

UNDERGROUND AND OVER THE AIR:
RADIO LIBERTY, RUSSIAN DISSIDENCE, AND THE CULTIVATION OF A
LISTENING PUBLIC

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

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An open letter from Russian dissidents in 1979 described Radio Liberty (RL) as “our national, domestic station.”¹ The station could reasonably claim that the relationship that RL had cultivated with its audience helped to foster an environment of rights-based activity. Samizdat was to Western surrogate broadcasters what “user-generated content” is to the media conglomerates of today. When one’s users are invested in the broadcasting enterprise, they can become a seemingly endless source of programming content, at relatively little cost to the broadcaster. But as Henry Jenkins, et al., have pointed out concerning the contemporary media landscape, there is a fine line between serving one’s users and exploiting them.² Radio Liberty has carefully trod this line throughout its existence.

This dissertation project is a curated collection of primary source material related to the construction of a mediated relationship between Radio Liberty and

¹ Viktor Nekipelov and Viktor Serebrov, “Fakul’tet demokratii. O zarubezhnykh radioperedachakh na russkom iazyke: sovety i pozhelaniia.” AS No. 3834, Moscow, November, 1979. Dornan Collection/Russian Samizdat Archive, Drew University Libraries, Special Collections, Madison, NJ.

² Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), xi.

its listeners. The overarching questions I address in the project center on the efforts of the station (and, indirectly, the U.S. government and other Western democracies) to establish a communicative relationship with its audience. My approach is interdisciplinary, comprising intellectual history, literary studies, and media studies, and I have chosen four areas through which to examine the RL project: 1) its founding based in the classical liberal ideology of the Enlightenment; 2) direct and multi-directional contact with the listeners; 3) the power of intellectual superstars to create a brand (and brand recognition). Informing all of these is the forbidden fruit nature of broadcasting and listening to a jammed signal.

To address these questions, and in the interests of the greatest use to future scholars, I have created a digital resource, which consists of a searchable database of letters and post cards written to the station between the years 1961-1972, along with related broadcasts. Within the resource, I then created interactive maps based on the origin points of the letters, a timeline of selected letters and broadcasts, and the option to create visualizations based on thematic tags. I then employed that collection of tools to address a set of research questions in an analytical document. The end product provides an immersive experience for users. Text and media are integrated on the same pages, and the project affords linear and non-linear engagement. Most importantly, a resource such as this one is expandable, responsive, and discursive, able to grow and change in response to its readers/users. The project may be found at <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/jkbrandt-dissertation/>.

Introduction

In the heady, self-congratulatory hindsight of the 1990s, Western liberal democracies indulged in the confidence spurred by a sense of Cold War victory. As various parties sought credit for the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many policies and practices that had been controversial during the previous fifty years suddenly seemed justified, indispensable, in fact, as though they could not have been done any differently. Among these was the surrogate broadcasting enterprise embarked upon by the CIA as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Through the voices of émigrés the stations spoke directly to the subject peoples behind the Iron Curtain, delivering news, literature, history, and politics. And if the tacit suggestion of the ideological supremacy of the West should happen to slip through, well, all the better. On the other side of the Curtain, meanwhile, opposition movements began to coalesce around various interest groups (religious, artistic, and political, and many combinations thereof). These movements found their own voices, so to speak, in the self-publishing phenomenon known as *samizdat*, which arose to confront the censorship of the Soviet bloc. Samizdat was neither new nor unique, yet from the Western view, it was endowed with nearly mythical abilities to speak truth to power, as long as that power was Soviet totalitarianism. RFE/RL saw as their crowning achievement the role they played in providing a broadcast outlet for these movements, thus amplifying these opposition voices.

My dissertation will focus on the work of Radio Liberty specifically, and primarily its Russian language service, which broadcast directly to the Soviet Union. In contrast to Radio Free Europe, which could rely on a target audience who largely had not sought membership in the Soviet sphere of influence, Radio Liberty's project was somewhat more daring, and morally ambiguous. As the founding documents demonstrate, there was real concern that such direct marketing would be seen as a hostile act, far more so than the familiar, and relatively bland, propaganda on offer through Voice of America. It could be assumed that a large portion of the Soviet audience was not predisposed to believe the word of émigrés who had been exiled from their homeland, or even worse, had abandoned it willingly. And even though many of the potential listeners within the USSR were anti-Soviet, they certainly were not all anti-Communist. Further, the émigré population from the Soviet Union was anything but homogeneous, and the different nationalities represented their own, often competing, interests. Internal strife within and between the waves of Soviet immigrants who were tapped to contribute to RL plagued the station, at times interfering with its mission and message.

In many ways, the democratic movements that blossomed in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and early 1970s were the key to the station's survival. The pursuit of human rights by the target audience seemed to support the ideological claims made by RL's founders. An open letter from dissidents in 1979

described RL as “our national, domestic station.”³ The station could reasonably claim that the relationship that RL had cultivated with its audience helped to foster an environment of rights-based activity. RL then reinforced its own legitimacy by building a reputation as an indispensable tool to Western scholars interested in following and supporting these movements. Samizdat was to Western surrogate broadcasters what “user-generated content” is to the media conglomerates of today. When one’s users are invested in the broadcasting enterprise, they can become a seemingly endless source of programming content, at relatively little cost to the broadcaster. But as Henry Jenkins, et al., have pointed out concerning the contemporary media landscape, there is a fine line between serving one’s users and exploiting them.⁴ Radio Liberty has carefully trod this line throughout its existence.

The overarching questions I am using to guide my research center on the efforts of the station (and, indirectly, the U.S. government and other Western democracies) to establish a communicative relationship with its audience. How did the station imagine its listeners, and what did they reasonably hope to gain from this enterprise? What was the role of RL in domestic politics? How did the station respond to changing developments at home and abroad, and what does that say about the role of transnational media during the Cold War? My approach is interdisciplinary, comprising intellectual history, literary studies, and

³ Viktor Nekipelov and Viktor Serebrov, “Fakul’tet demokratii. O zarubezhnykh radioperedachakh na russkom iazyke: sovety i pozhelaniia.” AS No. 3834, Moscow, November, 1979. Dornan Collection/Russian Samizdat Archive, Drew University Libraries, Special Collections, Madison, NJ.

