

December 19, 1969

CIA Appeals White House Decision to Terminate Radio Liberty

Citation:

"CIA Appeals White House Decision to Terminate Radio Liberty", December 19, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by A. Ross Johnson. Cited Ch8 n25 in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document number C01441045. Published as document 33, FRUS 1969-76, XXIX. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115127>

Summary:

Acting CIA Director R.E. Cushman appeals to Henry Kissinger on the Nixon Administration's decision to terminate Radio Liberty.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

C01441045

~~SECRET~~ EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 12958 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

19 DEC 1969

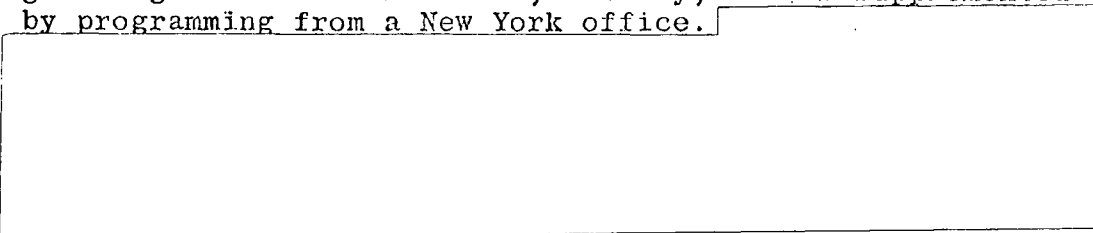
MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Termination of Radio Liberty

1. We have just learned of the decision by higher authority to terminate the Radio Liberty project. We wish to appeal that decision at once for the reasons listed below.

2. Radio Liberty Committee (RLC), together with its counterpart Free Europe Committee (FEC), have been subjected to a series of exhaustive inter-agency reviews since mid-1967. In February of this year the 303 Committee examined fully and carefully the findings of previous studies, and endorsed the conclusions sustained by the latter. Subsequently and pursuant to the 303 Committee endorsement, the President on 22 February 1969 approved the continuation of Radio Liberty [redacted] with CIA covert funding.

3. RLC operates Radio Liberty, a book distribution program to the USSR, and the Munich Institute for the Study of the USSR, under a current budget of [redacted] Radio Liberty broadcasts 24 hours of the day in 18 languages of the Soviet Union with 1840 kilowatts of transmitter power from sites in Germany, Spain, and Taiwan. The main programming office is in Munich, Germany, and is supplemented by programming from a New York office. [redacted]



~~SECRET~~

APPROVED FOR RELEASE:
01-Jul-2009

45a

123

4. While the size of Radio Liberty's audience cannot be firmly established, technical measurements indicate that with favorable propagation conditions the radio can cover 90% of the territory of the USSR. Although mail tests show that only a fraction of letters from listeners reach the radio, Radio Liberty has received as many as 1,000 letters in a year, reflecting audience interest. Several hundred interviews with Soviet and Western travelers confirm extensive listening to Radio Liberty, and denunciations by Soviet media are frequent and strong. Finally, the jamming effort against Radio Liberty has never ceased since it went on the air in 1953. This represents a budgetary burden to the Soviet Government substantially in excess of the cost of operating the radio.

5. Since 1965, intellectual dissent in the USSR has grown from a small pressure group within the literary-artists circle to the level of political dissent involving other elements of Soviet society. Radio Liberty, in its role as a free voice from abroad, serves as a catalyst for the growing number of Soviet dissidents who strive for freedom to interpret their society, its purposes and goals. They actively seek information and ideas and turn to foreign radio outlets like Radio Liberty, which, unlike VOA, is almost exclusively concerned with intensive coverage of Soviet internal developments, and seeks to correct the distortions and omissions of Soviet domestic output.

6. Before the decision to continue was made, the 303 Committee considered other alternatives such as shifting to public funding and possible merger with USIA, as well as termination. It was felt that continuation under CIA covert funding was the only desirable solution.

7. Congressional attitudes elicited in October 1967, when the future of the radios was under scrutiny, showed a strong interest in the radios and a desire to see them continue in operation.

8. The Department of State has recently restated the U.S. Government's recognition that the Soviet emigres, especially those who work for Radio Liberty and other emigre activities, have a special contribution to make to United


C01441045

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

States information programs, both overt and covert, which are aimed at influencing the attitudes of the Soviet people and their leaders in directions which would make the Soviet Government a more constructive and responsible member of the world community. Ambassador Thompson, while still in Moscow, recommended against termination.

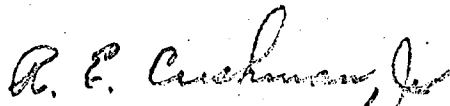
9. 

10. Since 1950, over \$132,000,000 has been spent in building up a smoothly running professional operation, which reaches its target effectively and is a source of concern to the Soviets. Once liquidated, an instrumentality of this type cannot be rebuilt.

11. Estimates of liquidation costs are roughly the equivalent of one year of normal operations, i.e., approximately  Thus, Radio Liberty's termination results in no budgetary saving in FY 1971.

12. Over and above the considerations summarized above, we would place maximum stress on the fact that unilateral termination of Radio Liberty would entail a major political concession to the USSR, with no quid pro quo. This would be both unfortunate and unnecessary. It could lead to miscalculation by the Soviets as to our intentions and strength of purpose. It would, we believe, call into serious question the survival of Radio Free Europe.

13. The Agency urges, in the strongest possible terms, that the decision to terminate be reconsidered.



R. E. Cushman, Jr.
Lieutenant General, USMC
Acting Director