

## **COLD WAR BROADCASTING IMPACT**

Report on a Conference organized by the Hoover Institution and the Cold War  
International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for  
Scholars  
at Stanford University, October 13-16, 2004

## I. PREFACE

This publication reports the highlights of a conference on Cold War Broadcasting Impact held at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, on October 13-15, 2004. The conference was organized by the Hoover Institution and the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, with assistance from the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Stanford University, and the Open Society Archives, Central European University, Budapest. The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands and the Bernard Osher Foundation provided generous financial support. The Honorable George Shultz opened the conference, and former Czech President and communist-era dissident Vaclav Havel sent video greetings.

Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were, along with other Western broadcasters, effective instruments of Western policy during the Cold War. Many East European and Russian democrats have seconded the words of Vaclav Havel that “our society owes Radio Free Europe gratitude for the role that it has played.” Western studies have examined the history and organization of RFE/RL and its place in American national security strategy. Major publications include Sig Mickelson, *America’s Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe & Radio Liberty* (Praeger, 1983), Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse University Press, 1997), Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider’s Memoir of Radio Liberty* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (University of Kentucky Press, 2000), and Alan Heil, *The Voice of America; A History* (Columbia University Press, 2003).

But we have lacked studies of Western broadcasting drawing on archival material from the other side of the former Iron Curtain. We have lacked analyses of broadcasting *impact* - the effect on both societies and communist regimes. In preparation for the conference, documents about Western broadcasting impact were collected from Communist-era East European, Baltic, and Russian archives. These materials include Communist Party Politburo and Central Committee discussions of broadcasting impact and propaganda countermeasures, secret police assessments and efforts to penetrate the Western broadcasters, directives on jamming, internal secret audience surveys, Party and censorship office press guidance on countering the broadcasts, and assessments of the impact on the

Communist armies. Documentation was collected by the CWIHP's network of archive scholars in the region, with assistance from the Open Society Archives. A Hoover Institution oral history project interviewed key Polish Communist officials about broadcast impact. These materials complement the extensive RFE/RL corporate records and broadcast archives now located at the Hoover Institution (described at <http://hooverferl.stanford.edu/>).

The conference brought together experts from the West and former Communist countries who presented papers based on this archival documentation. Veteran Western broadcasting officials and leading former Communist officials and dissidents also participated. This combination of new documentation, international expertise, and oral history provides new insights into a major Western instrument of the Cold War.

This publication contains a summary of proceedings, prepared by Gregory Mitrovich, who served as rapporteur. It also contains an analysis based on the conference discussions ("Lessons Learned") of why Western Cold War broadcasting was effective, prepared by A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta. Selected conference papers will be published in an edited volume by the Central European Press. Key documents will be made available in the CWIHP's Virtual Archive (<http://cwihip.si.edu>) and published in English in a second volume by the Central European Press.

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## II. COLD WAR BROADCASTING IMPACT: CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Gregory Mitrovich  
(Conference rapporteur)

**Session One: Goals and Content of Western Broadcasting: Testimony of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Officials. Panelists: Paul Henze, J. F. Brown, Gene Sosin, Mark Pomar; Commentator Istvan Rev; Moderator Norman Naimark<sup>1</sup>**

When Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty began operation the world was still struggling to surmount the devastation wrought by World War II, while relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had disintegrated to the point that a third global war appeared imminent. The Soviet Union's wartime occupation of Eastern Europe had quickly transformed into an exercise in empire-building, an empire that many feared would soon encompass the entire Eurasian continent. American and European anxieties reached their climax when hundreds of thousands of Soviet-trained and equipped North Korean troops invaded South Korea and routed the South's defenses only days before Radio Free Europe's first historic broadcast on July 4, 1950. This new organization had not even the time to establish itself before it was plunged into the front lines of the West's battle against Soviet expansion.

Much was at stake in the struggle between liberalism and communism; many believed the future of the world itself. Strategic planners determined that the United States must strike at the heart of Soviet power if the West was to emerge from the Cold War victoriously. As the most significant instruments capable of penetrating the Iron Curtain, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were crucially important actors in this conflict and, ultimately, would play an invaluable role in Soviet communism's ultimate demise. Yet, as Paul Henze warns, it would be a mistake to consider the achievements of Radio Free Europe assured. RFE was a "jerry-built operation," in fact an "experiment" — with its success far from predestined.

When the Truman administration planned the National Committee for Free Europe (NCFE) in 1948, radio broadcasting was not considered one of its primary missions. Henze observes that the NCFE was primarily envisaged as a device for taking care of East European political leaders who had established

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<sup>1</sup> RFE functioned as a separate station from 1950 to 1976, RL from 1953 to 1976. In 1976 both stations were merged into RFE/RL. This report uses RFE/RL unless the meaning is clearly RFE or RL.

exile governments during World War II and were barred from returning by the Soviet occupation of their countries. These exiles needed a livelihood that would provide an outlet for them to help their fellow countrymen. Initially, their mandate was to form “national committees” that would inspire those under communist domination to resist. Some exiles had previously served as radio broadcasters during World War II, encouraging resistance to the Nazis; it was an obvious leap to use these same skills to battle Soviet communism. The North Korean attack shattered any misgivings as to whether such broadcasts were necessary; few now questioned the scope of the Soviet threat. Yet it remained to be determined how radio broadcasting could successfully influence the internal developments of communist societies.

RFE needed to compete directly with indigenous, regime radio stations through round-the-clock radio transmissions. The basic principles of such broadcasts were: saturation home-service broadcasting encompassing all fields of interest to audiences, including news and information, religion, sports, culture, and entertainment; concentration on subjects important for people in the homeland; avoidance of preoccupation with exile concerns and polemics about rivalries in earlier periods; avoidance of preaching, invective, incitement to violence, and no promise of imminent liberation; detailed reporting on problems of communism and analysis of the actual workings of the Soviet system, and reporting on contradictions and disagreements within communist hierarchies; and programs describing the operation of open, democratic societies of the West to sustain the aspirations of East Europeans to rejoin Europe.

While all this may seem apparent in retrospect, Henze noted that it was far from obvious to officials at the time. Almost all planning that went into the creation of RFE was an improvised response to the sense of urgency that prevailed in the early 1950s. The notion that has become widespread today that RFE resulted from a coherent concept of what needed to be done remains an illusion.

J. F. Brown underscored Henze’s judgments, stressing that from the beginning RFE was a decentralized operation. While basic policy guidance came from Washington it was implemented by five national broadcast services—the Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian. There was no central scripting, and these national services enjoyed a unique degree of autonomy; indeed, their political programming was usually checked *after* a broadcast aired, not *before*, and this provided for greater vibrancy and closer interaction with RFE audiences that would have been impossible under central scripting. Supporting the broadcasting efforts were the highly respected Central News Department and the Research and Analysis Department.

For Brown the purpose of RFE can be reduced to one fundamental premise: to serve the peoples of Eastern Europe by keeping them company, upholding their dignity, bolstering their confidence, strengthening their “European-ness” and their historic ties to America, while giving them hope that “this too would pass.” RFE was needed because of the contradictions between state and society in communist Eastern Europe that involved repression by regimes forcibly maintained by a foreign power.

To succeed, RFE broadcasters had to resist two “seductive temptations.” First, they needed to avoid overrating their own importance while underrating the intelligence and common sense of their audience. While many RFE listeners were uneducated, they were far from gullible, and lived in a system that bred suspicion of everyone and everything. Only through accurate and judicious broadcasting could RFE overcome these reservations and build a reputation for honesty and accuracy. Second, RFE broadcasters needed to recognize that East European audiences were not as interested in RFE as RFE was in them. East European citizens had more urgent problems in their lives, like ensuring their own survival, and RFE played an adjunct—but not integral—part in their day to day living.

The arrival of détente put the future of RFE in question. Had it become a superfluous organization, a relic of the old Cold War, as Senator William Fulbright insisted? Brown argued to the contrary that détente signified that it was the communist states, not the West, that were getting weaker, something RFE recognized and encouraged with success through its broadcasting throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. An encounter between Brown and Czech dissident and later President Vaclav Havel punctuated the respect and good name RFE had achieved. Upon being introduced as a former director of RFE, Havel looked at Brown and exclaimed “Jim! We were colleagues!” That bond, more than anything, demonstrated the impact of Radio Free Europe.

For Gene Sosin, Radio Liberty (the name was changed from the original Radio Liberation in 1959) was the fulfillment of Aleksandr Herzen’s mission a century earlier to provide from abroad freedom of speech denied fellow countrymen in the homeland. RL started its broadcast service on a most auspicious date, March 1, 1953—the day Soviet leader Joseph Stalin suffered his fatal stroke.

During its initial broadcast, RL announced that it represented the free voice of Soviet compatriots abroad, with its objectives being freedom of choice for Soviet nationalities, freedom of conscience and religion, elimination of the system of terror and forced labor, freedom for Soviet agriculture, an end to Party control of the arts and sciences, and, finally, the end of aggressive Soviet foreign policy by the overthrow of the regime. Yet RL broadcasters stressed that they

could not provide the peoples of the USSR with the “recipe” to achieve this ambitious agenda. It was RL’s goal to provide the type of truthful information that Soviet censors would never allow within the USSR but was necessary if democracy were one day to prevail.

During its first years of operation, RL broadcasts were influenced by the émigré “Coordinating Center for the anti-Bolshevik Struggle,” which sought to use this new station to articulate its implacable opposition to the Soviet regime. Many of RL’s original broadcasters exploited this opportunity to vent their hatred of the communist regime; one broadcaster even made it a point to pronounce Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s name with a sneer.

Under the guidance of Boris Shub, prominent anti-Bolshevik publicist and formerly political advisor at RIAS (Radio in the American Sector, Berlin), this approach was changed. Shub understood that in order to succeed, RL needed to recognize and appreciate the sensitivities of the average Soviet listener, who was proud of his country’s victory over Nazi Germany, was loyal to ideals expressed by Lenin and his compatriots, and remained skeptical towards messages from the émigré community. Shub stressed that blatant propaganda would merely repulse the average Soviet citizen. Instead, RL needed to speak candidly about the difficulties of daily life in the Soviet Union while articulating hope for a better future. RL broadcasters sought to bridge the gap with the listener by identifying themselves with their audience, using “our country” or “our homeland.” Under the leadership of Howland Sargeant, president of RL from 1954 to 1975, the station was able to avoid micromanaging of its broadcasts from Washington while enlisting the advice of many of the nation’s top academic specialists on the USSR, including Walt W. Rostow, Merle Fainsod, Alex Inkeles, Marshall Shulman, and Richard Pipes.

According to Sosin, initially RL’s sources of news from the Soviet Union were extremely sparse; however, RL overcame this problem by developing a sophisticated network of monitoring posts that scrutinized radio broadcasts across the USSR. Of particular interest were local radios, which carried stories that RL would broadcast nationally. This led to an improvement in RL’s image of authenticity while filling in the “white spots” in Soviet news reporting.

Khrushchev’s secret speech of 1956 denouncing Stalin’s crimes was a monumental event in RL’s history. The speech was soon smuggled abroad and beamed back into the USSR so that the entire country could hear the indictments leveled by Khrushchev against Stalin, accusations that legitimated much of RL’s programming. Furthermore, RL made sure that its listeners understood the implications of the mass uprisings in Poland and Hungary, which in the latter



case escalated to a full-scale revolt that left thousands dead, discrediting the notion of a harmonious Soviet bloc.

RL frequently broadcast readings of famous Russian writers like Boris Pasternak, whose novel *Doctor Zhivago* was banned within the USSR, as well as *samizdat* (self-published) literature disseminated by Andrei Sakharov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and others of the increasing dissident population within the Soviet Union. RL often invited famous Americans such as Eleanor Roosevelt, leading congressmen, and labor leaders to speak directly to the Soviet populace to assure them that the West cared about their plight.

RL's importance continued to grow following the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, the 1975 Helsinki accords, and the rise of *glasnost* in the 1980s, and most auspiciously, during the failed Soviet coup of 1991, when both Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin relied on RL for news concerning conditions throughout the country vital to their efforts to resist the coup plotters, news that the state media were not broadcasting. Declared Elena Bonner, RL was "not only figuratively, but literally, on the barricades with us."

Mark Pomar recounted that during a recent visit to Armenia he happened upon a detective program about a Soviet KGB agent's investigations into corruption surrounding the daughter of former leader Leonid Brezhnev. In one scene the KGB agent and his subordinates were examining national media reports in Pravda, Izvestia, and other state-sponsored organizations. The agent announced that "today on Radio Liberty it said that . . . [therefore] all these other media are junk" and swept them from the table. This, Pomar contends, was exactly what RL had hoped to achieve as it sought to influence Soviet society. This example from a detective drama in 2004 demonstrates how RL had become part of Soviet life.

RL served as a detailed source of information in the Soviet Union when domestic sources were not available. The use of "we" and "us" spoke to the audience and made the audience feel that RL was involved in their daily lives—it spoke the language that was understandable to the people of the country and related to them. RL helped the Soviet listener to vet domestic media sources, and most important, it publicly discussed what was only talked about privately, something that served to help liberate the Soviet listener. That such programming existed inspired Soviet citizens by letting them know that the people of the West cared about their plight, a point underscored during a trip Pomar made to Kazan. There a man who reported to him that while jamming had prevented him from ever hearing RL's Tatar language service, the very fact that RL actually broadcast in Tatar demonstrated to him that the West had recognized the existence of their land, language, and culture even though it lay isolated in the Russian heartland.

