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The Birth of Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) and Its Role During the Berlin Blockade

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The Birth of Radio in the American Sector (RIAS)
and Its Role During the Berlin Blockade

J. David Mecham

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The Birth of Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) and Its Role During the Berlin Blockade

J. David Mecham
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The ensuing chaos and power struggles between the East and West following the end of the Second World War in Germany set the stage for the creation of a unique radio station that would broadcast from behind the iron curtain for the duration of the cold war. RIAS, or Radio in the American Sector, would play a key role in the battle over ideology between the West and the Soviet Union. The story of RIAS' birth and development is a unique narrative of unintended consequences as the efforts of the Soviet Union to gain a monopoly over the airwaves of Berlin actually contributed to ensuring a permanent Western radio presence in the city. This paper draws in part upon oral history, personal papers, government documents and the archives of the New York Times to tell the story of the development of RIAS and its role during the Berlin blockade and influence on the cold war.

Keywords: Radio, RIAS, DIAS, Berlin, Blockade, Airlift, Germany, Howley, Clay

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Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the many lessons learned during World War II was the utility and strategic value of radio for the purpose of communicating messages (propaganda or otherwise) to large masses of civilian population. This lesson reinforced Russian doctrine founded in its Marxist-Leninist ideology that media was to be controlled and censored by the government. However, in its zeal to gain the information advantage in post war Germany, Russia took action that would actually deny itself that media monopoly and inadvertently act as a catalyst in the creation of Radio in the American Sector (RIAS). RIAS would serve a voice of opposition and information throughout the cold war.

Following Germany's capitulation ending WWII in Europe, Germany and Berlin were divided into areas of control according to prior agreement reached by the allied leaders at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. Initially, the French were not included and Berlin was to be divided into three areas of control belonging to the Russians, British, and Americans. However, that arrangement was subsequently amended and a portion of the American sector was given to the French.

The study of the actions and administration of the respective zones of control for the United States and Russia in post-war Germany is highly illustrative of how two very different philosophies of mass media and press freedom function. The Americans administered their zone and sector with the American ideology and value that freedom of the press is critical in any successful democracy. The Russians administered their zone and sector with the polar opposite

view that the government is to control all forms of mass media and use censorship as a tool for controlling the population.

During the years immediately following the end of the war, the western Allies would demonstrate a willingness and desire to cooperate with the Soviet Union. The western Allies had what hindsight might consider a naïve desire to administer Berlin in a unified manner with the Russians. The western Allies considered the occupation of Germany to be a necessary part of their responsibility as the victors to rebuild a Germany where democratic government would allow self-determination for the German people. It was essential to reeducate the German people to instill democratic values in an effort to ensure the tragic history of the Third Reich would never be repeated.

The idealistic goals of the western Allies were not shared by Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. Russia's undeclared intentions were to make Germany a Soviet satellite country. Stalin had no intention of allowing democracy to take root in Germany. In fact, the ultimate Soviet goal was to tolerate the western Allied presence in Berlin only so long as necessary. Berlin's geography was a mix of fortune and inconvenience for the Soviets. Having the German capital located in their zone was a symbolic trophy and source of pride for the Russians. However the western Allied presence there was also an intolerable irritation and the Russians would make every effort to drive the western Allies out of Berlin.

Their respective goals would dictate the conduct and decisions by the occupying powers in Berlin. The resulting ideological clash created the environment where RIAS would be a critical tool for the western Allies to oppose the Soviet Union, and an invaluable source of support for Berliners.

The history of RIAS is a unique narrative of a radio station that would entertain, educate, inspire, motivate and influence thought for generations of Germans. For the duration of the cold war RIAS would broadcast from within the heart of communist East Germany, as "Eine freie Stimme der freien Welt" (a free voice for the free world).

The purpose of this paper is to document the creation and impact of the joint American and German radio station that would come to dominate the airwaves of Berlin and East Germany. RIAS has not been the subject of a great deal of scholarly research, particularly with regard to the dynamic role it played in post-war Germany, the blockade of Berlin and its impact on the cold war.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

From its earliest days, radio became prominent as an effective weapon for use in the international struggle over ideas and propaganda. Radio gave governments the means to directly reach their own citizens or the citizens of other countries to deliver the message or information of their choosing.

Radio's role in World War II has been studied extensively. One of the most important roles of radio for the United States in WWII was as the communication link between the federal government and the citizens. Donald King¹ focused his research on radio's impact on the home front and how the medium was used to instruct and educate the American citizenry regarding the needs of government and its policies along with the corresponding responsibilities of citizens. Although there were other forms of media such as movies, plays, and newspapers, radio was highly trusted and extremely effective as a means of informing, entertaining, and unifying the American people. Through the war the radio industry and federal government worked together in an effort to lead America to victory.

Radio was considered the "fourth front" by Charles J. Rolo.² Even as the war was still in the early stages, the vital role of radio was clear. Rolo described radio as "the most powerful single instrument of warfare the world has ever known. More flexible in use and infinitely stronger in emotional impact than the printed word, as a weapon of war radio has no equal."³ Rolo broadens the scope of his work to include the role radio was playing internationally as the war was being fought. Whether it be propaganda or news to the citizens of enemy nations, news

and entertainment to soldiers in theaters of combat, or the homogenization of Americans on the home front, radio was an indispensable tool of war.

International radio broadcasting had become popular in Europe even before the war began. In the 1920s, short wave radio technology was developed that enabled radio transmissions to travel long distances. European nations took advantage of the new technology to broadcast all over the world. Holly Cowan Schulman⁴ presented a discussion of America's initial and ongoing venture into the international political broadcast scene known as the Voice of America. After World War I, Americans had been reticent to become involved with propaganda. Propaganda had developed into a prominent feature of warfare during the First World War. Memories were still vivid of the work of the Committee on Public Information headed by George Creel which was responsible for a great deal of emotionally charged propaganda. Americans had no desire to revisit those memories.⁵ America's entry into the Second World War quickly motivated the U.S. Government to enter the world of international broadcasting and in 1942 the Voice of America (VOA) went on the air. VOA was used throughout WWII to broadcast American propaganda into Europe, Africa, and Asia. Although its mission has changed over the years, VOA was aired on RIAS and continues to be produced today.

Psychological Warfare

The conclusion of World War II brought about changes in international broadcasting. Following a brief period of warm relations, ideological differences filled the void left by a vanquished common enemy and former allies quickly became adversaries marking the beginning of the cold war. The radio cold war quickly intensified between the U.S. and Soviet Union with each country dedicating resources toward the war of words. As radio became the front line of the cold war, psychological warfare became a greater focus of scholarly research. William E. Daugherty⁶ assembled a three volume casebook containing contributions by a variety of authors writing on numerous aspects of psychological warfare. The study of psychological warfare includes multiple disciplines including history, mass communications, psychology, military intelligence, human resources, sociology etc. Although the term psychological warfare had been applied to the activities of international broadcasting, it was somewhat misleading. Cottrell⁷ offers the term "political communications" as an alternative.

As the cold war became entrenched as a fact of life in the late 1940s, the effort to broadcast western ideology and propaganda into the Soviet Union continued to intensify. RIAS was fulfilling an increasingly critical role and Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were added to America's psychological warfare arsenal designed to penetrate the iron curtain. However, America was not the only participant in the battle. K. R. M. Short⁸ contributed a collection of research to the body of literature looking at the international broadcasting efforts of the U.S. and other western countries. Radio Canada International, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Germany's Deutsche Welle and Deutschlandfunk were all involved in the propaganda battle with the Soviet Union and eastern bloc countries. The programming of the

western stations as well as the target audiences were also a point of research. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the western broadcast effort, an understanding of the target audience is critical.

The study of a divided Germany was necessary in order to understand the programming needs of western broadcastings target audience. Henry Ashby Turner Jr.⁹ aided in that effort with a review of the political history and development of the two Germanies beginning with Germany's defeat at the end of WWII. Radio played an important role for both sides as the east and West German governments evolved. During the blockade of Berlin, the Russians used Radio Berlin to repeatedly proclaim to the residents of West Berlin that the Americans would abandon them while the western Allies used RIAS to counter those claims. Despite their political division the two countries shared the same history, culture and language. Families were also divided with members living in the East and West. Such ties would ensure the two Germanies would always remain inextricably connected. RIAS would continue to play an important role throughout the cold war.

