Human Rights Radios? Radio Free Europe, the BBC External Services and the "Helsinki Process", 1973-1978

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Abstract

This thesis compares two transnational radio broadcasting organizations, Radio Free Europe (RFE) and the BBC External Services' Central European Department (BBC CED), and their response to and engagement with the negotiation, signing and implementation of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The aim of this work is to demonstrate that between the opening of the initial negotiations of the CSCE in 1973 and the closing of the first CSCE follow-up conference in Belgrade in March 1978, both RFE and the BBC CED in different but related ways, underwent a transformation in the way in which they represented and justified their mission and purpose which was closely related to the ideas about freedom of information which were formulated within the so-called "Third Basket" of the Helsinki Final Act, pertaining to "Humanitarian and Other Fields".

Using archival sources from both RFE and the BBCXS's collections, I argue that despite the existence of real differences between the two organizations in relation to their origins, locations, and perceptions of themselves in relation to the other, by the end of my period both organizations had evolved into "human rights radios", an identity which continues to dominate their external and internal representations of their work to this day.

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Introduction: Human Rights Radios?

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 has been described as "the most important international treaty since Potsdam", resulting in a "change of paradigm" which was "probably the first step on the road towards the demise of the Soviet system".[1] Similar importance has been placed upon the work of transnational broadcasters such as Radio Free Europe (RFE) and the BBC External Services (BBCXS) in shaping the end of the Cold War, with leading Polish opposition figure and former President of post-communist Poland Lech Walesa asserting that "Without Western broadcasting, totalitarian regimes would have survived much longer."[2] Fittingly, scholars have paid attention to both transnational broadcasting and the human rights activism which emerged in the wake of the Helsinki Final Act as important factors in explaining the nature and timing of the collapse of Communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe. However, thus far, surprisingly little consideration has been given to the ways in which transnational broadcasters responded to, reflected on, and arguably contributed to the process by which the language of human rights became a leading discourse of anti-regime opposition in Communist Central and Eastern Europe.

I will focus on two leading transnational radio broadcasters, Radio Free Europe (RFE) and the BBC External Services (BBCXS), in particular its Central European Department (CED), and their internal discussions and external broadcasts related to human rights issues during the period between 1973 and 1978. This timeframe was selected since it is a crucial period in the history of human rights in Europe, spanning from the beginning of the official negotiations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which resulted in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act on August 1st, 1975, through to the first follow-up meeting of the CSCE, which was held in Belgrade between October 4th, 1977 and March 8th, 1978, where the human rights provisions of the Final Act were much debated. The period is also a relatively under-researched and potentially pivotal time in the history of transnational broadcasting during the Cold War, as broadcasters were forced to adapt to meet a range of new challenges and threats.

[1] Andras Mink, trans. E. Duunay, and P. Bognar, *The Defendant: The State, The Story of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee* (Budapest: Hungarian Helsinki Committee,2005), 21.
[2] Walesa L., *Foreword* in Nelson, M., *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse University Press, 1997), i.

By comparing the two organizations' responses to the Helsinki negotiations, the signing of the Final Act, and the emergence of human rights groups in Communist Central and Eastern Europe following the Act's agreement, I will improve our understanding of the similarities, differences, collaborations, and divergences between RFE and the BBCXS. Such work is important in evaluating the basis of both organizations' historical and contemporary reputations as news providers, as propaganda or public diplomacy tools for their respective national governments (The United States in the case of RFE and the United Kingdom for the BBCXS), and as advocates for specific political or moral values. Given the continued prominence of both organizations in providing news and commentary to international audiences numbering in the millions, this effort at understanding the historical basis of their shift towards utilizing the language of human rights, which arguably still frames much of their contemporary broadcasting output, seems particularly apposite.

After evaluating the ways in which both organizations responded to and reported on the Helsinki Final Act and the human rights activism it inspired (focusing in particular on their Polish, Hungarian, and Czechoslovak services), I argue that both broadcasters, in different but closely related ways, underwent a period of transformation between 1973 and 1978. During this period, the ideas and language of human rights came to play a new and definitive role in both organizations' internal and external representations and explanations of their purpose. Despite the major differences which existed between the two, both RFE and the BBC CED developed a new emphasis on serving the human rights of their listeners during the period between 1973 and 1978 that had not existed in the same way before. This emphasis on human rights remains an important part of both organizations' missions and reputations to this day. It is my contention that during this period, both RFE and the BBCXS fully embraced new identities as "Human Rights Radios".

My opening chapter will situate my investigation within its broader historical context, firstly by examining claims for the 1970s as a decade of "breakthrough" for the language and ideas of human rights within foreign policymaking in Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union. It will then position these claims for the increasing importance of commitments to defining and defending human rights within the specific framework of Cold War diplomacy during the 1970s, and of the experience of détente in Europe, of which the

Helsinki Final Act is often considered a definitive "high point". After examining different scholarly claims regarding the nature and development of the Helsinki Final Act's historical importance, and its relation to the emergence of human rights groups whose activism was made possible and powerful by the emergence of a range of transnational groups and networks, I will begin to focus on the role that both RFE and the BBCXS played in these processes.

In chapter 2, I will examine the similarities and differences between RFE and the BBCXS in greater detail, beginning by outlining the two organizations' origins, and particular points of crossover and divergence in terms of personnel, journalistic practice, and each broadcaster's perception of the other. I will then focus on the nature of the joint challenges faced by both in the early 1970s, relating to funding and new forms of accountability to their respective national governments, before focusing on both organizations' efforts to incorporate greater amounts of samizdat and tamizdat material from Central and Eastern Europe and contribute to the maintenance or cultivation of a sense of "Europeanness" within their audiences that belied the contemporary geopolitical division of the continent.

Chapter 3 will focus in detail on how RFE and the BBC CED, in different but related ways, moved towards conceptualizing their broadcasting efforts as an essentially humanitarian pursuit, engaging in particular with Susan Haas' ideas on this topic. I will then evaluate the archival evidence which shows how both organizations engaged with the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act regarding access to, circulation, and exchange of information (sometimes defined or described as "freedom of information" or "free flow of information") as a human right. This will be followed by an assessment of the ways in which different interpretations of the Helsinki Final Act's numerous clauses were wielded as both a weapon against, and a shield for, Western broadcasting across the iron curtain during this period.

In Chapter 4, I will address the inherent challenge of any study of media history, namely the difficulty of measuring and evaluating the impact which media has on its audience. I will examine the efforts expended by both RFE and the BBC CED in an attempt to overcome the particular challenges of ascertaining their audiences' size, profile, and preferences, bearing in mind the limitations which the conditions of the Cold War placed upon the pursuit of conventional practices of audience research. I will then assess the ways in which both organizations sought to demonstrate the impact which their broadcasts on the subject of human

rights and the Helsinki Final Act in particular were having upon their listeners in Central Europe. Lastly, I will approach these specific efforts from a wider perspective, emphasizing the limitations of measuring and achieving "impact", and positioning both organizations' explicit coverage of Helsinki and human rights within a broader, more holistic overall broadcast offering to their listeners.

I will conclude with an overall evaluation of the evidence I have presented in support of my main argument regarding both organizations' transformation into "Human Rights Radios", the implications of such a conclusion for our understanding of RFE and the BBCXS, and suggestions for ways in which future scholarship might examine transnational broadcasters with a new set of questions in mind.

Chapter 1. Tuning In: On the Histories of Human Rights, East-West Relations and the Radios in the 1970s

Borrowing his title from that of Joseph Heller's second novel, Edward Berkowitz declared the 1970s as a decade in which "Something Happened".[3] While Heller's sophomore effort struggled to match the critical acclaim and popular attention given to its predecessor, *Catch-22*, the 1970s themselves have fared somewhat better as a subject worth rereading and re-evaluating. No longer dismissed as the "sickly, neglected, disappointing stepsister" to the 1960s, the urge to focus on the 1970s as a period of transformative and paradigmatic change in world history has become an increasingly pressing one among historians of many different fields of enquiry.[4] From those interested in understanding the basis of the contemporary post-industrial global economic system to those who seek to explain the history of social movements related to women's emancipation, the rise of environmentalism, or the nature of contemporary religious belief, the 1970s has become a historical period *en vogue*.[5]

This fascination with the 1970s is especially prevalent amongst adherents of global history, which seeks to understand the interconnectedness of different parts of the world through transnational phenomena such as migration, trade, religion, and communication, and to avoid the limitations of an explanatory framework that restricts itself within the borders of the nation-state or empire.[6] The sense that the "something" that happened in the 1970s was globally important, had an impact on the world as a whole, and has something particularly important to say to our own times, permeates much of this scholarship.

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[3] E. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[4] B. Shulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001) 1. Quoted in N. Ferguson, "Crisis, what Crisis?" in N. Ferguson, C. Maier, E. Manela, D. J. Sargent, eds, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1. For another example of a recent historical revision of the 1970s as a decade of global transformation, see Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History From Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[5] On the global turn towards the international recognition of women's rights as human rights in the 1970s see C. Donert, "Whose Utopia? Gender, Ideology and Human Rights at the 1975 World Congress of Women in East Berlin" in J. Eckel and S. Moyn, eds, *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 68-87. On the rise global environmentalism see J.R. McNeill, "The Environment, Environmentalism, and International Society in the Long 19790s" in Ferguson et al, eds, *The Shock of the Global*, 263-281. On the impact of the globalizing phenomena of the 1970s on religion, see as an example Ayesha Jalal, "An Uncertain Trajectory: Islam's Contemporary Globalization, 1971-1979" in Ferguson et al, *The Shock of the Global*, 319-337.

[6] A good case in point would be the moves towards a globalization of labor history, exemplified by Marcel Van der Linden's work. M. Van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

Numerous factors have been proposed in recent scholarship which position this particular decade as the site for the emergence of key processes, mindsets and structures of moral and political thought, which separate our own time from that which came before the 1970s. Phenomena such as the decolonization of the third world, the evolution of a new "holocaust consciousness" within Western Europe, and the rapid expansion of mass media, capable of bringing the horrors of humanitarian crises from around the world into the living rooms of millions in a new and more emotionally affective way, have all been proposed as part of the explanation of the importance of the 1970s in shaping the contemporary world.[7] The claim has been made that if we wish to understand the structural basis of the contemporary world, we must look to the 1970s: it is "the immediate prehistory, as it were, of our present."[8]

The 1970s: The "Breakthrough" of Human Rights?

One area in which this focus on the 1970s has become particularly prominent is the history of human rights. At the forefront of this "seventies turn" is the work of Samuel Moyn, whose reputation as "human rights history's current *enfant terrible*"[9] at least partially rests upon his assertion that human rights "emerged in the 1970s seemingly from nowhere".[10] In marginalizing the importance of human rights ideas before the 1970s as being entirely subordinate to and subsumed within notions of state sovereignty, Moyn asserts that it was during this decade that the idea of the existence (or desirability) of a set of global, supranational, and universal human rights "achieved a prominence that far outstripped even that of its founding epoch thirty years before".[11] This controversial statement has drawn criticism from those who would characterize the emergence of such ideals, and their ability to impact upon the international political scene, as a *longue durée* process, with its roots dating back as far as the

[7] See Jan Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s" in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn eds, *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 226-261; Michael Cotey Morgan, "The Seventies and the Rebirth of Human Rights" in Ferguson et al. eds, *The Shock of the Global*, 237-251. For more on the emergence of a new "holocaust consciousness", see Mark Bradley, "The Origins of the 1970s Global Human Rights Imagination" in P Villaume, R. Mariager and H. Porsdam, eds, *The "Long 1970s": Human Rights, East-West Détente and Transnational Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 22-23.

[8] Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics", 227.

[9] R. J. Wilson, "The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s (Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights Series) edited by Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn (Review)" in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 36, Number 4, November 2014, 915-930.

[10] S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass/London: Harvard University Press, 2010), Prologue, 3.

[11] Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, Prologue, 3.

Enlightenment.[12] It has also been questioned by those who would position the 1990s rather than the 1970s as the decade in which the notion of the existence of truly universal human rights experienced a "breakthrough" as a basic and fundamental concept of global politics in terms of guiding and justifying international foreign policy interventions.[13] Moyn's thesis is also arguably vulnerable to criticism on the basis that his work fails to sufficiently interrogate the reasons why leftist intellectual and political figures on both sides of the Iron Curtain, but particularly within Central and Eastern Europe, increasingly adopted the language of "human rights" to frame their dissent from mainstream state socialism. These reasons were closely related to the specific contextual factors operating within the region, and not simply as a response to or part of a Western-led project to deploy the language and ideas of human rights as a Cold War weapon.[14]

Whether one believes that Moyn's overall thesis survives these critiques or not, the status of the 1970s as a decade of particular interest for historians of human rights has undoubtedly been elevated by his work. For Moyn's colleague and collaborator Jan Eckel, the crucial element of change with regards to the new status of human rights ideas in the 1970s was the emergence of what he calls a new "human rights industry".[15] This "industry", based on the emergence of popular human rights activism and grassroots organizations operating in Western Europe and North America, radically affected existing human rights advocacy groups such as Amnesty International (established in 1961). The transformation of such organizations from small-scale pressure groups into mass movements with transnational memberships, capable of having a serious impact upon the foreign policy priorities of Western governments, is proposed as part of the explanatory basis of the "breakthrough" of human rights onto the global political scene.[16]

[12] See for example Lynne Hunt's arguments for the emergence of the epistolary novel in mid-18th century and its influence upon the French Revolution's keystone document, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man* as definitive moments in the emergence of human rights ideals. Lynne Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Press, 2007).

[13] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, "Human Rights and History" in *Past and Present,* Volume 232, Issue 1, August 2016, 279-310.

[14] For an example of an article examining this particular issue, see Wanda Jarzabek, "A Trap and a Chance: Basket III, Dissidents and State Authorities in Communist Poland" in Rasmus Mariager, Karl Molin and Kjersti Brathagen eds, *Human Rights in Europe during the Cold War* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 150-161.

[15] See Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics" in Eckel and Moyn eds, *The Breakthrough,* 229.

[16] J. Eckel, "The International League for the Rights of Man, Amnesty International, and the Changing Fate of Human Rights Activism from the 1940s through the 1970s", *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Volume 4, Number 2, Summer 2013, 191- 201.

Scholars of this "breakthrough" of human rights onto the policy landscape of Western Europe and North America have sometimes explained the increased use of the language and ideas of human rights by both governmental and non-governmental actors during this period as an attempt to overcome and supersede the geopolitical divisions and moral logic of the Cold War. For Eckel, "Human rights seemed to provide a way of responding to the failure of older political projects, of transcending the logic of the Cold War, of basing political action on a moral foundation, and of reaching a vantage point that supposedly was above politics."[17] Mark Bradley also suggests that the era saw the development of a new logic of international relations in which "complex interdependence between a variety of state and non-state actors, rather than Cold War superpower politics, increasingly shaped the contours of the international system".[18] Part of the attraction of human rights ideas and movements for many of their adherents in Europe at this time did lay in those supporters' convictions that they had the potential to transform their respective government's foreign policy objectives, and thus to enable them to transcend the narrow geopolitical interest and Cold War logic of competing power blocs. Yet this fairly vague idea of the emergence of a popular desire for the pursuit of moral causes through human rights interventions by nation-states does not adequately explain the "breakthrough" of the language and ideas of human rights onto the international diplomatic scene in the 1970s.

The decisions made by governments and international organizations to increasingly adopt and deploy the language of human rights in justifying their policies were not made solely on the basis of pressure from the "human rights industry", but were shaped and influenced by their awareness of the geopolitical realities of the Cold War Europe. As such, any argument in favor of the concept of a "breakthrough" of human rights as a key factor in European international relations in the 1970s must examine the Cold War reasoning behind the increased adoption of the language of human rights by the United States and its Western European allies during this period. Similarly, the reasons why the Soviet Union and the Communist states of Eastern Europe were increasingly vulnerable to attack on the basis of their human rights records from the 1970s onwards must also be scrutinized.

[17] Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics", 228.
[18] Bradley, "The Origins of the 1970s Global Human Rights Imagination", 18.