⁴ Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), xi.

media studies, and I have chosen four areas through which to examine the RL project: 1) the classical liberal ideology of the Enlightenment; 2) direct and multi-directional contact with the listeners; 3) the power of intellectual superstars to create a brand (and brand recognition). Informing all of these is the forbidden fruit nature of broadcasting and listening to a jammed signal.

At least as far back as the printing press, new forms of communication that allow a message to be "broadcast" to a wide audience have faced criticism as well as adulation. Those who have been interested observers of developing media technologies have typically fallen into two camps: the doomsayers and the democratic idealists. On the one side, there is a profound discomfort with the potential for a corrupting message to proliferate unchecked. On the other, access to information provided through media outlets, and circulated freely among citizens, would free them from political and social oppression, even from the "tyranny of books."⁵

The story of broadcast sound is one of intersecting publics and combined and competing goals. Radio has represented in many countries the confluence of democratic and authoritarian impulses, of bourgeois capitalist consumerism and community-minded collectivism. It is at once the discussion board of the people and the megaphone of the Führer. It is through the radio that citizens may be engaged, enraged, comforted, or controlled. Radio as the "tribal drum" in

⁵ Robert Ezra Park and Ernest W. Burgess, "From the Introduction to the Science of Sociology," in John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson, eds. *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts 1919-1968*. Critical Media Studies; Institution, Politics, and Culture Series. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004. Kindle edition), loc 1033.

Marshall McLuhan's formulation allows human behavior a return to a preliterate world, before the Enlightenment and its attendant domination by the printed word and linear thought.⁶ The mid-twentieth century came to be defined by the growth of this medium and its employment in commercial, religious, political, and military realms. And yet, as Kate Lacey has argued, radio is a medium that is routinely, if unfairly, subordinated to visual and tactile media.⁷ (Lacey 2013, loc 610). Such privileging of one sensory experience over another is directly refuted by the continual reassociation of the written and the spoken word in the work of Radio Liberty. By establishing the connection between the two for its audience, RL reawakened the notion of reading as collective listening.⁸

The "imagined community" of Radio Liberty listeners may be subdivided into specific interest groups, but it includes the station and its employees in a larger whole. Sound is not the only thread binding this community together, but it is the principal link, and as such, the key determinant of all interactions within the community. In order for the source to be relevant, it must be audible. How telling, then, that the Radio Liberty signal was the target of sustained jamming for the bulk of its existence, even at times when other foreign radio broadcasting into the Soviet Union was not jammed.⁹ The quality of the sound, and its accurate representation of the message being conveyed, have repercussions in the

⁶ Marshall McLuhan, "Radio: The Tribal Drum," *AV Communication Review*, no. 2 (1964): 134.

⁷ Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age*, (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013, Kindle edition), loc 610.

⁸ *Ibid.*, loc 467.

⁹ R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR during the Cold War*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2007. Kindle edition), loc 381.

listening audience that then reverberate through the community. We typically refer to the quality of sound as "fidelity," suggesting the faithfulness of the end product to its original (whether that original is a recording or a live broadcast). Jonathan Sterne draws our attention to the interactive and practice-oriented nature of this idea, though: "[s]ound fidelity is much more about faith in the social function and organization of machines than it is about the relation of a sound to its 'source.'"¹⁰ The true role of the jammed signal (and the interplay of "original" output and corrupted, "jammed" reception) is in the social ramifications of cultural practice. In the contentious Cold War atmosphere, jamming validated both the message and the messenger, at least to that segment of the audience which was already predisposed to listen.

Sterne's conception dovetails nicely with the vision of Soviet literate society proposed by Stephen Lovell. In his examination of print in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, Lovell describes reading as "an inherently social activity," and again invokes Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" as an apt description of a reading public.¹¹ The image applies twofold in the case of a reading public that is also a listening audience. RL listeners were drawn into a community around the station, which reinforced membership in that community by reading letters aloud, or at least acknowledging receipt of them. These listeners were also members of a Soviet reading community, who valued the very act of reading for various reasons with various goals. These goals could be met in conjunction

¹⁰ Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 219.

¹¹ Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1.

with radio and with each other.

Why Digital?

This is a fair question; after all, hundreds, perhaps thousands of traditional monographs and journal articles in media studies and media history are published each year. All of this scholarship gets along quite nicely in a linear narrative format, and without incorporating primary source recordings. Scholars are perfectly capable of describing media source material for their readers, and if those readers are particularly interested, they may seek out the sources themselves. The question is not whether media scholarship *can* be done in an analog format, rather, what value can be added to the scholarship by using a digital platform? I assert that historical media research in particular may benefit immeasurably from the implementation of digital tools. This view is in line with that expressed in the [AHA Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians](#), which recognizes digital media's "potential to support a communicative transformation, providing new ways to connect the professional work of expert historical scholarship with the ways in which wider publics memorialize, represent, and engage history." For that reason, I have chosen a digital platform, Scalar, that is conducive to the integration of media with text, and the facility to "read" the project in both a linear and a non-linear way (see more in [How To Use This Resource](#)). By including source file recordings of original broadcasts, the "reader" may partake in at least some of the sensory experience

as the original audience. Scholarship may become immersive, and as such, encourage deeper engagement.

A further hallmark of digital platforms is the ability for producers and consumers of the scholarship to interact. This notion undergirded the success of one of the first digital dissertations, [*Infinite Ulysses*](#), by Amanda Visconti. It is true that such interactions can sometimes attract bitterness and conspiracy theories, but they can also lead to new connections and fresh areas for further research. In the long term, it would be my goal to allow and encourage comments from the reader/listener/user. What I have built in this project is expandable and can be responsive to user input. It may serve as both a source for other researchers and as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. It is incumbent upon us as historians to attempt to engage our students and future scholars, as well as the public, in ways that will be most meaningful for them. Whether we like it or not, people of all stripes are less likely to pick up a 300-page monograph to learn about a topic than they are to search the internet. Likewise, secondary and post-secondary students are routinely instructed to use the internet in their assignments. A resource such as this one can be flexible enough to satisfy the casual reader, the young student, or the advanced scholar.

The final advantage of the digital platform to my project in particular has to do with the discursive nature of the subject matter. I am exploring the construction of a relationship and the communicative practices each side employed. The primary source material of letters, corporate documents, and broadcast recordings, while owned by the same entity, exist in two separate

archives, at the Hoover Institution at Stanford and at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University. A digital project allows these archival holdings to be in conversation with one another, and ideally, to stimulate further traffic to both archives as a result.

