

January 27, 1959

**Cord Meyer, Jr., 'Policy Guidance and Program
Review for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation'
[Approved for Release May 6, 2019]**

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Summary:

CIA official Cord Meyer reviews RFE and RL responses to program changes directed by the interagency Committee on Radio Broadcast Policy.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director (Plans)
Chief, Psychological and Propaganda Staff

SUBJECT: Policy Guidance and Program Review for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation

1. U. S. broadcasts to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have been under continuous review for responsiveness to U. S. foreign policy objectives to secure maximum possible impact and effectiveness of the methods and aims of both official (VOA) and unofficial radio stations (RFE and Radio Liberation). They were thoroughly reviewed by the Committee on Radio Broadcasting Policy during 1957 and 1958. This Committee, composed of representatives of State Department, NSIA and CIA, chaired by S. Allan Lightner, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, prepared policy papers for the individual target countries, defining the role each broadcaster would play in the fulfillment of both general and specific U. S. objectives in these areas. As a basis follow-up to this determination of policy, the Committee conducts periodic reviews of the program content broadcast by each of the broadcasters.

2. With respect to the broadcasts of RFE, the policy papers recommended the strengthening of RFE's posture as a reflector of the free Western world through appropriate relationships with "European" organizations, greater use of European materials and points of view, emphasis on European integration, discontinuance of identification of broadcasts with the Voice of Free Poland, etc., change in the unique tone of the broadcasts, etc. Great care was taken to insure that RFE broadcasts would not be inflammatory by adoption of such ground rules as "avoiding any action which would amount to or could be legitimately construed to be direct incitement to armed uprisings; or tactical advice in connection with any disturbance or uprising which might occur," "avoiding the use of program content or tone which either is calculated to be inflammatory or whose effects may be anticipated to be potentially inflammatory." The papers further explicitly confirmed that "policy for RFE broadcasting is aimed only at preventing revolutionary change."

3. These policy papers were issued as RFE Special Guidelines in the Fall of 1957. In addition to RFE's own programming direction and CIA's continuing supervision of RFE's output to insure compliance with these directives, the Lightner Committee has appointed a script review working group which periodically reviews RFE output. To date samples of output for all five countries have been analyzed and a second round of reviews is about to begin. These reviews have shown that RFE has made considerable

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progress in recasting the programming along the policy lines stated above. For example, all desks had changed their names by early 1958 to such well-known as "This is the Polish Station of RFE," which tone decreased sharply; the perspective of Russification was well advanced by the initiation of such broadcasts as the program "University of the Air" and planning is well along for the creation of a European Advisory Committee of prominent Europeans to advise and assist in RFE broadcasting. To quote from one of the Highways Committee's script reviews as an example, the Polish output which was reviewed on April 17, 1958, was considered to have "gone a long way during the past several months toward meeting current broadcast policy objectives. RFE was congratulated on broadcasts in the international commentary field and on a number of other specific broadcasts."

4. We would like to say that we consider attempts by the Communist regime to discredit RFE to be one indication of defeatism. It is obviously not in the interests of the Soviet Bloc leaders to permit this radio to break through the Iron Curtain with its message of truth and hope for the captive peoples. There have been many thousands of such regime attacks in the past as well as continuing efforts to put RFE out of business through diplomatic, UN and private channels. We have, in addition, just learned of a Communist agent attempt to bomb the RFE headquarters in Munich. On the other hand, there is a continuing body of evidence available attesting to the fact that RFE has a substantial and interested audience in its target countries.

5. Finally, independent studies by the foreign press, the Council of Europe and the German Government fully exonerated RFE from the charges that it incited the Hungarian people to revolt in 1956. As the UN Report on Hungary itself points out, the revolt there was sparked by the people themselves who were under the thumb of a Soviet puppet regime.

6. The Committee on Radio Broadcasting Policy issued the policy paper defining the policy objectives and operating goals for Radio Liberation on 1 May 1958. In essence, this document provides for an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary approach in seeking to bring about changes in the Soviet system toward more democratic forms, an approach which the radio already had been following.

7. RFE's basic objective is to stimulate Soviet listeners to think critically of the communist system and to provide, by means available to them, for alternative forms of Soviet governmental structure and behavior calculated to give them greater participation in decisions affecting their own future. The unique role of the radio is preserved as an essential ingredient in furthering the hope that fellow countrymen who live in freedom in the West are speaking to their fellow countrymen behind the Iron Curtain with the knowledge and experience they have acquired in both forms of society. In point of actual fact, the radio is completely independent of the Soviet radio community and under the complete policy and

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operating control of American citizens. It does not indulge in vituperation and indiscriminate attacks against the Soviet Union or the leaders but criticizes selectively those policies and institutions which work to the disadvantage of the Soviet people. It is quick to recognize and applaud Soviet scientific and other achievements in order to maintain its credibility as a champion of the rights of Soviet citizens. It speaks generally from the viewpoint that any change which may be brought about in the Soviet system must of necessity be initiated by the Soviet people themselves and not from outside.

8. In continuing reference to the policy paper, a working group of the Committee on Public Broadcasting Policy completed on 20 October 1952 an appraisal of material broadcast by Radio Liberty. Its draft report to the Committee said the working group "agreed that the broadcasts reviewed generally conform to current policy directives." It noted the content of the State Department representatives on the working group that the scripts "strike a good balance in tone, containing not too much invective and at the same time not being overly mild." The execution and presentation of some programs was praised while that of others was criticized. The text of the working group's draft report is attached hereto.

9. State Department representatives on the working group recommended that the name of the radio in Russian should be changed as soon as possible to Radio Liberty (in English, Radio Liberty, or Freedom). This change is now in the process of being effected after a lengthy study conducted by the members of the American Committee for Liberation. The Department of State, CIA and the American Committee for Liberation are agreed that the new "liberalized" name to the station's literature the liberation of the people of the USSR by force free should not that such a meaning does not directly interpret the station's policies and also as defined by the official policy document governing its operations. It is expected that the new name for the station will be established shortly under a special procedure allowing for a gradual transition period of a few weeks.

10. In a personal conversation with Richard H. Sargent, President of the American Committee for Liberation on 24 January in New York, Alexander Haigman commented the view attributed to him by news that USSR and Radio Liberty should be "broken off" if the Soviets agreed to discontinue jamming of VOA broadcasts. He outlined his own view, according to Mr. Sargent, as follows:

The time is not clear at hand when the USSR either will stop jamming of its own sound or be prepared to make a deal which is a good one from our point of view.

The time is not clear at hand when it would be wise to make an agreement by which such private broadcasters as RFE or Radio Liberty were shut down or dismantled.

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Under present circumstances the USSR might reduce or eliminate jamming for a time until the professional cadres of such private radio had been eliminated and the technical equipment dismantled and then they would be still in a position to fabricate some pretext for resuming the jamming. They would then have achieved the objective of eliminating these broadcasts without impairing their own position substantially.

There may however some time in the future come a point at which there is a possibility of a serious negotiation and then the question of whether broadcasts such as those of RFE and Radio Liberation should be maintained might hinge on how great and important a price the USSR would be willing to pay for their elimination.

CORD MEYER, JR.

Chief

International Organizations Division

1 Attachment
As stated

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