

FBIS Against the Axis, 1941-1945

Stephen C. Mercado

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Stephen C. Mercado serves in FBIS in the Directorate of Science and Technology.

The development of radio as a means of mass communication in the early 20th century soon led to its exploitation as a vehicle for propaganda. In the period between the first and second world wars, the governments of Berlin, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, and Tokyo all used government broadcasting organizations to disseminate official views in a multitude of languages to influence foreign opinion.

Increasing global tensions in the 1930s fueled the propaganda competition among the Communist Soviet Union; Fascist Germany and Italy; and France, Great Britain, and imperialist Japan. Germany's short-wave transmission capacity grew from four kilowatts in 1930 to 280 kilowatts in 1940. France surged from zero to 123 kilowatts and Great Britain's capacity grew from seven to 240 kilowatts.

The airwaves crackled with a variety of programs for foreign consumption. Prior to the Anschluss, Berlin put forth appeals to Austrians to cast their lot with the Reich. Tokyo's broadcast languages included English for audiences in North America and elsewhere. The radio programs at times resulted in diplomatic repercussions. London protested the inflammatory language of Rome's broadcasts in Arabic to British colonies in the Near East until the Anglo-Italian accord of 1938 brought a halt to such propaganda.¹

As the development of offensive weapons led to countermeasures, so the rise of radio broadcasting as a medium of propaganda and psychological warfare led to the establishment of monitoring services. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), for example, began listening to foreign broadcasts shortly after the First World War.

Washington Catches On

In comparison with London, Washington was slow off the mark in establishing an official monitoring service. By 1941, much of the world was already engulfed in war and the Axis partners were flooding the airwaves. Apart from amateur radio operators and such corporate ventures as the CBS Listening Post in San Francisco, Americans were largely in the dark. One of the few sources of light was the Princeton Listening Center. Launched in November 1939 at Princeton University with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Center was the US pioneer in the systematic monitoring, translation, and analysis of broadcasts from Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, and, to a lesser extent, Moscow.²

¹ Harold N. Graves, Jr., *War on the Short Wave* (New York: The Foreign Policy Association, 1941), pp. 6, 14.

² Records of the Princeton Listening Center (1939-1941), at http://libweb.princeton.edu/2005/libanes/firestone/rbse/finding_aide/plc.html.

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First FBIS headquarters in Washington, at 316 F Street, NE. (CIA photo)

Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long became increasingly worried about the possible loss of diplomatic reporting and other information if the war caused American embassies to close. He looked to radio as a supplemental source of intelligence and turned to FCC Commissioner James L. Fly for action. In charge of regulating domestic radio, the FCC was given the expanded task of monitoring foreign broadcasts. The concept, according to a later article, was to launch “an official U.S. monitoring service, to give greater coverage and more detailed service than was possible through private radio chains or the newspapers.”³

On 26 February 1941, the FCC received funding to launch the “Foreign Broadcast Monitoring Service,” the first name for FBIS.⁴ The service began its monitoring duties at 316 F Street, NE. On 1 October, FBIS opened its first bureau outside Washington—in a farmhouse at 13005 NE Glissan Street in Portland, Oregon—to monitor Japanese broadcasts. On 1 December, a bureau in Kingsville, Texas, went into operation to track broadcasts from Latin America. Other bureaus followed in the course of the war.

As with the Princeton Listening Center, FBIS began monitoring, transcribing, translating, reporting, and analyzing foreign broadcasts. The service published its first *Daily Report* of translations on 18 Novem-

ber 1941. Its first analytic report, released on 6 December, warned of Tokyo's increasingly belligerent tone. Based on broadcasts from the previous week, FBIS noted that “Japanese radio intensifies still further its defiant, hostile tone; in contrast to its behavior during earlier periods of Pacific tension, Radio Tokyo makes no peace appeals. Comment on the United States is bitter and increased; it is broadcast not only to this country,

but to Latin America and Southeastern Asia.” The next day, the Japanese air raid on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into war.

