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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

9 December 1951

Meeting on 7 December 1951 at 4:00 pm in Mr. Dulles' office. Present were Messrs. Dulles, Wiener and [ ] from CIA, Krentz and Sargeant from State, and Drayton Wilbur, Chairman of the Board, Committee for a Free Asia.

Mr. Dulles introduced the topic of the Committee for a Free Asia with a statement of CIA's relationship to the State Department. Addressing Mr. Wilbur, he explained that policy comes from State, that CIA carries out State's policy. Certain developments in the Far East had raised the possibility that the Committee for a Free Asia might have to be changed in major respects. Mr. Krentz, as the expert on the Far East, and Mr. Sargeant, acting for Mr. Barrett, would be able to say what changes they believed ought to be made. Mr. Dulles asked Mr. Sargeant if there was anything more Sargeant wanted him to say. Sargeant said there was not.

Sargeant continued addressing Mr. Wilbur principally. State was more and more certain, he said, that there is a job to be done by the Committee for a Free Asia but just as certain that the concept had shifted. The job in the Far East cannot be done by U. S. citizens or, in any event, cannot appear to be done by them. What is needed in the Far East, he thought was quiet work -- work without fanfare -- work which did not involve U. S. citizens speaking to Chinese, but which did involve developing leadership among overseas Chinese so that they could communicate to their fellows. He called on Krentz for his views.

Mr. Krentz said he agreed with what had been said by Sargeant. He thought that one of the jobs of the Committee, and perhaps the principal job, would be to rescue overseas Chinese and educate them. He pointed to an instance of 1500 in Hong Kong who were stranded and suggested that the Committee for a Free Asia should look into it. As to the Radio, he said Mr. Sargeant was the expert.

Sargeant then made three points in respect to radio:

- 1) Radio is only useful if it is close to the target area and on a medium wave.
- 2) There is no utility in reaching people with a message from Americans.
- 3) Means should be sought to let Chinese reach Chinese radio.

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In this connection he said that he thought the present radio program of the Committee was not an important and timely vehicle. Krentz agreed, saying that the less attention to radio, the better, that what was needed was a quiet job. "Here are the overseas Chinese," Krentz said. "They are going to go one way or the other. What can be done with them and with their leaders?"

At this point Mr. Wisner, with apologies to Mr. Sargeant, raised a point which he said Mr. Barrett had brought up with him. As long as the present Chinese government and the United States continued their present relations -- and he said he saw little possibility for a change in those relations in the near future, whether a cease-fire took place or not -- the Voice of America can be as tough as it wants to be and just as tough as any radio program of the Committee for a Free Asia. No restrictions are placed upon it. Mr. Wisner, citing Mr. Barrett's view, said that therefore the area for Radio Free Asia had become narrow, that unless Radio Free Asia develops a program distinctive from that which it now operates, it runs the risk of being a polite imitation of the Voice. That, said Mr. Wisner, was the State Department view and one which was understandable to him.

Sargeant thanked Mr. Wisner for expressing perfectly, as he described it, what the State Department thinking was. He said that on the other side of the question there were things to do with the overseas Chinese, some of them in this country, that the State Department could not do. He said he realized that leadership was needed by Americans but that the American hand should not be shown.

Mr. Krentz referred to a specific instance where he thought the Committee could be helpful. He said a Japanese-American seminar, not sponsored by the government, to be held, say in Honolulu, under the Committee's sponsorship would be worthwhile.

Mr. Wilbur spoke for the first time, asking what the purpose of such a seminar would be. Mr. Krentz replied that it would get together the leading scholars in Japan and the United States for an exchange of views. Mr. Wilbur said he thought it would be a good thing if they exchanged views on tuna fish and referred with a laugh to his conviction that the State Department had made some mistakes on the importation of tuna fish. "As to radio," he said, "I'm no expert." One of the directors of the Committee had phrased the job of all the directors as "maintaining the illusion of responsibility," a phrase Mr. Wilbur liked. "We're interested," he said, "in what you want." The only firm conviction Mr. Wilbur held on radio was that the radio department of the Committee was a good department, ably set up and well run. He said he would hate to curtail it. "Can't we do something," he asked, "to avoid the duplication you mention?" He would be glad, he said, to do anything that was suggested but he disliked to see something set up with as much skill and efficiency simply knocked down again. "What is the job," he asked, "you want us to do?"

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Mr. Sargeant answered, apologizing for his inability to be as specific positively as he could be negatively. He felt that Radio Free Asia must be as different as possible from the Voice of America, that it should get out closer to the target area and do everything possible to get the United States -- even the private U. S. label -- off the radio. "Can't it be built up," he asked, "as a Chinese radio, offering broadcasting possibilities and facilities to overseas Chinese leaders -- as soon as they have shown themselves as leaders -- building a Chinese character and avoiding the duplication and imitation of the Voice of America?" He said he suspected that as good as RFA may be, it is presently quite imitative and duplicative of the Voice.

Mr. Sargeant asked [ ] to define the present position of RFA and [ ] said that the RFA people themselves would not deny that their program was very much like the Voice but that they considered it necessary, in order to get a staff together and begin the work, to engage at least in the small operation now under way and that they were not expanding or planning to expand until such time as it was clear what was wanted of them.

Mr. Wisner said that RFE had started like RFA as a broadcast by Americans from New York but that it evolved away from the United States and was now on the edge of the Curtain. At the same time the United States character of the operation has been changed to a strong European coloration. He pointed to the Czech operation as an example where Radio Free Europe was in direct competition with the Czech National Radio. He asked whether this was not something to shoot for?

Sargeant agreed but said that he didn't want to have to go through the long cycle by which Radio Free Europe finally took on a European coloration. "The less we have," he said, "of the intermediate stage with the strong American smell to the operation, the better. Let's not go through another deconditioning period."

Mr. Wilbur said this all seemed reasonable to him. San Francisco had never been thought of as the ultimate point of departure for radio but only as a place to build a nucleus for eventual operation.

Sargeant did not altogether agree that the present RFA operation was a good nucleus but he said he understood the necessity of getting a staff together and finding something for them to do while large operations were planned. He said he would consult experts in the Department and find out what was required to build a nucleus and keep people together until a plan was developed.

Mr. Dulles asked if there were anything else Mr. Sargeant wanted to say. Sargeant said we are asking the Committee to do something tougher than anything that has been done. He said he thought it was

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relatively easy for a committee of Americans to take an interest in the Far East but that the charge he wanted to lay on the Committee was to continue doing a job without arousing the least suspicion of American interest.

Mr. Wilbur asked Mr. Sargeant to give him an example. Sargeant mentioned Thailand, where he said there was a strong overseas Chinese minority. He asked what could be done through the Committee, without Americans appearing in the picture, to get the overseas Chinese community here to have an influence on the community in Thailand. Wilbur said perhaps a radio should be set up in the Philippines and get the Filipinos to do the job with the Committee subsidizing the operation.

Mr. Wiener said that he was anxious to have this meeting end on a very clear-cut note, that he was not certain that everyone was clear.

Sargeant again said he was more clear on the negative aspects of the Committee than the positive and he again repeated his injunction that the radio should move to the target area, that it should have a strong medium wave signal and that no American should appear in the operation. "That," he said, "would establish the Radio as clearly out of a competitive position with the Voice of America. Wiener then asked if Wilbur would be willing to take up the cudgels on the stranded Chinese students in the United States who, he pointed out, were in great difficulty. Wilbur replied that that was the most important project the Committee could undertake and Krentz and Sargeant agreed.

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Chief, International Organizations Branch

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