Helsinki and the "Breakthrough"

It is in this context, understanding this apparent "global turn" towards human rights within the framework of Cold War diplomacy in Europe, that we should approach the subject of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and its significance within the history of human rights. Originally proposed by the Soviet Union as a mechanism by which it might legally guarantee the status quo of the borders of post-war Europe through an international agreement on the "inviolability of frontiers"[19] and the "territorial integrity of States",[20] and simultaneously to improve its access to Western technology and credit,[21] recent histories of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which culminated its inaugural meeting with the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, emphasize the extent to which Western governments were able to extract valuable commitments on the protection of human rights from Communist signatory states in return.[22] With regards to exactly which rights were protected by the provisions of the Final Act, most scholars refer to "basket three" of the Final Act, outlining cooperation between signatory states in "humanitarian and other fields" in relation to human interactions such as family reunification, easing travel restrictions and issues of freedom of information, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. However, as Richard Davy points out, also important were the provisions within principle VII of Basket One, usually focused on primarily for containing provisions relating to aspects of security and disarmament.[23] This principle states that:

> *...participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief [...] They will promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms, all of which derive from*

[19] Section III," Inviolability of frontiers" Part 1. (a) Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States; Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, Helsinki 1975 (Hereafter Helsinki Final Act), 6-7. Accessed on 24th February 2018 at https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act
[20] Section IV, "Territorial integrity of States", Part 1. (a), Helsinki Final Act.
[21] See Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton University Press, 2001). 25-28.
[22] See Richard Davy, "Helsinki Myths: Setting the Record Straight on the Final Act of the CSCE, 1975", *Cold War History*, Vol. 9, No.1, February 2009, 1-22; Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Transnationalism and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Morgan, "The Seventies and the Rebirth of Human Rights".
[23] R. Davy, "Helsinki Myths: Setting the Record Straight on the Final Act of the CSCE, 1975", *Cold War History*, Vol. 9, No.1, February 2009, 1-22, 11.

the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development.[24]

The principle then goes on to state that such respect "is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation among themselves as among all states", and insists on "the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field."[25]

Sarah Snyder has argued that the value of the CSCE agreement to those who wished to criticize and undermine Communist regimes lay particularly in the establishment of a "Helsinki Process", whereby signatory states, informed and influenced by human rights activist groups, regularly and publicly exchanged views on the implementation of the Act at follow-up meetings.[26] This, she argues, encouraged the emergence of transnational networks of human rights activism, which linked politicians, diplomats, journalists and NGOs from the West with human rights activists and opposition groups in the East. The formation of institutions such as the US Congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and Helsinki Watch represented important developments in keeping signatory states' human rights commitments at the forefront of policymakers' minds, and supported the emergence of CSCE follow-up meetings to act as forums to hold non-compliant governments in the Soviet bloc to account.[27] Alongside this, the period after the signing of the Final Act in 1975 saw the emergence of influential oppositional groups such as Charter 77 and VONS in Czechoslovakia and KOR and ROPCiO in Poland. These groups justified their collaboration with Western human rights advocates and their work to publicize their governments' use of violence and repression against their own citizens domestically and abroad on the basis of the Final Act's provisions on human rights, as well as with reference to the rights nominally protected by their own national constitutions.[28]

Scholars of the Helsinki Process have thus raised the idea that the inclusion of human rights provisions within the Helsinki Final Act, and the subsequent links made between honoring

[24] Section VII, Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; Part 1. (a) Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States, Helsinki Final Act.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Snyder, *Human Rights Activism,* 3.
[27] Ibid., 7-9.
[28] B. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2003), 88.

these provisions and the maintenance of a popularly legitimate and economically viable state, significantly contributed to the collapse of Communism in Europe and the end of the Cold War. Daniel C. Thomas argues that the emergence of new human rights norms within Communist states, which shifted, constrained, and eventually undermined these regimes' previous modus operandi of government, should be at least partially explained by the "Helsinki Effect".[29] As such, much of the recent literature on Helsinki supports the idea of a "breakthrough" of human rights ideas and language in changing the way in which foreign relations and broader political priorities were pursued and justified. However, such a conclusion does not necessarily confirm the notion of the emergence of a universalistic, apolitical or "utopian" set of human rights ideals as proposed by Moyn, so much as it reminds us of the necessity of understanding the uses and meanings of "human rights" within Europe during this period as being intrinsically inflected by the context of the Cold War.

The question of whether the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act were deliberately inserted by Western powers as a long-term ploy to undermine their Communist counterparts, or were seized upon in unexpected and unanticipated ways by oppositional groups east of the Iron Curtain, remains a live one.[30] The extent to which the United States viewed the drawing up of human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act as a straightforward opportunity to advance its own Cold War foreign policy aims is by no means clear-cut. During the Nixon and Ford presidencies, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was (at the very least initially) pessimistic about the value of the CSCE as a whole, remaining skeptical about the possibility of the multilateral negotiation of the Helsinki Final Act engendering any real shift in Soviet policy, and preferring to prioritize bilateral diplomacy with the Soviet Union and triangular talks including China as a route to Cold War détente.[31] The *Wall Street Journal* pleaded with President Gerald Ford in an editorial entitled "Jerry, Don't Go" not to sign the agreement, seeing it as providing the Soviet Union with legal guarantees of its de facto sphere of influence in Eastern Europe

[29] Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton University Press, 2001).
[30] See Kai Hebel, "Britain and the Cold War Politics of Human Rights in the CSCE, 1972-73" in Rasmus Mariager, Karl Molin and Kjersti Brathagen, eds, *Human Rights in Europe during the Cold War* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 113-115.
[31] Jussi K. Hahnimaki, "'They Can Write it in Swahili': Kissinger, the Soviets, and the Helsinki Accords, 1973-1975", *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Volume 1, 2003, 37-42.

without providing sufficient concessions to the Western powers to make the deal worthwhile.[32] Even Jimmy Carter, who would go on to position a commitment to human rights at the heart of US foreign policy during his presidency, referred to the Helsinki Final Act as a mistake and as an agreement approving the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe during his presidential campaign in 1976.[33] It was not until the CSCE follow-up conference held in Belgrade between October 1977 and March 1978 that the US's commitment to defending the implementation of the human rights provisions of the Act became unambiguously firm and explicit.[34]

For Snyder, it was not the US but Western European nations who "led the efforts to protect Western interests in the conference preparations",[35] with the 6 core states of the European Economic Community (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany, Italy and Luxembourg) working to develop a common position in the CSCE negotiations.[36] Richard Davy, who attended the Helsinki conference as a reporter for the Times of London, supports the idea that it was the Western European states who resisted pressure from Moscow and Washington to confirm the status quo, and instead ensured that the Final Act became an agenda for change, in which the message was sent to the Soviet bloc that détente could not be achieved in Europe without respect for human rights.[37]

Kai Hebel has proposed that the UK (which finally joined the European Economic Community or EEC in 1973 after many aborted attempts) played a particularly prominent role in deliberately shaping the CSCE negotiations in a direction which placed the human rights commitments at the forefront of the agreement from as early as 1972. Hebel quotes Foreign Office documents stating that "we should not shrink from asserting western beliefs in the freedom of movement, information, and cultural contacts" as evidence of a commitment to individual human rights lying at the heart of Britain's Cold War foreign policy during this period.[38] I propose that this ongoing debate about the exact role of the US and the UK in shaping

[32] S. Snyder, "'Jerry, Don't Go": Domestic Opposition to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act", *Journal of American Studies*, 44 (2010), 67-81.
[33] Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 82.
[34] Ibid., 81-115.
[35] Ibid., 20-21.
[36] Ibid., 18. This sentiment is also supported by Eckel, who argues that "ultimately, it was the states of the European Community that in spite of strong resistance managed to keep human rights on the agenda". Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics", 230.
[37] Davy, "Helsinki Myths", 3.
[38] Hebel, "Britain and the Cold War Politics of Human Rights", 115.

the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, and the subsequent interpretation and impact of those provisions, makes my proposal to compare the transnational broadcasting operations of United States and the United Kingdom and their response to the Helsinki Final Act particularly apposite.

The Role of the Radios

The role played by both Radio Free Europe and the BBC Central European Department (BBC CED) in shaping the impact of the Helsinki Final Act upon their listeners in Central and Eastern Europe, and in interacting with the new oppositional arguments and groups inspired by the human rights provisions of the Final Act, is a subject that has been only briefly touched upon in the respective historiographies of both the Helsinki Final Act and of Cold War broadcasting.

Daniel C. Thomas ascribes RFE and the BBC an important role in spreading the full content of the Helsinki Final Act, particularly those aspects related to human rights, to the people of Poland and Czechoslovakia. He argues that without these broadcasts, the impact of the Act might have been lesser, since Communist governments tended to publicize only those parts of the Act which they felt would buttress their domestic support.[39] He also briefly refers to RFE's role in broadcasting materials produced by Czechoslovak dissident movements like Charter 77 and, who framed their opposition in the language of human rights and justified their legitimacy on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act.[40] Alongside this, he notes RFE's role in collecting evidence of Communist states' violations of the CSCE's human rights provisions and passing this information on to the US CSCE commission to use in its public criticisms of the Romanian government and its failure to adhere to the provisions of the Final Act at the Belgrade follow-up meeting in 1977-78.[41] This helps position RFE as one of the transnational institutions which Sarah Snyder has imbued with such importance in her explanation of how and why the Helsinki Final Act was such a milestone in the history of human rights and the Cold War in Europe.[42]

These brief references to the role played by Western broadcasters in contributing to the emergence of oppositional movements across Eastern Europe, which mobilized around the

[39] Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*, 98.
[40] Ibid., 214-5.
[41] Ibid., 188.
[42] Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 64-65.

language and ideas of human rights as encapsulated in the Helsinki Final Act, suggest that a dedicated investigation into this aspect of the history of Cold War broadcasting would be of great value. Yet within the existing scholarship on both Radio Free Europe and the BBC External Services, relatively little has focused in particular on the 1970s as a decade of importance or of transformative change for either organization. In most written histories of both Radio Free Europe and the BBC External Services, the focus tends to lie upon telling the institutional history of the organization from a particular perspective: one that is indicative of its authors' previous roles as officials, directors, and managers within both organizations.[43]

While these general histories and memoirs of RFE and the BBCXS, which might be designated as "insider histories", provide us with valuable first-hand accounts of life within the organizations as seen from a managerial perspective, they do not tend to dwell upon the impact of the Helsinki Final Act upon life at RFE. In the sparse mentions of the Final Act, references are made to the violation of its provisions for freedom of information represented by Communist governments' attempts at "jamming" (preventing their populations from listening by jamming the frequencies used by Western broadcasters).[44] Indeed, the 1970s overall seems something of a "lost decade" in these insider accounts of both RFE and the BBCXS's history.

For RFE, the decade is framed mostly as a difficult time in which the organization's reliance upon secret CIA funding was revealed to the world, an existential threat to the radio's existence was posed in the aftermath of this revelation, and the subsequent forced merger of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty created serious tensions and infighting.[45] The only substantial mention of the Helsinki Final Act and its impact upon RFE programming or policy with relation to human rights is found in the memoirs of George Urban, former director of RFE and Hungarian émigré, who interestingly began worked as a broadcaster for the BBC Hungarian

[43] For histories of Radio Free Europe produced by senior former RFE employees, see Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Richard Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2009). For histories and memoirs on the BBC External Services by former senior former employees, see Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1982) and John Tusa, *A World in Your Ear: Reflections on Changes* (London: Broadside Books, 1992).
[44] Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 217; Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 138-140.
[45] Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 221- 227.

Service between 1947 and 1960 before transferring to RFE.[46] Urban states that after taking up leadership of RFE in 1983,

> *I reinforced the work of my predecessors to ensure that the Helsinki provisions were widely known and fully exploited. We gave all possible support to the Helsinki monitoring groups in the East which were then springing up everywhere in direct response to the Helsinki and Madrid agreements… We devoted tremendous time and energy to making the Helsinki monitors' articulations and ordeal (many were put in prison) generally known.* [47]

Apart from these briefly outlined memories in Urban's memoirs, the "insider accounts" which dominate of RFE scholarship have little to say on the organization's particular role as a site for the transnational exchange of ideas, texts and people who used the language of human rights, framed by the commitment of Communist governments according to the Helsinki Final Act, as a tool to undermine the popular legitimacy of those governments. Neverthelss, this recollection encouraged me to search for evidence that both RFE and the BBCXS responded in a notable and transformative way to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent human rights activism which it inspired within both organizations' archival collections.

I have already noted the historiographical trend to place European policymakers and human rights groups at the center of our understanding of the significance of the Helsinki Final Act. The history of Radio Free Europe has also undergone something of a "Europeanization", thanks to the work of the most recent generation of (mostly European) scholars focusing on the organization. Whereas much of the previous scholarship on RFE, mostly written by former RFE officials, tended to focus on the organization's role as a tool of US Cold War foreign policy, new approaches to the study of RFE's internal policies and structures have tended towards a more complex, multi-dimensional, and diffuse understanding of the organization's position and identity within the specific contextual framework of Cold War Europe.[48] Pawel Machcewicz's

[46] G. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War within the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 47-58.
[47] Ibid., 135.
[48] See Anna Bischof and Zuzana Jürgens, eds, *Voices of Freedom - Western Interference?: 60 Years of Radio Free Europe* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015); Alec Badenoch, Andreas Fickers and Christian Henrich-Franke, *Airy Curtains in the European Ether: Broadcasting and the Cold War* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013).

work on the Polish government's attacks on Radio Free Europe briefly discusses the role that RFE played in linking and promoting Helsinki-inspired opposition groups, both with Western supporters who might take up their cause, and with their many listeners within Poland itself.[49] It also reveals the Polish government's sustained yet ultimately unsuccessful efforts to co-ordinate other socialist states' opposition towards Radio Free Europe, ironically including appeals to the Helsinki Final Act itself in its efforts to shut down RFE.[50] At the same time, RFE was spreading news of the activities of opposition groups such as KOR, whose formation and strategies of opposition were clearly inspired by the Helsinki Final Act.[51] Through such action, RFE was helping to increase awareness and transform Helsinki-related human rights issues into a mass concern within Poland.[52]

Alongside this, Friederike Kind-Kovacs's work demonstrates the vital role that RFE played in the large-scale transfer of samizdat and tamizdat materials (underground unpublished or self-published literature, often of a politically or culturally subversive nature) between East and West, cultivating a Pan-European sense of identity within which ideas about human rights certainly played a constitutive part.[53] Susan Haas has also shown the extent to which RFE employees within the Central Newsroom in Munich considered themselves not simply, or not even predominantly, as agents of the US's Cold War foreign policy agenda, but rather as journalists undertaking a "humanitarian pursuit".[54] Within this self-identity, support for the Helsinki Accords and the human rights movements they inspired, such as Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and KOR in Poland, was a vitally important constituent.[55] These works have encouraged me to pursue a study of RFE as not just a tool of US Cold War diplomacy or a straightforward organ of "propaganda", but as a key site in which to trace the rise of a transnational language of human rights among state and non-state actors.

[49] P. Machcewicz, Maya Latynski (trans.), *Poland's War on Radio Free Europe, 1950-1989,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). 218-226.
[50] Ibid., 218-220.
[51] Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*, 88.
[52] Ibid., 227-233.
[53] Friederike Kind- Kovacs, *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 220–260.
[54] Susan Haas, *Communities of Journalists and Journalism Practice at Radio Free Europe during the Cold War 1950-1995* (PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 27. Accessed at http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2027&context=edissertations on February 23rd, 2018.
[55] Ibid.

Alongside its discussion of the "humanitarian pursuit" of journalism within RFE, Haas's work also sheds light on the importance placed by RFE journalists on the BBC as a model for good journalistic practice.[56] The relationship between RFE and the BBC, and particularly an examination of the reasons why the two organizations are often portrayed as polar opposites (with the BBCXS boasting a reputation for "objectivity" and "impartiality"[57] which contrasts with the regular depiction of RFE as a mouthpiece of "Western Propaganda") despite the clear connections between both organizations in terms of personnel, information gathering, and journalistic practice, will be one of the main elements of focus in the following chapters.

While the quantity of scholarship concentrating on the BBC's foreign language services pales in comparison to that focusing on RFE, some outstanding recent scholarship has focused on the value of studying the BBCXS as a way of improving our understanding of Britain's changing foreign policy objectives across the twentieth century. This work has mostly focused on the BBCXS's role in maintaining and mediating Britain's challenge to Nazi German control over access to information in continental Europe during the Second World War, and its status in maintaining and then helping to manage the decline of the British Empire.[58] However scholarship focusing on the importance of understanding of the BBC's transnational broadcasting from a Cold War perspective has so far been much more limited, with Alban Webb's work representing a fairly isolated effort at understanding the BBCXS's relationship with successive UK governments through a Cold War lens and only covering the period up to 1956.[59] This is despite the fact that the 1970s represented a key decade of transformative change for British foreign policy (and for the BBCXS's role within that foreign policy), due to the challenges of decolonization, accession to the European Economic Community, and navigating Britain's continuing role as a key bridgehead between the United States and Continental (Western) Europe. My efforts to compare the internal discussions and external broadcasts of both RFE and the BBCXS's Central European Department (CED) during the period 1973-1978

[56] Ibid., 68-69.
[57] On the BBC's reputation for objectivity, see K. R. M. Short, who writes that "what the BBC has always been given credit for…is that it is such a marvelously devious propaganda organ that it always, and to everybody, appears objective". K. R. M. Short, *Western Broadcasting Over the Iron Curtain* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), 12.
[58] See Stephanie Seul and Nelson Ribiero, "Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting: The BBC's foreign-language services during the Second World War", in Special Issue of *Media History*, Volume 21, Issue 4: 2015; Simon Potter, Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[59] Alban Webb, *London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service and the Cold War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

represent the first study of the BBC CED to focus on the 1970s in particular. It will thus contribute to the growing history of the BBC's international operations as a whole, as well as towards the aforementioned debate about the changing status of human rights ideas and language within the European political order of the 1970s.

