

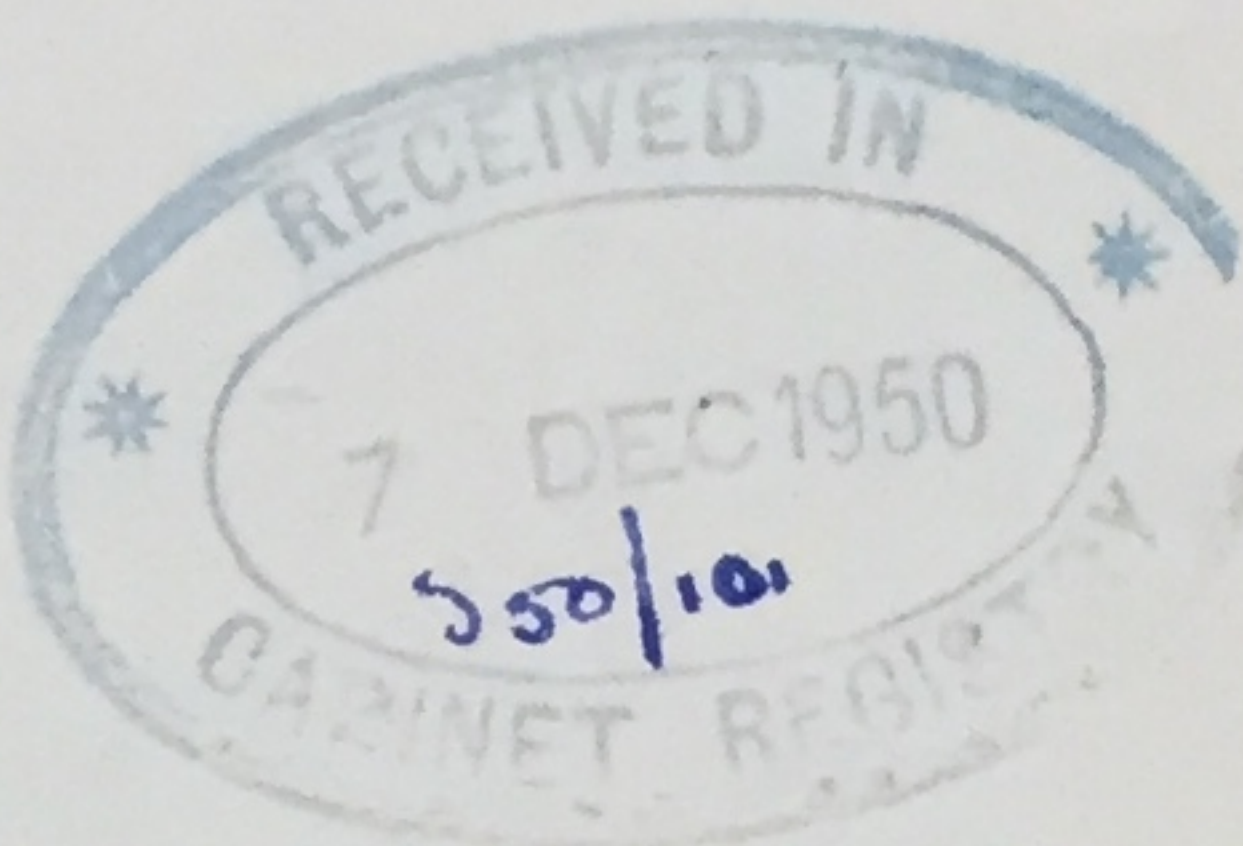
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A.C.(O)(50) 52 (THIRD REVISE)

TH NOVEMBER, 1950

CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNISM (OVERSEAS)

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

Memorandum by the Committee

This memorandum recommends proposals for intensified covert anti-Communist action in the Satellite countries of Eastern Europe which have been formulated by the inter-departmental Official Committee on Communism (Overseas). Although the memorandum is mainly concerned with covert measures, we recognise the importance of also maintaining vigorous overt activities in the field of broadcast propaganda to the Satellites, and we have therefore included recommendations on this aspect among our proposals.

BACKGROUND

2. In 1949 the Cabinet approved the appointment of an inter-departmental Committee to consider and report on the effectiveness of the measures taken by Departments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to combat Communism. A brief account of the Committee's report and recommendations, which led to the setting up of a permanent body known as the Official Committee on Communism (Overseas), and a review of the latter Committee's work to date are attached as an Annex.

3. As a result of our studies we have reached the conclusion that one of the most important fields in which covert anti-Communist action should be intensified is the Satellite countries of Eastern Europe.