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How did this happen? It was the result of broadcasting insightful and relevant programming. RL had the flexibility, however, to be very creative, allowing it to engage in programming that employed humor and spoofs regarding Lenin and other Soviet leaders. In addition, RL had a Board led by Malcolm (Steve) Forbes that protected it from interference from the State Department, Congress, and elsewhere. By contrast, according to Pomar, in the 1980s Voice of America (VOA) Russian programming was not particularly exciting and was not generating a large audience. Pomar sought to bring ideas from RL to revitalize the service and developed programming that would speak to the average Russian and place the political issues of the day in the American context. One successful method was to broadcast Russian dissidents who were able to read their works—banned in the USSR—over the air, while explaining their experiences in the West in order to rebut the claims of Soviet propagandists that dissidents were marginalized. By demonstrating that dissidents like Rostropovich and Solzhenitsyn were important cultural icons in the West, VOA enhanced the average Soviet citizen's view of the United States. These interviews especially resonated with Russian listeners, generating excitement that raised morale within the VOA service.

To understand the impact that RFE/RL had on communist society, Istvan Rev stressed the interactive essence of the Cold War conflict. The Cold War was a war of ideas and the victor would be the side that successfully implanted its vision in "the other's" populace. Thus the struggle over radio broadcasting was a struggle for control of the hearts and minds of the population, and the target regimes attempted to prevent its "enemy" from undermining that control. The Cold War was, according to Rev, built upon a series of "mutual fantasies" over the alleged capabilities that one or both sides had to control "the other." Soviet leaders recognized that RFE/RL was indeed designed to challenge their control over both the populations of the satellite regimes and of the USSR.

**Session Two: Goals and Content of Western Broadcasting: VOA, BBC,  
RIAS. Panelists: Alan Heil, Eugeniusz Smolar, and Christian Ostermann;  
Moderator Ken Jowitt**

“Western broadcasts opened an alternative channel for the flow of information and ideas, putting an end to the monopoly of official Soviet Party propaganda. Tyranny abhors new ideas and truth. These broadcasts marked the beginning of the end for the Soviet Party and Soviet ideology.” Alan Heil said that this quote, taken from a roundtable discussion with Ludmilla Alexeyeva, demonstrates the impact that Western radio had on the communist world and in particular the average citizen living in these countries.

Voice of America (VOA) broadcast its first message on February 25, 1942, just seventy-nine days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s entry into World War II. VOA’s cornerstone principle was: “The news may be good. The news may be bad. But we shall tell you the truth.” According to Heil, VOA’s mission as defined in its charter is “to serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news... accurate, objective and comprehensive.” It also “must win the attention and respect of listeners.” In order to fulfill these mandates it has, over the years, not only enlightened the world about America but also engaged in “cross reporting,” that is, provided in-depth news and information about one region to another, as well as “in country” reporting to specific audiences, particularly in times of crisis.

VOA faced a great challenge as it emerged from World War II to face the new reality of the Cold War. Indeed, Radio Moscow’s postwar broadcasting to Western Europe demonstrated the continuing need for VOA broadcasts to the entire European theater. The onset of the Korean War further galvanized support for VOA. Under the direction of Foy Kohler, VOA expanded its language services from twenty-five languages to forty-five languages, many to the USSR and Eastern Europe. In the early 1950s, the McCarthy hearings and unproven allegations of communist sympathizers within the State Department and VOA nearly destroyed the Voice, even though it broadcast a number of official statements during President Truman’s Campaign of Truth.

Nevertheless, VOA survived the McCarthy years, and under President Dwight Eisenhower experienced substantial growth in its overall technical infrastructure. The U.S. Information Agency was created in 1953, and the Voice was transferred from the State Department to the new independent agency, theoretically buffering it from political pressures and enabling it to develop what University of Leicester scholar Nicholas J. Cull called “a journalistic culture” in the years ahead. President Eisenhower insisted that Voice broadcasts follow the

BBC standard, and saw its role and that of its more hard-edged surrogate cousins as complementary. This greatly improved VOA's efforts to report on an increasingly restless world, particularly the Hungarian revolution, Suez crisis, Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, and the Vietnam War. VOA's governing charter was issued as an executive order in 1960.

During the Cuban missile crisis and the Vietnam War, VOA's journalistic independence suffered significant challenges. The USIA even stationed a senior officer in the VOA newsroom to clear all copy on Cuba before broadcast. Similarly, during the Vietnam War, the Johnson administration pressured VOA to clear news analyses through the director of USIA. This was after an analysis critical of the Soviet Union was aired during Soviet Premier Kosygin's visit to Hanoi as American planes began air strikes on North Vietnam. Subsequently, subtle edits were made to VOA roundups of the U.S. press excising commentary critical of the administration. Despite these pressures, VOA continued to broadcast the increasingly troubled news from Vietnam and the rise of the anti-war protest movement both within the U.S. and around the world.

In the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s VOA broadcast comprehensive coverage of the Apollo moon landings, détente, the fall of Saigon, the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the imposition of martial law in Poland. During the détente years, however, pressures were exerted by the Nixon administration to prevent the Voice from broadcasting excerpts of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* as it was deemed too polemical; similarly, a planned series on corruption within communist system was cancelled. This quickly changed under President Reagan, as a senior USIA political appointee recommended in 1981 that VOA characterize the Soviet Union as the "last great predatory empire on Earth" – contrary to the accurate, objective, and comprehensive news programming envisioned in the charter. The appointee soon resigned and pressures subsided after several years. In 1984, VOA's worldwide audience was estimated in USIA surveys at close to one hundred and thirty million, nearly half the listeners residing in the USSR and former Warsaw Pact countries. VOA's performance during the Chernobyl disaster, providing invaluable information to East European, Russian, and Ukrainian audiences about the dangers of radiation and the steps they needed to take to avoid radiation poisoning, represented one of its greatest triumphs, and inspired Secretary of State George Shultz to commend the station for playing an "essential role in promoting democratic values and undermining the monopoly of information" that allowed the communist system to survive as long as it did.

Eugeniusz Smolar cautioned that in developing our histories of Cold War radio broadcasting we not overstate its success, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s. Smolar challenged the premise, "prevalent in RFE editorial policy," that

Polish society was divided between the “brave, heroic, resisting anti-communist nation” and a “relatively small group of Moscow-led traitors.” The reality was far more complex, particularly in the 1960s as the population had become depoliticized by regime oppression and was nearly as suspicious of RFE as they were of the state media. Indeed, the populace adopted as its maxim: RFE says this and our propaganda says that—but I, in the middle, I have my own truth and that lies somewhere in between. This Smolar considered one of the most important elements in any consideration of RFE’s broadcasting impact, requiring further study. A further caveat identified by Smolar was that although RFE enjoyed high listenership rates during periods of crisis, these rates dropped significantly during the years in between.

Smolar contended that the broadcasting approaches for RFE and the BBC were almost diametrically opposed to each other. RFE was considered both in the East and the West as a political tool, always “on the warpath,” always willing to challenge the regime even to the point of debating minute points of history. On the other hand, BBC policy was to avoid considering itself as part of the local milieu, emphasizing objective, detached news analysis in its global reports rather than emotional language of “ideological name calling.” It did not idealize the past, did not relate to the Polish government in exile as a source of moral authority, and did not concentrate on active resistance—which for many years was limited to a celebration in a church or an annual meeting of Warsaw Uprising fighters at a cemetery, surrounded and photographed by secret police agents. The BBC seldom referred to the censored local media and tried to develop independent argument. Consequently, Soviet bloc audiences considered the BBC the most trustworthy Western media, often listening to BBC broadcasts to confirm RFE news, which led to a de facto division of labor between the two stations. This dedication to objectivity, however, made the BBC an ineffective agent of change behind the Iron Curtain.

It was BBC policy to avoid being seen as following any government line—even that of the British government. This led to a number of struggles between the BBC and the British authorities that nearly resulted in the BBC’s dissolution. Furthermore, the BBC sought at all costs to prevent its World Service from degenerating into a partisan radio station championing local causes—BBC executives stressed that there “was only one BBC.” Consequently, it was policy for the BBC to change correspondents’ assignments every few years to prevent them from “going native.”

New events produced a gradual, but nevertheless revolutionary change in BBC policy: the Helsinki accords in 1975, the dependence of regimes on Western capital and good will, the Polish workers revolt in 1976 followed by activities of the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) in Poland and Charter 77 in

Czechoslovakia (i.e., emergence of modern democratic opposition), the birth of the Solidarity trade union in 1980, the impact of the Polish Pope's sermons in Poland, and a generational change in BBC broadcasters. Information from KOR and Charter 77 sources came to be seen as a new and important source that the BBC could not ignore. A new broadcasting philosophy emerged: according to its charter, the BBC does not take sides; however, in its broadcasts to non-democratic, oppressive states it should be seen as an emanation of a free, pluralistic, and democratic society that upholds and publicizes its values.

The BBC responded to the ferment in Eastern Europe by decentralizing its editorial operations, forming partly independent news services for each target country, then, after the fall of communism, relocating their operations to the countries in question.

RIAS (Radio in the American Sector, Berlin) was, according to Christian Ostermann, a model upon which U.S. policymakers based the original concept for RFE and RL. RIAS started operation in February of 1946, focused locally on the U.S. occupation sector in Berlin, and served as the mouthpiece of the occupation. Originally seen as a tool for the democratization of a defeated Germany, RIAS did not engage in anti-Soviet broadcasting. That policy changed with the onset of the Cold War.

As disagreements between General Lucius Clay, head of U.S. occupation forces, and the Soviet occupation command erupted with greater intensity, RIAS's role began to expand and it became a key instrument in the battle for the hearts and minds of the German people. Criticisms of Soviet policy became more common as RIAS challenged the Soviet Union's monopolistic control over the German media seized in Berlin in the aftermath of the war. The Berlin Blockade Crisis of 1948–1949 placed RIAS in the forefront of the struggle to maintain German morale during the long year of the blockade and, with the U.S. airlift, offered the only hope for the citizens of West Berlin. It was this crisis that would solidify the relationship between the Germans and their occupiers. The growing Cold War struggle led to a shift in RIAS broadcasting strategy to focus on undermining Soviet control in East Germany, which quickly became the most important audience for its broadcasts.

As the Cold War escalated, the Truman administration intensified its use of informational programs to strike at the Soviet bloc, shifting from a defensive containment strategy to an offensive rollback strategy; indeed, in 1950 the National Security Council approved a rapid escalation in the use of psychological warfare and covert action to destabilize the Soviet bloc. Germany had become an important theater for psychological warfare operations and, in December 1950, psychological warfare specialist Wallace Carroll and RAND Corporation scholar Hans Speier submitted to John McCloy, the High Commissioner of Germany, a

report urging the development and use of aggressive psychological warfare and covert operations, including the creation of centrally organized resistance movements to challenge Soviet control in the East.

These efforts continued into the Eisenhower administration. However, RIAS and the other stations were caught in a contradiction between broad policy calling for destabilization and rollback, and special guidance ordering broadcasters to avoid inciting mass uprisings. The U.S. wanted the radios to “walk the fine line between stimulating uprisings and nourishing the spirit of resistance,” or as U.S. High Commissioner James Conant declared, “Keeping the pot boiling.” These tensions were evident in the East German uprising of 1953. RIAS successfully maintained this “fine line” during the crisis and East German intelligence services admitted that RIAS broadcasts did not incite the riot. However, RIAS was able to spread word of the strikes in Berlin throughout the country, accelerating the spread of popular demonstrations. East German intelligence documents attest that during the crisis East Germans listened to RIAS openly as an act of defiance to the regime. The Eisenhower administration had hoped to use RIAS to expand the unrest to other East European regions, but RIAS resisted efforts to take a more activist role, hoping to avoid placing the East German population in harm’s way.

A discussant related the story of Wolfgang Leonhard, an avid Moscow trained and raised German communist, who returned to Germany along with Walter Ulbricht on the first plane to Berlin from Moscow. Upon his arrival he came into contact with RIAS broadcasting, which succeeded in completely disillusioning him in his belief in Soviet communism to the extent that he eventually defected to Yugoslavia after Stalin’s break with Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito and spent years denouncing the Soviet system.

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**Session Three: Impact of the Broadcasts: Jamming and Audiences. Panelists: George Woodard, Gene Parta, Elena Bashkirova, Lechoslaw Gawlikowski; Commentator Sharon Wolchik; Moderator John Dunlop**

On the night of November 21, 1988, George Woodard received a call at his home in Munich, Germany from RFE/RL operators stating that all Soviet and some East European jamming of RFE/RL shortwave radio broadcasts abruptly ceased. The Soviet Union had jammed Western radio broadcasts for so long and with such great expense that Woodard and his colleagues resisted believing that this was anything more than a temporary stoppage. Throughout that night and the following days everyone waited to see if it would resume, but it did not. Within a few weeks, all East European jamming had ceased as well.

For over forty years jamming had constituted one of the Soviet Union's principal—albeit illegal—defenses against Western broadcasting, disrupting with varying degrees of success RFE/RL, VOA, BBC, Deutsche Welle, Kol Israel, and Radio Vatican transmissions. Jamming is the intentional interference of radio, television, or other electronic communications, and often entailed the transmission of loud noises of an irritating quality to deter prospective listeners. Some jamming relied upon highly repetitive sounds that made it both difficult and dangerous for a listener because it would be quite easy for police or would-be eavesdroppers to know that he or she was indeed listening to a forbidden station.

