



July 22, 1954

US Government Policy for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty

Citation:

“US Government Policy for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty,” July 22, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by A. Ross Johnson. Cited in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document number C01441019.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114487>

Summary:

An annex to the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) “169 Study” on U.S. international communications reviews the goals and effectiveness of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from the Blavatnik Family Foundation and the Leon Levy Foundation.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

- Scan of Original Document

7/28/54

Schramm

371(1)

~~SECRET~~

SPECIAL HANDLING

APPROVED FOR RELEASE MARCH 2009

A N N E X

Hannan

(22)

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs

(c) to

REPORT OF THE 169 STUDY

RADIO FREE EUROPE

For security reasons, in the Summary Report on the Effectiveness of U. S. International Broadcasting there has been no direct reference by name to Radio Free Europe (RFE). In fact, however, it is primarily RFE that is referred to when the expression: "and other U. S. international broadcasting" is employed in the section dealing with the Soviet Orbit. Moreover, the broadcasting activities of RFE were fully taken into account (though not specifically designated by name in every case) in the various reports dealing with the countries behind the Iron Curtain. The general conclusions as to the effectiveness of U. S. international broadcasting to the Orbit countries embodied in both the Summary Report and the Country Reports are, therefore, applicable to our broadcasting effort as a whole, including RFE as well as VOA, RIAS, etc.

EFFECTIVENESS OF RFE



RFE broadcasts to the Satellite countries differ from those of VOA primarily (a) as the latter speaks as the VOA, while the RFE transmissions (b) are identified as "Free Poland," "Free Czechoslovakia," "Free Hungary," etc., and speak as the true and legitimate voice of these countries.

The tasks assigned to RFE reflect this fact. These tasks, or policy objectives, include the following:

To give the people of the captive countries reason to hope for liberation; to encourage them to refrain as far as they prudently can, from collaboration with their Soviet captors; to prepare them for the task of contributing to their own liberation; to foster faith that upon liberation their voluntary establishment of democratic Europe will end their subjection to tyranny at home and their conscription in wars fomented by their Soviet masters; and to weaken and undermine the authority of their captors by creating dissension and a wholesome fear of eventual retribution.

42 JUL 28 1954
27 JUL 28 1954

1 of 3 pages

~~SECRET~~

SPECIAL HANDLING

42 / 78-2951 / 02 / 403

B 3 F3

(41)

(22)

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

The evidence of RFE effectiveness in accomplishing its aims consists largely of audience mail (at the present time about 100 letters a month reach RFE from behind the Iron Curtain), refugee and defector reports, and the views of U. S. Diplomatic Missions in the Satellite countries.

This evidence leaves little, if any, room for doubt that, with respect at least to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, RFE is effective. Within the limitations imposed by the special circumstances of the Orbit area, and in spite of increasingly heavy Communist jamming, RFE is getting its message through to a very considerable extent, and constitutes an effective force contributing substantially to the prevention of the consolidation of Communism in the minds of the people of these Satellite countries.

With regard to Bulgaria and Rumania, very little information or evidence of any kind is available and what is available relates, for the most part, to the period prior to 1953. Such evidence as there is, however, indicates that RFE's audience in Bulgaria and Rumania, although probably not large numerically, is significant in composition, and that RFE's programs are, within the limitations imposed by the special circumstance prevailing in these and eastern-most satellites, effective in helping to delay the consolidation of communism there.

The evidence available does not provide a direct answer to the question of whether RFE or VOA is, in general, more effective in broadcasting to the Soviet Orbit. When all the information and opinions are summarized and analyzed, the only conclusion on this point which appears justified is that both are useful and desirable, and that to eliminate either would be a serious mistake.

Letters, refugee reports, and Mission opinions, all appear to confirm that both VOA, which speaks with the authority of the United States Government, and RFE, which speaks with the voice of Free Hungary to Hungarians, etc., are essential elements in the effort to sustain the hope of liberation in the hearts of these captive peoples.

The evidence does, however, appear to point to the advisability of reinforcing, insofar as practical, the respective individualities or identities of VOA and RFE. At present, the programs of the two contain both similarities and differences. This leads to considerable confusion on the part of many listeners. Probably it is not possible - and perhaps it is not even desirable - to eliminate this listener confusion completely; but it does seem that a sharpening of the functional differences between VOA and RFE would result in substantial gains for each, and, therefore,

2 of 3 pages

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

for U. S. international broadcasting as a whole. The main element in VOA's popularity with Orbit audiences resides in the fact that, as the VOA it speaks with the authority of the United States Government behind it.

