

Visegrad Scholarship at the Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archives 2015/2016

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Introduction: This report will detail the findings from archival research conducted at the Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archives as part of the Visegrad Scholarship program. The report will consist of two primary components. Foremost, it will briefly assess the research findings as they connect to my primary research interests and objectives of the grants' tenure. Secondly, it will discuss the valuable secondary archival research findings, as well as the presentation, and the potential uses these findings. The first section *Public Opinion and Audience Research* looks at the research goals, files examined, a preliminary assessment of the findings, potential additional research, and outputs. The second section *Cartoons, Civil Rights, Office Life, and Pop Music from the Research Archives of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty the CIA Years* discusses how these topics became part of this research project, where the material is located in the collection, its value in future projects, and potential outputs.

I. Public Opinion and Audience Research

Research Goals: The purpose of my research under the grant tenure was RFE/RL public opinion and audience research during the CIA years. Under the auspices of the United State Central Intelligence Agency, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty served as much as an information gathering organization as a broadcasting agency. The research conducted during the fellowship

looked at one specific aspect of the persuasive information cycle, the audience and public opinion research aspects of the persuasive information cycle as conducted by and on behalf of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Throughout its inception and implementation Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, as with other United States government apparatus for generating persuasive information, had connections to the American advertising industry. These extended from relationships with key members of the Advertising Council, the nonprofit entity that brought together advertisers, corporations, the federal government and market researchers, to the appointment of Robert E. Lang, a former advertising executive from the Post Cereal Company as the first Radio Free Europe director.

While persuasive information went under many public names, advertising, marketing, propaganda, psychological operations, public relations, and eventually on the international scale, public diplomacy, those in the industry viewed the distinctions as superficial and saw them all as a means of influencing public opinion. Dependent on continual fresh ideas and new angles, like advertising campaigns for consumer goods, effective persuasive information also required continual revision based on market research. Essential to creating and maintaining cultures, economies and societies rooted in consumer capitalism, persuasive information and market research served as a bedrock for expanding Americancentric free enterprise and democratic values around the globe. With the Cold War cutting off potential markets and official means of international persuasion such as Voice of America confined by federal regulations, early cold warriors developed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty to reach the captive audiences behind the Iron Curtain.

Files Examined: In addition to the material listed below, please refer to the material listed in Section II.

HU OSA 300-6 Media and Opinion Research Department, 1962-1994

- HU OSA 300-6-1 Administrative Files, 1956-1994
- HU OSA 300-6-2 East Europe Area and Opinion Research, 1962-1990

HU OSA 300-8 Publications Department, 1950-1994

- HU OSA 300-8-47 Situation Reports, 1959-1989
- HU OSA 300-8-52 Weekly Information Letter, 1953-1959

HU OSA 300-20-1 Bulgarian Unit, 1949-1994

HU OSA 300-30 Czechoslovak Unit, 1951-1994

- HU OSA 300-30-30 Miscellaneous Records of the Czechoslovak Unit, 1951-1975

HU OSA 300-50 Polish Unit, 1951-1994

- HU OSA 300-50-11 Information Items and Correspondence from RFE Field Offices, 1970-1971

HU OSA 300-60 Romanian Unit, 1946-1995

- HU OSA 300-60-2 RFE Confidential Reports on Romania, 1971-1975

Preliminary Assessment:

During the 1950s and early 1960s at RFE/RL, there was a certain amount of trial and error in establishing research methods for audience and opinion research. In the 1950s, market, media and opinion research were still growing industries experimenting with new theoretical approaches, and RFE/RL faced the unique challenge of researching an audience they could not easily access. Conceptually, the research unit of RFE/RL represented a meeting ground of intelligence gathering and social research. Since they so closely monitored newspapers, radios and magazines, as well as talking to as many Eastern Bloc listeners as possible, they had valuable insight upon which the CIA could call. However, as their public face was that of an émigré radio station reaching out to those trapped behind in the East, the research units allowed scholars access to their material, offered tours and granted press requests.

