

November 27, 1961

**Bureau of the Budget Review of CIA Funding Levels
for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty**

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Summary:

An interagency group convened by the Bureau of the Budget concludes that RFE and RL funding should continue at current levels, that continuous evaluation of programs is needed, and that European co-funding should be explored

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: 27 November 1961

SUBJECT : Meeting with Bureau of the Budget Officials re Free Europe Committee (FEC) and American Committee for Liberation (AmComLib)

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Elmer B. Staats, Deputy Director, Bureau of the Budget
Mr. Kenneth R. Hansen, Asst. Director, Bureau of the Budget
Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Mr. Edward R. Murrow, Director, USIA
CORRESPONDENT: Mr. Allen W. Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence
Mr. Richard Bissell, Deputy Director (Plans), CIA
Mr. Cord Meyer, Jr., Chief of IO Division, CIA

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Mr. Staats defined the purpose of the meeting as being an attempt to reach an agreement on what should be the general order of magnitude of the FEC and AmComLib budgets. He wanted to avoid detailed budget discussion but did look for advice as to whether these two organizations should continue at their existing levels, be scaled down, or whether they should be increased. In the course of the discussion on FEC, the following positions were taken.

1. The DCI reviewed briefly the past history of FEC, expressed his own confidence in the present top leadership, and stressed the new opportunities that were presented to Radio Free Europe by the disorientation in Eastern Europe that followed the public denunciation of Stalin. He admitted to a long standing prejudice in favor of FEC and emphasized that if we maintained our military defenses it would be on the battlefield of ideas that the issue would be decided, and that on this battlefield RFE was a most useful weapon. Finally he warned that an attempt to make substantial cuts would make it unlikely that the organization would be able to keep the services of the three able new men who have just taken over its top management. He concluded that Mr. McCone was replacing him on the next day and that therefore he could make no final commitments on changes in existing budget requests.

2. Mr. Johnson stated that he had reviewed the work of RFE with his staff and believed that real progress has been made in the direction of eliminating

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obvious polemics and in sharpening the European image of the radio. He felt that progress also had been made in reducing the influence of emigres on program content, but that further progress in this direction was needed. He confirmed as accurate a statement by Mr. Meyer that State had not identified any policy violation within the last 12 months. He concluded by stating that in his opinion the budget for the radio should be kept at about the present level. He added that he was planning to send out a despatch to the five posts in Eastern Europe and to the Munich Consulate alerting them to the fact that they would be expected, within two months from now, to come up with an informed evaluation of both program content and local impact. Mr. Johnson added that the Department was enthusiastic about the mailing project and felt that its budget should be increased.

3. Mr. Murrow agreed with Mr. Johnson that RFE should be maintained at existing levels but felt that a survey should be undertaken as to how to increase active European participation in RFE. He suggested that the French and British Governments might be invited to contribute entire programs that would be carried on RFE facilities on a rental basis, and that perhaps RFE should move in the direction of becoming the voice of the Atlantic Alliance. Both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Meyer warned that there were inevitable policy control problems once other governments were involved in active participation, and Mr. Meyer added that there was some question as to whether the contract with the Portuguese Government could be renegotiated to permit overt official involvement. Mr. Bissell said that he thought more could be done to make RFE facilities available to private organizations, both in Europe and the United States. Mr. Murrow added that the claims made in the private fund-raising campaign for RFE were sometimes exaggerated and should be toned down. Mr. Meyer agreed to review.

4. Mr. Staats concluded that there was agreement that Mr. Richardson and Mr. Meyer should undertake an intensive review of possible steps to increase European participation, both private and official, and added that even a change of name might be in order. Mr. Hansen suggested that the results of such a review might be submitted to some form of inter-departmental committee for consideration.

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American Committee for Liberation and Radio Liberty

Time did not permit any extensive discussion of AmComLib and Radio Liberty, but there seemed to be a willingness to accept the evidence of increasing impact on the part of the radio within Russia, and no suggestions were heard for any reduction in the AmComLib budget.

[Redacted Signature]

CORD MEYER, JR.
Chief

International Organizations Division

APPROVED:

[Redacted Signature]

Director of Central Intelligence

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