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FREEDOM TO LISTEN

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SUMMARY

This paper was prepared by Dr. Arno Huth, a consultant to the United Nations. Its purpose is to draw the attention of members of the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press to the problems caused by and related to the reception of radio programmes, the size and structure of the world radio audience, and the different ways and means of receiving programmes and information.

The study leads to the conclusion that listener interest and listener participation in programme operations should be stimulated and encouraged. A more constructive attitude towards the "consumer" should be adopted in order to ensure that radio conveys information and programmes which are needed and wanted by the audience.

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/I. INTRODUCTION

## I. INTRODUCTION

Six thousand broadcasting stations are on the air, calling the peoples of the world day and night. While some of them operate only for a few hours, many broadcast their programmes during fifteen, twenty and sometimes even all the twenty-four hours of the day. They serve 180,000,000 radio receivers and 14 - 15,000,000 wired loudspeakers, in 145,000,000 homes and tens of thousands of assembly places. In addition, more than 14,000,000 television sets are tuned to 107 television stations in the United States and some 20 (experimental and regular) television stations in Europe and Latin America. Counting an average of two persons per home receiver in the United States, three persons per set in other countries with a high ratio of radio sets per population - like Sweden, Denmark and Czechoslovakia - four persons per set or loudspeaker in the majority of other European countries, five in most countries of the other continents, and seven to ten in under-developed areas, taking also into account collective reception which considerably increases the size of the audience, we can fairly assume that 600 million people now listen to the message of radio while over 65 million have access to both radio and television programmes.

These figures gain further in significance because of the fact that an important section of the world radio audience cannot be reached, or at least not regularly, by any other means of communication - either because the listeners live in isolated areas lacking roads and highways, printing presses and motion picture theatres, or because they are illiterate and less educated, and could not respond to any printed message even if they had an opportunity of receiving newspapers and magazines or of seeing documentary films and newsreels.<sup>1/</sup>

Four questions arise at the very start of any discussion of audience problems:

1. Do the six hundred million people now reached by radio enjoy freedom to listen or, on the contrary, is the reception and selection of programmes controlled and restricted?
2. Is the listener an active "partner" in radio operations, influencing programme policy and planning, or only a passive "consumer"?

<sup>1/</sup> According to the United Nations Statistical Yearbook, 1949-50, illiteracy in some countries is still as high as 65 to 90 per cent.

3. Why do three-quarters of the world's population not have access to information disseminated by radio?

4. What can be done to promote the freedom to listen, and to improve and expand existing radio facilities in order to bring information to areas and peoples not yet reached by any media of communication?

At present, the role, the listening habits and reactions of the audience are frequently ignored, at any rate on the international plane. This is a serious omission, indeed, since the political and educational development of the listeners, or at least the development of their political and cultural interests, largely depends upon the programmes and information they receive by radio. On the other hand, the attitudes and reactions of the radio audience - the largest audience of all the mass media - certainly influence world public opinion. It should not be forgotten either that radio is a tool of economic development, in highly developed countries where industry and trade make extensive use of radio to inform the public about their activities and products, as well as in less developed areas where radio is called upon to stimulate local industries and to help to create new markets.

Radio reception gives rise to a great number of problems many of which affect, directly or indirectly, the free flow of information. Consequently, their solution would promote freedom of information considerably. It would make it possible to open up new areas which are now isolated and to reach millions of people who are anxious to receive information, but who are not in a position to receive any as long as radio facilities are not put at their disposal, and as long as complex problems such as the supply of electricity, the re-charging of battery sets, the increase in power of radio stations or the establishment of radio links and cable connexions between central and local stations, cannot be solved. But even where sufficient radio facilities are available and where it would, in principle, be possible to supply enough radio sets or loudspeakers, large groups of the population have no access to radio, have no possibility to listen to radio programmes in their language, or no opportunity to select their "own" programme. Political, economic and social factors preclude many millions of people from receiving radio broadcasts - women who are not allowed to enter places where men assemble; minority groups whose needs and interests are frequently neglected by national stations; and, above all, the masses of poor

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and under-privileged who cannot afford to buy a receiver and to pay license fees or wire broadcasting subscriptions.

Any discussion of the problems concerning freedom of information would be incomplete without taking into account the reception of information transmitted by radio. While freedom of information could and should be promoted through measures at the "transmitting end" and through the removal of the many obstacles in the way of the gathering, the selection and distribution of news, much could also be done through practical and effective measures taken at the "receiving end" - by means of developing and improving reception conditions and facilities, offering more programmes especially adapted to the listener needs and interests, and promoting better listener relations and international audience research.