Methodology and Sources

My investigation will primarily adopt a comparative approach in understanding RFE and the BBC CED's responses to the negotiation and signing of the Helsinki Final Act and of the "Helsinki Process", and their respective relationships with related human rights groups which emerged in Central Europe during this period. In his influential article "Comparison and Beyond", Jürgen Kocka argues that one of the leading benefits of the use of comparison in history writing is its ability to achieve *verfremdung*: a way of defamiliarizing the apparently familiar and experiencing "a deprovincializing, a liberating, an eye-opening effect" leading to new and sometimes unexpected conclusions.[60] It is my contention that by comparing the similarities and difference between the way in which RFE and the BBCXS CED responded to the new challenges of the Helsinki era, we might get closer to establishing what was more unique, and what was more generic, about these two so-called "Western broadcasters".

Another related aim in adopting this comparative approach is to challenge the aforementioned distinction between the BBC as an "objective" news source and RFE as a tool of US "propaganda". Through a close comparison and analysis of the two organizations' similarities, entanglements and collaborations during the 1970s, I will interrogate the self-perceptions within the BBC of their work as being as being 'a class apart' from their RFE counterparts, wedded to a specific set of journalistic values resting explicitly upon the virtues of "objectivity" and "impartiality". In the following chapter, I will begin by examining the important differences between the two institutions in terms of their origins, foundations, locations, national concerns, funding arrangements, and relationship with their respective governments, clearly establishing that any similarities or commonalities that I propose must be considered with these profound differences in mind. Nonetheless, I am committed to using a comparative methodology to demonstrate that notwithstanding these important points of separation, it is still viable and valuable to consider both institutions as part of a shared process

[60] Jürgen Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond", *History and Theory,* Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 2003), 41.

by which Western states increasingly adopted the language of human rights in order to pursue Cold War foreign policy aims.

My work will draw on a range of archival source material to provide the evidence for its claims. Material used from the Blinken Open Society Archives' Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute Collection will be used to demonstrate the kinds of questions related to human rights and the Helsinki Final Act which RFE was most interested in asking of its listeners, the organization's priorities with regards to how to respond to new challenges in the post-Helsinki era, and the extent to which RFE staff conceived of their work in terms of serving the human rights of their audiences.

This material will be supplemented by my use of archival files from the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Corporate and Broadcast Records Collections, housed at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. This will be used to demonstrate both how the Helsinki Final Act and its impact upon human rights were discussed within different levels of RFE hierarchy, and how its influence fed through to RFE broadcasts.

With regards to the BBCXS, my main archival work was undertaken at the BBC Written Archives Centre in Caversham, England. This provided me with access to audience research reports, listener letters, internal memos and detailed reports discussing the CED's policies and "philosophy" regarding broadcasting to Communist Europe. This material included detailed internal discussions of human rights issues, revealing the variety of opinions held about the appropriate relationship between the CED and human rights groups based in Central and Eastern Europe (and their representatives in the UK). Alongside this, the collection also contained documents relating to the BBCXS's relationship with the UK government and parliament, as well as evidence of the nature of BBCXS's broadcasts specifically related to Helsinki and human rights in the form of listener correspondence and reports on the criticism which CED broadcasts on such subjects faced.

By close reading and comparison of these primary sources, in combination with secondary literature discussed above, I will be able to establish how these two transnational broadcasters responded to, and subsequently reflected, the "breakthrough" of human rights as a key discourse of Cold War foreign policy in Europe during the 1970s. I will draw out the similarities and differences between RFE and the BBC's internal debates and external broadcasts

on the subject, and examine their relationship to the prevailing foreign policy positions of the US and UK governments respectively. In doing so, I will show how both organizations, in different but related ways, should be understood as (among other things) advocates for a particular conception of "human rights" which emerged distinctly in the 1970s; and how by 1978, both RFE and the BBCXS might be accurately described as "human rights radios".

Chapter 2. Two Broadcasters, Divided by a Common Language: Comparing Radio Free Europe and the BBC External Services

In this chapter, I will outline the differences in the origins and institutional histories of RFE and the BBCXS, including both organizations' contrasting experience of the tumultuous events of 1956, and the extent and nature of competition and even occasional antipathy between the two organizations. It is my intention to demonstrate that despite these differences, it is more useful to focus on what RFE and the BBC CED shared and held in common by the 1970s than to frame their relationship as oppositional or antipathetic when understanding the two broadcasters' responses to the Helsinki Final Act and the changing status of human rights ideas an arguments within the Cold War. By understanding the close personal and ideological ties between RFE and BBCXS personnel, and the shared journalistic and research practices which both deployed, we might challenge the straightforward separation of the two into "propaganda" and "news" organizations respectively. I argue that by the 1970s, the existing similarities in both organizations' internal notions of their "mission" combined with a variety of external factors to draw them closer together with regards to issues related to coverage of dissidents, human rights, and pan-European political negotiations and cultural exchange. By examining their reactions and interactions during this period of change, we can trace the evolution of both the RFE and the BBC CED into "human rights radios".

Institutional Histories

The logical way to begin such an investigation into the convergences and divergences between the BBCXS and RFE is to scrutinize the context of both organizations' beginnings. Radio Free Europe established its full broadcast service to the people of Eastern Europe on May 1st, 1951. Puddington points out that the choice of this date, International Workers' Day, which by this time had been established as a choreographed celebration of Communist rule within the Soviet Union and its satellites, was not coincidental.[61] This provocative and politically motivated decision helps to underline the extent to which in its early years, RFE was committed to robustly and directly challenging the newly founded Soviet-backed Communist regimes' monopolistic control over news and cultural expression, in a concerted effort to disrupt, and ultimately to

[61] Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 1.

overturn, Communist rule.[62] In employing a range of exiles who had fled from Eastern Europe in the wake of the Second World War and the subsequent post-war imposition of Communist rule, it was hoped within US foreign policymaking circles, and within RFE itself, that the broadcaster might be used as a tool to help "roll back" Soviet influence over Eastern Europe. This misplaced belief that "communism was especially vulnerable in Western-oriented countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland",[63] and the conviction that RFE should play a direct role in not only identifying but explicitly attacking these vulnerabilities by encouraging defections to the West and revealing the names of alleged secret police informants, clearly separates RFE from the BBCXS, whose overseas broadcasts to Communist Europe did not pursue such strategies. While RFE doubtlessly evolved into a more nuanced and measured broadcaster, increasingly casting itself in the role of the trusted "surrogate home service"[64] and distancing itself from its earlier, cruder anti-communist rhetoric, its origins as a broadcaster which prioritized the explicit espousal of anti-communist rhetoric must be recognized.

The role played by the BBC's External Services in broadcasting across the iron curtain has thus far gained far less attention than that of RFE. While the relationship between the BBC and the UK government with regards to domestic political concerns continues to inspire a range of different academic inquiries,[65] the BBC's history (and present) as a leading player on the international broadcasting scene has received far less scrutiny.[66] Among the relatively small but valuable collection of historical works focusing on the BBC's foreign broadcasts, there are very few works which focus in particular on the way in which the Cold War affected the BBC's foreign broadcasting, and concomitantly how the BBCXS contributed to the shape of the Cold War.[67]

The BBCXS's historical roots pre-dated the outbreak of the Cold War. Overseas broadcasting in English was underway as early as 1932 (Under the telling title of the "BBC

[62] Ibid., 5-6.
[63] Ibid., 2.
[64] Ibid., 217.
[65] For a recent example see Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation 1974-1987* (London: Profile, 2015).
[66] The BBC's external services do receive some attention in Tom Mill's revisionist history of the BBC's relationship with the UK government See Tom Mills, *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service* (London: Verso, 2016).
[67] See Alban Webb, "A Leap of Imagination: BBC Audience Research Over the Iron Curtain", *Participations Journal of Audience and Reception Studies,* Vol. 8, Issue 1 (May 2011); *London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service and the Cold War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Empire Service"), while foreign language broadcasting began in earnest in the late 1930s, largely in response to fears about the impact of fascist propaganda being directed at strategically important parts of the world such as Latin America and the Middle East by Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy respectively.[68] Its Central European Department (CED) began broadcasting in Polish, Hungarian and Czech and Slovak in 1939, as the BBC was increasingly drafted into the UK government's efforts to counter the narrative of Nazi power that was increasingly projected across the region both before and during their occupation during the Second World War.[69]

While the decision to maintain these services after the end of the Second World War was certainly influenced by the emergence of ideological and strategic concerns arising from the new Soviet dominance over most of Central and Eastern Europe, this distinction between the origins of the BBCXS and other transnational broadcasters such as RFE, which was explicitly founded to serve the United States' specific Cold War strategic objectives, is an important one. The majority of the CED's staff were, as in the case of RFE, exiles from their home countries. But it is a notable point of difference between the two organizations that many of the most senior figures within the CED during the Cold War had been in place since the Second World War.[70] The fact that the CED was by no means a "child of the Cold War" in the same way as RFE, and the fact that many within the BBCXS considered the Second World War, and not the Cold War, as the "finest hour" of the institution, within which the essence of the service's mission and achievements were distilled and defined, seems an important distinction.[71]

For both RFE and the BBCXS, 1956 represented a particularly formative year, for different yet inextricably related reasons. For RFE, the year has taken on a totemic status as something of an *annus horribilis* within the organization's history due to its actions, or perceived actions, during the Hungarian Revolution of that year. The exact nature of the role played by RFE's Hungarian service in encouraging revolutionaries to believe that American military

[68] Seul and Ribiero, "Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting", 367-368.
[69] Webb, "A Leap of Imagination", 156.
[70] For example, Konrad Syrop, who served as Head of the CED in the mid-1970s, joined the Polish Service at its foundation in the days immediately following the outbreak of war on September 3rd, 1939. See Leonard Miall, "Obituary: Konrad Syrop", Thursday August 6th, 1998, *The Independent*. Accessed online on June 2nd, 2018 at https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-konrad-syrop-1169873.html.
[71] see Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 265.

support for their uprising was imminent is still contested.[72] However what is beyond question is the impact of 1956 on RFE's reputation. There was (and in many cases still is) a widespread belief that RFE had blood on its hands (or, more euphemistically as Johanna Granville's title puts it, "Jam on their Fingers") and actively encouraged a doomed revolution, which was subsequently violently crushed.[73] A series of serious changes to RFE's status and role within US foreign policy followed the debacle of 1956, which included the US State Department assuming direct responsibility for policy guidance to RFE and the introduction of a series of program guidelines to RFE's broadcast desk (BD) employees, outlining strict new limits to what should and should not be broadcast.[74] Among the new rules implemented at this time to try and prevent any repeat of the embarrassment of RFE's coverage of the Hungarian revolution was the famous "two source rule", which prevented news from being broadcast before its accuracy had been verified by two separate sources and which Susan Haas claims was explicitly borrowed from the BBC's code of journalistic practice.[75] Overall, the toxic legacy of 1956 within RFE continued to loom large well into the 1970s and beyond, intrinsically shaping its internal decision-making and external broadcast practices.

Whereas RFE emerged from its 1956 crisis with its reputation severely battered, for the BBCXS the year would become remembered as one in which its international reputation was burnished. Alban Webb has demonstrated how the BBCXS's refusal to bow to UK government pressure not to report on the strength of domestic opposition it faced during the so-called "Suez Crisis" has passed into BBC folklore as a shining example of the organization's ability to maintain objectivity, impartiality and independence from government control in its reporting.[76] The coincidence of this apparent fillip to the BBCXS's credibility as a news organization with RFE's struggles should not be underestimated when understanding how both organizations understood the nature of the relationships they developed with both Communist governments and opposition groups in Eastern Europe in the following years and decades. In the words of one

[72] See Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*,.89-114; A. Ross Johnson, "Setting the Record Straight: Role of Radio Free Europe in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956" *Woodrow Wilson Center 2006* (Working Paper, accessed online on April 18th, 2018 at https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/happ.op-3.pdf); Johanna Granville, "'Caught with Jam on Our Fingers': Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", Diplomatic History Vol. 29, Issue 5 (October 2005).
[73] Granville, "'Caught with Jam on Our Fingers'".
[74] Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 115-120.
[75] Haas, *Communities of Journalists and Journalism Practice*, 234.
[76] Webb, *London Calling*, 157-184.

BBC CED employee writing in 1971, "the Suez incident has been one of the brightest beacons in our "dialogue" with our communist equivalents or their politicians and diplomats", used to buttress the organization's reputation for impartiality and thus to justify and legitimize their broadcasts across the Iron Curtain.[77] In contrast, RFE's Hungarian debacle lent much credibility to Communist authorities' depiction of the broadcaster as a crude and untrustworthy propaganda organ, guilty of inciting violence and spreading misinformation.[78] The memory of 1956 would also impact upon the relationship between the two broadcasters, and the ways in which employees of both organizations positioned and identified themselves and their work in relation to the other. This is a theme which will be returned to in the following chapter, with particular reference to the case of both organizations' responses to the human rights activism within Central and Eastern Europe which was partially inspired by the Helsinki Final Act.

Crossover and Divergence in Personnel and Journalistic Practice

The apparently neat division between the "propaganda" of RFE and the "objective" and "impartial" news provided by the BBC suggested by their contrasting experiences and corporate memories of 1956 fails to represent how intricately connected the two organizations were on a number of levels both before, during, and after these events. One example of this is the extent to which RFE and the BBCXS shared research resources. Graham Mytton, the BBCXS's former Head of Audience Research, has written of how "throughout the 1970s and 1980s the BBC relied on research being done by RL and RFE's respective research departments and used the figures produced to make estimates of audience sizes throughout the communist bloc", and references to data on listening figures drawn from RFE research which was shared with the BBCXS is littered throughout the CED's audience research reports.[79]

Another more obvious marker of the close relationship between RFE and the BBC CED is the sheer number of employees who worked for both organizations at one time or another. In its early years, RFE often relied on former CED employees such as the Czech writer and

[77] "Broadcasting in the '70s to the Communist Countries", V. V. Pavlovic, 7th July, 1971. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe*. BBC External Services Collection, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham (hereafter BBCXSC).
[78] Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-64* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 68.
[79] Graham Mytton, "Audience Research at the BBC World Service, 1932-2010", *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* (Volume 8, Issue 1: May 2011).

broadcaster Pavel Tigrid, an exile who had already gained some broadcasting experience and some following among radio listeners during his time with the BBC, to present their programmes.[80] Archival sources also demonstrate the extent to which the BBCXS returned the favor in terms of "poaching" some of the best talent from RFE. Correspondence between Chester W. Ott, Acting Director of RFE, and George Tarjan, then Head of the CED, reflects the simultaneously collaborative and competitive relationship between the two organizations. In his courteous letter to Tarjan of May 11th, 1966, Ott writes that "It would be a great pleasure to get together with you at your convenience", informing him that "we should be happy to see you in Munich if it proves possible for you to come here" but that "I shall be in London some time within the next two or three months and could see you there".[81] But within the same letter is a polite but somewhat terse request that the BBC refrain from poaching the best RFE staff, particularly from the Polish Broadcast Desk: "We ask that you do what you can to insure against recruiting from our staff, and that you place such obstacles as you can, in good conscience, in the way of Radio Free Europe employees seeking new positions at BBC".[82] This request is made in the wake of a member of staff at the Polish Desk of RFE, Jan Krok-Paszowski, jumping ship to work at the BBC's Polish Service. The tenor of this request suggests a relationship built on an overall sense of mutual respect and shared interests, combined with a note of mild disapproval or annoyance and a sense of competition. This discordant note comes through more clearly in the memo marked "strictly confidential" attached to the above correspondence and exchanged between Ott and his RFE colleague Charles B. Kauffman, outlining fears that "the BBC is playing an underhanded game, and will continue to attempt to "raid" our personnel in a subtle way".[83]

A similar official tendency towards respect and co-operation can be noted within the BBC's own reply on the Krok-Paszowski affair, with Head of the CED Tarjan conceding that "a case can be made out for not weakening or disturbing the parallel efforts in the same field directed towards the same aims by not offering employment to a person who is actually working

[80] Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 4.
[81] Correspondence: Chester W. Ott to George Tarjan, 11th May, 1966. 1675.5, *BBC, Includes correspondence on the "poaching" of programs,* Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Corporate Records Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford (Hereafter RFE/RL CRC)
[82] Ibid.
[83] Note from Chester W. Ott to Charles B. Kauffman, undated, 1675.5, *BBC, Includes correspondence on the "poaching" of programs,* RFE/RL CRC.

for the other organization".[84] This concession of the CED and RFE's "parallel efforts in the same field" suggests an awareness on the part of Tarjan that the two broadcasters were ultimately more similar than different in their mission and purpose, and suggests a fraternal rather than an oppositional relationship.

