

November 22, 1950

Wisner Update on Radio Free Europe

Citation:

"Wisner Update on Radio Free Europe", November 22, 1950, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by A. Ross Johnson. Cited Ch1 n39 in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document number MORI 1137561. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/114350>

Summary:

Frank Wisner reviews RFE broadcasting after 5 months and notes a shift from use of exile leaders "of questionable current value" to "timely news items and commentary." He foreshadows expansion of broadcast hours and shift of program production to West Germany.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

Duplicate

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1 cited
FR 1-3864

22 November 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe

1. At the meeting of the directors of the National Committee for a Free Europe in New York on Thursday evening, November 2nd, attended by the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and the Assistant Director for Policy Coordination, the Committee was asked to reexamine its radio activities and prepare a statement of the aims and objectives of Radio Free Europe for study by the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence. Two comprehensive memoranda and other materials have been received in response to this request.

2. The following is a summary of these reports, together with our own additional views and refinements:

a. Essentially an instrument of psychological warfare, Radio Free Europe's purpose is to prevent, or at least to hinder, the cultural, political and economic integration of the satellite states with the Soviet Union.

b. Sponsored by a group of citizens, Radio Free Europe provides a channel over which individuals, both foreigners in exile and American citizens, can speak to the people behind the Iron Curtain. Unhampered by official status, Radio Free Europe supplements but takes care not to compete with or duplicate the Voice of America. Programs are sent out in intimate colloquial language on a far wider selection of subjects than the Voice as an agency of the government is in a position to use, and Radio Free Europe can move into the area of gray or even black propaganda should the situation warrant it.

c. To accomplish its purpose of bringing hope to our friends and confusion to our enemies, Radio Free Europe has been developing programs aimed at:

(1) Keeping

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(1) Keeping alive the hope of liberation in the satellite states and telling the various peoples that they are not forgotten by the free world;

(2) Stimulating and increasing the difficulties of the satellite regimes in their efforts to achieve full control of production and economic integration with the USSR;

(3) Creating doubts and fears among the quislings of the satellites by character assassination and talk of ultimate retribution, and at the same time drawing a distinction between Communist puppets and those who follow the party line in order to survive, thereby encouraging high level defections among the latter;

(4) Developing an atmosphere favorable to the growth of resistance movements, for ultimate exploitation in war, or, at a propitious moment, in peace time.

d. Programs totaling $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day are currently going out in five languages to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Rumania. These programs are devoted approximately one-third to news and two-thirds to so-called features, ranging from political satires to controlled speeches by exiles. As a result of five months' experience, emphasis has shifted from the use of distinguished political and intellectual exiles, whose personal prejudices and protracted absence from their native lands render them of questionable current value, to timely news items and commentary slanted to accomplish Radio Free Europe's purposes.

e. The production of five different language programs per day is the task of the New York office. Whenever possible scripts are written by exiles and edited by the American staff. By this means, the programs are kept local in character and more in keeping with the taste of their audience. Of primary concern is the development and maintenance of an adequate flow of information from behind the Iron Curtain, since local news in the satellites is as interesting as world news. Because of the dangers of being caught listening, all programs must have special appeal if they are to hold their audience.

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(2) Stimulating and increasing the difficulties of the satellite regimes in their efforts to achieve full control of production and economic integration with the USSR;

(3) Creating doubts and fears among the quislings of the satellites by character assassination and talk of ultimate retribution, and at the same time drawing a distinction between Communist puppets and those who follow the party line in order to survive, thereby encouraging high level defections among the latter;

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f. With only one low powered transmitter in use for less than five months, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the effort. There are about 69,000,000 people living in the target area, and the best information available indicates that they have about 3,100,000 receiving sets equipped to receive short and/or medium wave transmission. This ratio of approximately 33 people per set varies widely between countries, there being five people per set in Czechoslovakia, compared to over seventy people per set in Bulgaria and Rumania. However, in all these countries a grape vine process plays an important role in the dissemination of information, particularly information of a startling nature, and although relatively few persons may actually hear a broadcast, the contents appear to spread with great rapidity. This seems to be a consequence of the almost total obstruction of the normal flow of news from abroad. About the only measure of the results of Radio Free Europe's broadcasts to date is the relatively frequent public denunciation of them in the satellite areas. The state radio stations in both Hungary and Rumania have imitated certain of our programs in an effort to reply to the information carried. Also, we understand that Radio Leipzig has announced that any West German who works for Radio Free Europe will be hanged after the "liberation" of Germany.

g. Present plans call for an extension of facilities to permit broadcasting six hours per day per country and the necessary expansion of research and writing personnel to produce the programs needed for this schedule. In addition, the present delay of about thirty hours between the receipt of a news item and the broadcasting thereof, will be materially reduced by the establishment of a programs office in Germany where much of the work now done in New York can be carried on.

h. Supplementing the $7\frac{1}{2}$ kw short wave transmitter now operating in Frankfurt, a 135 kw medium wave transmitter located near Munich will be completed early next year. Two GE 100 kw short wave and four RCA 50 kw short wave transmitters are on order for delivery in the first half of 1951. Two of the 50 kws will be placed in the Frankfurt area, thereby giving complete coverage of the target area from Germany. The final location of the remaining units depends on various technical and political considerations, but the general plan is to set up a second line facility in North Africa, Portugal or the Azores to provide both better coverage and also a reserve to fall back on in case for any reason we are forced out of the German locations.

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i. The original budget of Radio Free Europe for the fiscal year 1950/51 has been tentatively amended under date of 24 August 1950 as follows:

	<u>Annual</u> <u>Operating Cost</u>	<u>Capital Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
Original 1950/51 Budget as approved			
Requested Increase 24 August 1950			
<u>Revised Totals</u>			

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Final approval of this amended budget is sought at this time in order that the program of expansion may be carried through. Of the [redacted] requested for Capital Expenditures, [redacted] has already been transferred, leaving [redacted] still to be remitted.

j. The annual operating cost indicated above at [redacted] will not, of course, apply to the current fiscal year, as this sum is for a full year's operation of all the proposed new facilities, which even if approved immediately, will not be in operation in their entirety until late spring. At the present time, operating expenses are running at [redacted] per month or an annual rate of [redacted] per year, some employees having already been added in anticipation of the enlarged operation.

k. The equipment to be installed under this plan has been specified by the Committee's advisor, Mr. Peter S. G. Mero, an independent radio consultant, with the concurrence of A. D. Ring and Company, who are likewise consultants in this field. This has been supervised by Mr. Robert Lang, Director of Radio Free Europe. To verify their conclusions, our special radio consultant, Commander Graveson, spent some time in New York last week reviewing these plans and specifications, and his report is expected daily.

l. The present regulations of the National Production Authority requiring manufacturers to give precedence to Defense Orders may seriously interfere with the acquisition of the new equipment and steps are being taken to expedite this procurement.

4/11/51
Approved
[Signature]

[Redacted Signature Box]

FRANK G. WISNER
Assistant Director for
Policy Coordination

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