

March 08, 1952

Voice of America Views of Radio Liberty Broadcasting

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Summary:

Voice of America Director Foy Kohler argues that without the formation of a Russian émigré political center enabling "Russians speaking to Russians," Radio Liberty would be a "bad imitation of VOA."

Credits:

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English

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- Scan of Original Document

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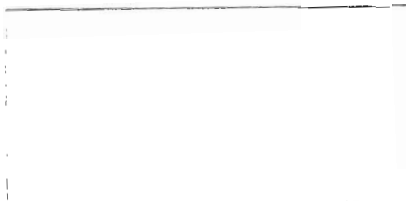
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Robert F. Joyce
Policy Planning Staff
Department of State

SUBJECT: Conversation between Mr. Foy Kohler and
 on 8 March 1952

1. There is enclosed herewith a memorandum covering a recent conversation between of my staff and Mr. Foy Kohler.

2. Mr. Kohler stated he would not prepare any memorandum of his meeting with and requested that we send you memorandum on the conversation.



Attachment: As noted

EE-S/HVP/mm ✓
10 March 1952

Distribution:
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Radio file

6.11.2



8 March 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR: File

SUBJECT: Conversation with ^{Foy}~~Floyd~~ Kohler of VOA on 6 March 1952

1. Messrs. [redacted] called on ^{Foy}~~Floyd~~ Kohler of the VOA at 11 o'clock on 6 March 1952 to determine the ability and willingness of VOA to help [redacted] with the current problem of the [redacted] radio.

2. [redacted] reviewed briefly the negotiations leading to the formation of a political center of the projected radio operation. Mr. Kohler was aware of the background of both projects and had approved them in principle.

3. Mr. Kohler made it very clear he considered the formation of the political center of primary importance, and personnel who composed the center the key to the entire problem. He expressed concern lest the radio project take precedence over the center itself and become another case of the tail wagging the dog. With the center a going concern, the values of radio and the press increase. [redacted] made it clear that our conception of the entire operation places the ultimate value on the sponsorship of the radio programs and the Russian character of the programs. Mr. Kohler agreed that the key to the success of the operation was the effectiveness of the delivery and content in terms of Russians speaking to Russians. Anything of a different nature would become a bad imitation of VOA without the resources (VOA's ability to process three to four million words a day). Mr. Kohler returned often to his belief that broadcasting is a means often confused as an end. The limiting factor of our operation is the appeal to Russian people from Russian people. The radio is an instrument only, capable of being easily glamorized.

4. Recognizing the importance of program and personnel, [redacted] asked the benefit of VOA's ideas and experience to avoid the mistakes of RFE [redacted]. Mr. Kohler was not optimistic about personnel, and thought the mistakes of [redacted] inevitable in our type of operation. He, however, agreed to cooperate with us and to give us access to their research and programming men. He expressed his concern about defection as an object, thinking its effectiveness limited and its inadvisability great unless specifically ordered.

5. Mr. Kohler felt the other serious limiting factor to be the technical -- the necessity of choosing targets for small specific ends, and the need for competent technical advisers. He initially stated that there was no frequency available in Europe, for example,

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Foy D. Kohler

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that would successfully reach the U.S.S.R. He expressed pessimism on the availability of radio receivers, mentioning that RCA's production of portable receivers has not materialized, leaving them with an unspent Congressional \$300,000,000. He felt it impossible to reach the U.S.S.R., but admitted the possibility of effectiveness in the peripheral areas. He spoke at some length of point-to-point reception, mentioning VOA's current broadcast 20 minutes an hour, 16 hours a day in Morse code on a commercial wave length. The commercial wave lengths are outside of the jammed bands, are directional, and so far the U.S.S.R. has made no attempt to jam point-to-point receivers. He suspects the reason for the latter is the Soviet's own vulnerability to similar jamming, i.e., telephone, domestic broadcasts, telegraphic relays. Mr. Kohler also spoke of the VOA ship as being no answer to the problem of reaching U.S.S.R., but merely providing a mobile basis for utilizing the funds invested, lest a land base be suddenly lost to us.

6. [] made it clear that our project radio operation in no way competes with the operations of the VOA, but is planned as an adjunct ~~and~~ ^{and} paralleled operation ~~with~~ those of VOA. Mr. Kohler admitted that the differences between governmental and private broadcasting in this field are constantly being diminished. He spoke of VOA's own plans in Munich which include an initial operation of 50 programming hours in 10 languages and ultimately in 16 languages, reaching all but central Asia. [] raised the problem of the small pool of available manpower for such operations and the possibility of competition between us and VOA in contracting with them. He suggested the possibility of joint use of some of the emigre personnel, but Mr. Kohler foresaw no real trouble on this score. It was agreed informally to avoid pirating, to stay clear of any individual the other organization had approached, and to discuss any specific case on an ad hoc basis between Mr. Kohler's and [] offices.

7. In this connection Mr. Kohler spoke of the firm agreement VOA has with RFE which he would like to duplicate with us, and mentioned Mr. [] attempt to lure Barmine away from VOA. [] committed himself immediately to the agreement embodying the three points above, and foresaw further advantages in mutual use of personnel when agreeable to himself and Mr. Kohler. We, for example, can employ such people as recent defectors who are of limited use to VOA.

8. Mr. Kohler warned against setting up too close an association, stressing such "normal" relationships as VOA enjoys with the radio industry as being most desirable. The availability of VOA's information to Admiral Kirk and his availability to them was confirmed.

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9. In closing [] repeated that the basic principles which underlie the formation of a political center of emigre organizations were set out in a paper by Francis Stevens of the State Department, which had been seen by Mr. Kohler. The formation of the center has been held up by our refusal to work with only the Great Russians and our desire to include the minorities as well. The project has been delayed for over a year in the attempt to bring the minorities in on an equal basis, and although a wide area of ~~disagreement~~ still exists, thanks to the extremists (NTS and the Ukrainians), its reality is close. Mr. Stevens has been informed at every stage, as have Messrs. Barber and Joyce. Mr. Kohler asked that all developments be relayed to Joyce with the request to pass the information on to Tom Divine.

10. Mr. Kohler agreed to let [] know immediately of any proselyting brought to his attention. He agreed to allow [] complete access to VOA's information and personnel, and suggested [] come to New York for several days as a representative of the Psychological Strategy Board making a survey and talking with the key people in VOA's organization. It was specifically stressed we wish (1) VOA's audience analyses and estimates, (2) a knowledge of the more imaginative people in the technical and programing fields, (3) information on the best use of hours and facilities, and (4) whatever suggestions and information can be plucked from their best plans. Mr. Kohler suggested that the PSB's paper on psychological themes and targets on the Soviet Union be surveyed before [] visit, and that PSB send a chit for his visit to eventuate next week.

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