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Public Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy: the Debate Over USIA

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Ever since Mr. Jefferson's Declaration spoke of an obligation to show "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind", Americans have recognized the need to have the rest of the world understand them. As the United States became a Superpower, the inclination became an imperative. This nation's National Security Strategy stresses "moral and political example" among its instruments of foreign policy. The United States Information Agency (USIA) was created to demonstrate this example and to "spread this message in an organized way."¹

The Problem

In two hundred posts around the world, USIA bears the responsibility for ensuring that American culture and American policy are understood to best advantage. Unfortunately, the nature of the responsibility and the structure of the agency have been repeatedly debated and redefined at home. The wrangling has produced some serious thinking on the shaping of American public diplomacy, but it has also brought erratic change and vagueness in what should be a coherent and consistent implementation of an important aspect of our national strategy.

For more than forty years, honorable men have argued how best America could make itself understood and once understood, promote its policies overseas. They have proposed widely differing institutions to effect this understanding. Artistic- and academic-based cultural exchanges and the press-related information and advocacy functions were lumped together under the category, "public diplomacy". Both contributed to the vague concept of "understanding". But there have been serious questions of whether both the information and cultural themes could function in the same institution.

USIA was established in 1953 as the product of an uninspiring compromise. Its officers have attempted to execute controversial and ill-defined mandates only to see them changed with new administrations. Concerns in the 1970's produced thoughtful critiques which resulted in a new compromise structure and more controversy. The latest incarnation is now ten years old. The new USIA is just beginning to forget its early counter-productive traumas. But no sooner has it gotten used to a new structure and begun to respond effectively than it is once again under fire.

This paper explores the continuing argument over the effectiveness of USIA as America's official instrument of public diplomacy. It will not concentrate on the arguments about the

¹ The White House, National Security Strategy of the United States, (Washington, D.C.: The United States Information Agency, January 1988). p. 10.

proper relationship of Voice of America (VOA) to the United States government. That opens another, separate literature of controversy. The particular concern here is the question of whether USIA can be both an effective advocate of US policy and a suitable exponent of American culture. Throughout 1987 there were significant initiatives from different quarters to dismantle the agency and put its several functions in the hands of other institutions.

The principal challenge that now faces USIA comes from academics, retired Foreign Service Officers and the congressional constituency for educational and cultural exchange programs. Some are concerned that America's cultural programs abroad are administered by an organization that is also mandated to promote the current policy of the US government in the host nation. They fear a political contamination of cultural interaction. They would like to see cultural exchange placed under a foundation such as the Smithsonian or the National Foundation for the Arts.

Others see the State Department as the logical source of Foreign policy and feel that public diplomats who are part of a separate agency cannot speak effectively for State. They want information functions (press relations, wireless file, Television, and publications) and the Information Officers of the agency to be made a part of the State Department.

Another group calls for VOA to decide whether it is an advocate for American foreign policy or an independent exemplar of the freedom of American broadcasting. Many critics would prefer to see VOA funded as an entity separated from both State and USIA.

On September 15, 1987, Senator Claiborne Pell, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee launched the latest initiative. Addressing a meeting of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy honoring its fortieth anniversary, he identified the "three major components of (USIA's) public diplomacy efforts: the advocacy function; the exchange programs; and the Voice of America." He noted his "dismay" at the closing of posts overseas while the staffing of the Washington headquarters grew. He declared that:

Dollar for dollar, I believe these are our most effective expenditures to enhance American influence abroad. ... Public Diplomacy is one of many victims of the Administration-induced budget crisis. Unfortunately, it is our national security that suffers.²

² United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Public Diplomacy in the Information Age", Transcript of the 40th Anniversary Conference, September 15-16, 1987 (Washington, D.C.:

He went on to attack the conduct of the Agency under the Reagan Administration, particularly its dealing with cultural exchange:

At the outset of the Administration, voices were heard advocating use of public diplomacy programs for a hard sell of Administration policy ... Grants were awarded to promote a specific political agenda. Thus Fulbright-Hays money went to spokesmen for despots on how to handle the American media (and) ... to divert the Fulbright program to a specific propagandistic purpose ...³

In saying this at such a gathering, Fell revived the ever-smoldering information-culture issue: whether USIA is competent to advocate the policies formulated at the State Department and whether supervision by an instrument of advocacy will sully the integrity of American cultural exchange.

Mr. Charles Z. Wick, Director of USIA, was quick to respond:

The significance of a unified public diplomacy effort has been recognized by Congress. ... Yet there exists a misunderstanding of the real need for a unified public diplomacy mechanism ... a view that would splinter the effort and destroy the possibility for a well-designed comprehensive strategy to meet the challenges of the Information Age that would dismantle USIA into its component parts and:

- create an independent broadcasting entity;
- move educational and cultural exchanges to other institutions;
- relocate information and advocacy programs elsewhere in the government;

We strongly disagree. To do so would weaken the effectiveness of all USIA programs. ... To fragment these resources (having cited a number of USIA functions) will only fragment our purpose and lead to a deterioration of our mission's overall effectiveness.⁴

Public Diplomacy

The participants in the debate all make reference to the

USIA, 1987).p.78.

³ Ibid, p. 79.

⁴ Ibid.,p. 54.

importance of something called public diplomacy. But "public diplomacy" is not a clearly defined concept.

One of the most astute students of the topic, Lois Roth, a Senior Foreign Service Officer in USIA, maintained that because of Americans' abhorrence of the word "propaganda" they hid behind the euphemism of "public diplomacy", producing contradictory approaches with no common vocabulary. Roth described America's angst in searching for "its own way of doing propaganda". In her view, America was shifting from "idealist-internationalist values" to a "realist-nationalist" consensus. America's need to explain itself to the world was drifting away from unbiased cultural understanding. The drift could be partially attributed to the vague understanding of "public diplomacy".⁵

While the history of public diplomacy is as old as our nation, the term was newly coined in 1965 by Dean Edward Gullian of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Fletcher is now the home of the Edward R. Murrow Center for Public Diplomacy. The term is defined at its birthplace as...

...the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy: the cultivation by government of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those in another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communications between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the processes of intercultural communications ... Central to public diplomacy is the transnational flow of information and ideas.⁶

This definition is certainly flexible, but it is hardly specific enough to give a government agency a sense of its mission. USIA accepts this broad definition, but underlines its role in the process as having the principal responsibility for American public diplomacy. Statements by its Advisory Commission make it clear that the essence of American public diplomacy is the "understanding by those who support the vigorous expression

⁵ Lois W. Roth and Richard T. Arndt, "Information, Culture and Public Diplomacy: Searching for An American Style of Propaganda," in Walter M. Brasch and Dana R. Ullath, eds., The Press and the State (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986) pp. 723-4.

⁶ Allen C. Hansen, USIA, Public Diplomacy in the Information Age, (New York: Praeger, 1984) p. 3.

of U.S. policies that the Fulbright and International Visitors programs provide foreign audiences with the background and knowledge of our culture that put (US government) policies in perspective ".7

The concept of dialogue is essential to most definitions of public diplomacy. Ambassador Phillip Habib points out that diplomacy is no longer the work of emissaries passing messages between kings. Nations deal with one another on many levels: cross-sections of the whole society. Thus, he says, policy decisions must always consider aspects of public diplomacy. The problem for governments is finding the proper organization of the process.⁸

Other definitions of public diplomacy stress "the relations of one government with the people of another state"; "reaching the people of another country over the heads of their government" and "communicating directly with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and ultimately, the behavior of their governments."⁹ A successful practitioner, Gifford Malone, says of public diplomacy that its ... "objective is to influence the behavior of a foreign government by influencing the attitudes of its citizens ... Private individuals, rather than governments are the targets."¹⁰ These advocacy-oriented definitions worry the supporters of cultural exchange for its own sake.

It is important for those involved in the issues of public diplomacy to remember that government sponsored communication is today only a tiny fraction of what Glenn Fisher calls "the magnitude and volume of the uncoordinated commercial and private channels of mass communication."¹¹ The channels of public

7 Richard F. Staar, Ed. Public Diplomacy: USA versus USSR. (Stanford, Cal.: Hoover Institute Press, 1986) p. 119-120 (quoting United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, Annual Report, 1985, p.1)

8 Staar, p. 285.

9 Kenneth W. Thompson, ed. The Stanton Report Revisited Vol. 7 of the Exxon Education Foundation Series on Rhetoric and Political Discourse. (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987) p. ix.

10 Gifford D. Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication: Organizing the Nation's Public Diplomacy. Vol. 11, Exxon Education Foundation Series on Rhetoric and Public Discourse. (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1988).p. 2.

11 Glen H. Fisher American Communication in a Global Society. (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1979) p. 2.

diplomacy in every part of the world are already laden with American messages. American music, technology, dress, language and films are everywhere. Often the media products that reach the largest groups are those which our cultural leadership would least want exemplifying our country.

What our foreign critics call "American Cultural imperialism" is usually of a quality that can only embarrass American diplomats, traditional or public. The bathing of the world in the worst products of our private sector media is only a further argument for a well-organized, well-funded instrument to promote a better view.

Public diplomacy, however defined, remains an instrument of national security strategy. Rep. Dan Mica of the House Subcommittee on International Operations recognizes that in the age of Glasnost and high-tech media, diplomats should learn what the military has already learned, that communications can effect the balance of power. He maintains that whether America is aware of it or not, it is involved in ...

the equivalent of a nuclear war ... a military battle in diplomatic terms, for the hearts and minds of the world ... It is a part of our military equation as well as our diplomatic equation ... I see that for every dollar we spend in international telecommunications, we can probably save ten or twenty, or fifty, in military hardware." 12

The Soviets take public diplomacy seriously. Their annual expenditures for what USIA does runs four to five times the largest budget ever requested by USIA. This should not be surprising as even France and West Germany spend twice as much as the US.¹³ The Soviets see cultural exchange and communication programs as another part of their global strategy of competition with the West. It is an aspect of the "correlation of forces".¹⁴

But what is the relationship of USIA leadership and public diplomacy to our national strategy? When Edward R. Murrow was made John F. Kennedy's Director of USIA, he demanded an authoritative role in policy-making saying "I want to be in at the take-off and I don't want to be in at the crash landing."

12 US Advisory Commission, "Public Diplomacy", p. 27.

13 Kenneth L. Adelman. "Speaking of Public Diplomacy in Our Time", Foreign Affairs, Spring, 1981, vol. 59, no. 4, p. 916. Staar, Public Diplomacy: USA versus USSR, p. ix.

14 Yale Richmond. U.S. - Soviet Cultural Exchange, 1958-1986: Who Wins? (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987) p.18.

