

The circulation of this paper has been strictly limited.
It is issued for the personal use of _____

TOP SECRET

Copy No. 19

A.C.(O)(50) 37

15TH AUGUST, 1950

CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNISM (OVERSEAS)

ANTI-COMMUNIST MEASURES IN THE FAR EAST

Memorandum by Overseas Planning Section

The object of this paper is to examine the possibilities of intensifying and extending the scope of our anti-Communist effort in the Far East. It is based on the Foreign Office memorandum entitled "The 'Cold War' in the Far East", which was submitted to the Committee under cover of A.C.(O)(50) 31 dated 19th July, 1950. The paper is in three parts: part A deals with the situation as it is now in South-East Asia, part B deals with China and part C contains proposals for action in both areas. Malaya and Japan are omitted from the discussion (apart from a general reference to the former) on the grounds that Malaya is being dealt with by a special Cabinet Committee (see paragraph 8 below) and that Japan is mainly an American commitment.

A. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

2. Our aims in South-East Asia are:-

(a) To oppose Communism in all its manifestations, using offensive as well as defensive methods;

(b) To enlist for this purpose the co-operation and assistance of all friendly Governments in this area, including other Colonial powers; and

(c) Above all, to secure the greatest possible help and co-operation from the United States of America, wherever this seems necessary or desirable.

3. The Communist effort in South-East Asia takes three main forms - physical force (see paragraph 4 below), agitation (see paragraph 5) and propaganda from outside (see paragraph 6).

4. The instruments of force are:-

(a) Viet Minh, i.e. an Indo-Chinese fighting force owing allegiance to Moscow, but accepting presumably substantial moral and perhaps material aid from China, with which it has close connections.

(b) The forces of the Burma Communist Party, (also indigenous and not Chinese), whose allegiance doubtless goes to Moscow, though the exact link with the Kremlin has not been established with precision. Due to local circumstances these

forces are reinforced by arrangements with the non-Communist Karens and with the neo-Communist People's Volunteer Organisation (P.V.O.) or factions thereof.

(c) The "Bandit" forces of the Malaya Communist Party, which as a constituted party owes allegiance to Moscow, but because of its Chinese character must clearly feel a close connection with the Chinese Communist Party and the Peking Government. It is however improbable that the Chinese Communist Party can claim control of the party, since this would ipso facto deny the Malayan character of the Malayan Communist Party and expose it as a purely Chinese affair.

(d) Forces of unknown strength and composition - though thought to be predominantly Javanese or Sumatran - in Indonesia. Although the Republic seems to have suppressed these forces after Moeso's irruption in 1948, the fact that a single emissary from Moscow could raise a revolt at short notice suggests that we should not write off the potentialities of Communist revolt in Indonesia, however ill-knit and ill-indoctrinated they may appear to be at present.

(e) The Hukbalahaps in the Philippines, of whom Communist propaganda has recently openly claimed Communist direction.

5. The principal agencies of agitation are:-

(a) Elements of the Burma Socialist Party who suppose themselves to be Marxist and for local political reasons attempt to be more anti-imperialist than even the Burma Communist Party.

(b) The T.U.C. (Burma), which has just declared its intention to affiliate to the World Federation of Trade Unions and in character rather resembles the Burma Socialist Party.

(c) The Communist Party of Siam, which is almost entirely Chinese, does not appear to have received a signal for active revolt or sabotage yet, and is being used simply as an agency of popular agitation and of bringing pressure to bear upon the Government.

(d) The Sobsi (Central Organisation of Indonesian Labour Unions), which is wobbling about and being ardently courted by the World Federation of Trade Unions and by the Peking Government. It appears to have some sound members and a great many unsound ones.

(e) The World Federation of Trade Unions and its agitators and propaganda agencies generally in the whole area. Recent evidence (some of it secret) shows that, although the World Federation of Trade Unions was declared to be virtually a principal agency for the support of the "National Liberation Struggle" in South-East Asia and was to have set up a Liaison Bureau in the Far East to carry out this task, the Liaison Bureau has at any rate until recently not in fact been set up. Nevertheless, the W.F.T.U. propaganda is skilful, unscrupulous, widespread and well calculated to invoke the affiliation of ingenuous oriental Trade Unions or Trade Unions run on the Chinese racketeering system, such as those exposed in the Awbery-Dalley Report on Malaya.