A Note on Translation and Transliteration

Nearly all of the letters in the project were translated into English by Radio Liberty staff at the time of receipt, and, except for a few words here and there, I have used those translations. When the user views the letter image files, they will typically find both the English translation and the Russian original. In instances when letters were written in a language other than Russian originally (for example, Ukrainian or German), unfortunately, only the English translation was typically maintained in the archives. Translations of the broadcast recordings are my own.

I am using the Library of Congress transliteration system for Russian, with the usual exceptions for proper names that have a well-established spelling in English that does not comply with LoC (such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy).

How to Use this Resource

The purpose of this project is to provide users the ability to explore the communicative loop created by Radio Liberty over a 20-plus-year period, from 1953 to 1975. The project includes letters from listeners and associated broadcast recordings. It is not an exhaustive archive (though such a project could

be pursued in the future); rather, it is a curated collection of primary source material related to the construction of a mediated relationship between the station and its listeners.

Any exploration of the project will begin from the [Table of Contents](#) menu in the upper left corner. Hovering over or clicking on the three lines will open the [full Table of Contents menu](#). The Table of Contents is a persistent element on every page, so users may select another destination in the project at any time. The site may be approached in several ways:

- **As a linear document** -- I have constructed a long-form analytical argument based on the sources, divided into three chapters, or "paths," entitled "Black and White and Red and Gray," "Collective Farm Drivers also Like the Beatles," and "Contemptuous of Eagles." They may be read from beginning to end, much like a traditional monograph.
- **Temporally** -- Selecting the "Timeline" option from the Table of Contents will present an interactive timeline, which includes links to Radio Liberty documents and broadcasts collected in the project, with their descriptions. The Timeline may be read in a linear fashion, moving chronologically from left to right by clicking the right arrow after each entry, or it may be skipped around, using the date bar along the bottom.
- **Spatially** -- The "Map Collection" from the Table of Contents presents a series of interactive maps based on the 344 letters catalogued in this project. Selecting a pin on the map will open a dialogue box with basic information about the letter (Listener Mail Report number, geo-

coordinates, city, and country), and a link to view the original image. The map may be expanded to full screen and the user may zoom in for better geographic detail. Depending on the zoom level, and in cases where there were multiple letters from the same specific city or town, one pin may represent several letters; when this is the case, the dialogue box will include an arrow selector at the top to move from one letter to the next.

- **Visualizations** -- The "Visualizations" option can be accessed through the [compass button](#) on the menu bar. Visualizations allow the user to focus on a particular association of items in the project based on tags that I have created, or to view all relationships between items in the project at once (this can be overwhelming).

Working with Media

Each media item used in this project is defined using Dublin Core metadata as the standard. All media are described using the following terms: date, bibliographicCitation, and rightsHolder. The letters are further described by creator, spatial (the latitude and longitude of the postmark), and language (the language of the original letter). Certain editorial decisions had to be made to make the best use of DC terms. For example, the metadata for the letters includes the field dcterms:creator. For the purposes of this project, that field is used to represent the anonymous identifier assigned to the letter-writer by the Audience Research Division at Radio Liberty. There were relatively few identifiers in use: the catchall "anonymous," which was used for letters that did

not include any identifying information; the acronym "XY," which was used for letters that did include identifying information, but had been redacted for internal circulation and storage in the archives, and a variety of other made-up pseudonyms, which may refer to a favorite author, a geographic location, or an inside joke. In many instances, one may still determine gender (which is grammatically inflected in adjectives and in the past tense of Russian verbs).

The various objects in the project (media, pages, annotations) may be viewed in relation to one another using one of the visualization options. Each option displays the same connections, just in a different way.

A Note on Notes

Publishing scholarship on the web presents new challenges to traditional style guides. While the endnote style is favored in historical scholarship, it is impractical in a long-form piece of writing on the web. Readers do not typically enjoy having to skip back and forth, and even when links are alive and responsive, they take the reader away from the main body of the text. Likewise, footnotes at the bottom of a web page can serve to disrupt the reading process. Since web pages can vary greatly in length, the footnote may be far removed from the text. And again, even adequate links to and from the footnote can be disruptive. The malleable nature of web publication also presents challenges to the static numbering system of traditional end- or footnotes. Content on the web

is more likely to change, thus requiring adjustments to numbering, which are burdensome in a work encompassing multiple web pages.

Therefore, I have chosen to create a note system that allows the bibliographic information, using Chicago Style, to appear in a pop-up adjacent to the text. The reader may choose to click on the highlighted note indicator or not, and they never have to leave the area of the page they are reading. In the interests of simplicity, I have used the parenthetical author-date format for citations in this work. Such a format is acceptable in most style guides (even preferred in MLA and APA), and provides the casual reader the immediate understanding of the source. If they would like the full bibliographic entry, they simply select the highlighted author's name (or item title, in the case of most primary source documents). When finished, select the link again (or anywhere on the page), and the pop-up window closes.

A Preface on Jamming

Throughout this project, the topic of jamming appears repeatedly. To understand the significance of this practice and its effect on the audience and the station, it is important to take a moment to delve into the world of broadcast interference. [Jamming](#) (and counter-measures) must be explored as both technology and sociology, with special attention paid to the perceived importance of being jammed. A key focus of the Audience Research department at Radio Liberty was the systematic cataloging of the Soviet government's efforts to jam the signal. Listeners were solicited to comment on the quality of the signal and to

describe their listening conditions (which band and at what time of day was most/least audible). In the post-war years, the Soviets re-commissioned various wartime broadcasting apparatuses to operate as “glushilki,” or “jammers.” Signal disruption is a key tactic in warfare, both hot and cold, and RL arguably benefited from the attempts to block its message. Such moves created an aura of forbidden fruit to the Soviet audience, while lending legitimacy at home to the claims that the broadcasts had value—why else would the Soviet regime attempt to block them?

