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Mr. Lewis and Radio Free Europe

National Review surveys the conflict between Fulton Lewis Jr. and Radio Free Europe and proposes a course of action for common enlightenment . . .

AN EDITORIAL

If something is not done about it soon, the war between Fulton Lewis Jr. and Radio Free Europe may have unwelcome consequences. For one thing, the issues, as time goes by, are becoming so tangled as to make it more and more difficult to get to the bottom of them. Tempers, moreover, are hot. Radio Free Europe has been, and continues to be, under fire from other quarters. It was widely alleged a year ago that RFE's galvanizing broadcasts brought on the Hungarian uprising, and the subsequent carnage. In any case, the danger is that anti-anti-Communists and neutralists will exploit the situation to bring on results that neither Mr. Lewis nor RFE would welcome. It is time for anti-Communists to suggest a course of action; one which, because it is fair and constructive, might compel the support and cooperation of the two camps. We intend to make such a proposal here, after examining the nature of the problem.

Fulton Lewis Jr. began to broadcast his criticisms on October 31, 1957, some eight years after Radio Free Europe was founded. Mr. Lewis does not object, he has reminded his audience, to the "ideals" of Radio Free Europe; but he feels that, for a number of reasons, the organization is not living up to its posted principles. Night after night, week after week, month after month, he has been giving reasons to support his central contentions that Radio Free Europe is being gravely mismanaged, and that the line it takes in its broadcasts is ideologically unsatisfactory. Unquestionably he has undermined confidence in the organization on the part of most of his listeners and readers, and they are numerous. What is the objective of Mr. Lewis? Reform, compelled by a congressional investigation.

Radio Free Europe at times acts as though Fulton Lewis Jr. did not exist,

and at other times tears its hair in semi-public exhibitions of anguish. RFE has not publicly conceded that there is merit in any of the charges Fulton Lewis has made. Privately, it may be another matter: outsiders have no way of knowing. RFE's counteroffensive has been to pretend, for the benefit of those who are unaware of it, that the war does not exist; and for those who are concerned, to encourage the belief that Fulton Lewis Jr. is wildly irresponsible, but that RFE, alas, cannot make a conclusive public demonstration of his irresponsibility because of the character of its operations, which depend heavily, for their success, on secrecy. We can't hit back, they are saying in effect; and that is why we haven't annihilated Lewis.

Government Funds?

We come to the crux of the problem. It is considered indiscreet to speculate publicly on the extent to which RFE is a government-directed enterprise. For one thing, the Communists are constantly alleging this in an effort to reduce RFE's flexibility. For purposes of this analysis it is not necessary to assert or to deny RFE's dependence on Central Intelligence Agency funds. Conceivably it gets three quarters of its money (Lewis estimates it at \$20 million a year) from the CIA; conceivably it gets not a penny: the analysis is unaffected because it is obvious that without government sufferance, RFE could not operate.

Clearly RFE's bases in Munich and Lisbon, whence it transmits to countries behind the Iron Curtain, are leased to it by Germany and Portugal by arrangement with the American government. If the State Department, or in any case the White House, gave the word, the doors of RFE would close as inexorably as if the

State Department were dealing with one of its consular offices. Shortly after the Polish and Hungarian uprisings, for example, the State Department agreed, in conversations with the Soviet Union, to suspend RFE's provocative balloon program; and, dutifully, down came the balloons, illustrating the kind of authority the government exercises over RFE's operations.

But in international affairs, it appears to be important to be able to attach a certain plausibility, however superficial, to routine diplomatic affirmations, in this case the statement that CIA (i.e., the government) does not direct (even negatively) the policy of RFE. To strengthen that impression—and perhaps to reduce the drain on CIA funds—a great deal of trouble is taken to solicit funds from private corporations and individual citizens, a project undertaken every year by an organization called Crusade for Freedom, whose exclusive function it is to raise money for RFE.

Crusade for Freedom makes a prodigious campaign for funds, enlisting the efforts of a glittering roster of big-name sponsors. The campaign is regularly launched by the President himself. Heads of mighty industrial organizations take it from there, touring the country and making speeches, mostly to presidents of other large corporations. The harvest is good. Last year, for example, Standard Oil gave \$250,000. Other organizations give anywhere from \$500 to \$100,000. On top of that, newspaper boys collect pennies and dimes from their clients. The total amount raised is not revealed, but \$10 million appears to be a reasonable guess. The donations are, of course, tax exempt.

