

June 24, 1955

Report by Sir Bruce Robert Lockhart on Radio Free Europe

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Summary:

Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart reports to the Foreign Office on his second visit to RFE (again accompanied by BBC Central European chief Gregory Macdonald) between July 5 and July 8, 1955. Lockhart positively evaluated broadcasts as more responsible than in 1952 and gave high marks to the content of the leaflets dispatched to Czechoslovakia by balloon and mail. He found staff unsettled by RFE's change of status following the restoration of German sovereignty, did not think RFE could long survive in Munich, and would advise it to relocate of its own volition before it was forced out of Germany

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English

Contents:

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INFORMATION RESEARCH

FROM Sir Robert
Ponce de Leon
to Mr Renne

Attaches his report on Radio
Free Europe.

No.
Dated 24 July
Received in
Registry— 27 July

References to former relevant papers

MINUTES

in context.

Atto 8/8.

(Print)

Nathan Dept
PUSD (W. Jackson) - pp 1-3 of encl.

(How disposed of)

This seems a very helpful survey
which puts its finger on precisely
the story + weak points of R.F.E.
though few of them are new to us.

S. Brown
10/8

Circulated in dept. | Atto 10/9.

(Action completed)

(Index)

JMB
25.4.55

References to later relevant papers

B.V. 15/x1.

Seen 19/9.

We must sound out the
Americans about all this
when we see - W. in.

in Registry 27/9

Original Secret Digital Archive

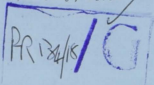
TELEPHONE
EDINBURGH 31593

30 DOUGLAS CRESCENT
EDINBURGH. 12

24th July, 1955.

PERSONAL &
CONFIDENTIAL.

My dear Jack,



I send you herewith my report on Radio Free Europe. I leave it to you to decide whether it should be marked Secret and/or Confidential, but I should not like the Americans in R.F.E. to know that I had been making use of their invitation in order to report on their activities.

I have not shown this actual report to Gregory Macdonald, but we have discussed all the items mentioned and I think it fair to say without committing him that he is in general agreement with what I have written.

The report runs to **2100** words.

Having been away from home for so long, I am over-whelmed with arrears of work. I shall send you an account of my expenses in a day or two.

My television programme having been postponed, I shall not be in London until the beginning of September. Will you and Paul Grey both be there then?

Meanwhile/

Original Source Digital Archi

Meanwhile, I should be grateful for a line of any guidance that may be necessary after Geneva. My hunch is that we shall have to be more circumspect with regard to the Russians (though lies and omissions may be exposed), but that we can continue to harass the satellites.

With all good wishes,

I am,

Yours ever,

R. Bruce Lockhart.

P.S. I am still unable to decide the priorities of my admiration: of the excellence of your luncheon, the attractiveness of your house, and your skill as a driver through the perils of the London traffic!

P.S. Please let me know if this has reached you safely.

J.O. Rennie Esq.,
Foreign Office,
12 Carlton House Terrace,
London S.W.1.

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REPORT ON RADIO FREE EUROPE

By Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart.

INTRODUCTION.

From July 5th to July 8th Mr. Gregory Macdonald, head of the Central European Service of the B.B.C., and I visited Munich at the invitation of Radio Free Europe. Our previous visit had been in January, 1952, when Radio Free Europe was still struggling with its birth pains. Our visit of July, 1955, could hardly have been more opportune, for it coincided with a change in the status of this American broadcasting station.

My detailed impressions of my visit are given under the following headings: (1) Output and Performance; (2) Changed Status; (3) Attitude of Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Polish Emigrés; (4) Future of R.F.E.; (5) Conclusions.

1. OUTPUT AND PERFORMANCE. In regard to output I found a great improvement. In 1952 Radio Free Europe not only took chances on unverified reports but was ^{also} inclined to raise unjustified hopes. To-day R.F.E. still takes bigger risks than the B.B.C., but it has learnt much and is well briefed by Mr. W. Griffith who during the past four years has amassed a remarkable knowledge of Central European politics and personalities. He receives State Department guidance, but is not a member of the American foreign service.

The station broadcasts to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland and under American control employs Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Polish emigrés. A comparatively recent feature is the use of balloons/

balloons for the dissemination of leaflets. The chief targets are Czechoslovakia and Hungary, with Czechoslovakia easily first on account of its geographical position. Only one balloon operation had been carried out in Poland. It created some commotion among the Polish emigrés abroad who feared lest the leaflets might rouse the home Poles to premature and unsuccessful action or at least expose them to unnecessary persecution.

Owing to persistent bad weather we were unable to visit the frontier site near Berchtesgaden from which the balloons to Czechoslovakia are released, although the Americans were eager to put on an "operation" specially for our benefit. Incidentally, M. Stransky, the acting head of the Czechoslovak "Desk" or section, told me that this summer, up to the time of our visit, approximately fifty per cent of the operations had to be abandoned on account of unfavourable weather.

