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Exiled Airwaves: The Greek Communist Radio Station *Voice of Truth* Based in Bucharest Addressing the *Gastarbeiter* in West Germany, 1960–1968

Abstract

By studying more local, small-scale radio stations with transnational reach, such as "Voice of Truth," media history scholarship can better understand the complexity of media landscapes during the Cold War. The production team of the exiled Greek communist radio station based in Bucharest worked to reconcile grand Marxist theories and ideological frameworks with the daily experiences of their target audience, namely Greek labour migrants in West Germany. Seeking to be at the avant-garde of informed resistance, the producers opened as many channels as possible to receive and transmit information, often in remarkable ways given their limited resources. By closely monitoring sociopolitical affairs, triangulating information, and reinforcing transnational ties, the exiled communist radio station proved to be more multivocal and less sclerotic than we might imagine.

Keywords

Radio | Greece | Germany | Cold War | Migration

Introduction

Naming a radio station 'the Voice of Truth' would sound quite preposterous in the pluralistic media world of today. However, in the Cold War reality of opposing regimes of truth, this exiled Greek communist radio station in Bucharest was allowed to make claims to an almost dogmatic monopoly of truth. Initially operating as the illegal radio station of the Democratic Army during the Greek Civil War under the name 'Free Greece,' it interrupted its broadcasts after the 6th Plenary Session of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) in 1956, only to resume broadcasting from Bucharest on 1 March

1958, under the name 'Voice of Truth' (*Η φωνή της αλήθειας*, literally 'the voice of the truth'). For ten years, between 1958 and 1968, its popularity grew as it expanded to five daily broadcasts, while its production team was split between the headquarters in Bucharest, Romania and the broadcasting station in Halle, East Germany. Among its shows, I focus on those addressing the Greek labour migrant community in West Germany, in order to add a new layer to the history of Cold War broadcasts across the Iron Curtain and to examine how an exiled radio station based in the Eastern Bloc managed to reach co-nationals living in the West.

Taking advantage of the almost complete archive of Voice of Truth broadcasts up to 1968 preserved in the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), I focus on the scripts of the shows 'Show for the Expatriates,' 'The Voice of Truth to Working Greeks Abroad' and 'For Greek Immigrants and Seafarers,' all broadcast every Sunday at 9 a.m. The nature of these sources allows me to trace the evolution of the content and tone, as well as the information that the production team had at its disposal, but it sets a limitation on gauging the reach and impact of the show on its audience, given that there are no listeners' letters included in the collection.

For the period under study, it was an external event, the Prague Spring crisis of August 1968, that had a deep impact on the operation of the radio, forcing its production team to take a stance and ultimately leading to the station's relocation to Halle.[1] The source collection for the Halle years between 1968 and 1974 has not been preserved in the ASKI archive, though it may yet be discovered in some German archive. For this article, I limit the study to the years 1960 to 1968, an already eventful period in Greek political life that offers an opportunity to trace changing attitudes to radio broadcasting.

Keeping in mind the limitations of the sources but also the privilege of accessing the full daily scripts of the show, the research questions that structure my investigation are as follows: What sources of information were available to the broadcasters, and what difficulties did they face as an exiled radio station? What was the content of the radio show, and how did it change over the decade in the context of the political events affecting Greece? What was the scope for Cold War propaganda, and what subtle ways were used to spread it through radio?

The main ambition of this article is to stretch the scale of migrant radio and diasporic media beyond the usual nexus between homeland and host country by including more unconventional information stakeholders, such as political refugees addressing labour migrants in our case. As research has shown, radio is de facto a transnational medium due to its capacity to quickly transcend national borders and address geographically dispersed communities simultaneously. More than that,

it is a mode of cultural production based on both sound and language that can strengthen local bonds within transnational communities. Finally, it is a transnational institution generating transnational communities of practice and standardising transnational sounds.[2]

