

Democracy and American Influence

Edward R. Murrow: We should endeavor to reflect with fidelity to our allies, to the uncommitted nations, as well as to those who are hostile to us not only our policy but our ideals. Yet in our day-to-day efforts directed to this end we do not stand alone. For much that is known and believed about this country is beyond the purview of our agency alone. Just as the work of USIA is far more than just the voice of American broadcast, so is the real voice of America far, far more than just our agency. From Norway to Nyasaland, from Rio to Rangoon, the story and the face of America goes out in movies, television, magazines, and the press. The military, with fighters in their families, number one million abroad. Over four million American tourists travel abroad each year. Another half million Americans live overseas for reasons embracing both business and pleasure. Foundations, educational exchanges, and international scholarships send our young intellectuals and their studious professors swarming to foreign universities. Fifty-thousand foreign students and hundreds of thousands of foreign tourists will visit our country every year to hear and evaluate at first hand the voice of America.

And all of this has great impact. Italy has built its first drive-in movie. An authentic drugstore stands in the shadow of the Arc de Triomphe. Even Moscow has succumbed to not only jazz and Louis Armstrong but also, and heaven assuage the souls of Marx and Lenin, to American installment buying. And these are both the [frothy] facts of the spreading style of America or the twentieth century, since both in so many ways are synonymous. Beneath them, in a far more lasting impact, is the broadening outward flow of ideas and techniques of how to live and work together. A respect for neighbors, a faith that every human problem is capable of human solutions. We and all the other voices of America that reach outside our frontiers are helping to spread the concept of access, of individual self-fulfillment, and citizen participation. The impression that democracy's business is never done.

I tell you all this not to defend our culture but to define our agency. You gentlemen of the press share very much with our agency the making of the picture of America that is known abroad. And the impact made on these people through the press is, of course, largely beyond the influence of the USIA. Yet the picture is even broader, not only the press but television, the movies, the traveling tourists, the missionaries, and the businessmen are part of the chorus that is the real voice of America.