A Fine Collection of “Screwballs”

The fledgling FBIS became responsible for providing open-source intelligence (OSINT) as its part of the military and civilian wartime intelligence effort. The organization faced numerous challenges in gearing up. At FBIS headquarters on F Street, an address described by staff members as “three blocks from Union Station and three miles from a decent place to eat,” a sign in the monitoring room said it all: “We’ve our own Axis to grind.”⁵

Putting together a radio monitoring service proved challenging. FBIS needed employees with a variety of talents to execute its multiple tasks. The service had to compete with the military draft and myriad other government agencies for personnel to fill managerial, secretarial, and engineering positions. Analytic and linguistic slots presented unusual challenges. There were no college courses in OSINT in 1941. Moreover, finding people to monitor, transcribe, and translate dozens of foreign languages was daunting. It

³ FBIS, “Purveyors of Fine Open Source Intelligence Since 1941: A History of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and Modern Open Source Intelligence” (brochure published in 1997). FBIS, *On the Beam*, 24 December 1942, p. 6. This and other issues of *On the Beam* are collected in *On the Beam: Newsletter of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1942-1945*, which was published by FBIS in 1991 in celebration of its 50th anniversary.

⁴ Helena Huntington Smith, “It Pays to Listen,” *Colliers*, 30 January 1943, pp. 43-44.

⁵ The initial monitoring service was renamed the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service in 1942 and evolved into the Foreign Broadcast Information Service in 1967.

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was not enough to recruit someone capable of translating a German newspaper. FBIS needed officers able to make sense of the scratchy broadcasts pulled from the static; understand the bewildering number of military terms, political slogans, and such; and render the material into proper English. Moreover, FBIS required capable officers not only for the relatively common languages of French, German, Italian, and Spanish, but also for such exotic ones as Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, and Japanese. In 1941, no Asian studies centers existed in the United States.

FBIS managers rose to the challenge, assembling a team of talented employees with diverse backgrounds. Harold N. Graves, Jr., who held a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, joined FBIS as senior administrator in March 1941. Graves had directed the Princeton Listening Center, which was absorbed by FBIS in June. Many of the analysts were first-rate academics. Dr. Hans Speier, an émigré from Germany, had been conducting research on German war propaganda under the aegis of the Rockefeller Foundation at the New School for Social Research in New York.⁶ Among the gifted linguists, at the Kingsville Bureau, a Texas native named George Chestnut regularly handled Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian broadcasts, with occasional

forays into German and Dutch when needed. In Washington, Dr. Habib J. Awad monitored Axis broadcasts in Arabic, Hindustani, Farsi, Turkish, and other languages of the Near East.⁷ In Portland, where most of the monitors tackled Japanese, Bill Pollock monitored Tokyo's broadcasts in French and German, as well as the Soviet Union's Russian broadcasts.⁸

close-shaven officers of the armed forces and the genteel lawyers found in large numbers in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). One journalist reported that the rest of the organization called the 60 or so linguists at FBIS headquarters the "Screwball Division." In Washington, she found "the greatest collection of individualists, international rolling stones, and slightly batty geniuses ever gathered together in one organization." The result was "a unique combination of newspapermen and Ph.D.s that gives the listening post its color and its crackle. Maybe it's the other things, too—the banging of teletypes, the global maps on every wall, the casual kidding in seventeen foreign languages; the feeling that something big may come over at any minute."¹⁰

Obstacles to Recruiting Asian Staff

Against stiff competition from OSS and military intelligence, FBIS managed to build a core of outstanding linguists with Asian experience. Dr. Chitoshi Yanaga, who assumed direction for all Asian languages in Washington, had earlier taught at the University of California, instructed intelligence officers at the US Navy Japanese Language School, and headed Japanese translation and research at the Office of War Information (OWI). From Hawaii came Satoru "Sugi" Sugimura, a graduate of the University of Hawaii and student at Meiji University in Tokyo. An interpreter, translator at the Interior



Harold N. Graves (FBIS photo)

Apparently, the FBIS workforce stood out in comparison to the

⁶ Ernst Kins and Hans Speier, *German Radio Propaganda: Report on Home Broadcasts During the War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. x. "Interview of Hans Speier" by Martin Collins of RAND Corporation, 5 April 1988, www.nasm.edu/nasm/dsh/rhpi/p2.html. Dr. Speier joined the RAND Corporation after the war.