The importance of historical contextualisation is illustrated by a recent volume titled *Media Tactics in the Long Twentieth Century,* which asks, among other questions, about the relationship between media and power in society, how influential the media are, who controls them and how effective the aims and operations of key media agents are.[3] Senders and receivers of media communicate within and about the society they share and, to a degree, shape it.[4] The broad-ranging theme of 'Silenced Voices' was recently explored in an edited volume that examines the complex dynamics of voice suppression and enablement across different media landscapes.[5] Radio across borders often involves broadcasting outside legal frameworks to challenge established networks and corporations. Other instances of cross-border radio include pirate, underground and clandestine radio channels and programmes, as well as radio as a means of public diplomacy.[6]

Beyond its relevance to migrant media, the article aims to contribute to the field of Cold War media, since the ideological schism runs through not only the content of the broadcasts but also their very *raison d'être*. As an exiled communist radio station addressing an audience of the same ethnic community located across the Iron Curtain, Voice of Truth provides an example of an internalised Cold War conflict played out on the airwaves of cross-border radio. As historian Roberto Sala argues, the so-called 'ether war' was an integral part of the propaganda struggles between East and West.[7] Radio was arguably the Cold War medium *par excellence*. With the onset of the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union notably expanded their foreign radio broadcasting capacity, and over time these 'surrogate radios' became important components of the mediascape in socialist countries.[8]

International broadcasters did not merely send their messages abroad; they also listened closely to broadcasts from other countries and used that information to shape their own output. The spheres of 'information' and 'intelligence' were closely intertwined and radio monitoring reflected both ideological motives and geopolitical circumstances.[9] As Linda Risso notes, 'radio broadcasts could penetrate the Iron Curtain and directly address the "enemy". Given the widespread listenership and the perceived destabilising role of Western programming, it is not surprising that the Communist regimes spent considerable time, energy and resources fighting foreign broadcasts through jamming, censorship and a renewed propaganda effort of their own national radio broadcasts.'[10]

By including a radio station like Voice of Truth in the Cold War media landscape, scholarship can gain insights into different modes of operation and influence beyond the American–Soviet bipolar framework. As a broadcaster representing a less widely spoken language such as Greek and operating under the close supervision of communist cadres, while struggling to differentiate itself by aiming for a less dogmatic and more independent flow of information, Voice of Truth was able to broadcast as far as West Germany and compete for migrant audiences with state-backed radio stations such as Bavarian Radio in Munich.

To give the reader an understanding of the complex Cold War realities surrounding Greece, the first part contextualises the radio broadcasts within the contemporaneous sociopolitical and media landscape. The second part focuses on the content of the shows and the sources of information, explaining the margins for manoeuvre the production team had. The third part emphasises the motives shaping the show's stance on current affairs and the scope for propaganda and ideological infiltration. The fourth part examines how regime change in Greece affected the station, responding to the junta's censorship and supporting resistance from abroad. Finally, the conclusion highlights the main conclusions of this case study and the pathways it opens towards the inclusion of more local radio stations with transnational reach.

Organisation and operation of an exiled radio station in the Eastern Bloc

While World War II was still raging in Europe and the Pacific, the onset of the Greek Civil War in December 1944 is often seen as the beginning of the Cold War. Although its influence on living conditions was significant, its impact on political realities and the wider social atmosphere proved profound and long lasting. The historian Stathis Kalyvas, who has written extensively on civil wars, divides the Greek Civil War into three phases, the last of which culminated in a renewed full-scale Communist insurgency that resulted in their definitive defeat in 1949.[11]

It has been argued that the end of the civil war in 1949 signalled the gradual pacification of Greek society. Bridging the political schism required bringing the Left back to parliament while remaining aligned with the country's Cold War alliances.[12] The reconstruction of postwar Greek society overlapped with the anticommunist struggle and social life was largely shaped through collective participation in the 'suppression of the communist mutiny'.[13] A new, dividing cleavage was introduced between the so-called nationally conscious (ethnikofrones), 'healthy,' 'clean,' first-class

citizens and the 'sick,' second-class citizens, composed of defeated communists, leftists, sympathisers and nonroyalists.[14]

