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International Radio Broadcasting -
What Lies Ahead For An Older Technology

By

Donald R Browne
International Radio Broadcasting—What Lies Ahead
For an Older Technology

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Over twenty years ago, I attempted to assess the growth, problems and future prospects of international broadcasting in a brief article which appeared in Journalism Quarterly. At that time, my own experience with international broadcasting was of somewhat less than ten years' duration and was based primarily on my dissertation research, a brief period of work with the United States Information Agency and a reading of the relatively modest sum of scholarship then in print. Now, twenty years later, I have the advantage of several field research projects, an additional one-year period of overseas residency and a somewhat greater availability of scholarly and semi-scholarly research to guide me in my present effort: to assess my own accuracy, especially regarding predictions, in setting forth those statements made twenty years ago, and to look ahead to see whether this admittedly older form of international communication has the vitality to survive and perhaps even flourish in the years to come.

I might as well state at the outset that I have been, in the main, reasonably accurate. This may stem from the obvious nature of a few of my predictions, I grant, but it probably stems at least as much from the relatively narrow confines within which international broadcasting operates—options limited by a host of technological, geographical, political and budgetary considerations—and from a certain imitative tendency within the ranks of international
broadcasters which has something of a parallel with the experience of American commercial radio. Finally, inertia or resistance to change can be found within international broadcasting just as it can be in most enterprises, and this might well remove some of the lustre from my clairvoyance.

Briefly, I felt in 1965 that most international broadcast organizations paid insufficient attention to the quality and strength of the broadcast signal, knew too little about the composition of their audience, and took insufficient notice of radio's "humanizing" quality—its ability to put across a message with a more personal touch, thanks to its reliance on the human voice. I pointed out the tremendous growth in international broadcasting, and foresaw the continuation of that growth, expensive as it might be. Finally, I indicated that the most fruitful line of development for international radio programming might well be a greater reliance on specific programs for specific groups, rather than a "shotgun" or broadside approach. This is how the picture looks to me in 1986:

1. **Quality and strength of broadcast signal**—although I failed to realize it at the time, the early 1960's marked the beginning of the "superpower" race, whereby 200, 250, 500 and 1,000 kilowatt transmitters became the norm. Consider the following figures: in 1961, there were 16 shortwave transmitters at 200 KW or more; in 1972, there were 185, now there are several hundred.

Foreign transmitter sites, which were already quite common as of the early 60's, have continued to be popular choices as means of improving the quality and strength of one's signal, despite the problems attendant upon the vagaries of someone else's political climate (**viz.** the Malaysian government's 1973 decision to ask the BBC to cease operation of its Far East relay transmitter in Tebrau). Thus, Radio Peking retransmitted through Albania until mid-1978;
West Germany's Deutsche Welle through Portugal, Rwanda, Malta, Canada, and, with the BBC, through Antigua; the Gospel-oriented Trans World Radio through Bonaire, Guam, Monaco and Swaziland; the BBC through Canada, the United States (Greensboro, N.C.), Antigua, and four other overseas locations, and so forth. In some instances, transmitter time is leased from the national government, but in many, the transmitting facilities have been erected by the international broadcaster, who in turn may have to agree to share transmitter time with the host government.

The risks and costs connected with these overseas locations are as high as ever, or perhaps even higher, given what seems to be an increasingly unstable political climate in the Third World. Quite aside from financial costs—for example, the West German Government built and equipped Radio Kigali for the Rwandese Government and also provided Radio Kigali with program and technical advisors, plus staff training all for the privilege of operating Deutsche Welle's Kigali transmitter—there are certain political costs. It stands to reason that a foreign government would not be particularly receptive to having itself criticized by a broadcast service which operated a relay base on its own territory. This has led in certain cases to the temporary suspension of broadcast relays (e.g. the VOA in Korea in 1952), the apparent withholding of material from broadcast on the assumption that a foreign government would take offense and possibly cancel or suspend operation of the relay base located there (e.g. the VOA in Greece in 1971), and the signing or stating of agreements with foreign governments in which the nations operating the relay bases then agree to refrain from broadcasting material offensive the the "host" government (e.g. BBC vis-a-vis Cyprus, RFE vis-a-vis Portugal). And in mid-1978, Radio Peking lost the use of a shortwave transmitter located in Albania because of ideological disagreements between Albania and the Peoples' Republic of China.
Despite all of these risks and costs, many nations seem anxious to continue the search for new overseas locations. This appears in part to be due to an increased desire on the part of international broadcasters to reach listeners through medium wave, which in most of their cases means that foreign relay bases are *sine qua non*. (Satellites are of no value in bringing medium waves direct to home receivers.) This increased desire for medium wave capability may be a sign of two things: the increasingly crowded conditions on the shortwave bands, and the hope of reaching a "new" and perhaps larger audience: those who can afford inexpensive transistors. This audience may be young, old, rural, urban and many other things; it will probably not on the whole be as affluent or as well-educated as the traditional shortwave audience. This has programing implications which I shall consider later. Local placement of programing on records and tapes also seems to have maintained its earlier importance.

