

AIR POUCH

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM

AMEMBASSY, BAGHDAD

OCT 15 1952

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DESP. NO.

DCR-1

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

October 1, 1952

DATE

REF

IEE Circular No. 35, dated April 28, 1952.

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	REC'D OCT 13	OTHER	BEIRUT CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA TEHRAN TRIPOLI

SUBJECT:

SPECIAL IIA PROJECTS FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES.

Since the receipt of the reference, together with the enclosed papers from the Working Group on Islamic Countries, this Embassy has been studying the problem of special projects for this area of the world. In its reply, however, it wishes to make clear that the conclusions are intended to apply only to Iraq; we do not have sufficient familiarity with the other countries to permit us to assume that these conclusions are also true in them.

These conclusions are based on such evaluation of press, film, and radio material as has been possible with particular attention to the material which appeared to be a part of the Working Group's program.

1. The basic distrust of the West mentioned at the Beirut PAO conference and repeated in the reference cited above is a political distrust. It can only be met by a political solution. This distrust arises from two factors: (a) the role of the West in the creation of Israel and (b) the continued influence of the British and the French in the Arab world.

2. In the absence of any marked change in policy which would remove this political mistrust, we, as propagandists, can only do our best to keep alive the hope in the Arab world that a political solution on the part of the United States is possible. We can do this by emphasizing the growing interest in contemporary Middle Eastern political problems on the part of Americans.

3. Those activities mentioned in the Working Group papers which held the greatest promise in this direction were the channel to the activities of the American Friends of the Middle East and the plan for fuller distribution and utilization of American books on the Middle East--provided these books deal with contemporary political subjects. One has the feeling here in Iraq that the Iraqis are tired of their antiquities.

4. This Embassy would add to this a project which would give in greater detail the content of university courses on Middle East politics (where such courses fit the objective of the project) and would

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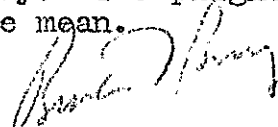
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follow more closely lectures given in the United States on this subject. We want them to know that the United States is learning more and more about Middle Eastern problems.

5. With these foregoing conclusions in mind, the Embassy is not enthusiastic about the projects dealing with the Washington Mosque and with the Avicenna celebration. The Mosque here is regarded as being built by outsiders in America for outsiders' use. Stories about it are not widely used and there seems little evidence that knowledge of its presence is regarded with anything more than, at best, mild appreciation. Its construction serves also only to emphasize how few mosques there are in the United States. Finally, the effectiveness of the theme is lessened in some circles by an unfortunate story going the rounds that the Egyptians in the Embassy in Washington are profiting heavily in its construction.

6. While the Avicenna celebration here awakened some interest, there was criticism that money was being spent in honor of someone who had not even lived in Iraq and who meant little to modern Iraq. The end result of the Avicenna celebration did not encourage this office to keep the theme alive.

7. Finally, it should be remembered that allaying the mistrust of the United States is only half the problem. One must also increase the mistrust in the Soviet Union, not by comparisons with activities of the United States, but by information directly concerned with the plight of the Muslims in the USSR. The Working Group should consider ways of issuing, on a continuing basis, material of the type that was contained in the Soviet Affairs Note on "Muslims in the USSR." The problem is ever present of convincing the educated Iraqis that conditions would be worse under a Communist regime than they are in the Arab world today. The plight of the Muslims is one illustration to them of what we mean.


Burton Y. Berry

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