

SECRET

OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
Washington 25, D. C.

April 11, 1956

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING
TELEVISION IN EUROPE

I. INTRODUCTION:

The growth of world-wide television indicates that shortly it will rank with the newspaper and radio as a mass medium having these capabilities and limitations:

A. Capabilities: (1) Television reaches illiterate and scholar alike. (2) It quickly reaches multitudes indifferent to radio and press. (3) The combination of auditory and visual impact makes it an effective way to convey a psychological message; it can influence deeply the social and economic patterns of Europe. (4) It has a way of "leading the leaders"; ownership of TV receivers occurs first among leaders and opinion-makers.

B. Limitations: (1) As a U.S. psychological weapon, direct television must be considered as primarily for use in the Free World. Except in a few (but important) instances, western television does not penetrate the Iron Curtain. (2) Even if long distance telecasting were feasible, the signal is especially susceptible to jamming, and control over use of receivers is simpler than in radio. (3) Television programs are much more expensive than radio programs.

II. EUROPEAN TELEVISION SITUATION

A. Free World Countries (See Annex A). Television is established in Great Britain and Western Europe. A network, "Eurovision" * connects Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, West Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium. Austria, Spain and Sweden probably will join this system. Norway, Finland, Portugal, and even Yugoslavia are potential participants. Filmed output of this network will find audiences elsewhere; e.g., Latin America. European stations supplement their programs by films from other areas.

Of special concern to the U.S. are the situations in Helsinki, Vienna, and Berlin. In Tallin, 35 miles across the water from Helsinki, the Russians are beaming programs in Finnish to Helsinki. A similar situation exists in Bratislava across the border from Vienna. In neither instance, however, can the programs be received without a modification being made in the receiving set.

B. USSR and European Satellites (See Annex C). The USSR has an ambitious program for the USSR and its European satellites, as strategic locations of stations in areas bordering Western Europe indicate. Some Soviet stations even now are capable of reception in peripheral areas of

* See map (last page) and Annex B

SECRET

the West. Exchange agreements with other nations (e.g., Britain, Switzerland) are increasing the Soviet material used by Free World stations. East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have regular television services, while Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria operate experimental stations.

C. Difference in Technical Standards. The technical television standards employed by the Soviet Bloc differ from those used in other countries of Europe. This prevents direct reception on Western receivers of Bloc programs, and vice versa, without a change or addition to the receivers.

Upon the basis of study of technical data pertaining to eight models of Soviet Bloc TV receivers, it appears that there is no simple method of completely overcoming the differences in frequencies and transmission standards between East and West European TV stations. The difficulty varies with the type or model of set.

For example the 600 Soviet sets imported by Finland ("Avanguard" and "Tempo" brands) could be modified with some substitution and addition of parts to receive Western telecasts but not to receive both East and West stations.

However, engineering developments, particularly changes in the design of Eastern sets, could change this estimate. Developments will be followed closely.

Upon the basis of information now available, it appears that the cost and difficulty of adapting most types of Western sets to receive Eastern telecasts is not great. However, it does not now appear likely that any considerable number of West European receivers will be so modified.

III. POSSIBLE COURSES OF U.S. ACTION

A. Utilize overseas TV to support U.S. foreign policy objectives:

1. By supplying attributed and non-attributed program materials, including films, scripts, live performances by U.S. traveling cultural groups, local programs, and material for insertion in local programs.

2. By presenting filmed or live appearances of visiting American officials, educators, scientists, businessmen, etc., and similar materials on foreign visitors to the U.S.

3. By cooperation with private industry for introduction of materials into commercial TV films provided by NBC, CBS, et al, to foreign television systems.

B. Assist and encourage development of a European-wide TV system - in consonance with U.S. objectives - by:

1. Technical advice in creating TV systems.

2. Professional and technical advice and training in programming and in station operation.

3. Unattributed program assistance (for which the need is great and for which the U.S. has abundant resources), including films and cooperatively-produced programs.

4. Technical assistance in production or assembly of receivers.

5. Advice to and support of Eurovision.

6. Advice concerning methods of supporting TV systems: taxation, licensing, advertising, or a combination.

7. Judicious financial support where appropriate.

C. Hinder and counter Communist efforts to exploit free-world TV audiences.

1. The free nations have a natural leaning toward Western culture, and the best way to prevent Communist program penetration is to support Western European TV systems, including Eurovision, thereby making unnecessary any reliance upon Communist help.

2. Dissemination of information based on monitoring of Communist TV output, including films supplied under exchange programs, should be undertaken to alert TV broadcasters to the nature of Communist use of the medium.

3. It is not recommended that jamming of Communist telecasts - in contravention of U.S. policy - be undertaken at this time.

D. Where possible, utilize TV in the Soviet bloc to reach the peoples of Communist countries.

1. Introduce U.S. materials into the items supplied commercially to TV systems in the Soviet orbit.

2. Encourage friendly countries to supply appropriate materials in their exchange arrangements with Soviet countries, but warn them of the pitfalls of unplanned and unmanaged exchange.

3. Telecast programs on Soviet bloc standards from peripheral points (e.g., West Berlin).

IV. U.S. ACTIVITIES

The present activities of the State Department, USIA, and the Department of Defense are outlined in Annex D. ICA has no TV projects in Europe, but does have an associate membership in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) which might be an effective channel for promoting European cooperation in the television field.

V. SUMMARY

A. Primary considerations affecting establishment of an all-European TV network are cost, facilities, and programming.

SECRET

B. One possible way to achieve pro-Western anti-Communist TV in Europe is to expedite development of an all-European network of the national systems. U.S. assistance can help this development, but care should be taken to avoid the appearance of outside domination.

C. Eurovision has made a start, but it lacks central management, money, program materials and adequate telecommunications.

D. While emphasizing European network development the U.S. should also work with individual TV systems (including commercial ones) and with their governments to encourage and, where necessary, assist their adherence to a European system, and to strengthen their resistance to Communist and Soviet influence in regard to facilities and programming.

E. The capabilities for U.S. assistance exist or can be developed, but are scattered in various agencies. The need is for coordination among them.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. This paper will serve as a guide in planning and will provide the general framework within which individual problems may be approached.

B. Presently authorized projects will be continued by appropriate agencies and the Committee on Broadcasting and Television will develop specific operational proposals relating to priority situations, including Eurovision, Berlin, Austria, Yugoslavia, and Finland, in that order.

C. Specific projects requiring additional authority or new funds will be submitted to the OCB for appropriate action.

Attachments: (5)

- Annex A, "Country-by-country Survey".
- Annex B, "European-wide Radio-television Facilities and 'Eurovision'".
- Annex C, "Television in the Soviet Orbit".
- Annex D, "U.S. Activities".
- Map of Eurovision.

SECRET