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Dr. Mark A. May, Chairman
United States Advisory Commission on Information
United States Information Agency
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mark:

I have just returned from a Far Eastern trip in which I visited Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hongkong, the Philippines and Japan. Although my time was limited, I visited in each country with State Department and USIS personnel concerning the scope, effectiveness and needs of our information activities, and in most countries also received from locals, nationals and the American colony additional observations and suggestions of value.

I am summarizing below the rather extensive longhand notes I made in the course of my trip.

Australia

Mr. Thoman, the PAO in Sydney, was on home leave. I visited with his deputy, Mr. Harrison, in Sydney, and in Canberra with Ambassador Peaslee, Counselor of Embassy Peterson, and Cultural Exchange Officer Boylan.

The priority of Australia for USIA funds appears to be well down the list, probably too far down. On films and radio material, for example, I am informed that almost no new material is being furnished from Washington although films are in great demand and much more radio program material could be placed with local broadcasters if received.

The principal activity is the daily news service, edited and released daily based on the wireless bulletin from Washington.



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This material, according to Mr. Harrison, is widely used by radio newscasters and by the metropolitan, weekly and small town press. He also reports excellent cooperation from the metropolitan press in carrying editorials favorable to the U.S. point of view. Frequently "background" meetings are held with selected editors.

It was pointed out to me by Peterson, in Canberra, that while our news service based on the wireless file is useful for many purposes, it is about eighteen hours late for metropolitan newspapers in reporting major pronouncements by government officials. These newspapers receive Australian Associated Press reports from the U.S. which interpret these pronouncements (frequently inaccurately) and use little direct quotes. The full text of the statements from USIS arrives after the story has been published. Peterson says we have offered to pay cable charges if the Australian Associated Press will follow each such report by the full text of the pronouncements from certain key officials. This suggestion has received a cool reception from the AAP.

It was also stated to me that cable rates from the U.S. to Australia are of the order of ten times the rate from U.K. to Australia, which obviously limits communication.

The Voice of America is not beamed to Australia.

About fifty Australians go to America each year under Fulbright and U.S. educational exchange programs. This is considered very useful.

The library and information center program was cut back a year or so ago and there now is only one USIS library in Australia. This is located in Sydney, on the second floor of the building in which USIS has its offices. Not having a street floor location seriously limits use of the library facility. Something should be done about this.

Australians generally are very friendly to America and feel that their interests and ours in the Far East are in many respects more compatible than are those of the U. K. A comparatively small group headed by Mr. Evatt is strongly anti-American. Evatt leads the Labor party and is considered

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a dangerous and unprincipled man. Communist propaganda apparatus is active in Australia. Substantial numbers of the press are thought to be left-wing and anti-American.

In this connection I was amused, but not pleased, at the attached front-page clipping from the Saturday April 30th edition of the "Sun", a large circulation Sydney newspaper. About the same time the director of a medical research institute in Australia was widely quoted as having said in substance that Australia had perfected a polio serum before Doctor Salk did so. Doctor Salk, the quote continued, was able to test his serum because government employees in America were required to submit to test inoculations whereas in Australia they did not believe in people being required to serve as "human guinea pigs". The item concluded by saying that the Australian polio serum may have to be sent to America to be tested on humans.

Indonesia

During my two days in Djakarta I talked at length with Ambassador Hugh Cumming, John O'Brien the Public Affairs Officer, and other members of the USIS and Embassy staff.

The USIS program in Indonesia was the most impressive I had yet seen. Press, publications, books, films, libraries, and exchange of persons are all the subject of extensive and, it seemed to me, well planned programs. Although VOA has a one-half hour per day news broadcast in Indonesia (relayed from Manila), the reception, according to O'Brien, is not good and few Indonesians (as distinguished from Chinese) have radio sets. O'Brien expressed the view that the \$36,000 annual cost of this program might be better used in other ways. The program is being continued through 1955 on a trial basis.

The USIS staff appears to be excellent. Two posts out of twenty-four for U.S. personnel are not filled because of shortage of office space, but according to O'Brien this is not seriously hindering their work. Morale is excellent.