(f) The Overseas Chinese Communities (especially those born in China) inasmuch as their loyalty to (and interest in being protected by) a Chinese Government makes them almost automatic agencies of the Peking Government.

6. The main centres of propaganda from outside South-East Asia are:-

(a) Moscow Radio and the Tass Agency, whose effects must be estimated for technical reasons to be not very great in the area.

(b) Peking Radio and the transmissions of the New China News Agency to its customers in South-East Asia as a whole.

(c) The Viet Nam (Viet Minh) News Agency which has an effect on e.g. the Burmese Government and Indonesian leaders, as well as wide circles of Asian publics, and on a small audience in Europe.

(d) Other Communist or Communist-inspired or Communist-directed propaganda reaching the area through various means, such as direct mail, news-letter, created news, incidents reported by the news agencies, reports from the Communist press, reflections of Soviet or satellite propaganda manoeuvres in international gatherings such as U.N.O., etc.

7. Anti-Communist forces. These may be broadly classified as the military efforts of ourselves, the French, the Indonesian Republic and the Burma Government; the long-term economic planning proceeding from the Sydney Conference; a propaganda machine which is described below; security liaison arrangements with the French and to a limited extent with the Siamese; and American aid and co-operation, which is developing in all fields.

8. Detailed consideration of policy and machinery as regards Malaya is omitted from this paper as being the concern of the Malaya Committee, which in the ideological field is at the moment overhauling both policy and machinery.

9. Our propaganda machinery consists of the information elements in our Embassies and Legations, which are fed with anti-Communist guidance and material from the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office and from the Regional Information Office set up in Singapore to serve the requirements of both Colonial Governments and foreign Missions. Associated with this machinery is a parallel one of Top Secret propaganda activities, which are of some considerable effect in Burma and are making a contribution in Siam, but have not developed in either Indo-China, (where hitherto relations with the French make such a task too delicate) or in Indonesia. The Regional Information Office has, also, an officer in Hong Kong engaged both in collecting information which may be of value in the propaganda task in South-East Asia as a whole, and in the distribution of delicate material which may get back into China or which may spread through the Chinese community. In addition, the B.B.C. short wave transmissions from London are directed to the Far East as a whole: their direct reception is not very effective, but they are relayed at 100 Kw. from Ceylon and at very much lower power from a temporary station in Singapore, which is to be replaced by two 100 Kw. transmitters now being installed in South Johore.

10. The propaganda agencies of the other governments are for anti-Communist purposes inconsiderable in comparison with ours. French official information is ipso-facto suspect to the people whom we wish to influence, though it is believed that the French authorities have retained control over the relatively powerful Radio Saigon medium wave station; Burmese official information is chaotic; the Siamese official and unofficial press has the advantage of being solidly apprehensive of the Chinese community; while the Indonesian propaganda machine is reported to be packed with fellow-travellers, and moreover was originally developed for effect abroad, rather than within the frontiers of the United States of Indonesia. Indirectly, the influence of the Indian press and expressions of Indian opinion are of considerable importance and receive fair distribution through news agency channels. A Viet Nam (Bao Dai) news service has been announced as entering the field, but cannot be expected to have much effect, if ever, for a considerable time.

11. American assistance in this field has hitherto been very small, but there is now to be a considerable development, the elements of which have been discussed at the recent conversations held at the time of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Conference in London. American plans are still not definite but they propose to establish a working liaison with our Regional Information Office in Singapore, and to set up a Regional Office of their own either there or in Manila. They have agreed with us regarding the general lines along which their organisations should work. In the field of broadcasting they have already made a proposal for participation in the use of the high-power transmitter in Ceylon and in the high-power station building in Johore: these proposals are being examined by the B.B.C., Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office, and in addition these three Departments are tackling the problem of negotiating with the Ceylon Government the prolongation of the lease of the high-power transmitter there (which was to have ceased when the Johore station came into operation) in order that the B.B.C. relays should be reinforced by three 100 Kw. transmitters instead of two. It is expected that the Johore station will come into operation in April, 1951; the B.B.C. are having difficulty in keeping labour at the site under the disturbed conditions in Malaya, and, while they have directed that all speed should be applied to the work, they do not think they can get the station going earlier.

