

TOP SECRET
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PRIME MINISTER

I think we should now consider what our policy should be for countering subversive activities by Communists, extreme nationalists, and other enemies of The Queen throughout the world, and whether our organisation for dealing with the problem is adequate.

2. There seems to be general agreement that the risk of global war has receded and that the Communists will seek to avoid steps which will substantially increase tension or the chances of war breaking out. On the other hand it is certain that their long term objectives have not changed and that we must be prepared to face a long period in which they will continue by subversion and other similar means to win over the free world to their system.

3. The attack on our position by Communist and extreme nationalist methods is not new, but as the risk of major nuclear conflict diminishes, the danger from more indirect methods will increase, particularly in such areas as the Middle East, South-East Asia and the Colonial territories. In the last few weeks we have seen the beginning of a Russian offensive of this type in the Middle East.

4. The strain which this throws upon our economic and defence resources is very great. The examples of Kenya, British Guiana and Cyprus show how great

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an expenditure of money and manpower may be involved through failure to take adequate precautionary steps in time at a mere fraction of the cost and effort ultimately involved.

5. The first requirement to meet this threat is a clear and determined policy for the area or territory concerned. In support of this all means, both overt and covert, must be directed and conducted both in London and locally with understanding and vigour. This has not always been the case in the past and I doubt in particular whether our covert effort has, except on a few occasions, been fully used. If this effort is not to be wasted it must be closely co-ordinated with our general policy and overt resources, such as economic aid, information work etc. Those responsible must also be encouraged to watch out for opportunities and to submit plans for defeating Communist, nationalist and other anti-British activities; and indeed to go further and take the initiative, wherever possible, in disrupting these activities and organisations at source.

6. I think that this is already the policy of the Government, but I am sure that it is not as clearly understood as it should be either by departments here or by British authorities abroad. We should see that this is now done.

7. If it is agreed that this should be our policy I think we should also consider the best procedure for carrying it out.

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8. For this purpose it is convenient to consider the world in three sections as follows. First, Communist occupied territories; secondly, British Colonial territories, Protectorates, etc.; and thirdly, intermediate territories such as a number of the Middle East countries like the Yemen, the Persian Gulf States, Afghanistan etc., and the smaller states of South-East Asia such as Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia and so on.

9. In present circumstances we can do little about the first category, except to take advantage of the present better atmosphere to encourage in these territories a better understanding of our way of life. This is clearly not the time for any major covert anti-Communist operations.

10. In the British Colonial territories I think there is probably much that can and should be done. The problem differs from Colony to Colony, but our objective, I suggest, should be to identify the principal anti-British interests at work in each territory and, on the basis of proper intelligence, take such counter-action as is required to maintain our own interests and defeat the enemy.

11. To accomplish this our first line of defence in these territories must be to build up wherever possible adequate reliable intelligence/security forces from the local population and resources so that, when the territory reaches independence, these forces are in situ
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and capable of preventing a relapse into Communism or anarchy.

12. But in many territories this is not enough. The advance to independence is swift and it is in some of the territories where independence is likely to come very soon that the strategic and economic interests of the United Kingdom are the greatest. Often it will not be possible for one reason or another to build up adequate indigenous intelligence/security forces in time, and I think we must seek some other way to maintain the essential United Kingdom interest before it is too late.

13. For this purpose I think that both the Security Service and M.I.6. will have to play a greater part than they have hitherto and that their efforts will have to be closely co-ordinated with those of the local British officials. I foresee a requirement in some at least of these territories for a group of persons to operate in the intelligence and counter-subversion fields solely in the interests of the United Kingdom. We cannot rely for this on the local indigenous security services, even where they exist, because they are falling progressively under the control of locally elected Ministers and parliamentary assemblies. There is therefore likely to be a clear divergence between the interests and policy of those Ministers and parliaments and those of the United Kingdom.

14. If we act in time I do not think that the number of territories in which these United Kingdom intelligence/security groups will be required need be many or that the groups
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themselves should be numerous. But they will have to owe loyalty to the United Kingdom Government alone. This raises a number of new problems. Among these are the relationship of these people to the Governor; the question of an extension of the Charters of both the Security Service and M.I.6 to enable them to act directly in support of United Kingdom interests in these territories; the problem of finance; the question of the division of functions among the organisations concerned and of staffing; the problems of cover and ways and means of operating. I have some ideas about the way in which these problems might be tackled which I would be glad to discuss with you.

15. The problem in the third class of territories to which I have referred above is somewhat different. What I think is mainly required there is a greater awareness in London and locally of the possibilities of using covert means to protect our position. I think that opportunities may be missed because our people on the spot may not always realise that it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to maintain our position, for instance as regards the supply of oil from the Middle East, at almost any cost. Similarly here there is sometimes reluctance to contemplate the use of covert means until it is rather too late for the proper planning to take place. I think therefore we should examine our present procedures and organisation to ensure that the possibility of using covert means to

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achieve our ends and in support of our overt policy is constantly borne in mind and the necessary planning carried out wherever possible well in advance.

16. Finally and most important, we shall require greater Ministerial direction for these activities than has hitherto been the case if they are to be carried through efficiently and promptly. There is at present an Official Committee (the A.C.(O) Committee) which has hitherto had to rely upon obtaining any necessary authority from the Minister concerned. This has not always proved successful, and may have led to some promising schemes being either delayed or rejected without full consideration being given to them at Ministerial level. I therefore suggest that the newly formed Colonial Policy Committee might undertake the responsibility for overseeing the work of the A.C.(O) Committee in the Colonial field and that the same Ministers might also interest themselves in the Committee's work in the intermediate territories in the Middle East and South-East Asia. I think this should probably be sufficient to bring to this type of work the requisite Ministerial drive and authority; but we could leave open for later decision in the light of experience the question whether the A.C.(O) Committee itself is properly constituted for the work in hand.

17. I have sent copies of this minute to the Colonial Secretary, the Minister of Defence and the Secretary of State for War, and I should very much welcome an opportunity of discussing it with you at a suitable opportunity. If the result of our discussion is that there is something in these ideas I think we should instruct the A.C.(O) Committee, or at any rate those members of it most concerned, to consider the detailed questions as a matter of urgency and to submit recommendations for giving the earliest practical effect to our decisions. I am convinced that the sooner we get to work in some of these foreign territories and British Colonies the easier our task will be and the cheaper to us in terms of manpower and money.

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R October 19, 1955