

March 8, 1954

**Memorandum from [redacted] for Chief, IO/1,
'History of the Efforts on the Part of the American
Committee to Establish Large Scale Radio Activities'**

Citation:

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Summary:

An International Organizations Division memorandum reviews the history of AMCOMLIB efforts to organize radio broadcasts, noting that they became the primary AMCOMLIB activity only after issuance of the Jackson Committee report in September 1953.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, IO/1

SUBJECT: History of the Efforts on the part of the
American Committee to Establish Large Scale
Radio Activities.

1. In the original QEACTION Project outline, approved by ADFC's office on 28 September 1950, it was stated that, following the organization of a United Front, a subsequent objective of the project was: "Overt radio broadcasts by the United Front Organization designed to reach the people of the Soviet Union as well as the Soviet forces of occupation in Germany, Austria, and the satellite countries."

2. Immediately following receipt of this approval, officers of the EE Division and of the newly formed American Committee initiated efforts to form a United Front, the prerequisite to further action. The first meeting of four emigre groups took place at Fussen, Germany in January 1951, less than four months after the initial project approval. Additional meetings with the emigres resulted in agreement on a protocol which, everyone concerned believed, would form the basis of the political center. Accordingly, the Committee proceeded full steam ahead to plan and implement the major elements in the program for "practical work" which, as the project outline had provided, was to follow the formation of a United Front. The Russian Research Institute was taken over. Plans were laid to establish a newspaper. And plans to develop a large scale radio operation were given the highest priority.

3. The Committee hired Forrest McGurney as Radio Director in July 1951. By 15 August 1951 McGurney had prepared a complete preliminary radio plan for QEACTION. This plan developed requirements for a total budget of [redacted]. The plan included two 100 KW transmitters, which the Committee proceeded to acquire. A.D. Ring prepared a study for the Committee which concluded that Barcelona was the optimum site for two 100 KW transmitters, given the target areas to be covered. Eugene Lyons, then President of the Committee, wrote a policy paper for the radio operation in which he stressed the importance of initiating broadcasts at the earliest possible date.

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4. Under the circumstances, with the Committee proceeding vigorously to develop and implement far-reaching activities in the field of practical work, Agency officials decided that they had better obtain top level Agency and Department of State approval for these activities. Accordingly, a meeting was arranged on 27 August 1951 in General Smith's office, attended by Messrs. Dulles, Wisner, Lindsay, and Bross of CIA and Messrs. Mohlen, Matthews, Reinhardt, and Joyce of State. At this meeting, General Smith introduced the subject of **QUACTIVE** radio operations by questioning the effectiveness of radio propaganda beamed to the USSR. The consensus of opinion of the State delegation was that the practical impact of radio propaganda on Great Russia was problematical. Mr. Dulles stressed the desirability of concentrating propaganda on Russian occupation personnel in East Germany. Accordingly, the meeting decided to permit radio broadcasting on an experimental scale only; General Smith authorized limited broadcasting coverage of occupation forces in East Germany and Poland, and the Soviet Union. The sum of [redacted] was approved by General Smith for this purpose in October, 1951. In October the Department of State set forth its views as to the priority of endeavor it believed the Committee should undertake. A newspaper was first on the list. Last, "and well at the bottom," was listed the radio program directed toward the USSR itself.

5. In accordance with the then generally accepted premise in regard to **QUACTIVE** (i.e. that a United Front had to be formed before radio broadcasts could be initiated), and in view of the official attitude towards radio broadcasts as shown above, activity in the radio field on the part of the Committee then remained quiescent until the formation of a Political Center in October, 1952. Immediately following this development, the Committee proceeded to move rapidly towards the building of a radio organization. When it became known that the Committee hoped to be on the air by 1 March 1953, certain Agency officials strongly recommended to DD/P that "the proposed March 1 opening date should definitely be postponed at least until the administrative difficulties have been straightened out and adequate scripts prepared." This recommendation was not followed, as Admiral Stevens developed a convincing argument at a meeting with DD/P on 27 February 1953 to the effect that whatever deficiencies the operation would initially possess would most efficiently be rectified in the course of actual broadcasting and operating experience. The radio went on the air on 1 March 1953 as scheduled. After a rather imperfect beginning, Radio Liberation had shown sufficient improvement to warrant the following official comment from the Department of State: "The quality of these broadcasts has steadily improved since their inception on March 1, 1953, and they should continue to be supported."

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6. Throughout this entire period, it was generally accepted that the political effort was of primary importance. It was not until the release of the Jackson Committee report in September 1953 that the Agency was officially notified that the radio effort was now to be regarded as of primary importance. It was a sudden shift in emphasis for all those who had been intimately associated with the project. Since the very first days, when Mr. Kennan gave impetus to the formulation of QKACTIVE, the political effort had not only been considered most important, but even a prerequisite to other activity. In the past month we have been trying to reorient the thinking of the Committee so as to recognize this basic policy change. When it is recognized and accepted, we should expect a resumption of that great drive to amplify the radio operation which characterized the early days of the Committee's activities.


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