In addition to RIAS, Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) were radio stations headquartered and networked out of Munich, Germany by groups of private U.S. citizens. RFE and RL shared some similarities with RIAS but were tasked with very different missions. Publicly, RFE and RL were portrayed as non-governmental endeavors that were privately funded through donations to the stations. Richard H. Cummings¹⁰ wrote that the truth, however, was that they had been covertly funded with U.S. tax dollars funneled through the CIA from the very beginning. In fact, a secret CIA report in 1969 described RFE and RL as "the oldest, largest, most costly, and probably most successful covert action projects aimed at the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe."¹¹

Arch Puddington's¹² research on RFE and RL looked at the history of the stations as well as their programming. It was also an analysis of the influences in the United States that impacted the operation of the stations. RIAS served as a template for the function and programming of RFE and later RL. The U.S. was interested in replicating the effectiveness and success that had been demonstrated by RIAS during the Berlin blockade and airlift. RFE and RL were the result. The mission of RFE was essentially to function as a surrogate home radio station to eastern bloc Soviet satellite countries. RFE broadcast to these countries in their native language. Radio Liberty was established a few years later tasked with the responsibility of broadcasting directly to all the people of the Soviet Union. RFE and RL were organized by bureaus representing individual countries or languages and predominantly staffed with refugees and other native speakers of the various languages.

The radio medium was also critical to Germans in other ways. The propaganda and information war fought between the west and the east was not the only role and impact of radio in post-war German society and culture. Radio was vital to the German people living amongst the devastation, ruin, and uncertainty left after the war. The German people were dealing with a multitude of challenges including homelessness, starvation, and disease. Many families had been scattered and left without a provider. Whether it was news, entertainment, or information critical to the function of everyday life, radio was the medium most used and trusted by the German people. Alexander Badenoch¹³ explored these issues as well as how radio stations functioned trying to meet the needs of their listeners while also complying with the requirements and rules of the occupational government.

Radio in the American Sector

With the establishment of a separate East German government, a secret police force was also established. Commonly known as the Stasi, the secret police was the primary means by which the communist East German government would enforce its will upon the people and remain in power. Through the use of the Stasi, East Germany would become a police state incarcerating hundreds of thousands of political prisoners. The view of RIAS and other western broadcasting operations through the eyes of the Stasi is intriguing to contemplate. However, due to the nature and high degree of secrecy practiced by the Stasi little has been published on the topic. In the years since the collapse of East Germany and reunification, there has been some research done on the Stasi but not with specific regard to RIAS.

John O. Koehler's¹⁴ narrative on the Stasi included detail on the Stasi's domestic operations in East Germany and its international operations as well. The Stasi not only repressed the citizens of East Germany, imprisoning many in the process, but was also responsible for conducting international terrorism and espionage.

Christian F. Osterman¹⁵ provided a glimpse of the Stasi reaction to the influence and power of RIAS in the context of the 1953 East German uprising. In 1953, an uprising of German workers began in East Berlin. Spurred on and encouraged by RIAS broadcasts, the uprising quickly spread throughout most of East Germany. The uprising reached an intensity that threatened the very existence of the East German government. In response, Soviet troops and tanks were sent in to put a violent and bloody end to the uprising that cost the lives of many East German citizens. Even more were sentenced to death as the Soviet controlled East German government pursued those they deemed responsible for instigating the uprising. Throughout the uprising, RIAS was on the air around the clock reporting events as they occurred, giving moral

support, and providing logistical aid by passing along pertinent information useful to the uprising participants. RIAS reporters even broadcast live from the scene of clashes between demonstrators and police in East Berlin.¹⁶ Soon after the uprising the East German government would significantly increase its effort to jam the RIAS signal. Jamming is essentially a form of electronic censorship. In order to jam the RIAS signal the East German government would simply transmit noise or static on the same frequency used by RIAS. If the jamming was successful a listener attempting to tune into RIAS would not be able to make out the RIAS signal over the static.

Generals Lucius Clay and Frank Howley

Events in post-war Germany were significantly influenced by the ranking members of the respective military governments. One of the key figures involved in the U.S. administration was General Lucius D. Clay, Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces in Europe and military governor of the U.S. Zone in Germany.¹⁷

Clay was an intense, determined leader. Born and raised in Georgia, the West Point educated engineer had fought WWII from behind a desk in Washington D.C. Working in procurement; he managed the operations of the Office of War Mobilization.¹⁸

With the end of the war in sight, President Roosevelt called upon General Clay to take the job nobody else seemed to want. A former senator, a former Supreme Court justice and Assistant Secretary of War had turned down the job as High Commissioner of Germany. Clay's name was recommended to Roosevelt, the job was offered and Clay accepted.¹⁹ As a member of the military, Clay's title would be military governor rather than high commissioner.

It was General Clay who presided over the establishment and development of RIAS. General Clay is generally credited for the western Allied response to the Soviet blockade by using an airlift to supply food, coal, clothing, and other necessities to the residents of West Berlin. After his retirement, General Clay would go on to serve on the board of directors for Radio Free Europe and oversee as well as participate in the fundraising campaign known as the Crusade for Freedom.

Upon his retirement and return to America, Clay²⁰ wrote a personal account of his years of administration in Germany. General Clay expressed a hope and desire that his record would aid in the understanding of the German problem. He defines the German problem as coming to terms with a divided Germany, completing West Germany's transition to self-government, and Germany's acceptance by other European countries who had suffered at the hands of the Germans during the Second World War. General Clay provides a personal narrative of the events that transpired in post-war Germany with great detail on relations and infighting between the Allies. General Clay lays responsibility for the ultimate failure to rule Germany by unanimous Allied agreement at the feet of the USSR, but also levels criticism at the other western Allies as well.

Over the course of several oral history interviews conducted over six years in the early 1970s, General Clay provided a personal account and rich source of information on RIAS, the U.S. administration of the American Zone in Germany, relations with the Russians and other western Allies, and Radio Free Europe. These histories contain information, facts, opinion and perspective unavailable elsewhere and constitute a vital primary source of information to this research.

General Clay's personal papers have been published in book form and provide thousands of documents and communication generated during General Clay's administration in Germany between 1945 and 1949. Many of these documents provide information and context that, when combined with Clay's oral history, make an essential contribution to the body of research for this paper.²¹

Much has been written and documented concerning the life and service of General Clay. Jean Edward Smith's²² biography contained insight and anecdotes absent from other works on Clay. Smith conducted many of the interviews that made up General Clay's oral history collection and had unique access to General Clay. Smith also edited General Clay's personal papers. Smith's biography added detail to the years beyond General Clay's retirement in 1949 that were not covered in Clay's personal account. Of particular note is an interesting change of heart experienced by General Clay with regard to the western broadcasting effort. Initially opposed to the concept, General Clay's experience in Germany served to transform him into an ardent supporter.

In the same manner that Germany as a country was divided into zones administered by the Allies, the city of Berlin was also divided into four sectors that were quadripartitely administered by the Allies through a governing military body known as the Kommandatura.²³ From 1945 to 1949, Frank L. Howley was first deputy and later appointed commandant, or Military Governor of the American sector. As commandant, Howley was also the head of the Office of Military Government, Berlin Sector (OMGBS).²⁴

Frank "Howlin" Howley had the emotion, determination and intensity to match that of Clay, and the two would often clash.²⁵ Before the war, the Philadelphian had worked as an advertising executive. A motorcycle accident had kept him out of combat, and he was working in

Paris in Army civil affairs in 1944 when he learned he would be in charge for the Americans in Berlin.

Clay came to Germany with an attitude of working in harmony with the Russian Allies, Howley did as well, but that would quickly change. In fact, Howley's first encounter with a Russian ended with a left hook to the Russian's jaw.²⁶ Howley believed he had a responsibility to protect American interests in Berlin. Howley's own words describe how he viewed his responsibilities and time in Berlin:

Despite incessant verbal blackguarding by the Russians, I had maintained American prestige in the former German capital. My actions may offend the naïve and outrage the appeasers, but I spent four years in Berlin lying awake at night, trying to think up ways to keep the Russians from stealing the city from under us.²⁷

Howley wrote and published an autobiography on his time in Berlin and the history of the events there from his perspective titled "Berlin Command."

Don Browne's²⁸ seminal research stands as the lone exhaustive scholarly work on RIAS and documents its beginning and development. It is an in-depth study of the programming of RIAS through the early 1960s.

What were the circumstances that influenced the creation of RIAS and the overall western broadcasting initiative? How did RIAS help lay the foundation for the future western broadcasting effort into the Soviet Union? What role did RIAS play during the Berlin blockade?

Methodology

This thesis will use historical methodology to examine the history of RIAS including the post-war historical setting which spawned RIAS, the establishment and early days of RIAS and the critical role RIAS played during the Berlin Airlift.