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was banned under Law 509/1947 and its exiled Central Committee established itself in Bucharest. From there, it supervised the Greek communist diaspora throughout the Eastern bloc and the party's covert activities in Greece.[15] The Left was still able to operate through EDA (Eniaia Dimokratiki Aristera, United Democratic Left Party), which became increasingly influential and acquired a voice of its own.[16]

The establishment of a propaganda apparatus with a major radio station was essential for the political agitation of the Communist Party both inside and outside Greece. The Cominform approved its creation in 1948 and chose Bucharest as its headquarters. In addition, there was another radio station in Moscow that had been broadcasting since 1947.[17] The director of the station had to be a member of the Central Committee of the KKE, so the editorial team had to be based in Bucharest at the seat of the Central Committee. The programmes were broadcast from the station in Halle in the GDR. The editorial team in Bucharest would transmit the content of the shows via *teleprinter* to the Halle team, who would be responsible for their on-air broadcasting. The precise location of the radio station was to remain secret for security reasons.

The new station, inaugurated in 1958, was as clandestine as its predecessor and adhered to the same underground operational rules. The Halle team was not permitted to appear under their real names and therefore had to use pseudonyms. They were also prohibited from corresponding with anyone. The Halle team comprised five individuals who were proficient in foreign languages, including Russian, German and French. Their office was equipped with a teletype, tape recorder, telephone and typewriter. The newspaper *Avgi*, the official organ of EDA and published by deputies Manolis Glezos and Leonidas Kyrkos, was the main source of information for the radio station. Although entire articles were often repeated in the broadcasts, the director of the station complained that, despite the newspaper gaining popularity through the airwaves, the major cadres of the party rarely commented on the radio show or assisted its mission.

The production team also received copies of centrist newspapers such as *To Vima, Ethnos, Makedonia, Tachydromos* and *Oikonomikos Tachydromos,* as well as more conservative papers including *Ellinikos Vorras, Estia, Apogevmatini, Ethnikos Kyrix* and *Vradyni*. Given that their communication had to be encrypted for security reasons, the two production teams exchanged information using code names, namely 'Stephan' from Halle to Bucharest and 'Viktor' from

Bucharest to Halle. The procedure was as follows: Bucharest sent the texts via teletype, which, after initial control, were typed and compared. The final text was then checked and read into the microphone to be recorded. The completed tape was subsequently transferred to the radio station in Leipzig, near Halle, to be broadcast. The programme opened with the folk song *An Eagle* played on the clarinet.

The Bucharest team consisted of the station's director, Zisis Zografos, a member of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party, who was primarily responsible for ideological issues and was also involved in the entire editorial process, as well as two additional editors, two sound technicians, three typists and a person to organise the archive. Their building in Bucharest was in poor condition and it took them six months to refurbish it into a functional workspace. The topics covered in the shows aligned with the decisions of the three previous party conferences, including national independence, peace, foreign affairs and democratisation, alongside themes such as workers' struggles, the national economy and the ideological promotion of the Greek Communist Party against malign enemy propaganda.[18]

Monitoring and rebroadcasting

Being in opposition and continuing their resistance from abroad meant that the Communist Party and its radio outlet had to monitor the Greek government's declarations and decisions closely in order to formulate an informed critique and adopt a clear stance on current affairs. The specificity of the show for migrants required locating news relevant to their life circumstances both in the homeland and abroad, contextualising their situation within a broader framework of capitalist exploitation. In the following paragraphs, we provide examples from the Greek press and subsequently continue with radio commentaries inspired by foreign media pieces.

The first example comes from 9 March 1961, when the station broadcast material from a report published by an economist in an Athens magazine concerning the living conditions of Greek migrants in Germany. The prevailing impression was that the migrants were disillusioned as soon as they entered their workplaces abroad, realising the stark contrast between the idealised image created by the glossy leaflets they had read and their own hopes and expectations versus reality. The reporter observed that 'that's the "heaven" to which the government and its organs push the unemployed'.

