

February 17, 1952

Report by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart on his visit to Radio Free Europe, Munich

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Summary:

Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart - head of the World War II Political Warfare Executive who later had a highly popular BBC weekly program in Czech - visited RFE with BBC Central European chief Gregory Macdonald between January 29 and February 1, 1952. Reviewing personalities, attitudes, and operations in Munich, Lockhart concluded that RFE had made progress in its first year, that its broadcasters were happy to be separated geographically from émigré politicians in the US, but that RFE faced the challenge of keeping the spark of hope alive in Eastern Europe without instigating revolt. It also faced the challenge of emerging German sovereignty, which Lockhart thought would force RFE to relocate to another country. Accompanying Foreign Office memoranda generally endorsed Lockhart conclusions. Information Research Department official F.C. Stacey cautioned that "the need for sensational stories of RFE activities" for the domestic US audience might result in irresponsible RFE broadcasts.

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Contents:

Original Scan

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PR

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INFORMATION REGISTRATION

FROM Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart to Mr Peck

Report by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart on his visit to Radio Free Europe, Munich.

To.
Dated 18th February.
Received in Registry— 20th February.

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THE ORIGINAL HAS BEEN RETAINED
IN THE DEPARTMENT UNDER SECTION
3(4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958

References

MINUTES

PK Dec. pr. read a copy of this report
to Adam Watson with
a compliments slip.

Mr. Stacey
13
American Dept
Northern Dept
Central Dept
pp. 10

(Print)

(How disposed of)

By Sir R. Bruce Lockhart
from Mr. Wilkinson

Feb 19

up as report sent to
Sir P. Duren
Sir R. Jacob (BBC)
Mr. Wilkinson
Mr. H. Watson (W/ton)

E.R. Ash
26/2

This seems a fair report and it is encouraging to see that a person of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart's great experience confirms the (what was hitherto, I believe, a minority) view that RFE has made "great progress in an incredibly short time".

I suspect, though I cannot confirm, that much of the doubtful reputation RFE has in certain quarters is due to the broadcasts originated in New York prior to the setting-up of the Munich station (and still in satellite languages other than Czech, Hungarian and Polish). In these the emigre groups' influence was most marked particularly in the supply of tendentious and often wildly inaccurate information. In Munich, as Sir Robert says, the Europeans are "glad to be separated from their own emigre politicians". This seems to be a great part of the secret of the success of Munich compared with New York.

Admittedly Munich has made mistakes but the staff there is refreshingly ready to acknowledge them and to have them pointed out. As Sir Robert says, the chief difficulty is that the political tempo has been too fast but the Munich staff are conscious of this and to my certain knowledge have been thinking very hard about this for some months past. The danger, the magnitude of which it is difficult to assess is that the subscription-raisers at home in the States, with their need for sensational stories of RFE activities, will force them into fresh excesses like the currency reform rumour before they have time to collect their thoughts.

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(Action completed)

(Index)

me
8/14

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One or two other minor points. I think Sir Robert may be slightly hard on the Information or intelligence section. I.R.D. receives their output constantly and has found it generally to be of a ~~remarkably~~ *reasonable* level of accuracy. Also while we can only agree with his remarks on the dangers of "too much broadcasting", we should surely bear in mind the advantages of a round the clock service from the point of view of listeners who are finding it more and more difficult to listen at regular hours. There is little doubt that the audience of the VOA Russian service which also employs the ~~the "round-the-clock"~~ *"round-the-clock"* technique is much greater than that of the B.B.C. Russian service, ~~which is intended to reach 2/3 of the~~ *transmissions*

(F.C. Stacey)
29th February, 1952

Mr. Wilkinson

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M. R. (in return)

A most interesting report for an expert observer. It is ~~fortunate~~ *fortunate* that the standard of R.F.E. is so high now that the B.B.C., for all its virtues, is virtually dropping out of the hunt. Mr. Nicholas should see.

Stacey
5.12

A very reasoning report.

The crux of the matter is in the para. 9 have sidelined in section V - page 7.

→ Sir P. Dixon } add. sec.
his. hunting } at any further
departed comments.

Box

14.12.52

Stacey
6/12

Wilson Originals Digital Archive

THE GEORGIAN HOTEL
HASLEMERE
SURREY

18th February, 1952.

My dear Peck,

I enclose herewith my report on my visit to Radio Free Europe, Munich.