The main source of the audience appeal of Radio Free Poland, Radio Free Hungary, etc., is nationalist - i.e., each program speaks as an indigenous voice, combined with the concept of a free European community which lies behind, or at least is implied in, the name "Committee for Free Europe."

The effectiveness of VOA broadcasts to the satellite countries, therefore, would be increased by reducing its more strident overtones, and building it up as an authoritative and official voice of the United States, speaking in a tone which is objective but not detached, calm, but positive and strong.

Such a shift of emphasis on the part of VOA would allow RFE to come more fully into its own as the principal, if not the sole, station voicing the aspirations of the Satellite people themselves and dealing with the opposers of Soviet tyranny and corruption and with the Satellite regimes.

Perhaps the greatest operational problem facing RFE is to maintain credibility under the peculiar demands of broadcasting in highly specific terms about life hidden by the Iron Curtain. RFE

and is said by our Missions within the Orbit to have avoided recently most of the inaccuracies which were noted earlier in its history. This still remains a problem, however, and some of the interrogation reports tell how gleefully the Communists have seized upon misstatements and misidentifications in RFE.

The great advantage of being able to speak with the tongues of free emigrés has a complementary disadvantage. Unlike Radio Liberation, RFE has avoided connection with emigré groups, employing its staff without particular reference to the groups they represent. Nevertheless, as liberation comes closer, this choice of personnel will become more important. And even now an important factor in the station's credibility is the reputation in their native countries of the station's commentators and newscasters.

In the spring of 1954, RFE appointed an evaluation man, which should result in making more use of the considerable mail and interrogation materials which come to the station, and in gathering needed information concerning the station's audiences and their response.

One further implication of the evidence with regard to RFE broadcasts is that the steadily increasing effectiveness of Communist jamming calls for all possible measures to overcome this interference. Apart from technical efforts in this direction, consideration might well be given to much shorter programs - especially news broadcasts and commentary - repeated much more frequently.

OCB-7/23/54

~~SECRET~~3 of 3 pages
SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

on

RADIO LIBERATION

Radio Liberation is defined by the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism as "an organ of the anti-Communist struggle of the peoples of the Soviet Union, and its sole purpose is to help liberate these peoples from Bolshevism."

The mission of Radio Liberation is admittedly a long-range one. Its objectives include the following:

To make the listener in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Armed Forces feel that in Radio Liberation he has a voice of his own; to undermine the strength and expose the propaganda of the Communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union; to encourage doubt and disaffection; to discredit Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism as the ideological basis of the regime; to create in listeners the determination to overthrow the Communist dictatorship.

Radio Liberation broadcasts in Russian and other languages used in the Soviet Union. By the Spring of 1954, it had 7 transmitters on the air for approximately 20 hours a day each, making a total of approximately 140 transmitter hours daily. Other transmitters specially designed to help overcome jamming are expected to go on the air soon.

Jamming of Radio Liberation is extremely heavy. Wherever monitoring tests have been possible, they indicate that the Communists make a priority effort to blot out Radio Liberation broadcasts. The indications are that the jamming is pretty close to completely effective in Moscow and the other large cities.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that part at least of Radio Liberation's message is getting through. This evidence is slight. It consists almost exclusively of a handful of fairly recent escapees or defectors. Interviews with these escapees establish the fact that Radio Liberation is known, that it can be heard in some places in Russia despite the jamming; that its programs appear to make a real impression on the listeners, and that its listening audience includes members of the Soviet Armed Forces in Germany and Austria.

The number of escapees is so small that no quantitative conclusions can be drawn from their evidence - although it is perhaps significant that such a large percentage of this minute sample had heard of or listened to Radio Liberation while behind the Curtain. But the evidence

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

-2-

does permit the conclusion that, qualitatively, Radio Liberation is "effective" in the sense that speaking as the indigenous voice of the Russian people, it is being heard and listened to within the borders of the Soviet Union and by some members of the Soviet Armed Forces stationed outside the USSR.

Radio Liberation has the combined advantage and disadvantage of working closely with emigre' groups. On the one hand, this arrangement gives its broadcasts a particular authenticity and insight in speaking to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the reputation of the station will necessarily be bound to whatever reputation these groups hold or come to hold in their native lands. As the day of liberation approaches, the choice of these groups and giving them a radio voice to speak to the homeland will prove to be an ever more important political choice, and will have to be examined closely.