Some months later, on 2 August 1961, the broadcast turned to demographic data released by the National Statistical Service of Greece, which, according to the speaker, contradicted the Minister of Labour's optimistic claim that migration levels were normal. In fact, the figures revealed a dramatic increase, prompting the station to warn that 'this national wound, which has always been a shame and disgrace for all the oligarchic governments, is now degrading into a real gangrene during the years of Karamanlis' rule, and there is the danger it may become a real bleeding for the nation when Greece enters the European Economic Community and half the working population of the country would migrate (...). Migrating is not a solution to the youth's tragedy, with consequences for the whole population. Survival and well-being can only be found in the struggle for bread and work in the homeland, in order to get rid of the Karamanlis carcinoma, for a democratic turn that will make national profit from the national riches.'

As the quotation above shows, a pathologisation of migration was common in the vocabulary of the Left. Migration was depicted as a wound that deteriorated and became a 'gangrene' that would only worsen, turning into a 'real bleeding'. In order to restore the health of the patient-nation, the cancer cells had to be removed, that is, the right-wing government of Karamanlis had to be overturned. Survival and well-being were presented as achievable only through the struggle for bread and work, not abroad but in a thriving Greece. In another instance, drawing from the sixth issue of the magazine *Neos Kosmos* under the title For Migration and the Migrants, the station communicated the official position of the KKE on migration.

As shown in the broadcast of 17 March 1963, another trope used by the Left to describe labour migration to the West was the so-called slave market. The station referred to the extreme exploitation of workers abroad, illustrated by the case of a 25-year-old woman who returned from Germany having lost her mental health. She was presented as the antipode of 'the Karamanlis government radio and the multi-headed propaganda apparatus that loses no chance to advertise the presumably benign conditions at the slave bazaars of Adenauer and the great 'benefits' for the migrants.'

A few months before that, on 15 January 1963, the station cited the conservative newspaper *Ellinikos Vorras*, published in Thessaloniki. Although this may seem unusual, the intention was to show that even pro-government newspapers could not hide the realities on the ground. The central point of the article was that the migrants were left alone, the state caring only about the remittances it would receive from them. Although the government placed a mediator in Munich to facilitate

contact between employers and employees, it took no further action, offering little beyond empty assurances. The journalist ended his article with the phrase 'Greece never dies,' and the Voice of Truth commentator added that Greeks do not die either; yet this did not imply that they should be expected to bear their burdens alone and helplessly under the neglect of their own state.

Apart from the Greek printed media, the production team monitored foreign radio broadcasts, such as Radio Prague and Radio Moscow. For instance, on 8 March 1961, the station drew on material from a Radio Prague programme on urbanisation and rural depopulation in Czechoslovakia and Greece. According to the journalist Pavel Krol, there was a movement from the rural areas to the cities, but this did not mean that the countryside was lagging behind. On the contrary, Czechoslovak households were equipped with TV antennas and washing machines, and even cooking robots. It was not uncommon for former stables to be used as garages for farmers' cars or motorcycles. In Greece, more than 335,000 people left the rural regions, of whom 150,000 settled in Athens, 100,000 migrated abroad, and the rest were spread across other Greek cities and towns.

The reporter himself visited Greece and was struck by the stark contrast between the luxury apartment blocks and expensive cars in the streets of Athens and the lamentable poverty of the Greek countryside. The relative Czechoslovak experience of urbanisation was attributed to the creation of industrial posts, where workers were constantly sought among rural dwellers, together with the mechanisation of agriculture through the extensive use of tractors and the collectivisation of production via farmers' associations. In Greece, the luxury villas and cars of Athens's urban residents were said to be built on the hard work of Greek farmers. The problem of depopulation of the rural areas towards the big cities and foreign countries stemmed from the capitalist system, and migration was portrayed as worsening rather than alleviating it. The vague promises of the ruling elites regarding the development of the rural areas were therefore not credible.

