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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH JUL 23 1952

511.873/7-852

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FROM : **EMBASSY, BAGHDAD**

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DESP. NO.

July 8, 1952

TO : **THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.**

DATE

REF : **Dept. Air of Feb. 19, 1952, 4:05 p.m.**

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SUBJECT: "When the Communists Came"				By GR NARA. Date 7/19/92

As the Department is aware, the Embassy received the English dialogue script of the motion picture "When the Communists Came" only last month. It has not, therefore, been possible before now to arrange a proper evaluation of the film.

The film has now been shown before a panel consisting of the Charge d'Affaires, the Army, Navy and Air Attaches, the Political Officer, Economic Officer, Public Affairs Officer and Films Officer. Each person attending the showing was requested to answer pertinent questions on the film. The comments below are based on the replies to these questions. Those present were asked to evaluate the film in terms of the story, commentary and action of the print as shown, making allowances for only minor adaptations to a Middle Eastern setting.

The consensus was that distribution of a Near Eastern version of this film in its present form with only minor adaptations may be neither wise nor feasible. The panel felt that the film would be most effective with adaptations among peasant and other low-income, less educated groups. Even among such groups, however, there was a general feeling that the film, in its present form, risked the possibility of backfiring. The film does not contain sufficient recognition of the universal desire on the part of the peasant in the Middle East for land and for a better life. These must somehow be represented as available not by revolution, but by political means. There must be some positive alternative to the Communist method of obtaining reforms.

In a country such as Iraq where land reform is one of the pressing issues, the brutal treatment of landlords is not likely to awaken any sympathy among the peasant population. Such statements as "In Russia, every farmer lives like a king," "This is an organization of youth," and "When do we take the rich man's land and houses?" are likely to be heard and remembered out of context. The film as it stands, therefore, may be as likely to provoke latent sympathy for the Communists as it is to combat such sympathy. In this connection, the Department may be interested in the experience of the Iraq Government two years ago when it arranged for the reissuance in Iraq of the film "Ninotchka" as an anti-Communist medium. After several showings the film was withdrawn because the Iraqi audience considered Ninotchka's squalid existence in Russia preferable to her gay and immoral life in Paris.

The suggestion was also made that the emphasis of the film should be changed from the destruction by the Communists to the fact that the local people were fooled.

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by the desire for reform which at first seemed to be apparent among the Communists. If a central theme were to be created for the picture, it was suggested that this theme should be "Do Not Be Fooled." The film should have the objective of making the peasant look twice at Communist promises of desired reforms.

Two members of the panel questioned the advisability of the use of an Azerbaijani version of the film in Iraqi Kurdistan where many reside who participated in the revolt and where some latent nostalgia for the days of the "Independent Kurdish Government" may still exist. Those officers most familiar with the Kurds, however, felt that such sympathizers are much in the minority and that the general knowledge of the stealing of Azerbaijani grain by the Soviets, and of the true nature of the Azerbaijani regime, would serve to make a film effective with this background.

The attribution to USIS is not considered of importance since any anti-Communist film is likely to be attributed to this source anyway.

The Embassy will naturally attempt to make fullest use of any Near East version of this film which may be received. If further testing is desired, the Embassy is willing to try a field test with an Arabic commentary on the Mandarin version. Unless the Department indicates that it is continuing this project, however, and desires further field testing before completing the Near East version, the Embassy will not go to the expense of translating the script.

Philip W. Ireland

Philip W. Ireland
Charge d'Affaires, a.i.

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