But by 1986, even with the President's close friend C.Z. Wick as the director of an expanding USIA, it was clear that the agency of public diplomacy was not being informed in advance of events as important as the raid on Libya. Public diplomacy remains an afterthought.¹⁵

Critics of American execution of public diplomacy stress the variety of activities that fall under this umbrella. They point to conflicting objectives of cultural and information programs that a single agency, USIA, must coordinate. Lois Roth noted capricious Congressional oversight, American ambivalence on foreign policy goals, and distaste for "propaganda" confusing any consensus on the objectives of USIA.¹⁶

Cultural Diplomacy

While much of the anguish over defining USIA's role has concerned the degree of propaganda to be mixed into "public diplomacy", there was another question: how, if at all, culture could fit under the same rubric. As Charles Frankel noted in 1965, "the instrumentalities developed by the government for dealing with educational and cultural affairs have been the consequence less of forethought than of a series of afterthoughts."¹⁷ In fact, the emphasis on culture or advocacy has varied with each administration and with sporadic changes in the public and Congressional mood.

When the disputants talk of the information function of USIA, they are referring to the work of the press attaches in dealing with foreign and American journalists, in acting as spokesmen for the Ambassador at an embassy or at the State Department and the use of media (radio, TV, publications and wireless file) to present the official US position on policy issues. "Culture" includes exchanges of scholars such as the Fulbright program, the short term International Visitors' programs, visiting lecturers, libraries and media centers, visits by performing artists, exhibits and English teaching support.

It is obvious that no clear line can be drawn between "culture" and "information" when the mechanics of the operations are considered. Culture can be transmitted by radio and TV as well as

¹⁵ Thompson, The Shannon Report Revisited, p. 41-2 quoting Walter Roberts.

¹⁶ Roth and Arndt, "Information, Culture and Public Diplomacy", p. 727, 730.

¹⁷ Charles Frankel, The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs: American Educational and Cultural Policy Abroad. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1965) p.3.

policy. The government's position can be pursued through library acquisitions and by lecturers. In 1948, before there was a USIA, Congress sought to separate American educational offices abroad from embassies and their information officers.¹⁸ But the arguments made last September by Senator Pell, indicate that no adequate solution to the separation has been found.

The elements of time and mutuality have been used to define differences in the two aspects of public diplomacy. The information end of the spectrum implies "one-sided advocacy while culture signifies the furthering of mutual understanding."¹⁹ Information implies the "direct assault" and "quick fix". It is thought of as the short-term delivery of time-sensitive policy statements. Culture implies long term, gradual development of understanding. According to a Congressional study:

A certain amount of faith is involved in acceptance of the goals of (the cultural programs) and their ability to achieve their objectives. ...to bring about medium-to-long-term results of strengthened patterns of communication which - and this point is the "leap of faith" - will favorably influence the foreign policy environment ... the factors involved in international decision-making are too complex to be reduced to a single weighting of individual inputs. Therefore, attempts to ascertain quantitatively the effect of personal international experience or decision-making in the international environment have only dubious validity.²⁰

The forces arguing for more cultural weight in American public diplomacy have had the problem of justifying expenses for long term victories and hard-to-measure gains in a society and government that has little patience.

¹⁸ Charles A. Thomson and Walter H.C. Laves. Cultural Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p.70.

¹⁹ Terry L. Deibel and Walter R. Roberts. Culture and Information: Two Foreign Policy Functions. The Washington Papers, vol. IV, no. 40 (everly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975) p. 11,13.

²⁰ United States Library of Congress. The United States Communicates with the World: A Study of U.S. International Information and Cultural Programs and Activities. Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations. Mimeo'd: Foreign Affairs Division, Congressional Research Service, August, 1975. p. 152.

USIA and CU Take Shape

While USIA is a relatively new element of the US government, there is a rich literature on its history and of the many arguments over its direction. Historians of public diplomacy can argue that the missions of Jefferson and Franklin to Paris were heavily laden with informational and cultural objectives. The assignment of Hawthorne, Irving and Howells as consuls was no mean cultural exchange. By 1840 the Library of Congress was exchanging materials with leading European libraries. This responsibility for exchange of documents was transferred to the Smithsonian Institute in 1867. By 1907 Theodore Roosevelt redirected an excess paid to the US on the Boxer Indemnity to a fund for educating 2000 Chinese students in the US. By the time the Craiel Committee established US reading rooms in seven Mexican cities, many of the conceptual roots of current USIA programs had appeared.

America was the last of the great powers to develop a government-run foreign cultural program. It took our self-conscious young nation a while to assert itself as a cultural power.²¹

The United States' first coordinated effort at multi-faceted public diplomacy grew out of FDR's Good Neighbor Policy. Nazi, Communist and other anti-American feelings in Latin America posed a threat. In 1938 a Cultural Relations Division was established in the State Department to set up American libraries, American schools and book translation programs to "counter hostile propaganda". An Interdepartmental Committee for Scientific Cooperation to was created to encourage "hemispheric solidarity through fostering private scientific and cultural contacts." Thus by 1941, the US government had established most of the functions that are now carried out by USIA. The impetus was political but the response was largely cultural. That would change with the coming of World War II.²²

The Office of War Information was set up in 1942 (shortly after VOA went on the air) as an aggressive propaganda element. It separated cultural programs directed at allied countries from

²¹ Thomson and Laves. Cultural Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy, p. 29.

²² Phillip M. Coombs. The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) p. 26; Lois W Roth. "Public Diplomacy and the Past: The Search for an American Style of Propaganda (1952-1977)" The Fletcher Forum vol. 8, no. 2, Summer 1984, p 355; Roth and Arndt, "Information, Culture and Public Diplomacy", p. 725; Deibel and Roberts, Culture and Information, p. 19.

more significant information programs directed at the enemy and occupied countries.

The end of the war brought a rejection of propaganda. But while other wartime agencies were being disbanded, President Truman retained Archibald MacLeish's Office of Public and Cultural Affairs. It was reestablished within the State Department as the Office of Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC). The two concepts were thus bureaucratically linked. Meanwhile, active university programs, with and without US government help, were carrying on their own cultural programs with a reviving Europe. The government's cultural programs were now tied to the remainder of its propaganda organization while private cultural institutions were going their own way without any relation to the information objectives.

In 1947 OIC was renamed the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIE). A year later the Smith-Mundt Act formally committed the US to a long-term worldwide information, culture and educational effort in peacetime. The objective was "to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and the peoples of other countries". But the Act separated information and culture as distinct functions. It divided OIE into a "fast media" Office of International Information and a cultural Office of Educational Exchange. In 1952, the two were combined as distinct units under the International Information Administration (IIA). Along with the Public Affairs Office, aimed at a domestic audience, IIA was made part of a separate element of the State Department. This semi-autonomous status within the Department meant that IIA gradually drifted out of the mainstream of State's concerns.²³

The constant reshuffling did little to clarify objectives or promote effective programs. In 1953 the Rockefeller Commission called for an agency independent of State in all things except policy guidance to carry out the duties of IIA. Senator Bourke Hickenlooper opposed the separation. As Secretary Dulles was not enthusiastic about either facet of what we now call public diplomacy, a compromise was reached establishing an independent Agency: USIA. To avoid the taint of propaganda in cultural areas, Hickenlooper was able to keep the Washington administration of the exchange of persons programs at State. The programs would be

²³ Ronald I. Rubin. The Objectives of the United States Information Agency, Controversies and Analysis. (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 117; Frank Stanton et. al. International Information, Education and Cultural Relations: Recommendations for the Future. The Stanton Commission Report. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1975), p.1,2.

planned by State in Washington but executed by USIS (the overseas appellation of USIA) along with its information functions abroad. The built-in tensions and conflicts were obvious.

In his initial letter to President Eisenhower, the first Director of USIA, Theodore C. Streibert tried to define a middle course saying:

Under the new mission, avoiding a propagandistic tone, the Agency will emphasize the community of interest that exists among freedom-loving peoples and show how American objectives and policies advance the legitimate interests of such peoples.²⁴

While the organizational framework of USIA was being assembled, ambitious work outside the Executive Branch was being done in the area of cultural exchange. Senator and Rhodes Scholar William J. Fulbright saw a solution to the dilemma of how cashless Europe could reimburse the US for war surplus equipment. His 1946 Surplus Property Act sought "mutual understanding" through providing American scholars opportunities to study and teach abroad.

As more funds became available, the Fulbright program also brought foreign scholars to the US. Similarly, its Commissions in each country were binational. The interference of political or propagandistic elements was discouraged in this academic atmosphere.²⁵ The updated Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 and the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 with various amendments remain the legislative foundation of our cultural and educational exchange programs. Thus while USIA believed itself to be the agent of all American public diplomacy, the more visible and popular elements of international cultural relations were being separately endowed and developing their own set of norms and objectives.

Each of these steps had taken place under the growing shadow of McCarthyism. The sensitivities developed in that era continue to shape the American pattern of information and cultural activity. As early as 1946, Congressmen were calling State's

²⁴ Murray G. Lawson, Bruce N. Gregory, Hugh Olds, Jr., Irving R. Wechsler. The United States Information Agency During the Johnson Administration, 1963-1969. Mimio'd. (Washington, D.C.: USIA, 1966, p. 1-6.

²⁵ Richard T. Arndt. "The Fulbright Program and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1946-1986", Organization of American Historians Newsletter, May, 1987, p. 26.

cultural programs "a hotbed of reds".²⁶ When US libraries abroad came under McCarthyite attack, it only helped to convince Secretary Dulles that they would be better placed outside of State in a new USIA. Ambitious State officers learned to avoid those cultural functions remaining in State. Most public diplomacy resources were pumped into the information function (to oppose Communism). In 1951 the Bureau of the Budget defined cultural activities as "an indispensable tool of propaganda".²⁷ The Jackson Committee that established USIA made it clear that the advancement of US policy and not academic quality was the criterion for the selection of persons to be exchanged.²⁸

Critics see the final establishment as more a political solution to a McCarthy Era problem than as a logical development of a foreign affairs program. The Hickenlooper-Jackson Subcommittee noted the information-culture dichotomy but did not act to resolve it. When the new agency was established, the information emphasis was obvious. The senior positions in the field were held by former journalists and advertising men. Cultural officers and cultural programs were placed in a subordinate position.

USIA had barely been established when even its supporters began to question its value. The Rockefeller Commission which had called for the creation of a separate USIA in 1953, asked the President in 1958 to return it to State. This was supported by Mike Mansfield, Lyndon Johnson and William Fulbright as well as by a report from the Brookings Institute. An Under Secretary of State for International Information and Cultural Affairs would head the re-implanted organization. With McCarthy gone, Dulles would not object to the association. The legislation was prepared and only a Congressional adjournment and the 1960 elections kept the Agency intact.²⁹

While the name of John F. Kennedy is often linked to cultural enthusiasm in America, there was no question that President Kennedy emphasized the activist advocacy function of public

²⁶ Barry Rubin, Secrets of State: The State Department and the Struggle Over U.S. Foreign Policy. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) p.58.

²⁷ Ronald Rubin, Objectives of the USIA, p. 122; Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p. 94.

²⁸ Roth and Arndt, "Information, Culture, and Public Diplomacy", p. 731.