Deliberate broadcast interference has a history that runs in parallel to the development of radio as a medium in the twentieth century. Since broadcast wavelengths are a finite commodity, the competition could be fierce, particularly among the early commercial broadcasters, who would intentionally encroach on each others' wavelengths.¹² This practice was refined in wartime, as radio communication became the norm on the battlefield. It is tempting to view jamming as simply a hostile act, carried out to undermine a competitor/enemy (commercial or military), or practiced in retaliation for such behavior. The content of the broadcast being interfered with is in some ways secondary (even on the battlefield, the primary purpose for jamming is the disruption of communication altogether, not so much specific messages of troop movements or tactics).

Content becomes important, however, when radio is being employed for propaganda purposes. The notion of “propaganda” itself is not even necessarily negative, except when its message runs counter to the cultural norms of a

¹² See Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922*; and Michelle Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952*.

chosen group or community. One of the earliest instances of jamming based on content appeared in the 1930s, and it involved Nazi Germany. It was not the Germans, however, who were practicing jamming; it was the Austrians, seeking to interfere with the messages that the Nazis were broadcasting over the Alps.¹³ Hitler's regime is often credited with weaponizing radio, and the Dollfuss government introduced a method to counter-attack in the same medium.

But how exactly does jamming work? On a very basic level, the propagation of shortwave broadcasting over long distances is dependent upon the reflection of the transmitted waves off of the ionosphere above the Earth's surface. Depending on the time of day and the time of year, the signal can be reflected at higher or lower layers of the ionosphere, based on the amount of radiation from the sun (i.e., more radiation is produced in the daytime, and in the summertime, when days are longer). When a wave is able to reach a higher layer of the ionosphere, it will be reflected farther than it will from a lower level. It may also be able to reflect again off the Earth's surface, or "bounce," more than once, in the right conditions, allowing a signal potentially to reach the other side of the world. Shortwave behaves uniquely that way, as the AM and FM bands with which we are more familiar in the U.S. operate either at the ground level (AM), or in a line-of-sight model (FM).

The most effective way to jam a signal is to be located near the original transmitting equipment. The Soviets couldn't do that, of course, so they had to try

¹³ George Woodard, "Cold War Radio Jamming," in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2010), 53; citing Stanley Leinwoll, "Freedom's Radio," *Electronics Now* 68 no. 9 (1997): 46.

to recreate the broadcast conditions from the other side, setting up large arrays of transmitters in Siberia, approximately the same distance to the east as the RL towers were to the west. In this way, the signals they produced would travel, or propagate, on approximately the same path (if in the opposite direction). This is commonly known as "sky-wave" jamming.¹⁴ In more urban areas, the Soviets also employed "ground-wave" jammers, which sought to disrupt the signal close to the receiver. In all, the constant back-and-forth led to innovations on both sides. In 1965, Radio Liberty produced its Annual Report booklet entitled "[In a Time of Change](#)," which, among other things, touted its broadcasting effectiveness and Soviet attempts to undermine it.¹⁵ Pages 2-5 are devoted exclusively to jamming, and convey the importance that RL gave to the practice. A 1962 report from the U.S. Information Agency (which was directly involved with VOA at this time, but only indirectly with RL) is quoted on the subject: "Jamming... like the Berlin Wall... is an admission of bankruptcy."¹⁶

Of all Western broadcasters into the Soviet sphere, Radio Liberty was the only one to be jammed without interruption from its inception to the height of the glasnost'/perestroika period in 1988, when all Soviet jamming ceased.¹⁷ Other large-scale broadcasters, such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle, and the Voice of America, all enjoyed periods of reprieve, and were essentially un-jammed by the era of détente and up through the end of the Soviet Union. Even Radio Free

¹⁴ Woodard, 57-58.

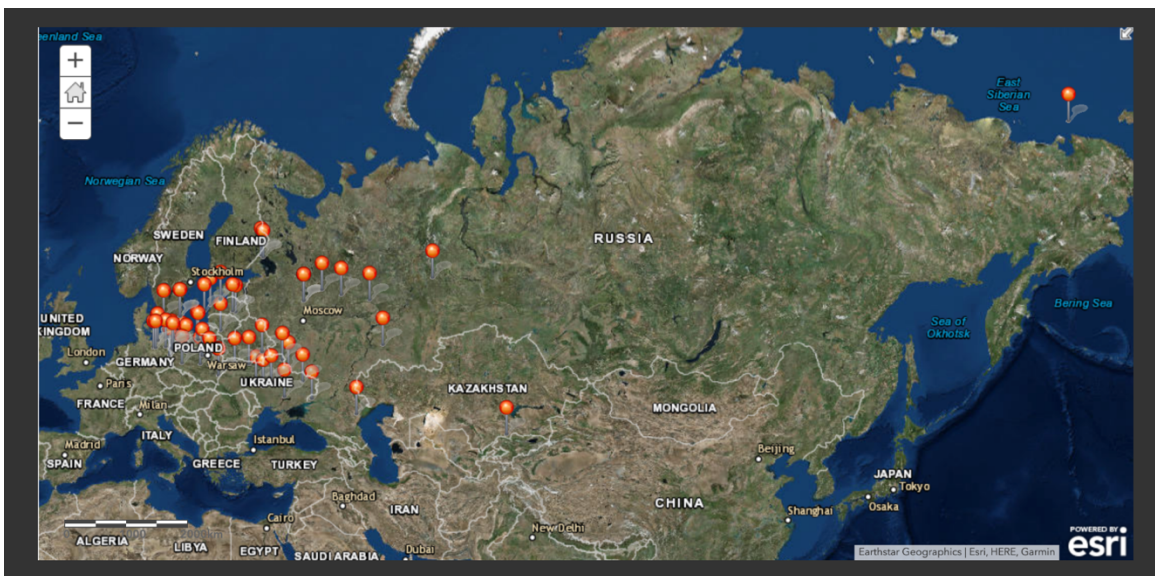
¹⁵ Box 620, Folder 9, RFE/RL Corporate Records. Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond*, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 185-186; Woodard, 52-53.

Europe was less consistently jammed than Radio Liberty, further underscoring the unique threat of RL broadcasts perceived by the Soviet regime.¹⁸

The map below depicts instances of listener mail that refer to listening conditions. It is important to note that such mail came in even from the Central Asian republics, and an outpost on the Arctic. Unlike the comments quoted in "In a Time of Change," however, not all of these letters were positive. Examples are provided below the map.