Czechoslovakia also hosted a significant number of Greek political refugees who published their own newspaper called *Agonistis* (*Fighter*). The station drew on its material on 20 February 1965, featuring an article describing the impressions of a political refugee travelling in Yugoslavia and meeting Greek workers from West Germany during the train ride between Belgrade and Skopje.

Moscow Radio was another source of information for the Voice of Truth, which on 21 September 1962 broadcast a speech by a university lecturer in economics on Greek migrants in West Germany. According to the professor, the migration scheme was presented as a 'friendly collaboration' between countries of the European Common Market and a blessing for Greece. However, from a purely

economic point of view, the 60,000 Greek workers in Germany benefited the German capitalists and generated surplus value there rather than in their own country. They also lived in slums and barracks, even in the former Dachau concentration camp; they had no political rights, and when they organised demonstrations and strikes, many of them ended up imprisoned.

Regarding the poor housing conditions, on 16 November 1964, the broadcast reproduced parts of an article in *Berliner Rundschau* about the exploitation of Greek migrants by landlords in West Germany. The migrant workers were said to be renting slum dwellings at prices up to 200 times the normal rate. However, when the landlords were taken to court, they were acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence.

The newspapers of the West German trade unions were also a valuable source of information for the radio broadcast, primarily to monitor the realities of Greek migrant workers in the host country and to inform them about their rights. For example, on 10 April 1965, the station read an article from the newspaper *Free Syndicates* on the importance of the participation of foreign workers in elections for trade union committees and boards. Similarly, on 19 November 1966, the station brought to listeners' attention an article published by the *IG Metall* newspaper on the intervention of Greek right-wing deputies against Greek workers in Germany. The commentary noted that the article had garnered wide publicity, as it was reproduced in many West German newspapers and other international news agencies.

First-hand information and outspoken critique

The mid-1960s were a period of increasing political tensions and polarisation. Mass mobilisation, demonstrations and strikes regularly dominated the headlines. As the years went by, the Greek Gastarbeiter began to organise themselves in communities that corresponded mainly to their political affiliations with parties in the homeland.[19] Each group competed for influence and visibility, and a kind of Cold War played out among the opposing communities. The radio programmes of the Voice of Truth sought to remain closely informed about the situation on the ground.

On 16 May 1964, the radio show presented the published results of a confidential report by the Bank of Greece on the employment and financial situation of Greek migrants, which concluded that Greeks were mostly employed in mines and construction sites rather than in industry. The government commented that perhaps it was not in the nature of Greeks to work in large industrial

units, and the radio speaker ironically remarked that, once again, the individual worker was to be blamed for their ignorance rather than the Greek state, which had abandoned them to the mercy of their exploiters. The next part referred to the 'orgy' of secret funds spent by the Karamanlis government on the surveillance of Greek migrants.

The main concern that emerged from the polarisation of the political climate was the state-sponsored surveillance and intimidation of leftist activists and democrats. When the right-wing government of Konstantinos Karamanlis was replaced in 1963 by a centrist government led by George Papandreou, investigations were launched to expose abuses of power committed during the previous administration. One example was the so-called Polychronis report, named after Leandros Polychronis, director of the Greek Ministry of Labour, which documented the situation of Greek workers in West Germany. On 14 April 1964, the Voice of Truth reproduced some of its findings, revealing 'one more facet of the neofascist regime of Karamanlis based on fear, terror and despicable anti-communist propaganda'. A few days later, on 19 April, the broadcast read out portions of the report's 68 pages, which uncovered the complex mechanism of surveillance and intimidation established in West Germany by the previous Greek government, described as an 'articulate, masterful, terrific in its conception and superb in its execution service of surveillance of Greek workers, to the point that it became a state within a state'.

On 30 July 1966, the station adopted strikingly radical language, describing the enemies of the democratic opposition in West Germany as 'people of the underground, agents of the American CIA, former SS and Gestapo members, together with Greeks – rats of the secret funds and the state budget'. According to the speaker, anti-communism was their ultimate refuge, and in its name Greeks, Germans and Americans enlisted underworld figures and secret-service bullies against Greek workers, branding every progressive activity as the work of agents of the Eastern Bloc in order to intensify their attacks with fabricated accusations.

