

WHAT DO WE SAY TO THE WORLD?

Since the end of the war almost everyone has recognized the need for an overseas program to maintain America's position on the battlefield of world public opinion. But there has been something of a battlefield at home regarding the most effective way of accomplishing the desired objective. Meanwhile the Soviet world strategy in recent months has shifted its emphasis from the military to the political. All this makes it all the more important that our own program should be more than merely defensive. The editors have asked Edward L. Bernays, one of America's leading authorities on government information services and propaganda strategy, and who is chairman of the National Committee for an Adequate Overseas U.S. Information Program, to discuss the aims of his group. Following the views of other members of the Committee, SR has added a dissenting opinion by Victor Lasky (former newspaperman and publisher) and an original suggestion about the information programs by John Lear (of the Research Institute of America). On page 38 Horace Sutton tells what is really thought of Americans abroad.

1. Unpopularity Is Unnecessary

By EDWARD L. BERNAYS, *publicist, and founder of the National Committee for an Adequate Overseas U. S. Information Program.*

MANY of America's leaders know that our official overseas information program is vitally important to our national strength. They know that our power comes not only from military and economic resources and that it cannot be effective without other peoples' good will. Unfortunately, the country as a whole isn't so interested. And for other reasons it is difficult to make sure that people in other lands receive an accurate picture of the United States.

In the first place, we have no monolithic political center that con-

trols at the source everything done and said. The essence of our democracy is to permit and encourage free expression of conflicting voices. We need and like discordant voices raised on all sorts of issues. But our enemies, if it serves their purpose, do not hesitate to build up our conflicts and deviations and treat them as if they were normal and usual. They distort American values and twist our meanings.

Another problem is the multiplicity of unofficial channels of communication to the rest of the world. American and foreign press services carry reports of various kinds to foreign people. Books ranging from comic books to university publications, from magazines to other printed matter, carry messages about America. Mo-

tion pictures influence opinion. Tourists, traveling salesmen, and official American representatives create our image.

As a result, the picture is confused. This confusion is exploited by Soviet machinery for spreading negative images of us everywhere. The Soviet machine attempts to deflate any attitudes favorable to America. It represents us as a warmongering and imperialistic people. The all-powerful Soviet state permits the Communists to control the content and media of propaganda not only within their country but also outside. It is a strange picture of the United States that billions of people may get from all this.

Though we as a people are not yet fully convinced that ideas and words are powerful weapons of offense and defense, the Congress of the United States established the U.S. Information Agency to handle overseas information. In 1955-1956 about \$80,000,000 dollars will be spent for this work. Compared to the Soviet expenditure (reported to be between \$1 and \$2 billion a year) this is a very small amount. We are spending

only about 2/10 of 1 per cent of our military budgets. But an increased budget (and I believe it should be larger) will not by itself solve all problems.

We must as individuals give stature to this activity. We must ensure that agency officials carry out policy without sacrificing principle to expediency.

We must obtain Congressional legislative cooperation for a good program. The service must function continuously and smoothly and attract first-class personnel. A joint legislative Congressional committee, similar to the Joint Congressional Atomic Committee, might be appointed to improve the relationship between the program and Congress.

Government officials at high levels should be educated to recognize the importance of the program to their own work. Before policy-actions are taken there should be discussion with overseas information-agency executives on matters of psychological significance to people in other countries.

There should be more cooperation between nations of the free world on common problems in overseas information activities.

The U.S. Information Agency should work more closely with our Delegation to the United Nations for clarification of the American point of view.

The objectives of the program should be outlined with greater sharpness. Are we dealing with a long-period program or an emergency program? We must decide how we are trying to project the U.S., keeping in mind that the U.S. is varied, dynamic, and changing.

AT THE present time our themes are 1) to unite the free nations of the world for peace, 2) to expose international Communism, and 3) to have our own peaceful intentions understood. Should we continue to use our present themes? Should we concentrate on fewer themes or add to them? And what should be the content of our approach to different countries? Should it emphasize fact or point of

view? Should we emphasize freedom, equality, and orderly justice and the worth of the individual? Should we emphasize differences in customs in different countries? Should controversy in the U.S. be reflected impartially? Or should we be selective?