Soviet jamming attempted to disrupt Western short-wave broadcasts. As the Soviet Union covered eleven time zones, short-wave broadcasts emanating from transmitters at Costa Brava, Spain, and elsewhere were the only means to reach the country on a national scale, only doing so because short-wave transmissions could be reflected off of the ionosphere. Consequently, a broadcast from Costa Brava could be received in Moscow via an atmospheric reflection over Wroclaw, Poland. By contrast, traditional medium wave (AM) broadcasts only have a range of hundreds of miles, depending on the transmitter's power.

Jamming was no easy task as it entailed construction of enough jamming stations to interfere with signals over wide areas. Western broadcasters sought to overpower Soviet jamming by increasing the number of transmitters while strategically placing them so as to cover a wider broadcast area and broadcasting on multiple frequencies. In a veritable electromagnetic arms race, the Soviets responded by further increasing the number of jamming stations; eventually they would build some three thousand transmitters to block the approximately 150 Western transmitter stations. By November 1988, Soviet leader Mikhail



Gorbachev recognized the futility of these actions, especially in a time of *glasnost*, where openness to new ideas was essential if Soviet reforms were to succeed.

Gene Parta's audience research analysis confirms that jamming had a significant impact on the ability of Soviet citizens to listen to Western broadcasting. Indeed, its intensification or cessation was considered a barometer of East-West relations, which was particularly evident during periods of international crises. Jamming of VOA and BBC broadcasts ceased in June 1963 due to the thaw in relations following the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis, resumed in August 1968 during the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, halted in 1973 under *détente*, and restarted, yet again, when martial law was declared in Poland in 1981, only to be discontinued entirely in 1987. The Soviets never ceased jamming RFE/RL until November 1988.

Yet despite the best efforts of Soviet technicians, Western broadcasters and East-bloc listeners discovered ingenious methods to circumvent the jamming. From 1978 to 1990 Western radio reached nearly 25 million Soviet listeners on an average day and over 50 million in the course of an average week. VOA had the largest audience during most of this period, reaching nearly 15 percent of the adult (16 years and older) population in an average week, followed by the BBC and Radio Liberty at 5–10 percent and Deutsche Welle at 2–5 percent. Once jamming ended in 1988, Radio Liberty's listenership immediately spiked to a weekly reach of 15–16 percent or nearly 35 million people, the largest audience of the Western broadcasters.

Beginning in 1972 and continuing until 1990, RL's audience research department undertook systematic interviews of more than 50,000 Soviet citizens traveling outside of the USSR and, using the mass media computer simulation methodology developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, compiled the first significant audience research statistics that provided scientifically derived insights into Soviet listenership—insights that previously had only been subjects of conjecture. Surveys conducted by Western research firms after the end of the Cold War established the accuracy of the RL studies, confirming that during the Cold War 30–40 percent of the Soviet adult population had listened to Western broadcasting. Yet this does not tell the whole story, as the data indicate that information from Western broadcasts was often spread by “word of mouth,” which served to amplify broadcast impact to a much larger part of Soviet society.

These audiences were made up disproportionately of urban males in the 30–50 year age bracket with at least a secondary education. Listening rates were highest in Moscow, Leningrad, the Baltic States, and Trans-Caucasus, while lowest in Central Asia, Moldavia, and provincial regions of Russia proper. Surprisingly, Communist Party membership was not a predictor of listening trends as Party and non-Party members listened at similar rates. Yet political

orientation was a strong determinant of listenership. Soviet “liberals” most often listened to Western radio, followed by those who considered themselves “moderates.” Conservatives and hardliners listened considerably less.

The RL data demonstrate that Soviet listeners turned to Western stations primarily for information, with entertainment playing a lesser motivational role. Soviet citizens listened especially to access information not available through the Soviet media, or to verify or refute Soviet media claims. Indeed, listener rates of Western broadcasting increased significantly during periods of crisis, such as the *samizdat* era of the 1970s, the war in Afghanistan, the Korean airliner incident, the Chernobyl disaster, and *perestroika*, as Western broadcasting provided essential and uncensored information to Soviet listeners. However, Western radio faced greater difficulties reaching out to Soviet audiences during periods when they felt they were directly threatened, such as the Polish crisis of 1980–1981 when Soviet media successfully mobilized opposition among the population to Solidarity’s efforts.

A question that has long concerned Western analysis of Cold War broadcasting is, not surprisingly, the accuracy of these traveler-based figures. Elena Bashkirova and Lechoslaw Gawlikowski, drawing on Soviet bloc archives, addressed this question.

Ironically, as Parta and his colleagues at MIT began their massive effort to calculate the effectiveness of Western broadcasting, so too did the Mass Media Department of the Institute of Sociology of the USSR Academy of Sciences. According to Bashkirova, it took considerable time for Soviet analysts to recognize the need to analyze the impact of Western radio. Previously, Soviet scientists studied the phenomena as only one part of their broader analysis of the impact of the USSR’s mass media efforts. Research undertaken by V. L. Artemov and P. S. Gurevich demonstrated that Western broadcasting needed to be analyzed on its own merits.

Polling the impact of “enemy” broadcasting on the Soviet audience was no easy task since concerns regarding the respondent’s sincerity raised doubts about the accuracy of these findings. Yet Soviet analysts believed that they had developed a methodological approach offering the required anonymity that provided some confidence in the reliability of their findings. Key factors included analysis of audience size, frequency of listenership to foreign broadcasting, and listener’s motives, thematic interests, and general attitude to Western radio broadcasting. Sampling focused on six urban population centers, as Soviet researchers sought to avoid the attention that a national survey might create. This would not skew the data, they contended, because it was unlikely that Western radio would find significant listenership in much of the rural USSR.

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The first studies, conducted in the 1960s, concluded that Western radio did not offer serious information competition to USSR media and, therefore, was not gaining a significant audience share. This conclusion changed in the 1970s as studies determined that in fact more than half of the urban population of the USSR listened to foreign broadcasting on a somewhat regular basis and split evenly between genders; listeners with a secondary-level education or higher comprised 70 percent of the Western radio audience. The distribution of the Soviet audience demonstrated the wide appeal of Western radio, though with a clear tilt towards the 16–34 year age bracket. One seeming inconsistency with RL data was the Soviet Academy of Sciences determination that 69 percent of the Soviet audience tuned into Western media because of their interest in music programs, followed by international (45 percent) and domestic news programming (38 percent). (It was noted that this might be due to the different methodologies employed, given that most of the younger people, who were primarily attracted to music programs, were much less likely to be part of the population traveling abroad.) Religious, cultural, and educational programming was relatively less attractive to the Soviet audience (although given the overall large percentage of listeners, the absolute number who listened to this programming was still high). Soviet listeners considered Western radio trustworthy at surprisingly high levels. Some 37 percent admitted that they fully or somewhat trusted Western programming, compared to 32 percent who did not trust and 31 percent who could not form an opinion. Soviet researchers were quite surprised by this finding, so much so that they expressed great suspicions about their accuracy.

A crucial question for Soviet analysts was just what made Western broadcasting appealing to Soviet audiences, particularly when one remembers that the regime actively discouraged such listening. Three things stood out: first, Western broadcasting offered news and information in a timelier manner than Soviet mass media; second, Western broadcasting supplied Soviet listeners with information and programs of great interest to them that Soviet programming did not; and finally, it offered a different official viewpoint on important issues.

Lechoslaw Gawlikowski's study of RFE's listenership in Poland introduces a methodological quandary in our effort to understand the impact of Western broadcasting: what do you do when the researchers tasked with studying the phenomena lie about their own results? This is precisely what happened in Poland during the era of martial law in the 1980s, when the Center for Public Opinion and Research (OBOP), evidently attempting to please its Communist Party superiors, retroactively recalculated the results of its polling to deliberately deflate the percentage of listeners in reports issued to the highest levels of the Communist Party.

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OBOP was established in 1958, after Gomulka's ascension to power made possible sociological surveys banned during the Stalin era. In its secret reports to the Party leadership, OBOP documented a steady increase in the size of the Polish RFE audience from approximately 20 percent of the adult population in 1976 to 31 percent in 1979 (while admitting that its pre-1976 data understated the RFE audience). With the onset of the Solidarity crisis, OBOP reported a jump in RFE listenership to 48 percent in 1980, 53 percent in 1981, and 49 percent in 1982.

Between the early 1960s and 1989, RFE's audience research department surveyed the listening habits of Poles (and other East Europeans, a total of over 100,000) traveling in the West. RFE found that some 40–50 percent of the adult population were regular listeners to RFE during most of this period. These figures are 10–20 percent higher than the comparable OBOP data. The RFE survey data show jumps in listenership during domestic crises, with 80 percent listening during the 1970 worker unrest and nearly 70 percent after the onset of martial law in 1981 (declining again to the 40–50 percent range after 1985).

OBOP data in 1980 and 1981 approximated the RFE survey results. But during martial law OBOP reported that the RFE audience declined dramatically to about 16 percent in 1983 and 13 percent in 1985. In an internal working paper OBOP then "recalculated" the 1980 audience as 15 percent (as opposed to its original figure of 48 percent). These numbers are up to 50 percent lower than the RFE survey data. The implausibility of the OBOP results are suggested by other secret internal studies conducted in the 1980s by the Institute for Social Research of the Military Political Academy (WAP). WAP found that the percentage of military conscripts who listened to RFE was 44 percent in 1979, 67 percent in 1981, and 51 percent in 1983 (data comparable to or higher than corresponding RFE survey results for this audience segment). Gawlikowski concluded that OBOP could operate without political interference only in the 1980–1981 period and thereafter altered its survey methods or interpretation of survey results to deliberately deflate the listenership to Western radio in its reports for top Party officials. This corruption of an internal information mechanism intended to inform the Party leadership was itself an indication of the breakdown of the Communist system in Poland.

Sharon Wolchik noted the need to resolve some of the discrepancies in the panelists' respective analyses. She observed that the Western radios had a surprisingly wide reach, particularly if one took into consideration secondary listenership. Also of importance is the consensus that Soviet bloc listenership was mostly highly educated, largely urban, and young, and that news and entertainment were key motivators for those to listen.

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**Session Four: Impact of the Broadcasts in Eastern Europe: Evidence from the Archives (I). Panelists: Jane Curry, Pawel Machcewicz, Oldrich Tuma; Commentator Richard Cummings; Moderator Charles Gati**

According to Jane Curry, RFE played a very complex role in Polish elite politics. Based upon in-depth interviews with forty high-level Communist Party officials sponsored by the Hoover Institution and research in newly opened Polish archives, Curry demonstrated that RFE's broadcasts were constant reminders of the precariousness of the Communist Party's control over the country. Top leaders and Party and media elites were well aware of RFE broadcast content even if they did not discuss it openly. RFE was a veritable "elephant in the living room" for Poland's communist leadership. Polish elites viewed RFE at different times and to differing degrees as one of the chief elements undermining Poles' support for or tolerance of the communist government; an indicator of official American positions on Polish politics; a weapon of internal elite politics; a 'tuba' and, even, organizer for the opposition in Poland; and a source of information on what was actually happening in Poland and the rest of the bloc. Party elites felt that they could not simply ignore RFE broadcasts but had to engage in a wide array of propaganda activities in an effort to discredit RFE in the eyes of the Polish people. Indeed, in the 1950s RFE quickly demonstrated how much impact it could have with its broadcasts of Josef Swiatlo's stunning condemnation of the Polish security services that, virtually overnight, engendered serious tensions within the Party apparatus and the secret police.

Polish leaders received daily transcripts of RFE broadcasts and circulated them to high Party officials. The Party apparatus regularly provided analyses of RFE broadcasts and directives on how Polish media should react to mid-level Party and state officials and the media establishment. Wladyslaw Gomulka and Wojciech Jaruzielski carefully read RFE transcripts in order to glean vital information about the situation in Poland and abroad, even in the Soviet Union. They demanded that problems raised by RFE be addressed and reacted negatively to officials portrayed positively by RFE. Edward Gierek, by contrast, concentrated on acquiring economic credits and loans from the West and generally disregarded RFE broadcasts.

The influence of RFE broadcasts was greatest in the initial stages of domestic crises. It waned during periods when Polish media had more freedom to report and criticize. RFE's impact on the Polish population was always a major concern for the Party leadership. But this did not affect Party decisions in major crises, such as the declaration of martial law in 1981. Especially in the 1980s, Party leaders sometimes made decisions just to prove RFE predictions

wrong, and dissident elements inside and outside the Party could exploit this by passing reports to RFE of pending decisions they sought to subvert. The Polish leaders who were interviewed gave RFE credit for not exacerbating the 1956 crisis and for paving the way for the roundtable negotiations in 1989 by showcasing moderate opposition leaders during the period of martial law.

Yet RFE's influence in Poland was not easily obtained. Pawel Machcewicz documented just how aggressively Polish security services worked to discredit RFE almost immediately after the station first began to broadcast. He described four principal strategies used by Polish security services to counter RFE: jamming, repression, intelligence operations, and propaganda.

Jamming operations of Western broadcasts began in 1950. These first efforts were not considered effective, leading to Stalin's 1951 decision to greatly expand the scope of the jamming. According to Machcewicz, the Soviets took this decision without even consulting Polish authorities. The effectiveness of jamming varied significantly during the early years. In the week after Stalin's death, jamming blocked Western programming across 82 percent of the country; however, jamming of RFE was less effective, as only 60 percent of the country reported jamming coverage. Jamming from Polish soil ended in 1956, after protestors in Poznan burned jamming equipment and Wladyslaw Gomulka began to liberalize Polish society. Jamming continued intermittently from the USSR and other East European countries but was discontinued permanently in 1988.