In view of the Indonesian government's suspicion both of U.S. A. and Communist governments, the USIS strategy is not to push or urge our material or facilities but to be ready to help wherever and whenever we can do so and are asked. O'Brien reports that this approach is working out well.

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Paper bound books about the U.S.A., written in Indonesian, are available, both in libraries and for sale at very modest prices through commercial book stores.

Backstopping from Washington and Manila is excellent.

Thailand

Ambassador Peurifoy was in the States at the time of my visit. A last minute change in airline schedules shortened my stay in Bangkok and, although I had a good visit with Mr. Harry Conover, Counselor of Embassy for Economic Affairs, my visits with Dr. James Meador (PAO) and Dr. Spinx (Deputy PAO) were disappointingly brief.

Thailand is one of the few countries where the government is actively and enthusiastically cooperating with the USIS. As a result of this combined activity Thailand probably has the best and most effective USIS program in the world. USIS does very little anti-Communist propaganda in its own name. Material is distributed by the Thai government although produced by the USIS, mostly in the field.

General Phao (head of the Thai police and also holder of other important posts in the government) has created a Thai CIA, which works closely with USIS and joins with it in an elaborate program of training and anti-communistic orientation for (1) Buddhist priests, (2) government officials (both federal and provincial), (3) Thai military forces, (4) teachers, (5) thought leaders, (6) general public.

The program embraces (1) anti-Communistic indoctrination, (2) pro-democratic and free world indoctrination and (3) action programs to demonstrate the government's intention and ability to help the people. This third point, involving the tie-in of action with words, is of prime importance.

Meador and Spinx had highest praise for cooperation they receive from Washington. Also, as stated, they were most enthusiastic about the Thai government's active and vigorous cooperation. They spoke particularly of the Buddhist priests outstandingly effective "partnership" in carrying out the orientation program.

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Motion pictures, both foreign and home produced, are widely used. Pamphlets also. Ultimately there will be libraries in all provinces (two in Bangkok).

Dr. Meador is obviously both competent and energetic. I am sorry to learn that he is returning to the States in June. Mr. Spinx will succeed him.

Hongkong

In Hongkong I had several visits with Everett Drumright, U. S. Consul General, James McCarthy(PAO) and Robert Miller, radio and TV officer.

Hongkong is used as a center for preparation of material designed to reach the thirteen million Chinese who are in Asia but outside of China proper, the principal places being Indochina, Thailand, Indonesia, Malay and, of course, Hongkong. USIS produces and prints in Hongkong Chinese language periodicals (some of which are wholly or partly self-supporting), books, pamphlets and special articles. These are distributed through USIS Missions in the appropriate countries.

The British discourage active propaganda programs (either pro or anti-communist) in Hongkong. Hongkong is, of course, a very sensitive spot and the British are trying not to rock the boat. Such propaganda material as the British government produces for this area comes from Singapore.

USIS also produces radio programs in Hongkong, which are broadcast from our numerous transmitters in the Far East. Some are designed for Red China audience, others for Chinese in other countries.

Mr. Miller, the radio officer, does not agree with Mr. John O'Brien's doubts about the usefulness of VOA Indonesian language newscasts to Indonesia. Miller says the mail received from Indonesia is impressive.

In one of my talks with him Mr. Drumright expressed the view that VOA news broadcasts are poor -- too slanted and too much commentary rather than news. Neither McCarthy nor Miller supports this opinion, and I suspect that Mr. Drumright had not listened to a VOA broadcast recently.

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I arranged to have a radio installed in my hotel room, but bad electrical disturbances during the last two days of my visit prevented my hearing the VOA program. In any event, I think it is clear that straight, unslanted news is the best audience getter in this area.

Mr. Drumright was also critical of the radio news file. This surprised me because, in other countries visited, this service was considered the most useful that is received from Washington. Mr. Drumright feels the radio news file contains very little new or useful material.

Mr. McCarthy is new in his assignment as Public Affairs Officer. He may be thoroughly qualified, but I was not convinced of this on the basis of my relatively brief talks with him.

Cooperation, support and quick service from Washington was heartily praised.