²⁹ Stanton Report, p.3; Malone "Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication", p.18.

diplomacy. In choosing Edward R. Murrow as the Director of the Agency, Kennedy gave USIA greater visibility, credibility with the country and access to his office. On January 25, 1963, he issued a Statement of Mission to the agency mandating achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives through "influencing public attitudes in other nations". The agency was to use its operations to "encourage constructive public support abroad", to "identify the United States as a strong, democratic, dynamic nation" and to "unmask and counter hostile distortions ... of the policies of the United States." There was real stress put on the advisory function. The Director was to advise the President and the USIA officers in the field to advise their Ambassadors on issues of foreign opinion.

JFK had thought to merge the exchange of persons office at State with Murrow's reinvigorated USIA, but Sen. Fulbright's objections were too strong. Kennedy was not interested in returning public diplomacy to State as the Eisenhower Administration had almost done. He did, however, elevate the exchange of persons office at State to bureau status headed by an Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. The bureau came to be known as "CU".

Amendments to the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 brought more funding to the Bureau and assured its status. But this only further developed the split between the information and cultural functions as the President urged USIA to more effective advocacy and Fulbright protected CU at State.³⁰ Fulbright himself said:

I utterly reject any suggestion that our educational and cultural exchange programs are weapons, or instruments with which to do combat. There is no room for an interpretation of these programs as propaganda, even recognizing that the term covers some very worthwhile and respectable activities.³¹

But the advocates of cultural exchange did not feel that State was paying sufficient attention. The American Assembly published a study that called for an end to short-sighted Cold War manipulation, the establishment of a single, independent cultural affairs office in Washington and a status abroad for Cultural Affairs Officers (CAOs) equal to that of the Public

³⁰ Thomas C. Sorenson, The Word War, The Story of American Propaganda (New York, Harper and Row, 1968), p. 72.

³¹ Roth and Arndt, "Information, Culture and Public Diplomacy", p. 736.

Affairs Officers (PAOs) who were invariably publicists.³²

CU chief Phillip Coombs called CU "the underdeveloped area of US foreign policy". A successor, Charles Frankel, would resign in 1967 in anger over both the Executive's and the Legislature's failure to support his programs because of the "preoccupation with Vietnam". He felt that even at State, cultural exchange was under political pressure. In the field, he saw the CAO as the "man in the middle" shunted aside as Information Officers (IOs) won praise for short-term policy achievements and became PAOs while better educated, more competent CAOs, dealing with complex long-term issues, rarely became PAOs.³³

There was indeed pressure in the late sixties for a more aggressive public diplomacy. Congressman John Rooney of Brooklyn particularly pressed USIA on the cost-effectiveness of its operations, its choice of audiences and its lack of a hard sell. When LBJ selected a new Director in 1965, he chose Leonard Marks, a lawyer with considerable experience in the communications industry who had been an attorney for Mrs. Johnson. Marks devoted himself to efficient organization of the agency. He did not play a policy advisory role like that of Murrow in the Kennedy White House. This was the height of the Vietnam War. USIA grew to meet the crisis. By 1967 the agency reached its greatest size. It had 1716 Americans overseas (250 in Vietnam), 7000 Foreign Service National employees, and 3329 Americans in Washington. In 1967, with the support of Senator Pell, a separate corps of Foreign Service Information Officers (FSIOs) was created paralleling State's corps of Foreign Service Officers (FSOs).

Both USIA and CU had roles, albeit overlapping, and were well-funded, but no one seemed satisfied with the allocation of responsibilities or the objectives of the entities.

The disquiet over public diplomacy (which by now had been given a name by Dean Gullian) even found its place among the less exciting issues of the 1968 election. The Republican Coordinating Committee called for a transfer of CU to USIA. Nixon-appointed USIA director Frank Shakespeare pursued a strong anti-Communist advocacy while State was moving towards detente. His zeal and the qualifications of some of his appointees raised more questions about the wisdom of a USIA advisory function and even about the

³² American Assembly Cultural Affairs and Foreign Relations Robert Blum, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice Hall, 1963)p. 5, 14.

³³ Frankel, The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs, p.20.

need for the agency. 34

The Stanton Report

___Lois Roth found that of the 65 reports on post-war federal government reorganization prior to 1977, 31 dealt with USIA. There was no lack of thinking about how we would carry out cultural exchange or how we would propagandize. But there was little agreement on how the agencies that pursued these objectives were to function. These were difficult times for USIA in Washington. Liaison with Congress suffered from a constant turnover of General Counsels. The growing pressures on the Johnson, Nixon and Ford administrations meant that the Secretaries of State, and certainly the Directors of USIA, had less access to the President.35

Rep. Dante Fascell's House Sub Committee held hearings that found the operation of USIA in 1968 to be "sadly lacking". There was a revolution taking place in communications technology but America's image in a year of assassinations, race riots and the Vietnam debacle was suffering. Our public diplomacy was geared to the Cold War, but bipolarity was being replaced by more complex relationships and a burgeoning Third World. Fascell is a supporter of Public Diplomacy. He notes that our channels for executing foreign policy are diplomacy, trade, communications and force. Yet force receives 95% of the budget allotted to the four. His subcommittee heard testimonies that indicated the USIA was still bureaucratically weak and ignored by the State department. The question was raised again of abolishing the agency.36

No action was taken in the sixties, but criticisms flourished. CU chief John Richardson proposed to Fascell an office of an Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy in State overseeing separate Information and Cultural units.37 Meanwhile Charles Frankel

34 Edward L. Bernays and Burnet Hershey, eds. The Case for Reappraisal of U.S. Overseas Information Policies and Programs (Incorporating Congressman Fascell's Report), (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 303-311; US Library of Congress, US Communications With the World, p. xxxv.

35 Ronald Rubin, The Objectives of USIA, p. 65, 74.

36 Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p. 24, 27; Bernays and Hershey, The Case for Reappraisal of US Information Policies, pp. 15, 81-2.

37 U.S. Congress, House Committee on International Relations. House of Representatives, "Public Diplomacy and the Future" Hearings, 95th Cong., 1 sess., June 8-24, 1977

continued to argue for independent CAOs, in the field with no ties to USIA. This was echoed by the American Assembly report. They felt that "The capital a (CAO) builds up in performing the task of cultural liaison, he loses in performing the tasks of an advocate."³⁸

Hearings and testimonies continued through 1973 when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee questioned USIA's structure and worth. The Committee called for the administration to address these issues as it had recently established a Commission on Government Foreign Affairs Organization (the Murphy Commission). Since 1968, the US Advisory Commission on Information had been calling for an organization outside of government to evaluate USIA's goals and activities. In 1973, the US Advisory Commission on Educational and Cultural Affairs agreed and the two commissions, with the blessings of Congress, approached Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies to host a study. Non-governmental funding came from the Ford, Rockefeller, Lilly and Ahmanson Foundations.³⁹

Dr. Frank Stanton, Chairman of the American Red Cross, former president of CBS, and former Advisory Commission on Information chairman, was to chair the panel. Members of the two advisory commissions and other leaders in the field sat on the panel. The project director was Walter Roberts who retired from an Associate Directorship at USIA to participate. The panel would interview three former Secretaries of State, former Directors of USIA, CU bureau chiefs and dozens of Ambassadors, CAOs and PAOs.⁴⁰

At this same time, the Comptroller General was Reporting to Congress on the problems of USIA. The report was published just as the Stanton Panel went to work in the Spring of 1974. It called for more realistic goals for USIA. This required a better understanding of objectives by the Congress and the Executive. It found that USIA was not permitted to carry out its advisory function and was not participating in NSC consultations. Its programs were too propagandistic and its products ineffective for the current policies. Thus:

Because of USIA's limited participation at the

(Washington, D.C.: FO, 1977), p. 150.

³⁸ Frankel, The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs, p.30.

³⁹ Georgetown University, "Georgetown University Announces Panel on International Information, Education and Cultural Relations", News from Georgetown University, mimeo'd press release, March 13, 1974, p.1.

⁴⁰ Malone Political Advocacy and Cultural Communications, p.28.

highest level ... (USIA) could be unaware of changes in direction of US foreign policy ... The lack of advance knowledge would hamper USIA's ability to advise other agencies on the implications of policies.⁴¹

The Stanton Panel would meet from April 1974 to March 1975. It represented a most impressive effort in the history of public diplomacy. The participants were the nation's most informed people on the institutions in question. The panel and its staff labored effectively and well. While they were familiar with all the preceding studies, they made a serious effort to approach the objectives of America's cultural and information policy abroad in an unbiased fashion. Even critics say that the "considerable labors were perhaps the most thoughtful analysis ever produced on this subject".⁴²

But the panel was not of one mind, and the issue that divided its members was the same one that had hounded CU and USIA and all their predecessors. Former Director Frank Shakespeare led a vocal group who saw both information and culture as tools in the struggle with Communism. Shakespeare stated that influencing attitudes was the only "reason we tax the people of the United States in order to have these programs". Mutual understanding was "garbage".⁴³ Advisory board member James Michener and CU chief John Richardson led a group favoring a separation of the two functions in order to protect cultural exchange from ideology.⁴⁴

It would seem that the opponents of hard sell carried the day. The Stanton report makes a strong argument for cultural diplomacy with an emphasis on persuasion based upon understanding. There is reference to the "sudden awareness of dependence" and the "myth of American omnipotence".⁴⁵ But philosophy was only a background to the report, its major concern was rational organization.

41 United States General Accounting Office Telling America's Story to the World - Problems and Issues: USIA, Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: GAO, March 25, 1974) pp.1,2,17,42-45.

42 Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p.33.

43 Terry L. Deibel. "Information vs. Culture: A Look at Philosophical and Organizational Criteria." Background Paper for Stanton Commission Report. Mimeo'd., May 20, 1974, p.2.

44 Thompson, The Stanton Report Revisited, p.48.

45 Stanton Report, pp. 10-12.

The panel found the existing USIA structure to be "at variance with logic." Specifically: "activities directly related to foreign policy (advocacy) were being performed by an organization (USIA) separate from the State Department, while ironically, the part of public diplomacy intended to be insulated from the foreign policy process (Cultural Affairs) was located within the Department." They found the same people in the field dispensing "two very different kinds of information". CU, as part of State, was permitted to communicate abroad and with the American people. But USIA had been forbidden to propagandize at home. This created great confusion when USIA cultural products were designed for its role as CU's agent in the field. CAOs in the field were rated by their USIA bosses, but developed programs under CU instructions.⁴⁶

The panel developed a strategy to resolve the problems by looking at the functions, activities, and content of the government's public diplomacy efforts. It found that separation into "Information" and "Culture" only produced overlapping roles. They identified four main functions:

- (1) Providing official explanations and interpretations of American foreign policy.
- (2) Advising decision makers as an input to the policy formulation process.
- (3) Disseminating information about the US overseas.
- (4) Exchanging persons of American and foreign nationalities.