4. This view receives support from the Chiefs of Staff in their paper D.O.(50)34 (approved by the Defence Committee on 25th May, 1950) on Defence Policy and Global Strategy. They state there that after "a stabilisation of the anti-Communist front in the present free world" the Western Powers should aim at "the intensification of 'cold' offensive measures aimed at weakening the Russian grip on the Satellite States and ultimately achieving their complete independence of Russian control". In the body of that paper they have suggested that "even now the Allies could afford to adopt a more forward strategy in the cold war, and should be making all possible plans and preparations to be more and more offensive as their military strength grows".

5. The Joint Intelligence Committee, in a study of Soviet intentions dated the 18th July, 1950, expressed the opinion that the "Soviet leaders will..... continue to press their plans for the extension of Communist influence by political, economic and ideological warfare and by subversion and civil war". Bearing in mind the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff, we consider that the Joint Intelligence Committee's conclusion accurately describes a state of affairs which calls for more energetic counter-measures, not only against the subversive activities of Communism in the free world, but also against Communist Governments in power behind the Iron Curtain.

AIMS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Aims

6. We believe that the proposals we recommend below will contribute to the following general aims:-

(a) To add to Soviet difficulties in the occupation or domination of the Satellite countries;

(b) To ensure that Western and United Nations propaganda reaches the populations of the Satellite countries despite radio jamming.

(c) To maintain the morale of these populations by making them feel that they have not been entirely forgotten and written off by the West;

(d) To develop contacts which would facilitate the organisation of resistance movements in the event of war;

(e) To stimulate the flow of intelligence (which has been decreasing) from Soviet-controlled countries.

Considerations

7. We are aware of the dangers and difficulties of engaging in activities behind the Iron Curtain, and in formulating our proposals we have ruled out any action likely to:-

(a) Increase unduly the tension between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers;

(b) Result in untimely risings or useless acts of defiance in the Satellite countries;

(c) Compromise members of His Majesty's Missions in the countries concerned;

(d) Run counter in the economic field to the general policy on East-West trade.

8. We do not, however, believe that a carefully controlled increase in anti-Communist activities within the Soviet orbit necessarily involves such grave risks, and we would draw attention to the fact that, during the past two years, two important subversive operations behind the Iron Curtain have been approved by the Foreign Secretary and carried out without embarrassing consequences. More recently, the Foreign Secretary has approved a third operation of this kind. These three operations are:-

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(b) In the Soviet Zone of Germany we have been attempting for some time to discredit individual leaders of the Socialist Unity Party in the eyes of their followers and of the Russians. The campaign has been conducted on a modest scale; but we have evidence that it has caused dissension within the Party, and there have also been a certain number of defections of persons who were the targets of the operation.

(c) In addition, the Foreign Secretary has recently agreed that certain action should also be taken against the German police in the Soviet Zone, who constitute the gravest threat to peace in that part of the world. The object of the campaign, in which the help of some Germans will have to be enlisted, will be to lower the morale of officers and men, and to incriminate the senior officers in the eyes of the Russian security police. In this way, we hope to undermine the confidence of the Russians in the loyalty and efficiency of this force and so reduce the possibility of its being used to attack the Western sectors of Berlin or the Federal Republic.

9. Clandestine propaganda to the Satellite countries clearly must not be attributable to British official sources. This implies that the material to be distributed must be either:-

- (1) Material overtly emanating from refugee sources (who would, however, be working under our control); or
- (2) Material ostensibly originating from dissident groups (including dissident Communist groups) inside the country concerned, but produced in fact by refugee and other writers working under our control outside, and introduced covertly into the country concerned.

With regard to category (1), experience has shown that close control of the production of this material is required, since refugees are notoriously prone to use such opportunities merely to forward personal or party political aims. The production of this material will therefore entail our recruiting refugee writers and technicians who will work under our control. As material in category (2) requires to be produced in the strictest security conditions and by highly skilled technicians, this will entail the separate employment of refugee and other personnel specially recruited for this task.

10. The operations listed in paragraphs 12-17 below will be carried out in the closest possible collaboration with the United States Government to ensure that the most economical use is made of our resources.

11. The proposals are necessarily limited in scope and are in the nature of an experiment. We wish to draw particular attention to the fact that they do not contemplate violent

action of the type undertaken by S.O.E. during the war. We intend, if they are approved in principle by Ministers, to inform His Majesty's Representatives in the countries concerned and to consider any modifications which they may wish to suggest. If the proposed operations are successful, it is our intention to produce further proposals for action behind the Iron Curtain based on the results achieved by the present plans.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

Austria

12. We recommend that a modest programme for spreading dissension in the Austrian Communist Party should now be inaugurated and that Austrians should be used on a small scale for this purpose.*

Soviet Forces in Austria and Germany

13. We also recommend that Austrians and Germans should be employed on a programme to spread dissension among members of the Red Armies of Occupation. Our best opportunities for doing this are in Austria and Germany. Such operations would involve building up real or "notional" dissident groups, e.g. for the distribution of clandestine propaganda, which would in any case mislead and confuse the Russian security authorities and might in time produce an increased flow of defectors from amongst those who felt themselves in danger.