## II. THE WORLD RADIO AUDIENCE

### Size and composition

The world radio audience has increased a thousand-fold. It has also undergone many structural changes, and the interests of listeners are today as varied as the interests of the world's population. During the pioneering and experimental period of radio broadcasting, a small group of radio amateurs formed the enthusiastic and grateful public of the first stations, less interested in the content of the programmes than in the phenomenon of radio and the exciting possibility of receiving as many and as distant stations as possible. But with the widening of the audience and with the addition of listeners less familiar with or interested in technical problems, the content of programmes, the presentation of broadcasts and the artists or speakers participating became more and more the chief interest. From then on, the main problem of the broadcasters has been how to satisfy this mass audience without neglecting at the same time the interests and needs of specific groups, the educated, the women, children, students, soldiers, farmers, workers and other professions. Until this day, this problem has not been fully solved: where the masses get what they want, "minority" listener groups are frequently dissatisfied; where radio aims at intellectual and cultural interests, the need for relaxation and entertainment has frequently been disregarded.

With the spreading of radio from country to country and its universal introduction, different methods of reception had to be developed in accordance with the topography and the climate of a particular region, the technological and economic possibilities of a country, and the living conditions of the people. Consequently, there are today various methods of receiving a programme, either wireless or by wire, either direct or indirect, over different bands of radio frequencies and by means of different types of receivers, tube sets or battery sets, loudspeakers and public address systems, and occasionally primitive crystal receivers and headphones. In many cases the method of reception does not only correspond to the local technical and economic conditions, but also to the political or educational objectives of the authorities, or of the political party in power, which may or may not want certain programmes or certain types of programmes to be heard.

/World War

World War II has had considerable influence on the development of radio-communications, in view particularly of military needs. While it caused the destruction of dozens of radio stations and studios, it also caused the establishment of a great number of new and powerful stations some of which are located in areas which never had any before. It also accelerated the improvement of radio techniques, especially in the field of long-distance transmissions and international broadcasting, connecting countries and continents, linking the homeland with the armed forces overseas, and governments in exile with their own countries occupied by the enemy. It has thus been possible to develop a system of world-wide information - and a new significance has been conferred on broadcasting activities and on the problem of freedom of information in radiocommunication.

The number of radio receivers and wired loudspeakers reflects the importance of radio broadcasting and its potentialities as an instrument of information, while the constant increase in the number of sets demonstrates radio's increasing power, influence and popularity. Three figures illustrate this point: 56,765,000 sets and wired loudspeakers were in use in January 1936<sup>1/</sup>; more than 120,000,000 in January 1941<sup>2/</sup>; and, despite the extensive destruction of receivers during the war, there were over 190,000,000 radio sets and loudspeakers at the beginning of 1951 plus 12,000,000 television sets.<sup>3/</sup>

However, impressive as these figures are, they do not convey a true and complete picture of the world radio audience since they do not reflect the present inadequacies in the distribution of receiving facilities. While some areas have all the communication facilities they need, others are completely devoid of transmitting and receiving facilities. While in the United States of America "almost every home had a radio in April 1950", according to an official report of the U.S. Census Bureau, in several other countries only one out of one thousand homes is equipped with a receiving set. The same is true for the distribution of sets within the countries themselves, for urban centres as compared with rural

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. "La Radiodiffusion, Puissance Mondiale" by Arno Huth (p. 72), Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1937.

<sup>2/</sup> Cf. "Radio Today" by Arno Huth (p. 59) Geneva Studies, Vol. XII. No. 6 Geneva Research Centre, July 1942.

<sup>3/</sup> The data for 1950 and 1951 quoted in this memorandum are based on licence figures, supplied by government agencies or broadcasting organizations, and - for those countries where no licence system exists - on reliable estimates of the number of radio receivers and parts imported and of the number of sets manufactured or assembled locally.

areas, for the high-income groups as compared with lower-income groups. The disparity in this respect is all the more shocking as the countries and population groups which have no radios are those which need them most urgently.

Unfortunately, any study of the problems involved in radio reception is hampered by the lack of essential data concerning the number and the types of sets used. The statistics which have been published are frequently incomplete or outdated, and the conclusions drawn from these data erroneous and misleading, especially since figures for radio receivers, loudspeakers and headphones are used without much discrimination.<sup>1/</sup> As a whole, no information is available with regard to the type of equipment used by the listener, the age, type and quality of the sets as well as the existence of antenna installations. This is all the more regrettable, as these data are needed to determine whether or not the listener is capable of receiving many and distant stations and thus information from abroad.