Given that RIAS and the events that inspired its creation are a matter of historic record, historical methodology is the obvious methodological approach for this topic. However, over-reliance on secondary sources has been a significant criticism leveled against communications historical research in the past.²⁹ While some secondary sources such as the New York Times have been utilized, earnest effort has been made in the attempt to avoid over-reliance on secondary sources in this research.

The narrative in this thesis is based on primary and secondary source material gathered from multiple sources. The Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, is the repository for the personal papers of General Lucius Clay. Contained within that collection is General Clay's oral history. Jean Smith completed that history as part of a project for the Columbia Center for Oral History. The history was obtained from the Eisenhower Presidential Library via interlibrary loan.

The U.S. Army War College Library located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania has the collection of General Howley's personal papers. The collection includes portions of his diary, a large collection of declassified OMGBS documents, and magazine and newspaper articles relevant to his time and experience as the U.S. Military Governor in Berlin.

The Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv (German Broadcasting Archives) located in Potsdam-Babelsberg area of Berlin, Germany contains a collection of English and German language documents related to RIAS, many of which are not available in the United States. German

language documents obtained at the Rundfunkarchiv were subsequently translated into English for use in this research.

The New York Times archives, makes it possible to research the media coverage of events in post-war Germany as they occurred. The New York Times published many stories relevant to the discussion of RIAS and the actions of The Red Army, as well as information useful in developing a timeline of the events as they occurred. The New York Times articles also make it possible to learn of events in Germany through the lens of people who were witnessing the events first hand. The New York Times archives are accessible online.

Chapter 3

Radio Berlin and RIAS

The Red Army was first to enter Berlin invading the city in April of 1945. However, the Red Army being the first Allied force to invade Berlin was less the result of military fortune and more the result of Allied restraint. With the American Ninth Army on the banks of the Elbe River west of Berlin, the U.S. was actually in a position to invade Berlin before the Russians. However General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the European Allied Forces, made the decision to hold American forces clear of the city and instead allow the Russians to invade.³⁰ Knowing Berlin would be in the Russian Zone, General Eisenhower thought it best to keep the Americans clear of the fight. After two weeks of brutal street fighting, the Battle of Berlin ended on May 2, 1945 with the surrender of the city's remaining defenders. Howley held the belief that allowing the Russians to take the German capital gave them a sense of superiority and entitlement, and was a primary cause of much of the trouble the western Allies had with the Soviets:

On this decision was based the Russian premise, developed *ad nauseum* later, that they captured Berlin and won the war while their timid allies lagged. Every time I attempted to voice my rightful claim to an American share in a common victory, I met this propagandist reply: "We won the war! We captured Berlin!" To the Germans, the Russians bellowed: "We are your saviors, not the Western imperialists!"³¹

One distinct advantage the Russians enjoyed from being first into Berlin was the capture of Radio Berlin. Radio Berlin had been a powerful tool used by the Nazis to disseminate their

propaganda, and the Russians were fortunate to arrive in Berlin and discover the studios and the 100,000 watt transmitter intact with only minor damage. The Russians were quick to take advantage of the opportunity and on May 3, 1945 had Radio Berlin back on the air just two days after its capture.³²

Radio Berlin was a prize the Russians would never relinquish or share. Control of mass media was an important element of the Marxist-Leninist style of communism practiced by Stalin's Soviet Union. In the battle for the mind, control of the message and the medium is critical; therefore there must be total control of mass media, and in 1945, radio was the most effective and efficient form of media. Radio Berlin gave the Soviets the only functioning radio station in the city, plus the added benefit of having a radio station and frequency that was already familiar to the residents of Berlin.³³

When the other allied forces arrived in Berlin on July 1, 1945 the sectors established in the Yalta agreement came into effect and Berlin became a city divided. The Radio Berlin facilities were located outside of the Russian sector, with the studios in the British sector, and the transmitter in the French sector. Irrespective of the physical location of Radio Berlin, the Russians refused to vacate the station or even share it with the other Allies. The Russians posted guards at the facility claiming the station did not fall under the auspices of the Yalta agreement, and by virtue of them being the first power into Berlin; they were justified in maintaining control of Radio Berlin.³⁴

The British, Americans, and French had a very different perspective believing they were entitled to access and use of Radio Berlin as established in the Yalta Agreement, as well as the recently signed Potsdam Declaration. The Potsdam Agreement signed by the U.S., the British, and Soviets was an agreement which governed the Allied administration of occupied territory.³⁵

Feeling they had a right to use the station the western Allies immediately began an effort to negotiate a resolution to the issue with the Russians.

As early as July 25, 1945, the western Allies naively believed they had reached an agreement to share airtime on Radio Berlin with the Soviets. In the July 26th edition of the New York Times, an article was published reporting “a large measure of agreement” to share not only Radio Berlin but newspapers and theaters in the city as well.³⁶ More than two months later however, on October 1st, the New York Times reported that the Russians were still refusing any airtime to the western Allies and instead “now broadcasts the political philosophy of the Soviet Union nineteen hours a day under the direct supervision of ten Red Army officers.”³⁷

The November 26, 1946 issue of the New York Times reported the frustration level of the British over the lack of progress in negotiations with the Russian occupation of Radio Berlin in the British sector, and had reached a point of a potential “showdown.”³⁸ A meeting of the Allied Control Council’s political directorate was held on November 27th in which the British pressed the issue with the Russians. After gaining some minor concessions from the Soviets, the British ultimately backed down.³⁹ The British explained their action saying they believed the Russians were not leaving Radio Berlin under any circumstances and any British move to force the issue “might have consequences not desired by any occupation powers.”⁴⁰

Perhaps a more important reason for the British not forcing the Radio Berlin issue was a Russian threat to close the only superhighway running in and out of Berlin. The road ran through the Russian zone and was under their control.⁴¹ Its closure was a serious threat to the western Allies and foreshadowed the Russian blockade Berlin would face in 1948.

The failure of the British to gain some concessions from the Russians was of serious concern to the U.S. as well. The Americans were in a difficult position as they had both

philosophical and logistical concerns over the Russian occupation of Radio Berlin, but lacked the same degree of legitimacy the British claims had over the issue. Nonetheless, the U.S. still felt the Potsdam Agreement clearly called for quadripartite administration of Radio Berlin and would assert that claim by threatening to issue a strong unilateral statement through the Allied Control Authority. This action was a clear illustration not only of U.S. frustration with access to Radio Berlin, but also with the British lack of fortitude in dealing with the Russians on the issue. It was becoming clear to the U.S. that the British were more interested in getting the Russians out of their sector than they were in gaining access to Radio Berlin.⁴² This U.S. effort would ultimately fail as had all other previous attempts by the western Allies to resolve the issue.

Efforts to wrest some control of Radio Berlin from the Soviets would continue until spring of 1947 when the western Allies would finally accept the fact that the Russians would never yield on the issue.

As negotiations with the Russians over Radio Berlin were still in the early stages, the Americans were still without the means to communicate with the residents in the U.S. sector on a mass level. Without access to Radio Berlin, this was a serious problem without an easy or readily apparent solution.

The ideal solution to the problem would have been to construct a new American radio station. However there were considerable challenges to overcome before such a feat could be accomplished. In addition to a shortage of radio equipment, the Allied quadripartite agreement allowed for only those radio stations that had existed prior to the end of the war to resume broadcasting.⁴³ Obtaining the required permission from the Russians would likely have been a challenge at best.

The answer for the American radio dilemma was ultimately found in technology developed by the Nazis. Drahtfunk, or wired wireless, was a system where the radio signal was distributed via the city underground telephone cable network rather than broadcast over the airwaves. A receiver equipped to receive the wired signal was attached to a screw on the bottom of a telephone receiver. Drahtfunk was a product of the German Propaganda Ministerium. They developed the system during the war to enable continued broadcasting during allied air raids that forced traditional radio stations such as Radio Berlin off the air.⁴⁴

Drahtfunk had some serious limitations. The use of drahtfunk limited the number of listeners to those who owned a drahtfunk equipped receiver. The number of people owning that type of equipment in the American sector was reported to be 154,108 as of December 1945.⁴⁵ It was a small fraction of the people residing in the American sector, but it was a start.

In addition to limited receivers, the telephone lines used by drahtfunk to deliver its signal were in poor condition. Berlin had been repeatedly bombed near the end of WWII and the telephone lines had suffered varying degrees of damage as a result, and many people didn't have a phone line connected to their residence. The perpetual humidity in Berlin also adversely affected the signal quality.⁴⁶

The drahtfunk station or DIAS (Drahtfunk in the American Sector) as it would come to be known, was to be administered by four American military personnel but staffed by Germans. The Americans would have oversight and advisory responsibilities; however the bulk of the responsibility for the programming would belong to the German staff. This was a unique concept especially as compared to the Russian run Radio Berlin where the German staff was there to operate the facility but the programming was dictated by the Russians.