B. CHINA

12. Our aims in China are (a) to deter the Chinese Government from embarking on adventures outside its frontiers and (b) to loosen the ties between China and Russia. We must avoid, as far as possible, saying or doing anything likely to increase Chinese hostility towards us and to drive China further into Russian arms.

13. As regards propaganda to China, the only direct medium to hand is broadcasting. Our facilities for broadcasting to China are limited to those described in paragraph 9 above. The broadcasting station at Hong Kong, which at first sight presents obvious possibilities, is barely sufficient for the needs of the Colony itself; and in any case a recent proposal for strengthening it to enable it to be heard in part of South China, including Canton, has been turned down owing to the apprehensions of the Colonial Office and the Governor of Hong Kong lest the present delicate but tolerable relations

with the Chinese Government should be upset. Useful results may, however, be achieved by the local representative of the Regional Information Office in Singapore (See paragraph 9 above).

14. There is no organised group of anti-Communist Chinese untainted with the record of the Kuo Min Tang either outside or, so far as we know, inside China; and any attempt at this stage to establish a resistance movement inside the country would almost certainly be premature and run the risk, by failing, of strengthening the Communist Party.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

15. In considering what can be done to intensify the "cold war" in the area, the complicating factors must be borne in mind. Briefly, they may be stated as those devolving from our China policy, which has hitherto placed severe restriction on our propaganda either about China or to Chinese; the extreme sensitivity of the Burmese Government and public to any signs of intimate collaboration with the Western Powers; a similar sensitivity on the part of the Indonesian Government, which in the opinion of His Majesty's Ambassador in Djakarta, might react against any attempts to push it off the fence by falling off on the wrong side; and the virtual impossibility of any direct action in Indo-China in the face of French susceptibilities. Apart from all this, there is the basic psychological consideration that, in the ideological field, ex parte statements and propaganda by the overt mass media of the Western Powers are suspect by the Asian populations, trained as they are in the tradition of opposition to "imperialism", so that effective anti-Communist propaganda must be organised as coming from Asian sources and on the responsibility of Asian publicists, leaders of opinion, scholars, etc., rather than from Europeans. This does not mean, of course, that positive projection of our own policies by our overt means cannot be carried out or is ineffectual, but the sharper political material requires a technique which is more difficult, more elaborate and in some respects more costly than the simple application of open information media. In the light of these considerations, the following recommendations are submitted, subject of course to consultation with His Majesty's Representatives in the areas concerned:-

(i) In the first place, a great improvement of our intelligence about the whole area, and particularly about conditions in China, the Soviet Far East and Korea, is badly needed. This requires, it may be suggested, not only an improvement in our own intake of secret intelligence, but also an intensification of relations with the American organisations in order to ensure that their information is made available as quickly as possible to our organisation. We are initiating arrangements with them for the extraction of press intelligence both from the Chinese press of China and from the Chinese and other vernacular press of South-East Asia. This should be accelerated. It is hoped that a great improvement in our intake of this press intelligence can be effected at modest cost if the Americans will participate.

(ii) Urgent consideration should be given to the possibility of recruiting agents in Indonesia who could, without associating themselves with "Imperialism", penetrate Left Wing groups and both check their progress towards Communism and seek to swing them into nationalist opposition to the threat represented by Kremlin imperialism and, in particular, by

Chinese expansionism. Correspondence with His Majesty's Ambassador gives ground for believing that such covert action might be possible and effective and that it would not have the same objections as diplomatic efforts to convince the Indonesian Government where their interest lies. Our aim might be to place agents in S.O.B.S.I. and the Indonesian newspaper world, as well as in, say, some of the more Left Wing parties. Our intelligence regarding conditions in the United States of Indonesia as a whole does not allow more specific recommendations, e.g. in respect of Sumatra, Celebes, or even Java, at present.

(iii) Consideration should be given to similar action in Burma. The groups where these agents might be placed should be the T.U.C. (Burma), the Burma Socialist Party and suitable factions of the P.V.O. itself.