⁷ FBIS, *On the Beam*, 1 January 1944, p. 5.

⁸ Smith, pp. 42, 44.

⁹ FBIS, *On the Beam*, 1 January 1944, p. 5.

¹⁰ Smith, pp. 42-44.



Translating room with maps of Japanese empire and China, at FBIS Bureau in Portland, Oregon. (CIA photo)

Department. Sugimura joined FBIS in 1941. First an “ace” monitor at Portland, he later became chief of the Japanese Monitoring Section of FBIS Pacific Bureau in Hawaii.¹¹ Beate Sirota was another valuable linguist. Born in Vienna, the daughter of the Russian concert pianist Leo Sirota, she had lived from the age of five with her parents in Tokyo, where her father taught at the Imperial Academy of Music. While attending Mills College in Oakland, she began working as a

Japanese translator in the summer of 1942 at the CBS Listening Post in San Francisco. FBIS, which absorbed the CBS unit that September, was fortunate to employ her until she graduated in 1943 and transferred to the OWI. While with FBIS, she monitored not only broadcasts in Japanese, but also those in French, German, and Spanish.¹²

Several of the editors handling the Japanese copy were newsmen who had been working in Asia when the war broke out, had been captured and incarcerated by the Japanese, and later were returned in prisoner exchanges. Matthew C. Ford—who had worked in Asia for 14 years for International News Service,

London’s *Daily Express*, and CBS—joined the FBIS office in San Francisco in 1943, following his repatriation. Raymond C. Phillips, another editor who landed in San Francisco following Japanese detention, had worked for two radio news services and two radio stations during nine years in China. Isabelle Heck had worked at the

¹¹ Beate Sirota Gordon, *The Only Woman in the Room* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1997); *The Key Reporter*, Phi Beta Kappa, Vol. 65 No. 3, Spring 2000, pp. 6-8; FBIS, *On the Beam*, 6 October 1942, p. 5. Beate Sirota later joined General MacArthur’s staff in occupied Japan, where she was instrumental in inserting language guaranteeing equal rights for women into the Japanese Constitution of 1946. For her activities in occupied Japan, see John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 365-367.

¹² FBIS, *On the Beam*, 9 April 1945, p. 7; *On the Beam*, 1 April 1944, p. 7. After the war, Dr. Yanaga taught at Yale University and published the masterly *Japan Since Perry* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949), and *Big Business in Japanese Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

Evening Post and Mercury in Shanghai before imprisonment by the Japanese and repatriation.¹⁴

As demands for OSINT increased, FBIS needed to broaden its recruitment. Outside of Hawaii, the greatest pool of talent for the intelligence war against Japan resided behind barbed wire in the hastily built internment camps in the western United States. In late 1942, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) Employment Division in Washington issued a memo to the heads of nine relocation centers informing them that FBIS would be sending Mary J. Mueller, assistant chief of the Translation Division, to the camps to recruit "highly qualified" Japanese linguists "to make rapid, summary translations of Japanese radio broadcasts." Successful applicants, "when cleared by the Army, will be granted exemption from evacuation and stationed at Portland, Oregon." Given the volatile atmosphere in the camps, where many Japanese-Americans were bitter over their internment, the WRA official asked camp directors "to anticipate Mrs. Mueller's visit by preselecting as many qualified and interested applicants as possible."¹⁵

Mueller's travels west proved no ordinary recruiting trip. In a letter written on 31 December to Harold Graves, she informed him that the WRA had advised her to delay her scheduled visit to the Manzanar

¹⁴ FBIS, *On the Beam*, 1 October 1943, p. 3; *On the Beam*, 15 February 1944, p. 8; *On the Beam*, 1 April 1944, p. 6.

¹⁵ Davis McEntire, WRA Employment Division memorandum, 18 December 1942, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), RG 262, Entry 83, Box 65.