Administratively, DIAS was placed under the authority of Information Services Control, a branch of OMGBS. Information Services Control was tasked with supervising the publishing of newspapers, periodicals, and books. Information Services Control would also be responsible for radio, cinema, theater, opera, music, entertainment, bookstores and libraries.⁴⁷

The Allied denazification policy also made staffing the new operation a challenging task. Denazification was imposed by the Allied Control Council in an effort to rid Germany and German culture of any remnant of the Nazi regime and ideology. This was a particularly difficult task given that the majority of civil servants in Nazi Germany were affiliated with the party in varying degrees. The Americans required 300,000 civil servants to function in their sector alone.⁴⁸ Although the policy was imposed by the Allied Control Council, the Russians had no qualms in hiring former party members to work at Radio Berlin. Clay, however, was a dedicated adherent to denazification and the policy was strictly enforced in the American sector. The restriction was uniquely difficult for DIAS. Any experienced radio worker in Germany was very likely to have been employed by the radio loving Goebbels' propaganda operation during the war, and as such would have been a member of the Nazi party. The solution was to instead hire journalists without radio experience or Nazi ties, and teach them radio skills.⁴⁹ This was not always an easy task. There were occasions when workers were discovered who had undisclosed Nazi ties. Such workers were summarily dismissed.

Even though it seemed the challenges to establishing DIAS were unending they were all met by the U.S. staff. A suitable building had to be located for the new facility in a city that had been mostly destroyed. Equipment had to be obtained for the studios. Material needs of this type could have easily been supplied by the military but DIAS was at the time not deemed a high priority. There was still a belief that an agreement could be negotiated with the Russians for

access to Radio Berlin. Given its low priority status, supplies and equipment were difficult to come by for DIAS. Even General Lucius Clay, Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces in Europe and military governor of the U.S. Zone in Germany described DIAS as “a rather timid venture in the radio field.”⁵⁰ As it was, Information Services Control was doing its best to provide support for DIAS with the limited resources available.

It might appear that DIAS was doomed from the outset. However, the meager beginnings of DIAS actually offered some distinct advantages. Flying under the radar as it were, the staff of DIAS was able to learn the radio ropes and gain some experience with the American/German partnership that would eventually become a source of great strength. The technology and equipment for DIAS were already in place, albeit in need of repair. Perhaps Drahtfunk’s greatest advantage though, was that it allowed the Americans to control the distribution of the signal and keep it confined to the American sector. The U.S. would no longer require Russian approval to deploy drahtfunk.⁵¹

Avoiding Russian opposition was a significant hurdle to avoid. The structure of the Allied government in Germany consisted of the Allied Control Council which had authority over all of Germany. The Kommandatura was established by the Allied Control Council in July of 1945 to govern the city of Berlin. It consisted of representatives from all four governing allies.⁵² Under the rules set forth for the Kommandatura, any decisions or regulations to be made or changed for the city must be approved by unanimous agreement. Opposition from any single member amounted to a veto.⁵³ Had the Russians opposed DIAS it may never have been established.

DIAS finally made its initial broadcast on February 7, 1946 at 5:00 PM, beginning with a short talk by its German Chief of the Station, Dr. Franz Wallner-Baste.⁵⁴ The normal broadcast

schedule ran from 5:00 PM to midnight.⁵⁵ For the next few months DIAS would work to improve its programming and mold its 150⁵⁶ German employees into an effective radio staff. During the summer of 1946, DIAS would continue to struggle with the challenge of making its signal available to all the residents in the American sector, and to improve the quality of its signal. On June 8th, the British made DIAS available to the residents in their sector which made DIAS available to a large number of new listeners but the drahtfunk delivery method and signal quality continued to be major obstacles.⁵⁷

The next major step forward came later in the summer of 1946 when the DIAS staff located a mobile 800 watt transmitter which had been formerly used by the Wehrmacht (German armed forces),⁵⁸ and through the efforts of the Information Services Control, obtained permission from the Allied Control Authority to use it for DIAS.⁵⁹

RIAS

On September 5, 1946 with its new transmitter in place, DIAS escaped the confinement of the telephone lines and began broadcasting over the airwaves as DIAS officially became RIAS (Radio/Rundfunk in the American Sector). Although their 800 watt transmitter was weak, and the drahtfunk system would remain in place for a time, RIAS could now be heard by far more Berliners.⁶⁰

By early 1947 as the realization was setting in that the Russians would never share the Radio Berlin signal, the decision was made to put more emphasis on developing RIAS. In March of 1947, RIAS announced a new more powerful transmitter had been located for RIAS that would increase its power to 20 kilowatts.⁶¹

On June 1, 1947, the more powerful transmitter was put into operation and the RIAS signal could now reach not only the American sector but all of Berlin as well. RIAS was also beginning to garner greater recognition in America. With the announcement of the June 1st power increase, the New York Times referred to RIAS by name for the first time.⁶²

Programming

Almost immediately RIAS began to impact the Berliner's concept of radio. RIAS was introducing the American style radio format to Berliners. Germans were accustomed to a loose radio format where programs and content varied in length and silence or "dead air" was not uncommon. American radio was far more regimented in 15 minute blocks of time making for a tighter "clock" and where dead air was to be avoided.⁶³

RIAS also introduced another American aspect of radio to Berliners in the form of a more personalized friendly feel to the station. Nazi radio was considered a voice of the state, and as such there were no radio personalities but rather an unimportant anonymous voice delivering the message of the state. RIAS named their broadcasters thereby allowing listeners to develop a relationship with the radio personalities. RIAS was frequently referred to in the newspapers as "the friendly station," and introduced the use of liners such as "Please stay tuned" and "We invite you to listen to..."⁶⁴

In addition to the news, RIAS also offered a variety of programming to Berliners. Cultural programming included symphonic music from sources that were unavailable during the war years such as American composers. Musical programming included programs such as "Studio for New Music" which featured the works of modern composers and American composers in particular. RIAS also carried live broadcasts of opera and symphony.⁶⁵

Literary offerings discussed books banned by the Nazis or published outside of Germany during the Nazi years. RIAS also presented radio plays such as “On Borrowed Time” by Paul Osborn, “Agamemnon’s Death” by Gerhardt Hauptmann and the “Salzburger Grosse Welttheater” by Hugo von Hofmannsthal.⁶⁶

RIAS carried political programming which offered roundtable discussions from all four political parties, live broadcasts of Berlin Parliament sessions, and provided a forum for local politicians. RIAS also gave voice to trade union issues, covered important political rallies and events⁶⁷

Another prominent aspect of RIAS programming was to offer programs designed to reorient German thought to a democratic way of thinking. “Bridge of the World” was a program that introduced Germans to non-Germans, especially Americans. Guests were interviewed on topics related to their native countries.⁶⁸

RIAS also offered programming targeted at German youth and other assorted programming including sports, theater, religion and Voice of America.⁶⁹

With all of Berlin within range of its signal it didn’t take long for the popularity of RIAS to grow. Letters began pouring into the RIAS studios, not just from Berlin but from East Germany as well from as far as 100 miles away in Dresden. Some letters told stories of life in the Russian zone and how people were already cautious of who knew they were listening to RIAS. Some letters contained praise for the impartial newscasts and Voice of America content of RIAS programming while other letter writers requested more current music than what was being played on RIAS. A great many letters requesting food and clothing were received as well.⁷⁰

By November of 1947, the RIAS share of listenership had risen to 38 percent. Five months later in February of 1948, it was up to 57 percent.⁷¹ RIAS had quickly become the most

trusted news source in Berlin. Further evidence of the rise in popularity of RIAS came in April 1948 with the first known occurrence of the Russians jamming the RIAS signal. RIAS had obviously become a threat in the eyes of the Russians.⁷²

Chapter 4

The Berlin Blockade

The political winds in Washington D.C. had shifted in 1947 as General George Marshall became Secretary of State. The prevailing ideology was that quadripartite administration was doomed to fail, and the best way to keep the Germans under control and stem the spread of communism in Europe was through a divided Germany. The British and Americans had also agreed to merge their zones of occupation and the new combined zone area had become known as Bizonia. The French objected to notion of merging their zone and remained independent of Bizonia.

The Soviets opposed the plan to form a new government in the west, and during the first half of 1948 relations between the western Allies and the Russians had become progressively strained. A series of events in the early part of the year would seal the fate of Germany as a divided country with a divided capital.