Simultaneously, the security services began to persecute those who were caught listening to RFE broadcasts or repeating information gleaned from RFE programming. Polish citizens found listening to RFE were often sentenced to several months (in some instances up to two years) of hard labor.

After 1956, the Polish secret service initiated a series of intelligence operations to strike directly at RFE's Polish-service broadcasters. As more people from the Soviet bloc were allowed to travel abroad, many were interviewed by RFE to learn about their listening habits. In addition, many travelers would contact RFE on their own initiative as they carried information or messages from family and friends still living in Poland. The Polish secret service exploited these communications by repeatedly attempting to infiltrate agents into RFE's ranks, successfully planting several operatives into a number of lower-level positions.

Polish communists decided to exploit the détente years of the 1970s, especially the rapprochement between Poland and West Germany, to launch major propaganda campaigns to discredit RFE and to convince West German authorities to expel the organization from Germany. Agents were sent abroad with false stories or fake documents or other disinformation that they hoped

would be played on the air. Accusations were made that RFE officials were either U.S. agents or Nazi war criminals. Nevertheless, Poland's effort to discredit and destroy RFE eased in the late 1970s and 1980s as the deep economic crisis, the rise of the political opposition, and the subsequent birth of the Solidarity movement shook the regime to its foundations and convinced Polish authorities that they faced a far greater threat from domestic enemies than from foreign opponents.

According to Oldrich Tuma, very effective jamming by Czechoslovak security services undermined RFE's ability to play a significant role in Czechoslovak affairs, as it had elsewhere. Consequently, the most popular radio broadcasts were those of the seldom-jammed VOA, which filled the gap left by RFE with reporting on domestic developments, punctuated in the 1980s by interviews with leading opposition representatives. The VOA also used to great success taped broadcasts of special events and the transmission of special recordings, such as a religious mass or the public outcry against the trial of Vaclav Havel, to further strengthen the opposition.

All together, nearly one-third of the Czechoslovak population listened to Western radio broadcasts, with word-of-mouth communications greatly increasing the effect. Concerns about these broadcasts grew and the Czech communist leadership responded by jamming RFE broadcasts continuously until early 1989. However, jamming of other foreign radio stations largely ceased by 1968, allowing VOA unfettered access to the country despite the exposure it provided regime opposition figures. The Chernobyl disaster provided the VOA with one its greatest opportunities to discredit the regime media. According to Tuma, state news services only began reporting on the Chernobyl accident on April 29, 1986, three days after the accident occurred. Only on May 5 did state media admit to a "moderate increase of radioactivity," yet never provided any public health instructions. Public opinion polling demonstrated significant levels of concern by Czechoslovak citizens, with nearly half reporting that they took active measures to protect themselves against radioactive contamination, such as limiting the amount of milk and vegetables they ingested—recommendations they received by listening to Western, and not local, media.

Foreign radio broadcasts never initiated a crisis nor decisively influenced Czechoslovak regime policies. Tuma maintained that their primary importance was to provide a large portion of the population a significant level of independent information that challenged regime propaganda and encouraged the opposition.

Richard Cummings contended that Soviet bloc security operations against RFE/RL continued throughout the 1980s and in Poland's case did not cease until early 1990, a year after the new Solidarity-led government had taken power.

The Polish regime was the most active in attempting to subvert RFE personnel, often using relatives traveling to the West to pass threatening notes demanding that family who worked at the station contact a regime agent. Cummings considered the Czechoslovak intelligence services the second most active of the Soviet bloc intelligence operations in trying to subvert RFE, and possibly the most effective. Czechoslovak services used a wide range of methods to attack RFE, from propaganda to attempts at poisoning RFE staff to plans to bomb RFE headquarters in Munich. In 1986 Radio Prague aired a program of "former" RFE officials who re-defected to Czechoslovakia after many years working for RFE. In reality these were secret agents planted in RFE who re-defected as part of Czech intelligence operations.

In the discussion Cummings cited three examples of cooperation among the bloc intelligence services in working against RFE/RL. First, the Czechoslovak intelligence services received from Hungarian intelligence RFE's phone book. Second, the Czech service, working for the KGB, sent Slovak-Ukrainian nationalists to the West to talk to RFE personnel and Ukrainian and Slovak expatriates and provided their reports to the KGB. Finally, a member of the RL Russian monitoring service became an agent for the East German Stasi because he would not work for the Soviets. Curry added that Polish officials knew that the Stasi had extensive intelligence on the Polish opposition as well as on RFE and used this knowledge to press the Polish regime to take greater action against RFE. Machcewicz and Tuma confirmed that their research had uncovered extensive documentation indicating cooperation among the various intelligence services.

The discussion included differing evaluations of the RFE Czechoslovak broadcasts by listeners. One view stressed RFE's importance, drawing on testimony of Cardinal Vlk (Archbishop of Prague) that "the work that Radio Free Europe has done for this nation was good work, and the Czech nation has profited from it." Another view was that RFE's effectiveness in the 1950s and 1960s was limited by its overemphasis on negative features of life under Communism, which alienated listeners.

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**Session Five: Impact of the Broadcasts in Eastern Europe: Evidence from the Archives (II). Panelists: Nestor Ratesh, Germina Nagat, Jordan Baev, Istvan Rev; Discussants: Ken Jowitt and Mircea Raceanu; Moderator David Holloway**

For both Nestor Ratesh and Germina Nagat it was a tragic irony that Romania, the least obedient of all Soviet bloc satellites, a country visited by two U.S. presidents during the Cold War, most aggressively attacked RFE. Indeed, as Ratesh demonstrated, while Romanian leader Nikolai Ceausescu traveled throughout the West, collecting honors and playing the hero of the anti-Soviet resistance, within his inner circle he plotted “feverishly” against Radio Free Europe. Although somewhat constrained in the sixties and seventies by the desire to gain recognition and support from the West for their effort to secure some independence from Moscow, nevertheless the Romanian Communists showed they would take decisive measures when needed to protect their authority at home. The regime “would not shy away from repressive action, from abuse and prosecution of RFE listeners, or from tough measures against any dissent.”

By the 1980s, the domestic situation had worsened dramatically and relations with the West had soured. Western broadcasting became more than a mere “nuisance” for the regime and operations were unleashed against RFE’s infrastructure and several of its premier broadcasters. The Romanian secret service, the Securitate, spearheaded the effort, even recruiting the services of the infamous international terrorist Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, alias “Carlos the Jackal.” Ratesh reported that, according to agents involved in Carlos’ recruitment, Ceausescu intended former Securitate General Ion Mihai Pacepa, who had defected to the United States, to be Carlos’s first target, but he rejected that assignment. The Romanians asked him to act against RFE instead, “which he reportedly accepted for large amounts of money, arms and ammunitions, false passports, foreign identity cards and driving licenses, as well as personal favors.”

Ratesh contended that Securitate criminal activity might have led to the deaths of two directors and the lead broadcaster of the Romanian Service in the 1980s, most significantly Noel Bernard. Bernard was the longest serving director of RFE’s Romanian Service, and the most popular. Ratesh characterized his commentaries during his sixteen years at RFE as “balanced, reasoned, civil, elegantly written, and delivered in a clear, imposing voice.” Bernard was a hero in Romania, “an almost fabled character” supposedly even more recognized than Ceausescu himself. On July 22, 1978, Ceausescu ordered Bernard’s death. Bernard’s file from the Foreign

Intelligence Service's archive seems to indicate that his death was indeed intentional.

Germina Nagat reported that a "systematic, nationwide surveillance of clandestine radio listeners began in June 1980, when the operative group called 'the Ether' was set up by the Securitate," further underscoring the lengths the Ceausescu leadership was willing to take to stop RFE. The increasing number of "political turbulences" associated with Radio Free Europe, especially in the wake of General Pacepa's defection to the West, led to the establishment of the "Ether" as an internal security organization that operated in each Romanian municipality under the direct supervision of the vice-minister of interior affairs and chief of the Securitate. Nagat said that by establishing "Ether" the Romanian regime determined that they needed to intimidate and harass all those listening to Western radio, particularly RFE. It also reflected the growing interest in Western radio within Romania during the 1970s and in particular the 1980s. Therefore, the establishment of "Ether" was not merely a preventive measure, but retaliation against the Romanian people for their trust of Western news, by punishing the simple act of listening to RFE as a political crime. The range and intensity of the surveillance grew rapidly; in just a few months the Securitate strategy shifted from keeping under surveillance Radio Free Europe's audience to preventing its growth. By the end of the 1980s, the regime's paranoia had grown to such an extent that "Ether" scrutinized not only those Romanians who had listened to RFE broadcasts, but anyone who might have "the intention to listen to Radio Free Europe" — a category that could include the entire population, or at least all Romanians who owned a radio with the frequencies of Western broadcasters. Nagat concluded that one might consider "Ether" a large-scale audience survey of RFE listenership developed not by sociologists, but by a secret service, under the absurd premise of identifying and punishing each and every Romanian listener.

What did jamming mean in the mind of the Soviet bloc listener? Istvan Rev suggested that the noise produced by communist jammers was not "simply the antithesis of meaning." Noise was used as a "medium" by which East European jammers communicated with the private world of the RFE listener. "The sound that the East European jammers generated did not simply aim at making the enemy broadcasts inaudible; the noise also established and confirmed the presence of the Communist authorities in the air, and thus in the private sphere of the secret listener."

It was evident that jamming had a significant impact on those in the Soviet bloc. Those who traveled or immigrated to the West frequently referred to communist jamming when interviewed by RFE personnel. It was as if, Rev contends, "they had tried to decipher, retrospectively, the exact meaning of the

noise even to themselves. The noise generated by Soviet jammers did not just overwrite the message coming from the West but constantly reminded the listener of the continuous surveillance, of the fact that he was not alone even behind the closed doors of his apartment." Jamming meant that there was no private sphere in a communist country, a sphere where the average person could, at least momentarily, evade "the omnipresence of the Communist authorities."

Rev recounted the story of the second day during the Hungarian Revolution—October 24, 1956—when Gusztáv Gogolyák, head of "Post Office No. 118," the covert site of the jamming operation in Budapest, ordered radio technicians all over the country to immediately close down all facilities, shred their documents, and lock the doors of the jamming stations. Surprised listeners were able for the first time to listen to the voice coming from Munich without the signal of the presence of the Communist authorities. The lack of intentionally generated noise in itself amounted to a clear statement, "We are here, and they have gone," and profoundly impacted the Hungarian population, possibly convincing it "that help was on the way . . . It was difficult to imagine that western soldiers would not soon follow."

When in the spring of 1957 "the ominous noise"—jamming—had resumed, "it announced the return, the restoration, and consolidation of the post-revolutionary Communist regime." The noise became once more the message: Communism was here to stay; the agreement that had allegedly been made in Yalta had to be taken deadly seriously. It was sensible to comply.

Jamming continued until 1964, then ceased, but was briefly resurrected after the invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968. As a result of the success of social conditioning, when jamming was replaced by natural atmospheric noise after 1972, listeners continued to attribute the poor quality of reception to the deliberate countermeasures of the Communist jammers. It was hard to believe that the authorities were not responsible for all the noise coming from the ionosphere.

Jordan Baev thought it "unrealistic" to discuss the effect of RFE broadcasts in Bulgaria "since we cannot find or define an objective database for such a conclusion." He said that analysts could speak with a degree of certainty regarding the measures taken by the Communist regime against the RFE. Nevertheless, analysts must bear in mind a crucial point—Bulgaria did not possess a credible opposition until the late 1980s, a significant distinction from other East European countries. Neither individual efforts to constitute an opposition by some intellectuals—many of whom either had a communist background, or were connected in some way with the ruling elite—nor the

“feeble efforts” to create dissident groups (inspired mainly by the Czechoslovak and Polish examples) drew a public response until the mid-eighties.

Baev divided the Bulgarian regime’s conflict with RFE into three stages. During the first stage, from the 1950s to 1960s, RFE’s impact was extremely limited and its programming largely ineffective. The Bulgarian Service contained representatives of earlier generations of émigrés who had lost touch with Bulgarian politics since their departure. They possessed limited information about the circumstances within the country, particularly the realities of Bulgaria’s political and cultural life, and relied upon bombastic propaganda methods and rhetoric that appealed largely to those already possessing strong anti-communist feelings. Consequently, the most effective Western broadcast stations were the BBC World Service, Voice of America, and Radio France International. During this period, the regime committed itself to a total jamming of all “anti-Bulgarian” broadcast programming, which included in the mid-1960s Radio Beijing and Radio Tirana.

Stage two—from the mid 1970s through most of the 1980s—saw RFE’s fortune change as it began to make some inroads into Bulgaria. Brezhnev’s “period of stagnation” — meaning rampant corruption — thoroughly disillusioned an increasing number of people living in the Soviet bloc, including Bulgaria. This led to an exodus of educated Bulgarians, including Georgi Markov, Asen Ignatov, Dimiter Inkyov, Atanas Slavov, and Vladimir Kostov, who escaped to the West and began to collaborate with RFE’s Bulgarian Service. These exiles knew Bulgarian society, particularly the hidden secrets of the Communist elite, and, most importantly, they possessed great name recognition within the country.

