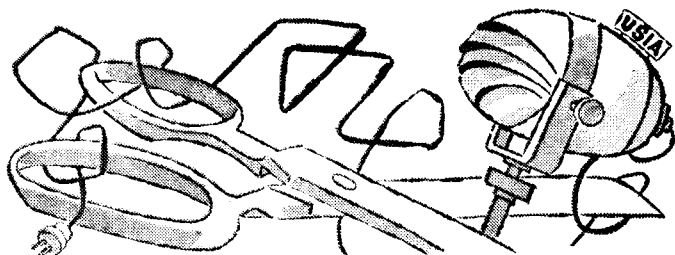


The Loin Cloth or the Rajah?



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 up-grade?

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American history textbook (one with a foreword by Charles Lindbergh and an introduction by Louis Bromfield, no less) be withdrawn from circulation in libraries overseas.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

the United States as a basic theme.

Perhaps the most basic of all the questions we must answer is this: "What are we trying to do anyway?" Is USIA's role an emergency one, designed to meet Soviet aggressive actions, or is it a permanent one whose purpose is to help build the kind of world in which America can feel secure? The idea of merely meeting the aggressive force of Soviet Russia underlines the limitations of some of the thinking that has gone into USIA's formation. The fact is that there is much more than an aggressive force loose in the world today—there are countries undergoing a process of rapid change. The Communists present to these countries a totalitarian model for their own development. It is USIA's job to suggest to them a different model. We must not—we cannot—be merely defensive. We must offer a framework within which the nations of Asia and Africa can develop as free societies.

IN THIS framework, let me hasten to add that the USIA cannot be more than a reflection of the attitudes and the actions of our Government. We cannot expect miracles from the USIA or any Government propaganda agency. All we can expect of it—all that we should ever want from it—is that it give a fair and honest picture of what our country is and of what we aim for.

One of the most effective propaganda efforts ever undertaken by the United States was a question-and-answer feature service in Germany. Editors learned that they could get a straight answer to any question they asked, no matter how embarrassing or how little it had to do with immediate U.S. propaganda objectives. By telling the whole truth the United States found an audience for the many truths which would win friends and influence people if they would only listen. A loaded question simply gave us an opportunity to answer our critics. We won their attention—and their respect—by talking about what concerned *them*, not merely what we wanted to get across. This, it seems to me, is basic to any effective overseas information program.

One final suggestion—that the name by which USIA is known be changed. The Voice of America, it seems to me, has a rather authoritarian ring about it. America—let us thank God—does not speak with one voice. Let the USIA reflect the diversity that has made us great and the differences that serve to strengthen our unity. Let America's many tongues speak through many Voices.

WHAT DO WE SAY TO THE WORLD?—3

Matching the Russian Message

By GEORGE GALLUP, *public opinion analyst of the Gallup Poll.*

RUSSIA, in my opinion, is a good generation ahead of us in her knowledge of propaganda and in her skill in using it. The Russians are reported to be spending \$1,000,000,000 to \$2,000,000,000 a year in getting across their propaganda ideas. If some account is taken of the work put in every day by hundreds of thousands of Party workers in reaching target groups in target areas, if the cost entailed in publishing scores of Communist newspapers, with their millions of circulation, is also taken into account, then it can be seen that if this country is to match Russian efforts we must think of sums running into several billions each year.

A couple of years ago I suggested to a Senatorial Committee that the sum of \$5,000,000,000 spent on today's tanks, guns, and battleships will make far less difference in achieving ultimate victory over Communism than \$5,000,000,000 appropriated for ideological warfare. I do not mean to imply that money alone can do this job. The mere expenditure of large sums of money offers no guarantee of winning the Cold War. We must have an effective message and, equally important, we must make sure it is effective before we spend the money.

But you can't sell people unless you reach them, and this costs a lot of

money. You can't do this job with mirrors, and no one has figured out a better formula yet than the one the Communists are presently using.

I once laid down the dictum that the best, the safest principle to follow in fighting an ideological war, at least at this stage of our knowledge, is to follow the rules of shooting war: We must reach *more people, more often*, and with a *better message* than the enemy. Now if some genius can come forward and show us how to do this with the sum of money Congress is currently appropriating, then I can show this same miracle-worker how he can become a millionaire overnight by performing a similar job for some of our big advertisers in this country.

Some people would like to ignore completely this fight for the minds of men. Many hope that—if we are strong militarily—somehow strength in this department will solve our propaganda job. But you can't kill ideas even with H-bombs. There is absolutely no possible escape from fighting the ideological war. Actually, in order to compensate for defeats which we are constantly suffering in the Cold War, we naturally tend to lean more heavily on the armed services, appropriating more billions for this department.

So, no matter how you figure it, the most *economical* and most *effective* way to deal with Russia is to *match* her efforts in ideological warfare.

If a country is lost to Communism through propaganda and subversion it is lost to our side as irretrievably as if we had lost it in actual warfare. We often overlook the fact that a good many of our friends and allies can be lost to us almost overnight. All it takes in any of these nations is just one election in which the Communists gain enough votes to take control.

ANOTHER fact which seems to have escaped the thinking of our Congressional leaders is that *total victory* in a new world war would not resolve the ideological war. Just try to imagine the problem this country and our allies would face in trying to police Russia and China and to keep Communism from rearing its ugly head again. No, the problem would not only *not* be solved but it would be intensified.

Why have our Congressional leaders been so slow in recognizing the importance of ideological warfare? One



—Justus in The Minneapolis Star.

"Developing Immunity."