Together with the wintry clouds in the German sky, the broadcast of 10 December 1966 noted the presence of 'black clouds of insecurity' brought about by rising unemployment and the financial crisis.[20] The economic miracle was beginning to fade, and optimism was giving way to anxiety. The Greek government, instead of addressing the pressing question of the returnees' prospects, continued to sell national resources and complied with the capitalists' demands to import foreign workers from Tunisia, Morocco and other countries in order to maximise profits through colonial-style practices of exploitation.

On 8 January, Voice of Truth reported that there were around 300,000 unemployed workers, and that the number could rise to 700,000 or even 800,000. The West German Minister of Labour, Kantzer, claimed that in the event of a financial crisis, all foreign workers would be expelled within three years. A worker commented that anxiety was widespread, and that when the workers left the factory at the end of their shift, they were no longer sure whether they would find their card in its place the next day or if it would already be at headquarters together with their dismissal papers. As the speaker said, 'it is not a coincidence that the ERE leader labelled migration as God's blessing. The blessing has now turned into a curse, though. The Greek migrants are once again living through the same nightmare as when they were forced to leave their homeland for foreign countries to seek better luck. Now, they voice their *J'Accuse* with mounting intensity against the governments that have done nothing so far to create employment opportunities for them.'

Repeatedly throughout January, February, March and April, the shows were dedicated to the issue of rising unemployment in West Germany and to the Greek government's apparent indifference to adopting measures for the reintegration of the returnees into the job market. This continued until 21 April, when unemployment seemed almost insignificant beside the new political storm that hit Greece: the colonels' coup d'état and the establishment of a seven-year military junta. In this new reality, what role could the radio play?

Bypassing censorship and supporting resistance against the junta

The colonels who seized power in Greece claimed to be foiling a communist coup, and they maintained the tacit support of the US and other NATO allies.[21] In the first days alone, seven thousand people were arrested and imprisoned, civil liberties were suspended, the press was censored, while political parties and unions were banned.[22] The attitude of Greek newspapers, which had enjoyed considerable freedom before the coup, varied widely. Some newspapers remained neutral, but some publishers closed their newspapers 'voluntarily' and left the country. Newspapers that challenged the regime directly, such as *Ethnos* and *Avgi*, were closed down. Among those that remained in circulation, some expressed their opposition in subtle ways.[23]

Although the Greek Communists depended on the Eastern Bloc's support for their survival, they found themselves in the uneasy position of having to reconcile their ideological principles with their comrades' realpolitik of 'peaceful coexistence' with the junta.[24] As the social historian Nikolaos

Papadogiannis noted, 'the condition of the Greek left-wingers deteriorated significantly in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.'[25] The junta stripped many left-wingers of their Greek citizenship by cancelling their passports.[26] On 17 June 1967, the radio show addressed the issue of passport cancellations as a threat voiced by the junta's Minister of Labour, Lekas, during a talk on the Greek-language programme of Bavarian Radio, as well as the practice observed at the consulate in Hamburg, where the consul refused to renew the passport of a worker.

On the occasion of May Day, the Voice of Truth broadcast reports on the various demonstrations and gatherings against the junta on West German soil, along with appeals from different associations and unions, such as the Friends of EDA and the EDHN (Socialists) of Hamburg, as well as the Greek Communities Union of West Germany, which called on listeners to 'destroy the fascist monster that has raised its head again in our homeland.' A similar mobilisation was reported on 28 May 1967, the day scheduled for democratic elections before the coup d'état. According to the speaker, the largest demonstration took place in Düsseldorf, bringing together more than 10,000 Greek migrants from the surrounding industrial cities, with participation from prominent figures in the West German local administration, including representatives of trade unions and the Minister of Justice of Rhineland-Westphalia.

