be noticed that the instruction was to oppose the inroads of Communism, i.e. its progress in countries not under Communist control, and to encourage our friends. We were, in addition, given specific Ministerial instructions not to do subversive propaganda in the countries under Communist control but to aim at encouraging anti-Communism in the countries not under Communist control, giving priority to the countries in which there is most danger of the Communists coming into power. Further, we have been forbidden hitherto to do propaganda designed to stimulate subversive activities in the countries in the Soviet orbit.

2. We have only received authority to use underground propaganda methods in the Middle East, Burma, and recently to a very limited extent, in Germany. We are now seeking authority to set up a covert propaganda organisation for China and, if Mr. Malcolm MacDonald agrees, for South-East Asia.

3. A further limitation which has been placed by Ministers upon our anti-Communist propaganda is that it must not become generally known that H.M. Government are carrying on an anti-Communist campaign in foreign countries / through

through official channels. We could otherwise be accused of interfering in the internal affairs of friendly countries.

4. Again, we have no authorisation to do anti-Communist propaganda in this country - only in and to foreign countries, the Colonies and, within limitations, in and to other self-governing members of the Commonwealth. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office has in fact arranged for our material to be supplied to the International Department of the Labour Party Headquarters, and for some of it to be passed to the T.U.C. and some selected M.P's, but this is by way of a private and personal arrangement. Apart from this the only anti-Communist work done by the Foreign Office in this country - but this is considerable in its effect - is the guidance on international affairs given by the Foreign Office to the newspapers here; and Speakers' Notes are provided periodically to Ministers.

II. Machinery

5. The machinery at home consists of:

(a) the Colonial Information Policy Committee set up by the Cabinet (consisting of the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries at the Foreign Office, Colonial Office and Commonwealth Relations Office) whose terms of reference cover all overseas anti-Communist Information work;

(b) an official departmental working party under the Ministerial Committee consisting of members of the three Overseas Departments, and attended by representatives of the Central Office of Information the B.B.C., and other Government Departments, as necessary;

(c) the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office, the operative planning, intelligence and production department for the overseas anti-Communist propaganda work. This Department at present has a staff of 50, with a Counsellor at the head, and is divided into sections to deal with propaganda intelligence, planning and editorial and production work. It provides the raw material for use in Commonwealth countries and Colonial territories as well as that for foreign countries.

6. This machinery for doing specifically anti-Communist propaganda is closely linked throughout with the machinery for doing positive propaganda about ourselves and our achievements, Western Union, E.R.P., etc., etc., which consists of one central and 6 Regional departments in the Foreign Office, and Publicity Departments in the Colonial Office and Commonwealth Relations Office.

7. The machinery overseas consists of Information staffs at practically all Embassies and Legations and a good number of Consular posts in foreign countries, a Regional production organisation for Arabic material in Cairo and a
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Regional office which has just been set up in Singapore for the production of material in the languages of South East Asia. In most of the Colonies and Dominions there are British staffs of various sizes concerned with Information work.

III. Nature of the Work

8. By far the most effective technique for overt propaganda work overseas is to get the ideas and information you desire carried for you by the local newspapers, key men in various walks of life, local broadcasts etc., without any sign that the ideas and information emanate from British official sources. Since, as I have stated above, we are under instructions that it should not be generally known that H.M. Government are carrying on anti-Communist propaganda, we are confined to this technique. But in point of fact anti-Communist propaganda which was put out openly from British official sources would queer its own pitch. Anti-Communist material is sent out from London in the form of basic papers dealing with some aspect of Communism, a Digest of short up-to-date anti-Communist items sent out every fortnight in English and French, special directives on the handling of current matters sent by telegram and articles for the newspapers etc. This material is adapted, and where necessary translated by the Information staffs overseas and distributed to journalists, members of broadcasting organisations, writers, Trades Unionists and key men in various walks of life who are glad to use it as their own without acknowledging its British official origin. A great deal of such material is now appearing in newspapers all over the world and is being used by trade union organisations, party organisations and a large number of prominent individuals. In addition British officials and in some cases prominent members of the British colonies use the material in their contacts with the local inhabitants from Cabinet Ministers downwards.
9. We supply a lot of information, by arrangement, to the Brussels Treaty Governments and this arrangement is being extended by request to Iraq at the request of the Regent and Prime Minister. The High Commissioners in the Commonwealth countries have been instructed to consider whether a similar arrangements could not be made with the Governments there.
10. Much is also done in the way of securing the reproduction in foreign reviews of good anti-Communist articles written in this country, the translation of suitable books etc., etc. We are able to some extent to stimulate the writing of such articles and provide material for them.
11. It need hardly be said that none of this open anti-Communist propaganda work can be done in the Soviet Union or satellite countries.
12. We also brief British official delegations to international conferences and provide them with material for attacking the line taken by the Soviet bloc. The excellent work done in this field by the Minister of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office will have been noticed. We try, if possible, to brief non-official
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British delegations or suitable members of them going to conferences abroad.

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14. In Germany covert means have recently been brought into use for disrupting the Communist Party's organisation and stimulating anti-Communist work in the British Zone.

15. The work of the B.B.C. is very important, and in consultation with General Jacob the overseas broadcasts have been enormously stepped up in an anti-Communist sense and is now good. Those in the Foreign Office and Colonial Office concerned with publicity are in the closest contact with their opposite numbers in the B.B.C. Broadcasts are the only means at present available to us of anti-Communist propoganda in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. There is no doubt that they are now effective. Special guidance telegrams for the B.B.C. in the handling of day-to-day matters are sent by our Missions in the Iron Curtain countries and there is constant correspondence between them and the B.B.C. editors concerned.

16. Our arrangements for securing information from other Government Departments are satisfactory except, hitherto, in the case of the Service Departments. It would be very valuable to receive from them, if possible, a flow of information on Service matters for strengthening the confidence of our friends abroad. The special liaison arrangements made as the result of a working party set up with the approval of the Chiefs of Staff and Prime Minister over a year ago proved unsatisfactory. New arrangements have recently been made after discussion with Sir Maurice Dean, by which we are to rely upon contacts with the Committee of Service Public Relations Officers under Mr. Newling.

17. We have an arrangement with the Americans for the exchange of information and ideas on anti-Communist propoganda both between the Foreign Office and State Department and between our representatives abroad.

IV. Conclusions

18. The present machinery for anti-Communist propoganda overseas, within the limits imposed, is working well. There are various ways in which the work can be extended but these are under continuous study. The Ministerial Committee is drawing up a 3-year programme for the extension of information work overseas - particularly in the Colonies and in the new Commonwealth countries.

19. Major points which suggest themselves for consideration / are

are:

- (a) Should Ministers be recommended to allow us to undertake, and set up machinery to do, anti-Communist propaganda at home?
- (b) Should the present ban on subversive propaganda behind the Iron Curtain be lifted? If so, this must be done - except for the B.B.C. - by underground means. The underground organisation for this purpose would take a long time to build up. It should be done in co-operation with the United States.

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Foreign Office, S.W.1.

31ST MAY, 1949.