2. *Knowledge of the audience*—by and large, those international broadcast organizations which were conducting any respectable degree of audience research (aside from counting letters, which most international broadcasters do) 20 years ago are still doing so, but they have been joined by very few others, and there are very few changes in survey methodology. The BBC and the VOA continue to lead the pack by a wide margin: Radio Canada International, FEBC and Deutsche Welle are doing considerably more with survey research than they did 20 years ago; Radio Japan and Radio Nederland conduct some more systematic research through mail questionnaires; and the remainder continue to rely on listener mail, chance mention of their work in foreign newspapers and periodicals, and their positions in various annual "polls" undertaken by radio listening clubs, to discern their popularity.³
Even those organizations which have a continuing commitment to survey research seem in the main content to discover "how many of what sorts of people listen to what sorts of programs." The BBC's listener panels, in operation since 1948 and greatly expanded over the past ten years, yield further data on listener satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as well as relative comprehensibility of program fare; the Deutsche Welle has also instituted a panel system for overseas listeners, but it is generally limited to broadcasts in German, whereas the BBC conducts it in 15 languages. The BBC also has conducted a few relatively complex surveys of program preference on the part of its listeners by means of a survey form printed in the program guide ("London Calling") itself. The Voice of America also has established listener panels of its own in various parts of the world and for various languages. As far as I can determine, only one broadcast organization—the BBC in 1971, with Nigerian subjects—has attempted a more sophisticated approach to the matter of listener comprehension of broadcast material, although two American professors have also conducted such research. Granted that such research is not easy, granted that application of its results would not be easy, either, I am still surprised that so few broadcasters have done so little with what would appear to be a vital question.

The Voice of America made a commendable attempt to institute trend research through its Continuous Audience Analysis Profile, initiated in 1972. CAAP, as it was known, involved the selection of a number of countries throughout the world, all chosen for their typicality and/or for the presence or availability of a survey research organization to carry out the necessary research there. Random sample surveys were to be conducted in each of these countries every three or four years, thus yielding a picture over time of the changes in size, composition, favorite listening hours and preferred programs, of the
audience. There were hitches in the system, of course: Lebanon looked like a good choice in 1973, when the first CAAP survey was done there; it's hard to say when the next one could be done, given the present chaotic conditions. Egypt would have been a very desirable choice when the CAAP surveys started, but U.S.-Egyptian relations in 1972 ruled this out; now, it would be much easier to arrange for such a survey. Such hitches eventually helped put an end to the CAAP project.

Radio Free Europe has also sought over the years to develop what its Research Department calls "continuous and corrective sampling." According to RFE officials, this involves interviewing visitors to Western Europe from Eastern Europe through the services of a number of independent research firms in such cities as Stockholm, Vienna, Paris and London, and doing so through a questionnaire schedule constructed to enable RFE to "weed out" what seem to be responses of dubious validity. RFE officials have stated that they carefully spot-check the work of their interviewers, and claim that the flow of visitors from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the general frankness of those visitors, give them confidence in their results. This research has been much criticized by various individuals in both Eastern and Western Europe, on the grounds that it is not very likely that visitors from Eastern Europe will wish to speak in detail with complete strangers about radio listening, TV viewing, etc.

UNESCO has commissioned a few studies which are designed to shed some light on the degree to which international broadcasting enhances international understanding. Two studies of this sort already have been conducted: one in Sweden, the other in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav study relied upon content analysis of international broadcasts directed to Yugoslavia, and sought to determine the relative degree to which each broadcasting entity's program content was value free." (Radio Peking and Radio Tirana came out at the bottom, Radio Bucharest at the top, the BBC and VOA relatively low.) The Swedish study
followed somewhat the same general approach (content analysis of international broadcasts directed to Sweden), but attempted to assess what portion of the broadcast content was utilized to cover one's own national activities and the national activities of other nations, as well as the presence and nature of treatment of stories dealing with conflict. (Broadcasters from Western Europe tended to emphasize their own national activities to a greater extent than did broadcasters from Eastern Europe. African events tended to be neglected by nearly everyone, save Portugal. Western European broadcasters paid relatively little attention to conflict within their own countries; Eastern European broadcasters did not provide such coverage.)