Rather a good demonstration, then, can be made in the course of contending that RFE is privately financed, as RFE officials stoutly in-

sist it is—therein observing if not the truth, at least the protocols. Fulton Lewis Jr. asserts that CIA puts up a large part of the money. But as we say, this is not a dispute that needs to be—or even should be—adjudicated; it is enough to bear in mind that, as lessor, the government has a veto power over RFE, and that therefore any criticism of RFE for conforming with American foreign policy is inapposite, since RFE presumably has no alternative. For example, if the Eisenhower Administration comes out for aid to Tito—as, regrettably, it has—it is unrealistic to suppose that RFE could get away with broadcasting analyses as to why aid to Tito is unwise. Fulton Lewis can, however, correctly protest the representations of Crusade for Freedom to anti-Communist donors; for Crusade is not above suggesting that Radio Free Europe, as an independent organization, can hew a tough anti-Communist line which the American government, weighted down by diplomatic and political inhibitions, could never do—even if it were so disposed. In other words, if RFE must adopt a friendly attitude toward Tito because the U.S. Government does, is it right to solicit anti-Tito dollars from Americans who assume that Radio Free Europe, an organization of perceptive anti-Communists, would never fall for the delusions that tend to bewitch our policy-makers?

RFE's refusal to publish reports on its intimate affairs cannot be assumed to confirm its connection with CIA. RFE can adduce altogether convincing reasons for keeping its operations secret. Under RFE cover, the organization presumably engages—let us certainly hope it does—in clandestine, quasi-conspiratorial anti-Communist operations. To put it another way, if it does not do so, with the singular opportunities open to it, its directors should be hanged. One must bear in mind, then, that RFE can reasonably refuse to ventilate its intimate operations on the ground that to do so would be to “blow” (a spy-word meaning to expose and thus render ineffective) its valuable operations.

We have arrived at a point where a crucial distinction needs to be made, and hereafter borne in mind. Some operations of RFE are secret, and cannot, without damage to them, be

publicly surveyed; but some are not, and therefore could be, without damage to anything except, possibly, a malefactor directly involved, properly investigated. RFE and Fulton Lewis Jr., it appears to us, have both failed to make that distinction as sharply as it should be made: RFE by applying the cloak of immunity to operations that appear to be self-confined and overt; Fulton Lewis by implying that everything RFE does bears public investigation. The distinction is not always easy to apply, to be sure. What may appear to an outsider wholly aboveboard may in fact be a painfully contrived cover for a clandestine enterprise. A publication may take a particular position on a particular issue for reasons that have nothing to do with the merits of the case—but because by taking that position, attention is distracted from Operation X; and so on. The fact that the distinction is not readily applied will figure in the proposal we make below.

Heated Words

In the current dispute between Fulton Lewis Jr. and RFE, what one might have expected to happen has, alas, happened: passion has crept in. Fulton Lewis Jr., RFE officials are saying, has been so outrageously irresponsible as to make preposterous the suggestion that we undertake a serious discussion with him. If any of my facts are off, Fulton Lewis Jr. answers, it is because RFE has refused to cooperate with me in checking the material I have, and in answering, responsibly, the charges that I have made.

And indeed, RFE has behaved strangely to say the least. Until a few weeks ago, the president of RFE, General Willis D. Crittenger, an old subordinate and friend of General Eisenhower, refused to see Fulton Lewis or to answer any communication or inquiry Fulton Lewis addressed to him. During Christmas week Mr. Gwyllim Price, at the time president of Westinghouse and president of Crusade for Freedom, made an appointment to see Fulton Lewis in New York. Lewis came up from Washington prepared to see Mr. Price, but Mr. Price cancelled the appointment and failed to make another one.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of letters have been written by listeners of Fulton Lewis to presidents of corporations in which they own stock, asking how the corporations justify, in the teeth of Fulton Lewis' revelations, making gifts to Crusade for Freedom. Inevitably the replies to the stockholders, some of them calm but most of them seething, are forwarded to Fulton Lewis Jr., and he has, in the choicer cases, read them over the air, thus understandably inflaming his audience. A lady who, as a consumer of Westinghouse products, wrote questioning the company's support of RFE, received a letter from Mr. Lester J. Marier, the secretary of the president, as follows:

I naturally regret that you have apparently accepted as gospel truth the tripe which Fulton Lewis Jr. has seen fit to write in his newspaper column and say over his radio program about the Crusade for Freedom . . . it is your privilege to place your confidence in whomever you wish. Personally I prefer to place my trust in the people who are directly responsible for the welfare and security of our country, rather than a washed-up third-rate columnist, who, with total disregard for the accuracy of his statements, by inference, innuendo, half-truth and misrepresentation is frantically striving to attract attention with the sole objective of bringing himself to the attention of an audience greater than the relatively meagre one he enjoys at the present time.

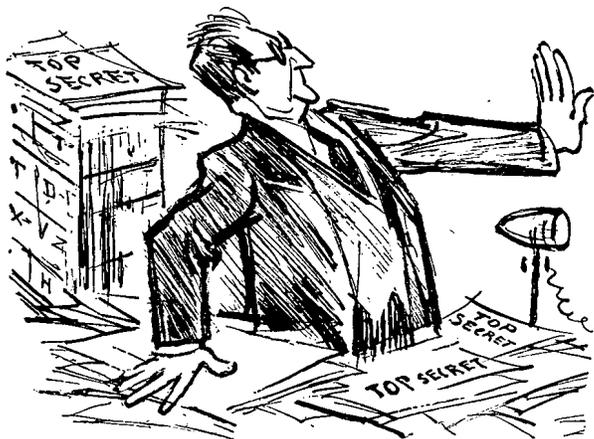
That is not the way to settle an argument; indeed, one might go so far as to say that is no way to address a lady; in any event, this is the kind of thing that is being lobbed back and forth.

Radio Free Europe has not in a corporate capacity taken part in the groin-and-eyeball fighting. Its official salvos have been restrained. On November 26, the Crusade issued a “Fact Sheet” “concerning charges of Fulton Lewis Jr. against Crusade for Freedom and Radio Free Europe.” Mr. Lewis, the memorandum began, had “for reasons unknown to the Crusade for Freedom” launched an attack based on “unfounded and erroneous charges” which Crusade was therewith refuting; and a nine-page memorandum followed. Two additional fact sheets have been issued, but their distribution has been limited; and the general impression has been one of official silence.

Silence, as any controversialist knows, can be as insulting as insults; and RFE's silence has clearly enraged Fulton Lewis' listeners, who construe it as a snub probably traceable to a terrified reluctance to examine the facts.

RFE's rebuttal of November 26 contained a few egregious misstatements which Lewis promptly exposed, thus discrediting, or attempting to do so by inference, the entire document. "Lewis," the memorandum stated, "indicates that various members of the RFE staff were 'Red plants.' There is no basis to Mr. Lewis' charges on security. The chief security officer of RFE was one of the founders, with Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, of the modern FBI, and accepted FBI procedures on screening are used."

Lewis submitted the memorandum to J. Edgar Hoover, who was manifestly upset by it, replying to Lewis



that the gentleman in question had been hired ten years after the founding of the modern FBI—and as a temporary typist. (He went on to become a special agent, and stayed with the FBI, performing satisfactorily, until he resigned in 1943.) "It would appear," Mr. Hoover wrote, "that the claim that Mr. Myers was one of the founders of the modern FBI might be placed in the category of 'literary license.' Sincerely, Edgar."

