

February 26, 1954

CIA Review of Radio Liberty Broadcasting

Citation:

"CIA Review of Radio Liberty Broadcasting", February 26, 1954, Wilson Center 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 C01434010. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114478>

Summary:

A CIA memorandum reviews Radio Liberty policy guidance to date and outlines how it differs from the Voice of America.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

C01434010

~~SECRET~~

1.3 #12
File H.6

EO 13526 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 13526 3.5(c)

RADIO LIBERATION

FEB 26 1954

AYI
~~10~~

I. POLICY

A. Basic Policy Paper

The basic policy paper for Radio Liberation was prepared by CIA, with comments by the Department of State incorporated therein. This paper, known as the General Guidance For American Radio Advisory Personnel, was issued by ANCOMLIB in February of 1953, about two weeks before RADLIB began broadcasting.

In brief, the policy paper is not only inadequate but unsuited for RADLIB's particular needs. Although it speaks of RADLIB as "an organ of the peoples from the USSR . . . who have associated themselves to assist in the struggle of their fellow countrymen against Soviet oppression" it ignores the nuances implicit in this concept of the radio, and denies to it that quality which would set it apart from existing and competing media. As it stands, it is a paper by and for Americans. It imposes limitations on RADLIB similar to those imposed on VOA, and in so doing leaves to RADLIB only those means of attaining its primary objective, "liberation", that are available to the official voice of the United States whose purpose is largely to inform.

In application, the basic policy paper proved restrictive but not altogether binding. It was not issued as a firm directive except in those parts which affected the basic interests of the United States and which directly related to Germany as a host country. Additional policy guidance [redacted] from ANCOMLIB headquarters was issued on a continuing, though ad hoc, basis.

B. Basic Guidance Numbers 1 and 2

The first stroke in giving RADLIB that coloration in the spectrum of anti-Soviet broadcasting which is its reason for being, was made on 5 June 1953. On that date Munich issued Basic Guidance No. 1 which was the final result of lengthy negotiations between the emigre front and ANCOMLIB on radio broadcasts to the USSR. This paper, too, like the basic policy paper, was a compromise measure. Unlike the basic policy paper, however, it was not a compromise among Americans, but between Americans and emigres and therefore gave RADLIB some measure of distinctive flavor which set it apart from the likes of VOA, for example.

ANCOMLIB headquarters continued to forward to Munich additional policy and programming guidance, most of it prepared by emigre specialists and some of it of particularly high caliber. Munich has synthesized this material and issued it as Basic Guidance No. 2, thus marking the latest step in the development of a unique personality for RADLIB.

79-2824
4 FEB 41

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: 08-Feb-2011

~~SECRET~~

36

~~SECRET~~

C. Concept of Radio Liberation

It is perhaps fitting at this time to write a few words in explanation of the concept behind RADLIB. The original idea for RADLIB evolved from the premise that United States interests in the cold war could be additionally served by having "Russians talking to Russians". Thus the concept for RADLIB envisioned an emigre station working in the interests of the Soviet peoples and speaking in a voice and from a point of view recognizable, understandable, and acceptable to the peoples within the USSR.

This concept is valid today. RADLIB is not another official instrumentality of the United States Government, nor is it the organ of private American capital. Were it one or the other, the recommendation here would be to cease all support. VOA does not require a pilot operation, nor does private capital need a mouthpiece. Indeed, the best contribution to the cold war effort that private capital can make is capital, not propaganda in its name.

In so new and so inexact a science as psychological warfare, the effectiveness of one or another approach cannot be fully predetermined. There are too many intangibles. The effectiveness of RADLIB's emigre sponsorship, for example, can only be adequately estimated by experience in using that sponsorship. Nonetheless, there are enough known and stable factors involved to enable the specialist, in propaganda, in area, in media, to indicate fields of likely productivity. Specialists in propaganda against the Soviet target considered an emigre radio, speaking in the name and language of the Soviet peoples, a valuable adjunct to U.S. propaganda efforts. There is no reason at this time to question the validity of their determination. Indeed, if the value of anti-Soviet radio has any relation to Soviet action, then RADLIB is becoming increasingly more valuable. Soviet jamming of RADLIB began two minutes after it first went on the air, and in the succeeding months as many as 12 jammers were concentrating on RADLIB broadcasts simultaneously. Moreover, several of the most recent defectors to the West claim to have heard RADLIB while in Soviet controlled territory, including the Caucasus. One of them, an enlisted man with the occupation forces in Germany, attributes his defection directly to RADLIB. Germans recently returned to the West have also heard RADLIB while behind the Iron Curtain and have seen evidence of listening on the part of Soviet occupation personnel.