The research units faced unique challenges in the field of audience and opinion research, such as how to interview a radio audience that they could barely access and how to make the scant data meaningful. Initially, they interviewed refugees, but as those numbers dwindled, they found ways to meet Eastern Bloc residents when they traveled to Western Europe for athletic and artistic events, conferences, youth festivals, and tourism. They also encouraged audiences to write the radio for giveaways, song requests and personal messages to be read on air. These letters served as a way to create audience interactivity, expand audience reach and gather information. Much like advertising and market agencies at the time, the RFE/RL practitioners did not adhere strictly to any one theoretical method and incorporated approaches on an ad hoc basis. Eventually, they developed methods that they called *Comparative and Continual Sampling* and *Continuous and Corrective Sampling* as an attempt to overcome the small samplings.

As the Free Europe Committee and the Advertising Council run *Crusade for Freedom* fundraising campaigns illustrate the relationship between corporate advertisers and psychological warfare practitioners, RFE/RL audience research highlights the connections between academic theorists and government psychological warfare efforts. One key figure in developing RFE/RL audience research Max Ralis, who headed audience research at Radio Liberty from 1954 through 1981, received his training from the prominent sociologist Paul Felix Lazarsfeld head of the Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research. A pioneer in media and opinion research, Lazarsfeld first headed the Princeton Office of the Radio Research Project. A project which began as a Rockefeller Foundation funded research project research about the impact of mass media and later became the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University. Ralis completed his PhD work with Lazarsfeld and then participated as an interviewer in the Harvard Refugee Interview Project (the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System).

While no direct communications between Lazarsfeld and Ralis during Ralis time at Radio Liberty have yet been located, methods were used in both the RFE and RL research units that reflected Lazarsfeld's theories. Paul Lazarsfeld argued that top down propaganda could not be effective and that intermediaries who discussed the content with others also played an important role. Along with other scholars, Lazarsfeld asserted analyzing civic engagement and consumer engagement required similar methodological techniques. To be effective, persuasive information should be responsive to the audience and the creators should understand the consumer as uniquely situated within their community and social group. RFE/RL audience research studies reflect this approach by having individual research units devoted to each country, staying abreast of each country's current events, cultural, economic and social circumstances, and questioning audiences from a range of demographic perspectives. The research units took great care to have

audiences questioned both about how they perceived the radio stations and how they perceived the various shows. This information then helped inform programming decisions as well as assess effectiveness.ⁱ

The research findings also demonstrated that instead of an Iron Curtain, the division between East and West more closely resembled a porous limestone cave system. While difficult to permeate, it was not impossible. RFE/RL broadcasts reached “captive” audiences in spite of jamming and RFE/RL found listeners to interview in spite of travel restrictions.

Additional Research:

Building on the research conducted during this grant, I will be continuing research at OSA. That research will include the records of the Free Europe Committee and the Alfred Reisch Collection. As the work on my book expands, I will also look at connected material in the following collections: the Air Force Historical Research Agency, the Borsis Souvarine Papers and Harvard Refugee Interview Project at Harvard’s Houghton Library, Columbia University’s archival collection of the Bureau of Applied Social Research, The Lazarsfeld Archive - Universität Wien, as well as RFE/RL material at the Hoover Institution and documents held in the United States National Archives and Records Administration system.

Output: The aforementioned research material from the Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archives will be incorporated into an article about how Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and their research in the 1950s and 1960s fit within the history of persuasive information. The research is also part of ongoing work that will be incorporated eventually into a book about the United States’ persuasion network of American advertising companies, major corporations, the

White House, university research institutions, the CIA, and other United States government agencies; major broadcasters such as ABC, CBS, and NBC; department stores and supermarkets; popular magazines such as *Reader's Digest*, *Time* and *Life*; market research and psychological testing organizations such as AC Nielsen, the Gallup poll, and the Psychological Corporation; and brand name corporations such as Coca-Cola, Ford, Kodak, Kraft Foods, Procter & Gamble, General Electric, General Foods, and General Motors. Collectively, these organizations pursued an economic and political strategy in which the United States would profit from leading the world in a geo-political order based on the consumption of advertised brand name goods and services. The presence, perseverance and extent of the network has been elusive, both in American history and in contemporary discourse - an invisible hand influencing consumer markets, contemporary politics, public knowledge, and masking the complexities of modern multi-national, mega-corporations.