Nevertheless, Czechoslovakia has been so showered with leaflets that the Communist authorities have been unable to deal with the downpour, although a few people have been punished for collecting leaflets and pasting them on walls.

I spent one afternoon in examining the leaflets. They were well printed and the content seemed to me to be well in advance of anything that we produced during the last war. Particularly good was the type of leaflet which showed what necessities of life pani Urbanova in Prague could buy for 80

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crowns in comparison with what Mrs Bennett in London could buy for the same sum. The comparison was greatly in favour of the English standard of life.

Very impressive, too, was the meteorological section which, under the control of an American Bartholomew, had all the latest charts and gadgets for transmitting to the balloon sites the latest information about the vagaries of the wind.

Technically Radio Free Europe is well equipped, but equipment alone does not ensure its success. The success comes from the immense publicity given to R.F.E. by the Czechoslovak Communist Government which attacks it with persistent violence. Inevitably these attacks encourage even the most timid Czechs and Slovaks to listen in and to pick up leaflets. Without the gratuitous advertisement given by angry and easily irritated governments all propaganda, including that of Radio Free Europe, would languish.

In conclusion, it may be said that the output of Radio Free Europe both benefits and suffers from its geographical situation. Although its emissions are heavily jammed, it benefits from its proximity to its audience. Proximity also facilitates its balloon operations and enables its information bureau to have early access to the latest refugee from behind the Iron Curtain. On the other hand, it suffers from isolation in that, unlike the B.B.C., it has no contacts with Western opinion beyond its daily telegram from the United States.

It is therefore very dependent on Mr. Griffith who,
incidentally/

Handwritten note:
Moral for ABC

incidentally, is married to a German. I should add that both Mr. Macdonald and myself were impressed - much more deeply than in 1952 - by the high moral and intellectual quality of the American personnel. Mr. Condon, the American head of R.F.E. in Munich, began his career in the B.B.C.

2. CHANGE OF STATUS. As a consequence of the independence of the Federal German Republic, the status of R.F.E. has changed fundamentally. It now comes under German control and, when Mr. Macdonald and I arrived in Munich, Mr. Condon was seeking a licence from the German Government to enable R.F.E. to continue its functions. Additionally harassed by the severe illness of his wife, Mr. Condon was not in an optimistic frame of mind, but he was confident enough that he would get his licence and that, so long as Dr. Adenauer survived, there would be no interference. This, I think, was also the opinion of Mr. Somers Cocks, the British Consul-General.

The change of status affects both the American staffs and the emigrés whom they employ. The cheap cigarettes and bottles of gin and whisky, previously obtainable free of duty, are now no longer available. If the loss of these privileges causes only regret to the Americans, it falls very heavily indeed on the emigrés. Still more serious is the withdrawal of immunity. During the occupation the Americans could protect their foreign staffs. Now their emigré staffs come under German jurisdiction.

3. ATTITUDE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK, HUNGARIAN and POLISH STAFFS.

It would be foolish to pretend that the new status of R.F.E.

does not cause nervousness among the emigré staffs, all of whom feel in varying degrees of emotion that their security is compromised. Indeed, M. Pirt, a former prominent Member of Parliament and my old Prague publisher, whom I expected to find in Munich as head of the Czechoslovak section, was held up in the United States until a new Bill granting him American citizenship or American protection abroad had become law.

This nervousness, if not yet wholly justified, is comprehensible. The Hungarians, who do not fear the Germans so much as the Slavs do, are the least pessimistic. They might be labelled even light-hearted, for not long before our arrival they had been talking of being back in Buda-pest in a free Hungary before the autumn. Doubtless, this optimism was inspired partly by American statements regarding the satellite states and partly by reports of Communist failures in Hungary itself. } !
See
M5b

The position of the Slavs is more uncomfortable and unenviable. Neither the Poles nor the Czechs forget that, even before the advent of Hitler, Bavaria was the home of Nazismus. Here to-day dwells the German-Bohemian population expelled from Czechoslovakia after the liberation. From Bavaria, too, goes out the strongest propaganda against the Oder-Neisse line. However correct may be the attitude of the present Bavarian Government, every Slav employed by R.F.E. has his ear to the ground to catch the first sounds of an unpleasant future.

Mr. Jan Nowak, the head of the Polish desk, who has a great record for gallantry in the Polish underground and who

was formerly employed by the B.B.C. European Service, tries to comfort himself with the theory that, because the West Germans are now happy and prosperous, they will not be tempted to go to war again. He is, however, concerned lest many Polish emigrés, more especially the intellectuals, be tempted to yield to the Polish Government's appeal to return to Poland. If the Polish Government were to offer work and honourable employment to writers and professors without forcing them to be Communists, M. Nowak thought that many would accept the terms and go home.