My over-all impression of USIS Hongkong was that on periodicals of all kinds a thoughtful and imaginative job is being done. Radio also seems to be in the hands of an enthusiastic and resourceful young man. I doubt that USIS is getting much help or attention from Mr. Drumright. He is obviously an able and knowledgeable man but is not particularly concerned with or interested in USIS.

Philippines

In Manila I had talks with Ambassador Homer Ferguson, John Nally (P. A. O.) and Mr. Miller, the Information Officer. On a side trip to Baguio I visited the USIS radio relay base.

My over-all impression of the USIS operation in the Philippines was favorable. All USIS personnel posts were filled except one very recently created. Although the Philippines program had been cut back somewhat in favor of more sensitive areas, the morale of the USIS personnel seemed good, and they considered themselves to have adequate Washington backing, service and cooperation. All five media -- news and publications, radio, motion pictures, library and information centers, and exchange of persons -- are being used in the Philippines. The library program, under Miss Ireton, was described as being unusually effective and popular.

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The Magsaysay government is, of course, strongly favorable to the U.S. and so also, I am told, is the great bulk of the people. One of the objectives of the Information Program is to get the Philippines to take a more active leadership in Asian affairs while at the same time retaining their loyalty to and support of the U.S. and her policies in the Far East. The Philippines being an outstanding example of what a new democratic nation can do for the material and spiritual lives of its people, if in their own behalf and through their own information service the Philippine government would spread the word to Asian and Far Eastern peoples, the effectiveness and credibility of their story would obviously be greater than our own. The Philippine government has organized an information service, and USIS is helping and working with it.

USIS is getting the full support of Ambassador Ferguson, who regards this activity as of great importance. He is new in his job but will, in my judgment, do a thoroughly competent one. He has long been interested in international affairs. Messrs. Nally and Miller emphasize the importance of long range as distinguished from crash programs. The USIS field missions are not organized, financed or designed to influence mass opinion, or even the opinion of limited groups on a short term basis, that is to say a few weeks or months. What it needs is continuity and low pressure, but with all material carefully designed to bear on the defined objectives of the USIS in the area.

More and more it is becoming apparent in the field that the selling of ideas -- such as support for free democratic institutions -- is effective at the mass level only when accompanied by demonstrable action attributable to the system we are selling. More effort should be made by USIS Missions to obtain from local government specific examples of beneficial governmental action. Also, more helpful examples can be found in the FOA programs and accomplishments if a tighter liason between FOA and USIS is maintained.

Japan

I visited with Ambassador John Allison and also with Dr. Bunche (acting PAO) while in Tokyo. However, as both Mr. Larmon and Mr. Canham were in Tokyo at the same time, and as the sudden

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death of Mr. George Sloan prevented my attending a luncheon meeting with Dr. Bunche and his USIS associates, I will leave the principal reporting about USIS-Japan to my fellow Commissioners.

It is perhaps worthwhile to mention one comment that Ambassador Allison made in the course of my visit with him. He said in effect that what is needed in Japan at the head of the USIS is a well known educator, a man who can meet and talk with top people in Japanese public and private life. In Mr. Allison's view, technicians can take care of the media operations of USIS but only some leading American can adequately fill the post of PAO. Apart from this comment, from which I inferred that in his opinion Dr. Bunche does not qualify for the top spot, Mr. Allison seemed thoroughly to believe in and support the USIA activity.

Taiwan

Although I was not able to visit Taiwan, a trusted and highly competent member of our International General Electric organization who has spent many years there, prepared for me the following brief commentary on USIS in Taiwan:

" I have been very much interested in the USIS program in Taiwan, both because of my long association with the island and its people and also because many of my friends are connected with the program there. I think the USIS program in Taiwan is quite unique and interesting.

