

March 17, 1961

CONFIDENTIAL

Senator:

Here are some thoughts which Pat, John, and I have developed on the subject of a Committee investigation of the nature and extent of efforts of foreign governments to influence the content and direction of United States foreign policy.

GENERAL:

In recent years there has been an increasing number of incidents involving attempts by foreign governments, or their agents, to influence the conduct of American foreign policy by techniques outside normal diplomatic channels. This is a subject of increasing concern to the Executive, to Congress, and to the American people generally. Activities of the China Lobby, the Spanish Lobby, the Dominican lobby, the Vietnamese lobby, and others, are frequently referred to in the press, but there is no very precise information on what they do or how they do it. Indigenous groups based on racial or national origins have been organized in the United States, and have often concentrated on influencing United States foreign policy in directions designed primarily to promote the interests of other states. Many foreign governments with diplomatic representation in Washington retain the services of public relations counsel or law firms, primarily to assist in bringing particular foreign policy points of view to the attention of the United States Government and people. Finally, there have been occasions when representatives of other governments have been privately accused of engaging in covert activities within the United States and elsewhere, for the purpose of influencing United States policy (the Lavon Affair).

The purpose of examining this subject is not to prove that all these activities are necessarily wrong. Rather, it is that the Committee has a responsibility to obtain for itself, for the Senate, and for the American people a full and accurate picture of activities of this kind. Perhaps legislative action will be suggested, perhaps not.

PROCEDURE:

By way of most preliminary planning, it is suggested that hearings (after preparation described below), might proceed in the following stages:

I. Public receipt of testimony from Department of Justice and Department of State.

The Attorney General might be called upon to give a brief history of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, describing how Justice got jurisdiction away from State. He should outline the present operation. Who registers; what information is supplied; prosecutions for failure to register, etc.

He should then discuss with the Committee specific examples of registration. Who represents China, Spain, Soviet Union, Dominican Republic, France, the United Kingdom, etc.

The Secretary of State might be called upon to describe influence through "normal diplomatic channels."

II. Public receipt of testimony from selected law and public relations firms. (Dewey, Acheson, Clark, etc.)

Perhaps these hearings should be preceded by a questionnaire, but in any event witnesses should be asked to discuss what they do and how much they get paid.

III. Executive (perhaps public) receipt of testimony on the Lavon Affair, and similar "gray area" activities.

IV. Public receipt of testimony of officers of such groups as the Committee of a Million, the Zionists, Captive Nations groups, the English Speaking Union, etc.

COMMENT:

Probably enough has been written to suggest that an investigation along these lines could be explosive in the extreme. At the same time, facts would probably be brought out that should be better known to the American people.

There would undoubtedly (even with care) be instances which would lead to foreign governmental protests, to violent attacks by special groups in the United States, and finally, there might be an overall public reaction in the direction of isolationism.

SUGGESTIONS:

That the Chairman instruct John Newhouse to devote full time to this project during the next six weeks to see what can be developed along the lines of this memorandum.

That the Chairman consider attaching to the staff (after discussion with Senators Sparkman and Hickenlooper) for a six-week period, Douglas Cater or Walter Pincus, both of whom have done work in this field.

That nothing be made public about this activity until such time as sufficient examples have been developed to justify the Chairman proposing to the Committee that several hearings are justified.

Finally, after you have read this memo, I suggest that Pat, John, and I discuss this with you at greater length.

CM:mej