Having said this, internal discussions of RFE within the BBC CED often held up the former organization as a leading example of what *not* to do. In 1978, then-Head of the CED Marie Anthony damningly argued in a memo debating the merits of broadcasting the founding text of Charter 77 (which will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter) that "RFE and Hungary in 1956 is the perfect example of what happens when broadcasters outrun policy" and that "To veer towards providing a platform is to move towards RFE".[85] Such passing remarks, which did not need to explicitly explain what had happened at RFE in 1956 regarding Hungary or why a "move towards RFE" was a move in the wrong direction for the BBCXS, suggest a very different conception of the relationship between the two organizations than the "parallel efforts in the same field directed towards the same aim" referred to in the Tarjan / Ott correspondence. It would appear that the essence of the relationship between the two organizations lies somewhere in the liminal space between the diplomatic and comradely language of the correspondence between RFE and BBC officials regarding the overall aims of both organizations and the sniping and grumbling of internal memos discussing the "competition". While BBC journalists and Heads of Department might seek to occupy the moral high ground when comparing themselves favorably to RFE on the basis of their news output, the shared practices, personnel and sense of mission that permeated the relationship between the two should not be underestimated.

The Challenges and Changing Missions of the 1970s

The early 1970s represented a period of serious challenge, even crisis, for both organizations. For RFE, the revelations in the US press in the late 1960s that the organization had been secretly funded by the CIA since its inception, and was not (as was largely believed within the United States) paid for by the donations of private citizens, were embarrassing, yet

[84] Correspondence: George Tarjan to RFE Director General Anthony Smith, 19th April, 1966. 1675.5, *BBC, Includes correspondence on the "poaching" of programs*, RFE/RL CRC.
[85] Marie Anthony, Memo to Central European Staff, 14th July, 1977. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe*, BBCXSC.

limited in their immediate impact.[86] But by the 1970s, in the context of a growing distaste within the US for foreign policy adventurism tied to the Vietnam War, alongside the Nixon Administration's pursuit of détente with the USSR, these facts threatened the very existence of RFE. Although the campaign led by Senator William J. Fulbright to close down Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which he decried as relics of the Cold War past, was ultimately unsuccessful, the new settlement regarding RFE's funding and oversight which emerged by 1973 was nonetheless an important turning point in the history of the "Radios".[87] The formation of the Board for International Broadcasting (BIB) meant that the organization's decision-making and broadcast output would have to be prepared with accountability to this Congressional body in mind.

Alongside these challenges stateside, the relationship between RFE and their hosts, the government of West Germany, also became more problematic during the Brandt and Schmidt administrations between 1969 and 1982. Their pursuit of *Ostpolitik* (strengthening diplomatic relations with East Germany and developing closer connections with other Communist states) turned the question of RFE and the location of its headquarters in Munich into something of a "political football" among the ongoing diplomatic negotiations. As well as facing something of a trial by media within the German press during this time, a serious blow to RFE's credibility as a news organization was struck by the International Olympic Committee's decision, after severe lobbying from the Soviet bloc countries, to rescind RFE's accreditation to cover the 1976 Winter Olympics at Innsbruck.[88] The extent of Communist states' efforts to use Western European nations' desire for détente to threaten the existence of RFE will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. However, it is enough here to state that when considered as a whole, these factors presented a serious existential threat to the organization, and encouraged a sense that it was in need of a new public image both within the US and within Europe if it was to continue its work into the era of détente.

[86] Kenneth Osgood, "The Exposure of CIA Sponsorship of Radio Free Europe" in Haalvard Notaker, Giles Scott-Smith and David J. Snyder, eds, *Reasserting America in the 1970s: US Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 64-71.
[87] Puddington dedicates a chapter to discussing "Senator Fulbright's Crusade". Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom,* 187-214.
[88] Ibid., 175-187.

The BBCXS too was facing a period of transition by the early 1970s. In the era of large foreign policy changes due to the near-completion of decolonization, and British entry into the European Economic Community, the role of the BBC's External Services as part of the UK's foreign policy infrastructure was naturally up for renegotiation.[89] Alongside this geopolitical realignment, Britain's economic difficulties in the early and mid-1970s made the BBCXS vulnerable to potentially swingeing funding cuts. While Services targeting audiences within Communist countries were designated as among the most valuable by an official review of the BBCXS carried out by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1970, it is clear that this review was the beginning and not the end of the process of cuts.[90] As such, it became increasingly apparent within the CED that it would be necessary to consistently demonstrate the political value of their ongoing broadcasts to their paymasters at the Foreign Office.

This threat was somewhat mitigated by a concerted fightback on behalf of the BBCXS, which mobilized supporters within political and journalistic circles to express their disgust at the proposed cuts. These efforts were compiled in an internal report which was widely shared among politicians, civil servants and other potential BBCXS allies, which labeled organization as "The Oxfam of the Mind"; cultivating an image of the organization not as a vestigial limb of a now-defunct imperial beast, but as a kind of humanitarian organization, committed to delivering the scarce resource of truth to impoverished listeners across the unfree world.[91] As Jacob Miller, editor of the "Soviet Studies" journal quoted in the report put it with regard to the BBC Russian Service, "I cannot think of any activity, in proportion to cost, of more value to the world's foreseeable future than the dissemination of true, clear, unbiased information to Soviet People".[92] As the previous *raison d'étre* of British overseas broadcasting, namely the maintenance of the British empire or of British superiority within the Commonwealth, terminally dissipated as a

[89] See Martin David Brown, "A Very British Vision of Détente: The United Kingdom's foreign policy during the Helsinki Process, 1969-1975" in Frederic Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow and Bernd Rother, eds, *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 121-133.
[90] See Alban Webb, Andrew Smith, Jess Macfarlane and Nat Martin, "BBC World Service and the Political Economy of Cultural Value in Historical Context" in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, eds, *Tuning In: Researching Diasporas at the BBC World Service* (The Open University, 2008), 9. Accessed online on May 31st 2018 at *http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/diasporas/sites/www.open.ac.uk.researchprojects.diasporas/files/BBC%20World%20Service%20Historical%20Report_0.pdf*.
[91] This is the title of a September 1976 BBC External Services report representing a selection of published comment on the BBCXS, inspired by Malcolm Browne of the New York Times, who wrote of the BBCXS that "BBC is, for the free mind, what Oxfam is to the hungry." BBCXS Annual Report 1976, E62/33, *Audience Research Reports / Listener Letters*, BBCXSC.
[92] Ibid.

legitimate or realistic foreign policy goal, the work of those responsible for broadcasting across the Iron Curtain took on a more central role in efforts to define the priorities and basic principles of the organization as it moved forward. The extent to which the BBCXS's purpose was justified in essentially humanitarian terms, as an organization which, in the words of the head of the BBC's Eastern European Service in a speech given on his departure from the role, "keep[s] windows open for people who without us would have no air, and keep[s] flames burning for people who without us would be in darkness", is striking.[93]

The Central European Department (CED) was dramatically affected by this gradual process of realignment, which increasingly defined the BBCXS's overall mission as one of serving its audiences on the basis of "the free flow of information as a basic human right".[94] The nature of the debates within the department about its proper role and purpose were outlined in a range of different internal reports. One such document, produced by head of the CED Konrad Syrop in October 1974, argued that a reevaluation of the mission of the CED was necessary due to a "lack of consensus about values and the difficulty therefore of interpreting, or reflecting, the variety and confusion of views which clamor for expression".[95] The fact that this report on the "Philosophy" of the BBCXS was widely shared across all BBCXS departments by Managing Director Gerard Mansell, who had instructed Syrop "to prepare a paper on External Broadcasting Philosophy with the intention that such a paper should lead to discussions throughout External Services Directorate, in order to help in clarifying and updating our own thought on what we are fundamentally all about", underlines the extent to which the BBC CED was particularly influential in informing the practices, priorities and purpose of the organization as a whole during this period. [96]

[93] Peter Udell, "Farewell Talk to East European Services", February 6th, 1985. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe*, BBCXSC.
[94] This particular wording was used by former BBCXS Managing Director John Tusa in his memoirs reflecting back on his career at the BBCXS as a whole. See Tusa, *A World in Your Ear*, 13-14.
[95] Konrad Syrop, "Notes on Philosophy'' internal report, 2nd April, 1974, 3. E40/477: *External Services Policy*, BBCXSC.
[96] Gerard Mansell, cover note to Konrad Syrop, "Notes on Philosophy", 8th April, 1974. E40/477: *External Services Policy*, BBCXSC.

Samizdat, Tamizdat and "Europeanness"

One phenomenon which came to define the "new era" of Radio Free Europe's history which emerged during the 1970s was the broadcaster's turn towards samizdat and tamizdat material as a major element of its broadcasting output. While the phenomenon of collecting and broadcasting unpublished or self-published materials which had been smuggled out of Communist states did not begin in the 1970s, both RFE and its sister station Radio Liberty (RL)'s engagement with such material took on a new scale and seriousness in the years following the formation of the *Chronicle of Current Events* in the Soviet Union in 1968. The extensive use of this material in RL's programming was mutually beneficial for both samizdat producers and the broadcaster themselves. RL provided the former with a potential audience far greater than any that could have accessed the tiny and often poor-quality print runs of such self-published titles. For RL, the opportunity to broadcast such material boosted the station's prestige among its listeners within the Soviet Union as a source of authentic and original news and content, helping to offset its reputation as simply a mouthpiece of American propaganda.[97]

The benefits of such use of material was clearly understood within RFE as well, and by the mid-1970s the broadcaster was also collecting, curating and regularly broadcasting a range of samizdat and tamizdat material. After its initial publication in Paris in 1974, the broadcast of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's influential account of the horror and scale of systematic Soviet cruelty and repression, *The Gulag Archipelago*, became a sensation not only among Western audiences. Due to its translation, serialization and broadcast by numerous different language desks at RFE, the book's impact upon Western leftist intellectual circles coincided with an impact which, although far more difficult to measure, was likely to have been just as formative for listeners in Central and Eastern Europe.[98]

Alongside this broadcast of literary works which were banned in the Soviet Bloc, RFE became a vital mouthpiece for opposition voices from within Central and Eastern Europe which used the language of human rights to frame their opposition after 1975. In his history of the

[97] See Miklós Sükösd, "Underground Print Culture and Independent Political Communication in Communist Regimes: Samizdat as Typosphere in Eastern and Central Europe from the 1960s to the 1990s", *Korean Journal of Communication Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (December 2012).

[98] For an example of how *The Gulag Archipelago* was integrated into RFE program schedules see Ioana Macrea-Toma, "The Intricacies of a (Cold) War of Ideas" in Bischof and Jürgens, eds, *Voices of Freedom – Western Interference? 60 Years of Radio Free Europe* (Munich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 137.

"Helsinki Effect", Daniel C. Thomas remarks that "in the early summer of 1976, a group of students recently expelled from Krakow's Jagellonian University for establishing an independent discussion group learned about KOR and the Ursus/Radom strikes from Western Radio Broadcasts".[99] This claim is supported by Pawel Machcewicz, who allots RFE a key role in the in the transformation of KOR from a small pressure group, seeking justice for striking workers, into a broader popular social movement in Poland organized around the rights enshrined within the Helsinki Final Act.[100] Archival evidence also demonstrates that RFE's Hungarian Desk also regularly broadcast samizdat material produced by figures such as Miklos Haraszti in evening round-up programmes presented by Gyula Borbandi.[101] All of this goes to show RFE's growing and close relations with opposition groups which explicitly used human rights arguments to frame and justify their dissent by the mid-1970s.

The BBC CED did not develop as close a relationship with opposition groups as RFE did at this time, preferring to keep more of a distance from such groups' spokespeople. There is even evidence that in May 1978, Jan Krok-Paszowski, the BBC Polish Service employee "poached" from RFE in 1966 (as discussed in Chapter 2), rejected the advances of a visitor from Poland who claimed to be a spokesman for ROPCIO (the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights, a contemporary of KOR), who asked him for a private telephone number so that he could phone through news from Poland; a proposal to which Krok-Paszowski "said firmly that we never use this sort of communication methods and do not need this kind of information".[102] Nevertheless, despite this apparent squeamishness or suspicion at establishing close ties with opposition figures (or those who claimed to be opposition figures), the BBCXS did also step up its samizdat broadcasting during the 1970s.

The BBC's Russian language section developed a particularly close relationship with Alexander Solzhenitsyn himself, inviting him to visit the section in 1976 to give his opinions and

[99] Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*, 98.
[100] Machcewicz, *Poland's War on Radio Free Europe*, 228.
[101] "A Samizdat Periodical: Evening Roundup D-778", Gy. Borbandi (trans. M. Schmidt), 14 December 1978. HU-OSA-300-40-2/6, *Culture: Samizdat, 1977-1984*; Subject Files in English; Hungarian Unit; RFE/RL Research Institute Collection, Blinken Open Society Archives, Budapest.
[102] Memo, Jan Krok-Paszowski to Head of Central European Department, 25th May, 1978. E62/46*: Polish Service – Relations with Poland 1971-84*, BBCXS.

criticism of the service.[103] Within the CED, Arthur Koestler's 1940 novel *Darkness at Noon*, which depicted the hypocrisy and barbarity of totalitarianism and remained unpublished in Hungary until the first samizdat editions appeared in the 1980s, was serialized by the Hungarian service in 1979.[104] BBCXS audience research reports also demonstrate the appreciation of Hungarian Service's listeners for the BBC's coverage of samizdat production within their own country. One Hungarian visitor the department (described as a "distinguished literary historian" visiting the UK for a conference) is quoted as saying that "…he believed that the Hungarian Service had been the first to mention the existence of Samizdat in Hungary and added that he had not quite believed it until, within days of the Hungarian Service transmission mentioning the topic, he had been able to acquire a typed copy of one such underground publication."[105]

Part of the rationale behind both broadcasters' focus on samizdat and tamizdat material was a shared sense among both RFE and the BBCXS of a desire to cultivate and nurture a shared sense of "Europeanness" among their audiences. Friederike Kind-Kovacs has demonstrated how an effort to maintain and extend notions of the existence of a culturally defined "imagined Europe" was an important aspect of RFE employees' perceptions of their work as contributing to undermining Europe's Cold War geopolitical divisions.[106] Similarly within the BBC, concerns were often raised within the CED during the 1970s that if broadcasts were going to be relevant, attractive, and influential for listeners in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, they ought to focus more on events within Europe – both West and East – than on areas of the world which had historically been more closely linked to the British sphere of influence. In his "Notes on Philosophy", Head of the CED Konrad Syrop wrote that there was "…a very strong feeling indeed that our bulletins were not "European" enough", spending too much time devoted to covering stories which were of little relevance to their listeners.[107] A memo from June 1974 demonstrates how this very strong feeling manifested itself into program planning, with Syrop detailing plans for the establishment of a "European Forum", which would focus on "discussion

[103] See M. Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse University Press, 1997), 152.
[104] The Hungarian Service received 5 letters regarding the serialization of *Darkness at Noon* in 1979. Audience Research Report, 1979. E3/1,005*:Hungarian Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research – Summaries and Competition Report,* BBCXSC.
[105] Audience Research Report, 1978, E3/1,005: *Listener Correspondence and Audience Research – Summaries and Competition Reports – Hungarian Service (1975-1984),* BBCXSC.
[106] Friederike Kind-Kovacs, "Voices, Letters and Literature Through the Iron Curtain: Exiles and the (Trans)Mission of Radio in the Cold War", Cold War History, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2013), 204.
[107] Syrop, "Notes on Philosophy", E40/477: *External Services Policy*, BBCXSC.

of problems at CSCE in Geneva, focus on the EEC, most favored nation clause for the Soviet Union, East-West relations, Soviet Dissidents, etc".[108] The inclusion within an Audience Research Report of the Czechoslovak Service from 1979 of an excerpt from a critical letter from a listener who complained of "too much attention to Africa, not enough to Europe" suggests that the steps taken by the CED to address this issue did not satisfy every listener, but reinforces the idea that such complaints were taken seriously.[109]

All of this suggests that it was becoming increasingly understood within the CED that their listeners would welcome more coverage of European news, and particularly of the relationships between Western and Eastern Europe, considering it as more relevant than news from any other part of the world. But beyond this, it is clear that it was believed by leading figures within the CED that it was right and proper for the BBC to nurture this interest, by deliberately shifting its focus towards coverage of pan-European political developments and framing this coverage in a way which emphasized the importance of pan-European political forums such as the CSCE.

