

**VISEGRAD SCHOLARSHIP
AT OPEN SOCIETY
ARCHIVES**

SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

**COMMUNICATING TO UNFREE SOCIETIES: RADIO FREE EUROPE / RADIO
LIBERTY AND SOVIET MOLDAVIA**

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Introduction

The mass media played an important role during Cold War and broadcast was one of the most efficient Occident's tools against the Socialist block. This phenomenon was called „the Battles of Western Broadcasting”, „Waves of Liberty” or the „Voice of Hope”. One of such broadcasts was Radio Liberation (1949-1964) since 1975 renamed in Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which brought the news in various languages of the West to the Socialist countries and the USSR.

Soviet Moldavia has not to own the RFE/RL Service, like other Soviet Republics and was covered by Romanian Service (RFE) and Russian Services (RL). The situation of Soviet Moldavia was rather peculiar during the Cold War, because of its geographical position and the special relations between the USSR and Romania. The Communist regime and its institutions developed a real ”fighting campaign” against Western broadcasts (Voice of America, RFE/RL, Deutsche Welle, Radio France, etc.). However, the citizens of Moldova used the opportunity to listen to these broadcasts as an alternative source of information. Some of them even sent letters to RFE/RL and tried to inform them about the real situation in Moldova.

To understand better the activity of RFE/RL and its impact on Moldavian society, we need to explore archival documents and oral history. By this project, I intend to develop a series of studies on this issue and publish a collection of documents selected from various archives, including the ones from the OSA.

Project Objectives

My project has a multi-disciplinary approach which includes most of the research areas covered by the OSA, but it is mostly linked with two of them:

- Truth-seeking in a polarized world and transformation of societies, because I will discuss how the RFE/RL contributed to the transformation of totalitarian societies and the end of Communism in Eastern Europe;
- Producing and organizing knowledge, since the project itself is producing knowledge, one of the project objectives is to analyse how the knowledge and information were organized and produced by RFE/RL for unfree societies.

Questions

- To what extent and in which questions was the approach towards Soviet Moldavia different within Romanian and Russian RFE/RL Services?
- What was the impact of the RFE/RL broadcast on the “Bessarabian question” (political dispute between the Soviet Union and Romania over the territory that in most part overlapped with Soviet Moldavia)?
- What role did the Moldavian émigrés employed by RFE/RL play in shaping the RFE/RL agenda towards Soviet Moldavia?
- How was the RFE/RL shaping the perception of Soviet Moldavia among listeners behind the Iron Curtain?

Execution and results

As a short-term Visegrad scholar at the Open Society Archive, I have worked with documents related to the activity of the Research Institute of RFE/RL. Collected information will help me to analyze the role, quality and impact of the RFE/RL broadcast on Soviet Moldavia issues.

During my fellowship, I met and discuss various aspects of my research project with OSA colleagues and fellows. At the same time, I delivered a presentation „Communicating to Unfree Societies: Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty and Soviet Moldavia” during OSA weekly seminars which were followed by very useful discussions.

From the statistical point of view, I have checked over **30 archive boxes** and copied **8094 archive documents**. I was interested especially in documents from the Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute - HU OSA 300. The most important documents for my research I discovered in the following boxes:

1. 300-5-180 Subject Files of Ann Sheehy, Moldova 1989-1990, Box 44 – 697 docs
2. 300-80-1 Old Code Subject Files – Box 552 – 1109 docs
3. 300-80-1 Old Code Subject Files – Box 554 – 1066 docs
4. 300-60-1:180, Ethnic minorities / Bessarabia 1949-1962; 1963-1965, and 1966-1969 – 761 docs
5. 300-60-1:181, Ethnic minorities / Bessarabia 1968-1973, 1974-1975, 1976-1977, 1978-1981, 1978-1975 – 935 docs
6. 205-4-70 Romanian Subject Files – Box 99 -1088 docs

Vlad Socor did a great contribution as a scholar at the Research Institute of RFE/RL, including topics related to Soviet Moldavia (HU OSA 300-5-190, Records of Vlad Socor). But because of the time limit, I could check just a few boxes. Another important part of the RFE/RL archive is microfilms, which were not accessible during my visit. So, I consider that OSA contain an amazing number of documents related to the activity of RFE/RL and I am sure that will come back to continue my research.

Products

From the long-term perspective, the outcome of the project will be a book. But after this short fellowship, I am working on an article which is planned to be published next year. At the same time, I have collected an important number of documents, which I will use for my research and teaching courses at my home university.

Acknowledgement

The study trip to the OSA gave me an excellent chance to benefit from an impressive international academic network, established new contacts with OSA scholars and reinforced partnership relations with OSA.

The work in the archive was easy and I received all the requested documents very fast. The OSA staff is very friendly, answered all my questions and solved all questions concerning access to the documents. The weekly lunches and seminars were a great occasion to discuss various issues with OSA staff members and fellows.

Thank you so much for this great opportunity to work in the Open Society Archive and do research on my project related to Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty and Soviet Moldavia.

Chişinău, Republic of Moldova
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