

INFORMATION REPORT

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~~SECRET~~

TRY North Africa

DATE DISTR. 28 Mar 1949

SUBJECT Remarks of Habib Bourguiba Concerning Possible Terror Campaign Against the French in North Africa

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

1. Habib Bourguiba, leader of the Neo-Destourian Party of Tunisia, presently directing the Tunisian resistance movement from Cairo, in a conversation with source on 7 February 1949, expressed the opinion that the only way in which Tunisia, Algeria and French Morocco could hope to obtain independence was by a campaign of terrorism and sabotage directed against the French administration. Such a campaign would demonstrate to the western powers that in the event of a war with the Soviet Union, there could be no peace and security for their bases in North Africa under French control. This, he hoped, might cause them to put pressure upon France to institute reforms and grant eventual independence.
2. Bourguiba said that the French administration in North Africa was unwilling to yield anything to the natives. Its purpose was to crush them and assimilate North Africa into metropolitan France. At the end of the war, he himself had offered to give France a pre-eminent position, military bases, even an army based in Tunis if she liked. He had asked only that the French let the Tunisians govern themselves and work toward independence. This proposal the French rejected.
3. Bourguiba expressed the hope that Great Britain would retain control of Cyrenaica and not give it back to Italy. The Italians, he said, are worse colonial administrators than the French. If the British were in Cyrenaica the promoters of North African independence would have a depot from which to operate against the French.
4. The Arab League does not offer much hope at the present time, Bourguiba believes. It devoted all its attention to Palestine and failed. It can now give little effective support to the cause of North African independence.*

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~~SECRET~~ Comment. Habib Bourguiba reportedly has been approached on several occasions by the Russians in connection with a possible revolt. His statements have not indicated, however, that a campaign of terror and sabotage is imminent or has progressed beyond the early planning stage.

CLASSIFICATION

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