II. Cartoons, Civil Rights, Office Life, and Pop Music from the Research Archives of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty the CIA Years

How these topics became part of this research project: In the course of conducting research, several topics began to emerge as interesting angles to use in creating a fuller understanding of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and also making use of the RFE/RL collection housed at OSA. The topics highlighted in this section all have significant amounts of material found across the collection, please refer to the list below. The primary source material would make an excellent basis to develop projects ranging from traditional historical scholarship to multi-media digital history.

Files Examined:

HU OSA 300-6 Media and Opinion Research Department

- HU OSA 300-6-1 Administrative Files
- HU OSA 300-6-2 East Europe Area and Opinion Research

HU OSA 300-8 Publications Department

- HU OSA 300-8-11 Daily Information Bulletin
- HU OSA 300- 8 -13 East Europe: A Monthly Review of East European Affairs
- HU OSA 300-8-24 News From Behind the Iron Curtain
- HU OSA 300-8-52 Weekly Information Letters

HU OSA 300-30 Czechoslovak Unit

- HU OSA 300-30-30 Miscellaneous Records of the Czechoslovak Unit

Value in future projects:

- *Cartoons:* RFE/RL research and monitoring units collected anti American and anti RFE/RL cartoons published in Eastern Bloc newspapers and magazines. RFE/RL research and monitoring units collected anti American and anti RFE/RL cartoons published in Eastern Bloc newspapers and magazines. As *News From Behind the Iron Curtain* put it, the common themes were depictions of "Americans as imperialists, warmongers, pro-Nazi, racists, and uncultured barbarians."ⁱⁱ

- **Civil Rights:** Human rights problems for the African American communities in the United States provided Eastern Bloc countries with a constant source of criticism that was used in propaganda internationally and within the Eastern Bloc, and monitored by RFE/RL. With the forthcoming United Nations' report about the conditions of African descendants in the United States, there will likely be renewed focus on this topic. The Communist press used American Civil Rights problems to illustrate the hypocrisy and shortcomings in American foreign policy, politics and society. As *News From Behind the Iron Curtain* put it, "the charge of color prejudice is one of the most popular notes in the anti-American propaganda keyboard" and "prime targets of anti-American propaganda". In Anti-American propaganda, it was used to show the "falsehood of statements that the US is a fighter for freedom and independence of small nations" and "the restrictions of Negroes rights was cited as proof of the falseness of American democracy and freedom." For example, a Soviet broadcast in Africa said that the US came "second only to South Africa in its discrimination against Negroes' and charged that "13 million American colored people are living in condition of 'slave exploitation'." The Eastern Bloc press said that within the United States African Americans and American Indians were "paid smaller wages," could not "exercise their right to vote," and "white people may molest Negroes without being punished." In addition, RFE/RL kept close tabs on how the Soviet media reported on Paul Robeson, the activities of the Civil Rights movement and the conflicts over school desegregation.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Office Life:** In spite of being a covert CIA operation, office life at RFE/RL had a lighthearted side. The following is a list of topics found in the correspondences files that provide a glimpse into office life at the Munich offices. All of the supporting material for

these topics is located in HU OSA 300-30-30: Miscellaneous Records of the Czechoslovak Unit 1950s-60s.