The third stage, from the late 1980s until the collapse of the regime, was an obvious byproduct of Soviet *perestroika* and represented the first time that RFE broadcasts significantly influenced events in Bulgaria. Dissidents created an increasing number of “informal” groups where intellectuals met. RFE established direct contacts with many of these groups and broadcast the dissidents’ voices throughout the country.

Despite the slow pace at which RFE developed an effective Bulgarian broadcast service, Bulgarian police still employed significant countermeasures to dissuade listenership within the country and defeat what the Bulgarian State Security Committee condemned as the “enemy anticommunist emigration.” The Hungarian revolution, which Bulgarian security believed RFE had largely fomented, motivated Bulgarian authorities to carefully monitor RFE activities. From the 1950s through the 1970s Bulgaria’s communist leadership created a number of state institutions designed to carry out the fight. These institutions maintained close ties with the KGB and regularly transmitted their reports to

Moscow. In turn the KGB provided Sofia with many of its own analyses regarding RFE's structure and activities. Operations designed to defeat RFE by discrediting its broadcasters and infiltrating its service continued even after Gorbachev had come to power. One document recounts a meeting between high-ranking Bulgarian officials and KGB Chairman Victor Chebrikov regarding a "coordination plan to discredit RL/RFE." The collapse of the regime four years later put an end to these efforts.

Ken Jowitt said that it would be a mistake to consider the role of RFE decisive in ending communism. While important and influential, he argued that internal regime corruption and the Gorbachev reform program were the truly decisive phenomena that shattered the Soviet bloc. Nevertheless, RFE did influence events behind the Iron Curtain and he applauded the panelist's efforts to study the extent of that influence.

Jowitt separated RFE's impact into two periods, the years before Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956 and the Polish and Hungarian uprising, and the years following. Prior to 1956 RFE and the Soviet empire were engaged in a bitter ideological struggle, described by Jowitt as the "uniform, militant, undifferentiated confrontation between RFE and the East." There was no compromise, no gray areas in the midst of this struggle. For the radio broadcasters at RFE the struggle was between them, the upholders of their countries' lost dignity, and the evil communists who occupied and oppressed their people. Khrushchev's efforts to dismantle Stalin's oppressive system and liberalize the Soviet bloc ushered in a new era of RFE relations with the Soviet bloc, where the possibility existed to influence evolutionary changes within the communist zone.

The differences in how each satellite country responded to RFE were striking. Jowitt characterized Romania's reaction as "hysterical, thuggish, and amateurish" but not "terroristic." Ceausescu's "psychotic" efforts to defeat Radio Free Europe demonstrated the true nature of his regime and displayed his willingness to use debilitating, individual acts of terror that, ultimately, were "systematically and systemically ineffectual." Consequently, these horrific acts of repression failed to achieve any tangible results and should not be overstated.

Jowitt agreed that the act of listening to RFE in the privacy of one's home was an act of defiance against the regime. He argues, however, that this type of "private defiance" actually aided the regime as it allowed the average Soviet bloc citizen to feel that he or she actually resisted communist authority without having to accept the far riskier public challenge to the communist system. Thus, the rebellious act of listening to RFE may have had the unintended consequence of allowing the public to believe that it was indeed resisting communist rule without the need to engage in outright public defiance, thus ameliorating the

potential long-term threat that public disaffection posed to the regime. This might even explain why Romanians listened to RFE broadcasts at a greater rate than other East Europeans; it was the most readily available means to challenge a brutally repressive regime in a society absent any significant civil organizations. Thus the radios may have unintentionally helped maintain the lack of feeling of civic responsibility.

Mircea Raceanu added several important points that helped explain the dramatic shift in Romania's reaction to RFE. Romania ceased jamming of RFE in 1963 because of its decision to establish an independent foreign policy. The cessation of jamming was a means by which Romanian officials could communicate to the West that it was moving towards independence, no longer feared outside ideas, and deserved help. The West responded with aid and numerous diplomatic honors for Ceausescu, including a visit by President Richard Nixon. RFE and other Western radios responded with broadcasts largely favorable to the Romanian leadership's efforts to distance themselves from Moscow. Indeed Raceanu claims that from 1963 until 1977 RFE broadcasts were hardly dissimilar to Romanian national news, prompting Romanian officials to view RFE as a largely "friendly" radio station.

U.S.-Romanian relations changed profoundly with President Jimmy Carter's election in 1976. Supporting human rights had become a central plank in U.S. foreign policy and Carter began to pressure the Ceausescu regime to improve Romania's human rights record. Though Congress granted Romania Most Favored Nation trade status, it attached a clause linking it to unfettered emigration. U.S.-Romanian relations declined further as President Ronald Reagan moved to confront the Soviet bloc. Ceausescu's reaction was to launch vicious, savage attacks against RFE in order to intimidate it from challenging his regime; RFE had now become enemy number one. At the same time, Raceanu said, the regime continued to use RFE broadcasts as a source of information. In some cases the Securitate itself "repackaged" broadcast RFE reports as secret intelligence for Ceausescu.

**Session Six: Impact of the Broadcasts on the USSR and the Baltic States:  
Evidence from the Archives. Panelists: Amir Weiner, Peter Zvagulis,  
Wladimir Tolz; Discussants: Oleg Kalugin and Anatol Shmelev; Moderator  
Gail Lapidus**

According to Amir Weiner, any effort to understand the impact of Western broadcasting on the USSR must begin with a thorough analysis of the domestic strength of Soviet authorities; in particular, it must answer the question: how much control were these authorities willing to give up over the type and amount of information Soviet populations received—what were the acceptable and unacceptable limits? Weiner analyzed KGB and Communist Party reports to appraise Western radio's influence during the 1956 Polish-Hungarian crisis and the 1968 Prague Spring. He stressed that these materials should not be confused with Gallup public opinion polls; they were instead police investigations into the illegal activity of listening to foreign radio. Their purpose was simply to locate troublemakers among the Soviet population.

Weiner focused on the Western frontier of the Soviet Union from the Baltic to the Black Sea, a region forcibly incorporated into the USSR only two decades prior to the initiation of Western broadcasting. These regions were home to largely non-Russian populations, for whom the question of nationality and ethnicity remained critical. These were populations that had only recently undergone the brutal experience of mass deportations and collectivization, wounds that were still painful when Western broadcasting began. Finally, these were populations in very close proximity to the most significant trouble spots in the Soviet bloc: Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Khrushchev's secret speech of February 1956, denouncing Stalin's crimes and initiating a period of significant reforms, sent shock waves through the Soviet system. The speech, Weiner noted, was secret only in the sense that it was not discussed by Soviet media—it was, however, debated at length within local Party cells throughout the country. Western broadcasting quickly exploited this omission, providing it with a coup of enormous proportions. KGB interrogations reveal that the general public was deeply angered that they had to learn about events of this magnitude only through foreign radio and not the country's own media, demonstrating the extent of the gulf that now existed between the two. Desperate for information, Soviet citizens turned to the sources that were readily available, foreign radio and gossip. Rumors quickly spread throughout the western regions of the USSR that Khrushchev's reforms would lead to a reconsideration of collectivization, that the Party would allow the *kulaks* (rich

peasants) to return to their lands, and that Khrushchev would issue amnesties for political prisoners.

KGB investigations into foreign radio's influence during the mid-1950s resulted in a number of conclusions troubling to the Party. Their analyses of Soviet youth demonstrated that many were indifferent to the political changes occurring; some students could not even name the First Secretary of the Party—Khrushchev. Furthermore, those who were politically attuned admitted that foreign broadcasting had become their prime source of information. KGB interrogations also revealed that students who listened to foreign radio often did so because their parents, even Party members, listened on a regular basis. Indeed, KGB documentation from the Baltic points out that these family discussions even included the possibility that the Americans would soon liberate Lithuania from communism.

National minorities and Party elites were also important audiences for Western radio. For the national minorities, listening to foreign broadcasts allowed them to keep alive their nationalist feelings and irredentist aims. The political elites, including most Party members, listened in order to learn the extent of Russification in the other republics and the effectiveness of the collectivization of agriculture.

Weiner said that the shockwave created by the crisis of 1956 dissipated quickly largely because Khrushchev's "delusional utopian dreams" blurred the memory of this crisis. With this added confidence, Khrushchev instituted a program of selective jamming, interfering with radio broadcasts of a "slanderous" nature, principally American.

By 1968, Weiner contended, the Soviet Union had become a much different country. The regime no longer faced internal threats to its authority and was confident enough to allow greater communication with the West, including tourism. Yet it faced growing international challenges from within the Soviet bloc. The Kremlin grew especially concerned by the growing liberalization of Czechoslovak mass media in 1968, which openly discussed politically sensitive issues (such as mass rehabilitations, trial for security personnel involved in mass repressions, rehabilitation of the Uniate Greek Orthodox Church) considered taboo within the USSR. These transmissions permeated the western USSR and frightened the Kremlin to such an extent that decisive action was the sole solution.

Peter Zvagulis cautioned that a significant lack of audience research data hinders our ability to assess Western radio's impact on Latvia during the Cold War. Soviet authorities considered it an act of espionage to collect any information regarding RFE/RL; the KGB even persecuted students for attempting to conduct such surveys for their sociology research projects. Consequently, the



traveler surveys reported by Gene Parta provided the only estimates of radio listenership. It was not until 1990, as the disintegration of the Soviet Union accelerated, that political conditions allowed researchers to obtain more accurate data. RFE/RL exploited these political changes to undertake the first significant audience survey of the USSR, including Latvia. According to this survey RFE/RL increased its weekly reach dramatically, from 11.3 percent in 1988—when Gorbachev ended jamming—to 20.7 percent in 1989. VOA, by contrast, suffered a decline from 17.1 percent to 12.8 percent as listeners switched to RFE/RL. The BBC listenership declined slightly from 9.8 percent to 9.3 percent, while Deutsche Welle registered a slight increase, from 2.6 percent to 3 percent.

Unfortunately, due to the restrictions imposed by communist authorities, similar statistics do not exist for the Cold War years, making comparisons difficult. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence indicates that the Soviet leaders were extremely concerned about Western broadcasts, considering them both “very important” and “dangerous,” with the most intrusive monitoring necessary to keep them from unduly influencing the population. According to Indulis Zalite, Director of the Latvian Center for Documentation of the Crimes of the Totalitarian Regimes, the Soviet leaders employed three separate strategies to subvert Western broadcasting.

First, Communist Party activists attacked the character of the broadcasters by contending that they were agents financed by Western governments and who maintained a network of agents within the USSR to collect their information. Second, the Soviets deployed units to monitor RFE/RL broadcasts and provide a very limited number of copies for counter-propaganda units to rebut—limited to prevent any accidental dissemination of what the Soviet considered very dangerous materials. Although Soviet officials viewed RFE/RL broadcasts as interference in Soviet internal affairs, Zvagulis cited one KBG official conceding that 99 percent of the programming was truthful and that the broadcasts had had a destructive effect on Soviet morale and accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union. If one was caught listening to Western broadcasts, particularly RFE/RL, officials placed that person’s name on a list, but no other punishment was meted out as, surprisingly, it was not illegal to listen under Soviet Penal Law. A Soviet citizen would be punished, however, if he or she were caught passing this information, as it was illegal to “disseminate false and fabricated information about the Soviet life” and “anti-Soviet propaganda.” Third, the KBG infiltrated Western radios with agents.

In retrospect, Soviet counter-measures seemed quite restrained—particularly when compared with the reactions of many of their satellites. The explanation lies in the central contradiction of the Soviet system: while frightened by Western radio, especially RFE/RL, the Soviet leadership realized

that it provided the needed scapegoat upon which to blame the ills of Soviet society, namely the failure to create the new “Soviet man.”

Although declassification of Soviet era documentation has slowed considerably since the brief period of openness following the collapse of the USSR, Wladimir Tolz utilized recently declassified documents of the Supreme Court and Prosecutor-General of the USSR to provide an account of early Kremlin reactions to Western broadcasting. These materials demonstrate the surprising level of interest that Soviet leaders, including Stalin himself, possessed in Western reporting on the USSR.

Stalin regularly received analyses of foreign radio broadcasts prepared by his secret services. He was particularly intrigued with how Western radio reacted to his policies, especially those that repressed ethnic groups. In 1953, Stalin was ready to resolve the USSR’s “Jewish problem” and, according to the documentation, was interested most of all in the reactions of the West to his anti-Semitic measures and what effect they might have on world public opinion. Stalin, according to Tolz, always paid particular attention to the formation and “production” of a favorable image. He acquired this information from Western broadcasting as well as reports from his ambassadors and agents abroad. Ironically, despite the attention Stalin paid to Western radio, he felt that its limited broadcast range posed no immediate threat to his regime; therefore he ordered very little “counterpropaganda” to discredit these broadcasts. This policy changed significantly as Western radio’s reach expanded inside the Soviet Union.

The regime’s opinion of the threat posed by Western radio changed in the aftermath of Stalin’s death and with the onset of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization campaign. These concerns increased substantially after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Soviet officials believed that the threat “to stir up Hungary,” including anonymous letters, leaflets, etc., ultimately inspired the formation of illegal groups that spearheaded the revolution. The Kremlin became especially sensitive to the potential rise of similar movements within the Soviet Union, intensifying its own repressive activities in 1957–1958. Understanding the nature of any opposition to the regime became a key concern for the Soviet leadership. Evidence produced by Tolz indicates that there may have been grounds for such concerns. By the mid-1950s dissident groups had begun to form, groups that expressed high levels of trust in Western radio. While Western radio influenced the formation of only a few such groups, Tolz suggests that the generation of many “socio-political ideas” like Western democracy remains insufficiently studied; consequently, the conclusions made by “Russian historians that ‘radio broadcasts of foreign radio stations such as Voice of America, BBC, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Europe were popular as

uncensored sources of information, but not as a generator of ideas' appears to be premature."