" For the last year or so, one-third to one-half of the USIS program has been spent in the preparation of propaganda media for export to other Southeast Asian countries. This media is really for the purpose of telling the world about Formosa and our program to protect it, not exactly as a showcase of democracy but certainly as a showcase of freedom. While this phase of the program has been given high priority, I am told that there are certain difficulties and weaknesses in it. The coordination in preparing and dispersing this material is quite difficult. In the first place, the material is prepared for distribution in a great many different areas and situations. Furthermore, this phase of the program, which is part of USIS, Taiwan, seems difficult to fit into USIS programs in other areas in which the

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material is used. For instance, speeches and interviews are prepared and recorded in Taiwan and are sent out to Public Affairs Officers in other countries for use in their USIS programs. The use of these materials in the recipient countries is at the discretion of the Public Affairs Office in the recipient country concerned. I think it should be at his discretion; however, I think at this point any lack of coordination or misunderstanding will tend to negate the effectiveness of the effort which went into the preparation of this material. This phase of the program is, of course, directed at the thirteen million overseas Chinese who live in other countries throughout Asia and others. About half to two-thirds of the USIS program in Taiwan is directed toward the one million or so mainland Chinese who are in authority in Taiwan. If it is gradually to be recognized that we are not going back to the mainland, then I think this is too large a phase of the program for this group of people. At present about 10 per cent of the program is directed at the Taiwanese themselves, who number some eight million. Again, if it is to be recognized that we are not going back to the mainland, a much larger portion of the program should be directed at developing good relations with the Taiwanese themselves. I believe the staff of USIS in Taiwan anticipate that one of these days the Taiwanese will be re-discovered and that there is some feeling on their part that more effort should be directed toward them. No doubt USIS-Taiwan will await a Washington directive for a change.

During my recent visits and particularly during this last one, I noted that there is a growing lack of appreciation for (or knowledge of the spirit of) the American Aid Program (and the Military Advisory Group) and what we are sincerely trying to do in Taiwan. I believe this has come about from the fact that the USIS program has directed little effort toward the Taiwanese; the mainland Chinese are not going out of their way to explain to the Taiwanese what we are trying to do; and the Taiwanese themselves, through increased prosperity and leisure, are becoming a little more open in their general complaints about life. Furthermore, the glitter is wearing off a little of some of the social reforms which have been instituted and impressed upon the Taiwanese. Perhaps, I should not fail to mention the mere fact that the foreign colony is growing larger and larger and therefore exerts a more day-to-day reality to its presence, including all the little irritations to the street-side economy that a foreign colony of free-spending Americans brings about. An increase in USIS activity toward the Taiwanese might overcome this.

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Conclusion

Apart from the specific observations and suggestions made above in discussing USIS Missions in particular countries, my general conclusions may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Improvement in the personnel, facilities and morale of the USIS Field Missions is very evident. With better recruitment, training and orientation procedures now being introduced in Washington, this improvement should continue.
- (2) Definition of USIS objectives -- both over-all and specific to each target area -- is also improving, and should continue to be given top attention.
- (3) The percentage of material being produced in the field to fit the local situation continues to increase. This is good.
- (4) Special effort should be made by the Embassy and the USIS Mission to enlist the cooperation of the local government in planning and executing anti-Communist propaganda. Programs worked out and implemented together seem much more effective.
- (5) Concrete evidence of local government action to help the people (including suitable FOA projects) should be integrated to the greatest possible extent with arguments-and-word programs against Communism and for freedom and democracy.

Finally, I want to mention again a matter that disturbs me greatly. For more than fifteen years now, people who live in other countries of the world and hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of whom would under normal conditions have visited America and thus formed their own impressions of our objectives, purposes and ideals, have been prevented from doing so because U.S. dollars are in short supply and their governments have been unwilling to make dollars available in exchange for local currencies except for high priority purposes. Isolated by the dollar shortage from great numbers of foreigners who would like to travel to America and see our country for themselves,

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we are losing one of the most effective ways of accomplishing the objectives of the United States Information Agency.

Perhaps this problem has been given the intensive study it deserves, and if so, I would like to be so advised. Has, for example, consideration been given to our government's creating a dollar fund (say \$10,000,000 as a starter) to be used to purchase limited amounts of foreign currency from people wishing to visit the United States and whose government is unwilling, for good reason, to make dollars available? These currencies might be accumulated by our government until the gold and dollar reserves of the particular foreign country reached some agreed level and then used to pay for expenditures of our government in the country in question.

Very truly yours,



PHILIP D. RBED

PDR:HA

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