The Soviet Union and Eastern European Satellites

14. General We could develop secret channels of communication to permit disruptive operations in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and probably Poland, and would propose to take action accordingly. Such operations would include dissemination of propaganda ostensibly produced by dissident elements inside the countries concerned, as well as publications produced by refugee groups and apparently disseminated by their own organisations. We also propose to institute operations aimed at disrupting attempts by the Soviet bloc to circumvent the Western Powers' ban on exports of strategic material. This would initially involve the collection of intelligence for a black list, to be followed by suitable counter-action.

Czechoslovakia

15. We propose to apply the above measures with particular emphasis in Czechoslovakia, which is both an important industrial target and a country with which we have promising channels of clandestine communication.

Subversive propaganda

16. We propose to take advantage of opportunities for clandestine distribution of propaganda, by means of miniature publications, which exist in Czechoslovakia and Hungary and might be extended to other Eastern European countries. Clandestine dissemination of information calculated to worsen relations between the Satellite Governments and the Soviet Union should be particularly effective in the economic field, where we might hope, from time to time, to get information regarding one part of the Soviet bloc which was being withheld from another, and use it to create friction.

* This proposal, and the following (insofar as it concerns Austria) have the support of the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Austria.

"Whispering campaigns"

17. The possibility of compromising officials of national Communist parties or of the administrations of Satellite countries, particularly in the Soviet Zones of Germany and Austria, by "whispering campaigns" and analogous methods cannot be ignored in view of the atmosphere of suspicion which pervades all Communist organisations, and it is proposed to exploit such opportunities for this type of activity as may be found. Even top-ranking officials might be compromised or induced to defect in this way; this would mainly depend on chance, but the possibility would constantly be borne in mind.

B.B.C. broadcasts to Eastern Europe

18. We are impressed by the contribution which B.B.C. broadcasts to Eastern Europe make towards combatting Communism. We are concerned, however, by the increasing difficulties which are being encountered in reaching Satellite listeners and would stress the importance of taking urgent steps to prevent a further deterioration in the present situation. In the first place, we are informed that the B.B.C. are in an unfavourable position vis-a-vis the Russians as a result of His Majesty's Government's agreement to the allocation of medium-wave broadcasting frequencies under the 1948 Copenhagen Plan, particularly in their broadcasts to Eastern Germany and Poland. Secondly, we understand that the Satellite countries have begun to follow the Soviet lead in jamming the Eastern European services of the B.B.C. Quick action by the B.B.C. may soon be necessary to counter this jamming if it spreads, but there is no money available in their current estimates to enable this to be done.

19. We understand that the Colonial Information Policy Committee have submitted for consideration by Ministers, at the same time as the present memorandum, certain proposals for making the necessary financial provision for this among other world-wide needs. We consider that these proposals, insofar as they are relevant to propaganda to Eastern Europe (the area considered in this memorandum), deserve the fullest possible support if our overt propaganda is not to lose in effectiveness.

Cost

20. The proposals for action described in paragraphs 12 to 17 will inevitably involve additional expenditure in terms of money and man-power.

The production of clandestine propaganda material will, similarly, necessitate increased expenditure by the Foreign Office Department concerned amounting (together with production and administrative expenses) to not more than £50,000 from secret funds in the next financial year, increasing to a possible total of £100,000 per annum when plans are fully developed.

21. If the plans are approved before the end of the present financial year, any immediate increased expenditure by the Foreign Office and during the present financial year is likely to be small and could probably be met from available funds.

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22. The proposed addition to the secret vote is insignificant in comparison with our defence budget and may, in our opinion, be expected to pay increasing dividends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. We recommend that Ministers should approve the proposals outlined in paragraphs 12 to 17 of this memorandum, subject to the necessary additional provision being made from the secret vote. These proposals may be summarised as follows:-

- (i) Spreading dissension in the Austrian Communist Party.
- (ii) Spreading dissension among Red Army troops in Germany and Austria.
- (iii) Disruptive operations, including the distribution of clandestine propaganda, with special emphasis on Czechoslovakia as an important industrial target.
- (iv) Whispering campaigns aimed at Communist officials.

We also strongly recommend that Ministers should approve the proposals (mentioned in paragraph 18) for assistance to the B.B.C. which have been submitted by the Colonial Information Policy Committee.

(Signed)

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

NOVEMBER, 1950.