To Oleg Kalugin, RL represented a milestone in international broadcasting, posed a significant threat to the Soviet monolith, and was an invaluable catalyst for change. Kalugin contended that if Gorbachev had not listened to RL's broadcasts during the August 1991 coup he might not have resisted the coup plotter's efforts to force his resignation.

But aside from entertainment—which did have a major impact on Soviet audiences—RL programming did not significantly influence average Soviet listeners. They were, according to Kalugin "a brainwashed people too fearful to listen to foreign broadcasts." Jamming also played an important role. KGB statistics reveal that from 1965 to 1971 only 414 people were arrested for "anti-Soviet" activities, 44,730 received official warnings, 1574 illegal groups were disbanded, and 192 pieces of underground equipment were confiscated. These were not significant statistics when compared to a population of 270 million. But opposition did increase toward the end of the Brezhnev period. Whereas in 1978 some 1660 anonymous authors distributed anti-Soviet literature across the country, by 1981 the number had jumped to 20,000. In 1978 the KGB confiscated 11,000 anti-Soviet documents to be publicly distributed; by 1981 the figure reached 23,000.

Ironically, Kalugin said, of all Soviet groups it was the political elite that RL most influenced. After years of listening to RL's programming without interference (and in the case of the Party elite, reading the daily transcriptions of broadcasts prepared by the KGB), these Party members understood that the Soviet Union needed fundamental change. This realization laid the groundwork for the reform process that ultimately spelled the end of the USSR.

Anatol Shmelev divided Soviet responses into two categories: hard responses, such as assassination attempts, bombing of RFE/RL broadcast stations, jamming, and persecution against listeners, and soft responses, namely counterpropaganda that so vilified the West that it developed significant anti-Western stereotypes within the Soviet population. These stereotypes exist today and are exploited by the administration of President Vladimir Putin. Shmelev felt that future research should explore two basic issues. First, did the regime differentiate between the BBC, VOA, and RL? Second, given the significance of ethnic nationalism, how aware were RL broadcasters of the vulnerabilities of the USSR's western regions and how willing were they to exploit them given the possible Soviet reactions to what would have to be considered a significant threat?

**Session Seven: Lessons Learned and Research Agenda. Panelists:  
Gregory Mitrovich, Elena Danielson, and A. Ross Johnson; Moderator  
Christian Ostermann**

Gregory Mitrovich, Elena Danielson, and A. Ross Johnson concluded the conference by defining a set of preliminary lessons and conclusions that could be drawn from the rich histories presented at the conference.

Mitrovich said that RFE/RL filled a need. The Soviet totalitarian system required that the regime maintain complete control over information within a society. Isolating the Soviet bloc's population from outside influences was essential if these regimes were to survive. A key reason for the success of RFE/RL is that it filled a gaping hole in the average Soviet bloc citizen's demands for information. Western radio broadcast to an audience that would be innately interested in what the broadcasters said. This is a relevant point today as we try to assess how international broadcasting might dampen anti-U.S. sentiment. The problem we face today is that with a plethora of media options—Internet, satellite TV, cell phone, etc.—what need does current broadcasting fill?

Mitrovich stressed that unimpeachably credible broadcasts were essential for Western broadcasters to succeed. One of the fascinating results of the conference was that the ability to criticize the United States gained RFE/RL standing in the eyes of Soviet bloc listeners. As Elena Bashkirova pointed out, Radio Liberty's coverage of the Vietnam War and the Watergate hearings were determining factors as to why Soviet listeners came to consider RL programming reliable. The radio's use of a sympathetic "us" and "we" rather than the tone of a preaching outsider seems to be critical as well.

Mitrovich contended that the success of Western broadcasting was due to its patient application. International broadcasting is not like other forms of intervention—like *coup d'état* or military action—that have the ability to cause immediate change in state behavior. Broadcasting takes many years—even generations—to succeed. Broadcasting must play the role of the background noise permeating society that over the decades might lead to change. The effective use of this policy requires an understanding of the scope and limitations of the media.

Elena Danielson separated the types of lessons learned into two categories. Predictable lessons include the crucial importance in gaining the trust of a target audience. Our Cold War experience demonstrates that one of the most important methods achieving that trust is the freedom for radio to criticize the U.S. administration, as with the Watergate hearings. A second important lesson

is the timeliness of reliable news, especially critically important news, such as the public health expertise broadcast during the Chernobyl disaster. Third, Danielson pointed to the controversy surrounding the role of entertainment and news. Some consider music and fashion programming superfluous and a weakening of the programming product. Others point out the importance that entertainment played in attracting an audience. But this programming should be primarily an outlet for a nation's own repressed culture rather than the imposition of American culture. Fourth, the quality of programming correlates with its reach, and effective audience research is essential for building that quality.

Some lessons are less intuitive. Danielson said that having a variety of stations creates a healthy competition that improves quality and keeps broadcasting honest. Radio creates a greater level of intimacy that allows for a certain rapport not attainable through other media, such as TV and the Internet. Finally, radios need the "freedom to flop," that is, the creative freedom to experiment that will inevitably lead to failures but will also lead to powerful programming.

The RFE/RL experience, according to A. Ross Johnson, demands a certain modesty given the mistakes that were made early on and the fact that it took several years before both operations reached a level of professionalism that ensured effective broadcasting. Despite all the difficulties encountered and today's challenge of competing with TV and the Internet, Johnson believes that radio still plays an important role, representing a "whisper in the ear" and a more intimate form of communication than TV or leaflets.

Johnson defined five lessons that he believes are crucial as we extend our broadcasting to new areas of conflict. First, we need to understand what we want radio to accomplish and be willing to take the time needed to reach our goal. Ultimately, what radio broadcasting needs is a guiding principle that we will focus our broadcasting strategy. The notion "keeping hope alive" behind the Iron Curtain represented a guiding principle of Cold War broadcasting.

Second, we need to have in-depth knowledge of the adversary. We must understand what is going on in a target country in order to broadcast effectively. One of the hallmarks of RFE/RL was the extensive research that provided invaluable information both for the radio broadcasters and the U.S. government.

Third, we must recognize that there are multiple audiences and that individual programs must focus on a specific target audience. Saturation home broadcasting (surrogate broadcasting) most effectively provides information for both elites and the general audience, and includes news, information, features, even sports and music programming (which brought a generation of listeners to RFE/RL).

Fourth, purposeful and responsible programming is essential for success. Audience research is crucial if we are to understand what will attract a population to listen. The use of external experts by both RFE and RL enhanced quality control. Responsible programming is essential, as well; as the 1968 Czech crisis unfolded, RFE programmers studied the lessons of 1956 in order to ensure that RFE did nothing that might contribute to violence.

Fifth, distance must be maintained between government funding and the content of radio broadcasting. All non-religious international broadcasters are government funded, but it is possible to combine government funding with effective and credible international broadcasting provided that there is a separation between administration policies and radio broadcasting. RFE/RL enjoyed that separation both under the CIA (until 1971) and then under the Board for International Broadcasting.

### III. COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING: LESSONS LEARNED

A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta

*Presentation to a seminar on "Communicating with the Islamic World,"  
Annenberg Foundation Trust, Rancho Mirage, California, February 5, 2005*

The Cold War Broadcasting Impact Conference held at Stanford in October 2005 and sponsored by the Hoover Institution and the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars reviewed evidence from Western and Communist-era archives and oral history interviews to assess the impact of Western broadcasts to the USSR and Eastern Europe during the Cold War. Conference participants agreed that these broadcasts had an indisputable impact, as documented by external and internal audience surveys, elite testimony, and the magnitude of Communist regime countermeasures against the broadcasts. Conference participants then explored the reasons for this impact, drawing on archival data from the target broadcast countries themselves and the experience of veteran broadcasting officials.

#### **Indicators of Impact**

Audience surveys among over 150,000 travelers to the West, once-secret internal regime surveys, and retrospective internal surveys commissioned after 1989 all indicated remarkably large regular audiences to Western broadcasts – about one third of the urban adult Soviet population and closer to a half of East European adult populations after the 1950s. (See Charts 1-6). These large audiences were further increased by extensive word of mouth amplification.

Information conveyed through Western broadcasts was particularly important in influencing attitude and opinion formation during crises. For example, when the USSR shot down the Korean airliner in 1983, Western radios immediately reported the incident while Soviet media remained silent for a week. The Soviet regime then launched a major media campaign in an attempt to mobilize Soviet

public opinion behind the regime's position that the downing was accidental. By this time, many had learned of the incident, and Soviet culpability for it, from Western radio and were highly skeptical of the delayed Soviet media coverage. Outside information was thus more credible than the internal version of events and contributed to shaping alternative attitudes. (See Charts 7-9)

As another example, Soviet media remained silent on the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster until two full days had passed and never gave out a full report or necessary health precautions. In this situation, Western radio was the first source on the disaster for over a third of Soviets queried in a survey and the most complete source for most. Western radio thus filled the gap when Soviet media was slow and unforthcoming in reporting on a major issue. (See Chart 10)

Other examples of the role of Western radio in contributing to the formation of alternative attitudes, such as the Soviet war in Afghanistan, were presented at the Hoover conference.

Reinforcing this survey data, both Communist and post-Communist elites have testified to the importance of Western broadcasts. Vaclav Havel, in video greetings to the Hoover conference, said that RFE/RL's "influence and significance have been great and profound." Former Hungarian propaganda chief Janos Berecz, in his paper for the conference, said: "I became convinced that Western broadcasts were among the accepted sources of information among the youth." East German spymaster Marcus Wolf, in his memoirs *Man Without a Face*, said "of all the various means used to influence people against the East during the Cold War, I would count [Radio Free Europe] as the most effective."

Another indicator of impact was the massive resources devoted by the Communist regimes to countering Western broadcasts. They organized expensive radio jamming on a massive scale, spending more on jamming than the West did on broadcasting. They placed spies in the Western radios and attempted to interrupt the flow of information to them about domestic developments. They took reprisals against listeners and Radio employees. They organized counterpropaganda, while at the same time secretly circulating monitoring of Western broadcasts among top officials to provide information not available from their own controlled media or intelligence services. Even counterpropaganda had to acknowledge and thus amplify in local media some information provided by Western radios. These



countermeasures were a significant drain on domestic resources, yet they failed to neutralize Western broadcasts.

### **Factors of Success**

How do we explain the remarkable success during the Cold War of these Western information programs that, in national security terms, cost very little. We have identified nine essential elements listed below (not necessarily in order of importance). Our analysis focuses on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which emphasized saturation home-service “surrogate” programming. The Voice of America (VOA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and other Western broadcasters also had significant impact, for many of the same reasons.

First, a clear sense of purpose congruent with the aspirations and possibilities of the audiences. We knew what we wanted - to constrain Soviet power (without provoking suicidal revolt), to keep alive hope of a better future, to limit tyranny, to broaden the boundaries of internal debate, all in order to make the Soviet empire a less formidable adversary. These were long-term, strategic objectives, not short-term policy goals. They emerged after some fumbling in the early 1950s with notions of early “liberation,” “roll back” and “keep[ing] the pot boiling. ”

Second, a capability for sophisticated appraisal of the adversary. Significant Radio resources were devoted – especially at RFE and RL -- to detailed analyses of national Communist regimes and the societies they ruled, based on extensive information collection and associated research that drew on Western press, official Communist sources, interviews with travelers, and regime opponents within the target countries. A cadre of specialized researchers was developed with deep area expertise. This information and analysis function was not envisaged at the outset – it was developed at the Radios over time in response to operational need. It became in turn a major input to U.S. Government and scholarly analyses.

Third, differentiated and tailored programs for multiple audiences among and within the target countries. RFE and RL were saturation home services with something for everyone (although RL focused more on elites and the urban intelligentsia; RFE more on the general population). Balanced world and regional news was a staple for all audiences. Programs for Communist elites included coverage of conflicts within and among Communist parties

and reports on social democracy in Europe. Programs for non-communist elites covered Western culture and intellectual life and, as internal dissent developed, amplification of that dissent. Programs for general audiences covered everything from agriculture to religion to labor to sports. Banned Western and internal music was featured. Willis Conover of VOA introduced a generation of Russians and Poles to jazz, the RFE Hungarian Service “teenager party” program attracted a generation of Hungarian youth to RFE, and Western music attracted listeners in the other RFE target countries as well. In the USSR, the magnitizdat phenomenon introduced banned Soviet underground music to a wide public.

Fourth, programs that were purposeful, credible, responsible, and relevant to their audiences. Events of the day were covered, but thematic programming was important as well (e.g. a series on parliamentary institutions in a democracy). Commentary was included along with straight news and news analysis, and audiences were attracted to star-quality commentators. It was essential that programs built and maintained credibility by reporting the bad news along with the good, for example in coverage of Watergate and Vietnam. Responsible programming was (at its best) calm in tone and (after the early 1950s) avoided tactical advice and especially any encouragement of violent resistance. Programming emphasized local developments and was attuned to the listeners through constant audience feedback obtained from traveler surveys and listener mail and through continuous management quality control.