OCB-7/28/54

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

on

UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
(USSR)

Radio Liberation is defined by the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism as "an organ of the anti-Communist struggle of the peoples of the Soviet Union, and its sole purpose is to help liberate these peoples from Bolshevism."

The mission of Radio Liberation is admittedly a long-range one. Its objectives include the following:

To make the listener in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Armed Forces feel that in Radio Liberation he has a voice of his own; to undermine the strength and expose the propaganda of the Communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union; to encourage doubt and disaffection; to discredit Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism as the ideological basis of the regime; to create in listeners the determination to overthrow the Communist dictatorship.

Radio Liberation broadcasts in Russian and other languages used in the Soviet Union. By the Spring of 1954, it had seven transmitters on the air for approximately 20 hours a day each, making a total of approximately 140 transmitter hours daily. Other transmitters specially designed to help overcome jamming are expected to go on the air soon.

Jamming of Radio Liberation is extremely heavy. Wherever monitoring tests have been possible, they indicate that the Communists make a priority effort to blot out Radio Liberation broadcasts. The indications are that the jamming is pretty close to completely effective in Moscow and the other large cities.

There is evidence, however, that in spite of jamming Radio Liberation can be heard in some parts of the Soviet Union and is being listened to by an audience of completely indeterminate size. Furthermore, there is evidence that this audience includes members of the Soviet Armed Forces stationed outside the borders of the USSR.

This evidence consists almost exclusively of interviews with escapees or defectors who have come out of the Soviet Union or of East Germany (in the case of members of the Soviet Armed Forces) since Radio Liberation began to broadcast in March of 1953. The number of these escapees is very small; in fact, it consists of a mere trickle. Nevertheless, from this minute sample there emerges the significant fact that a very large

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

-2-

proportion of the few escapees who have come out and who have been interviewed know about Radio Liberation and have listened to its programs. Furthermore, these programs seem to have made a good impression on some, at least, of the escapees interviewed.

The sample is far too small to permit the drawing of any quantitative conclusions.

In fact, one can probably say that the significance of Radio Liberation's broadcasts to the Soviet Union is not quantitative - it is qualitative - and perhaps the same thing applies to VOA. For what it is worth, the evidence drawn from these few escapees indicates that both Radio Liberation and VOA have an audience, and that each is appreciated by those who listen.

This is confirmed by the United States Diplomatic Mission in Moscow who feel that VOA and Radio Liberation each has its important role to play, and that these two voices are not competitive but complementary. If anything, the Mission appeared to feel that VOA was perhaps the more important of the two because it spoke with the authority of the United States Government behind it, whereas, Radio Liberation had the disadvantages as well as the advantages of being the voice of Russian exiles.

On the one hand, this arrangement gives its broadcasts a particular authenticity and insight in speaking to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the reputation of the station will necessarily be bound to whatever reputation these groups hold or come to hold in their native lands. As the day of liberation approaches, the choice of these groups and giving them a radio voice to speak to the homeland will prove to be an ever more important political choice, and will have to be examined closely.

To sum up:

The very limited amount of evidence available indicates that Radio Liberation is heavily jammed but that despite this jamming it is being heard and listened to within the USSR and by some members of the Soviet Armed Forces outside Russian borders. Insofar as the minute sample justifies any conclusion, it appears to show that Radio Liberation is effective in the limited sense that it has established itself as a station which speaks in the name of the Russian peoples themselves, and that as such it has an audience of indeterminate size among the peoples and the Armed Forces of the USSR.

OCB-7/28/54

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

to

H U N G A R YRADIO FREE EUROPE*Mr. Elovich*

Evidence of RFE's audience and impact in Hungary consists of letters, of refugee reports, and of opinions gathered from and by members of the U. S. diplomatic mission in Budapest. Since it began broadcasting to Hungary, late in 1950, RFE has received nearly 400 letters; despite strict postal censorship and other governmental actions inhibiting overt expressions regarding listening to RFE. These letters, therefore, constitute significant evidence that RFE has an audience in Hungary and one which attaches sufficient importance to RFE's broadcasts to risk writing letters to the station. Most of the letters and the majority of refugees interviewed tend to confirm that RFE has an audience of significant size, and that it is looked upon as constituting, in spirit, a true indigenous voice of the Hungarian people, and that it contributes substantially to maintaining their hope of liberation and their resistance to the efforts of the regime to consolidate communism in Hungary.