Conclusion

It is clear that any comparison of RFE and the BBCXS must avoid the easy elision of the two into an entirely united front of "Western Broadcasting" which acted in complete synchronicity. In particular, the legacy of 1956 helps delineate some of the important differences between the two organizations in this regard. Strong convictions undoubtedly existed among some within the BBCXS that their organization bore little resemblance to RFE, existing on something of a higher plane as a paragon of "professionalism, fairness and balance" which was sometimes explicitly defined as the antithesis of RFE's approach to transnational broadcasting.[110] Nevertheless, the bonds that united these two broadcasters in terms of shared resources and aims existed from the outset. This interconnection strengthened during the 1970s, as both RFE and BBCXS pivoted towards deploying the language of "Europeanness", and that of serving the humanitarian interests of their listeners within their internal discussions, as well as in their

[108] "'European Dimension'" of Central European Service Output", Konrad Syrop, 15 June 1974. E40/372: *Central European Service – Policy*, BBCXSC.
[109] Audience Research Report 1979, E/3/1,026: *Listener Correspondence and Audience Research Summaries – Czechoslovak Service*, BBCXSC.
[110] Marie Anthony, Memo to Central European Staff, 14th July, 1977. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe*, BBCXSC.

external representations of themselves directed towards both their own governments and their audiences within Central and Eastern Europe. This course was pursued as a means to justify their effectiveness and secure their continued existence. The ways in which this mutual commitment to the "humanitarian pursuit" of transnational broadcasting across the iron curtain manifested themselves in regard to the specific topic of the Helsinki Final Act, and the human rights activism which it encouraged, will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Transnational Broadcasting as a "Humanitarian Pursuit": RFE and BBCXS Internal Policies and Discussions Relating to Helsinki and Human Rights

This chapter will demonstrate the ways in which, between 1973 and 1978, both Radio Free Europe and the BBC External Services developed into transnational broadcasters whose employees increasingly defined their organizations' mission using the language of human rights. Contemporary debates about rights relating to the "access", "circulation", "exchange", and "free flow" of information, which were referred to in the Third Basket of the Helsinki Final Act, help explain how and why RFE in particular was explicit and emphatic in referring to the Final Act as a justifying international precedent for its continued broadcasting to Central and Eastern Europe. As pointed out in the previous chapter, The BBCXS was also increasingly wedded to the notion of defining its overall mission as one of serving its audiences on the basis of conceptualizing "the free flow of information as a basic human right".[111] While the BBC CED made explicit references to the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act far less frequently than RFE, internal discussions within the BBC's Central European Department (CED) reveal that its employees also considered their work as being justified and motivated by a commitment to the existence of a universal human right to access accurate information, which was being violated by the Communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe. I will demonstrate how the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act were utilized to justify the continued provision of Western transnational news broadcasting, in a period when arguments in favour of shutting down Western broadcasting across the iron curtain were arguably at their strongest in both the East and the West.

Drawing my evidence predominantly from primary source material found in the archives of both RFE and the BBC CED, I will examine the ways in which The Helsinki Final Act was deployed as a justification for the continuation of transnational broadcasting by Western governments and broadcasters, and simultaneously as a mechanism by which Communist states questioned its legitimacy and threatened its continued existence. While it was RFE which overtly draped itself in the flag of the "Helsinki Process", increasingly positioning itself and its actions as those of an organization dedicated to the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act's provisions on human rights, the BBC CED also benefited from the Final Act's provisions on the

[111] Tusa, *A World in Your Ear*, 13-14.

exchange of information, and the US's overt defense of Western broadcasting according to those provisions at the CSCE follow-up meeting in Belgrade between October 1977 and March 1978.

RFE's Pivot to Helsinki

As argued in the previous chapter, RFE was an organization whose origins, funding, and continued support within US foreign policy circles were based upon its perceived value as a Cold War weapon for the United States. However, such a conclusion should not preclude us from looking more deeply at how diverse range of opinions and motivations co-existed within the organization. Susan Haas has pointed out that RFE's Central Newsroom (CN) was a key site of contestation and evolution regarding RFE's identity in relation to human rights. Haas helpfully points out that the majority of CN staff, trained news journalists who provided the news bulletins which were the focal point of every Broadcast Desk's hourly output, were neither Americans or Central or Eastern European émigrés. Instead, the CN during the 1970s represented something of a smorgasbord of "Western" (or more accurately, English-speaking) journalistic talent, with employees hailing from Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland, as well as the US.[112] Haas argues that in order to understand the motivations of these non-American journalists to work for RFE, we must look beyond a simple understanding of RFE's mission in terms of serving US Cold War foreign policy goals. Rather, she explains how RFE's mission "coincided with both the democratic aims of Western journalism and the movement toward universal rights to information and free speech, thus attracting Western journalists to RFE, *despite* its relationship with the US government".[113] Asserting that CN staff understood and identified themselves as belonging to "a post-World War Two Western-initiated movement to achieve universal rights to free speech and information, including freedom of media flows, codified decades later in the Helsinki Declaration of 1975", Haas illuminates the extent to which those working at the CN belonged to a shared community of values, which crossed over institutional boundaries within Western journalism, and was motivated by a notion of their work as serving the universalist cause of human rights through the provision of information.[114]

[112] Susan Haas, "Radio Free Europe's Central Newsroom: Journalists as Émigrés" in Bischof and Jürgens, eds, *Voices of Freedom – Western Interference? 60 Years of Radio Free Europe* (Munich: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 147-176.
[113] Ibid., 154 (emphasis in the original).
[114] Ibid,.164.

The idea of the existence of a universal human right to freedom of information had evolved over time since the at least the Second World War, having been expressed thus in Article 19 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in December 1948:

> *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expressions; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers*.[115]

This commitment to freedom of information was phrased somewhat differently within the Helsinki Final Act, with signatories expressing their intentions towards "*Improvement of the Circulation of, Access to, and Exchange of Information"*.[116] The subsection contained a particular clause regarding radio:

> *The participating states note the expansion in the dissemination of information broadcast by radio, and express the hope for the continuation of this process, so as to meet the interest of mutual understanding among peoples and the aims set forth by this Conference.*[117]

While it is striking that the phrase "regardless of frontiers" does *not* appear in the text of the CSCE (as it does in the UNDHR), I will demonstrate how RFE nevertheless positioned their operations within the context of Helsinki's provisions on improving "access to information" and "expansion in the dissemination of information broadcast by radio", and argue that these

[115] United Nations Universal declaration of Human Rights, Article19. Full text accessed on May 12th, 2018 at http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ It is necessary to note that while Communist states (particularly the Soviet Union) were involved in the process of drawing up the UDHR, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland were among the 8 countries who abstained from voting in favor of the Declaration. The reasons for this abstention are complex and contested, combining an official aversion to the UDHR's failure to explicitly deny fascists and Nazis human right to freedom of expression and association with a legal positivist approach which rejected the notion of human rights (or any legal rights) existing outside of the framework of the state. See P. Danchin, Columbia University, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Drafting History" accessed on May 12th, 2018 at http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/udhr/udhr_general/drafting_history_10.html.

[116] "Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields", Subsection 2 ("Information"), part (a), Helsinki Final Act, 42.

[117] Ibid., part (a) (iii), 43.

provisions justified their right to continue to operate, despite concerted efforts by forces on both sides of the Iron Curtain to shut them down during this period.

Besides the evidence of a general commitment towards serving the cause of human rights affecting journalistic practices within RFE's Central Newsroom demonstrated by Haas, there are a number of clear examples of ways in which RFE demonstrated its explicit support for the Helsinki Final Act as an international agreement which buttressed and justified its existence. One of the most obvious ways in which RFE threw its weight behind the Act was the introduction of an explicit reference to Helsinki, which appeared within hourly "signboards" broadcast by the Polish service.[118] According to an article in the Polish newspaper *Zolnierz Wolnosci,* quoted without comment in an RFE research report on Communist press coverage of RFE, dated April 7th, 1977, this regularly repeated "signboard" broadcast as follows:

> *RFE is an independent broadcasting station, transmitting its programs on wave-lengths assigned to it by the International Telecommunications Union. The station is financed by the American people. The budget is approved by the US Congress. In working out our programs we are guided by the conviction that the principle of free flow in information and ideas, recognized by the US and confirmed in Helsinki serves to further peace and mutual understanding between the nations.*[119]

This demonstrates the extent to which explicit mentions of the Helsinki Final Act, and in particular the above mentioned provisions relating to access to information, as interpreted and represented by RFE, were inextricably woven into the fabric of RFE broadcasts by 1977. In justifying RFE's broadcasts in accordance with Helsinki, alongside other international organizations such as the International Telecommunications Union, this short but regularly

[118] As well as their content value, such "signboards" (short, regularly repeated signature audio slots which acted as on-air advertisements for RFE) served a practical purpose. RFE broadcast on multiple and often-changing shortwave frequencies in an attempt to overcome efforts by Communist authorities at "jamming" or blocking western broadcasts, meaning that regular on-air reminders of the station's name were necessary to help RFE's audience find them on the airwaves. See George W. Woodard, "Cold War Radio Jamming" in in A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, eds, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Budapest, CEU Press, 2010) , 51-63.

[119] "Attachments on RFE/RLAS Violators of the Helsinki Agreement", Folder: 163.7, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Belgrade 1977,* Alphabetical File, 1948-1998, RFE/RL CRC.

repeated "signboard" demonstrates how RFE considered such appeals as legitimizing their own work. Through cultivating the image of an international and transnational broadcaster that was "financed by the American people" (and not, by implication, the CIA) and committed to furthering "peace and mutual understanding between the nations", RFE positioned itself within an internationalist, peaceful, and rights-based framework of information provision which it considered to be simultaneously appealing to both its listeners in the East and its political and cultural backers in the West. The notion that the principle of "free flow of information and ideas" was "confirmed in Helsinki" is somewhat debatable when compared against the actual text of the Final Act, which is in many ways more vague and limited than the UDHR on the subject of freedom of information, and does not in fact contain the phrase "free flow of information". However, this is surely less important than the fact that RFE considered itself on solid ground in appealing to its audience in Poland (and, as we shall see later, to conference delegates of all signatory states of the CSCE) on the basis of its broadcasts adhering to, and even epitomizing, the Final Act's provisions on information rights.

"Our Support is Implicit in Everything We Do or Say": the BBC's relationship with Helsinki and Helsinki-inspired Human Rights Groups

While evidence for an explicit "pivot towards Helsinki" at RFE is clear, no comparable "smoking gun" exists within the BBC Central European Department's archival documents from the period. My time at the BBC Written Archive Centre did not unearth any specific or explicit commitment within the CED referring to overt support for the Helsinki Final Act, or any concerted efforts to utilize the Act in particular as a way of validating or legitimizing its broadcasts. However, despite the comparatively few explicit references to Helsinki which cropped up during my evaluation of the CED's internal policies, correspondence and memoranda during the period 1973-1978, it is nevertheless my contention that one can trace a meaningful engagement within the CED with the human rights provisions of the Final Act and earlier international agreements and ideas concerning human rights, which demonstrate a sincere but implicit commitment to supporting the observance of those provisions within the Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, internal debates about the mission and purpose of the CED in the 1970s predated the signing of the Act on August 1st, 1975, or even the beginning of the CSCE's initial negotiations in 1973. To gain more insight into these debates we can turn to some valuable primary evidence in the form of a number of internal reports which dwelt on exactly these topics. A seventeen-page policy report entitled "Broadcasting in the '70s to the Communist Countries", written by a BBCXS employee named V. V. Pavlovic and dated 7th July, 1971, places the question of the CED's approach to broadcasting across the iron curtain within the wider context of the two fundamental obligations of the BBCXS as a whole, which are here pithily summed up as the following: "to tell the truth and to broadcast in the national interest".[120] According to Pavlovic, the simultaneous pursuit of these two obligations had up to this point in time been largely unproblematic, since the BBC's reputation for impartiality, independence and objectivity was one which the British government considered a national asset in itself. He includes (unreferenced) quotes from "official statements put out by successive governments" to support this notion, stating that '"In the government's view the impartiality and objectivity of the BBC is a national asset of great value'" and that "'the government consider… that the Corporation's reputation for telling the truth must be maintained'".[121]

Despite this rather rosy depiction of a UK government perfectly happy to fund the BBCXS without seeking to exert any influence whatsoever over its broadcast content, the report does go on to state that the BBC had been guilty in the past of falling short of its commitment to impartiality. According to Pavlovic, it was in its relationship with and broadcasts about the end of the British Empire (a process that was all but complete by the early 1970s) that the BBCXS had been guilty of occasionally allowing its standards with regards to impartiality slip. The report argues that its occasional "explaining away, even by implication… during the passing away of the Empire" and the "implied eulogizing, such as might have occurred during the early days of the Commonwealth" was something of a black mark against the good name of the BBC around the world, which "tended to detract from impartiality, to blunt objectivity, to prejudice truth; and upset to dignity of the Corporation".[122] For Pavlovic, lessons must be learned from the BBCXS's handling of the end of empire, and applied to its approach towards broadcasting to

[120] V. V. Pavlovic, "Broadcasting in the '70s to the Communist Countries" (internal report), 7th July, 1971. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe*, BBCXSC.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

Communist Europe, where "if our truth is presented with even a touch of emotion or aggression it will sound like propaganda".[123]

Having thus argued for the necessity of prioritizing its commitment to impartiality, the report then goes on to state the following, somewhat contradictory opinion:

> *There are instances where the BBC cannot afford to be either impartial or neutral: in the struggle between truth and untruth, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, compassion and cruelty, tolerance and intolerance, decency and indecency. By the BBC's standards, to mention just one example, racialism is not a responsible opinion and a man who speaks in favour of racial intolerance, cannot have the same rights as the man who condemns it.*[124]

The inherent confusion and inconsistency contained within this report, which on the one hand positions impartiality at the heart of the BBCXS's mission and then in the next breath argues for the demotion of impartiality, in favor of a range of other moral commitments, as the most important principles underwriting the BBCXS's actions, illuminates the contradictory and often confusing thinking that sometimes emerged when BBCXS employees tried to express the most basic principles of what exactly the organization was for.

Pavlovic's views on the need to subjugate impartiality to other, apparently more fundamental principles were incorporated, almost word for word, into the important 1974 report on "External Services Philosophy" authored by Konrad Syrop, Head of the CED, mentioned in the previous chapter.[125] Syrop too dwells on the BBC's obligations, arguing that the service's credibility rested on four principles: "truthfulness, integrity, balance and impartiality".[126] However, Syrop also tempers his commitment to these principles by pledging his allegiance to "…those basic moral and constitutional beliefs on which the nation's life is founded. The BBC does not feel obliged for example to appear neutral as between truth and untruth, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, compassion and cruelty, tolerance and intolerance (including

[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Konrad Syrop, "External Services 'Philosophy'" (Internal Report), 2nd April 1974. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe,* BBCXSC.
[126] Ibid.

racial intolerance)."[127] The existence and prevalence of this report (which, as previously mentioned, was widely shared across BBCXS departments) demonstrates that competing ideas about the right balance to strike between impartiality and support for the values of truth, justice, freedom, compassion and tolerance were being expressed at the time when the CED had to develop policies towards coverage of human rights issues – including those movements which emerged in the wake of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

These reports go some way to demonstrating that moral commitments towards freedom, justice, compassion and tolerance were already considered to be *more* fundamental "BBC values" even than impartiality, at least by some key figures within the organization. But can we trace this commitment to the protection and extension of these abstract moral values into a concrete commitment towards protecting or serving the "human rights" of listeners, or indeed an interaction with the specific human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act in particular? There appear to be no reports devoted to tracing the impact of the Helsinki Final Act upon the CED's mission or broadcasts within the BBCXS's archives. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the emergence of human rights groups like Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, which referred explicitly and repeatedly to the Helsinki Final Act in its founding document,[128] did lead to internal exchanges within the CED which help illuminate the nature of the debate about the proper relationship between the BBCXS and human rights actors and ideas during the period.