Fifth, decentralized broadcast organizations. RFE and RL were the models, with autonomous country broadcasting units rather than central scripting. Over the years VOA and BBC moved in this direction as well – and gained larger audiences. Émigré broadcast service directors with intimate knowledge of their audiences, many with prominent reputations, were responsible for broadcast content, within broad policy guidelines and under American management oversight.

Sixth, multi-media operations. Distribution of printed materials supplemented broadcasting in some instances. In the early 1950s, program content was spread in Eastern Europe by balloon leaflets. Subsequently, leaflets, periodicals, Western books, and locally unpublished books were distributed (by open mail and by travelers) in target countries.

Seventh, appropriate funding and oversight mechanisms. Sufficient public funding was provided by the Congress (although RFE raised some private funds through the Crusade for Freedom). The CIA covertly (until 1971) and then the Board for International Broadcasting overtly (after 1972) made grants to RFE and RL and exercised fiscal oversight, working with the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accounting Office, and Inspector Generals. The BBC World Service had an analogous relationship to the British Foreign Office.

Eighth, distance from official government policies and journalistic independence. The CIA took a laissez-faire approach to RFE and RL – a relationship insisted on by the Radios' influential Boards and CEOs. After 1972 the BIB provided a “firewall” between the Radios and the State Department and other Executive Branch offices. The BIB legislation provided for “an independent broadcast media, operating in a manner not inconsistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States and in accordance with high professional standards,” giving RFE and RL considerable journalistic flexibility. Advocacy of specific U.S. policies was not required and in fact avoided. The BBC enjoyed similar autonomy in the British context. VOA's journalistic independence, affirmed in 1976 by law in the VOA Charter, was sometimes challenged by Administration policy interference and complicated by the requirement to broadcast Administration policy editorials.

Ninth, receptive audiences that identified with many of the goals of the broadcasters. Soviet and East European audiences lived in an “information-poor” environment, were subject to regime propaganda and censorship, and deprived of other alternative information. East Europeans were artificially cut off from the rest of Europe and mostly pro-American. Soviet listeners were more under Communist regime influence, but a significant minority were pro-democratic (or at least proto-democratic) in outlook.

## **Conclusion**

**Western broadcasts had a remarkable impact in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the circumstances of the Cold War. They reached mass audiences, as documented by traveler surveys at the time and confirmed now by evidence from the formerly closed Communist archives. They reached key elites, both within the Communist regimes and among regime opponents. The keys to the**

**mass and elite audiences were the credibility and relevance of the broadcasts. Government mechanisms were geared to providing public funding and oversight while ensuring management autonomy and journalistic independence.**