Big-Name Sponsors

Or consider Fulton Lewis' incessant charge that the name-sponsors of Crusade for Freedom know very little about what goes on in Radio Free Europe: "Whether they ever actually attend any board meetings,

I would be inclined to doubt." To which RFE answered: "The Crusade board members maintain an active interest [What constitutes "an active interest"? Lewis shot back] in Crusade matters, meet regularly [What is "regularly"? Lewis asked] and are kept fully advised of [sic] operational matters. [Does that mean, Lewis asked, that they know about the charges he, Lewis, has raised? Or does their apparent ignorance of them indicate that being "fully advised" is in this case to be less well advised than Lewis believes it necessary to be, under the circumstances?] In addition, the Executive Committee meets frequently [There's another one of those ambiguous words, Lewis asserts] to consider every phase of Crusade's operation. [Crusade, Lewis rightly points out, merely raises money and turns it over to RFE. The point is, what do Crusade's directors know about how that money is

spent?] Eugene Holman, Chairman of the Board of Standard Oil Company (N.J.), is Chairman of the Executive Committee. Other members are Gwyllim Price, President and Chairman of the Board of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Crusade; Dr. Frank Stanton, President of CBS, Inc.; Mr. Earl Newsom, senior partner of Earl Newsom and Company; General Willis D. Crittenger, President of the Free Europe Committee, Inc.; Mr. Cecil Morgan, Vice President of Esso, and Mr. Arthur Page, President of Crusade, and consultant to A.T. and T."

So what? Fulton Lewis asks, justifiably annoyed by the tendency of RFE to name-pull as a means of meeting criticism. Certainly the reliance of RFE apologists on Big Names has been aggravating, and perhaps the truest generalization Fulton Lewis has made is that the presumption is very much against personal familiarity, by these busy men, with the intimate life of Radio Free Europe. The President of Socony Mobil Oil, which has been giving Crusade \$50,000 a year, informed a dissident stockholder that "[RFE]

has the support of our government. Pending any change by our government in its attitude towards Crusade for Freedom, we expect to continue contributing to the organization." "You will note," wrote an executive of Chrysler to a stockholder, "[the] endorsement of the Crusade by President Dwight Eisenhower . . ." ". . . the Crusade," wrote Westinghouse to the abused lady mentioned above, "has the strong support not only of President Eisenhower and the numerous prominent industrial leaders of the country whose names you will find [in the enclosed literature] . . . but of the 76 social, fraternal, religious, veteran and labor organizations mentioned, representative of every segment of American population. I ask you, Mrs. Cox, do you suppose that the President of the United States, the other individuals named, constituting a major segment of the industrial backbone of this country, and these 76 patriotic and God-fearing organizations would lend their endorsement, their support and their dollars to a discredited organization? . . . Do you believe that this endorsement, this support, is given blindly?" To which Fulton Lewis, submitting to a rhetorically irresistible temptation, answered "Yes, I do suppose that the President of the United States and the other individuals named, and the 76 patriotic, God-fearing organizations would lend their endorsement, their support and their dollars to a 'discredited' organization—because they're doing it in this case."

Unsupported Generalizations

Now the fact that Radio Free Europe is *not* (at any rate, not yet) a "discredited organization" does not detract from the essential validity of Fulton Lewis' contention that Big Name sponsorship does not guarantee purity. He has not yet done so, but he could in this connection profitably recall the impressive sponsorship of the Institute of Pacific Relations during a period when, history has established, its effective leadership was pro-Communist.

This tack has hurt RFE. It does not require much sophistication to deduce that the chances are a million to one against Eisenhower having any idea whatever as to the nature

of Lewis' criticisms of RFE; so that a Presidential testimonial is no more meaningful—and no more unexplainable—than would have been a tribute to the Department of the Interior by President Harding on the eve of Teapot Dome.

Lewis, on the other hand, will sometimes make a charge—or endorse someone else's—and not return to it if it appears to have been effectively discredited; as, for example, his suggestion early in November that only one per cent of Iron Curtain escapees had ever heard, or heard of, RFE. He has not repeated or withdrawn that charge, which is evidently false. Fulton Lewis Jr. is most vulnerable to the charge that, by imprecise formulations, and unsupported generalizations—e.g., RFE is a “discredited organization”—he has in effect condemned the entire enterprise, and this without a complete survey of the amount of good it is doing; without, that is to say, a detailed examination of the RFE broadcasts themselves, or of the extent to which they nourish or inform anti-Communist sentiment on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In short, whereas Fulton Lewis may have made out a case for reform, he can be construed as calling for abolition.

The Charges

What is Fulton Lewis Jr. saying about Radio Free Europe? Most of his charges fall under one of two headings. The first is maladministration. RFE, says Lewis, is extravagant, and its personnel policy is indefensible. Second is the charge of ideological insufficiency: RFE is anti-Stalinist, but not anti-Communist. There is no room to catalogue the specific charges, merely to give a few specimens.