A memo sent by then Head of the CED, Marie Anthony, to her staff on July 14th, 1977, explains her decision as to why the CED would not be broadcasting the text of Charter 77 in full. Anthony's memo suggests that the question of the CED's proper relationship with Charter 77 had already been the subject of some debate among CED staff by this time. Referring explicitly to "the recent question of broadcasting texts: particularly Charter 77", Anthony outlines her conclusions on why the BBC should not broadcast such texts directly to its audience thus:

> *Our reputation for objectivity rests on the fact that we are professional broadcasting journalists applying standards of editorial judgement to every "story", assessing the accuracy of the facts, extracting from events, speeches,*

[127] Ibid.
[128] See Founding Declaration of Charter 77, 1-4. Full text accessed in pdf form on May 12th, 2018 at Roy Rozenweig Centre for History and New Media, George Mason University, http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/.

texts, the significant parts and presenting all this in assimilable broadcasting terms. To do otherwise would lead us into double hazard.[129]

What was this "double hazard"? Firstly, Anthony is wary of allowing any particular group to "use the BBC as a platform to address the audience directly", arguing that in deciding how to cover Charter 77, "news values and objective editorial selection are the only sound criteria, both in judging which "document" to broadcast, and how it should be presented".[130] Secondly, Anthony fears the hazard of being "manipulated" – either by 'dissidents" or by "those who have an interest in linking the dissidents with "western centres of subversion" and to depict us as encouraging internal dissension, interference in internal affairs, etc."[131]

This fulsome evocation of the BBC's critical approach to coverage of Charter 77, prioritizing the journalistic values of "objectivity", "accuracy" and "editorial judgement", extolling the virtues of keeping a critical distance from dissident groups on the other side of the iron curtain, and refusing to act as a straightforward megaphone for the broadcast of the group's manifesto in full, may suggest an uncomplicated hierarchy of values within the CED in which "news values and objective editorial selection" were principles that trumped all others - even a commitment to advancing and supporting human rights. This approach might lead one to the conclusion that within the CED, the commitment to "impartiality" did in fact outweigh commitments to those abstract values such as "justice", "freedom", "compassion", and "tolerance", to which Pavlovic and Syrop claimed that it ought to be sometimes subjugated. Such a conclusion would certainly draw a clear line of separation between the pursuit of "news values and objective editorial selection" on one side, and a willingness to demonstrate partisan support for human rights groups inspired by the Helsinki Final Act on the other – with the BBC and RFE on different sides of that line.

However, towards the end of her memo, Anthony helps illuminate the extent to which a commitment to these BBC journalistic values and commitments to the abstract moral notions related to "human rights" were not, in her mind, separate or conflicting values. In fact, Anthony

[129] Marie Anthony, Memo to Central European Staff, 14th July, 1977. E40/347/1, *Broadcasting to Communist Europe*, BBCXSC.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

helps to clarify how, in her opinion, the two commitments were entirely intertwined and inseparable from each other:

> *To sum up: "Human rights" is a major theme in our output, and we should report as we do any other important story, and we should reflect reaction. But our support is implicit in everything we do and say as "free broadcasters"… To veer towards providing a platform is to move towards RFE…Our reputation rests on a steady holding to professionalism, fairness, and balance.* [132]

This quote demonstrates that instead of the BBC's "journalistic values" of "professionalism, fairness, and balance" being considered as the pinnacle of the value hierarchy within the organization in their own right, thus outweighing and overruling the BBC's commitment to any particular moral or political cause, they are in fact perceived by Anthony as the best way in which to support human rights – placing that "implicit" commitment to supporting human rights at the very heart of the BBCXS's mission.

Taking this approach, Anthony's call to avoiding a "move towards RFE" is best understood as a desire to maintain the BBC's reputation for "objectivity" in order to retain its efficacy as a tool that might help improve the human rights situation in Communist Central and Eastern Europe. Her criticism of RFE is a historically founded, but perhaps somewhat outdated one, reflective of the damage which RFE's mistakes in 1956 did to its reputation. While rhetorically distancing herself and her organization from RFE, Anthony's insistence that the CED was more likely to achieve its goals regarding its support for human rights through maintaining and strengthening its reputation for "objectivity", rather than in revealing its hand through more explicit support for Helsinki-inspired groups like Charter 77, nonetheless suggests that a commitment to transnational broadcasting as a "humanitarian pursuit" lay at the heart of her understanding of the mission of the CED, just as it did at RFE.

[132] Ibid.

The Other Side of the Coin: Communist Efforts to Use Helsinki to Silence Western Broadcasting

While both RFE and the BBC positioned themselves, implicitly or explicitly, on the side of those who sought to use the Helsinki Final Act as a tool to challenge the status quo of Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe, it soon became clear after the signing of the Act in the summer of 1975 that its provisions could cut both ways. In fact, between the signing of the Final Act in August 1975 and the start of the Belgrade follow-up conference in October 1977, the Helsinki Final Act were repeatedly and emphatically wheeled out as a justification for attempting to shut down Western broadcasting to the Soviet Bloc by Communist governments and their media outlets, even as it was simultaneously being claimed as a legitimizing and justifying basis for their continued operation in the West.

The geopolitical conditions of the 1970s provided a new diplomatic context, framed by the logic of détente, which offered Communist regimes a far more sympathetic ear in the West to these complaints against the "interference" of Western broadcasts within internal affairs than had previously existed. As has been previously mentioned in Chapter 2, a range of developments including the revelations of RFE's history of covert funding by the CIA, West Germany's pursuit of *Ostpolitik* diplomacy, and the International Olympic Committee's refusal to accredit RFE to cover the 1976 Innsbruck Winter Olympics, combined to strengthen perceptions of RFE's problematic status in the minds of key backers within both the US and Western Europe. It is within this context, framing western transnational broadcasting (and particularly RFE) as a threat to the progress of détente in Europe, that we must understand Communist governments' increasingly urgent and co-ordinated efforts to use the Helsinki Final Act to shut down the "radios".

Both Radio Free Europe and the BBC had been perceived as thorns in the sides of the Communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe for decades, often lumped together into the derogatory category of "imperialist propaganda" by Communist government and press discussions of their broadcasts.[133] But by the 1970s, Communist governments' fears about the impact of these Western broadcasters upon their citizens became more serious. A 1973 Report to the Hungarian Politburo on fighting this "imperialist propaganda" noted that such broadcasts

[133] See Linda Risso, "Introduction" in "Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War", Special Issue of *Cold War History*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2013, 145-152.

were "less sharp in its tone today but much more extensive in scope".[134] By 1978, the Hungarian Central Committee was especially concerned about the fact that the "imperialist power centers" had shifted their focus "on certain issues – such as issues of human rights and democracy" where "they have even managed to take the initiative temporarily".[135] These concerns were echoed in Poland, where both RFE and the BBC, as well as other Western broadcasters such as Radio Vatican and Deutsche Welle, were accused of having broadcast "propaganda [which] has focused on the freedom of the citizens, as affected by the projected constitutional changes and the Final Resolutions of the CSCE".[136] Considered altogether, these documents suggest that Communist governments were particularly concerned about the impact of Western broadcasting which referred to the civic and human rights of their citizens as being (at least nominally) protected by international agreements such as the Helsinki Final Act, as well as within these Communist states' own national constitutions.[137]

A February 1976 report on possible joint countermeasures to be taken against RFE and RL reveals a serious and co-ordinated effort by Soviet Bloc countries to use the Helsinki Final Act to try and shut down Western broadcasting across the iron curtain for good. The report begins by stating that the "minimum objective for the short term was the necessity to expel the US centers of subversion in the form of RFE and RL from the European continent. The optimal goal would consist of their total liquidation".[138] In order to achieve this goal, it proposes that the mysteriously titled "Operation Spider" should be implemented.[139] This joint plan was undertaken with the conviction that "international public opinion has to be mobilized for the purpose of ending the criminal activities of RFE and RL as hotbeds of ideological subversion whose

[134] "Document 5: 1973. Report to Politburo and Politburo Resolution on Fight against 'Imperialist Propaganda'", in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 370.
[135] "Document 6: 1978. Hungarian Central Committee Discusses Implementation of 1973 Resolution", in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 379.
[136] "Document 10: 1976, Analysis of Western Radio "Propaganda" Directed at Poland", in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 400.
[137] This combination of international and national/ constitutional guarantees of civic and human rights was a critical element of the self-justification tactic utilized by human rights groups across Central Europe, including Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, KOR (the Worker's Defense Committee) and ROPCiO (The Movement for the Defense of Human and Civic Rights) in Poland, and the Hungarian intellectual opposition centered around figures such as Gyorgy Konrad and Miklos Haraszti. See Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, 88-89.
[138] "Document 21: 1976. Bloc Intelligence Organs Take Joint Countermeasures against RFE and RL", published in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 441 – 442.
[139] Ibid, 441.

existence is in contradiction with international law and the Helsinki Final Act".[140] Activities suggested to achieve this goal include "implementing measures to isolate radio stations Free Europe and "Liberty" in the international arena, including international (UN, UNESCO, IOC) and national organizations, centers, societies and associations", supporting characterizations of their broadcasts as "activities in the spirit of the Cold War [which] stand in contrast to détente".[141]

Aside from their efforts to turn international opinion against Western broadcasting across the Iron Curtain via appeals to the Helsinki Final Act, Communist governments utilized their control over the press within their own countries in an attempt to stoke up distrust towards Western broadcasters among their (potential) listeners. An appendix to a report entitled "Eastern Attacks on RFE/RL" dated April 7th, 1977 states that "Communist charges that such [RFE/RL] broadcasting violated the Helsinki agreements" (on the basis of Principle III on the "inviolability of frontiers" and Principle VI on "non-intervention in internal affairs"[142]) had emerged as the "dominant theme" in the "crescendo of Soviet and other East European media attacks on Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty" which "rose steadily during 1976".[143] According to the report's author, "their key conclusion was constant: the existence of RFE/RL was incompatible with that section of the Helsinki accords barring interference in other countries' internal affairs".[144] The report's existence and timing highlights growing fears within RFE/RL that the upcoming Belgrade follow-up conference of the CSCE would be used by Communist states to lobby for a total ban on Western transnational broadcasting across the iron curtain. It concludes by arguing that it was not only RFE/RL who have been the target of such attacks, but that "the major thrust of Communist pre-Belgrade attacks has been directed at <u>all</u> Western radio stations broadcasting into their territories: RFE/RL, BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio Vatican and Radio Canada".[145]

It is clear then that an attack on the legitimacy of Western transnational broadcasting at the Belgrade CSCE follow-up Conference raised concerns within RFE. However the Belgrade Conference was also considered the ideal opportunity to refute these claims, redefine the mission

[140] Ibid., 442.
[141] Ibid, 443.
[142] Subsection III, "Inviolability of frontiers" and Subsection VI, "Non-intervention in internal affairs", Section 1 (a), Helsinki Final Act, 5-6.
[143] "Eastern Attacks on RFE/RL", Folder: 163.7, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Belgrade 1977,* Alphabetical File, 1948-1998, RFE/RL CRC.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid. (emphasis in the original).

of Western transnational broadcasting in the eyes of both Western and Eastern European observers, and insist on the continuance of such broadcasting as a phenomenon that was not only undertaken within the limits of the letter of the Final Act, but in fact was specifically protected by the Act. These efforts to counter-attack by "fighting Helsinki with Helsinki" at Belgrade represent an important aspect of the way in which RFE in particular placed itself at the heart of a nascent "Helsinki Process" tied to the growth of transnational human rights activism.

The Fightback at Belgrade: Helsinki as a Shield for Western Broadcasting

Sarah Snyder has argued convincingly that by the time of the Belgrade follow-up conference, beginning in October 1977, US foreign policy under the Carter Administration had decisively shifted in favor of using the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act to criticize the Soviet Union and its allies and to try and shift the status quo in East-West relations in the US's favor.[146] However one element of the Belgrade Conference which is overlooked by Snyder is the prominence of debates around the future and legality of transnational radio broadcasting, which served as part of this wider process by which the Helsinki Final Act was used to "call out" Communist countries' human rights violations.

Knowing that it would be attacked at Belgrade, it was imperative for RFE to forewarn and forearm the US's delegation to the conference, as well as members of the US Congress CSCE Commission. Correspondence between Walter K. Scott, an Executive Vice President of RFE, and RFE President Sig Mickelson gives numerous examples of the ways in which their organization briefed the State Department to ensure it had evidence at hand to counter Communist claims that RFE/RL's activities were in violation of the Helsinki Final Act. For example, RFE "prepared translations of the most significant programs of the Czechoslovak BD {Broadcast Desk] on Charter 77 for the first three weeks after its public appearance in January", in order to demonstrate that RFE's coverage of the emergence of this group did not cross the line of "non-interference" explicitly stated within the Helsinki Final Act.[147] RFE president Sig Mickelson was also invited to testify in front of the US Congress's CSCE Commission on May 19th, 1977, after being asked to "tell the Commission what effect the Helsinki Agreement has had

[146] Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 81-115.
[147] Memo from Walter K. Scott to Sig Mickelson, May 2nd, 1977. 163.7, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Belgrade 1977*, Alphabetical File, 1948-1998, RFE/RL CRC.

on Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe" by Commission chairman Congressman Dante Fascell.[148] This suggests a serious coordination effort between RFE/RL and the US's official CSCE apparatus to use the Belgrade Conference as a platform to explicitly defend RFE/RL's ongoing mission in broadcasting to Central and Eastern Europe. It should also be noted that Aside from RFE's effort, its sister station Radio Liberty too committed serious resources to trying to demonstrate its alignment with the spirit and letter of the Helsinki Final Act, and pre-empt any attempt by the Soviet Union to challenge its legitimacy on the basis of the Act at the follow-up conference. This included the writing of a detailed 7–page "Talking Paper for Belgrade", arguing that "far from violating the letter or spirit of Helsinki, as Soviet propaganda claims, Radio Liberty daily champions those rights and obligations agreed to by the 35 signatories of the Helsinki Agreements by providing information denied Soviet citizens in their domestic media".[149]

RFE/RL correspondence from the time also suggests that it was felt within the organization that it was not only RFE/RL that was threatened by coordinated Communist attacks at Belgrade. In an essay "on the significance to RFE/RL of the Belgrade Conference", especially prepared by RFE Policy Analyst Karl Reyman in Munich for RFE's directors in New York, Reyman states clearly that "there is not the slightest doubt on my mind but that in Belgrade we will be on the firing line for all others engaged in the same enterprise".[150] He goes on to insist that although "the Communist plan intends to single out RFE/RL at Belgrade as the prime exhibit of alleged Western non-compliance with the Helsinki accords" other transnational organizations, including the BBC, would also be accused of being part of an "imperialist chain of subversion".[151] According to Reyman's suspicions, "an opening wedge could become a flying one if we should be forced to take the rap" – suggesting that it was in the interests of *all* Western broadcasters and their respective governments to defend RFE's right to exist, lest they be the next in the Soviet Bloc nations' crosshairs.[152] As such, the US's success in fighting off

[148] Correspondence, Dante Fascell (Chair of Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Congress of the United States) to Sig Mickelson, President of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, April 21st, 1977. 163.7, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Belgrade 1977*, Alphabetical File, 1948-1998, RFE/RL CRC.
[149] "Radio Liberty and Helsinki Talking Paper for Belgrade", May 13th, 1977. 163.6, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe,* Alphabetical File, 1948-1998, RFE/RL CRC.
[150] Memo from Karl Reyman to Nat Kingsley (CC: Sig Mickelson), September 28th, 1976. 163.7, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Belgrade 1977*, Alphabetical File, 1948-1998, RFE/RL CRC.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

Communist attempts to use the Helsinki Final Act to shut down RFE might be understood to have benefited the BBC CED as well.

Quotes from the proceedings of the Belgrade Conference show exactly how this preparation on defending Western broadcasting was put into action, with US delegate Guy Coriden arguing in his remarks on October 24th, 1977 that the Helsinki Final Act guarantees "a free, untrammeled flow of ideas and information".[153] Coriden ended his diatribe against Soviet bloc efforts to call for RFE/RL to be shut down thus:

> *I don't believe the Czechoslovaks are concerned about RFE/RL because they think the radio really threaten their government or will cause its downfall. I think they're worried because it's through these stations the Czechoslovak people first heard the text of Charter '77 and first heard what was happening to its signers – that they were being dismissed from their jobs and otherwise harassed.*

As such, the explicit claim is made not only for the *legality* and *legitimacy* of Western broadcasting according to the Helsinki Final Act, but also for the notion that it was playing an active and valuable role in the Helsinki Process, by publicizing Soviet bloc countries' failure to abide by its human rights provisions to their own citizens.

Conclusion

By the time that the Belgrade Conference closed in March 1978, RFE had transformed into a broadcaster which explicitly justified its existence and its mission in terms of the Helsinki Final Act, and specifically in supporting the implementation of the provisions within its "Third Basket" relating to "Humanitarian and other fields" which played such a prominent role in the proceedings of the Belgrade follow-up conference. Despite never pinning its colors to the mast of Helsinki in the same way that RFE did, it is nonetheless clear that the BBC CED underwent a similar transformation, or at least evolution, regarding its institutional priorities and self-perceptions of its own purpose in relation to human rights during this period. While both organizations maintained clear differences in emphasis, tone and broadcast content, a shared

[153] Summary of Statement of Information on Basket III, Guy Coriden, US Delegation at Belgrade Conference, October 24th and 26th, 1977. Accessed online on June 6th, 2108 at https://www.csce.gov/sites/helsinkicommission.house.gov/files/Belgrade%20CSCE%20Meeting%2C%20U.S.%20Statements%201977.pdf.

notion of Western broadcasting as a fundamentally "humanitarian pursuit", rather than one that was simply understood as propagandistic broadcasting in the name of furthering the national interests of the states which funded them, had clearly become more influential within both RFE and the BBC by 1978. The next issue to address is the question of how RFE and the BBC CED evaluated the impact of their broadcasting efforts to improve their listeners' ability to understand, value, and eventually to mobilize around, those human rights which were nominally guaranteed by the Helsinki Final Act.

