

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

A Summary of the principal objectives in a limited program of communications research in aid of American foreign policy abroad.

The program is designed to be elastic in scope. Although the total program is integrated and would achieve maximum economy and productivity when operated as a whole, it can be approached in discrete units, each one of which will make a useful contribution to solving problems of propaganda abroad. For example, a helpful start could be made by a pilot study of the values as presented in a single medium. From there the program could be expanded to other information vehicles (primarily news wire services, magazines, and probably film.) Simultaneous expansion into the proposed studies of audience characteristics and response would be possible. Additional elasticity would be available in the choice of areas; any one of the problems to be analyzed might be studied in one, two, or in all critical target areas.

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I. The program of the International Information Administration is

only one factor in the total flow of attitude-affecting material from the United States to audiences abroad. Important media include AP and UP reports, certain U. S. magazines (vis., Reader's Digest, Time), motion pictures, Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia. The Reader's Digest for example, is more widely read in Great Britain than are some of the national morning newspapers and is exceeded by only 4 British magazines. American observers have heard a good deal of criticism in France of the influence of the Reader's Digest. Whatever the justice of the criticism, the differential reception of the magazine is a matter of concern to American policy-makers.

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If the IIA output is to have maximum effectiveness it should be based on adequate information concerning the content of the other major media. Such information can enable IIA to supplement other information sources, and even to counteract contents of the other media when such material is giving biased or unfavorable or misunderstood information about the U. S.

Furthermore, there would probably be a high degree of usefulness to IIA in knowing how the contents of its output compared with that of other media.

Chilton R. Bush thinks the method of value-analysis should be used to

ascertain which values are being presented to foreign peoples through privately-owned American media, and which values not being presented are those that, according to stipulated criteria, should be presented. (The term is inclusive of individual goals and of standards of judgment). The Stanford Institute for Journalistic Studies has conducted some preliminary studies of American and foreign periodicals by this method, and the results appear to have promise for larger studies. At present, a Pakistani, a Hindu, and a Frenchman are continuing these studies.

C II. Studies in the field to determine the audiences reached by the various media for which values-analyses are being undertaken. Which American media circulate among the elites of critical target areas? (In this respect, the Stanford elite studies form a documentary and theoretical basis for the compilation of additional data on the communications behavior of political leaders.)

P II a. Studies in the field to determine what is the meaning of these values to persons exposed to them. That is, which values are meaningful and which are not in relation to the cultural pattern of the persons exposed? And to what degree?

Y III. The foregoing content analysis and audience studies would be accompanied or followed by studies in certain foreign fields to ascertain those values which appear to have fairly universal acceptance. Such studies would be preceded by a study involving the foreign students from a specific area. For those value representations which are meaningful (see IIa), what is the relative favorableness-unfavorableness of the reaction evoked in the audience? The question may be asked: What values are given to certain common propaganda symbols by representatives of various strata of various cultures? (The symbols thus studied would be a sampling of IIA output plus private media output to the countries concerned).

Although the main emphasis in both types of studies would be on values, it is anticipated that the investigation would turn up the need for further investigation of the social perception of foreigners.

The studies we propose are not primarily to describe propaganda themes or to analyze the social perception of foreigners (although that is included), but to describe objectively the value-system that Americans, through certain medias, present to foreigners, and to compare that objectively with the value system that is common to the people of certain foreign lands. It is of course necessary to validate the assumption that the values which we perceive as present in the texts are those which are perceived by foreigners, or if the assumption is not validated, to allow for the refraction that takes place. Thus field studies of social perception play a contributory role.

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