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Relocation Project "until this week when they expected that the Army would have completely quelled the uprising." She also explained the decision to have camp staff quietly recommend applicants, given the concern that posting advertisements would stir the "pro-Japanese element" among the interned to put pressure on applicants and families. In one camp, where a general strike had taken place, Mueller had heard that a woman had been expelled from her housing block for voicing pro-American sentiments.

Difficulties did not end with the interviews and testing. According to her records, Mueller interviewed 174 Japanese Americans, gave 100 of them tests, and found 22 of them well qualified. Five of the best applicants accepted her offer of employment, although at least one was lost to another government agency before he could start work.¹⁶ Mueller recounted the competition for recruits in her letter to Graves: "Unfortunately, Colonel Rasmussen, who I understand is in

¹⁶ Mary J. Mueller, Memorandum "Record of Japanese Language Tests," undated, NARA, RG 262 (Records of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service), Entry 83, Box 65. Memorandum "Recommendations of Possible Applicants for Position of Japanese Translator," undated, NARA, RG 262, Entry 83, Box 65.

charge of the Army Intelligence Japanese language instruction program at Savage, Minnesota, and elsewhere, visited all the projects about six weeks ago and did an excellent job of cream skimming. He has taken literally dozens of the best people and left very few." She also noted a reluctance of some applicants to move to Portland and found, to her further frustration, "several capable people among the Issei." The Issei, or first generation of those who had come to the United States, were resident aliens ineligible for employment. Nevertheless, she asked Graves whether FBIS could still hire them, having heard a rumor that the Army and Navy language schools were "taking aliens." She described drawbacks affecting consideration of second generation Japanese-Americans (Nisei), including those educated in Japan (Kibei): "Most Nisei seem to have very little knowledge of Japanese and most Kibei have evidently been influenced by their years of indoctrination in Japan and are either afraid or unwilling to work for the American Government."¹⁷

Compounding the difficulties of recruiting among Americans resentful of their incarceration, FBIS had to deal with Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, who was in charge of West Coast defense. DeWitt had overseen the removal of the Japanese and was reluctant to see any return, even those working for the government. As FBIS Director Robert D. Leigh explained in a letter to

¹⁷ Mary J. Mueller to Harold N. Graves, 31 December 1942, NARA, RG 262, Entry 83, Box 65.

Dr. William Langer, director of OSS Research and Analysis (R&A). "Our problem is a vexatious one. It is that of actually obtaining personnel who will be approved by Lieutenant General DeWitt, Commanding General of the Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, and of securing persons who have the practical competence to perform the very difficult task of monitoring these broadcasts."¹⁷ Eventually, many FBIS Japanese-American officers went to work in a bureau in Denver, established as a result of DeWitt's antipathy to Nisei intelligence officers working on the coast.¹⁸

OSINT Proves Its Worth

Despite the recruiting challenges, FBIS racked up numerous successes during the war years. The service's several hundred members were few in comparison to the large numbers in the military or such counterpart civilian intelligence agencies as OSS and OWI. Seen in that light, FBIS's achievements in OSINT were all the more impressive.

FBIS provided a number of services of common concern, such as tracking news of Allied prisoners of war. The service also landed many "scoops." At the time of Italy's surrender in September 1943, FBIS was out ahead of CBS and the rest of the commercial pack in report-

¹⁷ Robert D. Leigh to William L. Langer, 25 November 1942. NARA, RG 262, Entry 68, Box 22.

¹⁸ Utahna Hall, "Another 'Secret' Is Out," *Oregon Sunday Journal, Pacific Parade Magazine* (Portland), 21 October 1945.

