

Nov 04, 2016 by *Alvin Snyder*

Jane Fonda Public Diplomacy ^[1]

Adam Powell reports in his most recent CPD Blog post that the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors plans to investigate expanded program acquisitions for use overseas on the Voice of America and perhaps other U.S. government non-military international broadcasts under its aegis. The BBG plans to weigh this initiative in its yearly strategic review of broadcast operations. It is said to believe that airing the U.S. Sunday morning network news interview programs would further showcase the openness of government public discourse from Washington. The VOA says it already has an affiliate agreement with ABC ONE, "allowing VOA to use newsworthy ABC-provided material in news stories," and that additional U.S. broadcast networks also grant "excerpting rights to the Sunday talk shows for limited use of news stories together with appropriate credits." The VOA also licenses some non-news programs to feed its affiliates via satellite.

When we installed satellite TV facilities at U.S. embassies and missions throughout much of the world in the 1980s at the U.S. Information Agency during the Reagan administration, we also fed the Sunday network news interview broadcasts for in-house screenings to the embassy staffs which they found useful for background information. That is still being done. There was not sufficient public interest in watching entire programs, much of which would not be relevant to audiences abroad.

With respect to other acquired programming which the BBG expresses interest in investigating, I'm reminded of one thing in particular. As director of the USIA's TV and Film Service I traveled to Hollywood with Agency Director Charles Z. Wick to initiate a pro-bono program acquisition committee that would access film and video programs for distribution on our new satellite TV network, Worldnet.

Wick and I met with Hollywood talent agent Bill Hayes, who enlisted the legendary Leo Jaffe, President Emeritus of Columbia Pictures, to head the committee. Leo in turn contacted others who volunteered to serve as committee members including the President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; the Chairman of Screen Gems; the Chairman of Madison Square Garden; a past President of Universal Pictures and Decca Records; mega-Hollywood TV producer Aaron Spelling, and baseball immortal Willie Mays. With the committee's help we accessed mega programs such as Alistair Cook's "America" series, "Live at Lincoln Center," and other class products. It must be noted that we also acquired the popular Jane Fonda's exercise video and Dallas Cowboy cheerleader videos, welcomed by viewers behind the Iron Curtain and elsewhere. Soviet leader Gorbachev knew that resistance was futile!

Perhaps the Broadcasting Board of Governors ought to consider enlisting a pro-bono Hollywood agent and a power program acquisitions committee as part of its strategic review of government-sponsored broadcasts abroad, to supplement on-going efforts.
