

TOP SECRET

In the confused period which will now prevail in the Middle East we shall be guided in day to day events by Ministerial statements, but during the present lull it is perhaps all the more important to make sure that we plug certain themes consistently. The Arab world is in a ferment. Before the dust settles we have a chance to get over our story and to emphasize certain lines which have been partially obscured by the fierceness and rapidity of events. This paper on themes is submitted to the Committee for consideration.

November 15, 1956.

1. General Considerations

- (a) Present and long-term objectives of our overt propaganda in the Middle East must be to win back confidence of the Arab countries, to reassure the Bagdad Pact countries, to discredit Egypt, to discredit the Soviet rôle and counter Russian propaganda.
- (b) In doing so we must try to reduce the temperature - Sir I. Kirkpatrick has expressed the view that our propaganda must be "calm and self-confident rather than abusive".
- (c) It is of vital importance that certain fairly simple themes should be plugged almost ad nauseam. Now that pressure has been slightly reduced it should be possible, if the Committee agree, to arrange for a fairly systematic plugging of themes. This has so far been done on a day to day basis.

2. Methods

Themes would appear to divide into three categories. Those suitable for

- (a) constant overt plugging;
- (b) selective overt plugging, and
- (c) covert plugging.

(a) would be used on all channels to the whole Middle East area.
(b) to certain countries, e. g. the Arab world outside Egypt, or to the Bagdad Pact powers. (c) through Embassies and other channels (e. g. Scant) - with due caution.

3. Themes

Many ideas for themes have been submitted by H. M. Representatives and officials in the Foreign Office, and they are included in the list below:

- (i) Themes for Constant Plugging
 - (a) Repeat the original aims of U. K. Government's policy were to "stop the forest fire". Stress the limited nature of our intervention.
 - (b) The story of U. N. impotence, with the lesson that our action has paved the way for an effective international police force under the United Nations (Sir R. Scott Tel. 595 to P. M.).
 - (c) We ordered a cease fire because we had promised to do so as soon as Egypt and Israel had agreed to a cease fire and the United Nations had decided to despatch an international force to the Suez Canal area.
 - (d) An additional reason for ordering a cease fire as soon as we did was the representations made to us by our Bagdad Pact allies.

- (e) Expose the nature of exaggerated and belated Soviet threats (e.g. the threats came after allied landings; Soviet arms and technicians did not assist the Egyptians, who put up a poor military performance). (Sir R. Stevens Tel. No. 931 of November 10.)

(ii) Themes for Selective Plugging

- (a) The evidence piles up that Egypt was preparing to wage war - a war which would have had disastrous consequences for the Arab world - with Russia's plans to use Nasser as a cat's-paw for eventual domination of the Middle East. (Sir P. Dixon's line to Mr. Hammarskjold in his Tel. 1183 and Sir R. Scott's Tel. to the P.M. 595.)
- (b) Egypt's pretensions to military prowess have been exploded. Nasser is a reckless adventurer who has brought nothing but adversity to his followers.
- (c) Nasser's dream of hegemony over the Arab world has now been dissipated by decisive action by Britain and France and by military defeat at the hands of Israel.
- (d) Support now for Nasser's wanton sabotage of the Suez Canal will only lead to great economic distress for the oil-producing countries. The sensible thing to do now is to get the oil flowing again. The Asian countries will not welcome a friend who cuts off a vital supply route. In using this line in the Middle East it should, however, be remembered that the general Arab reaction to Nasser's blocking of the canal is likely to be one of approval and that we should not appear to bemoan the damage to our interests. Facts to disprove Nasser's claim that we sunk the ships should be quoted.
- (e) Examine the Soviet U. N. action in regard to Suez. Have they tried to help, or have they tried to hinder?
- (f) Hungary is an example of what to expect if Nasser became a cat's-paw in Russian hands.

(iii) Covert Plugging

- (a) Nasser's support is diminishing. In the cold light of day his former supporters are realising that his intransigent folly has led to a disastrous outcome. There are signs that support for him is weakening (e.g. the "Daily Mail" story about arrests).
- (b) The Egyptians showed they could not fight - a fact that many true Arabs had long suspected. As usual the Egyptians ran away from the Israelis. The intervention of Anglo-French air forces did not affect the issue. In the Israeli campaign the Egyptians lost few casualties but enormous losses of material. This shows how they fought.

- (c) The Russians have taken a real beating - their long-term aims have been frustrated. That is why they are blustering now.
- (d) The Russians are cynically trying to stir up trouble with talk of volunteers and other scare propaganda - in their attempt to extend the cold war to the Middle East. They reveal they are no friends of the Arabs. An example is their constant attacks on Islam. In Soviet propaganda Islam is described as a "foreign religion" implanted by the "barbarous Arabs" in both the Caucasus and Soviet Central Asia. [If Moslem volunteers appear this will be a good point. Miss V. Conolly has documentation.]
- (e) Russia supplied Egypt with large quantities of modern weapons, but Egypt has misused them and thrown them away. Is it likely that Egypt will be trusted by Russia with any more valuable equipment? (Sir A. Kirkbride)
- (f) Nasser, by every means in his power, will continue to incite the Arabs to sacrifice their own interests and blood in order to get him out of the jam he is in. "Nasser is ready to fight to the last drop of Arab blood".
- (g) The Russians are cynically trying to exploit the Middle East to draw world attention away from the horrible massacre in Hungary.