

## **December 21, 1951**

### **George Kennan's Views on Radio Liberty**

#### **Citation:**

"George Kennan's Views on Radio Liberty", December 21, 1951, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by A. Ross Johnson. Referenced Ch1 p29 in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document number C01441009 <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/114372>

#### **Summary:**

Office of Policy Coordination officers visit Princeton to solicit George Kennan's views on Radio Liberty broadcasting

#### **Credits:**

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#### **Original Language:**

English

#### **Contents:**

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EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs (c)

21 December 1981 1.1.2

MEMORANDUM FOR: O/EE-4

SUBJECT: EE-4 Meeting with George Kennan on Thursday, 20 Dec 81

1. The following officers of [redacted] met informally with George Kennan in the latter's office at Princeton, N. J., shortly before 11:00 a.m. on 20 December 1981. It was their purpose to sound out Mr. Kennan on the [redacted] radio particularly as to the line and strength of its attacks on Soviet authorities.

2. [redacted] opened the discussion by briefing Mr. Kennan on his [redacted] re our political center. On the whole, [redacted] were unsympathetic taking the view that the political center is only creating additional tension in an already tense situation and that it is interfering with [redacted] for the purpose of gathering intelligence.

[Large redacted block]

4. [redacted] then summed up our reasons for setting up the radio: [redacted] particularly in [redacted] was to demonstrate the disaffection of the Soviet people for their regime by allowing Russians to talk to Russians in terms denied to the VOA.

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5. Mr. Kennan cautioned that the [ ] radio must consider the position of Western Germany as a sovereign host country and as a special responsibility of the U.S. Mr. Kennan further advised that we not junk considerations of the possibility that there will be no war, that there will be no change in Soviet authority, and that we will have to continue to do business with the Politburo. The United States government, if not the political center, must consider that Stalin might change his ways.

*new treason by an old dog?*

6. Mr. Kennan continually stressed that our radio should put the brunt of its attack on the Bolshevik party, not the Communist party, and not the Soviet Government as such. The political center should "Face up" disposition of Soviet authority and not call for a violent overthrow of the Soviet Government.

*should this be ruled out?*

7. Our point of departure should be the Bolshevik dispersal of the Constituent Assembly which deprived the Russian people of their one opportunity for free choice in Government.

8. He suggested that we do not lump the Soviet Army and the rank and file of the Communist Party and even the security police with Soviet leadership.

9. The Soviet system is not only a conspiracy against the outside world and its own citizens but against its own bureaucracy which it controls by accelerating or slowing down its rate of dog-eat-dog competition. As a consequence, maximum tension exists in these branches of Soviet authority directly below the Politburo.

10. Mr. Kennan set forth two guiding principles for the operations of the [ ] Radio: (1) it must consider its role as a guest on German territory and contain its attack so as not to prejudice German security and indirectly American interests therein, and (2) it should avoid the question of destroying the Soviet Government.

*Kennan probably meant differently word.*

11. [ ] felt that Point 1 would make sense to members of the political center and help us in gaining their acquiescence to our control.

*see par 7.*

12. As the immediate target of [ ] radio is [ ] the discussion turned to appropriate themes.

Mr. Kennan thought that [ ] descriptions of defectors' life and treatment in the West and the like. We should increase dissatisfaction with Army discipline and with the strict confinement of officers and soldiers on occupation duty. We should tell them why they are restrained from travel and foreign contacts.

*thru subtleties in any attack.*

13. We should also attack their political indoctrination as intellectual subversion and stress the fact that the Soviet regime closed the window on Europe and the world so deliberately and painstakingly opened by Peter the Great; our propaganda is but striving to knock that window out again.

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14. Mr. Kennan feels that the Soviet people are immensely interested in cultural activity and news, and that we should give them periodic accounts of cultural achievements by Russians abroad and those purged within the USSR. He mentioned his interest in the Oleskov publishing company which among other things is reviving the works of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova, both victims of Soviet wrath. He also suggested that we present a roundup of the Emigre press where it supports our purpose.

*how about  
fear +  
family  
pull down.*

15. As to style of presentation, Mr. Kennan advocates a dignified, forceful and concise presentation and cautions against the expansiveness characteristic of Russian Emigres.

*what is the type target  
audience - intelligent*

16. On the whole, he advocates a large measure of independence for the political center radio within the framework of a few simple rules laid down by us.

17. The meeting adjourned for lunch at approximately 1:00 p.m. and was not continued.



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