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TO : Department of State

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FROM : LONDON 1720 APR 5, 1950 1 Enclosure

REF :

ATTN: UK DESK

SUBJECT : Suggestions for Voice of America from General Lev Prohala, Czechoslovak Exile now in Great Britain.

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In the course of recent conversations with General Lev PROHALA, a Czechoslovak exile, he was encouraged to express any ideas he might have as to how Voice of America broadcasts might be made more effective. He has responded with a letter, a copy of which is attached.

As the Department is aware, General Prohala has a long record of opposition to the Benes Government and did not return to Czechoslovakia in 1945. He remained in England and within the limitations of his small means has continued to propagandize against what he regarded as collaboration of that Government with Communism. While he has always been regarded as a dissident by the Czechoslovak authorities and while his ideas for a union of Central European peoples may be rather impractical, nevertheless it must be admitted he is thoroughly anti-Communist in his views and that he is also one of the group who accurately foresaw the unhappy outcome of the Benes policies.

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The writer prepared a confidential biographic report on General Prohala in 1944 and later revised it from Praha about 1946. Further data on General Prohala appears in London Despatch 1181 of March 10, 1950, subject "Slovak National Council", although he is not a member of that organization.

His ideas as to the Voice of America are self-explanatory. His comment toward the end that, according to one of these "outstanding exiles, politics is 90 per cent tactics and 10 per cent principle" is probably attributable to Dr. Hubert RIPKA, who one time made such a statement privately. It may be mentioned that General Prohala is at present suing Dr. Ripka's publishers in London for making a statement in his book "Czechoslovakia Enslaved" that General Prohala had been degraded from his rank during the war.

*John H. Bruins*

John H. Bruins  
Counselor of Embassy.

-cc: An Embassy Praha  
Enclosure:

Copy of letter from  
Gen. Prohala re. VOA.

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Enclosure to London 1720

30th March, 1950.

Dear Mr. Bruins,

In the course of our conversation a few weeks ago, I touched, among other things, upon the problem of American broadcasting to my country. Since then, several articles have appeared in the American and British Press, stating that, by April, the National Committee for Free Europe expects to open a new broadcasting station under the name "Radio Free Europe", in addition to the U.S. State Department's "Voice of America".

I am afraid that the new station will not differ very much from the "Voice of America", which, in my opinion, is not the best sort of propaganda for the Czech people. According to the above mentioned Press reports, "outstanding exiles from Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, many of them former Cabinet members, are being lined up to speak to citizens in their homelands". These same people have been broadcasting also on the "Voice of America".

You know the conditions in post-war Czechoslovakia very well from your own experience, and are therefore most certainly aware of the fact that most of those "outstanding exiles" from Czechoslovakia, including the former Cabinet members, are regarded by the majority of the Czech people as directly or indirectly responsible for the establishment of the Gottwald regime. Very few Czechs have confidence in the former Ministers who not only collaborated with the Communists, but in their speeches and writings constantly deceived their people and the outside world about the true state of things in Czechoslovakia prior to February, 1948. It was mainly to the dishonesty and cowardice of these people that the democratic world was taken by surprise when the Communist take-over happened. To a keen and unprejudiced observer it must have been clear that the February events were just a logical sequel to the betrayal of democracy by the non-Communist politicians. Therefore, it is my considerate opinion, that it would be a grave mistake to allow now these men to pose over the radio as "champions of freedom and democracy". In Slovakia there is more than lack of confidence towards these men: a deep detestation and hatred. It ill becomes to people who destroyed in Slovakia every vestige of freedom of speech, to propagate now the American tradition of free speech and communication. With these discredited ex-collaborators with Communism preaching the way of western democracy "there is little hope that western democracy will very much appeal to the hearts of the oppressed Czechs and Slovaks.

There is also another thing which causes me anxiety. The present cold war between Communism and Democracy is a conflict of ideologies. On the side of the Communists we can observe an ideological preparedness and a perverted and prostituted

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religious fervour - for they rightly regard their creed as the religion of materialism. On the side of the Democracies there is, alas, a lamentable lack of similar ideological weapons. A book can only be refuted by another book, a doctrine by a better doctrine, an anti-God religion by a positive theistic religion. If the "Voice of America" and the new "Free Europe" radios are not going to take into account these facts then, I am afraid, they will be wasting their time and the good American citizens' money. Is it not a common knowledge that the Churches are the only remaining ideological strongholds to Communism? And does it not follow from this fact that to sustain the Christian faith of the subjugated peoples of Central and Eastern Europe would be the most effective antidote to the communist poison?

But such a propaganda can only be effective if it is done by people who themselves believe in what they preach. Here again, I daresay that the "outstanding exiles" chosen by the "Free Europe" Committee, are eminently unsuitable for the role. The communists have their principles. According to one of the best known of these "outstanding exiles", "politics is 90% tactics and 10% of principle". You surely cannot beat a 100% communist principle with 90% discredited and bankrupt tactics and 10% of adulterated so-called "principles".

At the end I would like to stress the absolute necessity of a solemn pledge concerning a sound reconstruction of Europe in the economic, social and political field, based on justice, freedom and democracy, given to the enslaved nations behind the Iron Curtain by the highest authorities of the Western World.

I should be grateful if you would kindly transmit these humble suggestions of mine to the appropriate authorities.

Believe me, dear Mr. Bruins,

Yours sincerely,

S/S Prohala  
(General Lev Prohala)  
41, Margravine Gardens,  
London, W. 6.

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