

D. McKay

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December 4, 1942

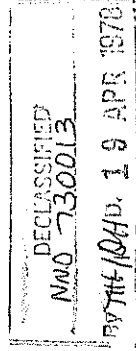
Memorandum to Dr. RogersFrom: R. H. KnappSubject: The Use of Terror Propaganda

In line with our discussion of yesterday, I should like to put into writing the following thoughts:

Terror propaganda, while immensely successful under proper conditions, may well be used imprudently to increase the resolution and determination of the enemy. This is especially true when it is not accompanied by reassurances to the innocent or helpless in enemy territory.

It has been the aim of German and Italian domestic propaganda to picture the war to their peoples as an ~~alterna-~~ative between total victory or annihilation. The strategy is obvious. If all Germans and Italians can be persuaded of this view, then even those who have been strongly unsympathetic with the Nazi and Fascist regimes will now have, of necessity, common cause with them, and the unity and determination of the enemy nations as a whole will be increased.

In presenting unalloyed terror propaganda to the enemy, we are, I think, furthering the very conviction which the enemy is trying to foster among their own people. The



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case of Italy at this moment is an excellent example. Churchill's declaration of intentions must be considered terroristic. Had it been made in conjunction with concrete assurances regarding the intentions of the allied nations to deal fairly and humanely with the Italian people, and at a time when the Italian people, or elements of them, would have some prospect of successful rebellion, its effect might be otherwise. As it now stands, there is great danger that this declaration may drive the Italians to their leaders, and into closer cooperation with Germany. Already, of course, the Germans have taken occasion to indicate to the Italian people that Churchill's declarations merely confirm their predictions that if an allied victory is achieved, both Italy and Germany will be subjected indiscriminately to brutal retaliations.

In general, I think terror propaganda should be employed only under the following circumstances:

1. When there is the possibility of producing demoralizing panic. (A comparatively rare situation.)
2. When it is presented in conjunction with reassurances to innocent or helpless within the enemy population.
3. When it is presented at such a time that elements of the enemy population have reasonable prospect of being

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able to operate effectively against their leaders, and thus demonstrate their loyalty to the allied cause and disaffection toward their leaders.

Conversely, terror propaganda should not be employed in the following situations:

1. When there is no hope to produce immediate panic.
2. When it is not accompanied by reassurances to the innocent or helpless within the enemy nation.
3. When there is no possibility of action by those within enemy territories who oppose the ruling regime.

Clearly, the factor of timing rules the advisability of employing terror propaganda. If properly timed, it may produce panic; if not, it may force additional cohesion among the enemy. If properly timed, and accompanied by reassurances, it may precipitate revolt within the enemy nation; if not, it may drive them into common cause with their leaders.

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