The panel found that while (3) may fit both categories, functions (1) and (2) do serve "Information" roles while, (3) and (4) can be seen as primarily "Cultural".⁴⁷

The commission's project staff produced a paper showing that France, Britain and West Germany had all developed public diplomacy organizations that separated advocacy from cultural exchange, that this separation was effective and credible, and that only the US kept the two themes under the same office overseas, a relic of wartime propaganda agencies.⁴⁸ The commission was concerned that as long as there was a separate information agency, there would be "a tendency to sell the US ... what is needed today is a more mature confident approach in making information about ourselves available." ⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Stanton Report, p.4.

⁴⁷ Deibel, "Information vs. Culture", p.25.

⁴⁸ Deibel and Roberts, Culture and Information, p.20.

⁴⁹ Stanton Report, p. 51

In its report, the commission recognized the quality of the work that both CU and USIA had accomplished in spite of a poorly articulated organization. They admitted to seeking a middle ground between the propagandists and those promoting culture for its own sake. They concluded that the kinds of programs that CU and USIA promoted were worth the taxpayers' support. However, reorganization was necessary. The panel recommended an autonomous Information and Cultural Affairs Agency (ICA) combining the information and cultural programs of CU and USIA. CU would thus leave State. The Director of the agency, like the directors of AID and ACDA, would report to the Secretary of State. All policy advocacy functions would pass from USIA to State's Office of Policy Information, headed by a Deputy Under Secretary. VOA would separate from USIA to become an autonomous agency with a separate board of directors (on which the ICA Director would sit). VOA would have a mandate to "represent American society in its totality, and with State Department responsible for official US foreign policy articulations." 50

These changes would imply other alterations in Washington and at embassies around the world. A single advisory commission would replace the two that supervised USIA and CU. The panel recommended that FSIOs become FSOs like their State colleagues. The press officers who moved into State would find a Deputy Under Secretary of State heading an Office of Policy Information. He would be the Secretary's advisor on Public Information and Opinion. He would supervise the Department Spokesman, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs and the Assistant Secretary for Foreign Press Relations. The latter officer would supervise most of the services brought over from USIA (wireless file, VOA/ICA policy guidance, programs and publications). 51 At embassies, the Press Counselor would report directly to the Ambassador and be based at the Embassy. There would be no more PACs. CACs would head the ICA office and report to the Ambassador.

The panel realized that great tact would be necessary to develop efficient interaction between the CAO and the Press Counselor as their functions would at times overlap. But as Walter Roberts summarized, "the Panel concluded that they must be organized separately if they are to run effectively." The articulation of policy had to move closer to the source of the policy. The cultural operation must be kept separate from advocacy to:

concentrate on programs designed to create

50 Stanton Report, Endpiece.

51 Stanton Report, p. 27.

favorable attitudes about this country without being harassed by day-to-day foreign policy issues.. The long-range strategic objectives should be pursued without the pressure of tactical policy requirements."⁵²

The panel felt that such changes would assure greater support from the Congress having a more functionally organized public diplomacy. State officers would gain a better understanding of public diplomacy. The public and Congress would find it easier to understand the work of a public affairs section of the State Department than a discreet USIA that operated only abroad. The separate ICA would have more credibility among the academic private sector.

The work of the Stanton Commission was monumental. It first appeared that its recommendations would be put into effect. The Report was completed in March 1975 and was accepted by the Murphy Commission two months later. The report had a logical basis and could have produced a workable arrangement. But various forces came to bear, and there was no coherent implementation of the proposals. Gifford Malone suggests that State was mildly interested in the proposals but too concerned with short-term policy issues to "engage its energies in a meaningful sense" in the sorting out of public diplomacy. Congress had initiated the report, but could not implement it without action from the Executive. Malone reminds us that this was the period of the Nixon resignation. The Ford White House and Kissinger State Department were too preoccupied to react.⁵³

The 1976 election and the Carter transition further set back implementation of the Stanton conclusions. Walter Roberts maintained that Secretary of State-designate Vance had told Frank Stanton that the Carter administration would implement the entire plan. But that plan was reportedly changed "by the National Security Advisor who, as always, considered himself as an independent force in ideological warfare with the Soviet Union."⁵⁴

⁵² Walter R. Roberts, Stanley A. Zuckerman, Wilson P. Dizard, "Three Views of the Stanton Report", Foreign Service Journal, August 1975, p. 20.

⁵³ Malone, Political _____ Advocacy _____ and _____ Cultural Communications, p.29, 38, 40.

⁵⁴ Thompson, The Stanton Report Revisited, p. ix.

Responses to the Stanton Report

Supporters of the Stanton conclusions say that it was at the Fascell Sub Committee hearing in 1977 that "contentious turf-warriors and longstanding mindsets" gutted the impact of the report. They claim that the Panel had not marshalled the needed political support before going public. It did not win the support of members Leonard Marks and Edward Gullian who dissented from the conclusions. Gullian feared that putting the press officers into State would mean that "your propagandist will take on the coloration of the careerist". It did not play to the cold warriors in Congress. State was not enthusiastic about its conclusion that public diplomacy was becoming as important as traditional diplomacy. The Panel did not demonstrate having anticipated the response that would come from the employees of both CU and USIA.⁵⁵

The broader-based Murphy Commission response would carry weight on Capitol Hill. It was largely supportive of the Stanton Report. It varied only in that it preferred to keep FSIOs in a separate corps than the FSOs rather than to merge the two a la Stanton. It did not feel as strongly as Stanton that the ICA Director should report to the Secretary. Reporting to the President was acceptable to the Murphy Commission. Otherwise, the two panels were in complete agreement. They accepted the distinction between Culture and Information and the abolition of the role of the Country Public Affairs Officer. Bringing advocacy back into State and giving culture some autonomy was what had succeeded as other countries in the Western Alliance conducted their public diplomacy.⁵⁶

But while Murphy Commission blessing was a good start, numerous critical responses followed. One that Congress paid considerable attention to was the report by the General Accounting Office (GAO). The GAO had made its own review of the Stanton-Murphy conclusions. The GAO was not convinced that the distinction between the two types of information (long-term: advocacy vs. short-term: culture) was grounds for reorganization. They doubted State's ability to handle the full press function of USIA. They believed that USIA should keep its role in policy information and that CU should be merged into

⁵⁵ Stanton Report, p. 81; Hansen, USIA, p. 5; Richard Arndt in Thompson, The Stanton Report Revisited, p. 101; and Roth and Arndt, "Information, Culture and Public Diplomacy", p. 742.

⁵⁶ United States Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy. Report. The Murphy Commission Report. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975) pp. 23, 138, 141, 278.

USIA.

GAO felt that the system had worked relatively well for twenty-five years. USIA's FSIO's had skills in dealing with the media. They would not be able to exercise these skills in the national interest as well in State as they could in a separate entity. GAO foresaw "jurisdictional fights" at embassies between CADs and IOs with overlapping responsibilities without the oversight of a PAO. That would only "export the artificial division that now exists in Washington". They feared a "tidiness on paper at the expense of arrangements that essentially have met the test of performance." Having rejected the basic premise and most of the conclusions of the Stanton Panel, the GAO recommended a "comprehensive charter defining mission, objectives, and procedures that would provide a useful frame of reference".⁵⁷

There followed an acrimonious exchange of letters between Frank Stanton and GAO's Comptroller General, Elmer B. Staats. The letters were introduced before the House and Senate. Stanton complained that the GAO had "failed to understand" the reasons for the report being made and of GAO's being too concerned for "USIA's vested interests." Both criticized each others' methodology. Stanton saw misrepresentations and distortions in the GAO study. Other critics said that it favored the "turf-owners."⁵⁸

The Stanton Panel saw its position further undercut by sources that it had expected to be supportive. State opposed the "coherence" of the reorganization. USIA denied the validity of the Information-Culture distinction calling it fallacious. Panel member Gullian dissented completely. He felt that both the press and cultural officers had a common "vocation" to deal with "a broader audience" which was not true of State and its officers. Making the information function a part of State and ICA a creature of the Secretary would be of only "superficial" value.⁵⁹ USIA Director Keogh, and most of his predecessors concurred. Keogh asked that CU be brought into USIA to avoid the "fragmentation" that existed in our cultural policy. Leonard Marks and most of the USIA supporters argued for this

⁵⁷ Comptroller General of the United States, "Public Diplomacy in the Years Ahead -- An Assessment of Proposals for Reorganization", General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C.: GPO, May 5, 1977) pp. ii, 9-12, 15, 16, 25-27, 36.

⁵⁸ United States Senate, "Frank Stanton's Views on State, USIA and VOA", Congressional Record, May 9, 1977. pp.8 7268-71.

⁵⁹ Stanton Report, p. 80.

combination of USIA, VOA and CU under USIA.⁶⁰

Individual State and USIA officers entered into the discussions in testimonies and in letters to a variety of publications. USIA's Gunther Rosinus exemplified FSI/Os feelings about closer ties to State. He wrote:

Collegiality is better (than) subordination.
The element of our diplomacy dedicated to operations, exposition and the stimulation of controversy and debate is not best served by submerging it in a larger bureaucracy dedicated to observation, reporting, careful phrasing and the smoothing or avoidance of controversy.⁶¹

Officers overseas seemed to feel that this was just one more reorganization with little to contribute to the day-to-day realities of the field. AFSA, the professional organization representing State officers, opposed any reorganization which would put some of its members in a separate, untried institution. AFGE, the union that would be the bargaining agent for USIA officers favored a merger into a larger and separate USIA. Clearly there were more than philosophical issues entering into the discussion.

Richard Arndt has divided the opponents of the Stanton Report into five unflattering categories that, while debatable, represent the emotions that still surround the argument:

- honest ones who believed that the business of USIS was only the whitewashed American version of propaganda; everything else was fun and games...
- the Machiavellians ...saw cultural programs as a cover under which information program 'propagandists' could 'manage' the cultural program
- timorous - who feared a cultural affairs orientation
- opportunists (timeservers and anti-intellectuals)
- hedgehog specialists, especially of media techniques who knew only their jobs and could not muster the

⁶⁰ Joel P. Woldman (US Foreign Policy Analyst) "Summaries of Arguments for and Against Reorganization of U.S. Government Foreign Information and Cultural Programs". Foreign Affairs Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Prepared for the Hon. Helen G. Meyer. (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 22, 1975). p.11.