- Christmas – Office Parties, Kids Parties, Shopping Leave
- Holiday and vacation schedules
- Alcohol – Champagne collection, Invoices
- Fire Drills
- Hirings and Firings
- Office reprimands – Cigarette Butts Tossed Out the Window, Ignored Memos, Lazy workers, Dirty Offices, Intoxication, Personal Long Distance Phone Calls
- Archival/Procedural – Style Guides, Storage, Microfilm, Computers, Procuring materials – newspaper and magazines
- Expat Life – Vaccines, Taxes, Insurance Coverage, Military Privilege Cards, Visas, Schools, Military provided school bus service, Imported personal vehicle, passport renewal
- Emigrating - English lessons and US citizenship
- RFE/RL Perks – Housing, China, Furniture, Motor Pool Services, RFE Gas Station
- Local Privileges- Library, Mail Delivery
- The administrative hassles of having your source arrested
- Security Slips – Not locking office doors, taking office keys/material out of the office, not deleting confidential names/information
- 1959 Budget cuts RFE stopped providing china, glassware, light bulbs, kitchen utensils, furniture cleaning services

- 1963 Fuel Shortage-Office heat rationing
- **Pop Music:** The United States effectively used pop music as a soft power tool and the audience research unit reveals who listened to what and when, as well as the most requested songs and popular music giveaways. Youth music shows were among RFE's most popular including young people behind the Iron Curtain in global youth culture and stirring the rebellious nature of youth. In the late 1950s, RFE started giveaways and taking music requests from Eastern Bloc countries. These popular music initiatives proved to be some of the most powerful connections the radio made with audiences behind the Iron Curtain. For instance, in the year of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, RFE reported that "...according to a young student, RFE broadcasts are responsible for the Western song "Young At Heart" becoming an outstanding hit in Hungary. In the beginning, he said, the regime did not like its being sung. But now it is tolerated and can be heard in many coffee houses."^{iv}

The letters sent the RFE/RL requesting pop music giveaways and songs to be played on air made in past the Iron Curtain to the research units of RFE/RL. The offer a unique glimpse into popular and youth culture behind the Iron Curtain as well as the importance of popular music as a soft power tool. In addition, it demonstrates the ways that the radios were able to employ techniques used with traditional radio audience such as music requests and giveaways.

Below is a RFE/RL translation of a letter that will be the subject of a blog post to be developed for the OSA website. The letter is dated September 9, 1964 and was received at "UTAB Records, Box 2600, New York 17, New York, USA." It came from Bulgaria "in response to Southern Base transmissions" and was written in Russian:

I thank you warmly for the two records!!! I love Chubby Checker's performance! You know, all my friends have been round to hear the records! Everyone raved about the music!!! And some of them who have taperecorders have been in to tape all the numbers! They were all filled with admiration!!

Comrades, at the moments, as I am writing, I am listening to the Hungarian station's "(?Mishered?) Hit Parade," Often one also gets the Ten Hits, or the Ten Top and so on, from Free Europe on this station. I listen to this station's musical programs every day. Now the BEATLES are singing – the 'zhuk udarniki.' says he bought a tape recorder....." And I have one real big request to make of you. Send me a tape with recordings of Twists, rock 'n roll, Bossanova and the Blues. I want very good, Tuneful recordings.

I recently heard Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong's version of Duke Ellington's 'Fall in New York.' I'd like to have that song. I'd also like to have numbers by Doris Day, Nancy Wilson, Ray Charles, Johnny Holiday, Elvis Presley, Tony Taylor, Cliff Richard, Little Richard, and the songs "Chin-Chin, " "Hello Dolly" – Louis Armstrong, "I have a (?Heart)" – ("?II too have such a Soul"), "Non hol'eta' ...("Don't be Afraid to Die') 'Bossanova baby' and "Viva Las Vegas' – Elvis Presley, "twist and Shout' – the Beatles, and the melody begins...

...I should also like 'My Boy Lollipop' which I am listening to at the moment

My birthday is November 23.....Therefore I will be very happy if you send me, for my birthday, the tape with those recordings, and one or two discs-but all good tunes! I can't stand cacophony!!!^v

During the 1960s, the Radio Free Europe Audience Research provided regular reports about the mail requests and the songs requested from the Eastern Bloc countries. These reports provide a unique snapshot of popular culture and have great potential if combined with photographs and music clips to make an engaging digital history exhibit. The reports can be found in HU OSA 300-6-2 East Europe Area and Opinion Research, 1962-1990.

