

WORKING DRAFT

SECRET

March 5, 1958

TO MEMBERS OF COBAT:

As agreed at the COBAT meeting held March 3rd, this working draft of a report to the OCB, attaching agency positions on television and pointing up the problem of financing Committee projects, is distributed for your consideration and revision at the next meeting.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION

Background

The President's Committee on International Information Activities recommended in its report to the President, dated June 30, 1953 that the U.S. should be prepared to provide assistance to television industries in other countries while those industries are in their formative stages. The Schramm reports each year (1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957) have pointed out the increasing importance of television overseas as a medium of communications.

Purpose of COBAT

The OCB Committee on Broadcasting and Television (COBAT) was therefore established in December 1955 to assure inter-agency coordination on projects involving assistance to foreign governments in developing their television services. COBAT's terms of reference state that the Committee will, among other things, "undertake the development of specific projects, including planning and arranging for financing, to counter Soviet TV efforts into Free World areas."

The Problem

COBAT's Report and Recommendations Concerning Television in Europe (4/23/56) which was adopted as a general guide for planning purposes, stated "Specific projects requiring additional authority or new funds will be submitted to the OCB for appropriate action." Such projects have not been submitted (in the absence of any possibility of financing them. And it is the view of the Committee that the Board's wishes cannot be carried out in the field of television overseas unless some new source of funds is made available. COBAT alone can not solve the crucial problem of how to finance projects.)

Agency Positions on Television

None of the represented agencies or departments has allocated funds available for assisting television industries in foreign countries. Statements of policy on television under which the State Department, USIA, ICA and Defense now operate are provided as attachments to this report. ICA under its present policy limits its offers of assistance and training to educational TV only. ICA is considering a change in its operating policy to allow for participation in projects going beyond the strictly educational field. But until such review takes place, ICA contributions must needs be limited.

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Examples of Increased Russian Activity

In the meantime more and more countries have been receiving assistance and training from the Russians in the field of television programming. Russian offers have been accepted in Egypt, Yugoslavia, one or two Middle-Eastern and Latin American countries. But this is only one part of the overseas television picture. In the field of exchanges in television films and personnel, the Communist countries have become very active in the last few months. And over-the-curtain television operations by the Soviets, which have been a matter of concern to COBAT since its inception, have been stepped up.

Berlin Situation

The Berlin situation is one of the most acute at the moment. East German standards have been converted to those of West Germany, so that the West Berliners can receive telecasts from East Berlin without having their receiving sets adjusted. The East Zone station has been producing programs especially designed for West Berlin audiences. These programs are good programs, containing a special style of television propaganda, which are put on at the time of any weak spots in the West Berlin programming. The competition for the West Berlin audience has become keen. But the free Berlin television station does not have sufficient financial means to counter the Eastern television offensive effectively with attractive programs. COBAT is studying the Berlin situation, but none of its members (operating under present policy - see attachments) has been able to solve this problem to date.

Conclusion

The Committee feels that the OCB should be apprised of the lack of progress in the field of overseas television, and the reason therefor. Opportunities for effective programs along the line recommended four years ago do exist and could easily be exploited. Much information has been collected which could serve as an immediate guide in the choice and execution of such programs. But planning for them is meaningless until some source of funds is discovered.

Recommendation

COBAT recommends an immediate study of means for obtaining a \$250,000 emergency fund to meet rapidly and effectively occasions as they arise in critical areas involving television overseas.

Attachments:

1. State Department Position on TV (extracted from paper prepared for COBAT meeting 12/3/57)
2. USIA Policy on TV (extracted from CA-836, Oct. 3, 1957)
3. ICA Policy (extracted from "background" in ICA draft 11/29/57)
4. Defense Policy (extracted from Department of Defense paper distributed to COBAT 11/4/57 - but not dated)