Despite this apparent deficiency, a considerable amount of basic facts and figures is available, both with respect to the number and the density of sets. A few may be quoted here to illustrate the size of the audience and the relative importance of radio in different countries and areas. More than half of all radio receivers in use are in the United States of America. In 1950, according to the census, 40,930,000 homes, i.e. 95.6 per cent of the 42,520,000 occupied dwelling units, had radio sets, and even rural districts and farms registered high percentages of "radio homes" - 93.1 and 93.2 per cent; the estimated number of sets then was about 85 million. Television sets were installed in 5,120,000 homes, i.e. 12.3 per cent of the total. Taking into account the number of radio and television receivers manufactured since the census was taken, the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters estimated the number of radio sets on 1 January 1951 at 91,454,000 and the number of television sets at 10,664,000, a figure which has further increased since and reached 13,482,000 or more than 30 per cent of all the homes by the end of September 1951.<sup>2/</sup> This

<sup>1/</sup> Due to the rapid advance of radio broadcasting and television, facts and figures for 1947 and 1948 do no longer reflect the present situation. Unfortunately, most of the books, studies and reports on mass communications published in 1950 and 1951 are based on such "old" data, and do not take into account the technological developments of the last two years.

<sup>2/</sup> Cf. "Broadcasting-Telecasting", Washington, D.C., 24 September 1951.



means that almost every American is within reach of a radio set and in a position to listen daily to the news and comments, broadcast by one or the other of the 2,935 stations,<sup>1/</sup> and that television, which continues to make striking advances, now commands an audience of over 60,000,000 people.

The United Kingdom counted 11,708,950 licences for radio sets and loudspeakers on 31 December 1950 - there were 942,441 subscribers to relay exchanges in September 1950 - and 586,100 for television sets, the number of which exceeds 900,000 at present. Germany has more than 13,000,000 radio sets (9½ million in the German Federal Republic, 3¼ million in the German Democratic Republic and about 550,000 in the Western zone of Berlin). Recent information for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is not available; the latest official figure, dated 1949, indicates 11,000,000 licences in the European part of the USSR, i.e. 8,000,000 loudspeakers and 3,000,000 radio sets.<sup>2/</sup> Considering the increase in previous years and estimating three to four million sets and loudspeakers in the Asian part of the country, it can be fairly assumed that the total number of both receiving sets and loudspeakers amounts to 16,000,000, to which have to be added about 50 - 100,000 television sets. Japan, which lost millions of receivers during the war, has speedily recovered; 8,958,208 sets were registered by the end of 1950. France has almost as many sets and perhaps even more, but only 6,889,522 were registered on 31 December 1950, with an estimated number of 2,000,000 undeclared sets.

Then follow Brazil, with about 3,500,000 sets, Canada with 2,145,819 licenced receivers on 31 December 1950 - the actual number of sets in use is about 20 to 25 per cent higher - Italy with 3,153,630 sets, Czechoslovakia with 2,412,087 sets, Sweden with 2,152,980 sets and Australia with 2,063,506 sets at the same date. Nine countries had more than one million sets by the end of the year. But there are also twenty countries with less than 100,000 sets and five with less than 10,000, not to speak of non-self-governing territories many of which have not even five thousand sets.

<sup>1/</sup> 2,284 AM (medium wave) and 651 FM (ultra-short-wave) stations. Figures supplied by the Federal Communications Commission, on 19 July 1951. Cf. "Broadcasting" Magazine, Washington, D.C., 23 July 1951, p. 87.

<sup>2/</sup> Cf. Information and Documentation Bulletin, International Broadcasting Organization, No. 30-31, of 15 May 1950.

The role radio plays in different countries, in the private and public life of their peoples, and also the full impact of the inequity in the distribution of radio sets is exemplified by the figures concerning the density, i.e. the ratio of radio receivers and other receiving facilities to the population. These data are revealing - there are more than 600 receivers per thousand inhabitants in the United States as compared with less than 1 per thousand in Ethiopia and seven non-self-governing territories. Sweden had, on 31 December 1950, a density figure of 308.2 per thousand, Denmark 305.3, Iceland 249.4, Australia 246.6, Norway 239.7, New Zealand 238.9, Canada 236.2 and the United Kingdom 233.4 per thousand not including television sets. On the other hand, the density in the European territory of the Soviet Union did not exceed 110.7 in 1949; Argentina had 91 in 1949, Italy 67.8, Brazil 66.5 and Poland 60.8 per thousand by the end of 1950. The density figures for the Middle and Far East reflect the urgent need for development of radio receiving facilities, many countries there having less than 10 receivers per thousand inhabitants and India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan only 1 or 2 sets per thousand population.