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FBIS maintained a special telephone connection to the White House at the time, and on 10 September [1943], when Hitler went on the air in reaction to Italy's surrender, 'Eager listeners on the line were Prime Minister Churchill, Gen. Marshall, and Harry Hopkins.'
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FBIS headquarters from 1942-1947 at 1424 K Street, NW, in Washington. (CIA photo)

ing the reactions of Axis and neutral radio to the development. Before the end of the surrender proclamation by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, FBIS had notified its government clients of the news and identified the speaker as Badoglio himself. FBIS maintained a special telephone connection to the White

House at the time, and on 10 September, when Hitler went on the air in reaction to Italy's surrender. "Eager listeners on the line were Prime Minister Churchill, Gen. Marshall, and Harry Hopkins. Ejaculations and remarks of Churchill could be clearly heard," according to the FBIS newsletter.¹⁹

In addition to its *Daily Report* translations, FBIS published special reports. Beginning in January 1943, the Analysis Division's German Section prepared the *Central European Radio Analysis: A Weekly Intelligence Report on Nazi Propaganda*. The report was based on transcripts of German international short-wave broadcasts and weekly summaries of German domestic programs monitored in London, where FBIS maintained a bureau as part of the global partnership with the BBC that was formed in December 1941. The Analysis Division also covered the war with Japan through its serial publication *Radio Report on the Far East*, first published on 24 August 1942. These special publications offered a depth of reporting and analysis found nowhere else in the United States. The first issue of *Radio Report on the Far East*, for example, included references and analysis of broadcasts from Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo on the reported unrest in India, which was part of the Japanese campaign of psychological warfare to subvert British rule in South Asia.²⁰

¹⁹ FBIS, *On the Beam*, 1 October 1943, p. 1.

²⁰ FBIS, *Radio Report on the Far East*, No. 1, 24 August 1942, p. B2. NARA, RG 262, Entry 34, Box 1.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN RADIO ANALYSIS

A WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE REPORT ON NAZI PROPAGANDA

JANUARY 14, 1943

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FOREIGN BROADCAST INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

First issue of the special FBIS report on Nazi propaganda, prepared by the Analysis Division's German Section (CIA photo)

Apart from monitoring propaganda lines, FBIS delivered intelligence on distant developments. Towards the war's end, FBIS reported the Imperial Japanese Navy's spokesman for the China Seas Fleet boasting, in a 28 May 1945 broadcast from Shanghai, that Japan was placing stay-behind guerrillas on strategic islands throughout the southwest Pacific so that "when the time comes for our major counter-offensive to be initiated we will find a...force out in the expanse of the wide Pacific Ocean waiting to receive us and to cooperate with us." In fact, US forces had to flush out such stay-behinds for many months after the surrender in the Pacific. One of them, Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda, remained at large until he left the jungles of the Philippines to return to Japan in 1974.²¹

FBIS also relayed technical details that came over the air. A Japanese broadcast from Singapore on 31 May 1945 to the United States laid out the mechanical workings of the Japanese balloon bombs that had been floating across the Pacific Ocean to explode in the western half of North America. According to the radio, a barometric device would automatically release an attached sandbag each time the balloon fell to a certain altitude. Once the balloon had reached the continent after 80 to 120 hours and the last sandbag had fallen, the device would drop its payload. On 7 June, a Japanese propaganda broadcast to North America said that, "In Washington the Army disclosed

²¹ For an account of Imperial Japan's "last soldier," see Hiroo Onoda, *No Surrender. My Thirty-Year War* (New York: Kodansha International, 1974).

yesterday that Japanese bomb balloons have fallen in Michigan in the past few months.... Previously balloon bombs reportedly killed several persons, damaging wide areas throughout the western states."²²

High Praise

FBIS received frequent praise and requests for expanded service. The State Department's Breckinridge Long, "godfather" of FBIS, congratulated FCC Chairman Fly in a letter of 10 September 1941:

*I want to express my appreciation of the work the radio monitoring unit is doing under the FCC.... As you know, the monitoring system has been one of my pet ideas for years. ... My own opinion is it is a most valuable addition to our foreign intelligence. I want to give, on my part, every encouragement I can to the continuing success of the excellent work you are doing.*²³

Nelson A. Rockefeller, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in the Executive Office of President Roosevelt, wrote Fly on 29 July 1942 that, "We have been able thus far to make good use of the material provided by teletype from the Kingsville Field Bureau of the Monitoring Service of your Commission." Rockefeller was writing to request a greater volume of verbatim transcripts for use in

²² FBIS, *Radio Report on the Far East*, No. 75, 15 June 1945, pp. B10-11, NARA, RG 262, Entry 34, Box 3.