Allied Control Council

The first major blow to the future of Allied relations came when the Soviets walked out of the Allied Control Council effectively marking the end of any semblance of quadripartite rule in Germany. The handwriting had been on the wall for some time, so much so that the governments of Britain and the United States had agreed to begin work on forming a new German government to govern Bizonia.⁷³

Control Council meetings were becoming progressively tense and adversarial in January and February of 1948. When the Control Council met on March 20, 1948, the Soviet member of the council, Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky, demanded that he be informed of all the agreements reached by the western Allies after they had met in London in February and March of 1948. General Clay told Sokolovsky that he considered the request reasonable but would need to first obtain approval from the western governments. Anticipating Clay's reply Sokolovsky produced and read a prepared statement which Clay described as repeating "all of the old charges against the Western Powers in more aggravating language." The entire Soviet delegation then rose in unison as Sokolovsky declared "I see no sense in continuing this meeting, and I declare it adjourned." The Soviet delegation immediately left the room. The western Allies remained and voted to invalidate Sokolovsky's adjournment and continued the meeting, but the reality of the situation was that the Control Council was finished.⁷⁴

The Soviet withdrawal from the Allied Control Council proved to be a strategic mistake however, as it brought France to the conclusion that a divided Germany was inevitable and they could no longer stand alone. The French had been reconsidering their opposition to becoming part of Bizonia. The demise of the Control Council convinced the French quadripartite rule was truly dead, and France would soon join the Americans and British. The foundation for West Germany had been laid.⁷⁵

Kommandatura

The next major domino to fall was the Kommandatura. The Kommandatura met in Berlin on June 16, 1948 at ten in the morning. In an apparent attempt to test western Allied patience the Russians had been prolonging Kommandatura meetings to the point that they were running

twelve to fourteen hours in duration. Howley described the Russians as “spinning on like phonographs in verbal trials of strength to wear us down.” That night after “twelve solid hours of bickering” Howley’s patience was spent. With the Russians showing no sign of ending the meeting, Howley contemplated leaving and having his deputy to sit in his place. At 10:45 he proposed adjourning the meeting at 11:00 but the Russians refused. Finally at 11:15 Howley requested permission from the French chairman, General Ganeval, to be excused and have his deputy Colonel Babcock remain as his representative. General Ganeval granted Howley’s request and Howley left the meeting, and Russian drama ensued.⁷⁶

As Howley departed, the Russian Kommandatura representative Colonel Yelizarov exclaimed “I consider it impossible to continue this meeting after an action that I can only claim as a hooligan action on the part of Colonel Howley. I consider we should finish.” Minutes later the Russians were gone and the meeting was over. Before officially closing the meeting however General Ganeval stated that “This meeting is not closed because Colonel Howley went home, since he was replaced by his deputy, which has happened before, but because of the departure of the Soviet delegation.” The Kommandatura was dead.⁷⁷

Currency Reform

Perhaps the final blow to quadripartite administration of Germany was the western Allied announcement on June 18, 1948 of currency reform. German economic recovery was prerequisite to an independent West Germany. During the war the Nazis had greatly increased the number of Reichsmarks in circulation and by the end of the war the German economy was suffering from substantial inflation.⁷⁸ The Allies also had a serious black market problem on their hands where the preferred currency was not the Reichsmark but the American cigarette.

Perhaps most importantly the western Allies also needed currency reform as a part of a new West German economy.

In an effort to address the black market and inflation issues, the western Allies had approached the Russians and had attempted to negotiate currency reform with them in 1947. Negotiations had failed when the Soviets required a set of plates to print their own currency, a demand the U.S. was unwilling to grant.⁷⁹

With currency reform negotiations at a permanent impasse, the western Allies agreed to move forward without Soviet participation and without Soviet knowledge. On the evening of June 18, 1948, General Clay went to the RIAS studios and made the currency reform announcement over the air. The new currency would be the Deutsche mark, and the change would be effective June 20th in the western Allied zones only. Currency reform was not be implemented in Berlin.

The Berlin Blockade

On June 24, 1948, four days after the effective date for currency reform in the west, the Soviets cut off all land and water access to Berlin. The imposition of the blockade was not unanticipated. Not only had the Russians made threats to do so in the past, but they had begun restricting travel in Berlin. On March 31, 1948 the Soviet Military Administration issued an order that required all military passenger trains en route to Berlin to be searched by military personnel. The Americans refused to acquiesce and as a result all military travel into Berlin was now going by air. The next day the Soviets also decreed that no freight was to be allowed out of Berlin by rail with approval of the Russian Kommandatura. The Soviets had taken control of all the Berlin trade.⁸⁰ In April, the Russians stopped all outgoing passenger trains and expelled the

U.S. Army Signal Corps teams stationed in the Russian sector to maintain communications lines.⁸¹

The restrictions imposed by the Russians had stimulated discussions in the U.S. regarding what to do should the Soviets impose a total blockade and ultimately was it worth staying in Berlin? The Department of the Army wanted Clay's thoughts on the matter. Clay's opinion was clear:

We have lost Czechoslovakia. Norway is threatened. We retreat from Berlin. When Berlin falls, western Germany will be next. If we mean ... to hold Europe against Communism, we must not budge. We can take humiliation and pressure short of war in Berlin without losing face. If we withdraw, our position in Europe is threatened. If America does not understand this now, does not know that the issue is cast, then it never will and communism will run rampant. I believe the future of democracy requires us to stay.... This is not heroic pose because there will be nothing heroic in having to take humiliation with retaliation.⁸²

After the Soviet Military Administration ordered all rail traffic closed effective June 24th at 6:00 AM the Russians used currency reform as justification. Given all the restrictions imposed prior to the announcement on currency reform, the excuse rang hollow to the western Allies. Indeed after a meeting was arranged between the western Allies and Sokolovsky, at the insistence of the British, an offer was made to accept Russian currency for use in Berlin if the Russians would lift the blockade. Sokolovsky's response revealed alternative motives for the blockade. Sokolovsky explained that the "technical difficulties" would remain until the plan for a government in West Germany was abandoned. The currency issue never even came up.⁸³

The British and Americans options were limited. They could abandon the 2.5 million people in West Berlin and give the Soviets what they wanted, they could attempt to force the roads open and risk war, but they chose instead to institute an idea of General Clay's to resupply

the city by air in an operation now famously known as the Berlin Airlift, or “Operation Vittles” as the Americans called it. The airlift officially began on June 26th.⁸⁴ Building slowly at first, the airlift would ultimately become an efficient stream of U.S. Air Force C-54 Skymaster cargo aircraft flying around the clock to Tempelhof, Gatow and Tegel airports with arrivals and departures separated by mere minutes.

As the blockade was instituted, Radio Berlin began asserting Soviet claims of full authority and jurisdiction over all of Berlin for the Soviets, announced that the abandonment of West Berlin by the western Allies was imminent, and that rioting had begun in the western sectors.⁸⁵ Referring to the Russian misinformation as “Russian bushwah,” one of Howley’s first acts in the initial hours of the crisis was to go on the air at RIAS and explain the true American intentions promising the listeners that:

We are not getting out of Berlin. We are going to stay. I don’t know the answer to the present problem - not yet – but this much I do know. The American people will not stand by and allow the German people to starve.⁸⁶

Radio Berlin also broadcast other assorted claims in their effort to cause panic in the west. They announced that the sewers were no longer being pumped, that “German babies were dying for lack of milk.”⁸⁷ Radio Berlin nearly succeeded in causing panic when they claimed the water was going off. German women began filling any container they could find with water, from bathtubs and buckets to pots and pans. Water shortages began to develop and the situation turned dangerous as the water supply began to fail. The former advertiser in Howley neutralized the threat by going on RIAS and telling Berliners to “Forget about the water shortage!” He then urged women to give their babies a bath, and to use as much water as they needed, that there was

no shortage. Howley's gamble worked. The hoarding stopped and the water supply returned to normal.⁸⁸

Perhaps the primary difficulty facing Radio Berlin however was the growing RIAS audience share. While the RIAS audience had been growing, the blockade and subsequent airlift resulted in massive growth of audience share. In September 1948, with the blockade in place and the airlift underway the September numbers for RIAS indicated the audience had grown from February's 57 percent to 80 percent of all listeners in Berlin,⁸⁹ and by July of 1949 an astounding 91 percent of all Berliners were tuning into RIAS.⁹⁰ The powerful tool that Radio Berlin had once been was no more. The success and popularity of RIAS had relegated Radio Berlin to a position of essential irrelevancy.