Audience research in the past two decades, then, has told us little more than we knew in 1965, although its very reinforcement of earlier results may have been beneficial. Those who demand evidence of the fact that international broadcasts are indeed reaching listeners should by now know that, while such evidence is obtainable in several different forms (which often give very different results7), one looks in vain for indications of extremely large audiences (except in crisis situations or where one has a strong medium wave signal) or instances of action taken on the basis of material heard in a foreign broadcast. It should also be clear by now that listener mail is not a very useful gauge for measuring the effectiveness of a station. For example, both Radio Nederland and BBC officials noted a tremendous increase in mail from Japan during the late 1970s. Neither was inclined to attach much importance to this, since random analysis of these letters revealed that most of the writers were Japanese teenagers who seemed more interested in DXing (long-distance listening) than in learning much about either Britain or Holland. Stations desiring to increase their mail
draw can usually do so quite successfully through the provision of a good deal of pop music, especially when coupled with a listener request format. Radio Australia to Indonesia and Deutsche Welle in English to Africa both have enjoyed success in this way. Whether this is the sort of audience one actually wants is another question—and if it is a desired audience for any other reason than to impress officials with the volume of listener mail or to learn the "reach" of the broadcast signal, then there should be stronger attempts made to determine how such programing affects the images these listeners have of the broadcasting country, or whether these programs are useful "bait" to attract listeners to still other, "meatier" programing.

3. Use of radio's "humanizing" quality—even as my earlier article was being written, certain international broadcasters were developing more informal programing, with changes in verbal style, content and overall format. Radio Moscow's North American Service had made a quite dramatic move in the direction of informality of verbal style during the 1950's. The Voice of America introduced its Breakfast Show in 1962, and thus brought a more or less spontaneous approach to international broadcasting. Musical request programs had been around since the 1950s, but generally in once-a-week, limited duration form; the 1960s saw numerous stations developing the sorts of pop music request shows referred to earlier, usually with "personality" hosts and hostesses and daily or almost-daily blocks of time. Featured in program guides as well as over the air, these individuals received eloquent testimony to their popularity when they were sent on tour in the areas to which they broadcast, even as had VOA's Willis Conover a decade or so earlier. International broadcasting organizations also began to employ announcers with readily identifiable dialects or accents, especially for broadcasts in English to Africa, but also to England and North America, the idea apparently being that listeners would feel more comfortable with someone who spoke English in the manner that they themselves did.
Most international broadcasters also introduced programs designed to show how ordinary citizens in the "home country" worked and played, what concerns they had, and, quite often, what they thought of other countries. Such matters as this had occasionally been treated in the various "Listener's Mailbag" programs that most international broadcasters had carried for some years, and certain specific programs of this sort enjoyed some popularity during World War II, but in the 1960s they were joined by such weekly features as Radio Japan's "One In a Hundred Million," Radio Cairo's "My Friends," and later, Radio Moscow's "Radio Bridge." Whether these programs were causing listeners to have a more "human" image of the broadcasting nation is an open question, however: the answers would probably have to be elicited through special research projects, and, so far as I know, such projects have not been undertaken. Even if they were, the results might be of little use unless trend research were done, since the real effectiveness of such programing would seem to be in its longterm value. Still, these informal approaches are assumed to be popular with listeners, as various international broadcast services (e.g., Radio France International and Radio Bucharest) have added them on a regular or occasional basis in recent years.

4. The continued growth of international broadcasting—this has certainly turned out to be a sound prediction, at least in terms of increases in transmitter power. It also has been true of certain language services, those in the communist nations and the Deutsche Welle and All-India Radio most particularly. Many nations have grown very little in this respect, but few have diminished, either; Radio France International dropped a large number of its foreign language services in early 1975, but began restoring some of them a few years later, and Radio Ghana seems to have experienced a decline, while Radio Denmark gave up on international broadcasting in languages other than Danish in 1970,
but these are rarities when one considers that approximately 85 sovereign nations currently operate foreign broadcasting services. The nations of Africa and Asia have accounted for the greatest numerical growth over the past two decades, while Central and South American continue to lag far behind. The growth in religious broadcasting likewise has been remarkable: Trans-World Radio and The Far East Broadcasting Company now have several overseas transmitter bases, and the latter broadcasts in some 25 languages as of 1986.

One can examine growth in other ways, of course: additions to language services and increases in present languages would reveal that the Third World has been the primary beneficiary of increased attention by international broadcasters over the past 20 years or so. As one considers this particular kind of growth, one notes a rather interesting state of affairs: once a Communist international broadcasting service introduces a language, it very rarely drops that language; in contrast, the Voice of America and the BBC both dropped a few languages over the period 1965-85: Hebrew, Albanian, Spanish to Spain, Italian, Maltese and Sinhala for the BBC, Japanese and Tamil for the VOA. Foreign office pressures, budgetary and political, had most to do with the BBC actions, a need to show fiscal responsibility for the VOA's.

The rate of growth in terms of added language services now seems to be levelling off. This may or may not mean that most broadcasters have become about as large as they'll ever be --I'm inclined to think that this is so--but if it does mean this, it may well be that cost has at least as much to do with it as do availability of the necessary announcers and writers or the desire to reach certain audiences.