²³ Breckinridge Long to James L. Fly, 10 September 1941, NARA, RG 262, Entry 66, Box 20.

generating propaganda to promote hemispheric solidarity during the war.²⁴

Senior military officials also wrote letters of appreciation. Secretary of War Henry Stimson noted in a letter of 6 August 1941 to FCC Chairman Fly that the Special Study Group in the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department was a regular recipient of the *Spot Bulletin* series. Stimson concluded that, "This service is greatly appreciated and is a valuable contribution to War Department information." Less than a month after Pearl Harbor, Brig. Gen. Raymond E. Lee, then the acting assistant chief of staff, G-2, recorded his own appreciation, noting that, "For many months this service has made available to us, in digest form, a general picture of what propaganda was being broadcast to the world from the Axis countries and England. In addition to propaganda, information is sometimes contained in these broadcasts which serve as a check on information received from other sources and in this way have increased the value of this service."²⁵

Working Closely with OSS

Among civilian intelligence agencies, FBIS perhaps worked most closely with OSS. Their relationship began before the war. In his September 1941 letter of

²⁴ Nelson A. Rockefeller to James L. Fly, 29 July 1942, NARA, RG 262, Entry 68, Box 22.

²⁵ Raymond E. Lee to James L. Fly, 26 December 1941, NARA, RG 262, Entry 66, Box 20.

appreciation. Long had advised Fly to work with OSS, pointing out that, “[FBIS] has a counterpart in the organization of which Mr. Donovan is the head, and I assume that the information which you get is made instantly available to some of his people so that the habit will be established for them to be able to counteract the effect of some of the things which you will discover.”²⁶

OSS found OSINT invaluable. Dr. Charles B. Fah, acting chief of the Far Eastern Section of OSS, wrote on 13 August 1942 to FBIS Director Robert D. Leigh that, “The Far Eastern Section of the Office of Strategic Services has found the various reports of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service of the Federal Communications Commission indispensable in our work. Monitored Japanese broadcasts offer the most extensive single source available for information on developments since December 8, 1941, in Japan and the territories she has occupied. Monitored Chinese broadcasts are important indications of thought and morale in Free China.” Dr. Fah concluded by requesting expanded coverage of Japanese broadcasts. Later that year, OSS R&A Director William D. Langer wrote Leigh that, “Without the monitoring service of the Federal Communications Commission, our knowledge of current events in Japan would be meager, and the fact that we would like more of a good thing does not imply any lack of appreciation of what we are now receiving. I can speak only for ourselves, but I am sure that there are

²⁶Breckinridge Long to James L. Fly, *op. cit.*

“
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 ”

other agencies in Washington whose members feel as we do.”²⁷

Even OSS Director William “Wild Bill” Donovan took the time to write regarding the value of OSINT:

*We have, as you know, been receiving from the FBIS transcripts of both the Japanese short wave broadcasts beamed at this country and, at such times during the year as they can be heard, standard Japanese broadcasts intended for home consumption. These transcripts are of particular interest and value in that they indicate the different Japanese propaganda lines and often, though perhaps unintentionally, they contain intelligence which when combined with material from other sources contributes substantially to the political and economic intelligence now available on Japan.*²⁸

Running into Partisan Politics

While contributing to the war effort against the Axis, FBIS had to counter attacks from enemies of President Roosevelt’s New Deal on Capitol Hill. As a division of the

²⁷William L. Langer to Robert D. Leigh, 16 November 1942, NARA, RG 262, Entry 68, Box 22

²⁸Donovan to Leigh, *op. cit.*

FCC, FBIS became entangled in a bitter dispute between FCC Director Fly and Representative Eugene Cox of Georgia. Fly, heading the commission interested in curbing the monopolistic activities of CBS, NBC, and the National Association of Broadcasters, locked horns with Cox and other congressmen who were more comfortable with monopoly capitalism than with federal regulatory zeal. Cox called Fly the “most dangerous man in Washington” for seeking to regulate big radio.²⁹