D. American Control

Critics of the concept behind RADLIB have expressed continued alarm over our ability to maintain control of the radio. It can be unequivocally stated that American control over every aspect of RADLIB's operation always prevailed and was never in serious jeopardy. Initially, when a Coordinating Center of the emigration existed, the emigration was allowed a significant voice in running RADLIB. This voice was often obstructive, but never deciding.

~~SECRET~~

C01434010

~~SECRET~~

With the dissolution of the Coordinating Center, the operation of RADLIB was almost totally divorced from emigre politics. Indeed, the major concern became not the extent of emigre participation in radio affairs, but rather the lack of adequate sponsorship for RADLIB broadcasts.

ANCONLIB's new approach to the problem of a united front, a Working Alliance of the emigration, shifts emphasis from political unification and activity, to joint practical work, and allows the emigration only an advisory voice in RADLIB as in all other anti-Soviet efforts to be subsidized by ANCONLIB.

The participation of the Soviet emigration in Committee activities including RADLIB is essential to the effectiveness of the program as it is conceived. Within the limits of final American control there is a direct ratio between the effectiveness of RADLIB and the degree of emigre participation in it. It is only with the active support of competent emigres that RADLIB can attain that quality which is its purpose.

E. Difference Between RADLIB and VOA

It is the desire here to emphasize that RADLIB can, should, and does serve a function distinct from that of VOA and of a nature wider than that prescribed in the Jackson Committee Report.

The basic and significant difference between VOA and RADLIB is in their sponsorship. Emigre sponsorship of RADLIB obligates it to speak in a voice and from a point of view peculiar to the Soviet emigration and hence, presumably, most readily acceptable to the peoples of the USSR.

That is not to say, however, that RADLIB must be restricted to those programming and broadcasting practices which are not already reserved to VOA or to some other medium. Because it is deemed fitting for VOA to "concentrate on a more conservative and essentially long-term approach; an approach fundamentally informative in make-up and devoid of special pleading", it is not obligatory for RADLIB to "concentrate on rough and tumble, direct, tactical propaganda warfare".

The measure of what RADLIB can say, how it can say it, and to what purpose, is not to be exclusively determined by policy considerations governing VOA. It does not follow that RADLIB can say only what VOA can not say or that it cannot say what VOA can.

RADLIB's role in the U.S. propaganda effort is not merely a supplementary one. Its mission is not solely to compliment VOA. Indeed, both media are, to a large extent, subject to similar rules of behavior. Like VOA, RADLIB must hew to the policy line of the Government; it must adhere to established principles of psychological warfare; it must remain true to the spirit of its sponsorship.

~~SECRET~~

C01434010

~~SECRET~~

It is here, in remaining true to its sponsorship, that RADLIB and VOA draw apart. Although RADLIB's sponsorship gives it wider latitude than that allowed VOA, it does not confer carte blanche to say anything and every thing that people want it to say. There are lines and themes prohibited to RADLIB either because they are contrary to the interests of the U.S. or because their use would quickly compromise the integrity of the radio as the voice of a free Soviet emigration. Similarly, the fact that RADLIB has a non-governmental character and a private sponsorship does not constitute a mandate to be rough and tumble, direct and tactical in approach. There are determining factors other than sponsorship, the appeal to be made, the audience to be addressed, for example, which may dictate formality and conservatism for maximum effectiveness.

Failure to appreciate the obligations imposed on RADLIB by its sponsorship has been responsible for considerable misunderstanding among officials in governmental circles regarding the value of RADLIB to our psychological warfare effort. Because in an endeavor to preserve its integrity as the voice of a free and a united emigration, RADLIB has refused to accept certain tactical themes peculiarly American, Americans have questioned its merit and have recommended its reorganization if not its dissolution.

RADLIB is a non-governmental, privately sponsored organ, designed to further the interests of the United States, both immediate and long range, vis a vis the Soviet Union. Paradoxically, its ability to further American interests depends largely on its ability to speak in a voice and from a point of view alien to most Americans. Any attempt to "Americanize" RADLIB is tantamount to sabotaging a very useful tool in the anti-Soviet struggle.

II. PROGRAMMING

A. Evaluation

When Radio Liberation first went on the air, 1 March 1953, there were considerable misgivings concerning the quality of its programs and the ability of its programming staff to keep it broadcasting uninterruptedly.

Admittedly, program content was weak, yea bad. [] ANCOMLIB [] [] concerned with the quality of broadcasts, made special efforts to monitor and evaluate all programs which were transmitted. Of necessity [] evaluations were made ex post facto, after the programs were on the air. Nonetheless, [] a spot check of Nationality programs [] revealed a steady improvement in the quality of RADLIB broadcasts.