For budgets, too, have grown in recent years. While this might be taken in some quarters as an indication of the importance of the activity,
it has also served to call attention to the stations in a sometimes unwelcome manner. Newspaper columnists, members of parliamentary bodies, and even employees of the broadcast organizations themselves have occasionally begun to express doubt over the need for certain of these operations, and to advocate their reduction or even total abolition. Senator Fulbright's attacks on the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in the early 1970s are perhaps the most prominent examples of this state of affairs, but the BBC External Services have been the target of pressures to dramatically reduce the scope of their operations for the past several years, and one thread of argument (besides the obvious need for economy in a financially-troubled Britain) has been, "Do we really need to provide such a service to the world? What does it do for us in return?" RFE and Radio Liberty, hard hit by dollar devaluations vis-a-vis the West German mark, consolidated their Munich operations under one roof in late 1975 in order to hold expenses down to what the U.S. Congress will authorize. The BBC's Transcription Service had to be made into a more or less "paying proposition" as a result of budget cuts in the early 1980s.

These fiscal pressures also have appeared to result in a heightening of interest on the part of legislative officials concerning the administrative efficiency, programing policies and even continued need for international radio stations. In recent years, both the BBC and Radio Nederland have been examined by their respective Governments for administrative efficiency, especially proper management of budget. In neither case did this arise from any specific allegations of wrongdoing, but rather, from the tight monetary situation faced by most West European countries. International broadcasting operations could be one of the less painful budget cuts, in that there are few constituencies that would be angered by its diminution or disappearance.
A number of officials at these stations have told me that they feel that the tight monetary situation is only one element in this sometimes-unwelcome show of interest on the part of others. The atmosphere of détente seemed to be at least as important in the late 1970s: questions were raised regarding the continued need for sizable broadcast services to the USSR, Eastern Europe, The People's Republic of China, etc. The usual reply to this on the part of station officials was, "But one never knows how long détente will hold or whether all Communist nations agree that it is desirable. And if we dismantle or even reduce any of these broadcast services, it will be most difficult to build them up again. Such talent is scarce, and audiences once lost are difficult to regain." The coming to political power of the Thatcher government in 1979 and the Reagan administration in 1981 saw a restoration and even expansion of broadcast services for communist countries, so the officials were right in one sense to argue as they did, although often they didn't have much proof of effectiveness for those services in the first place. Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and the BBC have all been reasonably effective at showing in various tangible forms that they are having some impact upon public opinion in the Soviet Union and Central Eastern Europe. They do so by the aforementioned surveys, by various statements of support from exiles, and by citation of attacks on them in the Communist media, which are taken as inferential signs of success. No matter that these indices yield an incomplete picture; at least there is a picture of sorts, and, when it is presented, its incompleteness is paraded as virtue (after all, you can't take public opinion surveys on RFEs audience in Czechoslovakia by interviewing a random sample of Czechoslovakia itself.) The broadcast organizations that seem to face more difficulty are those which, like Radio Nederland, have little but listener letters to show as evidence of effectiveness—and it doesn't take long for a member of Parliament to learn that large numbers of listener letters come from DXers or from young people writing to request musical selections.
5. **Future directions for broadcast formats**—although I did not predict 20 years ago that broadcast formats would turn more in the direction of providing highly specific program fare for specific audiences, I stated that I thought such a step desirable. To some extent, programing has followed this path; indeed, there was a fair share of it back in 1965. I feel that it has increased, however, and in this respect I may have failed to take account of a phenomenon that was already developing two decades ago: the attempt to reach truly mass audiences with international broadcasting. I had concluded in my 1965 article that, for most international stations, such an approach was not feasible (Radio Cairo's "Voice of the Arabs" was a major exception at that time; there are a few indications, primarily through scant survey data, that it may no longer be quite as "mass-oriented", or, at least, as attractive to the masses). I based this conclusion on several elements: lack of access by the masses to shortwave broadcast receivers; lack of medium wave frequencies for international stations; lack of sufficient interest on the part of the masses in what a foreign country has to say; development of better-quality programing on national broadcast services.

While these elements are still present in many situations, certain international broadcasters are seeking to overcome them by the aforementioned devices of obtaining medium wave transmitting sites in other parts of the world, and by introducing programing with a strong "mass" appeal, particularly pop music by request. There has been considerable growth in international commercial radio (e.g., Afrique No. 1, Radio Monte Carlo/Middle East) over the past 15 years, and those stations almost always feature "mass appeal" formats. Whether such programing does much to promote a foreign country's "image" among the masses or whether it serves to attract new listeners who then begin to listen to other fare on the same station is difficult to say (although certain surveys and letters indicate that this happens at least occasionally), but there is no question that the VOA, BBC, Deutsche Welle, RFE, Radio
Australia and others are trying to reach a mass audience some of the time. (A large share of this effort should be seen as an attempt to reach a young mass audience, which has implications—largely untested—for the future listenership of the stations.)

Where one of the above elements is concerned, I was probably mistaken. Twenty years ago, it looked as if many of the Third World countries were on their way to developing fully professional broadcast services—professional in technical quality and in philosophy. My various trips to various parts of the world in the intervening years have led me to conclude that this development has not been as rapid as I might have expected. Furthermore, various crises in the developing countries—Bangladesh, Nigeria, Iran, to name a few—have seen the imposition of even tighter controls on the domestic media. In these situations, international broadcasting stations have profitted from considerably larger-than-normal listenership, if various BBC surveys (and a small in-class survey I conducted in Lebanon at the time of the 1973 Mideast War) are to be believed. While this sort of mass audience is ephemeral, it is probably important, and it certainly seems to impress the critics of international broadcasting!