(iv) In the field of labour relations, it has already been decided that the I.C.F.T.U. should send a mission to South-East Asia to represent its point of view in opposition to the propaganda and agitation of the W.F.T.U. This is only a mission however, and the present proposals do not include the establishment of a permanent I.C.F.T.U. office in South-East Asia. Consideration might be given to urging the I.C.F.T.U. to set up such an office and to include in it a press officer with practical experience. He might possibly be a "volunteer" covertly subsidised by the Foreign Office. This Office could usefully be established in Singapore or Djakarta. If our "volunteer" were an Asian citizen of some kind, so much the better. In this general connection, it may be noted that, in addition, a proposal has been made for the appointment of a Labour Adviser to the Commissioner-General: this is now being expedited. It may be hoped that his personal influence in the field of labour may be considerable.

(v) In the field of security measures, an advance might be made by tightening up our policy regarding the granting of transit facilities for the emissaries of Communist "Front" organisations, or of emissaries from these various countries attempting to set up connections with such organisations. For example, last year transit facilities were granted in Hong Kong to a S.O.B.S.I. delegation from Indonesia proceeding to the W.F.T.U. meeting in Peking. It may be recommended that urgent consideration be given to the formation of a black list of organisations, coupled with an instruction to our colonial authorities to prevent the passage of emissaries of these organisations or of persons going to their meetings. Such organisations are the World Federation of Trade Unions, World Federation of Democratic Youth, Women's International Democratic Federation, "Partisans of Peace", various Writers' Congresses, and spurious cultural organisations for relations with the U.S.S.R.

(vi) As a next step, we should consider how far we can go in approaches to the Burmese and Siamese Governments to suggest to them that they should similarly take measures to impede the movements of these agitators. There have been recent indications reported from Rangoon of a hardening of the attitude of the Burmese Government to the W.F.T.U. and towards extremist elements in pro-government parties. The Burmese are ignorant of the character and the real purpose of some of these organisations, and we might gain some advantage by a confidential explanation of what they are up

to and which of them might be stopped with advantage to the Burmese Government. In this connection, the Indian Government have taken very resolute action in stopping W.F.T.U. commissions and in impeding the gathering of so-called Cultural Congresses designed to spread Communist political propaganda, and this precedent may be useful. It is probably too early to attempt any such approach to the Indoesian Government.

(vii) At a later stage, consideration might be given to arriving at a Commonwealth policy in this matter, just as it is proposed to move towards arriving at a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy in the same connection.

(viii) It is already proposed to initiate a cautious policy of passing papers for general information to these Asian Governments in South-East Asia, and to include among them papers on, e.g. Ho Chi Minh, Soviet policy in several fields and the implications of Chinese policy, with the object of influencing these Governments and of educating at any rate their top layers. The passing of such papers is already taking place in the case of Western European Governments, and also Commonwealth Governments, and there is reason to believe that some of them have had a not inconsiderable influence on the attitude of Pandit Nehru and the Indian Government.

(ix) The Colonial authorities concerned should be asked to study the possibility of impeding the activities of the N.C.N.A. and the Viet Nam News Agency by administrative methods. A similar study should be made as regards Burma, Indonesia and Siam, where denunciations, Special Operations etc. might be usefully employed. The United States should be informed of developments in these fields and invited to co-operate, e.g. in the Philippines.

(x) Our general stand in regard to Soviet jamming of our broadcasts would probably render it impossible for us to institute jamming of e.g. Peking in Malaya, but the Colonial Office might be invited to give consideration to this. It might be argued that the state of emergency gave us a locus standi there for jamming which we do not possess elsewhere.

(xi) We should examine the possibility of forming, maintaining and controlling a small and very carefully chosen group of Chinese intellectuals outside China to propagate a new set of values for China, based on progressive principles of which the most important would be (a) support of agrarian revolution and social reform, (b) the elimination of totalitarian and other strait-jacket influences and (c) freedom of intellectual, cultural and scientific intercourse between China and the rest of the world, as opposed to the abject subordination of Chinese culture to a single alien political philosophy.

(xii) We should consider the possibility of setting up Centres of Chinese Studies in the Universities of Hong Kong and Singapore. We should not attempt to use them for subversive purposes, but encourage them to work openly and publicly as centres of Chinese scholarship. Mr. Gloss, late Vice-Chancellor of Hong Kong University (now in England) and Mr. Adams, Secretary of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies (who is in the Foreign Office's confidence in matters of "political warfare") might have valuable advice to offer.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

15TH AUGUST, 1950.