Ironically, it was the blockade and the resulting airlift that would further diminish the influence of Radio Berlin. At the beginning of the airlift, the Americans and British had two airports available with the Americans using Tempelhof and the British using Gatow. It became clear that these two airports would not be sufficient to accommodate the traffic necessary to supply the tonnage the city would need. Plans were made to build an additional airport in the French sector in the open fields near the Radio Berlin transmitter towers. 1500 German workers armed only with picks and shovels, worked around the clock under Allied supervision to complete the new airport in only 90 days. Tegel airport began operations in November of 1948.⁹¹

The Radio Berlin towers' proximity to the approach into Tegel was a significant problem for the airlift pilots. One tower stood 262 feet high and the second tower was 393 feet tall. In adverse weather where visibility was reduced, such as fog, the towers posed a significant safety hazard. On the morning of December 16, 1948 the Radio Berlin towers were destroyed by the French. The French sector commandant Brigadier General Jean Ganeval stated that he had

informed the manager of Radio Berlin on November 20, 1948 that the towers needed to be relocated. The Soviets claimed to have received no such warning. Following the towers destruction Gen. Ganeval issued a statement in which he said he “could no longer accept responsibility for possible accidents.”⁹² The destruction not only removed a safety threat for pilots but had the added effect of knocking Radio Berlin off the air. The Russians would have Radio Berlin back on the air 12 hours later using a weaker 20,000 watt transmitter 15 miles away in Potsdam.⁹³ However, it would take until late March before the Soviets could restore the original 100,000 watt transmitter destroyed by the French.⁹⁴

During the blockade, RIAS went on the offensive in being openly critical of the Soviets, their ideology, and their propaganda. Earlier that year on February 12, 1948, General Clay had cleared the way for RIAS to openly criticize the Russians and communism through “Operation Back-Talk.” To date, RIAS hadn’t taken full advantage of that freedom.⁹⁵ That would change with the advent of the blockade.

One of the first major changes from RIAS in response to the blockade was to begin broadcasting around the clock. RIAS programming had always been a mix of arts, entertainment, news and information, but RIAS would now make a special emphasis on all matters related to the blockade. The change to a 24 hour schedule was also requested by the U.S. Air Force. The Air Force needed to use the broadcast signal as a navigational aid. The signal acted as a homing beacon for aircraft flying supplies into Berlin as part of the airlift.⁹⁶

Electrical power in the city had always been a scarce resource and subject to rationing. Berliners had relied on RIAS in the past to inform them of when they would have their turn for power in their area of the city, however now the inability to turn on a radio receiver due to the lack of electricity had more serious consequences. In addition to electricity, Berliners would

come to rely on RIAS for other critical logistical information such as where and when the daily ration of food and coal brought in by the airlift would be available. The inability to effectively disseminate information was a serious impediment to the military government, RIAS and its listeners. RIAS attempted to mitigate the power shortage through the use of American Army vehicles equipped with loudspeakers. Three or four vans would travel to key areas of the western sectors where announcers would then read the news to Berliners over the loudspeaker from morning until evening regardless of the weather. The RIAS vans quickly became a regular part of the daily life in the western sectors and were said to belong to the blockade like “raisins to a cake.”⁹⁷ It was not uncommon for grateful listeners to offer the announcer a warm drink or even share their last cigarette.⁹⁸

RIAS was not only providing the latest news on the airlift, but it continued to provide the international news, Voice of America Broadcasts, documentaries, political, cultural and entertainment programming as it always had.

Music continued to be an important part of the RIAS programming during the airlift. Music had always been a priority for the station. In the early days of DIAS, the station organized and sponsored its own orchestra and choir.⁹⁹ The orchestra and choir not only provided the station with live music but was also a popular attraction for Berliners to attend live concerts. The orchestra would prove to be an effective ambassador for the station for decades and still exists today as the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. The choir is known today as the RIAS Kammerchor.¹⁰⁰

Another important part of RIAS programming during the airlift was the coverage of the elections in Berlin. Since the first city election in Berlin in 1946, there had existed an intense ongoing political power struggle. The Soviet backed Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands

or Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) along with the western Allied sanctioned parties the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands or Social Democrats (SPD), the Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands or Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Freie Demokratische Partei or Free Democratic Party (FDP) had been the players in a clash of east vs. west ideology.¹⁰¹

Having been defeated at the ballot box in 1946 gaining only 19.8 percent of the vote,¹⁰² and as the December elections of 1948 approached, the SED had become more overt in their efforts to oppose the non-SED parties. Russian organized mobs had taken to harassing and assaulting the non-SED members of the city parliament while the Soviet controlled police looked the other way. During an attempted meeting of parliament on September 6, 1948 a pro-communist mob of around 1500 people took over city hall and prevented the meeting from taking place. Three American journalists covering the story were assaulted and detained by the mob.¹⁰³ The Soviet controlled police also arrested 19 of the 46 western controlled police that were in the building. The remaining 26 took refuge in the British and French offices. Throughout the night Russian troops and police surrounded the building waiting to arrest them. Following a 20 hour standoff, an agreement was reached between the French military governor, General Marie-Pierre Koenig, and the Russian military governor Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky. Sokolovsky had promised Koenig that the western police would be allowed to return to the western sectors. On the evening of September 7th with two French trucks waiting to return them to the west, the men filed out of the building and were immediately arrested by the Russians and taken to prison.¹⁰⁴

Throughout the crisis, RIAS had been broadcasting live from the parliament building. RIAS reporter Jürgen Graf kept Berliners informed up until his microphone was disconnected by the Russians and the young man was subsequently beaten.¹⁰⁵

In response to the Soviet violence, RIAS began broadcasting a call to action to protest the Russian attempt to take over the city government. Three days later on September 9, 1948, West Berliners responded as nearly 300,000 people assembled in Platz der Republik in front of the old Reichstag building in the British sector.¹⁰⁶ The massive crowd vented frustration not only over the treatment of the city parliament but over the blockade and the communists as well. Popular democratic leaders such as Ernst Reuter, Otto Suhr and Franz Neumann spoke to the crowd. General Howley described the scene:

Freiheit! (Freedom) was the cry from thousands of throats as the speakers said, “We call upon the world for support in our struggle for democracy. We’ve been through this once before. We’ve had one single dictatorial party and we don’t want another. Let the Communists get control and they will lead us to ruin!”¹⁰⁷

The demonstration was a profound illustration of the Berliner anti-communist mindset held by most Berliners. It was also a strong indicator to the Russians that the blockade was not having the anticipated impact on the morale of Berliners. The demonstration was also a remarkable example of the trust and influence RIAS had achieved with its listeners.

Following the mob violence with the city parliament, the meetings were moved to new location in the west. The SED unsurprisingly refused to accept the new location and thereafter quit attending any parliament meetings effectively creating divided city governments that would be in place for the duration of the cold war.¹⁰⁸

Throughout the blockade RIAS would continue broadcasting the informational, educational and entertainment programming intended to aid the residents of West Berlin during

the blockade. However, a key shift in philosophy was taking place and in May of 1949 with the blockade lifted, RIAS altered its programming philosophy and began adding programming that was specifically directed at the residents of the Russian Zone. This programming transition at RIAS would continue and within a year the East Germans would become the primary target audience of RIAS.¹⁰⁹

As a result of the blockade and airlift, RIAS had become firmly entrenched in the hearts and minds of Berliners. The lessons learned by the western Allies would have far reaching consequences for the duration of the cold war.

Chapter 5

Influences

The success and effectiveness of RIAS would serve as the inspiration and model for the creation of Radio Liberty (RL) and Radio Free Europe (RFE). In fact, Boris Shub who headed Radio Liberty's New York program section was the former political adviser to RIAS.¹¹⁰

RFE and RL began as separate organizations with a very similar mission. RFE first broadcast on July 4, 1950.¹¹¹ RFE was established to broadcast to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania via short wave and medium wave transmitters located in Germany and Portugal. RFE programming consisted of western news, information, commentary, and even personal messages from refugees to their families.¹¹²

Originally known as Radio Liberation, Radio Liberty began broadcasting on March 1, 1953.¹¹³ Radio Liberty's mission was to broadcast western news and information directly in to the Soviet Union. RL broadcast in 18 different languages to all of the USSR.¹¹⁴

RFE and RL had much in common. They were both located in Munich with similar broadcast missions and publicly claimed to obtain their funding through private donations raised via an organization known as the Crusade for Liberty. Claiming private funding gave RFE and RL the unique advantage of being free of the political and diplomatic encumbrances that would otherwise apply to a broadcast operation with official ties to a sovereign state.