These data are of particular interest - they indicate whether radio listening, in a given country, has become a common practice, whether radio is accessible to all or whether it is still the privilege of a few. Density figures also reflect the economic and social status of the different countries and the degree of their technological development. There is a relationship between the extent of radio listening and the economic and cultural level of a nation; the density increases with the standards of living and the intensity of intellectual interests.<sup>1/</sup>

Likewise, the average number of listeners per radio set varies considerably, from three in highly developed countries to seven and even ten in less developed areas, which suffer from a shortage of radio equipment, or in countries where families are exceptionally large. While the "virtual audience" in Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Switzerland, where 2,412,087, 2,152,980 and 1,039,511 sets were registered by the end of 1950, is estimated by the broadcasting organizations of

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. the report by Dr. Julius Spanak in "Slovensky Rozhlas", Bratislava, 4 July 1943.

these countries at 7,500,000, 6,000,000 and 3,500,000 listeners respectively, it is believed that the 93,000 sets and loudspeakers in Malaya are being used by 651,000 persons and the 65,398 sets in Tunisia by 600,000 persons.<sup>1/</sup> In some countries, receivers are in the hands of a small upper class and the only opportunity for the masses of the population to listen is provided by radio sets in coffee houses or community sets installed in schools and assembly centres of the town or village.

To obtain a more complete picture of the radio audience, wire broadcasting and collective listening should be taken into account. More than 14,000,000 homes and tens of thousands of collective listening centres do not have radio sets but are equipped only with wired loudspeakers.<sup>2/</sup> Wire broadcasting, favoured by technical as well as economic and political factors, has progressed considerably during the last years and is now being introduced into countries which, like Austria, Finland and Sweden, had never operated relay exchanges before. As stated above, eight out of the eleven million licence-holders in the European part of the Soviet Union (1949) did not use radio sets but only wired loudspeakers. The same was true (by the end of 1950) for 950,000 listeners in the United Kingdom or 8 per cent of the total audience; for 550,584 licences in Poland, i.e. 37 per cent of the total; 485,586 in the Netherlands, or 25 per cent; 171,996 in Switzerland, or 16.5 per cent; and 93,764, or 6 per cent in Belgium.

Wire broadcasting is of particular significance in territories where it has yet been impossible to establish a sufficient number of radio stations; several British colonies have developed relay systems to such an extent that the majority of the listeners are now receiving their programmes by wire. More than 9,000 of the 11,500 licence-holders in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, and half of the 80,000 licences in Hong Kong are subscribers to relay exchanges.

Wire broadcasting and group listening are closely allied. Many of the wired loudspeakers are installed in schools, hospitals, clubhouses, tractor stations, collective farms and other listening centres - not less than 5,576 in Poland -

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. Documentation and Information Bulletin, European Broadcasting Union, Vol. II, No. 6, p. 134 (15 March 1951) and Vol. II No. 7 (15 May 1951). p. 241.

<sup>2/</sup> See Chapter III, pp. 16 - 20.

/and thus

and thus the size of the audience is considerably increased. Frequently, one loudspeaker system serves a whole factory employing thousands of workers, providing them with the same radio programme and with local information added to the news relayed from central radio stations. A large number of public address systems is also being used in conference rooms and halls, and especially for outdoor reception - in streets and places of the USSR as well as in village centres and public parks in Brazil.

The figures given above clearly indicate the potentialities of broadcasting as a channel of information. It performs a service which cannot be provided by any other means - in many parts of the world, radio alone can reach the majority of the population. Wire broadcasting supplements where wireless does not serve the whole audience, and collective reception where private facilities are insufficient, or where the authorities are interested in conveying a specific message to the masses.

The data on radio reception and in particular the number of sets and loudspeakers or the figures concerning the "density" of receivers prove that radio now reaches a greater number of people than any other media; but they also prove that radio, despite thirty years of remarkable development and growth, is still at an early stage of growth, and that many countries are far from being provided with a sufficient number of sets, that the distribution of radio facilities, and consequently, of information broadcast by radio stations, is very unequal. Many millions of sets, and especially low-cost receivers are needed.