⁶¹ Gunther K. Rosinus. "USIA: A Counter Proposal", Foreign Service Journal, January 1977, vol. 32, p. 4.

curiosity to see how others' work could enhance theirs.62

Arndt's thinking represented that of CU officers, CADs in the field and academics who worked in cultural exchange. They wanted independence from a "propaganda agency". Many such testified at the Fassel hearings against the merger of CU and USIA. The Fulbright image was of special concern. Charles Frankel noted:

Educational exchange and cooperation is a technical business requiring specialized knowledge, experience and contacts which an agency whose center of gravity lies in journalism and the art of persuasion cannot adequately marshal or appreciate.63

Frankel and others began to raise the issue of a semi-autonomous government foundation along the lines of the National Science Foundation or the National Endowment for the Humanities. As early as 1974, the Assistant Secretary for CU, John Richardson, had discussed such an arrangement with the National Endowment for the Arts. International cultural funding was falling and the Endowments seemed to do better with Congress than CU or USIA.64

In January of 1977, Mr. Charles Courtney, a USIA officer who has since that time held some of the his agency's highest positions, drafted a paper recommending the same policy. He argued that USIA and CU should join in "a new organization outside the federal government to be supported partly by private sources". USIA/CU would provide a basis, but would serve to support the international exchange work of non-governmental institutions. USIA employees would gradually be phased into other government agencies. The public advocacy element would either be absorbed by State or be abolished as no longer relevant in the modern communications environment. Courtney wrote:

... organizational and procedural matters can be resolved through time and experience. What is needed at this moment is a commitment by the Government of the United States to the goal of liberating information and cultural exchange from the bondage of policy; and an admission thereby that past arguments in favor of using information and culture as tools in the service of policy have been proven inadequate. (rather), convert our worldwide

62 Richard T. Arndt, "Public Diplomacy" in Kenneth Thompson, The Stanton Report Revisited, p.30.

63 House of Reps., "Public Diplomacy and the Future", p.447.

64 Library of Congress (CRS), The United States Communicates with the World, p.173,286.

information and cultural apparatus into an institution devoted to the most rewarding and inspiring forms of international communication. 65

A Congressional Research Service (CRS) study did not support merging USIA into State as it would only "submerge" the functions in a "larger bureaucracy". CRS saw a future date when USIA functions could be taken over by non-governmental communications programs. CRS also spent more time in its report dealing with the impact of high technology than the Stanton Report had. They proposed a new organization that could be an expanded CU, an autonomous agency or an agency within State like AID or "linked to an existing cultural organization such as the Smithsonian or the National Endowments for the Arts or Humanities".

OMB had praised the separate USIA as being "more innovative and flexible than the Department of State." OMB opined that USIA's only problems came from "internal problems arising from a growing sense of purposelessness possibly related to its imperfectly defined mission and unclear mandate". 66

Years of effort and intellectual and professional anguish on the part of many concerned parties went into the Stanton Report. Unfortunately, the impact of the report (beyond that on the participants in the debate) was not comparable to the high quality of the work that went into it. Most people in authority disregarded the important philosophical basis of the work. They tired of the debate and looked for a compromise solution. This was epitomized by Congressman Ryan, sitting on the Fascell Subcommittee. As the hearings ended he asked:

..for what reason did all this enormous surge to bring USIA back into the State Department occur? There has been no scandal .. no .. public outcry ... and yet we have the Stanton report .. I have been sitting on the committee now for five years and I am still trying to find out where it is coming from. 67

The Reorganization of 1977.

The number of studies grew. The Fascell hearings droned on. It became apparent that the new Carter administration would have to take some action on public diplomacy. As would be expected,

65 Charles (Sam) Courtney, "Non-Reasons and Reasons, for Information and Cultural Exchange", mimeo'd. (Washington, D.C., USIA, January 18, 1977, pp 12-15.

66 Ibid., pp xiv-xvii, 257-263..

67 House of Reps., "Public Diplomacy and the Future", p. 22.

the result was one about which most of the world did not care and about which the articulate few who were interested disagreed.

Once again, Richard Arndt's caustic eloquence:

... it was clear from the beginning that no conclusion was possible ... CU had one witness, USIA had eleven. the (Fascell) Committee came to no conclusion and produced no recommendations. The next step ... was the young, overprogrammed, inexperienced, hyperexcited and cocksure staffers of the Carter White House ... (who) did exactly the opposite of what (Stanton) recommended and put CU into USIA.⁶⁸

And Walter Roberts:

The people who opposed (Stanton) were basically my colleagues in the bureaucracy of USIA. They did not wish to see these things divided ... They wanted to have one big organization because you are more powerful in a big organization... they had many friends on the Hill and they enlisted Brzezinski who was very much against the Stanton Panel..... nobody really thought it through.⁶⁹

The Advisory Commission on Information, which had helped establish and staff the Stanton Panel in 1973, decided to oppose the Report in May of 1977. Their argument was that the State Department had not yet become flexible enough "to incorporate information and cultural affairs as a coequal component".⁷⁰

In the Summer of 1977 the Fascell Committee recommended that the Carter Administration merge CU and USIA and keep VOA as part of the whole. To protect CU and VOA, they suggested that these entities maintain their own separate access to Congress. The Committee further recommended an updating of the 1963 Kennedy mandate to the agency. Fears of contamination of the Fulbright program would be dealt with through continuance of the oversight responsibilities of the Board of Foreign Scholarships which was to be independent even of the advisory board of the new agency. A special amendment to the Reorganization Plan required that:

⁶⁸ Arndt, "Public Diplomacy" in Thompson, Stanton Report Revisited, p. 92.

⁶⁹ Thompson, Stanton Report Revisited, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Malone, Political Advocacy and Public Diplomacy, p. 42.

Sec. 7(c). The Director shall insure that the scholarly integrity and non-political character of educational and cultural exchange activities vested in the Director are maintained.⁷¹

Image problems abroad would be met with a change in the name of the agency. This was not a minor concern. As Thomas Goutierre of the University of Nebraska pointed out, both "Information" and "Communication" in large parts of the world translate as propaganda or, more likely, "intelligence", i.e. spying.⁷²

In October of 1977, President Carter announced that he would create a new public diplomacy agency and the United States International Communications Agency (USICA) was created on April Fools Day, 1980. To some, the new name symbolized the end of the propaganda-laden "information" role and the opening of "two-way bridges" of understanding.⁷³ The reorganization plan provided for a Director who would report both to the President and to the Secretary of State. He could be called to sit on the NSC on an ad hoc basis. The administration sought to reduce the concerns of CU and the academic world by redefining the agency's mission and pledging the integrity of the educational and cultural exchange programs. USICA would be greater (and less propagandistic) than the sum of its parts.

The President's mandate of March 1978 called for a new orientation. The stress was more on "mutual understanding" and it included what became known as the "second mandate". This latter was the old advisory function writ large:

To help insure that our government adequately understands foreign public opinion and culture for policy-making purposes, and to assist individual Americans and institutions in learning about other nations and their cultures ... (the agency would) ... undertake no activities which are covert, manipulative

⁷¹ Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977, Prepared by the President and transmitted to the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress Assembled, Oct. 11, 1977, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 9 of Title 5 of the US Code.p. 2.

⁷² House of Representatives. "Reorganization Plan No.2 of 1977 (Agency for International Communication)". Hearings before a Sub Committee of the Committee on Government operations.95th Cong, 1 Sess., Oct 18-21, 1977, p. 398.

⁷³ Fisher, American Communication in a Global Society, p.2.

or propagandistic".74

VOA was to continue in its Charter that offered it a certain degree of independence from administration control in order to provide a credible news service.

The Carter USICA would, in fact, be very low key in its advocacy function under the leadership of former CAD, Amb. John Reinhardt. But it would also have less input in policy issues and suffer substantial cuts in personnel and resources. Politics, however, was not completely ignored. The advisory commission of the new agency was supposed to be bipartisan, with a minimum number of members belonging to each major party. Richard Arndt complains that the very mention of party designation politicized the institution. He feels that this has contributed to a de-emphasis of cultural activities with a board that is politically and not academically judged in their nomination.75

There was an additional political value to the change. USIA had been an agency without a domestic constituency. By bringing in CU and assuring some authority over Fulbright and International Visitors, USICA would have access to the academic exchanges constituency and the 700,000 American volunteers who host foreign visitors.76

The Carter administration did not raise the information-culture debate. It leaned a bit towards the side of culture while the next storm gathered. Charles Frankel still believed that cultural relations had "been put into the hands of the wrong people". AFSA and CU veterans remained angry.

The Wick Era

The more modest role and the slow budgetary decline of the Carter-Reinhardt years experienced a sudden change with the election of Ronald Reagan and the appointment of Charles Z. Wick as Director of USICA. The new team would put new emphasis on, and more dollars into, hi-tech public diplomacy and take an aggressive advocacy role,

74 Jimmy Carter. Memorandum for: Director, International Communication Agency. (Washington, D.C.: The White House, arch 13, 1978) p. 2.

75 Arndt, "Public Diplomacy" in Thompson, The Station Report Revisited, p. 96.

76 Hansen, USIA, p. 140

The coming of these individuals matched a change in the public diplomacy environment. New technologies in computers, satellite communication and worldwide access to video cassettes effected cultural and policy exchanges. America's image had suffered throughout the 1970's. Its new leader was the "great communicator". There were great challenges and opportunities in public diplomacy. Congress was telling the Executive that the United States "lagged behind those nations that compete with the US in the dissemination of ideas".⁷⁷ The new team would meet the challenge.

Mr. Wick was a close personal friend of the President and became a highly visible figure in Washington circles. The agency again had the access that it had been losing since the Murrow years. With public diplomacy in vogue, USICA liaison developed with State, DOD, AID, Congress and the NSC.

Kenneth Adelman described public diplomacy as "Washington's major growth industry" in the early Reagan/Wick years. He stressed the need for close USICA cooperation with the Secretary of State. He saw the need for USICA to keep State and the NSC aware of the "moods and opinions" abroad - to avoid another disaster like the Iranian Revolution.⁷⁸

There was no new Reagan Mandate, but there were clear signs of emphasis. An unprecedented number of political appointments were made in the agency. They reached to a much lower level than had taken place in other administrations. Many of the appointees had ties to the right wing of the Republican Party. Mr. Wick revived the old USIA slogan: "Telling America's Story to the World." In 1982 he restored the name, USIA, to the combined agency. His "Project Truth", aimed at the growing Soviet disinformation campaign, further clarified the ascendancy of advocacy.

By 1982, C.I. Wick had reversed the trend in agency budgets which had been declining in real dollars since 1963. By the mid-80's, the budget was double what it had been during the Carter years. Ancient VOA equipment was to be modernized. A new TV initiative centered around interactive interviews via satellite (WORLDNET). This became the showpiece of the agency. Even State began to appreciate the value of the innovations and to participate. State was also busy setting up its own public diplomacy working groups to deal with issues that it felt that it alone must oversee.

The vagueness of the "advisory function" was reduced in

⁷⁷ Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p. 68.

⁷⁸ Kenneth Adelman, "Speaking of America", p.933-935.

January 1983 with a National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-77, which established a Senior Planning Group (SPG) on Public Diplomacy on which the USIA Director sat. This enshrined public diplomacy as a concern of national security. It brought the Director closer to policy - but it did not clarify the issues that were still troubling the combined organization.

Under the Reagan administration real interest in public diplomacy was limited to those initiatives that advocated the administration point of view. But the Wick team won money for the Agency that expanded all its elements. With more money won for grants and special projects, the political leanings of the recipients attracted more attention. The expanded Wick budgets increased the number of visitors and the opened a flood of private sector grants to organizations that promoted exchange of persons.