Another question for decision is the problem of targets. These of course would vary in different countries. Should the targets be the masses or the people who control the Government, or parties out of power? When should we talk more to our friends than to our enemies, and to what extent to each?

There is another problem we must solve. How to test and check up on whether the organization functions effectively. This is difficult, too, for no overseas information program is free from countervailing forces both at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency to credit or blame the Overseas Information Program for the state of our relations with another country. That, of course, is unrealistic. Overseas information programs are no substitute for foreign policy—economic, military, and political. Anything we do in the U.S. that deviates from the ideals of freedom, equality, and orderly justice may hurt us in the eyes of other people. The attitudes of other people towards us depend, as we have seen, on a variety of different factors, in which official overseas information plays only a part. In a democracy all problems flow back to the public for solution.

Last year we organized a voluntary National Committee for an Adequate Overseas U.S. Information Program comprised of experts on public opinion, communications, and international affairs. Our aim is to alert the American people to understand how vital it is to strengthen America through effective information programs.

We have sponsored a number of conferences. One, held with the cooperation of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, explored problems of content, targets, and evaluation. Another, recently held at New York University, discussed careers and stimulating education for experts in overseas work. A third, at the University of Pennsylvania, considered U.S. approaches to Southern Asia. We have secured the cooperation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on a grassroots basis. These and other efforts at public education may act as catalysts to increase public interest in these vital problems, for until the American people are so oriented any program is bound to be handicapped.

Mutiny with Bounty

Considered Reflections on TV, Without Color

By Stanley Young

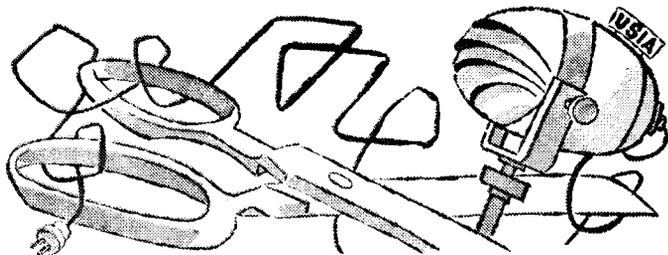
THOUGH I admit, without reservations, that if children take tobacco, liquor, and opium,
 Their parents are in for a certain amount of social opprobrium.
 Still, having just dragged Junior away from the T-V set
 I'm uncertain, yet, whether I wouldn't prefer to offer our pet
 Weed, bottle, and needle, or any other handy drug
 To picking him up off the rug
 Glazed, sodden, doped, and pulverized,
 And, if Monsieur Mesmer will forgive me, mesmerized
 By gunfire, blood, and crunching bone
 After an hour in the living-room with the spiritual brothers of, say, Al Capone.

I may be wrong, because I'm older, and our T-V isn't in color
 And I am prone, when something prones me, to give way to cholera
 And holler, as if I didn't know a yak from a yogi
 And what a rush of blood to the temples does to your psyche,
 Still, parents, friends, and ladies and gentlemen of the P.T.A. of America and
 Nassau County

I'm declaring, yea, offering with no strings, a considerable cash prize and bounty
 For the scalps, skins, teeth and hair of
 Certain T-V producers, writers, and their heirs you're probably aware of
 Because I'm calmly prepared to believe, after many cans of beer, and study
 That there's something about the whole ruddy
 Mess that, if any of you fond fathers came home from work and slumped down
 tared,
 Junior, after the program was over, might well bury you in the backyard,
 And, if any of you doting mothers, inadvertently of course, dropped dead along
 the panel,
 Junior might simply stagger up and switch to another channel.

I may be wrong, because I'm older, and, as I've said, our set isn't in color.

The Loin Cloth or the Rajah?



