

January 10, 1957
Memorandum for [withheld], 'Reappraisal of U.S. Propaganda Broadcasting' [Declassified May 6, 2019]

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Summary:

The State Department forwards to CIA a memorandum calling for fundamental reorientation and curtailment of RFE and RL broadcasts.

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Withheld under statutory authority of the
Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949 (50
U.S.C., section 3507)

January 10, 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: [redacted]

SUBJECT: Reappraisal of American Propaganda Broadcasting.

At the request of Identity A, there is enclosed a paper prepared [redacted] on the general topic of American propaganda broadcasts. Identity A would like to discuss the subjects raised in this paper with Identity B at the latter's convenience.

[redacted]

Withheld under statutory authority of the
Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949 (50
U.S.C., section 3507)

Attachments:
paper described

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IDENTITIES

Identity A - Deputy Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy

Identity B - Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles

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Problems

Developments in Eastern Europe since the 20th Congress of the CPSU, (including the growth of "Goulashism" in Poland and the revolt and subsequent Soviet military repression in Hungary), and increased Soviet activity in the Asian-African area, underline our prior assumption that the conclusions and recommendations of the Jackson Committee require re-study on an urgent basis to determine whether our national information program should not be re-cast to conform to new tasks. In the light of the new budget hearings, which will affect plans by VOA, RFE and RL to carry out major program expansion, this problem has particular immediacy, and unless we assume that US Government financial resources are sufficient to permit the carrying out of all plans for radio-rotation expansion simultaneously, must or should entail considerations of priorities as between media networks and geographical target areas.

Discussion

1. At the present time, the United States finances and operates, directly through RFE and indirectly through CIA, three major radio networks devoted to the implementation of American foreign policy objectives. Unlike VOA, whose programs are worldwide, RFE concentrates on the satellite nations of Eastern Europe, while RL broadcasts to the Soviet Union only in the Russian and certain minority languages. The manner in which these two ostensibly private networks operate, i.e., through committees located in New York but with operating facilities largely decentralized in Germany, has in the past made effective guidance by the Department in the furtherance of overall US policy objectives difficult, particularly in time of stress. While the problem of policy guidance and implementation during the recent Hungarian revolt has been the subject of other memoranda from this office, it should be pointed out here that recent experience raises the question of the practicality of concentrating a major portion of the US investment in overseas radio activity in the decentralized form in which it now exists. Operation of radio broadcasting through an organization such as the Free Europe Committee seems to have most of the disadvantages inherent in "official" broadcasts, since it is widely assumed that RFE/RL speaks for the US, and an additional disadvantage, not shared by VOA, of being more or less unresponsive to official US policy because of the voice in its day-to-day operations held by outsiders. It should be noted that so-called "black" radio differs in kind from RFE in that it is unattributed, widely, relatively inexpensive, and can be terminated as soon as its effectiveness ceases. The Jackson Committee's comment that our "national information program has suffered from the lack of effective central direction" continues to be a valid criticism of current operating procedures.

2. Respecting

future crisis
High level working group
detailed & specific guidance

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2. Respecting radio programs beamed to the USSR, the Jackson Committee's view that straight news is the most efficacious way of conveying our objectives to the Soviet peoples appears particularly applicable to VOA. It is the opinion of RL, however, that there is a place also for a radio network which would devote itself to a continued discussion and examination of internal Soviet problems, soberly analyzing and exposing those weaknesses in the Soviet system which have become more manifest in recent years. If it is to fulfill this role, "Radio Liberation" must undergo a fairly substantial reorganization, including a change in name to something like "the voice of democracy". This reorganization, based upon a re-definition of the RL concept, should include greater control by responsible Americans over program content, and the dropping of the fiction that RL is a Russian opposition station. The reorganization should include consideration of the possibility of RL broadcasting to the Asian-African area, using the experience it already has had with Muslims, and the strengthening of its physical facilities, which today are admittedly inadequate. Thought should be given at the same time to re-location of transmitters to avoid undue concentration in any one area, "Sage," "Army."

3. The future of RFE depends to a very great extent on considerations of public policy, for as the Jackson Committee pointed out, "propaganda cannot be expected to be the determining factor in deciding major issues". RFE in the past several years has played a major role in pointing up nationalism in the satellites, and giving specific focus to grievances of the satellite peoples. Unless we are prepared to support this kind of radio propaganda with concrete actions, the future of RFE is dimly set in any event. Its mission must be more clearly defined in the light of the emergence of the satellite states. Another factor affecting RFE is the development in Poland of "Solidarity", which in the light of current policy requiring US media to refrain from giving RFE facilities to give limited support to an admittedly Communist but at the same time somewhat independent regime. The mission of conveying straight news to a Poland which appears in the throes of an attempt to achieve some degree of independence from Moscow and a measure of internal liberalization most appropriately can be filled by VOA as in the case of Yugoslavia.

*Wanted
interest of
planning out
F E Army
Seland
firmed
character
of Poland
interest?*

4. As indicated above, a main purpose of both RFE and RL has been to appear as the voices of indigenous opposition elements. In this context, both networks rely heavily on emigre personnel, whose role in the implementation of policy directives at times has verged on policy determination itself. Experience has shown that the interests and objectives of these emigres have not always been identical with US interests and objectives. Moreover, emigres as a group have a tendency to become somewhat removed from events in their countries of origin, and to be unresponsive to the political currents which move those who have remained behind. This truism was graphically illustrated in the course of the Hungarian revolt.