A listener from Crimea in 1964 asserts that most Soviet citizens agree with their government's attempts to jam stations such as RL, and with the money spent on these efforts ([LMR #386-64](#)).¹⁹ He further asks them to broadcast his letter in full, even offering to write more for them, if they like. Although he is clearly hostile toward the émigrés at the station, whom he sees as propagandists, and insists

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Box 538, Folder 4, RFE/RL Corporate Records, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

he is neither a communist nor a party member, he engages with the station. Another from Moldova states that, "...regrettably, audibility is at times satisfactory," and describes the station as a "wasp's nest, with whose poison you succeed in poisoning a few people" ([LMR #69-61](#)).²⁰ Even negative responses such as these served to underscore the station's purpose, as they made clear that opponents were listening, and were, in a sense, taking the bait. Letter-writers, whether supportive or hostile, tend to be the most deeply engaged with a media outlet. Even today, when all it takes is a click or a tweet to register one's opinion, those commenting tend to be more intensely positive or negative than the general audience. At the height of the Cold War, it required sincere effort to write a letter and choose to post it to a western address.

Listening to Radio Liberty was never a simple matter of tuning in. Good reception was highly variable, and with the Soviet government heavily invested in preventing that reception, especially in the most populated parts of the U.S.S.R., it required persistence and determination to tune in.

An American Dilemma

Standing next to a three-dimensional graphic which depicts a web of covert financing, Mike Wallace introduces his special report with the following admonition: "The very fact of this broadcast is proof that something is seriously wrong, for whenever you hear about an intelligence operation in progress, that

²⁰ Box 536, Folder 5, RFE/RL Corporate Records, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

operation has failed."²¹ It was March of 1967, and CBS television had picked up on a category of criticism first published by the left-leaning journal *Ramparts* the previous month. Editor Sol Stern at *Ramparts* had “exposed” the financial backing provided by the Central Intelligence Agency to various supposedly private organizations, including Radio Free Europe, and by association, Radio Liberty.²² The CBS special was entitled “[In the Pay of the CIA: An American Dilemma](#),” and it addressed the CIA’s actions with terms such as “ostrichism,” “shenanigans,” and “credibility chasm.” Referring to the *Ramparts* article, Wallace presents the subject in the manner of an exposé, clearly suggesting that the government has crossed a line by allowing intelligence operations to use unsuspecting Americans to achieve its ends. He further casts these operations as failures, hinting that this adds insult to the injury already suffered by the American public.

This public showdown over covert operations reflected a tension within the United States about the proper scope of government activity in a democracy. But it provided only a glimpse into the complex application of ideals such as liberty and reason in the real world. A more complete picture of the interplay of such Enlightenment notions can be seen in a close examination of one of the CIA’s innovative projects – Radio Liberty – and its relationship with the Soviet human rights movement.

²¹ Columbia Broadcasting System. “In the Pay of the CIA: An American Dilemma,” Produced by Ron Bonn, air date March 13, 1967. Youtube title “In the Pay of the CIA Charity, NGO, Think Tank, Media 1967,” Parts 1-5, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DlalzuRit4U>, (accessed 8 June 2016).

²² Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 188.

There have been numerous histories of Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) in recent years, as the documents surrounding their founding have been declassified.²³ Many of these are memoirs written by prominent figures at the Radios, and they tend to tell a triumphant Cold War tale. Likewise, there has been much scholarship on the Soviet human rights movement and the self-publishing phenomenon known as “samizdat.”²⁴ This project looks to examine the interplay between the two, American broadcasting on the one hand, and Soviet democratic activity on the other. They each attempted to apply Enlightenment concepts, but with a slightly different focus. The American approach was based in a social scientific, and some might say cynical, conception of freedom, and viewed radio as a potential weapon of psychological warfare. The Soviet dissidents grounded their movement in legal theory, and their demands seemed to reflect an optimistic view of the power of individual thought. By investigating the relationship that developed between Radio Liberty and the Soviet human rights, or “democratic,” movement over the use of samizdat, we can see the emergence of a multi-faceted image of “liberty.”

In its role as a voice of freedom, so to speak, yet sponsored by a spy organization, Radio Liberty and its Soviet audience would seem to have embodied the cultivated myth of Enlightenment as propounded by Max

²³ See James Critchlow, *Radio Hole-in-the-Head: An Insider's Story of Cold War Broadcasting*; Richard Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe 1950-1989*; A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The Cold War Years and Beyond*; Sig Mickelson, *America's Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*; Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider's Memoir of Radio Liberty*.

²⁴ The coining of the term, which is a literal rendering of “self-publish” in the form of the typical Soviet institutional acronym, is generally credited to the poet Nikolai Glazkov, who first used a slightly longer version of the word in 1952. See Komaromi 2004, 598.

Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. But the result of this deliberate enlightened thinking was not “disaster triumphant,” as the two German philosophers warned.²⁵ In this particular case, we see the push and pull of the Enlightenment ideals upon which the United States was founded, and through which it hoped to gain the upper hand in the Cold War.

When one speaks of Enlightenment ideals, a certain list of terms is conjured: in addition to the aforementioned freedom and democracy are the values of reason, individuality, equality, and human rights. These rights are further defined to include thought, speech, religious practice, and political self-determination. They are typically touted as the cornerstone of the American experiment. Through them, one may examine and understand the world without recourse to metaphysics or myth. In Baconian terms, knowledge is power. And in the American context, these ideals are an unqualified good. But to Horkheimer and Adorno, they represented reified concepts that would enable such atrocities as the rise of Hitler and fascism. As James Schmidt explains, “the attempt to break free from mythology falls back into mythology.”²⁶ In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, first circulated in 1944 and published in 1947, Horkheimer and Adorno reflect on the meaning of Enlightenment in the context of the Second World War. They assert that Enlightenment is “totalitarian,”²⁷ and explore its difficult relationship to myth:

²⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Trans. by John Cumming, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 3.

²⁶ James Schmidt, “Language, Mythology, and Enlightenment: on Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.” *Social Research* 65, no. 4 (Winter 1998), 833.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/40971288> (accessed 5 March 2013).

²⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno 6.

