

26 MAR 1956

General David Sarnoff
Chairman of the Board
Radio Corporation of America
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York 20, New York

Dear David:

I want to thank you very much for sending me Mr. Hangan's background on Egyptian broadcasting and thought that you might like to have some of our comments.

Radio Cairo's influence in the Arab World has indeed been paramount, due in part to its high transmitter power and, as Mr. Hangan states so well, its appeal to the largely illiterate, nationalistic Arab masses. It is of interest to note, however, that its pre-eminence may also be due to its superior programming which has for so long been unchallenged in the Middle East. However, as other Arab states learn the techniques of modern programming which Egyptian broadcasting employs, their voices, even though supported by comparatively less transmitter power, should attract and hold larger numbers of their indigenous audiences. It has become apparent that if programming is sufficiently attractive, the greater percentage of indigenous Arab audiences prefer the broadcasting of their own country to that of Egypt.

Realizing, of course, that quality of programming is a key factor in attracting Arab audiences, the Voice of America has increased the quality as well as the quantity of its broadcasting to the Arab World. We believe its presentation of American interest in legitimate Arab aspirations becomes increasingly effective.

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12/3/81

(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE)

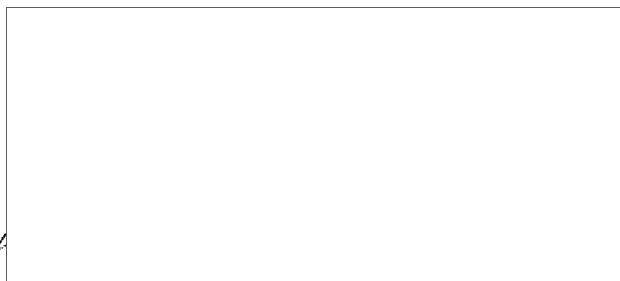
I greatly appreciate your bringing Mr. Hagen's informative study to my personal attention. Such reporting by him and others who are so well informed is of much value to us.

With kindest personal regards.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Allen W. Dulles
Director



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MISC. 12-7-59

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NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

INTERDEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENCE

TO

DATE

February 26, 1959

FROM

WILLIAM R. MC ANDREW

SUBJECT

VOICE OF THE ARABS RADIO

This backgrounder on the Voice of the Arabs radio, the Nasser station in Cairo that blankets much of the Middle East, is from Welles Hangen, NBC News bureau chief in the Egyptian capital. All of this material is available for air, with credit to Hangen.

Introduction - The Voice of the Arabs is the radio voice of Gamal Abdel Nasser. It is the most powerful and effective component of the Egyptian State Broadcasting system and the whole Egyptian-Syrian propaganda machine that Nasser now controls.

The Voice of the Arabs was inaugurated on July 4, 1953, less than a year after the Nasser-Nagib revolution. It began with only half an hour daily, increased to six hours in 1954 and to eighteen hours daily in 1956. Several of the transmitters were damaged by the Anglo-French bombing in 1956. The Voice of the Arabs now broadcasts eight hours daily.

Reception of the station is good throughout the entire Arab world, from Morocco to the Persian Gulf and as far south as Nigeria and Somaliland. Nasser's radio voice preaches his gospel of Arab nationalism and anti-imperialism in the staccato tones that appeal to the Arab masses.

The Voice of the Arabs has repeatedly demonstrated its power to arouse its audience to violent political action. Competent observers credit it with a main role in provoking popular outbreaks in Jordan in December, 1955, when General Templer tried to bring the country into the Baghdad Pact. The voice of Cairo also was instrumental in inciting the riots that led to Glubb Pasha's removal from Jordan the following year.

Cairo broadcasts had much to do with creating a climate of opinion in Syria favorable to union with Egypt. The old pro-Western regime in Iraq never succeeded in neutralizing the provocative effect of Egyptian broadcasts to Iraq. The Voice of the Arabs should certainly be listed as one of the makers of the Iraqi revolution of July 14, 1958.

Similarly, in Lebanon the Voice of the Arabs incited the Moslems to wage last summer's insurrection. It buoyed up their hopes with optimistic reports of the imminent collapse of the Chamoun regime.