/III. DIRECT

### III. DIRECT AND INDIRECT RECEPTION

#### Individual and collective listening

The method of transmission - direct, by radio (wireless), or indirect, by wire - determines to a high degree the method of reception. As we distinguish between direct and indirect transmission we can also distinguish between direct reception of the programmes radiated by a radio station and indirect reception through the intermediary of a central receiving system (relay exchange or another form of programme distribution service), from which the amplified radio signal is relayed by wire (telephone lines or others) to the loudspeakers or headphones installed in listeners' homes, in factories, schools, or community centres.

In turn, the method of reception has a direct bearing on freedom of information and programme choice. In the case of direct transmission and reception, the listener may tune in to any station which his radio set is capable of receiving, thus selecting and composing his "own" programme according to his preferences. In the case of indirect transmission and reception, the listeners' choice is limited to programmes pre-selected by a "third person", usually, a government-controlled agency, and chosen from the offerings of the national and, occasionally, foreign stations. The highest developed systems offer four and even five or six programmes; but frequently a single programme only is transmitted by wire, thus leaving the listener no choice at all. Despite this disadvantage, which is of primary importance with regard to freedom of information, wire broadcasting<sup>1/</sup> has made considerable progress during recent years.

There are several factors which may cause prospective listeners to prefer this method of reception. The first is of an economic nature: there is generally no initial investment needed for the purchase of the receiving equipment, but only a monthly subscription fee to be paid to the wire broadcasting service - in the same way as one would pay for telephone service - and which frequently covers also the licence fee for radio reception, imposed by the government, and

<sup>1/</sup> Frequently, other terms are used such as radiodistribution, telediffusion or rediffusion.

the rent of the wired loudspeakers or headphones. (Few listeners realize that they could buy a high-quality receiver for the amount paid in monthly subscriptions during two or three years; but since in many countries instalment buying is not so common a practice as for instance in the United States, they do not have any alternative). Another reason for the expansion of wire broadcasting is the degree of static or electrical interference of radio broadcasts in mountainous regions or in highly industrialized areas; this explains the success of static-free wire transmissions in Switzerland as well as in the Netherlands and some parts of the United Kingdom. Moreover, wire broadcasting is a means of increasing the range of radio stations to so-called "fringe areas" which, under the present circumstances, do not get a primary service. Finally, wire broadcasting is of considerable value for collective listening. The reception is stable in volume and generally free from interference; the loudspeaker, once tuned to a specific programme does not need any service. Schools, factories, clubs, thus prefer wire broadcasting for use in class rooms or for collective listening by adults.

Wire broadcasting may, under certain conditions, endanger freedom of information. By using cables and telephone lines for the distribution of programmes, those in control of radio and of public information can bar completely any opinions of which they disapprove, and can impose their own opinions upon the audience. No foreign broadcast will intrude into the listener's home without the permission of the authorities and no message from a clandestine transmitter will ever reach the audience. Moreover, the reception of official programmes can be planned and "organized", in factories, tractor stations, state farms in clubs and party centres, in schools and libraries, streets and public places. By controlling the consumption of electric current it is even possible to check when a loudspeaker is switched on or off, i.e. "who listens and to what?". Wire broadcasting is certainly the most effective method of limiting or suppressing freedom of information - without even the need for restrictive laws and regulations. This implicit threat has caused public opinion in the United Kingdom to reject as "undemocratic" a much publicized proposal (made in 1941 by P. P. Eckersley, former Chief Engineer of the BBC) to replace wireless broadcasting by a highly developed wire transmission system, using the electric

mains and offering a choice of six different programmes tailored to the preferences of the different groups of the audience.

However, wire broadcasting may also serve to increase the free flow of information.. It may be used, as for example in Sweden, as a channel for an additional programme which, because of the shortage of frequencies available for broadcasting, cannot be transmitted over the air. Likewise, some non-self-governing territories, unable to finance the construction and operation of a sufficient number of radio stations or to provide the native population with radio sets, have substituted wire broadcasting for wireless transmissions.

Wire broadcasting, which can be used to control the free flow of information or to increase the amount of information available to the audience, has become an essential part of broadcast activities in six countries - Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USSR - and in many non-self-governing territories. Plans are in hand for the expansion of existing services and the establishment of new ones as well as for the introduction of wire broadcasting in additional countries. Likewise, the distribution of programmes by wire will become more and more important in television.