The Crusade for Freedom was headed up by none other than the former American Zone military governor General Lucius Clay. Upon his retirement and return to America, General Clay

had been asked to serve on the RFE board of directors and successfully directed the Crusade for Freedom in its first year.¹¹⁵

General Clay had not always been supportive of such operations as RFE and Radio Liberty. The idea for RL had first been discussed shortly after the war in 1946. At the time General Clay told Washington “I cannot agree that the establishment of a broadcasting station in Germany to broadcast to the Soviet Union in the Russian language is in the spirit of quadripartite government.”¹¹⁶

General Clay’s experience with RIAS and the blockade in Germany had impacted him so profoundly that three years later he had reversed his previous position and had become an ardent supporter of an operation such as RFE. In his oral history regarding the purpose for RFE, General Clay said:

Well the most effective radio operation I had seen in Europe was RIAS radio in Berlin, but it was operated by military government, but used German broadcasters and technicians to broadcast into Berlin and East Germany. The Radio Berlin, which had been beamed to most of Europe, most of Germany anyway, had been taken over by the Russians and we had to create RIAS from scratch. But it was very evident to me because we were using German observers, because within general policy we were allowed considerable latitude and freedom. That RIAS was obtaining a listening audience and a reputation for credibility which could not be enjoyed by BBC or the Voice of America. And therefore it seemed to me most appropriate that we should carry this further in developing broadcasting to the satellite countries.¹¹⁷

Russia’s RIAS Influence

Given the powerful influence RIAS had on the people of East Germany, the voice of opposition RIAS embodied, and its denial to the Soviets of a media monopoly, it is high irony to note that, were it not for the action and conduct of Russia in the earliest days of the Berlin occupation, RIAS might never have existed.

With the occupation of Radio Berlin by the Red Army and the refusal to share airtime with the other Allies in a period when relations amongst the Allies were still relatively good, the Russians left little choice for the western Allies other than to build their own radio facilities. That point would seem obvious and must have occurred to the Soviets at the time. If so, then what might have been the Soviet reasoning that guided their actions and decisions with the Allies in this matter?

Did the Russians believe their veto power in the Kommandatura would be enough to help them maintain their media monopoly in Berlin? The Russians may have believed they were protected enough by their veto that they could continue to string along the other Allies through endless negotiations in the hope that the Allies would ultimately give up the issue.

Perhaps the Russians underestimated the other Allies and questioned their long term dedication to Germany? This is quite plausible. After the war, American troop withdrawals in Germany came quickly, in fact too quickly for some. In his oral history, General Clay was asked about troop levels in Germany and Berlin. He indicated that a full division had been left in Berlin and called that a “sizeable force”¹¹⁸, but also expressed a concern that the U.S. military presence in the American Zone in Germany had fallen to unacceptable levels. When asked if this was an issue continually pressed by U.S. commanders in Germany with Washington Clay replied:

I think I would have to answer you by saying that certainly General Eisenhower contemplated 10 divisions and requested it I’m sure McNarney made presentations for more than that. In addition to that, I am sure that General Marshall and later General Arnold and General Eisenhower when he became Chief of Staff made very great protestations to the Congress that they were cutting back too fast. But that was not the mood of the country. The country was just, bring the boys home.¹¹⁹

When asked what the basis would be to keep troop levels in Germany so high General Clay replied “The fact that the Russians were keeping theirs there. What other basis do you need?”¹²⁰

General Clay was then asked how were people to know that in late 1945?

I think somebody should have sensed it. I don't think it was up to us. It was a political decision. But the very fact that the Russians were in a position to dominate Europe was very clear, except for us. No, I think we all had the idea that because we'd fought as allies we were going to live and get together and we were going to have this one world concept that so many of our people are talking about right now. I've never seen any action on the part of the Russians that should make us believe that today, but many of our leading statesmen say this.¹²¹

Clearly General Clay, the military governor over the American Zone as well as other military leadership in Germany, was concerned about the haste of the troop withdrawals and the continued Russian military presence.

If the Russians sensed a lack of resolve in the Americans to remain in Berlin it would seem logical to deny the other Allies access to Radio Berlin, and prolong negotiations as long as possible hoping to buy enough time before America and Britain would eventually abandon Germany.

Soviet action and conduct in Berlin made it clear they desired the Allies out of Berlin, and there was a limit to their patience. Relations between the western Allies and Russia began to deteriorate by the end of 1945 and continued to degrade until the Russians walked out of the Kommandatura and ultimately imposed the Berlin blockade in 1948.

Believing the allies lacked the determination to stay long term in Berlin and West Germany, watching the western Allies reduce their military presence giving the Soviets a military advantage, and believing they could control much of the Allied activity in Berlin via the Kommandatura, likely led the Russians to believe that it was only a matter of time before the Allies could be driven out of Berlin. In the meantime, their philosophy that all forms of mass media needed to be controlled could be implemented where they did have control, and Radio Berlin was in integral part of that plan.

The reality however, was that the Russians had indeed underestimated western determination, and misinterpreted U.S. troop withdrawals as a sign of weakness. When the Allies were denied access to Radio Berlin they were forced to find another means of communicating with the people in the American sector and DIAS was born. When the Russians became more aggressive with their propaganda and continued to deny access to Radio Berlin they forced the Americans to respond and develop DIAS into RIAS.

When Soviet patience ran out and they resorted to the blockade of Berlin they forced RIAS to expand and grow. RIAS quickly became the most popular radio station in Berlin and in the process Radio Berlin became practically irrelevant. Seemingly every step taken by the Soviets resulted in the exact opposite of its intent.

Unintended consequences seemed to be a theme for the Soviets in the post war years in its Berlin and German dealings. Denying access to Radio Berlin directly influenced the creation of RIAS. Russia maintaining a high military presence in Germany represented a threat to the western Allies and West Germany resulting in a continued U.S. presence.¹²² The U.S. commitment to West Germany and Berlin lead to additional resources for RIAS. RIAS in turn provided key logistical and moral support during the blockade, and served as the model for Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe.

Although it is impossible to state with certainty that had the Russians given the western Allies access to Radio Berlin, RIAS never would have existed. What can be said with certainty is that the Russian occupation of Radio Berlin played a critical role in the decision process that led to creating the radio station that would serve as the most effective voice of opposition to communist rule and doctrine in Berlin and East Germany. For nearly 50 years RIAS served as

the critical communications medium upon which Berliners and East Germans trusted and depended during the trying times of the blockade of Berlin and the cold war.

Chapter 6

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

Limitations are germane to all historical research. The study of RIAS presents unique geographical challenges. Post-war Berlin was a hodgepodge of people and cultures, an unnatural coexistence only a world war could facilitate. As time passed, and Berlin and its people became accustomed to post-war life in Berlin, the key people that witnessed and influenced the creation of RIAS left Berlin. The study of RIAS therefore lends itself to much travel. While some information is available via the internet, most of the material is not. A limiting factor of this research was the time, resource and access limitations to other potential primary sources.

As with any historical research, primary sources are not always perfect and subject to potential flaws or inaccuracies.¹²³ Although the primary sources used to write this narrative would likely be considered by most historians to be reliable, the accuracy of this research is limited to the accuracy of the sources upon which it is based.

Access to information and primary source material that might present a view of RIAS from the East German or Soviet perspective is limited at best. Therefore, this research is limited primarily to the American and West German perspectives.

The perspective of the East Germans and Soviets regarding RIAS is an intriguing prospect for additional research. Although it has been over 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall started East and West Germany on the road to reunification, the process to research, archive and provide access to the documents and records of the former East German government has

been slow. In time those archives will become available and present an opportunity for additional research and study of RIAS.

The Landesarchiv Berlin has a sizeable collection of original RIAS programming recordings. Given the time and resources to transcribing, translating and documenting original RIAS programming would provide an insightful view of RIAS, and is a promising opportunity for additional research.

NOTES

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³ Radio Goes to War, p. 11.

⁴ Holly Cowan Schulman, *The Voice of America - Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). Hereafter referred to as "The Voice of America".

⁵ The Voice of America, p. 3-5.

⁶ William E. Daugherty, *a Psychological Warfare Casebook*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1958).

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⁹ Henry Ashby Turner Jr., *The Two Germanies since 1945*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

¹⁰ Richard H. Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2009). Hereafter referred to as "Cold War Radio".

¹¹ Cold War Radio, p. 5.

¹² Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom - The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky).

¹³ Alexander Badenoch, *Voices in Ruins - West German Radio Across the 1945 Divide*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

¹⁴ John O. Kohler, *Stasi - The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Christian F. Osterman, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953* (New York: Central European University Press, 2001). Hereafter referred to as “Uprising in East Germany”.