Myth turns into enlightenment, and nature into mere objectivity. Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them.²⁸

The relationship is multi-directional, however:

Just as the myths already realize enlightenment, so enlightenment with every step becomes more engulfed in mythology. It receives all its matter from the myths, in order to destroy them; and even as a judge it comes under the mythic curse.²⁹

And so, as they perceive it, Enlightenment thinking can be as stifling and dangerous as any reliance on myth precisely because it, too, must become unchanging and unforgiving in its denunciation of the thought that preceded it. The issue is complicated further by the use of modern technology, in this case radio, which, in their estimation, was to fascism what the printing press had been to the Reformation.³⁰ The Radio Liberty project, then, with its unquestioned acceptance of the value of Enlightenment ideals, represented the most pernicious system of thought delivered by the very worst contemporary medium. Horkheimer and Adorno did not take into account, however, an audience whose freedoms were routinely and arbitrarily denied by their government. In particular, they did not imagine the Soviet listener, who may have already accepted the values of liberty and individual thought, but was prohibited from expressing them. This would seem to be the unique niche of

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁹ Ibid., 11.

³⁰ Schmidt, 815.

Radio Liberty. Its founders certainly exploited a particular line of reasoning in order to shape the behavior of an enemy, and denounce the “myth” of Communism. But it is difficult to prove that the overall result was repressive or damaging in the way that Horkheimer and Adorno envisioned.

It can be difficult to discuss the heady notions of “freedom” and “democracy” without appearing either to hold them as moral absolutes, or to dismiss them cynically as utopian concepts, which are never fully achieved. It is important to acknowledge them as key tenets of an intellectual tradition that grew out of the Enlightenment, and that resonated with a new relevance for policy-makers as the two superpowers squared off in an extended Cold War. The question of what it means to have freedom to use one’s reason for a democratic purpose lurks behind every aspect of the CIA/Radio Liberty/samizdat project.

Before we can delve into the world of Soviet samizdat, it is important to understand the founding purpose of Radio Liberty, and how it came to be the focus of any public attention within the United States. In the tension-filled decade after World War II, it became clear that the United States and the Soviet Union were engaging in a new kind of warfare, one that would be governed by the war-weariness of the recent worldwide conflict, and by the threat of nuclear destruction. With the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the American intention to support the people of states under Soviet influence in Eastern Europe was made public. The pertinent policy objective was the “support of free peoples who are resisting attempted subjection by armed minorities or by outside

pressures."³¹ In a document drafted for the National Security Council in April, 1948, State Department Policy Planning Director George Kennan advocated for the establishment of a covert operations directorate within the government. This arm of the security apparatus would engage émigrés from nations under Soviet domination, as well as known anti-communist elements in other countries, and foster support for their causes. Kennan's intent was to foment intellectual resistance to communist (particularly Soviet) incursions. He termed this endeavor "organized political warfare," and claimed it as a logical peacetime extension of Clausewitz's doctrine.³² Thus, clandestine activities become war by other means. It was also significant that Kennan and others in the State Department saw Lenin as a master of "political warfare," and believed the Soviet regime had continued his legacy. As G. J. A. O'Toole outlines further, with its intervention to prevent Communist domination in Italy, the Truman administration was becoming comfortable with the notion of an ongoing conflict where most skirmishes are not fought on the battlefield, but are carried out through covert action.³³ In a very basic sense, government action that will undermine the enemy, with the fewest possible casualties, is seen as rational.

After the embarrassing failure to foresee the increasing instability on the Korean Peninsula after 1948, much of the intelligence apparatus was

³¹ G. J. A. O'Toole, *Honorable Treachery: A History of U.S. Intelligence, Espionage, and Covert Action from the American Revolution to the CIA*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991), 434.

³² "George F. Kennan on Organizing Political Warfare, April 30, 1948." <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/11432>, Cold War International History Project, e-Dossier No. 32: Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, Wilson Center, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/e-dossier-no-32-radio-free-europe-and-radio-liberty> (accessed March 2, 2019).

³³ O'Toole, 437-438.

reorganized to allow the CIA a wider selection of subversive activities.³⁴ Within this new scheme the medium of radio was seen as a weapon of psychological warfare. There was ample evidence from Nazi Germany of the power of radio in the hands of a charismatic leader. But intelligence planners focused on the potential for radio to speak directly to an audience who was physically and ideologically remote. In so doing, it could model the type of freedom that was meant to be key to a democratic society, and that was suppressed in zones of Soviet influence. It would also afford the U.S. government the opportunity to put the many post-War Eastern Bloc refugees to work in service of an important policy goal (and perhaps keep them out of trouble). The first foray into this new territory was Radio Free Europe (RFE). As its name implies, Radio Free Europe was aimed at the subject peoples of Eastern Europe, many of whom viewed the Soviet Union as an unwelcome oppressor. The United States government could count on a relatively large corps of educated, politically experienced refugees from those states who were more than willing to contribute to any campaign to undermine Soviet influence in their homelands. This was an endeavor that would rely on the voices of Eastern European émigrés themselves as programming directors and announcers to provide a steady flow of information that would otherwise be unavailable behind the Iron Curtain. Employing the former nationals of these subject states would lend legitimacy to the message that the CIA wanted to get out: on the other side of the Curtain, information flows freely, without fear of reprisal.

³⁴ Ibid., 431.

By the time RFE went on the air in 1950, many of the same people in the Department of State and the CIA responsible for designing Radio Free Europe felt emboldened to turn this “weapon” of sorts directly on the Soviet Union. The government project was firmly grounded in a faith in social science research. The belief that human behavior could be studied, quantified, predicted, and thus manipulated, lay behind the development of psychological operations. Such application of the scientific method was a logical conclusion of Enlightenment thinking. They incorporated a vision of radio as inherently democratic, in that it could instantaneously cross borders and tended to dissolve social strata.³⁵ Listening does not require literacy, or even necessarily time. One may listen passively while sitting at a desk, cleaning the house, or working an assembly line. And each individual listener does not need to own a radio in order to partake of the product. Sound travels of its own accord. Here we have another interesting departure from the conception of radio espoused by Adorno and Horkheimer. To their thinking, radio was the medium of totalitarian menace.³⁶ American government officials chose to see it as a facilitator of democratic thought and Enlightenment ideals. Their approach to its use, however, based as it was on the scientific manipulation of social behavior, reflected the potential threat envisioned by the German philosophers.

The belief in the power of social science led to several projects in the post-War period that would directly influence the formation of Radio Liberty. Much of

³⁵ Hadley Cantril and Gordon W. Allport, *The Psychology of Radio*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), reprinted by Arno Press, 1971, in series *History of Broadcasting: Radio to Television*, 20.