Chapter 4. Through a Glass, Darkly: RFE and the BBC's Evaluations of the Impact of Helsinki, Human Rights, and Their Own Broadcasts on Those Subjects

Previous chapters have dealt with the question of how Radio Free Europe and the BBC Central European Department increasingly positioned themselves and their work in relation to an emerging and influential notion of access to information as a universal human right. In the following chapter, I will show that both organizations' own efforts at evaluating the impact of their broadcasts on the subjects of the Helsinki Final Act and human rights help demonstrate the extent to which both, in separate but related ways, shifted towards a new, human rights-focused mission in the post-Helsinki era. This will be achieved by looking critically at the ways in which RFE and the BBC CED tried to assess the size and demographic profile of their audiences in Central and Eastern Europe. In particular, I will explore the similarities and differences between both organizations' efforts to gauge their listeners' opinions about the Helsinki Final Act and the human rights activism that it inspired. I will then examine the extent to which both broadcasters asserted that their representations of and engagement with the Final Act were having a measurable influence on their listeners' opinions about Helsinki and human rights. In doing so, we can improve our understanding of how both organizations increasingly evaluated the impact of their own work in terms of demonstrating their listeners' engagement with the ideas and arguments related to human rights during this period.

This chapter will address the difficulties faced by both RFE and the BBCXS in trying to assess the impact of their broadcasts upon their audiences, and evaluate the methods and evidence used to try to overcome these difficulties and measure (or estimate) the nature and extent of this impact. Next, I will examine the different kinds of listeners which tuned into these Western broadcasts in Central and Eastern Europe, emphasizing the importance of the Communist regimes themselves as a key audience demographic, who were listening and responding to RFE and the BBC's output on a range of subjects, including Helsinki and human rights, in a number of different ways. Finally, I will try to place both broadcasters' output on Helsinki and human rights into a broader context by tracing the limits to the extent that human rights–focused content shaped broadcasts and audience engagement, before asking what such conclusions mean for my overall thesis about the turn towards a conceptualization of both RFE and the BBC CED as "human rights radios" by 1978.

Hearing the Hidden Listener: The Difficulties of Measuring the Impact of Transnational Broadcasting

The challenge of attempting to accurately measure and meaningfully evaluate the ways in which radio broadcasts impact upon or influence their audiences is a perpetual problem, both for the broadcasters themselves and those who retrospectively study them. As Andrew Crisell puts it in his classic text *Understanding Radio*, studying audiences "is a subject rich in questions and well-nigh barren of answers." [154] And while analysts of radio face a particular set of challenges when ascertaining the nature of listeners' engagement with broadcast content, compared to other mass communication media such as newspapers or television,[155] understanding the impact of transnational radio broadcasters across the Iron Curtain during the Cold War represents a more difficult task still.

The physical and existential limitations imposed upon the exchange of information between these broadcasters and their listeners dramatically affected and in many cases entirely precluded the pursuit of those forms of audience research in which radio broadcasters commonly undertook to collect information about their listeners' preferences and reactions towards their output.[156] In response to the fact that the possibilities for deploying most market-leading audience research techniques (including focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires which targeted as wide a cross-section of listeners as possible) were severely limited, Cold War broadcasters were forced to rely on "second-best methods" in order to attain the information which they required about their audience's size, demographic profile, and preferences.[157] In the case of RFE and RL during the 1950s and 1960s, their primary source of up-to-date information was their Research Institute's concerted effort to systematically interview travelers from the Soviet Bloc who were temporarily out of their country.[158] While recognizing the "primarily *ad hoc* and anecdotal" nature of this evidence, which "provided useful insights but permitted few general inferences", Director of the Audience Research and Program Evaluation at RFE/RL R.

[154] Andrew Crisell, *Understanding Radio* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 200.
[155] Ibid., 201-205.
[156] For more on these limitations see István Rév, "Just Noise? Impact of Radio Free Europe in Hungary" in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 239-259.
[157] R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR during the Cold War* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), 1.
[158] For a more detailed account of how this interviewing project was developed and deployed see R. Eugene Parta, "Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research (SAAOR) at Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty" in Short, *Western Broadcasting Over the Iron Curtain*, 227-244.

Eugene Parta argues that by the 1970s his department had developed research methods which were capable of producing "a remarkable body of internally consistent findings with high face validity" which "we feel confident… offer valuable insights into the role played by Western radio during the Cold War period", despite these inherent problems in terms of data samples.[159]

Parta asserts that the development of "highly robust methods", which included the use of "a sophisticated mass media communications computer simulation mode developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology", meant that the Research Institute was able to "provide broadcast management with crucial information allowing them to adapt programming in order to better meet listeners' needs and desires".[160] This information included estimates of the "Demographic Characteristics of Listeners", making the claim that Western broadcasters' audiences were overwhelmingly male, educated to a secondary or higher education level, and living in urban areas – thus matching the main "target group" of Western radio which was, according to Parta, "designed primarily for an urban intelligentsia".[161] At least as early as the 1980s, RFE/RL's Research Institute also explicitly measured Western Radio listening by "attitudinal type" (ascribing listeners with one of 5 political labels including "liberal", "moderate", "indifferent" or "hardline"); by "motivation" (with categories ranging from "desire to hear unavailable information" to "knowing your adversary"); and by "program preferences" (categories including "samizdat", "life in the West", and "human rights").[162] These categories demonstrate exactly what kind of information RFE/RL was most interested in accumulating in order to inform internal decision-making about programming. This information was also widely shared within the US and Western foreign policy and academic communities, demonstrating how the organization sought to strengthen its reputation as a reliable and credible source of scarce information about public opinion across the Iron Curtain. Among those organizations which relied on RFE/RL Research Institute's research was the BBCXS itself. Former BBCXS Head of International Broadcasting and Audience Research Graham Mytton notes that "throughout the 1970s and 1980s the BBC relied on research being done by RL and RFE's respective research

[159] R. Eugene Parta, "The Audience to Western Broadcasts to the USSR During the Cold War: An External Perspective" in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 68-69.
[160] Ibid., 69-70.
[161] Ibid., 27.
[162] Ibid, 27-39.

departments and used the figures produced to make estimates of audience sizes throughout the communist bloc". [163]

This projected confidence in the Research Institute's ability to obtain reliable and "objective" information through the application of complex, data-driven methods can be considered as a major element of RFE/RL's overall efforts to project an image of the organization as one wedded to scientific, rational and objective pursuit of information. This alleged "objectivity", so keenly sought as a badge of honor by both RFE and the BBC, who felt that the notion of appearing objective to its audience was key to their credibility as a news source, would be repeatedly attacked and critiqued by Communist commentators.[164] The cultivation of this aura of "objectivity" through the use of scientific statistical methods and the presentation of data in "scientific" forms such as reports littered with tables, graphs, and statistics should be considered as an important constituent part of the organizations' wider project of "rebranding" itself by the 1970s in the eyes of Western onlookers and commentators as an integral part of the emerging international informational order dedicated to overcoming barriers to the free circulation and exchange of information (discussed in Chapter 3), rather than as a bastion of partisan Cold War propaganda and misinformation.

The need for both RFE/RL and the BBCXS's audience research departments to present themselves as sources of reliable and actionable information about the extent and nature of their listeners had increased by the mid-1970s. Given the new funding arrangements and increased governmental scrutiny which both organizations faced in this period (discussed at length in chapter 2), it became imperative that both broadcasters could demonstrate not only the "reach" of their broadcasts (i.e. the number and type of listeners being attracted), but also the *impact* of these broadcasts in a clear and quantifiable fashion, in order that their value might be easily explained when trying to protect their services from potential financial cuts instigated by those responsible for political oversight of the broadcasters. With this in mind, we must approach both

[163] Graham Mytton, "Audience Research at the BBC External Services during the Cold War: A View from the Inside", *Cold War History* (Vol. 11, No. 1: February 2011), 63. Mytton goes on to state that such was the nervousness within the BBCXS about relying on RFE/RL data to estimate its audience size, "a decision was made to reduce the estimates by half, an arbitrary decision that on later reflection was almost certainly unnecessary" (Ibid, 63).

[164] On Communist regimes' critique of the concept of objectivity as one to aspire to in journalistic practice, see Rév, "Just Noise?" 250. On Communist attempts to diminish or detract from the BBC's reputation for objectivity, see Peter Fraenkel, "The BBC External Services: Broadcasting to the USSR and Eastern Europe" in Short, *Western Broadcasting Over the Iron Curtain*, 145-146.

organizations' audience research reports (examples of which are analyzed in detail in the following section) as markers not only of the broadcasters' interest in their respective audiences' size, profile, preferences, and opinions on a range of subjects, including the Helsinki Final Act and human right. They are also evidence of the internal changes which both organizations experienced as a result of their new, more directly accountable relationship with their respective governments.

Comparing RFE and the BBC's Efforts at Understanding and Explaining the Impact of Helsinki (and of their own Helsinki-related Broadcasts) on their Audiences

A perusal of the RFE/RL Research Institute's Media and Opinion Research Department archives demonstrates that RFE expended considerable efforts in trying to understand not just its audience's size, profile and preferences, but also listeners' *opinions* on a range of subjects. In particular, RFE showed a keen interest in trying to ascertain its audience's opinions about human rights during the period 1973-1978. The summary of one report, entitled "Exposure to and Evaluation of Radio Free Europe's Coverage of Human Rights Imitative is East Europe", dated August 1979, claimed that "recent survey results projected to Radio Free Europe's East European total audience indicate that 85% had heard RFE broadcasts dealing specifically or generally with human rights initiatives in East Europe", and that "of those who had heard this coverage, 85% were of the opinion that Radio Free Europe handled the subject very well or well".[165] While we might question the sampling and weighting methods by which the researchers reached this conclusion, what is clear from the existence and content of this report is that the Media and Opinion Research Department was tasked with producing evidence not only that that RFE's human rights coverage was being listened to, but that it was having an *impact* – i.e. that it was having some kind of positive effect on listeners' views or actions.

Beyond this general concern with human rights, further evidence reveals RFE's particular concern in measuring the impact of its broadcasts in shaping its listeners' opinions about the Helsinki Process. The existence of a 1979 audience research report entitled "Three Measurements of East European Attitudes to the Helsinki Conference, 1973-1978" clearly

[165] "Exposure to and Evaluation of Radio Free Europe's Coverage of Human Rights Initiatives in East Europe", 1979-08, 300-6-2:4/168, Media and Opinion Research Department, Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute, Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest (Hereafter RFE/RL RI).

demonstrates that RFE placed real importance on understanding the nature of opinions within these countries regarding Helsinki in particular.[166] Its content is even more revealing; the report summary on the first page clearly states the report writer's belief that RFE's coverage of the Helsinki Process in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia was having a measurable effect upon its listeners' opinions on the subject:

> *The shift in RFE's listeners' attitudes is most interesting because it is not matched by a similar shift among non-listeners. Evidently listening to Radio Free Europe was the deciding criterion and not any special a priori group or attitude characteristics of RFE listeners. Considering that the human rights issue as evoked by the US and frequently reported in the course of the relevant year by Radio Free Europe was crucial for the shift in attitudes toward the CSCE, we have also broadcast content evidence for this opinion change. Rarely can the effectiveness of a broadcaster be so clearly shown unencumbered by the "chicken or egg" ("which comes first") dilemma.*[167]

It is beyond the purview of this thesis to delve even more deeply into evaluating the data collection and statistical methods used to support the claims made within RFE's audience research reports regarding the accuracy, reliability, or truthfulness of their findings. More relevant for my purposes is the fact that this evidence confirms that RFE was broadcasting content designed to engage and influence its listeners in Eastern Europe's opinions in favour of a positive view of the impact of the Helsinki Final Act and of the recent prominence of human rights issues more broadly. More than that, it demonstrates that the audience research department was being instructed to expend time and resources in trying to prove (or be understood to have proved) that the impact of RFE's broadcasts on its listeners regarding human rights and the Helsinki Final Act was *measurable*. The fact that the report's authors assert that they can prove that RFE succeeded in changing its listeners' opinions on the subject in the desired direction, claiming to have demonstrated a clear causal link between listening to RFE and a "shift in attitudes towards the CSCE", helps strengthen my claim that by the end of 1978, at least part of

[166] Three Measurements of East European Attitudes to the Helsinki Conference 1973-1978", HU- OSA-300-6-2:4/166, 1979-07, Media and Opinion Research Department, RFE/RL RI.
[167] Ibid.

RFE's mission was understood as a commitment to informing and influencing its audience's opinions about human rights.

In comparison to RFE, the BBCXS Central European Department's efforts at audience research were quite different in form, content, and scope. The BBC Audience Research Department produced annual reports for the Hungarian, Polish, and Czechoslovak services, which were far more general (and far slimmer) than their RFE counterparts. They also relied most heavily upon listener correspondence, rather than on surveys, questionnaires or interviews to reach their conclusions – even while recognizing in every report that the threat or reality of mail censorship by Communist authorities meant that correspondence was limited in number and somewhat compromised in its content.[168] This reliance on listener correspondence, along with the previously mentioned dependence on RFE's audience research findings on audience size, demographics and preferences suggests at least one of two preliminary observations: either that that BBCXS considered its research aims to be less focused upon their audience's opinions on topics such as human rights or the Helsinki Process compared to RFE; or that the CED lacked the resources to pursue specific, strategic audience research aims in the same way that RFE did.

With regards to what the CED's audience research reports *can* tell us about the impact of its discussions of the Helsinki Final Act, there is some important evidence that some listeners considered the CED's output to reflect the "Spirit of Helsinki"[169] and engaged directly with the CED's coverage of stories involving appeals to the Helsinki Final Act by human rights groups which emerged in Central Europe after 1975. The CED received some praise from listeners who felt that it provided programming which was otherwise unavailable to them through state media, despite the Helsinki Final Act's clause to ensure the improvement of the "circulation of, access to, and exchange of information".[170] In the Hungarian Service's 1979 annual research report, one correspondent, who describes themselves as a doctor from Budapest, is quoted: "Many thanks

[168] Use of listener correspondence was nonetheless justified within these reports as providing "evidence of correspondents' awareness of the situation and the methods they employ to avoid the censor's clutches" (most prominent of which was sending mail to the BBC through the registered mail service rather than the normal postal service). "Audience Research Report, 1975", E/3/1,004: *Central and East European Services – Listeners Letters and Other Associated Reports*, BBCXSC.

[169] For more on the contested nature of the "Spirit of Helsinki", see Jovan Cavoski, "On the Road to Belgrade: Yugoslavia's Contribution to the Defining of the Concept of European Security and Cooperation 1975-1977" in Vladimir Bilandžić, Dittmar Dahlmann and Milan Kosanovic, eds, *From Helsinki to Belgrade: The First CSCE Follow-up Meeting and the Crisis of Détente* (Gottingen: Bonn University Press, 2012), 84.

[170] Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, Helsinki 1975, Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields, Subsection 2 ("Information"), part (a), 42.

for your excellent work, for the Round Table Discussions, industrial news, book reviews, etc. We hear little of these subjects here, in spite of Helsinki!"[171] Another correspondent, this time writing to the Polish Service in 1977, also emphasized listeners' frustration that the perceived benefits of Helsinki were not being felt in their country, boldly asking whether "the British government intervened or proposes to intervene concerning the jamming of the BBC programmes to Czechoslovakia? How about the spirit of Helsinki? I presume this last question may very well irritate the censor's dirty snout".[172] Other correspondents took a more critical approach to coverage of Helsinki-inspired human rights groups by the CED. One correspondent listening to the Czechoslovak Service from France (and thus, we can assume, part of the Czech émigré community there), criticized the BBC for failing to report enough news on Charter 77, claiming that "only you, in London, sit comfortably while hundreds of Czechs are risking their safety by their signatures. Shame on you!"[173] Another claimed took the opposite view, positing that the BBC "did not hesitate to condemn the violation of human rights in Eastern Europe" but treated news of human rights abuses in Western-backed regimes (for example in Chile and South Africa) "with voices of soothing and understanding".[174]

These examples of the listener correspondence contained within these annual reports are only isolated snapshots of individual opinions, mediated through a murky lens distorted by censorship, the fear of censorship, or the possibility that such letters were not written by genuine civilian listeners, but by the secret services or allies of the target countries' governments writing to obfuscate or confuse. The possibility that these listeners' opinions are entirely unrepresentative of the majority's must be taken seriously, not least since they are sometimes contradictory. Nonetheless, such responses (and their prominence in featuring in the annual reports of the Hungarian, Polish, and Czechoslovak language services) suggest that CED listeners were engaging with the BBC's coverage of human rights stories, placing that coverage in the context of the Helsinki Final Act and its subsequent impact on life in their home countries,

[171] "Audience Research Report, 1979", E3/1,005. *Hungarian Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research (Summaries and Competition Reports),* BBCXSC.
[172] "Audience Research Report, 1977", E62/33, *Polish Service: Audience Research Reports / Listener Letters*, BBCXSC.
[173] "Audience Research Report, 1978", E3/1,026. *Czechoslovak Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research Summaries,* BBCXSC.
[174] "Audience Research Report, 1980", E3/1,005. *Hungarian Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research (Summaries and Competition Reports),* BBCXSC.

and expressing a range of views, from the supportive to the critical, on the role of the BBC in affecting this impact.