Grants began to go to "right-wing" think tanks. Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Exchanges, Dr. Mark Blitz explained these policies saying that: "a government has no particular requirement to subsidize the promulgation of private informational efforts abroad whose policy views it disputes."⁷⁹ Critics claimed that this violated the objective of the Carter Mandate in setting up an agency that would let the world learn about America (all viewpoints) and America about the world. Wick initiatives such as Project Democracy, the Central American Initiative, and grants to conservative programs drew national attention. Congressional enemies moved in to investigate. The events gave opponents of the 1977 reorganization the opportunity to speak again on the pernicious mixture of advocacy and culture.

When it had appeared that the agency was going to take a major budget cut in his first year in office, Mr. Wick had offered to make cuts in the exchanges program. It looked as if cultural exchanges, including the Fulbright programs, would be slashed. The result was an uproar from the "Fulbright lobby" that caused Congress, led by Sen. Pell, to increase the USIA budget. Congress mandated that twice as much of the agency's expanded budget would go into these exchanges. Wick supporters claim this was a brilliant ploy to embarrass Congress into increasing agency funds. Critics say that this was not a ploy, but only a cynical disregard for the cultural side of the agency that by a pleasant accident benefitted all parties.

The agency grew, moved to new quarters, and incorporated new technology to make itself a viable competitor in a changing environment. Most media attention, however, went to disclosures of favoritism in hiring (Kiddiegate), claims of political pressure on VOA staffers, and rumors of a "blacklist" to forbid

⁷⁹ Staar, Public Diplomacy, p. 102.

the hiring of certain liberal lecturers,

A GAO study at the beginning of the Wick years detailed a failure of agency cultural programs to match its objectives. It identified "superfluous and duplicative" USIS programming. It found much that was out of touch with the cultural needs of the host countries. It stated that USICA failed to recognize private sector cultural initiatives going on in the same area.⁸⁰ In the ensuing six years these questions were addressed and there was a revitalization of the book program, library expansion, development of a worldwide English-teaching program, the opening of a Youth Exchange and a university affiliations program.

The Debate Rekindles

-- There are observers of USIA who would say that the members of the Stanton Panel who dealt with the failing public diplomacy institutions of 1974 would have drawn very different conclusions if they had to appraise the burgeoning "empire" of C.Z. Wick as it stands today. They would see that the agency has been revitalized, has found its niche and is doing both its press and cultural jobs well. There is, however, still a committed group of partisans who have fought this battle before and will continue to work to re-structure American public diplomacy along lines that are bureaucratically more streamlined and theoretically more pure.

While there are some differences of opinion, the general trend of the critics continues the earlier arguments that State should be given the information function. This avoids duplication of effort. Cultural activities should be separated from things political. The arguments were rationally based, but would be infused with emotion, especially in light of what the critics viewed as the partisan "excesses" of the Wick leadership. They turned on the USIA-CU merger of 1978 as a "monstrous arrangement lacking the subtlety required for effective communication with the Third World." They fell upon the term "public diplomacy" as "vague" or "propagandistic". Richard Arndt says that the Stanton Report had:

produced nothing and contributed to the unfortunate situation that we now have. ... Things today are worse than before Stanton, in the judgement of sensitive observers ... Even dove propagandists realize that the overkill program has sacrificed much of the lustre it once drew from the cultural

⁸⁰ Hansen, USIA, p. 117.

component.⁸¹

Arndt believed that the Fulbright program, especially, is a "persistent temptation" in danger of erosion by "implementers of foreign policy" who are getting ever-closer to their goal. They have replaced academic with political criteria in the appointments of the watchdogs of the Board of Foreign Scholarships and the advisory commissions. He asserts that, "the heroic years in the Congress, of (CU), of academically based cultural officers, of the cultural officers' corps within USIA" are gone. All that remain are "a small group of Congressman and their redoubtable staffers, the overseas commissions and ... (an) inadequately organized alumni constituency."⁸² Arndt had been one of those talented CADs and had participated in some of CU's fine achievements.

Another vocal veteran is Gifford Malone. A State officer and an Eastern European specialist, he had twice been "detailed by State to USIA" from 1971-73 and from 1980-1984. He thought that the 1973 merger was a good idea. He was a State officer who appreciated public diplomacy's role in foreign policy. But he has little use for the term itself. He calls it a "catchy expression" that has become so pervasive, albeit unclear, that it makes it "harder to think logically" about the programs to be managed.⁸³

Malone wants a more effective organization of the effort: one that has clear objectives and fits its institutional framework to those objectives. He sees a need to reorganize to face the "unprecedented interaction of different cultures and political systems". We have the technology and a capable private sector. We lack the organization. He says that: "The structure that we have built is impeding the effort and is placing limits on our ability to improve".⁸⁴

The structure is weak because USIA has "two dissimilar missions: advocacy and cultural communication". Currently, information under USIA is kept too far from policy at State and Culture is tied to advocacy to no benefit. He does not blame the Wick administration. Rather, he was impressed with the degree to which an ideologically aggressive group balanced the two

⁸¹ Arndt, "Public Diplomacy" in Thompson, The Stanton Report Revisited, p. 97-99.

⁸² Arndt, "The Fulbright Program", p. 26.

⁸³ Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp.viii-xvi, 9.

missions. But the principle is not sound and advocacy will always be a threat to "those whose primary interest is [in] academic exchange". The arguments for not changing the structure are simply that his former colleagues have learned that it is easier to operate in a single agency than in the pre-1978 model. "Habits of thought and work ... are powerful inducements to support the status quo". 85

Malone feels that the Stanton Panel did not foresee the coming growth of public diplomacy. This has awakened State to the importance of advocacy. The rise of the NSC argues that the information role be merged with State to provide a united front to present advocacy concerns to the NSC. It would simplify the advisory mechanism for all concerned. He would have a new Bureau of International Information headed by an Assistant Secretary and over this an UnderSecretary for Information. These would have what is now the USIA equipment and staff to issue printed materials, texts and documents to expound US policy from the source of that policy.86

Malone's US Cultural Representative abroad would have a separate office, probably away from the Embassy. While he reports to the Ambassador, he would not be a part of the Embassy. This would provide him with better access to politically-skittish academic professionals. He would be separate from the policy fixation of the Embassy staff and he would report to an independent agency at home, similarly distanced from policy and propaganda. There would, of course, be some need of Embassy administrative functions. Malone's independent cultural organization would have a Director who would report to the Secretary, not to the President. Malone feels that this would protect the organization from political influence and appointments.87

His new body for educational and cultural exchange would be headed by a Director chosen for his prestige in academe who,

would find it easier to develop close relations with the American (and foreign) academic world and with the many private groups, intellectual and artistic, that are so important to the US government's overseas efforts.88

85 Ibid, pp. 67, 97-99.

86 Ibid, p. 98, 105-106.

87 Ibid, 140, 129.

88 Iid, p. 129.

His conclusions are much like those of the Stanton Panel. VOA would become separate under a separate board getting only some policy guidance from State. All advocacy functions would be handled by State. The cultural agency would be separate but (like AID and ACCA) its Director would report to the Secretary. Malone sees that this would not take place immediately. State is just coming to appreciate the value of public diplomacy and the USIA bureaucracy would resist another change. But he feels that to meet the new challenges, change is "both timely and necessary".⁸⁹

Arndt and Malone are two among many articulate members of the diplomatic community who are looking for a more rational approach to public diplomacy. Working with Kenneth Thompson at the University of Virginia, they have provided a forum for their concerns. But while they are respected as masters of the art, they are not in positions of authority. Their strength, ironically, is in advocacy.

Attack From the Hill

The "500 pound gorilla" in this piece remains the Congress of the United States. In the five-decade history of American public diplomacy that wondrous legislative body has alternated between indifference to and bullying of public diplomats. Those involved in the day-to-day struggle to communicate the complexities of American culture or American policy to the rest of mankind find it hard to accept the idea that Congress can have other concerns. But it does. And legislators have not been amused when they have endured lengthy testimonies, arranged for complex compromises and then seen something upset their creations. Thus when Congressional committees have been called deal again with problems at USIA, they have done so with little humor, and a willingness to try something different.

The very success of the Reagan/Wick revitalization of the agency attracted attention and focused criticism. From the charges of nepotism during the early "Kiddiegate" episode to the recent use of cultural exchange legislation to import inexpensive European nannies (put to quick use by Yuppies on the Hill, of both parties), the media has had opportunities to point out questionable practices of the agency and its flamboyant Director. The more serious charges of blacklisting and politicization of grant-giving brought Congress into play.

To calm the critics, since 1980 the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy has made reports and conducted questionnaires of Fulbright alumni and BPS personnel to assure Congress that undue pressure is not affecting their program. In 1983, after the doubts about the political content of "Project Democracy" and the

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.158, 161.

creation of the National Endowment for Democracy, Congress legislated a Charter for the "E Bureau" (Educational and Cultural Exchanges). This was an amendment to the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961. It was to provide a final safeguard from the politicization of exchange grants. It identified each of the exchange programs under the Bureau and declared that:

The President shall insure that all programs under the authority of the Bureau shall maintain their nonpolitical character and shall be balanced and representative of the diversity of American political, social, and cultural life. ... (and that) ... their scholarly integrity shall meet the highest standards of academic excellence or artistic achievement.⁹⁰

This put considerable restraint on E Bureau officials who had to submit most of their grants to considerable congressional scrutiny. But questions were still raised.

Rep. Fascell's Committee on Foreign Affairs, through fellow Floridian Dan Mica's Subcommittee on International Operations met again from July 16 to September 24, 1986 to review the "oversight of public diplomacy". They were concerned with USIA-State relations in the years after NSDD-77 and with the integrity of the exchange programs. The Advisory Commission was arguing that the relations with State could be improved if a senior USIA officer would be assigned as a Deputy to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs.⁹¹

Rep. Mica was concerned that State's setting up Public Affairs advisory groups indicated lack of faith in USIA. This was denied by both agencies citing the need for the State groups to communicate with American audiences forbidden to USIA. The only other area of friction was raised by Advisory Commission chairman, Edwin J. Feulner concerning overseas security.

State had reacted to the increase in the attacks on diplomats abroad with elaborate new precautions and fortified embassies. USIA's press and cultural officers alike opposed the application of these restrictions to their offices. Both USIA functions require access to host country nationals that few State officers need. USIS offices have been designed to attract large numbers

⁹⁰ Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act and Related Materials, Public Law 96-164 (H.R. 2915) 97 Stat. 1017, Nov. 22, 1983., p. 1156.

⁹¹ U.S. House of Representatives. Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Operations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. 99th Congress, 2 Sess., July 13, 23, Aug 6, Sept. 24, 1986. (Washington, DC.: GPO, 1987), p. 171.

of walk-ins to libraries, classrooms and cultural events. The dangers are obvious, but are expected as the price of doing business. Feulner spoke for USIA recognizing that USIS must improve its security, but that it should be able to establish standards of its own. He also argued for the USIA Director sitting on the NSC as a permanent member, not in the ad hoc capacity then in effect.