I do not know what distribution you wish to give to it, but I should like to send a copy to Sir Pierson Dixon and to Major-General Sir Ian Jacob, the Director of the Overseas Services of the B.B.C.

As I have only a portable typewriter, would it be possible for you to have two extra copies made and forward them with my compliments or your compliments or both!

If there are any other points which I have not covered in the report and on which you would like further information, please let me know.

Yours ever,

R. H. B. L. L. L.

J. H. Peck Esq.,
Foreign Office,
12 Carlton House Terrace,
London S.W.1.

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Report on Radio Free Europe,
Munich.

By Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart.

From January 29 to February 1, 1952, I spent four days in Munich inspecting the installations and activities of Radio Free Europe. I was accompanied by Mr. Gregory Macdonald, Director of the Central European Section of the Overseas Service of the B.B.C., whose expert knowledge was of the greatest value to me. We received every courtesy and much hospitality from the local American directors of Radio Free Europe who seemed eager to show us everything. My report is concerned mainly with the output and political aspects of R.F.E. Mr. Macdonald, I am sure, will be glad to supply any further technical and organisational details that may be required.

1. ORGANISATION. Broadcasting from Munich started in February, 1951. Since then rapid progress has been made. R.F.E. has now its own broadcasting house in the Englischer Garten. The house was built at great speed, and doubtless at great expense, and is equipped with all the latest machinery. It is already too small for the activities of R.F.E., and new wings are now in process of construction. Meanwhile, the organisation suffers from geographical separation, the

Information/

Information and Evaluation Section and the Hungarian Section being housed in separate buildings.

All broadcasting by R.F.E. is now done from Munich, and apart from political guidance from New York and a restricted number of broadcasts by political emigrés from the same city all programmes are prepared in Munich.

At present broadcasting is carried on in three languages - Czech, Slovak and Hungarian. Broadcasting in Polish is scheduled to begin on April 15, but R.F.E. will do well if it can start its Polish output by May 1st. There is also a short bulletin in Rumanian and Bulgarian. This, however, is a minor feature, and there are no Rumanian and Bulgarian teams.

11. PERSONNEL. The total personnel employed by R.F.E., Munich, is approximately 1000. There are at present 190 Czechoslovaks, 100 Hungarians, and 70 Poles who, when they start broadcasting, will add to their numbers. There are some 200 Americans. The remainder are Germans employed as technicians, guards, porters, messengers, chauffeurs and domestic staff.

In principle the Americans are responsible for administration and, within certain limits, the Europeans are allowed to prepare their own programmes and say what they like. There is no stop controller on the microphone. If a European makes a serious blunder, he is reprimanded or dismissed.

The three leading Americans are, first, Mr. Condon, who is head/

head of the station and is a strong and silent, shy man with a reputation, confirmed by the British Consul-General, of being pro-British. He was employed by P.W.E. at one stage of the war and later by P.W.D., S.H.A.E.F. He pressed me hard to broadcast from his station on the ground that he wished to make R.F.E. a co-ordinated Allied effort. I refused politely on the excuse that I had no time, but in reality because I did not wish to broadcast in Czech to the Czechs from Munich.

Next comes Mr. Griffith, who was formerly in the State Department and is responsible for policy guidance. He made himself very pleasant to us, but at the two policy meetings which we attended both Mr. Macdonald and I noted separately that, when the guidance was given, there was no discussion. None of the Europeans spoke. The guidance was given and accepted as an order. Mr. Griffith, who, I am told, is married to a German, struck me as competent but cold. He was the one American who seemed unpopular with at least some of the Europeans.

Finally there is Mr. F.L.Raphael, the Programme Director, who is the son of a Portuguese father and an Irish mother. He is a man of drive and energy. R.F.E., Munich is his child. He brought it into the world, loves it, and works sixteen hours a day to make it thrive. I left Munich with the impression that he is the one American of high position who enjoys the complete confidence of all the Europeans.

111. OUTPUT. The Czechoslovaks, with whom R.F.E., Munich, started, have now worked up to twenty hours of broadcasting daily. The policy of the Americans is to "saturate" Czechoslovakia. Twenty hours, however, is a big programme, and personally I have always felt that too much broadcasting brings diminishing returns. Some of the programme is of course repetition, and great importance is attached to news. There are also some excellent features, and I was greatly impressed by a regular musical item in which M. Stelibsky, a well-known Czech composer, and M. Kohout, a singer, provide a stream of political songs which make a great appeal to Czechs and Slovaks. There were other features which were not so happy, notably a currency scare which undoubtedly had the effect of inducing home Czechs to raid the shops, but brought complaints from Czech bourgeois who sold property in order to convert the proceeds into goods. This campaign, I understand, was inaugurated by the Americans, possibly on instructions from New York.

