

February 6, 1959

Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson's Views of Radio Liberty

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Summary:

Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson forwards to Washington his views on Radio Liberation, following discussions in the Moscow Embassy with members of the US Advisory Committee on Information.

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I HAD SEVERAL LONG INFORMAL TALKS WITH MAY AND OTHER MEMBERS HIS DELEGATION. WHILE I DO NOT RECALL SPECIFICALLY THAT SUBJECTS RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERATION WERE RAISED IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE MATTER WAS DISCUSSED. I DID HAVE INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH PHILIP REED WHO I BELIEVE IS ALSO MEMBER ADVISORY COMMISSION. FOLLOWING ARE MY VIEWS AND THOSE OF EMBASSY GENERALLY WHICH WERE DOUBTLESS REFLECTED IN THESE DISCUSSIONS.

BECAUSE OF THEIR WIDE LANGUAGE COVERAGE THESE BROADCASTS AT PRESENT TIME IN LIGHT OF OUR CURRENT RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION CONSTITUTE USEFUL INSTRUMENT. BROADCASTS ARE SO SUCCESSFULLY JAMMED IN MOSCOW HOWEVER THAT EMBASSY HAS LITTLE OPPORTUNITY TO JUDGE THEM. WE UNDOUBTEDLY PAY A PRICE FOR WHATEVER THEY ACCOMPLISH SINCE EMBASSY TRAVELLERS HAVE RECEIVED EXPRESSIONS OF RESENTMENT ON PART OF SOVIET LISTENERS TO THEIR GENERAL LINE. MOREOVER RL BROADCASTS PROBABLY HURT VOA REPUTATION SINCE FEW SOVIET LISTENERS WOULD DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THEM. IN MY VIEW PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS SUPPORT THESE BROADCASTS GIVE THOSE ELEMENTS IN SOVIET REGIME THAT DOUBTLESS ARGUE THAT BASIC US OBJECTIVE IS OVERTHROW OF SOVIET REGIME. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT KHRUSHCHEV HAS ON MANY OCCASIONS CITED KERSTEN AMENDMENT AND ALLEGED US SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES AS ONE OF CHIEF REASONS FOR BAD US-SOVIET RELATIONS. I PRESUME QUOTATIONS FROM THESE BROADCASTS COULD BE USED TO SUPPORT THIS POINT OF VIEW. I HAVE HOWEVER ALWAYS TAKEN VIEW THAT FOR PRESENT THESE BROADCASTS SHOULD BE CONTINUED IN BUT THAT WE SHOULD BE PREPARED IN ANY BASIC OR EVEN PARTIAL NEGOTIATION AND SETTLEMENT WITH SOVIET UNION TO DISCONTINUE THEM IN RETURN FOR SOVIET CONCESSIONS SUCH AS CESSATION OF JAMMING. I REALIZE THIS IS DIFFICULT IN VIEW OF OUR POSITION THAT US GOVERNMENT HAS NO CONNECTION WITH THESE BROADCASTS BUT BELIEVE SOVIETS WOULD BE SATISFIED BY OUR UNDERTAKING TO USE OUR INFLUENCE TO SEE THAT THEY ARE DISCONTINUED IF THIS IN FACT HAPPENED. I ALSO REALIZE THAT ONCE THESE FACILITIES WERE DISMANTLED SOVIETS COULD RESUME JAMMING BUT BELIEVE IF THIS AGREEMENT WERE PART OF A GENERAL SETTLEMENT IN THIS FIELD SUCH AS WAS ENVISAGED AT GENEVA SUMMIT AND SUBSEQUENT FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCES, IT WOULD BE WORTH TAKING THIS RISK. I REPEAT HOWEVER THAT I WOULD NOT BE DISPOSED TO RECOMMEND OUR UNILATERAL DISCONTINUANCE OF THESE BROADCASTS DESPITE REAL DOUBTS AS TO WHAT THEY ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISH.

THOMPSON

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