The congressman launched hearings against the FCC in January 1943 for suspected abuse of its regulatory powers. He dragged FBIS into the spotlight as well, charging the service with being a glorified news agency that provided nothing of value to the military. The hearings ended with a whimper on 2 January 1945, and the Cox-Lea Committee concluded that, “Obviously, the U.S. could not conduct an intelligent program for counteracting enemy propaganda without a reasonably accurate knowledge of that propaganda. Monitoring of foreign broadcasts is the only way in which such knowledge can be obtained fully and promptly. And it was perfectly natural and logical that the Communications Commission was selected to do this job.”³⁰

The other thorn in the side of FBIS was Representative Martin Dies of Texas. Less interested in crafting legislation than chasing publicity,

²⁹Andie Fucher, “The Hutchins Commission,” *Media Studies Journal*, Spring/Summer 1998 (Freedom Forum: Washington, DC) (www.freedomforum.org).

³⁰FBIS, *On the Beam*, 3 February 1945, p. 3.

Dies poured his efforts into charging civil servants with disloyalty. Strongly opposed to the Roosevelt Administration, he denounced those executing the president's policies as "New Deal Communists." He became the first chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1938.³¹

Three employees from FBIS were among the dozens of civil servants that Congressman Dies accused of "un-American beliefs." One of the targets was Dr. Goodwin B. Watson, chief of the FBIS Analysis Division, a prolific author on education and public opinion and one of the two creators of *Central European Radio Analysis*.³² Another target was Dr. Frederick Schumann, an authority on the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany who had left Williams College in October 1942 to join the Analysis Division's German Section.³³ The third, William E. Dodd, Jr., was a member of the Report Section.

Dies might have directed his wrath against FBIS because the organization had drawn attention to the fact that the congressman's public

pronouncements were meeting with high approval in Nazi Germany. Vice President Henry Wallace had criticized Dies for his remarks, saying that "the doubts and anger which statements of Mr. Dies tend to arouse in the public mind might as well come from Goebbels himself as far as their practical effect is concerned."³⁴

The FCC stood behind its employees pilloried before the Dies committee and the House Appropriations committee. The FBIS newsletter of 15 February 1943 printed a defense of the three, describing the material presented as "in error."

*In the cases of Watson, Schumann, and Dodd, in FBIS, they were interventionists during the period of the 30's and were extremely active in trying to arouse their fellow citizens to the dangers of fascism. In so doing, they tended to approve of the foreign policies of all European countries which themselves were strongly anti-fascist. This includes the Spanish Loyalists and the Russians up to the time of the German-Russian Pact. The temporary defection of Russia toward the Nazis was strongly condemned by these three persons. In general, there would seem to be no great difficulty in disproving the accusations thus made, as the activities of the FBIS are matters of public record.*³⁵

Despite the efforts of the FCC to defend the three men, Dies succeeded in driving them from government service. Schumann returned to Williams College. FBIS had intended to keep Watson and Dodd on board, but the House took further steps. In a move later ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court (*United States v. Lovett*, 1946), the House Appropriations Committee acted, under Section 304 of the Urgent Deficiency Appropriation Act of 1943, to halt all compensation for the two FBIS employees and for Robert Morse Lovett of the Interior Department after 15 November 1943. Based solely on the accusations of Dies, the committee had besmirched the reputation of, and barred permanently from federal service, two well-regarded FBIS staffers.³⁶

Another thunderbolt soon struck the service. FBIS Director Leigh announced in the newsletter of 15 February 1944 that the House Appropriations Committee was eliminating 30 percent of the service's budget from July onward. Noting that the committee had given no reason, Leigh bitterly wrote that, "The obvious conclusion is that the proposed cut relates

³¹David Brinkley, *Washington Goes to War* (New York: Knopf, 1988), pp. 17, 199.

³²FBIS, *On the Beam*, 15 February 1943, p. 8. Dr. Watson's works before the war included *Orient and Occident. A Preliminary Study of Opinions and Attitudes of Americans Regarding Oriental Peoples and Questions* (1927), submitted to the Institute of Pacific Relations, and *Education and Social Welfare in Mexico* (1940), a report prepared for the Council of Pan American Democracy.

