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

Citation:

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

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English

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- Scan of Original Document
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January 10, 1957.

MINUTES FOR:


At the request of Identity A, there is enclosed a paper 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.

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
Problem:

Developments in Eastern Europe since the 20th Congress of the
CCCP, including the growth of "dissident" in Poland and the revolt
and subsequent Soviet military reprisals in Hungary, and increased
Soviet activity in the Asian-African area, underline our prior assess-
ment that the conclusions and recommendations of the Jackson Com-
mittee require re-study on an urgent basis to determine whether our national
information program should not be re-orient to conform to new tasks. In
the light of the new budget hearings, which will affect plans by VOA,
RFE and RI, to carry out "new" regional expansion, this problem has par-
ticular immediacy, and unless we assume that US government financial
resources are sufficient to support the carrying out of all plans for
regional station expansion simultaneously, most or should entail consider-
ations of integration as between media networks and geographical target
areas.

Discussion:

1. At the present time, the United States finances and operates,
directly through CIA and indirectly through CIA, three major radio
networks devoted to the implementation of American foreign policy ob-
jectives. Unlike VOA, whose programs are worldwide, USG concen-
trates its radio programs on the satellite nations of Eastern Europe, while RI
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.,
though 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 furtheance of overall US policy objectives diffi-
cult, particularly in times of stress. While the question 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 net-
work in the centralized form in which it now exists. Operation of radio
networks through an organization such as the VOA European Commis-
sion seem to have some of the disadvantages inherent in "official" broadcasts,
since it is widely assumed that VOA/VOE speaks for the US, and an addi-
tional disadvantage, not shared by VOA, of being more or less unquestion-
ably superior to official US policy because of the value in its day-to-day operations
held by foreign. It should be noted that so-called "black" radio differs
in kind from VOA in that it is unattributed, widely, relatively inexpensive,
and can be tolerated as soon as its effectiveness ceases. The
Jackson Committee's comment that our "national information program has
suffered from the loss of effective central direction" continues to be a
valid criticism of current operating procedures.

1. Awaiting

[Handwritten note:]
High level senior management should provide detailed specific guidance.

SECRET
2. Respecting radio progress based 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 continuous 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 reorganisation, including a change in name to something like "the voice of democracy". This reorganisation, 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 reorganisation should include consideration of the possibility of RL broadcasting to the Asia-Pacific area, using the experience it already has had with Pakistan, 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, e.g., Germany.

3. The future of VOA 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."

VOA 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 the spread of radio propaganda with concrete action, the nature of its success in any area is still a matter of considerable doubt. Any move to protect the integrity of the satellite peoples. Another factor affecting this is the development in Poland of "Solidarity", which for the time being, seems to be very much of a media to refrain from violent confrontation and to try to set the stage for a peaceful transition to democracy. At the same time, however, the situation in Hungary is one of the most serious in Europe. The mission of conveying straight news to a Hungarian audience is one that holds in the throes of an attempt to achieve some degree of freedom from Soviet and a measure of internal liberalisation most appropriately can be filled by VOA as in the case of Yugoslavia.

h. As indicated above, a main purpose of both VOA and RL has been to appear as the voices of indigenous opposition elements. In this context, both networks rely heavily on enigmas personalities, whose role in the implementation of policy directives at times has warped the policy determination itself. Experience has shown that the interests and objectives of these enigmas have not always been identical with US interests and objectives. Moreover, as groups, these are far too eager to remain somewhat removed from events in their countries of origin, and to be unsympathetic to the political currents which move those who have remained behind. This truism was graphically illustrated in the course of the Hungarian revolt.
Not only may the enemies exert an undesirable influence on broadcast policy, when organized in national committee and similar groups, but their efforts may be in some way in conformance with the Soviet policy in terms of their membership in NS policy organs. The parents of this and all the other European nations are being inundated by the American Committee for Liberation, which claims to be the mouthpiece of the American Committee for National Liberation. These activities, which are directed into internal and limited fields not directly connected with the foreign policy and intelligence fields for which the Department and CIA are responsible.

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 EE resources, a major effort should be made to build up effective American broadcasting to that area, without recognizing the important task of broadcasting in the Soviet orbit, while the present policy would carry the primary responsibility of broadcasting to Asia-Africa, thought should be given to employing the resources of the American Committee (CL) in that area, making use of multi-purpose transmitters. Such transmitters should be located in or near the Asian-African areas, and should be designed for broadcasting to the Soviet orbit on short-wave and to the adjacent area on medium-wave.

6. Consideration of improved and other major broadcasting aid in the present vein is not out of the question, but lest of all in the former Federal Republic which forms the basis for a major part of all planned broadcasting facilities. It seems to be the superpower's intention that criticism of this and other media may be minimized by some means, but not that there may be pressure on any part of the German or a greater voice in what is said from these sources. In Germany, which is the removal from Germany of some of these facilities, one thing leads to concentrate Soviet attention on Germany. Measures for this purpose include:
(a) decontrol 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 satellite. Under these circumstances, consideration should be given to whether it is economically feasible for the US to increase its investment in facilities located in one country, or whether it should not seek to diversify its investment through construction in countries other than Germany.

Complementary: [Handwritten note]

1. That for the immediate future broadcasting priority be accorded to over both NS and EE in the consideration of new facilities, or the enlargement of existing ones, and that the limits of the NSP be widened in view of its immediate consideration of the NSP budget proposals of NSP and CIA.
2. That the Department express to CIA its belief that the basic concept of Radio Liberation and the manner in which policy is implemented, is re-examined urgently by the Department and CIA with a view to making it 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 RL can be justified at this time, and that a gradual reduction of RL activities seems desirable. This recommendation would be in line with the Finnish and Hungarian translation

4. That the totality of present policy guidance to all media on Eastern Europe be re-examined urgently with a view to reorganizing the effort which has existed between the national aspirations for the existence freedom of the satellite and our specific policy objectives. This redefinition should take into account the respective roles and targets of RL and RL, and a re-examined RL, and should have as a main objective the reordering of media output to realizable actions by the RL in the support of freedom for the satellites from Soviet control, and greater internal freedom for the people of the USSR itself.

5. That the Department re-examine RL is desire that the methods by which policy guidance to all media on Eastern Europe be re-examined urgently with a view to reorganizing the effort which has existed between the national aspirations for the existence freedom of the satellite and our specific policy objectives. This redefinition should take into account the respective roles and targets of RL and RL, and a re-examined RL, and should have as a main objective the reordering of media output to realizable actions by the RL in the support of freedom for the satellites from Soviet control, and greater internal freedom for the people of the USSR itself.

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8. That the Department re-examine RL is desire that the methods by which policy guidance to all media on Eastern Europe be re-examined urgently with a view to reorganizing the effort which has existed between the national aspirations for the existence freedom of the satellite and our specific policy objectives. This redefinition should take into account the respective roles and targets of RL and RL, and a re-examined RL, and should have as a main objective the reordering of media output to realizable actions by the RL in the support of freedom for the satellites from Soviet control, and greater internal freedom for the people of the USSR itself.
In the past, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been provided opportunities to discuss matters with USA and CIA officials. It is recommended that consideration be given to the formation of a committee (on the lines of the Jackson Committee) to review and make recommendations on the future of the American propaganda broadcasting, and to formulate additional recommendations.