

**December 12, 1956**

**Memorandum of Conversation, 'Official German Intentions Vis-a-Vis Radio Free Europe' [Declassified July 15, 2011]**

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<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115000>

**Summary:**

West German Washington Embassy First Secretary Wilhelm Turnwald conveys to State Department officials his concerns about RFE operations.

**Credits:**

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Original Scan

*Outlet*

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

*U/OP (Mr. Higgs)*

DATE: December 12, 1956

SUBJECT: Official German Intentions Vis-a-vis Radio Free Europe

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Wilhelm Tarnwald, First Secretary, German Embassy  
Mr. James Sutherland, EE  
Mr. Thomas Hester, EE  
Mr. David Mark, EE

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With concurrence *CIA*  
IPS by *M. J. ...* Date *7/15/11*  
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During a general conversation on Eastern European developments, Dr. Tarnwald, who is the German Embassy's specialist in such matters, raised the question of the future status of Radio Free Europe in Germany. He asserted that RFE officials were much too loath in recognizing the great changes that had occurred in West Germany since RFE was first set up under the sponsorship of the U.S. occupation forces. It was incredible that Germany did not have any control over or effective voice in RFE operations, and this situation could not long continue. Dr. Tarnwald stated several times that there could be no doubt that RFE was not a private and unofficial endeavor, but was under CIA control. However, there was not only the question of the value of RFE broadcasts and balloon operations from a policy point of view.

[redacted] which required a real investigation.

Dr. Tarnwald did not deny that RFE had a substantial audience behind the Iron Curtain, and he was ready reluctantly to agree that it could not be liquidated at this moment, since that would lend credence to Soviet-Bloc charges about RFE's allegedly improper role in the Hungarian revolt. However, he felt that it would soon have to limit itself to broadcasting activities, and that even these would have to be progressively reduced. While he did not so state specifically, he left the clear implication that before too many years passed, the Federal German Government would want to have all RFE activities discontinued.

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