¹⁶ Uprising in East Germany, p. 233.

¹⁷ Following Clay’s departure from Germany after the airlift in 1949, the administration of U.S. occupied Germany would shift from the military to the U.S. State Department. Clay’s position would become a civilian post with the title High Commissioner for Occupied Germany (HICOG).

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¹⁹ The Candy Bomber, p. 26.

²⁰ Decision in Germany.

²¹ *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay - Germany 1945-1949* ed. Jean Edward Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974).

²² Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay - An American Life*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990). Hereafter referred to as “An American Life”.

²³ Kommandatur is the German spelling. Kommandatura is the Russian form of the word and also most frequently used. The Russian spelling of the word has been used in this paper.

²⁴ Berlin Command, p. 5-6.

²⁵ Berlin Command, p.156.

²⁶ Berlin Command, p. 16.

²⁷ Berlin Command, p. 7.

²⁸ Don Browne, "The History and Programming Policies of RIAS: Radio in the American Sector (of Berlin)" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1961). Hereafter referred to as “History and Programming”.

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- ³⁰ Berlin Command, p. 8.
- ³¹ Berlin Command, p. 8.
- ³² "Red Army Crushes Foe Along Baltic," *New York Times*, May 4 1945, p. 1.
- ³³ History and Programming, p. 32.
- ³⁴ History and Programming, p. 33.
- ³⁵ Decision in Germany, p. 37-39.
- ³⁶ Tania Long, "Accords Reached on Berlin Control," *New York Times*, July 26 1945, p. 6.
- ³⁷ "Berlin Radio Used Only by Russians," *New York Times*, October 1 1945, p. 2.
- ³⁸ Jack Raymond, "U.S. Eyes Contest for Berlin Radio," *New York Times*, November 26 1946, p. 20.
- ³⁹ "British Ease Stand on Radio in Berlin," *New York Times*, November 28 1946, p. 12.
- ⁴⁰ "British Avoid Clash Over Berlin Radio," *New York Times*, November 29 1946, p. 18.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Jack Raymond, "U.S. Will Demand Berlin Radio Role," *New York Times*, December 8 1946, p. 32.
- ⁴³ Gus Mathiew, "Technical Aspects of Drahtfunk" Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in Book III of the Historical Report for the Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, December, 1946), p. 1. Hereafter referred to as "Technical Aspects".
- ⁴⁴ Technical Aspects, p. 1-2.
- ⁴⁵ Information Services Control Summary No. 36, Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in Book III of the Historical Report for the Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, December 27, 1945), p. 7.
- ⁴⁶ Technical Aspects, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Information Services Control Summary No. 1, Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in Book III of the Historical Report for the Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, July 10, 1945), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Decision in Germany, p. 67.

⁴⁹ U.S. Office of the Military Governor for Germany, Monthly Report of the Military Governor, U.S. Zone, No. 10 (Information Control, April, 1946), p. 3.

⁵⁰ Decision in Germany, p. 283.

⁵¹ Technical Aspects, p. 2.

⁵² Decision in Germany, p. 29.

⁵³ Raymond Daniell, "Berlin Administration is Working Smoothly," *New York Times*, July 22 1945, p. 62.

⁵⁴ Information Services Control Summary No. 42, Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in Book III of the Historical Report for the Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, July 10, 1945), p. 5.

⁵⁵ Weekly Communications Report No. 56, Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in Book II of the Historical Report for the Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, 1946).

⁵⁶ "Six Months Report, 4 January – 3 July 1946" (Office of Military Government U.S. Berlin District), p. 130.

⁵⁷ Information Services Control Summary No. 12, Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in Book III of the Historical Report for the Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, July 10, 1945), p. 2.

⁵⁸ Robert L. Lochner, *Ein Berliner unter dem Sternenbanner – Erinnerungen eines amerikanischen Zeitzeugen*, (Berlin: Goldbeck- Löwe, 2002) www.riasberlin.de/rias-hist/riad-hist-lochner.html (accessed July 6, 2012).

⁵⁹ "Four Year Report, 4 January – July 1, 1945 – September 1, 1949" (Office of Military Government U.S. Sector Berlin), p. 78. Hereafter referred to as "Four Year Report".

⁶⁰ U.S. Army Military Government Report 31 August – 6 September 1946, Appendix of Documents Used as Reference in the Historical Report Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, (Information Control, 1947) p.20.

⁶¹ Jack Raymond, "U.S. Will Amplify Radio in Germany," *New York Times*, March 2 1947, p. 15.

⁶² "U.S. Radio in Berlin Adds Power Today," *New York Times*, June 1 1947, p. 24.

⁶³ Office of Military Government US Sector Berlin, RIAS Highlights May 31 1947, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Babelsberg, Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany. Hereafter referred to as "RIAS Highlights".

⁶⁴ RIAS Highlights.

⁶⁵ Office of Military Government US Sector Berlin, General RIAS Information, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Babelsberg, Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany p. 1. Hereafter referred to as "General RIAS Information".

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⁶⁷ General RIAS Information, p. 2.

⁶⁸ General RIAS Information, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Book III of the Historical Report Volume VIII: Information Control July 1 1945 – June 30 1946, Office of Military Government Berlin District APO 755, p. 57.

⁷⁰ "Germans' Letters to U.S. Zone Radio Station Indicate Fear of Russians, Red Countrymen," *New York Times*, October 6 1947, p. 10.

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⁷² Edward A. Morrow, "U.S., Britain Plan Berlin Power Unit," *New York Times*, April 13 1948, p. 1.

⁷³ Decision in Germany, p. 349.

⁷⁴ Decision in Germany, p. 356.

⁷⁵ An American Life, p. 479.

⁷⁶ Berlin Command, p. 181.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 182.

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- ⁷⁸ Decision in Germany, p. 209.
- ⁷⁹ Decision in Germany, p. 156.
- ⁸⁰ Decision in Germany, p. 358-359.
- ⁸¹ Decision in Germany, p. 361.
- ⁸² Decision in Germany, p. 361.
- ⁸³ Decision in Germany, p. 367.
- ⁸⁴ Berlin Command, p. 204.
- ⁸⁵ Berlin Command, p. 199-200.
- ⁸⁶ Berlin Command, p. 200.
- ⁸⁷ Berlin Command, p. 202-203.
- ⁸⁸ Berlin Command, p. 203.
- ⁸⁹ "Soviet Radio Losing to U.S with Berliners," *New York Times*, November 2 1948 p.
- 14.
- ⁹⁰ Four Year Report, p. 79.
- ⁹¹ "New Airfield to Be Opened Today," *New York Times*, November 5 1948, p. 5.
- ⁹² "General Ganeval's Statement," *New York Times*, December 17 1948, p. 3.
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- ⁹⁵ Four Year Report, p. 78.
- ⁹⁶ Four Year Report, p. 78.

⁹⁷ Hans-Werner Schwartz, Geschichte der RIAS-Nachrichtenabteilung, Jubiläums 10 Jahre RIAS, Record: 960 Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Babelsberg, Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany. Hereafter referred to as "Geschichte der RIAS".

⁹⁸ Geschichte der RIAS.

⁹⁹ Das Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, www.dso-berlin.de/content/e54/e17893/index_ger.html (accessed July 10, 2012)

¹⁰⁰ RIAS Kammerchor, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, www.dso-berlin.de/content/e54/e30214/e38361/index_ger.html?raw=rias&ZMS_HIGHLIGHT=raw (accessed July 10, 2012)

¹⁰¹ Four Year Report, p. 13-14.

¹⁰² Four Year Report, p. 15.

¹⁰³ "Red Mob in Berlin Seizes City Hall, Drives Out Council," New York Times, September 7 1948, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Berlin Command, p. 216-217.

¹⁰⁵ Howard S. Pactor, *Unintended Consequences – RIAS and the Cold War*, www.riasberlin.de/rias-hist/rius-hist-unintend.html (accessed July 10, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Four Year Report, p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ Berlin Command, p. 217.

¹⁰⁸ Four Year Report, p. 18-19.

¹⁰⁹ Don R. Browne, "RIAS Berlin: A Case Study of a Cold War Broadcast Operation," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1966): 120.

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¹¹² Psychological Warfare, p. 154.

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¹¹⁴ Psychological Warfare, p. 155.

¹¹⁵ Lucius D. Clay, interview by Jean Smith, March 30, 1971, interview 25, transcript, Columbia University Oral History Project, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas.

¹¹⁶ An American Life, p. 285.

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¹²⁰ Clay Interview.

¹²¹ Clay Interview.

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