

Policy Planning Staff Memorandum

George F. Kennan, Director of Policy Planning, US Department of State
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The Problem

The inauguration of organized political warfare.

Analysis

1. Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP--the Marshall Plan), and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of "friendly" foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.
2. The creation, success, and survival of the British Empire has been due in part to the British understanding and application of the principles of political warfare. Lenin so synthesized the teachings of Marx and Clausewitz that the Kremlin's conduct of political warfare has become the most refined and effective of any in history. We have been handicapped however by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war, by a tendency to view war as a sort of sporting context outside of all political context, by a national tendency to seek for a political cure-all, and by a reluctance to recognize the realities of international relations--the perpetual rhythm of struggle, in and out of war.
3. This Government has, of course, in part consciously and in part unconsciously, been conducting political warfare. Aggressive Soviet political warfare has driven us overtly first to the Truman Doctrine, next to ERP, then to sponsorship of Western Union [1-1/2 lines of source text redacted]. This was all political warfare and should be recognized as such.
4. Understanding the concept of political warfare, we should also recognize that there are two major types of political warfare--one overt and the other covert. Both, from their basic nature, should be directed and coordinated by the Department of State. Overt operations are, of course, the traditional policy activities of any foreign office enjoying positive leadership, whether or not they are recognized as political warfare. Covert operations are traditional in many European chancelleries but are relatively unfamiliar to this Government.

5. Having assumed greater international responsibilities than ever before in our history and having been engaged by the full might of the Kremlin's political warfare, we cannot afford to leave unmobilized our resources for covert political warfare. We cannot afford in the future, in perhaps more serious political crises, to scramble into impromptu covert operations [1 line of source text redacted].

6. It was with all of the foregoing in mind that the Policy Planning Staff began some three months ago a consideration of specific projects in the field of covert operations, where they should be fitted into the structure of this Government, and how the Department of State should exercise direction and coordination.

7. There are listed below projects which have been or are now being suggested by the Staff:

a. Liberation Committees.

Purpose: To encourage the formation of a public American organization which will sponsor selected political refugee committees so that they may (a) act as foci of national hope and revive a sense of purpose among political refugees from the Soviet World; (b) provide an inspiration for continuing popular resistance within the countries of the Soviet World; and (c) serve as a potential nucleus for all-out liberation movements in the event of war.

Description: This is primarily an overt operation which, however, should receive covert guidance and possibly assistance from the Government. It is proposed that trusted private American citizens be encouraged to establish a public committee which would give support and guidance in U.S. interests to national movements (many of them now in existence) publicly led by outstanding political refugees from the Soviet World, such as Mikolajczyk and Nagy [of Poland and Hungary, respectively]. The American Committee should be so selected and organized as to cooperate closely with this Government. The functions of the American Committee should be limited to enabling selected refugee leaders [to keep alive as public figures with access to printing presses and microphones. It should not engage in underground activities.]

What is proposed here is an operation in the traditional American form: organized public support of resistance to tyranny in foreign countries. Throughout our history, private American citizens have banded together to champion the cause of freedom for people suffering under oppression. (The Communists and Zionists have exploited this tradition to the extreme, to their own ends and to our national detriment, as witness the Abraham Lincoln brigade during the Spanish Civil War and the current illegal Zionist activities.) Our proposal is that this tradition be revived specifically to further American national interests in the present crisis.

[1 heading and 2 paragraphs (21-1/2 lines of source text) redacted]

c. Support of Indigenous Anti-Communist Elements in Threatened Countries of the Free World.

Purpose: To strengthen indigenous forces combating communism in countries where Soviet political warfare is a threat to our national security.

Description: This is a covert operation again utilizing private intermediaries. To insure cover, the private American organizations conducting the operation should be separate from the organizations mentioned in previous projects. [3 lines of source text redacted] This project is a matter of urgency because the communists are reported to be planning the disruption of ERP through labor disturbances in France. [2 lines of source text redacted]

d. Preventive Direct Action in Free Countries.

Purpose: Only in cases of critical necessity, to resort to direct action to prevent vital installations, other material, or personnel from being (1) sabotaged or liquidated or (2) captured intact by Kremlin agents or agencies.

Description: This covert operation involves, for example, (1) control over anti-sabotage activities in the Venezuelan oil fields, (2) American sabotage of Near Eastern oil installations on the verge of Soviet capture, and (3) designation of key individuals threatened by the Kremlin who should be protected or removed elsewhere.

8. It would seem that the time is now fully ripe for the creation of a covert political warfare operations directorate within the Government. If we are to engage in such operations, they must be under unified direction. One man must be boss. And he must, as those responsible for the overt phases of political warfare, be answerable to the Secretary of State, who directs the whole in coordination.

9. [6-1/2 lines of source text redacted]

10. The National Security Council Secretariat would seem to provide the best possible cover for such a directorate. Such cover would also permit a direct chain of command from the Secretary of State and be a natural meeting ground for close collaboration with the military establishment.

Recommendations

11. There should promptly be established, under the cover of the National Security Council Secretariat, a directorate of political warfare operations to be known as the Consultative (or Evaluation) Board of the National Security Council.
12. The Director should be designated by the Secretary of State and should be responsible to him.
13. The Director should have initially a staff of 4 officers designated by the Department of State and 4 officers designated by the Secretary of National Defense.
14. The Board should have complete authority over covert political warfare operations conducted by this Government. It should have the authority to initiate new operations and to bring under its control or abolish existing covert political warfare activities.
15. Specifically, (a) the four projects mentioned in paragraph 7 above should be activated by the Board and (b) covert political warfare now under CIA and theater commanders abroad should be brought under the authority of the Board.
16. The coordination of the above covert operations with the overt conduct of foreign policy should, of course, be accomplished through the offices of the Secretary and Under Secretary of State.