The House Subcommittee took the testimonies under advisement along with the questions of reorganization of the agency and de-politicizing of grants. There was no Congressional call for a reorganization. According to Subcommittee Staff Director, Richard McBride, barring an exceptional scandal at USIA, the House has no interest in making future changes in a working agency. It expressed its sense that VOA needed a separate line item appropriation so that it would not be slashed if a USIA Director wanted to save the budget of other programs. But that was their only change.

It is very different in the Senate. Senator Fulbright may be in retirement, but he still makes his preferences felt. This is especially true where it concerns the exchange programs that bear his name. Senator Claiborne Pell has been a long-term critic of the current structure of USIA. Now, as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he is in a unique position to redefine public diplomacy. He has, in his senior Staff Member, Peter Galbraith, a forceful and articulate advocate of a complete reshaping of the organization of information and culture in American diplomacy.

This powerful triad has been particularly suspicious of the political freight of the Wick leadership's initiatives. They were also well aware of the variety of alternatives to USIA. With their special concern for the cultural exchanges, they have shown increased interest in the option of a semi-autonomous institution such as the Smithsonian to house cultural exchange. 92 This option, preferred by Charles Frankel in the 1960's and John Richardson in the 1970's would be a,

foundation which would receive funding from both public and private sources, as the Smithsonian has, ...with a board .. chosen by key scholarly and educational organizations. This would represent the broad scope of American culture at the highest level, with minimal government input. (There would be a small permanent staff drawn from academe) and a reserve staff for duty abroad and at home who alternate between periods of a year or two as its employees or representatives and longer periods of

92 Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p. 125.

work in private educational or cultural institutions.⁹³

Accreditation of Cultural Attaches to embassies would vary with the conditions in each country.

Senators Fulbright and Pell advocate an arrangement along those lines. Fulbright maintains that "education cannot be treated as an instrument of foreign policy" except as a "long-term cultivation of perspective". He reminds his listeners that the Fulbright Commissions overseas are bilingual and jointly funded. Thus they have no obligation to work for American policy interests. He is not pleased with the stewardship of exchanges by the new USIA and reiterates his opposition to the Carter plan to take CU from State.⁹⁴

Senator Pell, even after the safeguards established in the E Bureau Charter, continues to fear further politicization and "the present bureaucratic configuration, which links the advocacy function overseas with the exchanges programs". He sees politicization damaging the reputation of the programs and from this a decline in the quality of the participants. That in turn will make the programs "not worth doing".

He sees an ambiguity in the missions of the parts of the expanded USIA. He would have VOA become independent along the lines of the BBC. He would bring the Information officers out of USIA and into State as a fifth "cone" of the State Department personnel system. That leaves the cultural exchange program. He has said that "regardless of the Washington-based organizational structure, the work of public diplomacy overseas, would still depend upon FSO's". Of that Washington structure, he feels that:

The Smithsonian Institution provides one possible framework. I believe consideration should be given to the creation of a center, hopefully named the J. William Fulbright Center (analogous to the Wilson Center), in the Smithsonian administration to administer the academic exchanges. ⁹⁵

This prospect had been explored by Frankel and Richardson and by the Congressional Research Service Study of 1975. The Endowments that had been approached were not enthusiastic then. They had sufficient work at home. Nor was the Smithsonian interested in altering its style by taking in a part of the USIA

⁹³ Frankel, The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs, p.143.

⁹⁴ US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Public Diplomacy in the Information Age", pp. 90-94.

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 80-81.

or CU bureaucracy to operate an overseas element.³⁶

The most recent Pell and Fulbright statements were made in September, 1987. Hearings were mentioned, but in six months, none have taken place. That is not the end of the issue. Pell staffer, Peter Galbraith, keeps the issue alive. Inspired by continued Reagan administration exploitation of public diplomacy, Galbraith sees the danger of politicization a constant. His personal involvement began in 1981 with Wick appointees using E Bureau grants for a series of right-wing projects. He worked with Senators Pell and Torinski to develop a grant review process and the E Bureau Charter. He favors a return to the concept of the two-way "second mandate", the mutuality implied in the Smith-Mundt Act and spoken of in the Carter USICA. He sees the Smithsonian, probably through the Wilson Center, as a possible site of a de-politicized exchange program. Another possible heir to CU might be the Library of Congress. The LOC has some field offices and could attract "real scholars" as CADs. He would move the information function and the IOs to State as a separate career cone. Galbraith does not see this taking place in the next few years, but he is very committed to an apolitical cultural diplomacy and he is a young man.

Conclusions

___It is clear from all that has been reviewed above, that many sincere individuals and interested groups have tried to reshape American public diplomacy. They represent that articulate and influential minority who have heard of public diplomacy and agree that it is a vital part of the American national security effort. Beyond that there is little agreement and considerable controversy. Years of wrangling went into the creation of the USIA as an umbrella organization for Information activities, Cultural exchange, educational exchange and broadcast media (WORLDNET-TV and VOA). The very leadership and dynamism that has wrenched these activities from decline has provided a highly visible target for critics. There has been evidence of politicized grants, misinformation about Muammar Qadhafi's opposition, and Oliver North's ties to the National Endowment for Democracy. Each has given ammunition to the opposition of the effective "unity of force" with which USIA now operates.

A major part of the problem is the absence of an agreed upon definition of public diplomacy. Objectives remain vague. Today's USIS critics remind us that, "In bureaucracies without strong concepts, issues proliferate." The issues are many, but the recurring themes remain: the degree of emphasis on advocacy; the

³⁶ Library of Congress, "The US Communicates with the World", p.174, 286.

separation of culture and information; the access of USIA to the President and the Secretary - the advisory function; the nature of VOA; questions of how USIA can evaluate its work (various kinds of research projects); and a lively disagreement over whether USIA's targets are the masses or the elites in a nation.

The advisory question was not resolved by NSDD-77. Albeit a close friend of the President, Director Wick only attended two NSC meetings in 1987. Giving public diplomacy its rightful position (i.e. equal to State's traditional diplomacy) is an issue the Advisory Commission raises each year. It will take great pressure from sources yet uninvolved to give USIA that sort of influence. Where the advisory function does take place is in the Embassies, where the PAOs, with their access to both journalists and cultural figures in the host nation are an Ambassador's best source on national moods and trends. But PAO advice is generally melded into the Ambassador's overall reporting. To make public diplomacy have an impact at State, it is necessary for that bureaucracy to begin to pay more attention to the USIA input from the field and to join with USIA in arguing for more substantial budgets for opinion research in the field.

State has not been particularly sensitive to the role of USIA, either as advocate, cultural entrepreneur or both. Yet there has been a sudden attention to public diplomacy at State - on their terms. This has concerned USIA officers who see State (new at the game but more influential) moving into their arena and further distancing them from the highest decision-makers. State maintains that "they and USIA have separate but complimentary missions in public diplomacy." State does have access to the American press and people, forbidden to USIA at home.⁹⁷ But State's commitment continues to be ad hoc with little correlation between one task force and another. As Edwin J. Feulner says:

There is no conceptual framework for the department's activities in this field and no rational organizational arrangement that would enable it to perform in a coordinated manner. Clearly the department is going to remain involved in public diplomacy, and it is in the national interest that the nation's senior foreign affairs organization be involved. Consequently, there is a strong and immediate need for the department to define its role and organize itself accordingly.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Hans N. Tuck, "Letters to the Editor" State, Jan 1988, no. 307, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁸ Edwin J. Feulner in Staar, Public Diplomacy, p.136.

Thus there remain "difficulties in getting the policy and public diplomacy communities to communicate with each other".⁹⁹

It is for that reason that following Gifford Malone's suggestion to move the information function in USIA to State under its own Under Secretary, while outwardly logical, would only serve to lower the status of public affairs specialists. The public diplomats would lose their current tenuous access to the NSC and be removed further from the President. In State, the IO "cone" would slip into some lower level of the caste system wherein Political Officers are already little given to listening to members of the Economic, Administrative or Consular cones.

The Stanton report had advocated such a merger thinking that IOs would hold Press jobs in large embassies. In small ones that tasking could be given to junior political officers as part of their other duties. This could raise foreign hackles in that the Minister of Information who had had the PAD (a First Secretary at least) as his contact, would now be matched with a junior officer. It would also eradicate entry-level IO slots, the training ground for later IO responsibilities in senior Press Attache positions. Having an IO separate from the Ambassador's office and the Political Officer has permitted a "screen" between the embassy and the press that Malone's plan would remove.

Many of the critics had claimed that IO's moved to State would have better access to ambassadorial positions. None of them noted that most USIA officers do not have any expectations of becoming ambassadors. They serve to be PACs, CAOs and IOs in larger posts. There are USIA officers who become ambassadors now. IOs joined to State would have just as much difficulty in competing with the members of the Political cone.

Any plan to merge the two services raises its own cultural questions. Over the years, there has been a tendency for State to hire younger people and train them on the job. USIA recruits tend to be older, having some experience in academe or journalism. Older officers would be at a disadvantage in State's career development pattern aimed at youth. They would be less likely to see their specialized talents applied in a State career.

Likewise, there is a different approach to management training in the two agencies. State officers are early involved in reporting and developing policy papers. But any years will pass before a political officer supervises anyone but a fraction of a secretary. The USIA officer may repeat and distribute policy, but he does not develop it. He, however, may on his first tour abroad find himself managing large numbers of people in complex situations (cultural centers, press conferences, exhibits).

⁹⁹ Richard F. Staar, Ed., Public Diplomacy, p.22.

Making IOs into State officers presumes a local interest in American policy that is not always present. Policy advocacy is a role of USIA in the field, but only one of its roles. The Stanton study showed that the press function is generally "a small percentage of USIA's work ... the larger part is directed at the longer range objectives of Educational and Cultural Exchanges".¹⁰⁰ The PAO under the present system can adapt himself or his staff to covering the unique blend of culture and information demands that vary with each post. A division of the work between State and some cultural unit would be chaotic. Both IOs and CAOs use the same computer resources, video and book libraries and many of the same mailing lists and publications.

Some critics say that with the media revolution of recent years, there is no need for US government publications, wireless file and broadcasting. But they are incorrect in assuming that American media is everywhere. There are still many nations too poor to have access to AP or UPI. What they do get is often filtered through anti-American sources. Even where data is present, perspective is still lacking. There is a need for a full-service USIA press office in each country. It is debatable whether this office would be able to work at maximum efficiency within a larger embassy context.

There have been numerous arguments for separating VOA from USIA. That would certainly please a portion of the VOA staff that wants more "freedom" as journalists. But VOA already has a Charter that guarantees a degree of autonomy and independence. As a government-funded part of the overall public diplomacy mechanism of this country VOA will always have to accept some degree of guidance from State or USIA. We have learned the lesson that too much political weight turns away listeners, and that will not soon be forgotten.

One of the presumptions of merging the USIA advocacy function with State has been that State is the source of our foreign policy. Unfortunately, that is increasingly less true. Clearly, the White House, through the NSC, has been generating policy and State takes its orders along with other agencies. DOD, Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture, the Congress and numerous private entities have direct relations with foreign governments and the White House, bypassing State. Separation from State is thus not so great a hardship for the IOs, who will still have to maintain relations with each of the other players.