I still feel that, under most circumstances, international broadcasting serves most efficiently and effectively when it narrows its sights to specific audiences and I remain to be fully convinced of the lasting value of pop music request programs, but I am by now willing to acknowledge that they may have a place; I only wish that the underlying assumptions would be tested.

6. Strategic approaches—I did not comment in 1965 on short-and-long-term strategies of international broadcasting. I do so now only in passing, mainly because of my own philosophical commitment is clearly on the side of long-term strategies but with little evidence to offer in its defense.
Although I find their arguments sometimes naive and their documentation generally scant, I agree with Whitton and Larson (Propaganda: Toward Disarmament in The War of Words) and with W. Phillips Davison (Mass Communication and Conflict Resolution) that international communication should be used as one element in the long term quest for international peace and order, and I feel that Irving Janis and W. Brewster Smith, as well as Karl Deutsch and Richard Merritt, have given us some "cautiously specific" ground for optimism here.\(^\text{13}\)

But I must also acknowledge that, in many instances, international broadcasting is being used for the same short-term strategic reasons as it often was just before and during World War II. India and Pakistan, The Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China, Egypt and Israel, the Federal and Democratic Republics of Germany, as well as several dozen clandestine stations, all have provided numerous instances of what is usually characterized as "war by radio." Much of this programming appears to be conceived in typical warlike terms: charges and counter charges, strongly-worded criticisms of political leaders, "saturation" broadcasting.\(^\text{14}\)

It is not all that easy to find evidence that war by radio or other forms of short-term broadcasting actually accomplish much. There were some spectacular but quite isolated "success stories" during World War II, several less spectacular but notable instances of the effectiveness of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector of Berlin) during the period 1946-1956, and numerous claims that the Voice of the Arabs was responsible for such acts as the dismissal of Sir John Glubb by the Jordanian Government in 1956 or the Yemeni Revolution in the early 1960s.

However, as former BBC staff member Julian Hale has pointed out, those radio operations which conduct numerous short-term "campaigns" or indulge in "war by radio," often have difficulty maintaining credibility should their predictions prove false or when the tide turns against them. The Voice
of the Arabs faced just this problem after 1967, when it had boasted of sweeping victories by Arab forces in the Third Mideast War, only to be forced to acknowledge defeat within a matter of days. The residue of distrust left by this imprudent behavior was plainly evident to me when the Fourth Mideast War broke out in 1973: my Lebanese and Palestinian students, colleagues and other friends and acquaintances virtually refused to accept the word of the "Voice of the Arabs" until the first few days of BBC and VOA reporting, plus various dispatches appearing in some of the most trustworthy Lebanese newspapers, confirmed what the Voice of the Arabs was saying.15

All of this makes me wonder whether, outside of certain highly tactical situations in which radio is one weapon in an arsenal, there is much value in short-term broadcasting. It is perhaps useful in one perverse way: it can be employed to show that one nation heartily disapproves of another nation without necessitating military conflict, which certainly is preferable to combat! It is doubtful that short-term-based broadcasting is listened to by many people in the "target" country, however, when the "target" country happens to have a well-developed and relatively competitive media system or when the incoming broadcasts are available for only brief periods and with weak signal strength, as is so often true of the clandestine stations. Here, the major audience may be ubiquitous monitors who comb the airwaves with highly sensitive equipment and pass along their transcriptions to government departments and perhaps the domestic media and universities. This may at times serve the purposes of those in charge of the clandestine broadcasting but may have nothing whatsoever to do with broadcasting per se; it may simply be an opportunity for the "host" nation to display its solidarity with the cause represented by those who are broadcasting from its territory, or it may be a way for the "host" nation to display its opposition to a nation other than the one to which the clandestine broadcasts are directed, as seems
often to be the case with the various Palestinian radio services.

The Future

If, as I contended earlier, international broadcast activities seem to have stopped expanding, what might happen in the future? Might there be an actual decline in broadcast services, and, if so, where and in what forms? Virtually every broadcast official with whom I have spoken in my various field research projects has seen little hope of expanded language services or increased transmission hours, largely because they have seen little hope of expanded budgets, although VOA, RFE and RL did very well for themselves in the early to mid 1980s, thanks largely to the strongly "anti-Communist" policies of the Reagan administration. Indeed, executives in the BBC have been forced to consider the possibility of medium-to large-scale cuts in budgets almost yearly; in such cases, it would probably be language services that would be dropped, rather than transmission hours. No station cares to give up transmission time, since this is virtually unrecoverable once relinquished (certain other nations are all too ready to utilize vacant frequencies).

