

One of the most prominent aspects of the Cold War is the spy agencies and the infamous intelligence operations that were employed by both the United States and the Soviet Union. Whether it's the *James Bond 007* franchise, *Atomic Blonde*, or *Mission Impossible*, pop culture has utilized Cold War surveillance as a popular genre to promote American ideals in a thrilling fiction.¹ While pop culture's use of Cold War espionage is a popular aspect of America's view of the Cold War, it is less commonly known that American spy agencies like the CIA employed pop culture in their field operations as a means to promote American ideals and agendas. Music and sound was a field of culture that spy agencies like the CIA heavily operated with, utilizing programs such as the Congress for Congressional Freedom and Radio Free Europe in conjunction with propaganda and manipulation in order to further American interests abroad and combat communist powers like the Soviet Union.

The idea of the CIA and the American intelligence community utilizing various forms of media to establish and promote Western ideals is not an unknown concept. As early as the 1950s, American journalists, like Joseph Alsop who believed that "the notion that a newspaper-man doesn't have a duty to his country is perfect balls," were widely recruited by American intelligence agencies to preach CIA talking points and conduct espionage.² While extremely effective, the CIA did not stop with just recruiting journalists and opted to extend their reach into other avenues of culture including broadcast radio. Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) were American

¹ Verheul, Jaap, ed. 2020. *The Cultural Life of James Bond : Specters Of 007*, 125-131.

² Bernstein, Carl. 1977. "THE CIA AND THE MEDIA," 57.

funded and operated broadcast radio stations that were critical in sending Western media and information into Eastern Europe. RFE and RL were initially started in the 1950s and received a majority of their funding from direct and secret CIA subsidies.³ Throughout the funding of RFE and RL, the CIA heavily influenced what was broadcasted, with prominent figures related to the CIA, like informat Sig Mickelson, being appointed to high up and executive positions within the broadcasting networks.⁴ According to Mickelson, "RFE and RL came to serve as a surrogate free press for the captive peoples," and would broadcast Western news and music as a means to penetrate Western ideals into Eastern culture.⁵

These unauthorized broadcasts were met with resistance by the KGB and the Soviet Union, with jamming of RFE and RL becoming a commonality. The KGB focused its jamming efforts on political conversation and news broadcasts, while typically allowing the music programs through. While seemingly innocent, the CIA in tandem with RFE and RL were able to take advantage of the KGB's allowance of music as an avenue to infiltrate Soviet culture and draw Eastern Europeans into Western culture. Western music, especially Jazz, became increasingly popular within the Soviet Union due to the efforts of Western broadcasters. The US exploited this popularity and continued to broadcast music into the Soviet Union and use music as a vessel in which to attract Soviet citizens to listen to more serious Western broadcasts. Keeping Western music popular within the Soviet Union further enabled the US to stifle the growth and cultivation of Soviet culture, which could potentially spark a degradation of the East.⁶

³ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty Act* (to accompany S. 18), 7.

⁴ Bernstein, Carl, 61-62.

⁵ Mickelson, Sig. *America's Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, vii-viii.

⁶ Mikkonen, Simo. "Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?: Soviet Reactions to U.S. Cold War Broadcasting," 784.

Despite their best efforts, Soviet radio jamming efforts were considered to have a limited impact on the dissemination of Western ideals into the Soviet Union. By 1950, the KGB efforts to jam Western broadcasts exceeded the expenditures to broadcast Soviet programs, as well as the cost of Western broadcasts. Soviet bureaucratic slowdown and resource deficiencies meant that political broadcasts were able to slip through the cracks.⁷ When political broadcasts made it through, occasional Soviet listeners would record Western broadcasts onto tapes, which in turn would be sold on the black market. Customers interested in Western politics and culture, typically being drawn in by the music programs, would purchase these tapes and disseminate them at parties.⁸

Western infiltration of Soviet culture in the mid 20th century was significant in the normalization of US-Soviet relations and the beginning of the fall of the iron curtain. Positive reception to Western music within the Soviet Union led to Cultural Exchange Agreements beginning in 1958 which opened up both the US and the Soviet Union to the other side's cultural works, especially music.⁹ Part of these cultural exchanges was for Western musicians and ensembles to travel to the Soviet Union and go on tour. This provided the American intelligence community with an opportunity to go behind the iron curtain and conduct field operations. Soviet magazine *Nedelya* accused the CIA of planting operatives within visiting American ensembles. *Nedelya* claims that CIA operatives were planted with little time to rehearse with the ensembles and that they would produce poor tone and sour music. With foreign musicians having ample free time while on tour in the Soviet Union, *Nedelya* claims that these operatives "devoted much of their spare time in Russia to distributing anti-Soviet literature...and the

⁷ Mikkonen, Simo, 786.

⁸ Mikkonen, Simo, 784.