Communist Regimes' Responses to Human Rights Radios

Aside from the civilian members of the public who lived under Communism, another key audience for both RFE and the BBC CED was the officials and leadership of the Communist regimes themselves. Jane L. Curry has argued that the Polish Communist Party leadership "saw it [RFE] as one of the most trusted and believable information sources they had – one that was far more trustworthy than their own state media",[175] while István Rév has outlined the extent of the Hungarian MTI (government news agency)'s institutionalized secret monitoring of Western broadcasts to Hungary from their base in Gödöllő, just outside Budapest.[176] The regular transcripts, news bulletins and reports based on their monitoring provided material for the "Daily Confidential Information Bulletin" which was provided to select members of the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Party, meaning that "the Communist Party leadership was far better informed about the programs of RFE than the most devoted subversive, anti-Communist private listener",[177] and that those who produced evaluative reports on the nature of Western broadcasters' output "internalized, in a perverted form, the perspective and content of the narrative" that was being delivered by these broadcasts. [178] For Rev, the very shape that Communist rule took in Hungary in the post-1956 era, but particularly from the late 1960s onwards, by which time "Communist experts had become convinced that the Western propagandists were not in the business of inciting a rebellion", was a kind of "joint construct: the result of a not-so-obvious but permanent dialogue between strategists on the two sides".[179] Rev shows how evaluations of the way in which Western broadcasters reported on the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism (a range of economic reforms) and Hungary's role in the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact countries in the autumn of 1968, mediated through the Hungarian monitoring service's evaluation reports, contributed to the shaping of the Hungarian government's official explanation of the Party line on these subjects. This points to

[175] Jane L. Curry, "Radio Free Europe and the Polish Elite: Trusting the Enemy Station More than Your Own" in Bischof and Jürgens, *Voices of Freedom – Western Interference?,* 207.
[176] Rev, "Just Noise?", 246.
[177] Ibid., 248.
[178] Ibid., 250.
[179] Ibid., 251.

the possibility that Western broadcasters' coverage of the Helsinki Final Act, and of the related emergence of human rights movements and arguments in the wake of the Final Act, also shaped Communist governments' policies and rhetoric on these subjects during the period 1973-1978.

One clear way in which Communist governments reacted to Western broadcasters' output regarding the Helsinki Final Act and its relationship with human rights was through their use of their own state media outlets to directly contradict or undermine the credibility of these broadcasts. Examples of the kinds of attacks that RFE faced (on the basis of contravening the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Agreement, its alleged role as a front organization for the CIA, and its overall status as a threat to détente) have already been outlined in Chapter 3. The BBC Czechoslovak Service's annual audience research reports note the way in which its coverage of the Helsinki Final Act, and of the human rights movements which it inspired, was also directly critiqued by state media within Czechoslovakia. The service's annual report for 1975 contained a "Press and Radio Reaction" section in which noted that "In August, Prague radio for abroad attacked the BBC Czech language broadcasts in connection with the Helsinki Conference"[180], while the annual report for 1978 notes that "In a January broadcast, Prague home service attacked the BBC's coverage of human rights issues and claimed that the BBC had again made a sharp attack on the socialist countries, with accusations of violations of human rights". [181] The BBC was also criticized by Czechoslovak official media for allegedly defending colonialism, supporting UK government policy in Northern Ireland, not standing up for British workers' rights, and interfering in the internal affairs of any country where Britain's ruling circles regarded such interference as necessary.[182] These excerpts demonstrate that the BBC's output regarding Helsinki and human rights was considered sufficiently influential and dangerous by Czechoslovak authorities as to draw direct and specific rebuttals.

Moreover, the existence of this "Press and Radio Reaction" section within the BBC Czechoslovak Service's annual reports reveals a concern within the organization about these Communist state media attempts to disparage the BBC's precious reputation for objectivity, balance and impartiality. One might propose that the BBC's reticence to take a more partisan

[180] "Audience Research Report, 1975", E3/1,026. *Czechoslovak Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research Summaries.* BBCXSC.
[181] "Audience Research Report, 1978", E3/1,026. *Czechoslovak Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research Summaries*. BBCXSC.
[182] Ibid.

role in supporting groups like Charter 77, discussed in the previous chapter, might have been influenced by the extent to which its existing coverage on the topic of the Helsinki Final Act and human rights activism was being directly admonished in the Czechoslovak press.

Everything but Human Rights: On the Limitations of Impact and the Holistic Nature of Human Rights Radio

While all of the above evidence points to a substantial and sustained period of interaction between both RFE and the BBC and their respective audiences with regards to both broadcasters' coverage of human rights issues relating to the passage and subsequent impact of the Helsinki Final Act, it would be remiss to conclude without clarifying the limits of these interactions, and of the impact of both broadcasters' human rights coverage as a whole, as far as can be garnered from the available source base. A closer inspection of the "evidence" provided of the impact of such broadcasts raises some questions, while an evaluation of both broadcasters' broadcast output as a whole (i.e. not simply focusing on human rights or Helsinki-focused output) paints a far more holistic and diverse picture of both RFE and the BBC CED than might be assumed if one were to focus solely on the particular topics of Helsinki and human rights. Nonetheless, it is my contention that doing so in in no way detracts from my conclusion that both organizations might legitimately be describes as "human rights radios" by the end of my period in 1978.

While the RFE Audience Research Report on attitudes towards Helsinki analyzed above proclaimed that its findings demonstrated a clear shift in its audience towards supporting the Helsinki Final Act, a closer look at the report's statistics suggests that this is somewhat misleading as a headline conclusion. While the report does demonstrate that RFE listeners were more likely to hold positive views about the impact of the Helsinki Final Act than non-listeners, its far more striking finding is the fact that the vast majority of those consulted believed that the CSCE had had no influence whatsoever on their country. RFE's own figures show that in 1973, before the start of CSCE negotiations, 50% of respondents believed the conference was likely to lead to positive consequences for their country, with just 20% believing it would have no influence. But by the next round of responses in 1976-77, over half of respondents believed there had been no influence (55%), while in the last round of responses in 1977-78, that number had increased again to 60% of respondents.[183] So while the report's authors emphasize the claim that

[183] "Three Measurements of East European Attitudes to the Helsinki Conference 1973-1978", RFE/RL RI.

the number of RFE listeners who believe that the Helsinki Final Act has led to positive consequences had increased since the signing of the Act, and that RFE itself was responsible for this, this trend is less marked and arguably less meaningful than that which shows the apathy that the majority of respondents felt towards the Helsinki Process, at least before 1979.

This sense of apathy or agnosticism towards the impact of the Helsinki Final Act as a whole might also be attributed to listeners of the BBC CED, if we are willing to reach such preliminary conclusions on the basis of analyzing the extent and content of listener correspondence. While scouring the CED's audience research reports for mentions of Helsinki, human rights, and political opposition movements like Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia or KOR in Poland, what was most striking was the *rarity* with which such references popped up, in comparison with the surfeit of mentions for other, more quotidian topics. Requests and praise for pop music programmes, entries to listener competitions on the British royal family to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, and requests for materials for learning English to supplement the "English by Radio" programmes broadcast by all the CED's language services studied far outnumbered correspondence which explicitly discussed Helsinki or human rights. This imbalance in the topic of listener correspondence is epitomized by the following excerpt from the Hungarian Service's annual report from 1975, summing up the nature of listener correspondence for the year. Of the 1,034 letters received in 1975, "All but nine of the letters addressed to the Hungarian Service were destined for the pop music programmes presented by Bobby Gordon".[184] Such an overwhelming response suggests that the CED's pop music and entertainment programs had a far more measurable impact upon their listeners than their coverage of human rights issues during the period.[185] Documents from the Broadcast Analysis Department of RFE show that it was not only the BBC CED which dedicated a large proportion of its airtime to programming that was seemingly entirely disconnected from their mission as a transnational broadcaster dedicated to providing vital information to its audience – an October 1974 report shows that almost half of the Hungarian service's broadcast output was music or

[184] "Audience Research Report, 1975", E3/1,005. *Hungarian Service: Listener Correspondence and Audience Research (Summaries and Competition Reports)*, BBCXSC.

[185] Though we must factor into our conclusion the fact that correspondence with the BBC on topics such as pop music was far less risky for correspondents (who knew the likelihood of their letters being intercepted or read by their government authorities) than any letters praising the BBC's human rights coverage or criticizing their government's human rights abuses (or attempts to block or discredit the BBC's coverage of human rights stories).

light entertainment, with sports, religious, and cultural programming also taking up large chunks of program time and news only representing 24.5% of total broadcast output.[186]

How should we square this evidence of both stations' predilection for non-news, entertainment programming with the depiction of both RFE and the BBC as "human rights radios"? One way is to point out that much of the cultural programming served the purpose of allowing listeners in the East access to banned or marginalized cultural products (such as samizdat literature or religious sermons or discussions) which helped to buttress the radios' reputations as the enablers of freedom of expression and information, whose provision of such programming helped to emphasize the limitations upon such rights within Communist societies. Another is to understand the importance of offering popular programming such as pop music shows in order to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, who might build up a positive image of RFE and the BBC (and subsequently of the US and UK by association) as a result of having enjoyed this output, which might leave them more open to listening to and sympathizing with the broadcasters' human rights- focused output. The value of attracting young people in particular to listen to RFE/RL through music programming was particularly noted by Parta.[187] The value of developing holistic services which listeners came to view as integral to their enjoyment of daily life in order to cultivate fondness and trust which might "spill over" into other programming focused on human rights issues should not be underestimated.

Conclusion

By looking carefully at the nature and methods of audience research conducted by both RFE and the BBC CED, as well as the content of the interactions between the radios and their listeners, we gain a clearer sense of exactly how both organizations evaluated the impact that the Helsinki Final Act was having upon their audiences, as well as the impact which their broadcasts on Helsinki and human-rights related topics were having in particular. While recognizing the limitations of audience research as a methodological approach to understanding the influence of radio broadcasts in general and transnational radio broadcasting during the Cold War in particular, we can nevertheless reach some satisfactory conclusions.

[186] "Original Airtime Figures", Memorandum, 26th November, 1974. 1675. 9, *Broadcast Analysis Department, General, 1973-4*, RFE/RL CRC.
[187] Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 71.

Firstly, RFE's audience research efforts demonstrate a commitment to "objectively" proving RFE's ability to influence its audience's opinions about the positive impact of the Helsinki Final Act. Secondly, The BBC CED's more limited efforts at audience research, reliant on listener correspondence, hint at the existence of numerous different opinions about the impact of their broadcast output on Helsinki and human rights, pointing towards the heterogeneity of their listeners (and particularly the divide between the diversity of individual correspondents' opinions and the uniform negativity of Communist governments' official responses to BBC CED broadcasts, as expressed through their domestic and international media outlets). Finally, that both RFE and the BBC CED positioned their broadcast output on Helsinki and human rights within a more holistic overall offering to their listeners in Communist Central Europe, which arguably helped cultivate a more intimate and trusting relationship between listener and broadcaster. Taken as a whole, all of these factors strengthen the overall argument that by 1978, both RFE and the BBC CED were conceiving of themselves as "human rights radios".

Conclusions

At the outset of this thesis, I declared my intention to compare the ways in which RFE and the BBCXS responded to and reported on the Helsinki Final Act and the human rights-related activism which it helped inspire in Central and Eastern Europe, and proposed that both organizations underwent a transformation between 1973 and 1978, whereby the language and ideas of a human rights came to play a new, central role in defining the mission and purpose of Western broadcasting across the Iron Curtain.

I also sought, through my comparison of the two, to support the idea that by the end of my period, despite clear differences between the two organizations relating to their origins, locations, and reputations, as well as concerning the relationships they developed with opposition figures in Central and Eastern Europe, the similarities between the two organizations were far greater than much of the existing scholarship and rhetoric on the subject has previously suggested.

I have demonstrated how during these five years, both organizations experienced a notable shift in terms of how their employees justified and explained the purpose of their work to a range of audiences: to their listeners in Eastern Europe; to their political and financial backers in their home countries; and to the international community as a whole. This shift was inextricably linked to the rise of the rhetoric of Western transnational broadcasting as a fundamentally humanitarian pursuit, providing access to information to those whose human rights to do so were being curtailed by their state governments. While RFE was far more explicit in defining itself as a broadcaster which served the human rights of its audiences in Central and Eastern Europe according to the particular provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, which they described as guaranteeing the "free flow of information" across national border, the BBCXS as a whole, and the CED in particular, also increasingly positioned and described its work in relation to serving the human rights of their listeners in Central and Eastern Europe.

My evidence is clearly not sufficient, nor is designed to demonstrate that the 1970s was a decade in which the language of human rights emerged "seemingly from nowhere"[188] to come to entirely dominate the mission of Western transnational broadcasters. A deeper comparison of the

[188] S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, Prologue, 3.

different legal and moral justifications used to buttress both organizations' work over the whole chronology of their long histories than I present in this work would be necessary in order to reach such a conclusion. Nevertheless, I propose that my evidence on RFE and the BBCXS's shift towards deploying the language of human rights in defining themselves, and in justifying their continued existence to a range of audiences, suggests that such representations did gain a new prominence, and were considered to be newly persuasive and powerful during this era. Moreover, this shift towards self-identifying as "Human Rights Radios" was coherent in relation to their respective governments' more general shifts towards the deployment of human rights-based arguments in order to further their foreign policy goals.

What are the implications of such a conclusion? Firstly, it helps strengthen the notion that the proposal of a global "breakthrough" of human rights in the 1970s must be inflected by an understanding of the uses and usefulness of the rhetoric of human rights for European institutions and groups on both sides of the Cold War divide. Future work might build on this conclusion through a closer examination of the actual language used in the broadcasts of both RFE and the BBC CED than I was able to undertake, through a detailed content analysis of the transcripts of broadcasts in Polish, Hungarian and Czech or Slovak languages that can be found within both organizations' archives. Similarly, scholars may wish to delve more deeply into the primary documents of human rights groups such as Charter 77, KOR, or later groups such as that around the *Beszélő* samizdat newspaper which emerged in Hungary in the early 1980s, to examine the ways in which these groups responded to or engaged with this new human rights-focused rhetoric being deployed by Western broadcasters. Such work would help further illuminate the extent to which the rise of "human rights radio" really informed or interacted with human rights activism on the ground in Central and Eastern Europe.

Secondly, my work should encourage further efforts at re-evaluating the legacy and consequences of both RFE and the BBCXS's increased adoption of human rights language in the justification of their existence to both listeners abroad and funders and political backers at home. Despite the fact that neither organization is broadcasting to Poland, Hungary or former Czechoslovakia any more, both are still very much active in broadcasting to Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, and continue to justify their work in terms of "promoting the free flow

of information"[189] and "address[ing] the global gap in provision of trusted international news, by providing accurate, impartial and independent news and analysis of the highest quality."[190] By understanding the historical reasons and methods by which both organizations shifted towards presenting themselves as serving the human rights of their listeners, we can help better explain, frame, and potentially inform the current and future decision-making within and about both broadcasters' contemporary purpose.

The influence wielded and reputations enjoyed or endured by these organizations to this day is built on a historical understanding of their past actions and motivations. As the digital turn transforms global efforts at and definitions of terms such as "freedom of information", "soft power", and "public diplomacy", affecting the way in which the ideas and language of human rights are deployed for political and moral purposes, it is valuable to consider the ways in which such processes are by no means unprecedented, and ask whether anything of value might be learned for the present by evaluating how a different, but arguably no less dramatic, set of changes and challenges were experienced and implemented in the past. It is my hope that my work can therefore contribute to the body of historical scholarship which not only reflects and re-examines the past in its own terms, and for its own sake, but has something to say to the decision-makers of the present and future.

[189] "Frequently Asked Questions", Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Website. Accessed on June 6th, 2018 at https://pressroom.rferl.org/p/6118.html

[190] BBC World Service Operating Licence, Section 1: Remit, November 2016. Accessed on June 6th, 2018 at http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/world_service/2016/wsol.pdf.

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