

November 4, 1960

Letter, Edward Van Der Rhoer to Gene Sosin

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Summary:

Radio Liberty policy official Edward Van Der Rhoer discusses the process of coordinating Radio Liberty policy papers

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November 4, 1960

Mr. Gene Sosin
American Committee for Liberation
1657 Broadway
New York 19, New York

Dear Gene:

As you know, we have certain problems here in connection with the handling of Policy Position Statements, particularly respecting the timing of their presentation to the Council of Editors. My own approach to the problem was set forth in my letter of September 19: in a nutshell, to handle each FPS in the manner that seems most appropriate in the individual case.

The FPS which we now call "Free Exchange of Information and Ideas" set forth a policy on which we are all generally in agreement and one which we have been following in RL broadcasts even in the absence of any formal statement of policy. Since there appeared to be no really controversial elements in this paper, I felt that any changes we made would be primarily in regard to form and that this FPS could be handled in a routine manner with early consideration at a Joint Policy Meeting.

In all likelihood, however, I should have kept you better informed on our reactions to the format of the original draft. There were several objections concerning the form of the original paper:

1. We (that is to say, the Policy Advisory Board) did not like the original title "Peaceful Competition of Ideas". The consensus was that the use of a term such as "peaceful competition" as well as such terms in the original paper as "peaceful coexistence", "revisionism" and the "Spirit of Camp David" only tended to raise the question of the sense in which we were using phrases which originated in Soviet propaganda. As pointed out in Mr. Sargeant's memorandum of March 11, 1960, the use by the Soviet regime of phrases of this type to advance its own propaganda aims compromises their use by us without adequate qualifications and explanation. In this particular case, their use would force us to add qualifications and explanations in order to make clear what we meant.

2. We considered the original draft too long and too repetitive. In the light of Mr. Sargeant's memorandum of September 20, 1960 concerning the RL Interim Guidance on The 15th General Assembly Meeting, this FPS seemed to lend itself particularly well to treatment along the lines pointed out by him.

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3. In Mr. Sargeant's memorandum of September 20, his first point led us to look especially closely at the objectives of the original draft of "Free Exchange of Information and Ideas" as received from you. We decided that all of the original objectives were more correctly methods and techniques of treatment.

In view of these objections to the original format, we changed the title and shortened the statement. The assumptions and objectives were stated in very simple, general terms without altering the meaning of the paper as a whole. The original objectives were included among the methods of treatment which we drafted on the basis of the shortened form of the assumptions and objectives. The new form of this paper, which we are forwarding herewith, was presented to the Joint Meeting on November 3 and approved with only very minor revisions and with the addition of one method of treatment.

All of this, including Mr. Sargeant's comments on the UN General Assembly Guidance, ties in with the agreement reached during his visit to Munich in February. It was agreed then, according to my understanding, that we would use the short form of the PPS, i.e. a short, clear cut statement of basic policy (assumptions and information policy objectives). In addition, it was agreed that there might be occasions when the basic paper would be presented to the Council of Editors either in revised form or not at all: in lieu of the basic paper, the Council of Editors might be convoked to consider only the detailed method of treatment.

Please give me the benefit of your comments and advice so that we will be able to process Policy Position Statements on the best conceivable working basis.

With best wishes to you, Bob and Helene,

Sincerely,

Edward Van Der Rhoer

EVDR:AdoW

Enclosure:

PPS - Free Exchange of Information and Ideas;
Methods.