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*File down
transmit
Policy
increasing
with post
modernism*

Not only may the services exert an appreciable influence on broadcast policy when organized in national committees and similar groups, they tend to become an end in themselves, and in some cases an immediate source of funds all time in terms of their usefulness to US policy objectives. The parents of RFE and RL, the Free Europe Committee and the American Committee for Liberation, are heavily committed to the support of other non-governmental national committees. These activities should not necessarily be directed into political and other channels not primarily connected with the foreign policy and intelligence fields for which the Department and CIA are responsible.

*Egon paper
attached
What more
needed*

5. The so-called uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa today are being flooded by Soviet and anti-Western propaganda. In the future allocation of available US resources, a major effort should be made to build up effective American broadcasting to that area, without diminishing the important task of broadcasting to the Soviet orbit. While RFE presumably would carry the primary responsibility of broadcasting to Asia-Africa, thought should be given to employing the resources of the American Committee (RL) in that area, making use of multi-purpose transmitters. Such transmitters should be located in or near the Asian-African area, and should be designed for broadcasting to the Soviet orbit on short-wave and to the adjacent area on medium-wave.

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6. Criticism of RFE and other American broadcasting media in recent weeks has become more vigorous, not least of all in the German Federal Republic which forms the sites for a major part of all US-owned broadcasting facilities. It seems to be the judgment of our Embassy in Bonn that criticism of RFE and other media can be expected to increase rather than diminish, and that there may be pressure on the part of the Germans for (a) a greater voice in what is said from stations located in Germany, and/or (b) the removal from Germany of some of these facilities insofar as they tend to concentrate Soviet attention on Germany. Reasons for this pressure include (a) domestic German political considerations, (b) the desire of many Germans for a "normalization" of relations with the USSR as a possible prelude to German reunification, and (c) the likelihood that the Federal Government in the future will seek to achieve some modus vivendi with the satellites. Under these circumstances, consideration should be given to whether it is essentially desirable for the US to increase its investment in facilities located in our country, or whether we should not seek to diversify our investment through construction in countries other than Germany.

*Corpuscular
bureaucracy
unsuccessful
German when
in contact
Budget*

?

Recommendations:

London question? Check on trends in Germany

1. That for the immediate future budgetary priority be accorded RCA over both RFE and RL in the construction of new facilities, or the enlargement of existing ones, and that the Bureau of the Budget be deferred in view of its immediate consideration of the 1953 budget requests of NSIA and CIA.

*either private or govt subject complete to be
informed - no intervention to pay - voluntary*

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2. That the Department express to CIA its belief that the basic concept of Radio Liberation, and the manner in which policy is implemented, be re-studied urgently by the Department and CIA with a view to making RL a more effective instrument. A satisfactory re-definition of the RL concept should precede any augmentation of physical facilities.

3. That the Department propose to CIA that no further expansion of IORH can be justified at this time, and that a graduated shrinkage of its activities seems desirable. This shrinkage should begin with the Polish and Hungarian transmissions.

4. That the totality of present policy guidance to all media in Eastern Europe be re-examined urgently with a view to removing the gulf which has existed between our national aspirations for the ultimate freedom of the satellites and our specific policy objectives. This redefinition should take into account the respective roles and targets of VOA and RFE, and a reconstituted RL, and should have as a main objective the gearing of media output to realizable actions by the U^S in the support of freedom for the satellites from Soviet control, and greater internal freedom for the peoples of the USSR itself.

5. That the Department submit to CIA its desire that the methods by which policy guidance from the Department is implemented by RFE and RL be strengthened, to ensure that what is broadcast by RFE and RL conforms in all respects with national policy. Such strengthening presumably will call for a reevaluation of the system of operation radio broadcasts through committees entirely independent of national control, and which, in fact, do maintain a great degree of independence.

6. That the Department inform CIA that the influence of signals on RFE and RL output be reduced, and that responsible American officials be placed in a position to control output, particularly in time of emergency when that control has tended to become laxest.

7. That the Department urge CIA and USAID to undertake an urgent examination of the means whereby our international output to the Latin-African area can be increased in the shortest span of time. This examination should include a study of the feasibility of "satellite" transmitters in or near the Latin-African area for broadcasting as an alternative to that area, and on alternatives to the Soviet orbit.

8. That, in line with recommendation 7 above, a sustained effort be made to achieve a diversification of sites for transmitting facilities, in order that the overall broadcast program will be in a position to continue irrespective of the initial attitude of one or more local government. Specifically, the present heavy concentration of facilities in Germany should be decreased.

*Long-term alternatives to RL
re-examine
shrinkage
of IORH
with a view to making RL a more effective instrument
in Poland
Hungary
USSR
V & A*

Agree

P

Exam memo

Conceded in discussion

PP staff

Budget ?

*Agree No more increase
Capital expenditure*

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9. What, provided discussions with USIA and CIA of the above recommendations point to the advisability, consideration be given to the formation of a committee (on the lines of the Jackson Committee) to evaluate further American propaganda broadcasting, and to formulate additional recommendations.

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