³⁶ Schmidt, 815.

the groundwork for this belief grew out of the Harvard Refugee Interview Project. After some preliminary interviews in 1948-49, the Project was pursued in earnest from 1950-53.³⁷ Russian speakers were hired to interview hundreds of displaced persons from the Soviet Union at the refugee camps in West Germany. These interviews were meant to gain insight into the social lives of Soviet citizens in a way that was otherwise impossible, given the closed nature of that society. The survey designers sought specific information about radio listening habits from some of the interviewees, and several were asked to respond to a “Special Interview” about the Voice of America. From the notes of these interviews we can see the possible source of some of the program policies that would later be developed. And it is not insignificant that among the interviewees were future prominent figures at Radio Liberty, such as Gene Sosin.³⁸ The respondents were asked about their opinions on the relative quality of Voice of America and other international broadcasters, such as the BBC, and invited to suggest improvements for VOA. Among the responses are suggestions that “Russians want to hear the voices of other Russians,”³⁹ and “nowadays it is essential to expose Soviet lies, and not dawdle the time away with music.”⁴⁰ These and other recommendations made their way into the eventual program philosophies at RL.

³⁷ The Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System Online, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies Collection, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, MA.
<https://library.harvard.edu/collections/hpsss/index.html> (accessed 14 July, 2019).

³⁸ Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider's Memoir of Radio Liberty*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), xvii-xviii.

³⁹ HPSSS Sched. A, Vol. 10, Case 131, n.d.

⁴⁰ HPSSS Sched. B, Vol. 13, Case 470, n.d.

The RL project also employed an audience research specialist who had studied with Paul Lazarsfeld, the acknowledged expert on the potential power of radio broadcasting to a mass audience.⁴¹ Lazarsfeld's focus on the effects of media was groundbreaking at the time, and he viewed radio as a tool that was not inherently positive or negative, but could be put to either use. With regard to domestic radio, he observed, "To be the masters and not the victims of radio, we must create institutions whereby we can channel its effects upon public opinion."⁴² His practical take on radio was interestingly almost directly at odds with that of Theodor Adorno. This is particularly significant because the two worked together on the Princeton Radio Research Project in the early war years. Adorno, however, left the project in 1941 due to his distaste for the empirical approach to culture that the project espoused, and his concern about the destructiveness of radio.⁴³ The crux of the disagreement may be summed up in Lazarsfeld's and Adorno's views of Hitler's use of radio. The former would remind people that Hitler "did not achieve control through radio but almost despite it, because at the time of his rise to power, radio was controlled by his enemies."⁴⁴ The latter's view was spelled out in his collaborative work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "radio becomes the universal mouthpiece of the Führer;... The inherent tendency of radio is to make the human word, the false commandment,

⁴¹ Puddington, 168.

⁴² Paul Lazarsfeld, "The Effects of Radio upon Public Opinion," in Douglas Waples, ed. *Print, Radio, and Film in a Democracy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942), 78.

⁴³ Thomas Y. Levin and Michael von der Linn. "Elements of a Radio Theory: Adorno and the Princeton Radio Research Project," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 321.

⁴⁴ Lazarsfeld, 74.

absolute."⁴⁵ The founders of Radio Liberty chose the medium with Lazarsfeld's understanding that it could be used both to champion and to undermine. Adorno would likely have viewed the project as an example of the danger of Enlightenment thinking.

The newest radio project proposed to broadcast to the people inside the borders of the only other superpower, and the situation in the Soviet Union was quite different from that in Eastern Europe. While it was certainly well known that there were many disaffected citizens in the U.S.S.R., they lacked any sense of cohesion. Many were Marxists, but anti-Bolshevik, some were focused on religious freedom, and some simply sought the right to emigrate. Complicating things further, many of the minority populations in the various republics of the Soviet Union tended to see themselves more like their Eastern European counterparts. They viewed Soviet Russia as an illegitimate occupying power, but legally and politically, they were Soviet citizens. Feeding their disaffection could be seen as inciting rebellion. These early difficulties were frequently discussed among policy makers, who understood that persuading Russian, Ukrainian, and Armenian émigrés to work together toward a common goal was unlikely to proceed smoothly.⁴⁶ The Office of Policy Coordination in the U.S. advocated for encouraging the patriotism of the various peoples, in the expectation that "the different nationalities will be influenced to concentrate their hatred against the

⁴⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, 159.

⁴⁶ CWIHP, "Document 16 — OPC History of AMCOMLIB, August 21, 1951." <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114354>. (accessed 6 June 2016).

regime and not against each other."⁴⁷ This was a tall order, and in the end, unsuccessful.

In the fall of 1950, at the first meeting to negotiate an agreement on a "political center" of émigrés from the Soviet Union, a settlement could not be reached even among the Russian groups involved. One of the main sticking points was the role of non-Russian minorities in the political center. The American intelligence committee driving the initiative argued that non-Russian Soviet émigrés should be allowed to participate on an equal basis, but the Russians would not agree. Likewise, they became bogged down in disputes over the future government in Russia, should the Soviet regime be defeated (or removed). It took another year of negotiations for the various groups to come to a settlement, admit non-Russian minorities into the fold, and accept that any future Russian government would be decided at a time when the people "could freely express their will."⁴⁸ This was a small triumph of the ideal of democratic self-determination that the Americans were hoping to foster among the Soviet émigrés, who would then transmit that ideal back to the U.S.S.R. In June of 1952, the *New York Times* announced the plans to begin propaganda broadcasts into the Soviet Union by focusing on the success in consolidating ten interest groups among the émigrés.⁴⁹ (Schwartz 1952). It is important to note, however, that this first coalition did not include the major Ukrainian organizations, who

⁴⁷ CWIHP, "Document 17 – RL Objectives Outlined."

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114359>. (accessed 6 June 2016).

⁴⁸ CWIHP, "Document 16."

⁴⁹ Harry Schwartz, "Kirk Consolidates Soviet Exile Units: Admiral Succeeds in Getting 10 Groups to Join in Beaming Propaganda into Russia." *New York Times*, June 24, 1952, 14.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/112275941?accountid=12536> (accessed March 15, 2013).

wanted a guarantee of independence in a post-Soviet world. And more tellingly, after the station went on the air, the coalition essentially fell apart, leaving the project much more closely controlled by its American advisors than had been the case at Radio Free Europe.