On 3 November 1967, the station broadcast the response of the Greek women of Hamburg, who, having learned through the programme about the struggles of the Women of the Patriotic Front (affiliated with the Communist Party of Greece), expressed their solidarity by organising information campaigns and fundraising efforts to support the women in Greece, both materially and morally. In December, several broadcasts were dedicated to the violation of human rights in Greece, detailing the arrest of 1,500 citizens by the junta, their imprisonment and exile, and the mobilisation of various anti-dictatorial unions and associations in a public discussion about the restoration of democracy in Greece.

The sources that informed the radio were often West German newspapers, as seen in the broadcast of 2 September, which addressed the bullying of democratic workers by two para-state extremist organisations, as reported by the Süddeutsche *Zeitung*. These extremists were recruited and supported by the Greek secret services, while West German trade unions and public opinion stood by the fighting Greek workers. On 6 September, the source was the West German television broadcasting an interview with Greek actress Melina Mercouri, who had been stripped of her Greek citizenship due to her resistance to the junta from abroad. Notably, West German television allowed her interview to

be conducted in Greek to address the Greek migrants present in the country. Another renowned cultural figure, the composer Mikis Theodorakis, who also served as president of the Lambrakis Youth, was also arrested by the junta, and several broadcasts were dedicated to gatherings and concerts supporting his cause.

On 18 December 1967, the broadcast commented on a programme referred to as the Cologne Radio show—almost certainly the Greek-language service of Deutsche Welle, led by the journalist Vassos Mathiopoulos—entitled Greek Tragedy, Second Act. The programme discussed the exile of King Constantine and predicted that the junta would harden its stance in response to the Greek people's resistance and the mounting criticism from foreign governments. The Voice of Truth presented these assessments as confirmation that the dictatorship was isolated internationally and increasingly dependent on repression at home. It also highlighted the significance of foreign media in shaping public opinion about the situation in Greece, contrasting their reporting with the tightly censored domestic press.

To appreciate the limitations of our evidence, it is useful to recall that Radio Free Europe employed an unorthodox method of interviewing listeners to gather information about its clandestine audiences inside the target countries. It drew on the Western perspective of individual defectors to better understand how deeply subjective stories of clandestine listening were collected, shaped and used in the ideological battle between East and West.[27] In this case, no such interviews survive, but some broadcasts did include listeners' letters.

From the show on 5 August 1967 and for the following months, an introductory note summarising the programme's content was added to the beginning of each broadcast. It read: 'In today's show, you will listen to news from the homeland, news about the anti-dictatorial struggle of the migrants, an essay from our collaborator Orestis titled "Messages", and migrants' letters to our station alongside songs they requested.'

Regarding the listeners' letters, on the same day, the speaker commented that 'many listeners' letters make their way to us through various channels, including those from migrants working in different countries of Western Europe. The Greek migrants, like our other listeners, praise the role of our station in our people's struggle against the dictatorship, describe movingly the reach of our voice wherever there are Greeks, offer critical comments regarding the content and style of our shows, and express their deep anti-dictatorship sentiments. They also ask us to play records for them and their friends.'

In the following broadcast on 12 August 1967, the speaker read a letter from an anti-dictatorship council in West Germany praising the station: 'After the royal-fascist coup d'état of 21 April in our country, your station has been the greatest and most important information provider. It gives us courage and determination in the hard but decisive struggle that all sane-thinking people are leading against the royal-fascist regime.'

Conclusion

Voice of Truth, being an exiled communist radio station operated by political refugees and broadcasting to labour migrants situated on the other side of the Iron Curtain, constituted quite a complex constellation. It had to face many challenges, among which were the strict ideological line of the Greek Communist Party and its resulting distance from daily reality in Greece, making it hard to gauge the pulse of the audience. Its mission to popularise the Party's theses among the masses risked undermining its popularity, given that it often adopted a heavy intellectual tone without the lightness of a music programme or more general-interest topics. Furthermore, operating as an exiled station with security measures such as restricted communication with the outside world, split across two distant countries like Romania and East Germany, and with few operating members, the station was in an uncomfortable position when seeking to transmit its shows with the necessary speed and accuracy, often lacking reliable sources of up-to-date information.