Today the Voice of the Arabs and its new appendage, the Voice of Free Africa, are effectively stirring up nationalist sentiment in the Persian Gulf and East Africa. The Cairo radio also attacks Communist influence in Iraq.

Facilities and Programming - Egypt will soon possess the most powerful medium-wave transmitters in the Middle East. One 150-kilowatt Czech transmitter already is operating on medium-wave channels at Mansoura in the Nile Delta. Another unit of similar capacity is being installed and 300 more kilowatts of medium-wave power are programmed. This will give the Voice of the Arabs a 600-KW capacity, far exceeding anything now in the area.

This compares with the Voice of America's 150-KW transmitter aboard the Coast Guard cutter Courier anchored off Rhodes. Radio Baghdad, the most modern outside Cairo in the Arab world, also has 150-KW medium-wave transmitter, installed shortly before the revolution last summer.

Every contestant in the Middle East's radio war is striving to drown out all rivals. Egypt is linking the fledgling Syrian Broadcasting System with her own network. A more powerful transmitter has been sent to Damascus. (Egyptian State Broadcasting) already is exchanging programs and staff with Damascus.

Officials here say Egypt will build a 70-KW medium-wave transmitter in Yemen, now affiliated with the United Arab Republic in what is called the United Arab States. This transmitter will relay programs to East and Central Africa broadcast by the 50-KW transmitter used by the clandestine Voice of Free Africa. This transmitter is located somewhere in Upper Egypt and is heavily guarded.

funds for a land-based megawatt transmitter that will broadcast to the Middle East and North Africa, supplanting the inadequate Courier. Best bet is that the new American facility will be on Cyprus.

BBC programs in Arabic are relayed from Cyprus. British officials say they intend to revive an Arabic service originating on the island. But acceptance of British broadcasts in the Arab world is now at low ebb.

During the first nine months of last year the Communist bloc increased its broadcasts to the Arab world from about sixty-nine hours to more than eighty-one hours weekly. Red China alone stepped up her transmissions to Arab countries by seventeen percent.

ESB now broadcasts a total of sixty-one hours and forty minutes daily. This includes eight hours for the Voice of the Arabs, three hours for the Sudan, almost nineteen hours for the Cairo local service in Arabic and nineteen hours and fifteen minutes to overseas points.

Cairo also broadcasts a local service in European languages ten hours and forty-five minutes daily as well as a Third Program (patterned on the BBC) for two hours a day.

In addition to these transmissions, the Voice of Free Africa originates from four to four and a half hours daily in African languages.

The Voice of the Arabs broadcasts exclusively in Arabic although there is a French-language program beamed to North Africa. Cairo radio itself broadcasts in seventeen languages: Indonesian, Malay, Bengali, Urdu, Swahili, Amharic, Somali, Hebrew, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian, French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese (to Brazil).

There also are special programs in Algerian and Sudanese dialect.

The Voice of Free Africa has initiated broadcasts in Tegrane to parts of Ethiopia, and Afrikaans and Lingua Africa to Central Africa, in addition to Arabic and the other main African languages.

A staff of more than 1,000 is employed by ESB. The Voice of Free Africa reportedly is operated directly by the Intelligence service of the Egyptian Army.

ESB's staff is well paid by Egyptian standards. Ahmed Said, the leading commentator of the Voice of the Arabs and the most famous radio name in the Arab world, is reputedly one of the best paid men in Egypt.

Many Egyptian radio personnel have been trained abroad. Ahmed Taher, controller of overseas broadcasting and reportedly boss of the Voice of Free Africa, spent twelve years in London with the BBC Arabic service. The former news director of the station took part of his training at NBC. At least two Egyptian radio men have been sent to Moscow for on-the-job experience.

Staff has also been recruited from abroad. Three announcers for the new Voice of Kurdistan service are reported to have been provided by the Soviet Union. The Algerian rebels (FLN) broadcast regularly over Cairo facilities in both Arabic and French to their supporters in Algeria. Political renegades, including several known Communists, from Zanzibar, southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and Central Africa are also on the ESB staff.

A modernistic headquarters building will be completed for ESB and associated services in about two years. It will be just north of the new Nile Hilton fronting on the river. Officials in Cairo say the new building also will have facilities for television broadcasts.

