

RFE-RL INC.

U.S. cold war of words in

The center of Munich is relatively small. From the Frauenkirche, the familiar twin-domed cathedral that is the city's best-known landmark, it is but a short walk to Odeonsplatz, the Residence and opera houses to the southern tip of English Garden, which resembles nothing less than its name suggests, since it stretches northward for some six or seven miles, a glorious woodland park. Walking eastward one reaches a canal and then a high fence, ringed with barbed wire. Guard dogs roam freely protecting a long white building with a red roof. This is Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, known for simplicity's sake as RFE-RL, and it marks the front line in the United States propaganda war against the Soviet Union.

In 1980, when the Reagan administration came into office, the two radios were revitalized. Under CIA control until 1971, they have been independent (at least in theory) since and are now under the control of the Board for International Broadcasting, which also administers the Voice of America and the recently established Radio Marti, which broadcasts to Cuba. In 1982, the Reagan administration appointed James Buckley, brother of columnist William F. Buckley as President of RFE-RL, and well-known anti-communist George Bailey, an author and journalist as Director of Radio Liberty. Director of the twin station Radio Free Europe was and remains the controversial right-wing intellectual George Urban, perhaps best known for his conversations with prominent figures in *Encounters* magazine.

The mission of RFE-RL is to provide a surrogate news service for Soviet and East European citizens. The liberty bell that is the stations' crest will, the legend blares, remain silent until the capitals of Europe are free once again. Reading the fine print of the BIB regulations offers a more subdued goal: to provide objective accounts of events in the countries covered. For this purpose, there are gathered under the red roof of the former German military hospital some 1,200 employees: American administrators, German security and maintenance workers, researchers of various nationalities, a professional news desk, and services represented by native speakers of all the major Soviet nationalities (Radio Liberty)

and those of most East European countries (Radio Free Europe). Of the so-called communist states, there are no broadcasts to East Germany (since this is left to the West Germans), Yugoslavia or Albania.

Before looking at the operations in more detail, a word might be said of the significance of RFE-RL in Soviet eyes. Briefly, Moscow regards the two stations as major instruments of subversion. Scarcely a day goes by in which Radio Moscow does not shriek about the hostile broadcasts of Radio Liberty, or accuse some desk of employing war criminals, or remark upon events at the station itself. In 1985 the Soviets made a film featuring Radio Liberty. Also in that year appeared a statement over the airways that all employees of Radio Liberty are regarded as "military enemies of the Soviet Union." In other words, were an employee so rash as to set foot on Soviet territory while employed there, he could be arrested, tried and executed.

Since this writer was employed for some 15 months by Radio Liberty, it is this station that this article will examine in detail. By and large, Radio Free Europe is more effective. It has a larger research staff in terms of the populations of the countries involved, the jamming is not so successful (in some cases, such as Hungary, it is not always employed), and the reactions of spokespersons like Poland's Jerzy Urban indicate that the listening audience is huge. But arguably Radio Liberty is the more important, since the *raison d'être* of the radios concerns Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe. The USSR is regarded as the only culprit for grabbing territory in 1944-45.

It should be stated at the outset that not all is well at Radio Liberty. The nature of the organization ensures the employment of a large segment of Russian emigres, who dominate the station. In contrast, the nationalities services are composed sometimes of only 8 or 9 employees and broadcast for anything from 20 minutes to 8 hours a day. The best Russian service is composed of both native Russians and Russian Jews. Director George Bailey appeared to ally himself with the former and was therefore accused of being prejudiced against the latter. From



Radio Liberty wages an American propaganda war on the USSR.

Washington and within the station itself, the cry was that Bailey, a friend of Solzhenitsyn and Vladimir Maksimov, had done nothing to prevent the "takeover" of the Russian service by the associates of these two powerful emigre figures, and anti-Semitic broadcasts had resulted.

These were serious accusations and throughout 1984-85, various political and academic leaders could be seen touring the narrow corridors of the building and meeting with fellow Americans employed there. The cry of anti-Semitism became louder when a Russian Jewish employee published an article in an American newspaper that criticized his employers. The employee was dismissed, but the tough German labour laws have ensured that

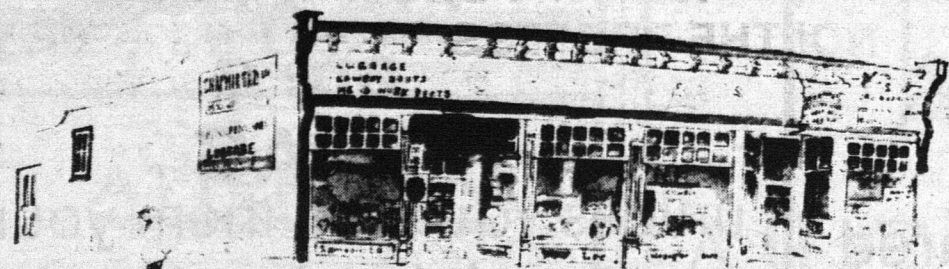
his case will first be heard in court. In fact, he became an instant martyr. The American writer Dimitri Simes took up the case along with Lars-Erik Nelson. Columnist Jack Anderson joined in. All three writers had little fondness for the radio station, and in most of the articles, and accusations were far-fetched. The most serious allegation concerned a broadcast of the new version of Solzhenitsyn's 1914, about the assassination of the Tsarist minister Stolypin by a Russian Jew. But President Buckley never rose to the challenge. Eventually Bailey was obliged to resign, although as the Soviets were quick to point out, he has been retained on full salary as a "consultant."

Aside from internal arguments, the research capabilities at Radio Liberty are impressive. Soviet television and radio broadcasts are monitored, Soviet newspapers arrive promptly at the station, to be scrutinized by an army of researchers, who also have access to any Soviet journal they care to name. Additionally, all employees are provided with a daily "budget" of major news items from the world's press, including the editorials and feature articles of *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *London Times*, *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*, the entire West German press and journals, and most Swiss and Austrian newspapers. It's quite possible but inadvisable to spend an entire day reading through the "budget," but most researchers are expected to skim through and select the articles they require. In addition the *Krasnyi Arkhiv* (Red Archive) includes a vast amount of filed material that is currently being computerized.

The public outcome of the prodigious research work is the *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, which appears in all major university libraries of North America (including the University of Alberta Library). The *Bulletin* is a weekly publication containing seven or eight articles about recent events in the USSR. The articles are necessarily short and concise and hardly represent the last word on a subject since they are usually written immediately after an event. The *Bulletin* and the broadcasts resulting from research papers represent the West's only authentic response to the Soviets engaging Georgii Arbatov.

Nevertheless, several factors have combined to make such research work less effective than should be the case. First, the *Bulletin* itself has been criticized heavily by some researchers, particularly those who write in Russian and have to await

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