⁹ "Soviet Cultural Exchange Pact Signed After White House Delay." 1966. *New York Times*, 56.

interpreters tried to pick up intelligence information.” When Soviet ensembles toured within the United States, *Nedelya* claimed that the CIA would often try to recruit the musicians or convince them to defect as well as sabotage Soviet performances.¹⁰ While the US embassy provided no comment on the matter, there is certainly evidence to suggest that the CIA took advantage of the cultural exchange agreements to further entrench Western culture and ideals into the Soviet Union. The CIA throughout the Cold War sponsored and influenced some of the world’s most prominent cultural figures and convened cultural conventions around Europe to ensure that Western ideals dominated Europe and to exert cultural pressure on the Soviet Union.¹¹ Nicholas Nabokov, a Russian composer and emigre, was appointed as the Secretary General of the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in 1951 and was responsible for the expansion of Western music in the culture between the West and the East. Nabokov was involved in the production of 4 international music festivals as well as organizing Western music for the sake of cultural propagation. Nabokov believed his job to encompass 2 major roles: to defend Western culture and modernism while simultaneously discrediting and degrading Soviet culture.¹²

The Congress for Cultural Freedom was one of the most integral parts of the US government’s cultural strategy during the Cold War and extended far beyond the reach of Nicholas Nabokov. The CCF was run by CIA agent Muchal Joselson from 1950 to 1967 and had a deep pool of CIA and intelligence resources to pull from. During this time, the CCF expanded into over 35 nations and was a prominent organization that

¹⁰ "Soviets Blame CIA for Sour Music." 1967. *The Washington Post, Times Herald*.

¹¹ Harris, Miller Sarah. "A Congress for Cultural Freedom: Berlin, 1950," 66-74.

¹² Wellens, Ian. *Music on the Frontline: Nicolas Nabokov's Struggle against Communism and Middlebrow Culture*, 1-14.

exerted extreme influence on Western culture.¹³ The CCF made its initial gains in Western culture through developing relationships with prominent journalists and newspaper editors. By providing incentives for these journalists, such as prizes or career opportunities, the CCF was able to influence what journalists wrote and how they phrased and represented their ideas.¹⁴ With this strategy proving to be extremely effective the CCF later expanded into other realms of culture, eventually encompassing most aspects of culture including art, film, and literature. One of the initial impacts that the CCF had on the music industry came in 1952 with the Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century festival. Organized by Nabokov, the festival took place in Paris and sought to reinforce the public's integrity in Western culture and institutions while casting away any doubt about the Western system.¹⁵ While effective, it was not until 1954 with the International Conference of Twentieth Century Music in Rome that the CCF fully realized the potential of propagandized music. These initial experiments into the music industry drove the CCF to hold more music festivals globally.¹⁶ The CIA funded and operated organization slowly increased its influence over Western music as it provided increasing benefits to musicians and artists who were willing to work with the CCF. From prizes to high profile performance opportunities, the CCF made very enticing offers to musicians to include rhetoric in their music that was designed to push Western Europe away from its curiosity towards communism and marxism and towards a more Western and American point of view.¹⁷ The CCF became the main cultural arm of the United States government due to the convenience of it acting as a proxy for US funding to

¹³ Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, 1.

¹⁴ Saunders, Frances Stonor, 281.

¹⁵ Harris, Miller Sarah, "The 1952 Paris Festival," 98-111.

¹⁶ Saunders, Frances Stonor, 186-87.

¹⁷ Saunders, Frances Stonor, 1.

cultural intellectuals. The CCF was able to organize and operate cultural exploitations within Europe which allowed the US government to enjoy clean hands and dump funding into cultural exploitation with minimal risk.¹⁸

Following its success in Europe in the 1950s, the CCF underwent rapid growth in the 1960s as part of the US Cold War strategy of containment on all fronts. With the US getting further entangled in Vietnam and Asia, the CCF followed, with an initial expansion into Asia in 1951 with the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF). Acting as the CCF's Asian affiliate, the ICCF received CIA and US government funding and shared similar objectives as the CCF. The ICCF never saw the extensive prominence that the CCF enjoyed due to the ICCF largely being focused on social change, but it did provide the foundations for later CCF operations within Asia.¹⁹ In 1955, the Asian-African Conference in Bandung was a hallmark moment for US and Western foreign policy as the Third World was announced and sought to take a different approach on world affairs from the Western-Soviet dichotomy.²⁰ 1955 marked when the CCF took a more direct involvement in Asia and the Third World as US foreign policy became increasingly fixated on these regions with the South East Asia Treaty Organization Pact. With concerns about Chinese and Soviet modernizations, the CCF was concerned about how poverty within Asia would inhibit the acceptance of Western ideals. With Asia and the Third World extremely different culturally, the CCF relied upon the figures and aspects of its success in Europe as a means to make inroads in these regions. The CCF attempted to employ their Western scholars, artists, and musicians to

¹⁸ Scionti, Andrea. "'I Am Afraid Americans Cannot Understand': The Congress for Cultural Freedom in France and Italy, 1950–1957," 89.

¹⁹ Shillam, Thomas William. "Shattering the 'Looking-Glass World': The Congress for Cultural Freedom in South Asia, 1951–55," 441.

²⁰ Burke, Roland. "'Real Problems to Discuss': The Congress for Cultural Freedom's Asian and African Expeditions, 1951–1959," 53.

get involved in Asian and Third world universities and states as a means to open up cultural exchange and to increase the influence of the West and the US.²¹ By integrating Western figures into these institutions, the CCF hoped that their collaboration with Asian and Third World figures would expand the network to draw from and to more subvertly, but effectively instill Western ideals into these regions.

The Cold War is largely defined by the flash moments like the Cuban Missile Crisis and the proxy wars such as Vietnam. While these were all consequential to the outcome of the 20th century, the cultural and ideological war that took place globally was the true motivator for both the West and the Soviets as a means to dominate spheres of influence. As recording and playback devices along with mass media technologically advanced throughout the 20th century, music and sound became an increasingly important battleground for the culture war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

²¹ Burke, Roland, 62.

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