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APR 19 1975

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 16, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: JACK MARSH
FROM: MAX FRIEDERSDORF *M.F.*
SUBJECT: Stanton Report on USIA

Jim Keogh has given me a copy of his critique on the recent Stanton report which would restructure USIA. Jim asked me to pass this on to you and I believe it will be of interest.

To Max -

*This appears to be
throwing the baby out with the
bath water.*



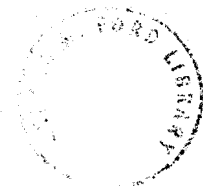


UNITED STATES
INFORMATION AGENCY
WASHINGTON 20547
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

A Critique of the Stanton Report
on Information, Education and Cultural Relations

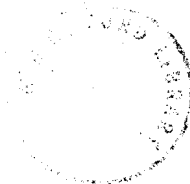
The United States Information Agency welcomes the study and attention that a number of official and unofficial groups are giving the U. S. Government's overseas information and cultural programs. The American public and even many officials of the Federal Government know far too little about the work of USIA. If these studies lead to a broader understanding of the Agency's function and a general consensus as to its mission the public interest will be well served. If they also lead to an improved structure that will increase effectiveness and efficiency much will be gained.

In its recent report, the Stanton Panel on Information, Education and Cultural Relations reaffirmed the vital importance of the information and cultural programs to the U. S. Government and stated that they "have demonstrated their success and are therefore an exceptional investment of governmental energy and the taxpayer's dollar." The Panel found that these programs are working well despite an imperfect structure and urged that they be given greater support.



The Stanton Panel concluded that new factors in the international situation make public diplomacy more important than ever. One of the consequences of growing international interdependence noted by the Panel is "the need to explain the societal context in which U.S. policies and actions are generated." Pointing out that detente both requires and enables a fuller international expression of American ideas, the Panel makes the observation that detente does not mean an end to the sharp East-West struggle. In fact, there is clear evidence that the East is committed to that struggle by ideology and policy. The report asserts that the growing importance of countries whose cultures differ greatly from the United States requires that the U.S. make an intensive effort to explain what lies behind American commitments. The "diminished capacity of the United States to dictate the course of international events" means that the United States will have to count more than ever on explanation and persuasion.

After making these perceptive general points, the Stanton report turns to structure. Making three broad recommendations, it would:



1.) Combine the long-range "general" information, education and cultural programs of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (CU) of the Department of State and the USIA into a new Information and Cultural Agency (ICA).

2.) Transfer the foreign policy information function from USIA to an enlarged bureau of press and public affairs in the State Department.

3.) Remove the Voice of America from USIA and set it up as a separate federal agency under a Board of Overseers.

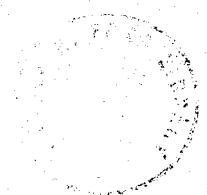
Let us examine the consequences of these proposed changes.

1.) A New Information and Cultural Agency

Under the Stanton plan, the new ICA would absorb all of CU and those parts of USIA dealing with "general" or long-range information and cultural programs. The mission of the new agency, according to the report, would be "the promotion of mutual and reciprocal understanding of the United States abroad and of other countries here, both as an end in itself and as an essential basis for a peaceful world." It would not be concerned with U.S. foreign policy issues.

The report projects the new ICA as a "clearly separate and autonomous" entity which should be detached" from the day-to-day conduct of foreign policy." This concept of the new agency and its stated purpose raises some serious questions. How is mutual understanding to be achieved and what would it be worth if the current problems and day-to-day issues which form much of the substance of relations between countries are intentionally avoided? There is real danger that the programs of ICA would lack substance and realism and would not be taken seriously either by the State Department or by members of Congress who might well regard such programs as unnecessary luxuries. The taxpayers would be justified in questioning whether they should be paying for programs that are insulated from American policy. Our information and cultural programs should be coordinated with U.S. policy, and the agency which runs them should have close and cooperative relations with the Department of State--as USIA does at present.

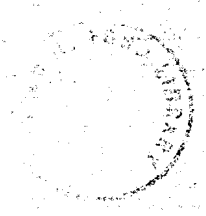
The ICA would retain some of the media services and program resources now found in USIA, but under the Stanton proposal they would be considerably reduced from present levels. It urges a "new



reliance" on the public sector for program resources with a consequent reduction in Agency media production. The report specifically mentions that Agency production of "feature motion pictures and motion picture and TV series could be curtailed. . . private media product acquisition should be strengthened."

In the past two years USIA has curtailed its own production and placed new emphasis on acquisition. Does the Stanton group want to force USIA to drop such productions as its two film and TV series that are highly successful? Science Report, portraying the latest American scientific advances, is regularly shown on local TV stations in 79 foreign countries; Vision, a film magazine of contemporary American life and personalities, is seen on more than 500 TV stations in 72 countries. Nothing similar to either series is produced commercially.

In the past two years, the number of USIA magazines has been reduced from 56 to 16. While praising a number of Agency publications, the Stanton report calls for "further selective curtailment," which it says "will also bring into question the need for retaining the three Regional Service printing plants in Manila, Beirut and Mexico City. . ."