Recognizing this delicate situation, the earliest policy guidelines that were circulated for Radio Liberty spoke of developing “an attitude of sullen resentment and shrewd non-cooperation” within segments of the Soviet population, but pledged that the broadcasts “will not include material tending to provoke overt action against the Soviet government, etc.”⁵⁰ They further delineate the very different function of a covert, intelligence-based radio station from that of an avowed instrument of American propaganda, such as the Voice of America (VOA), which had been in existence since 1942. The new venture “will not explain or defend American policies, propagate American ideas, extol the American way of life, build up American prestige, play American jazz, or otherwise encroach upon the field activity of VOA.”⁵¹ The founders of the station certainly understood that, if their project succeeded, it would tend naturally to “propagate American ideas” and “extol the American way of life.” But VOA was already seen around the world as a deliberate organ of political and cultural propaganda, designed to present the United States in a favorable light. The CIA and Department of State now sought to put radio to another, perhaps more sophisticated use.

⁵⁰ CWIHP, “Document 24 – RL Broadcasting Policy, March 28, 1952.”
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114376> (accessed 6 June 2016).

⁵¹ Ibid.

On March 1, 1953, the new station went on the air with the following words: "[This is Radio Liberation speaking](#), the free voice of your compatriots abroad."⁵² The potential success of the station could perhaps be measured by the Soviet government response – it began jamming the signal within ten minutes. The chosen wording of that first broadcast underscored two key concepts: first, the freedom of speech that was, in a sense, embodied by the voice in radio broadcasts, and second, the authenticity of those voices as fellow "Russians." Whether these concepts were heard/received by the audience was the subject of research and debate for the next thirty-plus years.

Conclusions

This project is not intended as a panegyric to the memory of an under-appreciated relic of the Cold War. Rather, it is an attempt to explain one small period in the history of Radio Liberty and Soviet samizdat as it reflected the persistence of Enlightenment rhetoric on the information battleground of the Cold War. By the early 1970s, the station faced its fiercest criticism at home, as its connections to the CIA had been revealed in multiple outlets. Compounding the picture was the Nixon administration's emerging policy of détente. It was little surprise, then, that in 1971, various members of Congress sought to restructure, or preferably eliminate, funding for both stations. Yet at the moment when Radio Liberty's purpose and very existence were most in question, the station benefited

⁵² "First Broadcast of the Radio Liberation (Beginning)", 01 March 1953. [Electronic record.] HU OSA 297-0-1-31858; Radio Liberty (Radio Svoboda) Russian Broadcast Recordings; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. <http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:0b6eeba5-3d24-4a04-a151-f03ebdf92736>. Accessed 10 February 2019.

from an explosion of rights-based intellectual activity produced by its target audience in the Soviet Union. This activity took the form of self-published writings that have come to be known worldwide by their Russian term, “samizdat.” By targeting its efforts at this new trend, Radio Liberty was able to establish its role as an indispensable source of information to the Soviet people, and thus, an embodiment of the value of freedom of thought in a democracy.

In their attempts to craft a listening public, Radio Liberty was, in fact, cultivating multiple audiences: the Soviet citizen, of course, but also the Kremlin, and the broader community of politicians and academics in the West. They began with the assumption that freedom of speech was a universal human right, and in practice, they tacitly reinforced the idea proposed by Kate Lacey of a concomitant freedom to listen. The constant back and forth, through broadcast and print, continually inscribed and re-inscribed these twin ideals.

The slow-paced dialogue created by the conditions of broadcast and written response served to deepen the relationship in a way that seems almost incomprehensible in the current landscape of instantaneous feedback and real-time updates. In separate interviews with the author, both A. Ross Johnson, former Director of RFE and of the RFE/RL Research Institute, and R. Eugene Parta, former Director of Audience Research at RFE/RL, expressed the sense that the success of the clandestine broadcasting enterprise was dependent on investment in the long game. Its impact could seldom be measured month over month, or even year over year, though they worked very hard to do so. It was a generational investment, which likely did not change hearts and minds so much

as it provided an outlet for people to discover that they were not alone. When asked whether any similar program could reasonably be pursued today through broadcasting, social media, or web2.0 and 3.0 technologies, they were both skeptical, largely because of the prevailing imperative in psychological operations to "move the needle." This was the type of program that required 30 years before the needle moved appreciably. And no one claims that Radio Liberty moved that needle completely on its own. It moved only in tandem with efforts within the target area.

One of the reasons my focus is qualitative, not quantitative, is validity -- it is nearly impossible, now or then, to judge whether the opinions being expressed were genuine, whether the person expressing them was who they said they were. It all came down to trust, and that trust had to be built over decades. The digital nature of this project enabled me as a researcher to better envision the influence of this particular broadcast media, even when it is difficult to measure. The predominance of mail from two main areas, Ukraine, and the borderlands of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany helped to give a background to the words those letter-writers put to paper. And the ability to incorporate the actual broadcasts that they may have heard created an immersive experience that gave those words context.

Looking back at the struggles Radio Liberty and the Soviet human rights movement endured at the height of the Cold War, one can see that "success" may only have been temporary. According to The Committee to Protect Journalists, since 1992, 38 journalists have been killed in Russia in connection

with their work.⁵³ In 2012, RFE/RL was forced to cease medium-wave radio broadcasting to Russia, at least for a time, in compliance with a new Russian law restricting foreign ownership of broadcast licenses. That same year, the Pussy Riot trial carried resonances of its predecessors, Siniavskii and Daniel' and the Trial of the Four. And yet, RFE/RL does persist. Its Russian service web presence still bears the title "Radio Svoboda," and on any given day, it is not unusual to find a headline story there describing the questionable treatment or detention of a journalist. Freedom of speech and the freedom to listen are both still very much in question. And on this side of the torn Curtain, popular and political culture are both struggling with the reality of Russian bots effectively tampering with our own freedom of thought. The resultant fear is a powerful political weapon.

⁵³ Committee to Protect Journalists, https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&typeOfDeath%5B%5D=Murder&cc_fips%5B%5D=RS&start_year=1992&end_year=2019&group_by=year. (accessed 14 July 2019).

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