Chart 1. Weekly Reach of Western Radios in Poland: 1962-1988

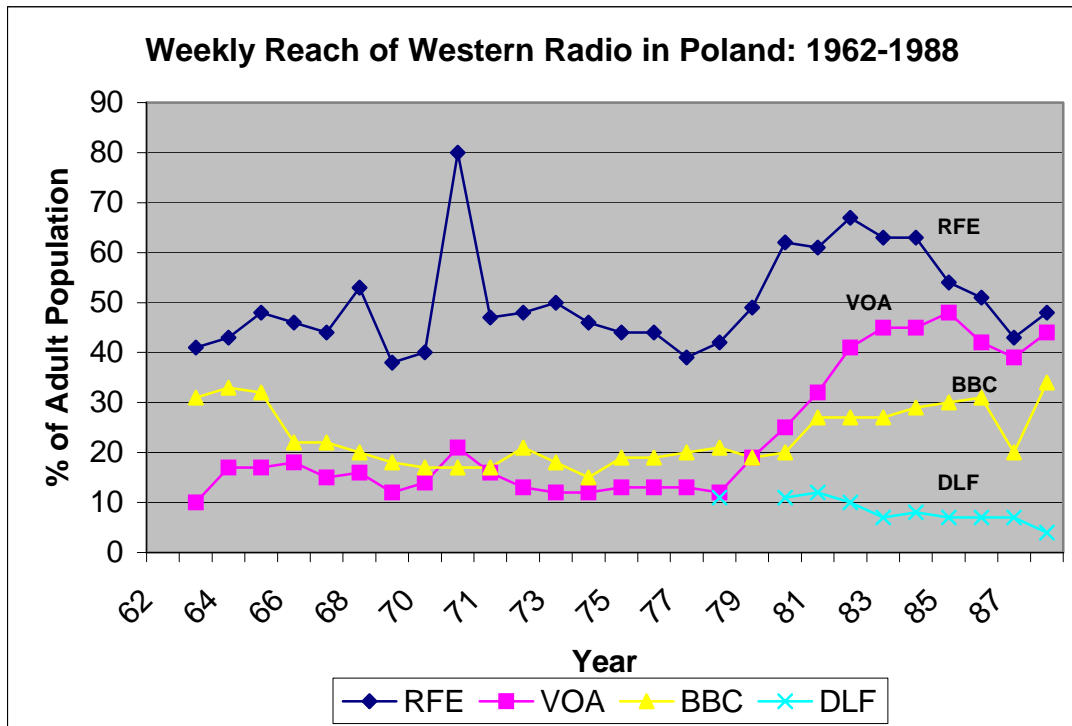


Chart 2. Weekly Reach of Western Radios in Hungary: 1962-1988

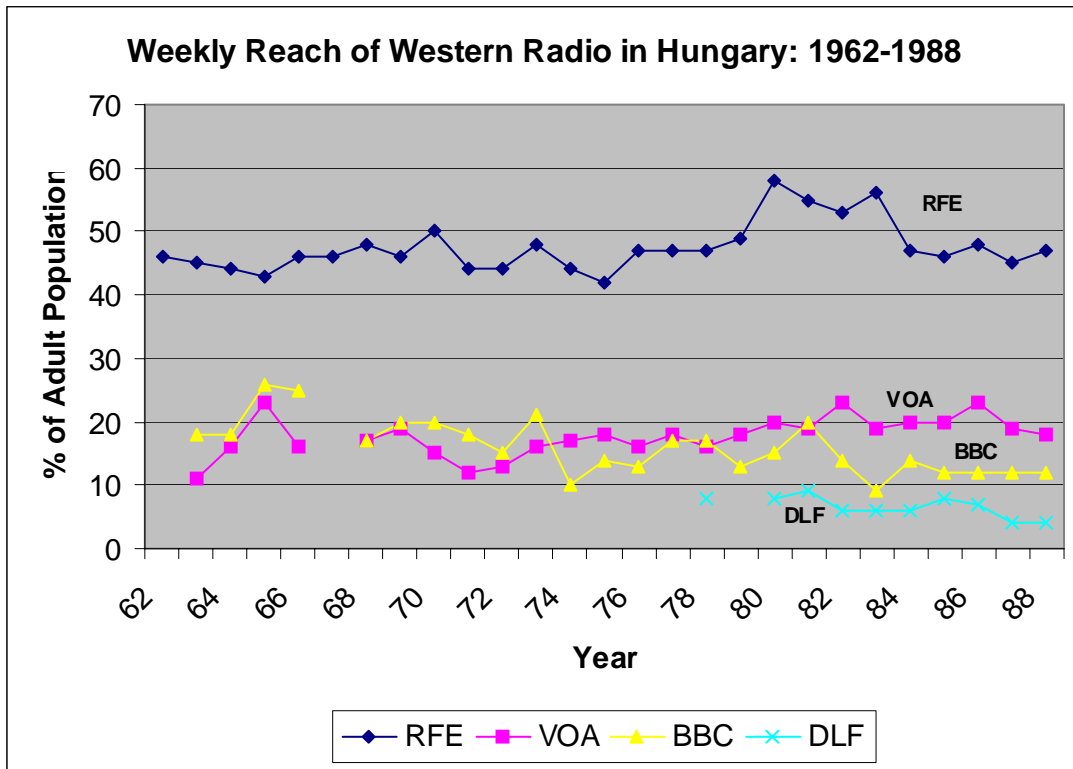


Chart 3. Weekly Reach of Western Radios in Czechoslovakia: 1963-1988

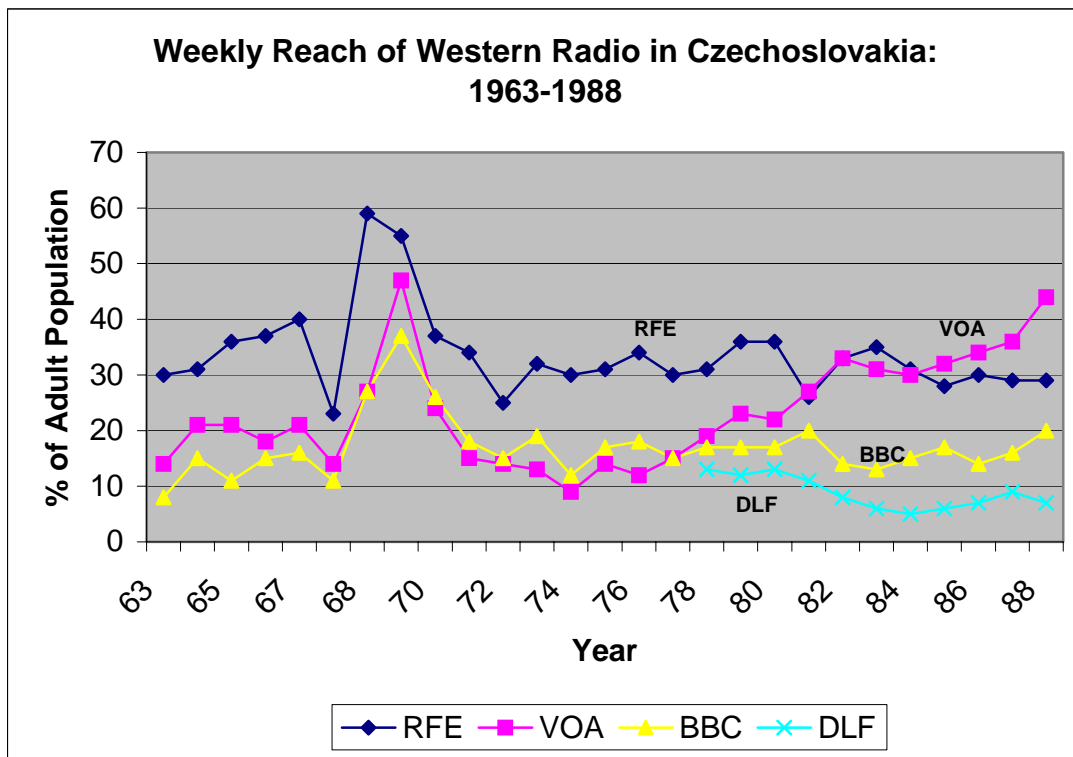


Chart 4. Weekly Reach of Western Radios in Romania: 1962-1988

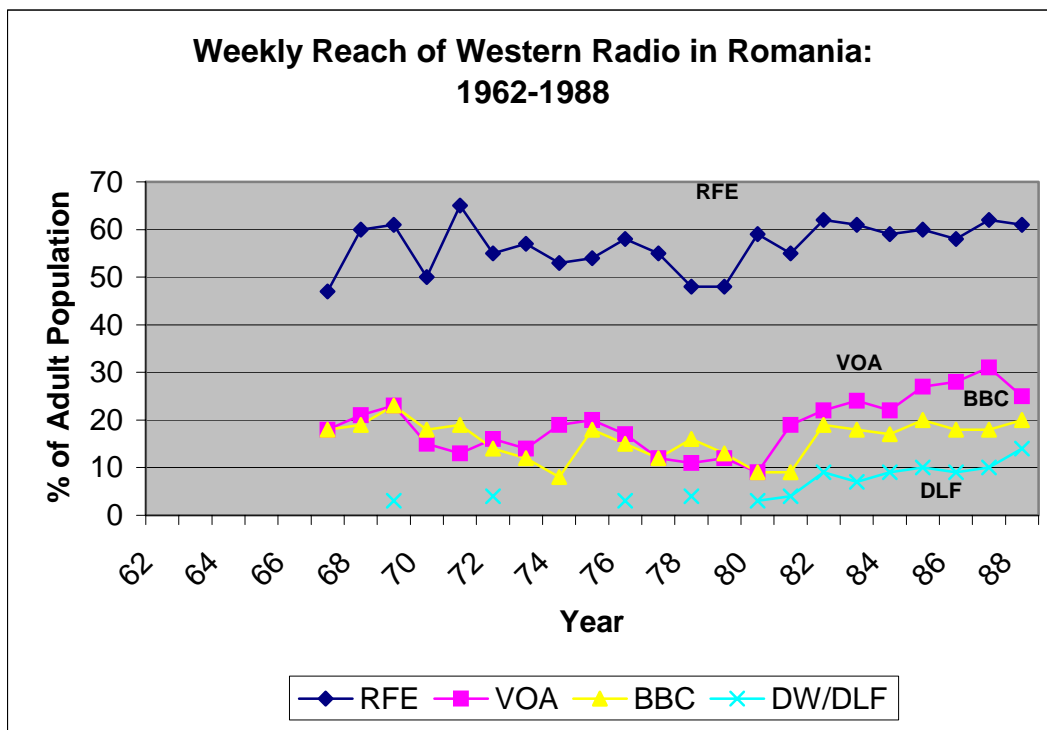
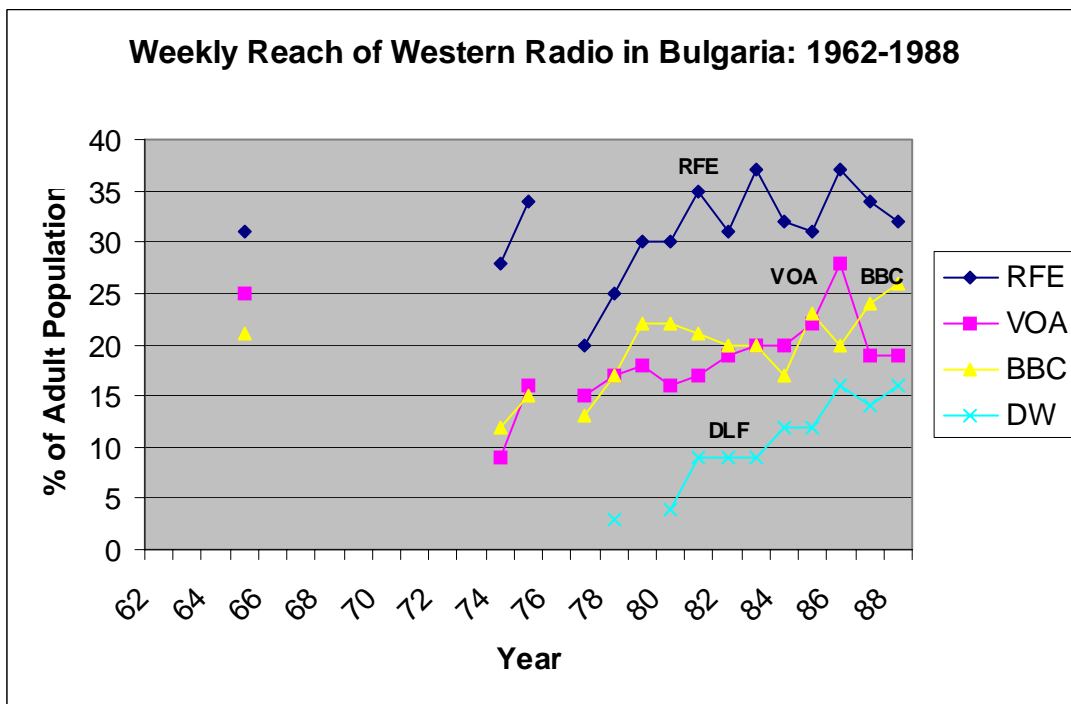
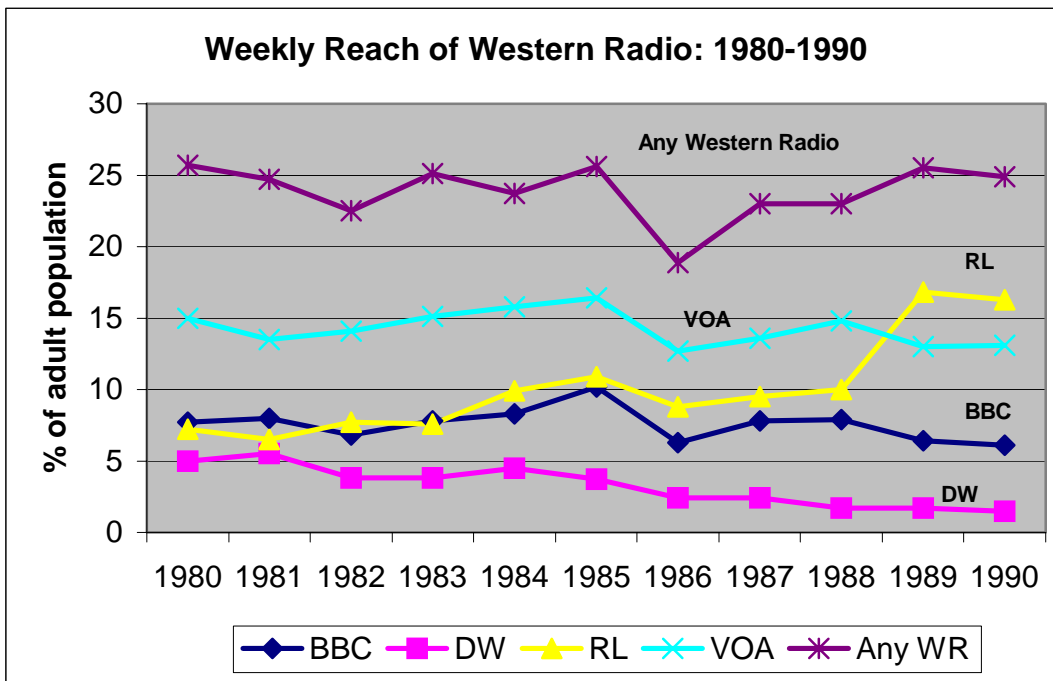


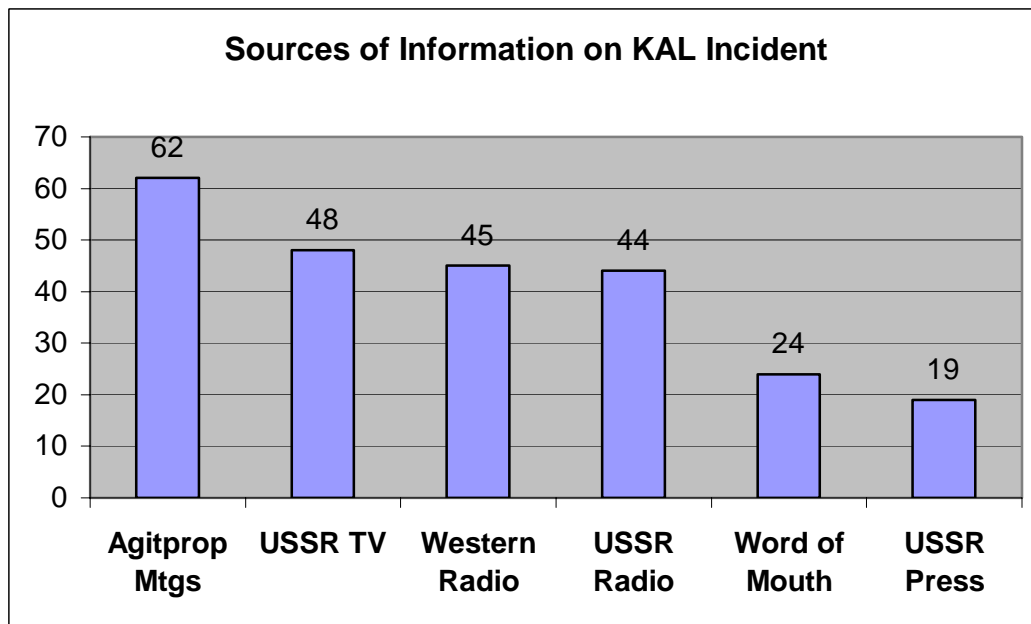
Chart 5. Weekly Reach of Western Radios in Bulgaria: 1962-1988



**Chart 6. Weekly Reach of Western Broadcasters in the USSR: 1980-1990**

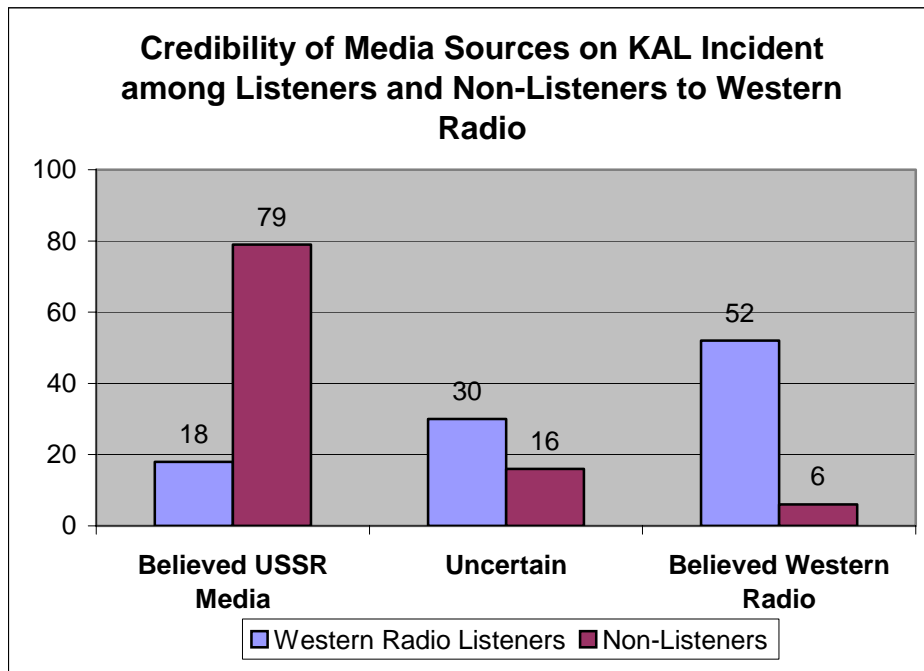


**Chart 7. Sources of Information on the KAL Incident**

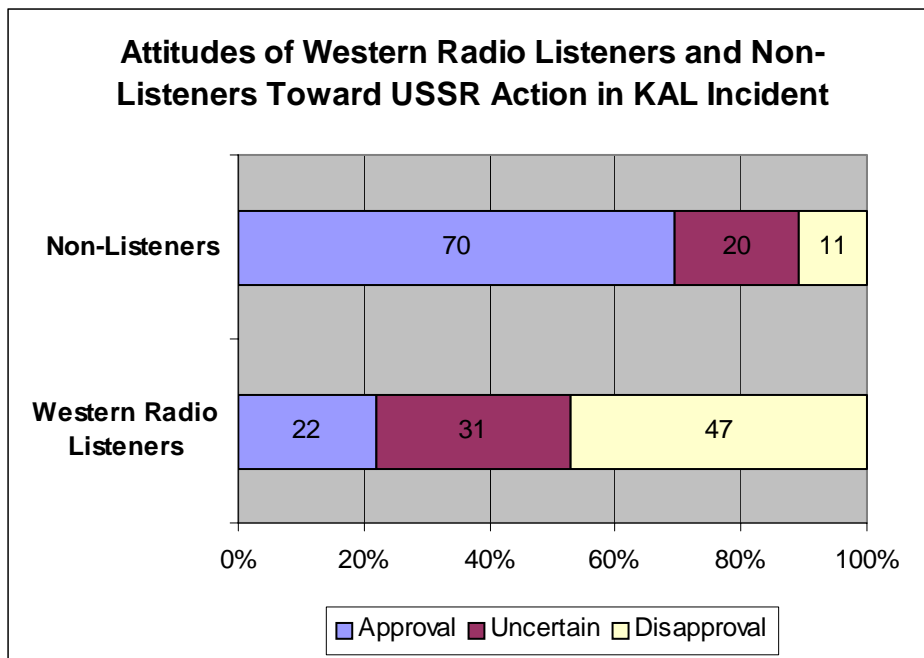


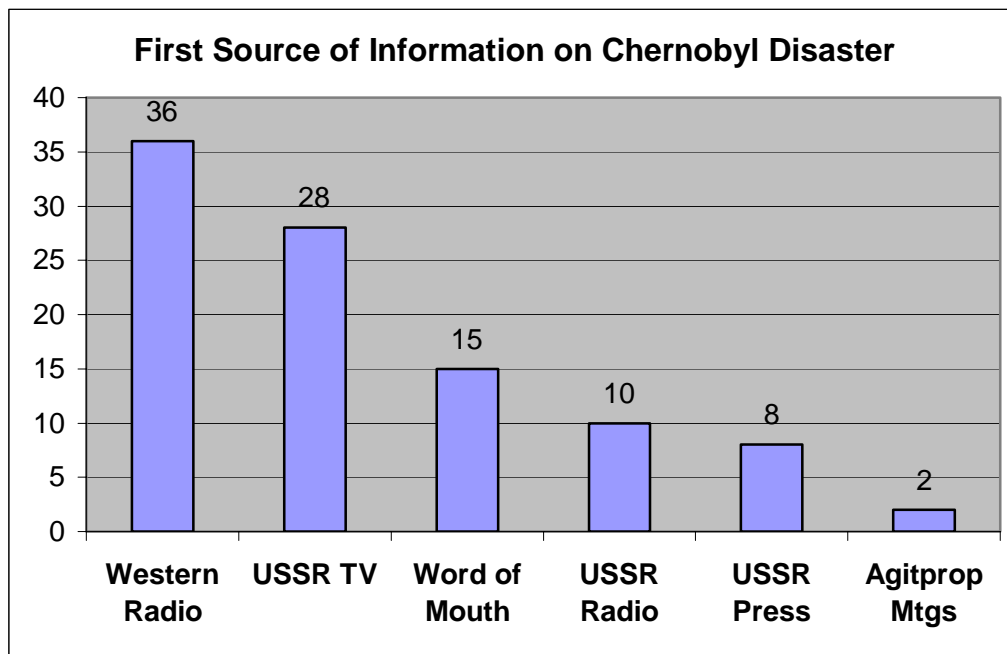


**Chart 8. Credibility of Media Sources on KAL Incident Among Listeners and Non-Listeners to Western Radio**



**Chart 9. Attitudes Toward the USSR Action in the KAL Incident Among Listeners and Non-Listeners to Western Radio**



**Chart 10. First Source of Information on the Chernobyl Disaster**

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