The editorial team of the station made an admirable effort to adapt the shows to the changing times by closely monitoring the daily press across the political spectrum, both in Greece and in West Germany. It reproduced material from printed media that might not have had the reach that radio could offer, presenting it in a concise form with brief commentary, even when ideologically charged. Over time, it identified key issues affecting the migrants in West Germany and highlighted the political activities of leftist groups and unions within migrant communities. This became increasingly important during the period of the dictatorship in Greece, as the station acted as a platform for free speech and mobilisation. A commitment to responsible journalism gradually superseded ideological rigidity; the station recognised that, instead of merely being listened to, it also had to attend to the wishes and concerns of its audience. Through the diversification of sources and a greater openness, it created a two-way communication that constituted a democratic act in itself.

By studying more local or small-scale radio stations with transnational reach, such as Voice of Truth or *España Libre* (the Spanish equivalent, also based in Bucharest), media-history scholarship can gain a fuller understanding of the complexity of Cold War media landscapes. Moving beyond the bipolar focus on US-sponsored broadcasters such as Radio Free Europe or RIAS in Berlin, which promoted pro-Western narratives against the bulwark of Soviet censorship, media literature can be enriched by examining broadcasters representing exiled communities in smaller host countries. It is not necessary to speak of a 'periphery,' since the historical actors did not regard themselves as outsiders. On the contrary, they sought to reconcile overarching Marxist frameworks with the everyday experience of their audiences, both in the homeland and abroad. Positioning themselves at the forefront of informed resistance, radio producers opened every channel available to receive and transmit information in ways that were remarkable given their limited resources. Such case studies only reinforce the view that Cold War mediascapes were far more multivocal and less rigid than they are often portrayed.

Notes

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1. The KKE Exterior, headed by Kostas Koligiannis, celebrated the Warsaw Pact intervention, while the KKE Interior supported the opposition and identified Greece as the 'Czechoslovakia of the West.' This rift was also reflected in Voice of Truth, whose production team aligned themselves with the KKE Interior, disagreeing with the Party's uncritical adherence to the Soviet agenda. After the split within the KKE and the temporary suspension of its operation in 1968, the station moved to East Germany, where it remained in operation until 1974.
2. Golo Föllmer and Alexander Badenoch, *Transnationalizing Radio Research: New Approaches to an Old Medium* (transcript Verlag, 2018), 16.
3. Mats Cronqvist, Fredrik M. Norén, and Emil Stjernholm, eds., *Media Tactics in the Long Twentieth Century*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2024), 1, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032618326.
4. Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Shixin S. Lai, *Media and Society: An Introduction*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2024), 3, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032655109.
5. James Morrison and Sarah Pedersen, *Silenced Voices and the Media* (2024).

6. Tobias Hochscherf, Richard Legay, and Hedwig Wagner, "Radio Beyond Boundaries: An Introduction," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 39, no. 3 (2019): 431–38, https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2019.1647969.
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19. Democracy in Greece was gravely shaken after events of July 1965, when the Prime Minister George Papandreou was forced by the King to resign, and a succession of 'marionette -governments' took office. The new government was formed by defectors from the Centre Union, which is why the crisis became known as "apostasy." For a month, numerous demonstrations were organised, leading to violent clashes with the police and hundreds arrests.
20. A short-lived recession in 1966–1967 resulted in high unemployment and lower real wages. When the West German economy began to falter in 1966, approximately 1.3 million foreign workers lost their jobs. In just a year, from the end of June 1966 to the end of June 1967, the number of Greek workers fell from 196,200 to 146,800.
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25. Anti-junta organisations also emerged from the Centre, such as Democratic Defence (Dimokratiki Amyna) and the Panhellenic Liberation Movement (Panellinio Apeleftherotiko Kinima, PAK). The major underground organisation of the Left was the Patriotic Anti-Dictatorial Front (Patriotiko Antidiktatoriko Metopo, PAM), which was established a few days after the coup by members of EDA and the Communist Party.
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Biography

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