The director of Nasser's powerful radio is Mohamed Amin Hamad, a hulking 46-year-old former prosecuting attorney who became chief of censorship after the 1952 revolution. Hamad has never been out of Egypt. He speaks little English. But he is an iron-fisted administrator and considered 100 percent reliable politically.

Hamad has sprinkled agents of Egyptian Intelligence throughout ESB. One of these is a shadowy figure named Mohamed Abdel Kader, so-called Political Controller of the Voice of the Arabs and a very important person in the whole operation.

The director of the Voice of the Arabs is Yehya Abu Bakr, a moderate who replaced the vitriolic Ahmed Said after the latter's campaign to have King Hussein assassinated backfired last year.

Radio policy is laid down by Nasser himself operating through a Supreme Broadcasting Council whose chairman is Lieutenant Colonel Abdel Kader Hatem, a former Army Intelligence officer who now holds the position of Deputy Minister for Presidential Affairs in charge of Information and Broadcasting. Hatem is deceptively soft-spoken and astute in the intricacies of Oriental intrigue. He often gives final approval for a "sensitive" political commentary.

Organisation - The fiction is maintained that ESB is an autonomous corporation independent of political control by the government and similar to the BBC. This was in fact the original conception when the Egyptian government entered the broadcasting field in 1947. Today, however, official control of ESB is omnipresent and omnipotent.

There also has been an attempt to portray the Voice of the Arabs as separate and distinct from ESB. It is said to be a privately operated station speaking for the "Arab people." This is a transparent myth. The Voice of the Arabs and ESB use the same staff in many departments, operate in the same headquarters and work under the same strict political control.

Because of the effort to maintain these fictions and the regime's obsession with security, ESB and the Voice of the Arabs have been shielded from inquisitive eyes. Heavy police guards armed with rifles are mounted around ESB buildings twenty-four hours a day. Access to studios and newsrooms is rigorously controlled.

Effectiveness - Egyptian radio has achieved its remarkable degree of effectiveness because it preaches an inflammatory gospel of revolt and revival that appeals to the largely illiterate, nationalistic Arab masses. Radio receivers are fairly widespread in the Middle East, enabling Cairo to project its message into the smallest hamlet.

For example, there are some 800,000 sets in Egypt alone. Syria is thought to have 300,000 for a population of less than 5 million. Iraq has about the same number of receivers for a slightly larger population. Morocco has about 430,000 sets for her 11 million people.

Cairo radio is closely linked to the rest of Nasser's propaganda machine. It regularly broadcasts editorials from the Cairo press. It carries Nasser's own speeches. It mixes news and political commentary with propaganda-laden "entertainment" programs, including dramatic productions.

The former Egyptian Minister of National Guidance has said: "The mission of ESB is to make the voice of Egypt and her revolution heard all over the world."

The "voice" is an effective exponent and propagator of Nasser's brand of nationalism. It is not a substitute for policy and never will be. Without Nasser and his mass appeal, Cairo radio's tirades would lose much of their impact.

Indeed, there is evidence that Cairo radio quickly loses effectiveness when Egyptian policy goes astray as it did in April 1957 when King Hussein outwitted pro-Egyptian elements in Jordan who sought to dethrone him.

Cairo at that time reported blood was running in the streets of Amman. It exhorted the Palestine refugees and other Jordanians to rise against the king. The reports were so patently false that the exhortations lost their audience.

One thing is important to remember. Violence of language is nothing new in the Arab world. The Voice of the Arabs did not invent political diatribes and invective. These are staples in the Arab world of very ancient vintage.

Language, especially the Arabic tongue, is an art form in the Arab world. It is expected to be used that way, particularly against one's enemies. This means that expressions of exaggerated ferocity are repeatedly used without any thought being given to their real meaning. For example, an Egyptian peasant will often say to his wayward son, "I'll cut your throat unless you behave." Of course, he has no thought of murdering his offspring. It is a typically violent Arab way of speaking.

The impact of Cairo radio is, therefore, primarily the product of its nationalist message and only secondarily the effect of its intemperate language. Actually the two go hand in hand.

The West can never compete on these terms with Cairo. It can only deliver its own message in its own vernacular. The only antidote to Cairo radio is a policy that will align the West, especially the United States, with the aspirations of the Arabs which Cairo seeks to exploit in ways repugnant to everyone but the Arabs.