The greatest anguish in the arguments considered above has arisen from discussion of the role of international cultural exchange. Most of the Directors and Advisory Commission members for USIA and most of the Congressmen concerned have highlighted

¹⁰⁰ Stanton Report, p.5.

their statements with reference to public affairs initiatives and the technology of fast media presentation. Cultural exchange has continued to take second place. This has not been lost on those who care most about cultural diplomacy.

What has been forgotten is that different strategies can be used simultaneously. Cultural relations employ a "cumulative" strategy, making points built on trust, respect and deep understanding. But public diplomacy can also require a "sequential" strategy of a short-term nature. The individuals who had been exercising both strategies in the field have rarely felt immobilized by the dichotomy. Nor are they blind to the care which is necessary in keeping the two apart. They can be kept apart within the mind of a single person. USIA officers are capable of having two ideas at the same time.

Although the Fulbright program has been faithfully administered in the field by USIA "policy advocates" for forty years, the concern about politicization has never been greater. The hard-sell anti-Communist "soap merchant" mentality of a Frank Shakespeare has proven counter-productive. But to try to completely sever American policy and American advocacy from a cultural exchange overseas would be to present a most inaccurate picture of our very political society. We are a nation with both cultural geniuses and soap merchants.

Many of the critiques cited above are the work of Foreign Service Officers. FSOs live in a continuous diaspora. They live and work in a series of different, discreet embassies. Each USIA post is unique. When detailed to the Washington bureaucracy, they find that, although the Washington workload is lighter, their real place is overseas. Certainly the "substance" of USIA work - contact - is overseas. They carry with them the perspectives of the embassies in which they have served and of the Washington assignments (great sources of tunnel vision) that they have had.

Mssrs. Arndt, Malone, et. al. have held senior positions at our largest embassies and in Washington assignments with global responsibilities. They have fond memories of CU as they remember it. When they argue for a separation of the information and cultural functions, that makes good sense when viewed from a Rome or an Associate Directorship. But in the bulk of the posts abroad, small and labor-intensive, the PAO, IO and CAO are one person.

That officer would, in the course of a day in either role, see the same Ministers, Deans and journalists. To have two Americans trying to see the same people, one exchanging policy information and the other (pretending a pristine independence from the Embassy where he gets his mail, comes for building maintenance assistance and attends inescapable meetings)

exchanging cultural information would strike most host country nationals as hilarious.

Charles Frankel described the CAO in the field in the following way:

... an unusual combination of qualities. He would be an intellectual with gregarious instincts; a warmhearted communicator between two cultures and yet a hard-headed negotiator; an administrator of a large staff and program who keeps his staff and program in hand while he spends most of his time out of his office; a faithful bureaucrat who nevertheless can deal with the temperamental idiosyncrasies of professors, musicians, athletes and VIPs. In short, he would be a man of parts with the tastes of an aristocrat, the patience of a saint, and the constitution of a shot-putter. If he can manage it, he should also be a man who has a beautiful and charming wife who loves his job as much as he does, speaks the language of the country as well as he, and has inherited a comfortable sum of money so that she can supply what his representational fund lacks. 101

Twenty years later this definition holds, although it could read "she" as well as "he". The staffs are smaller today and computers and TV satellite dishes have changed the offices. The critics have bemoaned the fact that the old academic CU-based CAO slots now go to USIA, an organization of journalists and ad-men. But the officers who have entered since the 1979 reorganization come predominantly from academe. Many of the new classes of inductees are half Ph.D.s. Many are themselves former Fulbright lecturers.

The critics of the combined USIA worry about Washington ideologues putting the wrong people on the lecture circuit. Field officers know how to program their visitors and if a speaker sent from Washington is too outlandish, he can be exhibited to trusted local audiences as more of a "specimen" than a spokesman.

The farther one gets from the white-hot political core of Washington, the less the degree of partisanship in a speaker matters. The Stanton report and the defenders of pristine cultural programming miss the point that in most of the world, this distinction is lost on the audience. Few citizens of the bulk of our host countries are concerned about the State/USIA or culture/information dichotomies. It is assumed in the Third World, where their governments control cultural activities, that ours does the same. Fulbright, Peace Corps, USIA, State and most

101 Frankel, The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs, p. 20.

tourists are thought to be CIA anyway. *

In these countries, there can be no independent foreign cultural presence without USG protection and negotiation. A Smithsonian or Library of Congress officer in the field would soon find himself drawn into the Embassy for logistical and bureaucratic support. On the other hand, there have been cases where official tensions between nations has isolated or removed the US Embassy while private cultural offices have continued to operate. USIA and the various binational commissions and institutes with which it works are used to unusual circumstances. They have shown their flexibility within the current system. Some of the proposed alternatives to USIA might lack that capability to be government or non-government as the situation dictates.

Foreigners know that US policy is not consistent and that our policies represent a system limited to a two-year attention span. They are aware of many of the strains that have existed within American society in recent decades. They were aware of the Civil Rights Movement, the traumas of the 60's and the concerns about "decadence". Given any exposure, USIA contacts quickly learn that American culture has many sides. They can just as easily accept multiple roles in American public diplomacy. They have learned that our libraries, English language programs, and cultural exchanges have a lasting value. They are quick to recognize a "hard sell". But they are also interested in American policy and will expect the CAO and his office to be able to enunciate that policy. Few capitals are so large or scholars so narrow that questions bearing on American policy will not have bearing on the functioning of any American cultural representative. If a representative of a foundation, in the role of the CAO, cannot speak intelligently on US policy, he will be letting down his audience.

The real concern about the cultural questions should not be directed at making changes in the field or even in creating new institutions in Washington. Instead, it should be on continuing the development of safeguards already begun in the 1978 mandate and the 1983 E Bureau Charter. A good starting point that has been suggested was that rather than trying to get evenly matched Republicans and Democrats on the Advisory Commission, some leaders of the academic and cultural communities should be appointed to moderate the current top-level emphasis on high-tech communications.

Under the current system, the PAO (holder of the position that the Stanton report would have abolished) is in a unique position to "blow the whistle" on any threats to the ideals of public diplomacy. His burden is that he has two masters. Both the Ambassador (State) and his Area Director (USIA Washington) give him orders and write his efficiency reports. But, should an

Ambassador ignore public diplomacy concerns or an over-zealous USIA element push for insensitive advocacy, a PAO with backbone can go to his other boss for support and have more access and clout than a totally subordinate State officer or a representative of a private foundation.

As it is, there are usually a great number of non-government American cultural activities in a country. There are schools, churches, missionaries, and purveyors of American films, music and technology. American scholars are everywhere. Often, they operate independently and like it that way. But when there is a problem in the host country, they don't want to deal with a foundation representative who takes pride in his independence from the embassy. They want access. Nor do they want to see an Embassy official unfamiliar with their role in the country. That is where the well-connected PAO/CAO comes in. His job is to maintain contact with this varied group and to be an integral part of the Embassy community.

Individual critics and legislators have called for a private or semi-autonomous cultural foundation (read National Endowment, Wilson Center or Library of Congress) alternative to USIA. They hope to assure purity of cultural concerns and insulation from politicization. That is unlikely to develop. National endowments have been created that have been quickly accused of being politicized.¹⁰²

What is the point in separation now that Congress has shown its ability to establish safeguards? Political appointments could just as easily influence an endowment as an agency. Shifting to the Smithsonian or foundation would only shift to another - equally vicious - kind of politics: academic politics. That can be just as biased yet more difficult for congressional watchdogs to control. Gifford Malone has noted that, "There is little to be gained and a good deal to be lost by taking the further step of separating cultural communication from the government's foreign affairs establishment."¹⁰³

The recommended reshufflings have been advanced by individuals with rich experience and well-grounded concerns. They have seen their ideas raised before, in the establishment of USIA and at the time of the Stanton Panel. The solutions of the time were usually compromises based on pragmatic, not philosophical, grounds. The philosophical questions remain and the bureaucratic

¹⁰² Walter Roberts in Thompson, The Stanton Report Revisited, p.46.

¹⁰³ Malone, Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication, p. 127.

solutions have evinced flaws. But this does not justify another massive change. As was stated, most of our foreign audiences would not perceive the differences. They would only be disturbed by the reshuffling and the inevitable administrative confusion that would attend it. Our officers in the field have already developed a workable use of available technology for encouraging "understanding" of both advocacy and cultural information.

Separating the functions would only add expense and chaos in the field. The two functions do overlap. This is not because the merging of USIA and CU forced an overlap, but because the nature of spreading both kinds of information is the same. The recipient audiences are the same. In many ways, the new USIA is greater than the sum of its parts.

Critics claim that the Stanton Report met defeat at the hands of bureaucrats concerned about saving their jobs and fearful of innovation. There is an element of truth in that when one reviews the testimonies given at the time. But there is also a powerful argument in the success that the combined USIA has had in the past decade. The disaffected CU members have either gone into retirement or adapted, even thrived, in the new environment. The foreign service officers and civil servants hired during the ten years of expansion do not have the bitter memories of the merger. They seem to be able to distinguish between the two functions of the agency. USIA has recruited personnel that is committed to public diplomacy, not ideology. That zealot element may exist, but it does so in positions visible to congressional overseers.

There is no question that American public diplomacy is once again facing a serious challenge. Gorbachov and Glasnost represent a much more polished threat than we have experienced. This nation will have to make deft responses to hard- and soft-sell initiatives. Thanks to the build-up in recent years, America has the technology to communicate. But USIA is still small, still lacks a domestic constituency and looks to future cuts in its budget. It has taken ten years for the institution to settle down from the last series of reorganizations. Ten years is a long time for a Washington memory, but it is short for institutional cohesion. That cohesion now exists. What is necessary is the fine-tuning.

The most realistic response, therefore, is not a major reorganization of the agency. In an era of budget cuts, cultural exchanges and public diplomacy, once severed, might well disappear. What might be useful, would be a summary study that would accept the existence of USIA as it is now, and propose guidelines that would assure it the philosophical integrity that has been the object of so much concern.

There is flexibility built into the system in the field.

Press attaches may work directly with their ambassador or in separate offices. Cultural attaches operate among centers, commissions and linkages that have varying degrees of US Government, host country, private sector input. The PAO oversees these shifting relationships and guides their relationship with the Ambassador and with Washington offices.

Public diplomacy of any kind is a strategy that waxes and wanes in the short attention span of the Congress and the Executive (read White House, NSC, and State). It needs a strong, identifiable presence outside of State or any other agency. It will have to improve its liaison with these institutions and with the academic community. That community is USIA's best potential constituency, but it must see USIA as an asset and not a threat. A coherent Public diplomacy program is vital to America's national security. USIA is not perfect, but it is the best option for carrying out the two major themes of public diplomacy. The themes are not mutually exclusive and can be co-located in one institution. It is imperative that the agency address the criticisms being made and incorporate them in a revitalized, unfragmented, effort.

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