³³FBIS, *On the Beam*, 5 November 1942, p. 3. Dr. Schumann's publications included *Hitler and the Nazi Dictatorship. A Study in Social Pathology and the Politics of Fascism* (London: Hale, 1936) and *Europe on the Fire. The Crises of Diplomacy, 1933-1939* (New York: Knopf, 1939).

³⁴Michael Sayers and Albert Kahn, *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (New York: Harper and Sons, 1942), p. 248.

³⁵FBIS, *On the Beam*, 15 February 1943, p. 3.

³⁶FBIS, *On the Beam*, 15 February 1943, p. 2; *On the Beam*, 1 January 1944, p. 4. For an explanation of *United States v. Lovett*, 328 U.S. 303 (1946) (United States Supreme Court), see the Legal Information Institute of Cornell Law School at: <http://www.law.cornell.edu>. The Supreme Court concluded: "When our Constitution and Bill of Rights were written, our ancestors had ample reason to know that legislative trials and punishments were too dangerous to liberty to exist in the nation of free men they envisioned. And so they proscribed bills of attainder. Section 304 is one."

to the opposition on the part of Representative Cox to FCC for reasons well known and [to] the Dodd-Watson case.” Dr. Leigh resigned that summer. Writing in the newsletter of his pride at how FBIS had faced its inquisitors, he admitted how “discouraging” the affair had been. He wryly added, “But Congressional investigations, as well as monitoring the Axis, are an inevitable part of a democracy at war.”⁴⁷



Robert D. Leigh, FBIS Director during war time battles with Congress (CIA photo)

The fall of the budget ax brought cries of alarm from the intelligence community. OSS R&A Director Langer wrote on 22 April 1944 to FBIS Director Leigh:

Speaking for the numerous workers in the Research and Analysis Branch, I should like to express

⁴⁷FBIS, *On the Beam*, 15 February 1944, p. 9. *On the Beam*, 4 July 1944, p. 3.

our regret that recent developments have led to a curtailment of the output of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service. Your group's contribution to our work has been of such value that the present situation has called forth expressions of concern from many of the analysts on the R&A staff.

FBIS reports provide complete and authoritative summaries of current news developments. This prompt coverage furnishes a wealth of relatively detailed information on the areas under study by our various sections. Furthermore, our entire Political Subdivision has come to rely upon your reports to supply important evidence of enemy propaganda lines as they appear in the broadcasts of Axis and Axis-controlled radio stations. Through these stations it is possible to discern the most important and persistent directions of enemy psychological warfare. Of comparable importance to us is the opportunity to study the reactions of neutral nations and our Allies as expressed by radio.

*In sending you this expression of disappointment at the reduction in FBIS output, I wish particularly to include with it a sincere hope that future decisions may empower you and your staff to resume to their full extent the activities which have proven so much to the benefit of our organization.*⁴⁸

⁴⁸William L. Langer to Robert D. Leigh, 22 April 1944, NARA, RG 262, Entry 68, Box 22.

At War's End

With the Axis defeated, US leaders dismantled in a matter of months the military and civilian intelligence structure built up over four years. The American public, euphoric at the moment of victory, demanded that its boys come marching home immediately. With the Axis in ashes, people were ready to forget the world once more. OSS was disbanded in September 1945, the month that Japan signed the instruments of surrender. On 15 August, FBIS had monitored Emperor Hirohito's announcement that Japan would surrender. Four months later, on 4 December, the last *Daily Report* appeared. The FCC terminated FBIS the following day. Thus ended the wartime service of Washington's premier OSINT organization.

In January 1946, the War Department's Military Intelligence Division took the baton from the FCC and assumed ownership of FBIS. The first issue of the new *Daily Report* was published that same month.⁴⁹

⁴⁹FBIS, *Daily Report*, Foreign Radio Broadcasts, Far Eastern Section, 3 January 1946, NARA, RG 262, Entry 25, Box 1.