There is also some evidence which appears to credit RFE with strengthening peasant resistance to the regime's agricultural policies.

On the other hand, some of the refugee interviews contained vigorous criticisms of RFE Hungarian programs, and some of the escapees interviewed voiced a strong preference for VOA and BBC, while acknowledging that they listened to all three programs.

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

OCB/7/22/54

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

to

B U L G A R I ARADIO FREE EUROPE

There is very little evidence available as to the audience or impact of RFE in Bulgaria. Such slight information as can be culled from the few refugees and other sources is to indicate that RFE is not so popular in Bulgaria as are VOA and BBC, but that even so RFE has an audience which, though numerically small, is significant in composition; that its listeners look upon it as a trustworthy and reliable voice; and that it is helping to maintain the morale of some persons who are opposed to the regime by breaking down their sense of isolation from the outside world, and by maintaining their hope of eventual liberation from communism.

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

TO

CZECHOSLOVAKIARADIO FREE EUROPE

On the basis of available evidence, which includes large numbers of refugees and escapee reports, substantial audience mail (taking postal censorship into account) and the views of members of the U. S. diplomatic mission in Prague, there appears to be little question that RFE broadcasts to Czechoslovakia have been effective. Up until approximately a year ago, it seems fairly clear there must have been hundreds of thousands of people listening more or less regularly to RFE programs. The intensification of jamming in recent months, however, has undoubtedly reduced that number; but recent evidence confirms that there are still large numbers who regularly try to bring in an intelligible broadcast in the face of the communist jamming effort, and who succeed in hearing and in passing on to others significant portions of the broadcasts.

The indications are that in Czechoslovakia, RFE is more heavily jammed than VOA, and far more subject to jamming than BBC. Reports indicate that some listeners are critical of individual programs on RFE, and that VOA, and especially BBC, are considered more reliable; but, the great bulk of the reports confirm that RFE has a large Czech audience. The frequency and volume of attacks on RFE in the Czech official press and radio also constitutes evidence of the important role of RFE and of its effectiveness in helping to keep alive the sentiment of resistance to consolidation of the Communist regime.

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

to

P O L A N DRADIO FREE EUROPE

More than half of the one hundred letters per month which reach RFE from behind the Iron Curtain come from Poland. In fact, the relative ease with which these letters to a post office box address get through the postal censorship in Poland has raised the question of whether some of the letters might not be "plants." Even if this were the case with some however, enough are plainly genuine to constitute significant evidence that RFE has an audience in Poland and that it is contributing significantly to the task of sowing seeds of doubt about the Communist regime, and sustaining hope of eventual liberation.

Other evidence of RFE's impact in Poland comes from refugees and defectors, and opinions gathered from and by members of the U. S. diplomatic mission in Warsaw. This evidence combines to indicate that the audience for "Radio Free Poland" is large, despite jamming and other efforts of the regime to discourage listening; that, despite some criticism, the programs for the most part are popular and are helpful in maintaining the morale of many Poles and militating against a complete consolidation of communism by helping to prevent the complete isolation of the Polish people from the West.

The available evidence also indicates that, for many of these listeners at least, RFE succeeds in establishing the kind of intimate relationship which makes the audience tend to look upon it as an indigenous station.

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLINGA N N E X

to

R U M A N I ARADIO FREE EUROPE

For Rumania, as in the case of Bulgaria, there is very little available evidence as to the audience and effectiveness of RFE. Moreover, what information we have is for the most part two years old or more, and, therefore, covers a period when RFE broadcasts to Rumania were still new.

Thus, at the time to which most of the available evidence refers, RFE does not appear to have achieved the same degree of popularity as VOA and BBC. The total potential radio audience in Rumania is very small by Western standards, or even by comparison with Poland or Czechoslovakia, and nearly all the sets are centered in the cities - electricity is rare in rural areas - where jamming can more easily be made effective. Nevertheless, what little evidence we have would seem to indicate that RFE is contributing, along with VOA, to the task of maintaining the morale of those listeners who are opposed to the regime, by breaking down to some extent their sense of isolation from the rest of the world.

~~SECRET~~SPECIAL HANDLING

OCB/7/22/54