Increased administrative efficiency is being considered as one way of dealing with the budget "crunch", and has already led to the aforementioned consolidation of RFE and RL and the aforementioned examination of BBC and Radio Nederland. This could in the future lead to still further consolidations; it was not unthinkable to my interviewees that Deutsche Welle and Deutschlandfunk (which serves Europe in general and the German Democratic Republic in particular), or RFE, RL and VOA, might be consolidated. Several individuals also mentioned that their respective Government officials from time to time have suggested some sort of consolidated Western European international broadcast station. The BBC External Services Managing Director in the 1970s, Gerard Mansell, pushed hard for the creation of such a station, but finally gave up in the face of indifference and resistance on the part of some European nations,
especially France.

Does any of this mean that Government officials are themselves becoming skeptical of the lasting value of international broadcasting? Probably some of them are, and one can find equivalents of Senator Fulbright in most of the Western European nations, although, like Senator Fulbright, they are more likely to advocate reduction and redirection rather than outright abolition. The spirit of détente and fiscal problems are the two most likely contributors, but the relative inability of many international radio operations to display their effectiveness in persuasive ways also seems to have taken its toll, as I mentioned earlier. Perhaps these stations have not been terribly effective in projecting the merits of a long-term approach to international communication, either; it is quite tempting to display individual instances of short-term effectiveness when such instances can be produced, but it would seem prudent to continually remind those who hold the purse-strings that there are longer-lasting effects which, at any one moment, really cannot be measured with precision, and where radio is one supporting element in what has become popularly known as an "orchestrated" effect. Seldom does one discover, for example, that a President Nasser listened regularly to the BBC or a President Bourguiba to the VOA, but it is doubtful whether either would have continued to do so if these stations had not proven themselves generally useful and trustworthy over time.

I shall continue to advocate, as I have in the past, the need for greater amounts of specialized research, often with panels of various sorts. But increased research will only be helpful if it asks questions which rarely appear at present: how much did you understand, why did you like or dislike the program or station, what do you believe or disbelieve, what first
attracted you to our service, and, in all cases, why? Answers to these questions would help stations to decide, inter alia, whether all of that popular music by request was worthwhile, whether broadcasts in special English should be expanded, whether the utilization of broadcasters with "accented" English was a helpful drawing card.

I do not believe that there is any way of legislating the more peaceful uses of international radio, although both the League of Nations and the United Nations have made attempts at it. The future probably holds as many clandestine stations and other tactical deployments of radio as does the present; one can see vivid proof of that in the tremendous growth of clandestine radio (e.g., Radio Venceremos) in Central America during the early to mid 1980s. But there are some small signs that, when one side in a conflict situation begins to moderate its broadcast voice, the other side may follow suit.

Whether broadcast officials themselves could use this line of argument to convince their budgetary and political masters that moderation and especially balance are worth sustaining even in tense circumstances, I cannot say, but the experience of the BBC during The Suez Canal invasion of 1956 and the Falkland Islands conflict of 1983 and of the VOA in reporting Watergate would seem to indicate that there is lasting value in this approach. It still remains for international broadcasters to develop more precise measures for determining the best way to make such messages effective, but, thanks in part to the pressures mentioned earlier, I look for some changes here, too, over the next decade. I only hope that those of us with a serious interest in international communications research will be enlisted in any efforts that are undertaken to aid in understanding why people do or don't listen to international broadcasting, and whether it makes any difference, after all.
And finally, there is television. Will it replace international radio? Already the U.S. Information Agency is expanding its international television services at an amazing rate, and many countries are realizing profits of tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars through the sales of TV programs overseas. But most of this exported television material is in the form of dramatic entertainment, which is probably just about the least common of all international radio broadcast formats. There are increasing amounts of news material available through international television, but most of it is chosen and edited by national broadcasting staff in each country receiving it, so it isn't exactly like receiving what the originating nation wants the audience to receive. In other words, international television so far doesn't begin to offer anything like the variety of factual materials that clearly seems to be the major attraction of international radio for listeners around the world, and especially material that will reach those listeners unedited by their own domestic broadcast services.

And as digitally-tuned, direct frequency read-out portable radios become less and less expensive—the price of some models is heading down toward $100—there seems to be good reason for optimism over the future of international radio. Direct broadcast from satellites could increase the popularity of international radio even more, but so far experiments in DBS shortwave transmission have been confined to the little-used 11 meter band. The superpower transmitter competition does make it harder and harder for small and medium sized nations to compete with the VOAs, BBCs and Radio Moscows, and this is an issue that I feel the ITU must address more firmly if there is to be fiscal sanity in this field. But the international broadcast service with something interesting to say and a direct, personal style in which to say it should be able to continue to justify its presence in the frequency spectrum and its budget on into the 21st century.
FOOTNOTES


2 This has, among other things, led many international broadcast services to move to out-of-band frequencies; a few dozen nations, including Great Britain, Cuba, and Taiwan, indulge in this practice. While in certain cases this is not an illegal activity by ITU rules, much of it is.


