

Session 10

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American 'Public Diplomacy' and Communist Propaganda in Poland during the 1960s

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VOA (Voice of America) presentation of American freedoms

VOA – 1941-1963:

- 1941 - 1946: In response to the events in Europe in 1940, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) was established to promote solidarity between “the nations of the Western Hemisphere” – the first scheduled international broadcasting activities of the United States
- Mid-1941: Establishment of the Foreign Language Service (FIS) – John Houseman as Chief of the FIS Radio Production Division
- 1942: VOA under the Office of War Information – John Houseman as Chief of the Radio Program Bureau
- 1945: Termination of the OWI – redefinition of the purpose of the VOA
- 1948: Smith-Mundt Act (US Information and Educational Exchange Act) – directives for how to communicate with other countries and “to increase mutual understanding” (‘public diplomacy’)
- 1950: President Truman starts “Campaign of Truth” – calling for “psychological warfare”
- 1953: establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA) –centralization of overseas information activities
- 1958: Henry Loomis (Voice director from 1958 until 1965) initiates the VOA Charter, which is finalized in 1960 and later approved as a directive by President Eisenhower

The VOA Charter:

The long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating directly with the peoples of the world by radio. To be effective, the Voice of America must win the attention and respect of listeners. These principles will therefore govern Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts:

1. VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.
2. VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.
3. VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.¹

- 1961: Edward R. Murrow as USIA Director – emphasizing truth as the “best weapon”
- 1963: President Kennedy’s memorandum to Director Murrow – commenting on the mission of the USIA: “influencing attitudes in other nations”

¹*Voice of America at the Crossroads. Panel Discussion Proceedings.* June 24, 1982. Washington, D.C.: The Media Institute.

Quote:

Willis Conover (1920-1996) in an interview with his friend Jack Towers, 1989:

I'm an independent contractor. I've been in some 50 countries to jazz festivals and such. On my visa application, it says employee. I'm not a VOA employee. I work for Music International Limited. The checks go there. Thus, in many ways, I'm exempt from changes that might result from different presidential administrations.



Suggested reading:

Glade, William. "Issues in the Genesis and Organization of Cultural Diplomacy: A Brief Critical History." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 39, 4 (2009): 240-259.

Heil, Alan J. *Voice of America. A History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Hixson, Walter L. *Parting the Curtain. Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961*. Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1998.

Pirsein, Robert William. *The Voice of America. A History of the International Broadcasting Activities of the United States Government 1940-1962*. New York: Arno Press, 1979.

Ripmaster, Terence M. *Willis Conover. Broadcasting Jazz to the World*. New York: iUniverse Inc., 2007.

Uttaro Ralph A. "The Voices of America in International Radio Propaganda." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 45,1(1982): 103-122.