

Cold War Radio Books, new in the Library

By Bart Lee, K6VK, Archivist

As Vlad-the-Impaler murders innocent Ukrainians, the late “Cold War” seems benign. The fall of the Soviet Union resulted from manifold western efforts during the Cold War to defeat the “Evil Empire” without a hot war. Shortwave Radio became a tool to destabilize Russia and its satellites.

The library has acquired* two relevant books about this shortwave radio work:



* Archivist's Donations

The RADIO FREE EUROPE book reports that by 1971, the Central Intelligence Agency had funded RFE with over \$306 million dollars (page 207). In today's inflated US dollars, that would be more than Two Billion Dollars (\$2,121,400,000++). Much more got spent between 1971 and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Propaganda ain't cheap! But "you get what you pay for" more or less.

The COLD WAR RADIO book focuses on broadcasts into Russia. It reports one analyst (Richard Pipes) asserting that Russia was still the barbaric and abusive state it always had been.[†] Alexander Solzhenitsyn[‡] took issue with this:

"[Pipes's] book allows only one possible conclusion to be drawn: that the Russian nation is anti-human in its essence ... and that as far as any future is concerned it is obviously a hopeless case."

Vlad-the-Impaler is making a pretty good case for Pipes's thesis. Now decades after the end of the Cold War, Putin makes war on innocents and rattles nuclear sabers. Broadcasting against Russia and its interests continues, including by radio, but mostly by more modern means. According to the *Wall Street Journal*[§] the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe have been joined by three more services in the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

For nostalgia, one can still hear the Voice of America on shortwave from Botswana, Africa, at its local dawn (grey-line propagation). The BBC broadcasts on shortwave from Ascension Island off the west coast of Africa, and from Singapore. But shortwave is just a legacy medium now in the Age of The Internet.

[†] Richard Pipes, *RUSSIA UNDER THE OLD REGIME* (Penguin, 1974)

[‡] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "Misconceptions about Russia..." *Foreign Affairs*, 58, no. 4 (Spring, 1980: 797-834, quoted in COLD WAR RADIO at page 156.

[§] Review, "Listen and You Shall Hear" by Martha Bayles re COLD WAR RADIO, *Wall Street Journal*, Bookshelf, October 24, 2022 (page A15).

Cold War Radio, back cover

“This well-researched, well-written book couldn’t be more timely and important. Not only does it show how the wide-ranging, oft-sophisticated programming of these stations played a critical role in undermining the Soviet Union, it also gives a needed appreciation of Russian history and culture. Very crucially, you’ll understand that while Putin’s rise was not inevitable, it did combine very real elements of Russia’s past.”

—**Steve Forbes**, editor of *Forbes* magazine and former chair of the Board for International Broadcasting

“Mark Pomar is almost unique in his length of service and variety of roles and experiences on the inside of U.S. international broadcasting. He has ‘made the sausage’ and seen it made from many angles. Pomar’s critique of the Soviet system and some aspects of Russian behavior is infused with respect for Russia that reflects a certain optimism that, for all its faults and challenges, Russia is a country with potential for growth and improvement.”—**Jeffrey Trimble**, former deputy director of the Broadcasting Board of Governors and former assistant managing editor and Moscow bureau chief at *U.S. News & World Report*

“Mark Pomar’s book provides an important piece of the Cold War history puzzle. It’s media, politics, culture, and the story of the war of ideas told by someone who was on the inside—a useful and important book for students, historians, and policymakers.”—**Jeffrey Gedmin**, CEO and editor in chief of *American Purpose*

“Of all the books that have been written about Cold War broadcasting this trenchant analysis by Mark Pomar of the Russian language programs of Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) is the first of its kind. It provides invaluable insights into what actually went on the air. It deftly compares and contrasts the Russian language program content of VOA and RFE/RL and confirms their essential complementary roles in Cold War broadcasting to the USSR.”—**R. Eugene Parta**, author of *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR during the Cold War*



From 1950 to 1960, millions of Americans participated in Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom." They signed "Freedom Scrolls" and "Freedom Grams," attended Crusader meetings, marched in parades, launched leaflet-carrying balloons, and donated Truth Dollars in support of the American effort to broadcast news and other programming to the peoples of communist-governed European countries. The Crusade for Freedom proved to be a powerful tool of the state-private network's anti-communist agenda. This book takes an in-depth look at the Crusade for Freedom, revealing how its unmatched pageantry of patriotism led to the creation of a dynamic movement involving not only the government but also private industry, mass media, academia, religious leaders, and average Americans.

RICHARD H. CUMMINGS was the director of security for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty for 15 years beginning in 1980. He currently lives in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Back cover, "Radio Free Europe's
'Crusade for Freedom'"



Front cover: Replica of Freedom Bell that was distributed to 48 states for use in local campaigns (courtesy of RFE/RL); background Cold War Globe (Wikipedia.org)

(06 XII '22 v2.2 {corrected} de K6VK) ##