4 See Lorand Szalay and Dale Lysne, "Attitude Research for Intercultural Communication and Interaction," Journal of Communication, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June, 1974), pp. 180-200. See also Timothy O'Keefe's "The Comparative Listenability of Shortwave Broadcasts," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter, 1971), pp. 744-748, in which the author applies the Flesch readability formula to shortwave (international) broadcasts and concludes among other things, that VOA's Special English is not perhaps as simplified as it should be. Whether the Flesch readability formula can be trusted in this sort of analysis is open to question although the author makes a reasonably strong case for its appropriateness.

5 "The Method of Continuous and Comparative Sampling," Radio Free Europe (Munich) Audience and Public Opinion Research Department, September, 1975. Radio Prague's North American Service broadcast an interview on September 26, 1975, in which an individual claimed that he had worked for one of the research organizations employed by RFE, and that he and other researchers simply filled out the questionnaires in their own apartments, rather than actually interviewing people. There are probably elements of truth in this account, but there is also a certain amount of wild exaggeration, especially in his allegations that RFE once wanted to interview 500 Bulgarian farmers within a short span of time; RFE officials I have spoken to are painfully aware of how seldom any Bulgarian farmers come to Western Europe, and, as far as I know, have never entertained notions of conducting such a survey.


7 See a very interesting U.S. Information Agency study, "VOA Target Group Contestants and Listeners in India: A Comparison," Report R-6-71, April, 1971, which appears to illustrate clearly just how strong a difference there is between the letter-writing and the non-letter-writing VOA listener.


The BBC, however, has been able to muster a considerable show of support from various quarters in the face of proposed budget cuts as those were proposed during and on into the 1980s, as witness numerous letters to The Times and other newspapers and periodicals. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty also enjoyed considerable support from various distinguished diplomats and exiles, including Alexander Solzhenitsyn, when they came under attack by Senator J. W. Fulbright and others in 1971 and 1972.

Actually, there are occasional opinion polls taken with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union which reveal something of the listenership for foreign broadcasts within these countries. Radio Free Europe's Research Department has made several references to these surveys over the years, and Maury Lisann's Broadcasting to the Soviet Union, N.Y.: Praeger, 1975, contains several references to Soviet polls and surveys; see esp. Ch. 5


See Kelman, op. cit., Chs. 5 and 6.

Here meaning sudden increases in transmissions to a particular country at a particular time, but also meaning the continuing deployment of a disproportionate amount of one's broadcast facilities toward a particular country, e.g., the round-the-clock, multiple-frequency service from the Soviet Union to the People's Republic of China and vice versa.

Julian Hale, Radio Power, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975, Chs. 6 and 10. Hale points out that the Voice of the Arabs adopted a far more sober tone in 1973 than it had in 1967, while the reverse was true of Kol Israel. This is confirmed by my own observations and those of my Lebanese and Palestinian friends: the latter were delighted to hear Kol Israel's announcers interviewing various general, most of whom were initially predicting "easy victories" for the Israeli forces. And when the "active combat" phase of the war had subsided, they were angered to hear "man-in-the-street" interviews broadcast by Kol Israel in which various individuals strongly implied that the Arabs were incapable of sound reasoning. Having heard most of these broadcasts myself, albeit only in English and French, I can substantiate that this is a true account of statements made over the station.

Five of the major "Western" broadcasting nations--the United States, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Canada--in fact coordinate their usage of international broadcast frequencies through yearly meetings. If one of these nations cut back on transmission time, it is possible that one of the other members of the group might attempt to pick up the vacated frequency hours, but there is no guarantee that such a move would be successful, since the International Telecommunications Union would have to become involved.
FOOTNOTES


Since the-Kavala operation employs some 122 Greeks, a considerable share of the $2.6 million flows back into the Greek economy.

4 The VOA cases are cited in my monograph, "The Voice of America: Policies and Problems," Journalism Monographs, No. 43 (Feb. 1976); the BBC-Cyprus agreement in the BBC Monitoring Service Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/W340/B/1, 12 Nov. 1965; and the RFE-Portugal agreement in "Portuguese Say RFE Gave 'Assurances'", The Washington Post, loc. cit. RFE officials subsequently denied that any "assurances" had in fact been given. See Richard Weintraub, "No Policy Change, RFE Officials Say," The Washington Post, June 15, 1975. In a development unrelated to a foreign transmitter base but involving foreign government pressures, the manager of Deutsche Welle was "blackmailed" into eliminating the station's coverage of Ethiopia's internal problems in 1975 by threats from "radical groups", possibly operating under the Government's sanction, to kill German children at the German school in Addis Ababa. Interviews with Walter Geis and Konstanze Schmöide, Deutsche Welle, September, 1975.

5 This has, among other things, led many international broadcast services to move to out-of-band frequencies; some 41 nations, including Great Britain, Cuba, and Taiwan, indulge in this practice. While in certain cases this is not an illegal activity by ITU rules, much of it is. Information supplied by Roger Legge, International Frequency Management Service, Etlan, Virginia, August, 1978.