While USIA periodicals should continue to be critically reviewed, there are substantial reasons why the Regional Service Centers should be retained. The main reason is the cost advantage to the U.S. Government. On the average, the Centers can deliver printed products to USIS posts at costs 30 to 50 percent lower than commercial prices. Because of their location, the Centers can bulk ship the products to the overseas posts more quickly and cheaper than could be done from the United States. The quality of the Centers' printing is extremely high. They also provide Arabic, French and Spanish translation services which are not available in many posts. The Washington staff would have to be greatly increased if the Centers were not available to provide these services.

2.) Foreign Policy Information

The Stanton report recommends that the foreign policy information function--the task of explaining U.S. foreign policy to overseas audiences--be transferred to the State Department. USIA would give up its press officers and those elements of its media service whose present job it is to interpret and defend American foreign policy abroad. These people and this function would be merged into an enlarged

bureau of public affairs (to be known as the Office of Policy Information) within the State Department. Some important activities which now enjoy an appropriately high priority within USIA would be submerged as minor activities within the large structure of the State Department.

Congressman John Slack, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the State Department and cultural and information programs, believes this would be unwise. He recently stated that "It is only realistic to assume that the job of explaining U.S. policies to foreign audiences would have a much lower priority under the proposed scheme than it does now under USIA." Columnist Carl Rowan, a former Director of USIA and once a high-level State Department official, says Slack is "absolutely right." Both men conclude that USIA is both more interested and professionally better prepared to do the job than the State Department.

Since USIA's daily Wireless File regularly carries texts of major policy speeches and statements to U.S. missions abroad, the Stanton report proposes that it be transferred to the State Department. No change in this essential and much admired service is envisioned except in its location. That, however, could have serious consequences, for the Wireless File has additional functions in support of Agency

programs that would be lost under the proposed move. The File is the Agency's major, fast communications link with the field posts. It is available to all USIA elements for the transmission of information and program materials. For example, it regularly carries book lists to expedite post selection and orders for USIS libraries; biographic and background information for which posts often have urgent, unanticipated needs in programming American speakers and cultural groups; VOA program schedules; notices concerning new film productions and acquisitions, and responses to post requests for specialized materials to exploit short-run targets of opportunity. If the Wireless File were shifted as the Panel recommends, a valuable facility would be lost to the program elements remaining outside the Department.

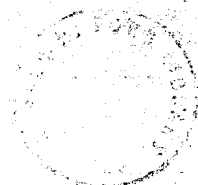
On the technical side, the Stanton report said, "it is hoped that the new and modern communications facilities of the Department can be used for the transmission (of the Wireless File) in lieu of the comparatively outdated USIA Wireless File system." The telecommunications facilities of the Department have not changed appreciably since July 9, 1973, when Acting Deputy Under Secretary of State for Management William O. Hall wrote that "the broadcast technique currently employed by USIA is the most efficient and cost

effective method of delivering the type of traffic contained in the Wireless File." Mr. Hall added that in comparing the State and USIA systems, "it is not practical to add the Wireless File broadcast on top of a limited capacity special purpose teletypewriter network without unacceptable degradation of both."

3.) Voice of America

The Presidential directive to the Voice of America charges the VOA with three tasks: to serve as a reliable, objective source of news; to present U.S. policy, and to portray American society. The Stanton Panel believes this places the VOA in "a tenuous position at the crossroads of journalism and diplomacy," and it would resolve this "anomaly" by detaching the Voice from other information and cultural activities and setting it up as a separate agency under a Board of Overseers. The intention conveyed by the Stanton report is to insulate the Voice of America from government policy to the greatest degree possible.

It is true that the requirements of VOA's several tasks are complex. Comprehensive news coverage is sometimes not the best diplomacy. But this inherent fact is nothing that can be removed by



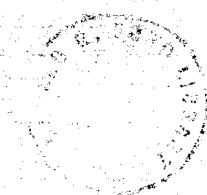
any reorganizational sleight of hand. Making the Voice a separate agency will exacerbate the problem, not resolve it. As Henry Loomis, former VOA Director, ex-Deputy Director of USIA and now President of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, wrote: "The Voice should remain within the Agency. . . . What the Director of the VOA needs is strong support in resisting undue and unwarranted pressure and yet recognizing and being responsive to constructive suggestions. The mechanism of the Director of the Information Agency plus the policy mechanism, area directors and so forth, provide a pretty good shield. It is not perfect. . . but it has worked surprisingly well over the years."

Under the Stanton proposal, foreign policy commentaries and analyses on VOA would be written within the State Department. To anyone familiar with the State Department clearance process, it is difficult to imagine that the Department would be able to produce a steady and timely stream of policy commentaries and news analysis for VOA broadcasts. Commenting on this aspect of the Stanton plan, Edmund A. Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and retired career Foreign Service Officer, in his dissent from the

Stanton report, wrote, "the difficulties that might arise in trying to reconcile fast moving news coverage with Department clearances boggle the mind."