Great energy and attention are also paid to the interrogation of escaped Czechoslovaks. The interrogation is organised on a large scale and R.F.E., Munich, has its agents in Berlin, Vienna, Graz, Paris, Nuremberg, Trieste, Hamburg, Strasbourg, Istanbul, Rome, and Helsinki. These agents are engaged on a basis of trial and error, and, although the

Evaluation/

Evaluation Section has a most elaborate system by which every item of information about escaped Central Europeans is card-indexed and filed, I have the feeling that too much is attempted and that better results would be obtained by concentrating more on selected escaped Europeans than on mere numbers. M. Stransky, the head of the Czechoslovak section, shares this view. I should add in all fairness that the European heads of sections have full right not to use interrogation material even if its reliability is rated high.

The Hungarians are now working on a schedule of twelve hours. This will probably be increased when they move over to R.F.E., Munich, headquarters. Their present house is to be occupied by the Poles, it being the policy of the Americans to segregate the newcomers until they can be brought into the melting-pot. Hungarian output is on similar lines to Czechoslovak output and, as far as I could judge, the Hungarians seemed a happy team.

In general, R.F.E., Munich, is well-equipped with newspapers, magazines, and books from behind the Iron Curtain. It also does all its recording on plastic tape which has two advantages over the B.B.C. system of recording on discs. The tape can be cut and altered to make a correction in a few seconds. The system is much cheaper than recording on discs. Indeed, Mr. Raphael told me that R.F.E., Munich, could not possibly afford to record on discs. This, doubtless, was an exaggeration/

exaggeration, for R.F.E., Munich, seems to have limitless funds at its disposal. Nevertheless, it reveals the handicap under which the Overseas Service of the B.B.C. suffers. Capital investment on equipment such as this would repay itself in a few years.

IV. ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICANS. The senior American officials seemed most friendly. They work for long hours and at great speed and feel themselves quite independent of the State Department and of the American military authorities in Germany. They are also eager to co-operate with the B.B.C., although the co-operation at present seems one-sided in the sense that it is the Americans who want to receive and have at present little to give in return. They have drive and enthusiasm but, with the exception of Mr. Griffith, lack knowledge and experience of Europe. I formed the impression that the administration was top-heavy and over-laden with paper. On the other hand, the technical side seemed excellent. I saw no sign of any anti-British feeling among the staff, but I was told both by a Pole and by at least one Czech that among the junior American staff there is no great love of Britain. In general, the Americans in R.F.E., Munich, have a high respect for the technical skill of the Germans whom they tend to regard as the only European race capable of doing a real day's work.

V. ATTITUDE OF THE EUROPEANS. In principle, the Europeans in R.F.E., Munich, like the idea of Czech speaking to Czech, and Hungarian speaking to Hungarian. They are also glad to be separated from their own emigre politicians. As regards their material comforts, they are well looked after by the Americans who have even gone so far as to build a new block of flats for them. I saw one of the flats which had been newly occupied by M. Nowak, the Polish director. It had been furnished completely even to the extent of brooms, aprons and polishing wax. It would have made many Englishmen envious. The emigres also receive American cigarettes and liquor at a low price and enjoy the benefits of a cheap and excellent canteen. On the other hand, they feel that, while they have got off to a very good start, they have gone too fast and have raised too many high hopes. They realise that the hopes cannot be fulfilled and fear a corresponding depression. They are now faced with the inevitable problem of how to keep the spark of hope alive without blowing it into a flame. For this state of affairs they are inclined to blame the Americans. I should like to think that the Americans also realise the danger of going too fast. I think that Mr. Condon does realise this difficulty, but American bustle is hard to hold in check.

I should add that R.F.E., Munich, does not attempt to instigate revolt. I asked Mr. Griffith what truth there was in the/

formally
of the R.F.E.

Drop here
in the British
Zone, who are
treated in
exactly the same way!

the frequent accusations made by the Czechoslovak Government against the Americans of arming and sending Czech emigres into Bohemia as saboteurs and spies. He replied frankly that he did not know for certain. He was sure, however, that three-quarters of the charges were totally unfounded. The other quarter, he said, might possibly be ascribed to the growing pains of the American secret service.