By LEO CHERNE *editor and executive secretary of the Research Institute of America.*

FIRST, let's give the USIA its due. It is operated by a group of professionals of high competence and devotion. More important, it has achieved notable success in many ways and in many areas. One trouble is that the success of USIA is not readily visible to the naked eye. You can't measure it in kilowatt hours—like you can the power produced by a dam built abroad with American funds. You can't measure it in Western European automobile production figures, such as those made possible by American productivity programs under the Marshall Plan. You can't even measure it in the steady deterioration of Communist party voting-strength in a country like France, for example. Yet the kilowatt hours of power produced in the dam, the automobile production rate, and the voting distribution in a country like France are deeply and directly affected by the success or failure of USIA. For if there were no USIA—or if USIA did not do its job well—who can say that the dam might not have been sabotaged, the automobile production rate crippled by strikes, the voting strength of the French Communist Party on the upgrade?

The achievements of USIA are all the more remarkable in view of the handicaps under which it operates, the most brutal being Congressional interference. One incident will suffice—the recent insistence by members of the House Appropriations Committee that a certain American history textbook (one with a foreword by Charles Lindbergh and an introduction by Louis Bromfield, no less) be withdrawn from circulation in libraries overseas. Among the

reasons: a photograph of “A little red schoolhouse, built 1750” might give the Communists the occasion to say this represents the American school system, although the photo was followed by pictures of a modern high school and of Harvard University; certain passages from “Walden” “might be damaging”; a graphic shot of a dust storm should be deleted because it was bad propaganda.

Our propaganda effort has, in fact, been so badly abused that advocates of an adequate program are reluctant to offer even constructive criticism. We sometimes pretend USIA is doing a better job than it actually is doing, in the hope that this will put Congress in a sufficiently happy frame of mind to appropriate the money required. When Congress spots a “mistake”—even one as ridiculous as the case of the history text cited above—nobody thinks to point out that Congress has only itself to blame. We wasted money this year; so we will spend less money next year. We did a bad job this year; so we will do a worse job next year.

One suggestion for improving our overseas information program, therefore, is to raise its status here at home. Let there be an increasing awareness and understanding in our country—within the Government and outside it—of the magnitude of the job before us, and of the length of time it is likely to take. Let the budget be raised; let the colleges inaugurate courses aimed at training men and women for lifetime careers in the information service, just as there are courses training for careers in the foreign service. For the question of personnel is a key to the whole effort aimed at telling our story abroad more effectively.

USIA pulled a neat propaganda stunt some time ago when it gave workers a day off to recruit personnel. But this did not quite get at

the problems which have driven so many qualified people out of Government and kept so many more from applying. There are many steps which could be taken. For example, we could hire more investigators to make security checks. Today a person with needed overseas experience applying for a job with USIA must wait six months or more for a security check. Many find better jobs before they are cleared. Yet, with adequate personnel the same check which is made in six months could be made in six weeks.

We could make appropriations on a two-year basis so that we would not repeat the 1953 mistake of firing workers because the money has run out and then trying unsuccessfully to hire them back when the new appropriation comes through. Most important, now that McCarthyism has become a “wasm,” we can seek to raise the morale of our civil servants by defending them against unjust attacks. With time, they may even get over the idea that it is better to do nothing at all than to risk making a mistake.

ANY discussion of USIA must take up several basic questions. There is, for example, the basic question “Who is our audience?” Is it the native in the loin cloth or the rajah, the left-bank intellectual or the tenant farmer? There can be no hard and fast rule, no inflexible policy about “audience” and “line.” And all of us must recognize this—just as we must recognize that it may even be valuable to our country's purpose to show a picture of a little red schoolhouse or a dust-storm wasteland as part of America.

There is the basic question “How can we make the best and strongest impression on countries abroad?” An effective method would emphasize the common aspirations and values of the U.S. and the free world. In Asia and Africa particularly we must show that we are different from other Western powers identified with imperialism and that we sympathize with the attempts of underdeveloped countries to become independent and to develop modern societies. A good example of how well this approach works is the USIA program in Vietnam. I saw this program at first hand some months ago and I believe the USIA program there was largely instrumental in helping the leaders as well as the people of free Vietnam to distinguish between the attitudes and actions of French colonial power on the one hand and of Americans on the other. It would certainly follow, therefore, that the USIA should present the progress toward racial equality being made here in