Perhaps because his own headquarters are in New York, M. Stransky, the temporary head of the Czechoslovak desk, was less pessimistic. He thinks that with the closing of Valka, the refugee camp controlled by the Germans and for many years a festering sore in the life of the refugees, the refugee problem will improve. He admitted, however that there were some Czechoslovaks in Bavaria who were ripe for almost any kind of propaganda. He was referring to those Czechoslovaks who were dismissed by R.F.E. in connexion with the Kučera case. Kučera was a Czech refugee who, after working in R.F.E., went back to Czechoslovakia and broadcast from Prague against R.F.E. and against the Americans. He was probably an agent-provocateur. Rightly or wrongly the Americans combed out the Czechoslovak section, and, according to M. Stransky, the Czechoslovaks who were/

were dismissed are now penniless.

These examples are given not as a typical illustration of the prevailing Slav attitude in R.F.E., but rather as symptoms of a decay which may increase rapidly in the political atmosphere of Munich. Those emigrés who had served previously in the B.B.C. European Service make little effort to disguise their desire to return to London. Indeed, in discussing the future of R.F.E., both M. Nowak and M. Stransky asked plaintively and quite independently whether London would not be the ideal site! On the other hand, it must be said that the political sentiment of the emigrés is strongly pro-American. The emigrés feel that the United States will never abandon them. They have not the same confidence in Western Europe.

4. FUTURE OF R.F.E. In this note on the future of R.F.E. I make a distinction between (a) the future of R.F.E. as an American organisation and (b) the future of R.F.E. as a broadcasting station operating from Bavaria.

With regard to "a", R.F.E. is financed by the private subscriptions of American citizens. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that many rich American firms support R.F.E. because various official organisations encourage them directly or indirectly to subscribe. In the perhaps unlikely event of an official change of American attitude towards anti-Communist propaganda, I think it probable that the private subscriptions would decline and R.F.E. fade away.

As regards "b", which is a much more urgent problem, I am convinced that the duration of R.F.E.'s existence in Munich will be determined entirely by the timing and extent of German pressure. In spite of the alleged promises of Dr. Adenauer that R.F.E. will be allowed to operate exactly as hitherto, I feel that the pressure will not be long delayed.

In a sense it may be said to have begun during our visit. In spite of its cultural attractions, Munich has a bad record for political murders. At our very first meeting with Mr. Condon and Mr. Griffith Mr. Gregory Macdonald asked if there had been any further attempts or threats of political assassination. The two Americans assured us that there had been nothing of the kind for a long time. Almost at the moment when they were reassuring us, M. Černak, an anti-Czech Slovak, who had been a Minister in the pro-German Slovak Government during the war, was being blown up in München Postamt No 13 by a bomb sent to him in a parcel.

In all probability the assassin was a Czech or Slovak Communist who had planned the murder expressly in order to create anti-emigré sentiment in Bavaria. Be this as it may, newspaper and even official comment was anti-Radio Free Europe, the two lines adopted being (1) that Černak had been a violent critic of R.F.E. and (2) that, if R.F.E. were not situated in Munich, Bavaria would be spared these damaging political assassinations.

The Americans in R.F.E. have long been aware of the
inconveniences/

inconveniences of its situation in Bavaria and have been considering alternative sites. Neither Spain nor Portugal is suitable. While we were in Munich, Mr. Raffan^{al}, one of the ablest American officials of R.F.E., was on a mission to Stamboul.

As the Americans did not seem eager to give us precise information on this subject, we did not press our questions. But from many points of view Luxembourg would seem to be the most suitable site.

CONCLUSIONS.

My conclusions are four:

- (1) R.F.E.'s output and efficiency have increased since our visit in January, 1952.
- (2) R.F.E. has a big audience and presumably performs a useful function.
- (3) R.F.E. is now faced with both technical and political difficulties. The Communist propagandists of the satellite countries already accuse it of having made a pact with the Germans to provide for the revision of the Oder-Neisse frontier and for the return to Czechoslovakia of the German-Bohemians. Technically R.F.E. is not protected by international agreements, can take no part in conferences on communications, and, if as a result of the Geneva Conference there should be an accord on cultural contacts between East and West, might find itself in an awkward and isolated situation.
- (4) R.F.E. should leave Munich of its own volition; that

is,/

that is, before there is any risk of its being forced to leave. I make this recommendation with the full knowledge that this well-equipped broadcasting station will revert to the Germans who built it and who will doubtless use it to its full extent for broadcasting to Central and South-Eastern Europe.

R. Bruce Lindsay.

Washington, 24 July, 1945.

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12, Carlton House Terrace,
London, S.W.1.

Personal

July 26, 1955.

Thank you very much for your letter of July 24 and the report on Radio Free Europe, which I shall have appropriately classified. We find the report extremely useful and I am most grateful to you for making the trip and collecting so much valuable material.

Paul Grey will be here at the beginning of September, but I shall probably be on leave by then unless my plans are changed.

It is still, I think, a little early to try to devise a guidance for the next stages, but as soon as we can take a clearer sight of things I shall try to put a few ideas down on paper.

Many thanks again for the report. With all good wishes.

(J.O. Rennie)

Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, K.C.M.G.,
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Edinburgh, 12.