RFE is vastly overstaffed (says Lewis). It has over 2,000 employees, far more than are necessary to do the job. In New York, young Ivy Leaguers pursue incestuous employment policies, giving fat jobs at fat salaries to other Ivy Leaguers, and disporting themselves as “Rover boys” romping about the world as amateur intriguers. In Munich, life is hedonistic in luxurious, RFE-owned apartment buildings. Spending is profligate, and staffs are swollen.

Security is bad, with the result that

RFE is vulnerable to penetration by Communists. Indeed, several employees of RFE have “redefected” to Communism, and have broadcast attacks on RFE, raising the possibility that they were plants.

The Czech desk (and to a lesser extent the Rumanian desk) is manned by Marxists who address their listeners out of basically Marxist context. Moreover, some of these men are personally loathed by anti-Communist Czechs in virtue of unsavory political records piled up before the 1948 coup. These men make the mistake which Radio Free Europe characteristically makes: they concentrate on encouraging Titoist tendencies in the satellite nations, instead of fomenting antipathy to the generic disease of Marxism. That, Mr. Lewis believes, RFE was designed to do, and should be doing; and that is what people who give to the Crusade believe, mistakenly, that they are supporting.

How effective is RFE? Lewis drastically disputes RFE's claims about the number of persons who listen to its programs.

Finally, there is the case that fits in no particular category, but is of considerable interest in the area of civil liberties: the hair-raising case of Fletcher Bartholomew. Bartholomew was a meteorologist with Radio Free Europe. In 1956, preparing to return to Minneapolis with his wife and three children, Bartholomew submitted some detailed complaints against RFE in a confidential memorandum of which he made three copies, sending one to Allen Dulles in Washington, a second to the head of RFE in New York, a third to the U.S. Consul in Munich. A few days before his scheduled departure he was lured into the psychiatric ward at a U.S. Army hospital and forcibly detained. A few days later, having first been moved to Frankfurt, he was flown to the United States in a strait jacket. There he was promptly released. Lewis asserts that his detention was illegal even assuming Bartholomew were insane, which he is not; and implies that the purpose of the manhandling was to intimidate Bartholomew, and to impugn his credibility.

Fletcher Bartholomew, RFE contends, was a psychiatric case, and he was handled with reference to the

best “interests of Mr. Bartholomew himself, the United States government and Free Europe Committee.”

Survey Suggested

NATIONAL REVIEW proposes that a committee be established to survey the work of Radio Free Europe. The committee should have three or possibly five members who are students of Communism. One member should have experience in financial affairs, giving his special attention to the administration of RFE. The following list suggests a roster from which the committee might be drawn: James Burnham, Sidney Hook, Will Herberg, Eugene Lyons, Charles Lowry, Thomas Murray, Max Eastman, Ralph de Toledano, William Henry Chamberlin, Christopher Emmet, Robert Morris, Francis McNamara, Stephen Possony, Robert Strausz-Hupé, Louis Nichols, Henry Kissinger—to mention only a few who are obviously qualified.

Responsible anti-Communists should make every effort to persuade Radio Free Europe to submit to the committee's investigation and to make available to it confidential figures and reports, on the understanding, of course, that confidential information would not be publicized. Fulton Lewis Jr. should be persuaded to accept the committee's findings as to the net value to the West of Radio Free Europe's operations.

The committee's report would publicly discuss those of Fulton Lewis' charges that can be discussed without hazard to security. It would pass judgment on their merit, and call on Radio Free Europe to reform in areas where reform is indicated.

In the event that Fulton Lewis or Radio Free Europe declined to cooperate, the committee should consider the wisdom of proceeding anyway, surveying whatever data are available, and making a report for the guidance of perplexed anti-Communists.

The plan for an independent committee to survey the operations of Radio Free Europe has the explicit endorsement, at this writing, of the Rev. John F. Cronin, Max Eastman, Arnold Beichman, Rep. Alvin Bentley, Sol Stein, Marvin Liebman, Herbert Philbrick, Sidney Hook, Frank Hanighen, and Christopher Emmet.