The Europeans have another minor grievance against the Americans. The lowest-ranking American, I was told, receives nearly double the salary that the highest-ranking emigre can reach. This difference aggravates the existing inferiority complex of the Europeans. They feel that the Americans regard them as very fortunate to have been picked out of the gutter of exile and given a decent job. In point of fact, the Americans have difficulty in finding young Americans who are willing to come to Munich and have therefore to pay big salaries.

The most dangerous sentiment among the European emigres, however, is fear - fear of the Russians and fear of the Germans. In Munich they feel themselves in the front line and think that, if war broke out, the Russians would be in Munich in an hour or two, the Americans would get away in cars, and they would be left to their fate.

They also fear the Germans. Bavaria is full of Sudeten Germans some of whom are employed by R.F.E., Munich, and the
Czechs/

Czechs, in particular, are full of mistrust and suspicion. The Americans, however, keep them busy and, allowing for the general unhappiness of all emigres, I was surprised how few complaints I heard from the Czechs who came to see me privately. I must also say that the Americans gave every encouragement to the Czechs to talk to me in private. Otherwise I should not have listened to them.

Vl. R.F.E., MUNICH, AND THE B.B.C. The reputation of the B.B.C. stands high in R.F.E., Munich, especially among the Europeans who feel that in experience, reliability and understanding of Europe the B.B.C. is still far ahead of R.F.E., Munich, and the Voice of America. Indeed, the few members of the B.B.C. who are now employed in R.F.E., Munich, seemed nostalgically loyal to London.

On the other hand, R.F.E., Munich, is a rapidly growing concern with apparently almost limitless sums of money at its disposal. It does not lack ambition, and the experience will soon come. The Americans have made initial mistakes but no other race corrects its mistakes more quickly. The European Service of the B.B.C. has been hard-hit by economy measures, and in this respect broadcasting is like everything else in life. It cannot stand still; it must either go forward or go back. Not only has the B.B.C. been forced to go back, but there is now a real danger that American and Soviet broadcasting will swamp all Europe.

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VI. CONCLUSIONS. R.F.E., Munich, has made great progress in an incredibly short time. The political tempo has been too fast and should be moderated to a pace more in keeping with the indefinite time factor. Provided this is done, I expect R.F.E., Munich, to make further progress. It has a thirty years' lease of the Munich site!

There is, however, one great drawback to Munich as a broadcasting centre. Apart from the danger of war, R.F.E., Munich is dependent to a large extent on the good will of the Bavarian Government. Indeed, it was mainly because of the friendly attitude of the Bavarian Government that the Americans chose Munich as their centre of operations. This good will may not last. The Germans are already studying with their usual zeal all the problems of Central and South-Eastern Europe. In their vision of the future an independent Czechoslovakia has no place, nor is there a single German who accepts the Oder-Neisse line for Poland's Western frontier.

How long then will the Bavarian Government continue to permit Czechs to broadcast from Munich propaganda which, in effect if not in actual words, is anti-Sudeten and in favour of a pre-Munich Czechoslovakia? In this connexion the beginning of the Polish broadcasts will be a critical test, and it is significant that the Americans, M. Mickalajczyk told me, have been trying to recruit Poles who are not too anti-German. If

this/

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this ever was their intention, they must have abandoned it in despair, for such Poles will be hard to find, and M. Nowak, the new Polish director, is not one of them.

I think it fair to assume that, as Western Germany acquires greater independence, pressure on R.F.E., Munich, will become so strong as to force the Americans to find another centre. Mr. Griffith, if not all the Americans, is acutely aware of this problem.

R. W. Nixon Lockhart,

17th February, 1952.

Wikipedia: Original Source Digital Archive

FOREIGN OFFICE,

12-15, Carlton House Terrace,
London, S.W.1.

19th February, 1952.

PA94(84.

John Peck is away for a fortnight and I am therefore replying to your letter of the 18th February.

I was most interested to read your report of your visit to Radio Free Europe, Munich, and I will send copies to Dixon and Jacob with your compliments as soon as possible.

Your report bore out the impression gained by one of our own people who visited Munich last summer that this operation, apart from normal teething troubles, is going surprisingly well, provided that the organisers can learn the secret of keeping the pot on the simmer without letting it boil over.

(P.A. Wilkinson)

Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, K.C.M.G.,
The Georgian Hotel,
Haslemere,
Surrey.