6 See my paper, "International Radio Broadcasting — Who Listens?", ERIC Document ED-050581, September, 1971, for a more detailed discussion of modes of research in international broadcasting.

7 See Lorand Szalay and Dale Lysne, "Attitude Research for Intercultural Communication and Interaction," Journal of Communication, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June, 1974), p. 180-200. See also Timothy O'Keefe's "The Comparative Listenability of Shortwave Broadcasts," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter, 1971), pp. 744-748, in which the author applies the Flesch readability formula to shortwave (international) broadcasts and concludes among other things, that VOA's Special English is not perhaps as simplified as it should be. Whether the Flesch readability formula can be trusted in this sort of analysis is open to question although the author makes a reasonably strong case for its appropriateness.

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See "The Times Diary," The Times (London), April 26, 1974, p. 18, where, under a column labelled "Lobbying," the columnist says, "Yet it does not answer the main point of the critics, which is why should it fall to Britain to bear the cost and responsibility of keeping the world informed?" Mr. Arthur Vann, Chief Accountant of the BBC External Services, also told me in an interview on September 23, 1975 that he felt the BBC found itself in much of a "defensive" position than ever these past few years, and that he can understand the reasoning behind the question "Why should we be doing this?" even though he is not in agreement with it.

The BBC, however, was able to muster a considerable show of support from various quarters in the face of proposed budget cuts in spring, 1974, as witness numerous letters to The Times and other newspapers and periodicals. It received even more support when a 1977 report by the Central Review and Policy staff called for a severe reduction in both languages and transmission hours for the External Services. See Ian Bradley, "Threat to Reduce BBC external services is met by concern from overseas," The Times (London), August 6, 1977, p. 4. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty also enjoyed considerable support from various distinguished diplomats and exiles, including Alexander Solzhenitsyn, when they came under attack by Senator J. W. Fulbright and others in 1971 and 1972. Although VOA was not under attack in

Actually, there are occasional opinion polls taken within Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union which reveal something of the listenership for foreign broadcasts within these countries. Radio Free Europe's Research Department has made several references to these surveys over the years, and Maury Lisann's Broadcasting to the Soviet Union, N.Y.: Praeger, 1975, contains several references to Soviet polls and surveys; see esp. Ch. 5. Another relatively common approach to assessing the likely impact of broadcasts from Western Europe and the United States to Central and Eastern Europe—and the Soviet Union is a comparative analysis of the broadcast content of news programs from several international stations. RFE has published several such studies; the United States Information Agency has done likewise, e.g. James Oliver's "Comparison of the Russian Services of the Four Major (Western) Broadcasters (VOA, BBC, DW, RFI)." USIA Research Report R-8-75 (July 28, 1975).

Listener letters do seem to be of some use to the various religious broadcasters, however, in terms of their effect on fund-raising drives; conversation with officials of the Far East Broadcasting Company in April, 1970 gave me the impression that this was the case at FEBC, at least.

See Kelman, op. cit., Chs. 5 and 6.

Here meaning sudden increases in transmissions to a particular country at a particular time, but also meaning the continuing deployment of a disproportionate amount of one's broadcast facilities toward a particular country, e.g. the round-the-clock, multiple-frequency service from the Soviet Union to the Peoples' Republic of China and vice versa.


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See Hale, op. cit., Ch. 14, for a brief but useful account of monitoring operations.

24 This included several officials from each of the following: Deutsche Welle, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Radio Nederland, BBC, and, in late 1974, VOA; subsequent interviews with BBC and VOA officials in 1976 and 1977 reconfirmed these impressions.

17 Five of the major "Western" broadcasting nations -- the United States, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Canada -- in fact coordinate their usage of international broadcast frequencies through yearly meetings. If one of these nations cut back on transmission time, it is possible that one of the other members of the group might attempt to pick up the vacated frequency hours, but there is no guarantee that such a move would be successful, since the International Telecommunications Union would probably have to become involved.

26 The BBC, however, has proposed a consolidated European broadcast service, in English, French, German and possibly Italian; see Kenneth Gosling, "European radio to get trial run," The Times (London), December 1, 1977, p. 1.

27 Maury Lisann's Broadcasting to the Soviet Union, op. cit. contains numerous references to Russian reactions to the BBC, DW, VOA, RFE and RL over the years, most of them hostile, but a few attesting to a more moderate tone on the part of those organizations. See also David Abshire, International Broadcasting: A New Dimension of Western Diplomacy, Beverly Hills or London: Sage Publications, 1976 (The Washington Papers, No. 35).

28 See Hale, op. cit., pp. 55-56, p. 81. As Hale indicates, the BBC suffered from a measure of governmental disapproval following Suez. The VOA frankness in reporting Watergate has not, so far as I know, resulted in any scientifically measurable evidence of increased audience support or imitations by other radio services, but it certainly attracted considerable support on the part of U.S. journalists.