It would be difficult to coordinate the programs of a separate Voice with those of the new Information and Cultural Agency. As Henry Loomis wrote, "It is important that the Voice be viewed as one of the tools available to an Ambassador and a Public Affairs Officer in a country. The Voice's programs can supplement the programs in the Cultural Center, they can advertise them, they can extend their reach and, vice versa, USIS activities can enhance the awareness of the Voice among the general population." Under the Stanton plan, this mutual support would be lost.

There may well be resistance on the part of some members of Congress to the creation of one more presidentially-appointed board. There ultimately would be justifiable resistance from the American people to use of their tax funds to support a kind of international CBS. The greatest problem in a separate Voice of America as envisioned by the Stanton Panel is this: Without a closely-felt need to serve the national interest, it would--like much of the private sector media -- project too little of the fundamental, long-range, positive side of



American life and too much of the hot, negative and sensational. The result could well be a situation in which American taxpayers' money would be spent on a broadcasting service which would devote too much of its time telling the rest of the world the worst about America.

The establishment of the VOA as a separate agency would add significantly to its present operating expenses. USIA budget and administrative experts have looked into this and have concluded that to set up the support elements now provided by USIA -- for example, a budget and finance unit, administrative services, security office, training, audience research, inspection and audits, legal services, the new Executive Director, and a secretariat -- would involve the addition of approximately 200 people to the VOA staff. Their review indicates that this would add several million dollars annually to the present VOA budget of about \$61.8 million just to continue the present level of programming. The only alternative would be to sharply reduce the Voice of America.

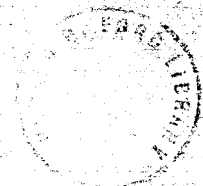
Other Problems

There are other problems that would arise from the Stanton plan. A major problem would develop in the field operations, where the position of the Public Affairs Officer who now coordinates the



activities of the press and cultural sections would be abolished. The two sections would be completely separate and independent from each other, and would receive instructions from and report to two different agencies in Washington. A divided field operation would reduce mission effectiveness in utilizing and coordinating all the information and cultural tools available in support of mission objectives.

Special thematic programs utilizing a range of communications methods would be infinitely more difficult to plan and carry out under the proposed system than at present. Who would be responsible for the new and important multimedia program of export and tourist promotion? Who would be responsible for placing Agency films or video tapes with local TV stations -- the Cultural Officer whose Agency supplied them, or the Press Officer who normally handles contacts with the media? How can a clear distinction be made between current foreign policy issues (the exclusive province of the State Department under the Stanton plan) and longer range aspects of the government actions and policies (presumably the responsibility of ICA)?



The Stanton proposals would complicate the problems of the Congressional committees that oversee the information and cultural programs. USIA's current budget is approximately \$238,000,000. CU's current budget is about \$53,000,000. The Stanton Panel would divide this between three agencies and would merge policy information activities and personnel into an enlarged bureau in State, making it difficult to know exactly how much was actually being spent by the U.S. Government for information, cultural and educational exchange activities.

One of the officials most concerned with this problem, Congressman John Slack, expressed this view in a recent statement in the House: "I would point out that fragmenting the function, staff, and resources of these activities into three different agencies makes the task of effective congressional oversight vastly more difficult. How much more easily and how much more efficiently could the committee carry out its oversight responsibilities," he asked, "if these programs were consolidated into one agency?"

(Substantial objections to the Stanton report's recommendations have also been expressed by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk.)

Conclusion

Just as "information," "culture," and "education" are not separable and mutually exclusive, neither should the so-called fast media be divorced from long-range information efforts. All are valuable tools in what should be a unified, coherent, continuing effort of our government to communicate with people abroad. Similarly, the function of interpreting U. S. foreign policy should not be seen as something apart from the effort to promote mutual understanding. These functions are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary and support one another.

The Stanton Panel was eminently correct in asserting that the new conditions of international life require that our country have a strong and effective information-cultural-educational communications capability. Given the United States position in the world of the mid-70s explanation and persuasion are indeed more important than ever. But to be effective these activities must be planned and carried out as coordinated elements of a unified program operating under a coherent plan. Under the Stanton proposals there could be no central planning and coordination for there would be no central management.

There is no perfect structure for the complex mission of public diplomacy. The Stanton Panel concluded that the present organization is working well, but sought to design a plan that would be an improvement. Instead, the Stanton proposal would scatter USIA activities among three agencies. It would fragment rather than consolidate and thereby weaken rather than strengthen. It would result in confusion, disruption and division of purpose. It is reasonable to expect that it would cost more rather than less.

If there is to be a reorganization, the elements of our overseas communications program should be consolidated into one unified agency. By far the most effective arrangement would be to unite the cultural, educational and information programs of CU, USIA and other agencies in a new and strong agency with direct policy ties to the White House and the Department of State, with close communication with other branches and departments of the government and continued responsiveness to Congressional oversight. One strong agency would ensure that our efforts are coordinated in support of the national interest and that the United States would have the effective public diplomacy that the times require.

James Keogh
Director, USIA
April 8, 1975