If we can apply single words to sum up RADLIB efforts, its broadcasts in March rated no better than "poor". By July of 1953 RADLIB reached

~~SECRET~~

C01434010

~~SECRET~~

an over-all rating just short of "good". Many of its programs were still "poor", but there was enough "excellent", and occasionally even "brilliant", material to raise the average.

[redacted]
[redacted] AMCONLIB, New York, however, has hired several well qualified people, some of them on a fee basis, to conduct program evaluations. The sum total of their critique was that RADLIB, although as good or better than other media talking to "Russians in Russian", is falling short of its potential. Its programs, they say, still lack a central purpose and cohesiveness; it has not as yet developed a distinctive and an individual personality.

B. Recent Improvements

Since then, in the last two to three months, AMCONLIB has taken firm steps to strengthen RADLIB's programming. The greatest progress has been made with the Nationality programs. New people, many of them skilled veterans released by VSA because of program cutbacks, were carefully screened and the best of them employed. Ukrainian and Byelorussian staffs are being selected with particular emphasis on professional competence, and broadcasts in these languages should be on the air waves in March or April. Today, the quality of most of the Nationality broadcasts of RADLIB are generally considered superior to the Russian language program.

The current difficulty with the Russian desk is the lack of a competent desk chief and a general shortage of competent fulltime writers. Politics are not involved. There are several candidates for the desk chief slot now under consideration, and it appears likely that a qualified emigre will be on board in the near future.

[redacted]
No. 2.

[redacted] Undoubtedly it marks a noteworthy accomplishment, although it falls short of giving RADLIB the character and flavor that is required.

Periodically, a suggestion is made to create for RADLIB a special advisory programming council of recent emigres which would develop program lines and themes for the purpose of exploiting these conditions and vulnerabilities in the USSR which are both of essence and of moment. This Council will probably be established before the end of this fiscal year. It should appreciably add to RADLIB's reputation as an authoritative and a unique voice in the anti-Soviet struggle.

- 5 -

~~SECRET~~

C01434010

~~SECRET~~**III. TECHNICAL****A. Equipment and Frequencies**

At this writing RADLIB is broadcasting with the power of four 10 kw transmitters, with six antennae, located at Lampertheim, Germany. An additional three 10 kw transmitters with two antennae, all bought and paid for, will be in operation about 15 March 1954.

For this equipment RADLIB has seven short-wave frequencies assigned on a 24-hour basis, four on a half-day basis, and one for trial purposes. The seriousness of RADLIB's frequency bind has in part been alleviated by the State Department's permission to use Soviet frequencies.

B. Languages

RADLIB is broadcasting to the following areas in the appropriate languages:

1. Russian Language

- a. East Germany, Poland, Austria
- b. Western RFSR, Byelorussia, and Ukraine
- c. Caucasus

2. Minority Languages

- a. North Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidjan
- b. Tatar-Bashkir ASSR
- c. Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan

C. Jamming and Monitoring

Two minutes after Radio Liberation went on the air, on 1 March 1953, Soviet jammers began their attacks. Monitors have identified as many as 34 different jammers which have hit RADLIB in the course of a year. Concentrations of 10 to 12 jammers have been known to focus on the radio simultaneously. According to RADLIB's chief engineer, Soviet jammers give a higher priority to RADLIB than to RFE.

Monitoring reports made on a continuing basis by RADLIB monitors in Berlin and in Vienna indicate the ability of the radio to lay down a good signal in East Germany and in Austria during the major share of the broadcasting day. Ad hoc monitoring of the radio in Ankara, Erzerum, and Meshed give reasonable assurance that its signal is heard in the Caucasus and in parts of Central Asia.

- 6 -

~~SECRET~~

C01434010

~~SECRET~~

Additional reports of RADLIB's ability to reach specific targets come from recent defectors. Several claim to have heard the radio while on occupation duty in East Germany. A defector currently in the Middle East reports hearing RADLIB in Georgia.

POLITICAL PROGRAM - ANCOMLIB

I. PRESENT PROGRAM

ANCOMLIB's immediate objectives regarding the organized Soviet emigration is spelled out in its proposal for a Working Alliance (approved by the Department of State, January 19, 1954). In brief, it sidetracks political unity and proposes cooperation on the basis of practical work. More importantly, it drops emigre participation in ANCOMLIB activities from the level of equal partnership to an advisory function.

This new plan for the emigration will be launched during March of this year. Expert opinion on its ability to succeed is divided. It is estimated, however, that the proposal for a working alliance has enough fissionable material to break up the two major polarizations in the emigration and to rally key groups from their ranks behind ANCOMLIB's program. Should the effort fail, ANCOMLIB will either have to scrap the political effort entirely, or relegate it to the role of a minor and a long range objective. In either case, ANCOMLIB will be faced with the immediate need of creating emigre sponsors for its anti-Soviet work.

~~SECRET~~