Potential Outputs: As mentioned, in addition, to being excellent topics for scholarly and student research projects, these topics would make excellent digital and public history works, particularly if they incorporated historic photographs and music. The first output will likely be a blog post for the Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archives based on the theme of popular music.

ⁱ Lynn, Katalin Kádár, and Inc, *The inauguration of organized political warfare: Cold War Organizations Sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee*. (Saint Helena, CA: Helena History Press), 2013; Spring, Dawn, *Advertising in the Age of Persuasion: Building Brand America 1941-1961* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2011; Bogart, Leo. "Obituary for Max Ralis, 1916-1999." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (August 1, 2001): 261–62. doi:10.1086/297715; Kenneth Lipartito, "Subliminal Seduction: The Politics of Consumer Research in Post-World War II America" in H. Berghoff, P. Scranton, U. Spiekermann, *The Rise of Marketing and Market Research* (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2012, 18, 215-236; Katz, Elihu, and Paul Felix Lazarsfeld. *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. Transaction Publishers, 2006; Schudson M., "The Troubling Equivalence of Citizen and Consumer," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 608(1):193-204 October 2006; Mikkonen, Simo. "Radio Liberty - The Enemy Within? The Dissemination of Western Values through US Cold War Broadcasts," 2010. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/handle/123456789/26802>.

ⁱⁱ Cartoons, March 1953, pp. 18-19 in News from behind the Iron Curtain Vol. 2, No. 3, HU OSA 300-8-24: 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ "As They See Us," August 1955, p. 15 in News from behind the Iron Curtain Vol. 4, No. 8, Box 2; "Home News: Foreign Broadcasts," 26 August 1958, p. 7 in Daily Information Bulletin No. 158 (375); "Main Topics of RM Foreign Broadcasts," 28 May 1958, p. 7 in Daily Information Bulletin No. 98 (315), Daily Information Bulletin, Box 1; No title, March 1953, p. 45 in News from behind the Iron Curtain, Vol. 2, No. 3, Box 1; "As They See Us: Social and Race Relations," June 1957, pp. 10-11 in East Europe Vol. 6 No. 6; "Paul Robeson," 30 June 1958, p. 9 in Daily Information Bulletin" No. 119 (336); "Foreign Broadcasts: Paul Robeson, 23 September 1958, Daily Information Bulletin No. 178 (395); "Late Soviet Items," 24 September 1958, p. 5 in Daily Information Bulletin" No. 179 (396), Daily Information Bulletin, Box 1; "Late Soviet Items: American Racism," 31 October 1958, p. 6 in "Daily Information Bulletin" No. 206 (423); "Late Soviet Items: US Racist Terror," 12 November 1958, p. 8 in Daily Information Bulletin" No. 214 (431), Daily Information Bulletin, Box 3; "Late Soviet Items: US Senate," 15 January 1959, p. 5 in Daily Information Bulletin, No. 472; "U.S. Race Discrimination," 31 March 1959, p. 8 in Daily Information Bulletin, No. 524, Daily Information Bulletin, Box 3, Publications Department, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Open Society Archives; "Soviet Headlines: 'This in American Democracy'," 18 October 1960, p. 2 in Daily Information Bulletin No. 898, Daily Information Bulletin, Box 3, Records of RFE/RL Research Institute, OSA; See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011); "Statement to the Media by the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the Conclusion of Its Official Visit to USA, 19-29 January 2016." Accessed February 22, 2016.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17000&LangID=E>.

^{iv} Radio Free Europe, European Division, "Newsletter to Staff for the month of February 1956", 16 March 1956, HU OSA 300-8-52 Weekly Information Letters.

^v Listener Mail Report #241-64, 9 September 1964, HU OSA 300-6-1 Media and Opinion Research Department.