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USIA Criticism of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty

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Summary:

USIA Director George Allen sympathizes with State Department questioning the value of RFE and RL in a meeting with Allen Dulles and others

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: 13 May 1959

SUBJECT : Dinner Meeting on Radio Broadcasting to the Bloc

PARTICIPANTS: Director of Central Intelligence
George Allen, Director, USIA
Henry Loomis, Director, VOA
Archibald Alexander, President, FEC
Howland Sargeant, President, AmComLib
C. Tracy Barnes, ADD/P for PP Ops; Cord Meyer, Jr., Chief, IO

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MARCH 2009

1. After dinner George Allen launched into a discussion of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation, on both of which he made the following points:

a. He stated that there was considerable questioning by the Department of State of the role of unofficial broadcasting to the Bloc. He did not identify himself directly with this body of criticism but implied throughout that he had some sympathy with it.

b. He put forth the view that changed conditions within the Bloc and in the Bloc's relations to the West brought into question the whole concept of emigres and escapees continuing to broadcast to their own people. He obviously places a considerable reliance on such events as the American fair in Moscow and the exchange program as a means of large scale communication, with a corresponding decrease in the need for radio.

c. He implied that the programming of both RFE and Radio Liberation is in the hands of aging emigre politicians who are increasingly out of touch with the real conditions in their homelands and who have as their main purpose in life the recreation of a past to which they can return. He went so far as to state that both the regimes in Eastern Europe and in Russia and the majority of the people were resentful of this emigre intervention in their internal affairs. He said it was clear that Faubus in Arkansas had used the fact of federal intervention to strengthen his own internal political position, and he said that in much the same way Khrushchev and the satellite leadership now use western broadcasting to consolidate their hold on

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their own people. When asked, if this was the case, why the regime sees fit to spend upwards of \$100, 000, 000 a year on jamming, he had no ready answer.

d. Allen concluded by suggesting that there was a need for basic review and perhaps reorganization of the official and unofficial broadcasting pattern. He implied that one of the reasons for our being unwilling to face such a review was the political influence in this country of the emigre leadership. Throughout the discussion Allen made few distinctions between conditions within Eastern Europe as opposed to those in the Soviet Union, and he also was obviously uninformed on the changes, both in policy and organization, that have occurred within both RFE and Radio Liberation, since the early days when the emigre role was more substantial.

2. Mr. Allen had to leave early and Henry Loomis stayed on for further discussion. He took the following somewhat contradictory positions.

a. He said that the pressure for review and reevaluation was coming from the State Department as a result of the May report and the communications from Ambassadors Beam and Thompson. He pleaded for a complete new look at the entire broadcasting effort to the Bloc with the purpose of determining in the abstract what the most effective and economical allocation of funds and personnel should be as between official and unofficial broadcasting. Measured against this ideal plan, he argued we should then proceed to make ~~that~~ changes are possible in the existing structures. To a question as to what changes have actually occurred within the Bloc to require so drastic a reconsideration, he said that one change which had occurred was the increase in the Soviet broadcasting effort to Africa and other under-developed countries.

b. Loomis initially took the position that the Department of State should be the agency to conduct such a review, but later appeared to propose that an outside group of prominent experts on the order of the Jackson Committee might be established.

c. Loomis concluded by saying that he saw his real role as one of explaining to George Allen our operations and of gaining his support for them. He said he needed the DCI's help in doing this, and hoped there would be more meetings of this kind in the future.

3. In the course of this discussion the DCI made it clear that he did not believe there had been basic changes in the structure of Soviet society or in the long term expansionary purpose of the Soviet regime. He pointed out

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that the Soviets were continually maneuvering to consolidate their hold on Eastern Europe and to obtain western acceptance of the status quo in that area. He said that the Soviets for a long time had attempted by jamming and diplomatic pressures to silence and eliminate the unofficial broadcasting effort which they obviously looked upon as an important obstacle to their attempt to solidify their hold over the restless populations of Eastern Europe and over their own people. To discontinue U.S. support of unofficial broadcasting would signal a basic shift in U.S. policy which the Director did not feel should be decided at the level of the Eastern European Division in the State Department, and the matter would have to be carried to the top for consideration and decision.

4. The DCI, joined by Messrs. Alexander and Sargeant, also opposed the idea of creating an outside group of experts to conduct a review, pointing out that a prolonged briefing would be necessary to bring them to a point where they could consider matters with which we are already quite familiar.

5. The discussion ended inconclusively, with an agreement to keep closely in touch on these problems.



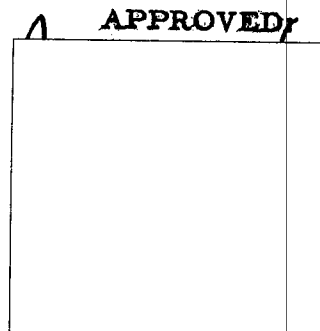
CORD MEYER, JR.

Chief

International Organizations Division

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