The difference between listening to broadcasts at home or outside the home is another important factor to be taken into account in the evaluation of the reception of information by radio, all the more as reception in the open air or at collective listening centres and other assembly places is frequently directed towards a political or educational goal. While individual listening is still, and by far, the most common method of radio reception, collective listening - encouraged by political and educational authorities - has made great progress during recent years. Community reception is practised to a large extent in the Middle East and in South-East Asia, both for educational broadcasts and for the distribution of news and information. The radio supplements the press and films which rarely reach these areas, or cannot be understood by an illiterate population.

Governments and political parties are, of course, anxious that their broadcasts should be heard by the greatest possible number of listeners - that they should reach the masses. Stations owned and operated by governments carry

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all official news bulletins and statements, and endeavour to inform the audience about the intentions of the authorities, and about new decrees and regulations. Occasionally, however, governments compel even those stations which are owned and operated by private enterprises to transmit - in addition to special announcements and emergency appeals - regular official programmes. The Government of Brazil, for example, acting through the national news agency, broadcasts a daily information programme<sup>1/</sup> called "Hora do Brasil", which all private stations must relay from Radio Nacional; those stations which, for technical reasons, are unable to pick up the programme, broadcast over medium and short waves, have to close down during the time of transmission.<sup>2/</sup> Facilities for collective listening have been provided in many countries; community receivers and public address systems have been installed in public places, in work and recreation rooms. The reception of all politically significant speeches has been considered a duty of the loyal citizen, and more than once attempts have even been made to substitute for the freedom to listen, the obligation to listen.

Mass education and collective listening are closely interrelated. Educational broadcasts are preferably received in groups; their effectiveness is considerably increased if the broadcast is immediately followed by a discussion clarifying and exploring the issue, and if the discussion leader is familiar with the topic and knows how to handle his audience. Collective listening is the customary form of reception of school broadcasts of lectures, or instructions for agricultural and industrial workers. It is for this reason that the BBC encouraged, as early as 1927, the formation of "discussion groups" and arranged for the broadcasting of special programmes to these groups. In Sweden, about four thousand study groups, composed largely of students, listen to educational programmes and discuss their content. Collective reception, on a large scale, has also been organized in Poland and in the USSR where thousands of listening

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. E/CN.4/Sub.1/107/Add.6.

<sup>2/</sup> Cf. "Press, Film, Radio" Vol. III, p. 241, Report of the Commission on Technical Needs, UNESCO, Paris, 1949.



centres and other assembly places have been equipped with radios and loudspeakers, and are now serving as classrooms for fundamental as well as professional and political education.

Listener groups and listener associations have been of great assistance to broadcasters, as proved by the example of the associations in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries, which are co-operating closely with the radio stations. Such relationship between broadcasters and their audience, and the participation of listeners in programme planning and production, certainly promotes the free flow of information. The interest of a large number of listeners who would regularly receive programmes designed for them can thus be ensured, and the effectiveness of the broadcasts be measured immediately.<sup>1/</sup>

The importance of direct and indirect reception, of individual and collective listening, and the influence of different methods of reception on freedom of information - on the amount of information received as well as its origin and content - certainly need to be further explored.

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<sup>1/</sup> The rights of listeners and listener associations, and their functions, are dealt with in Chapter IV, pp. 31 - 35.

#### IV. FREEDOM AND CONTROL OF RECEPTION

##### Rights and obligations and the listeners

Freedom and control of reception, rights and obligations of listeners - and, in particular, the influence of listeners on radio operations, on programme policy and planning - present many and difficult problems.

Three different aspects have to be considered in this regard: the free access to radio receiving facilities by all groups of the population, regardless of their socio-economic status, their sex and political affiliation, or their belonging either to a majority or a minority; the freedom of programme choice; and the role of the listener in the national radio system. The first refers to the right of the people to operate a radio receiver, or at least to listen to broadcast programmes; the second, to the right to tune in to any station, whether national or foreign, whether friendly or hostile to the government of the listeners' country; and the third, to the opportunity of the listener to take an active and participating interest in broadcasting.

The use of radio sets - or the freedom to listen, to seek and to receive information - may be restricted by rules as well as by practices, forbidding or discouraging the reception of certain foreign stations, or limiting the capacity of radio sets in order to prevent listening to certain programmes. Jamming is another means of interfering with the free choice of programmes but, up to now, it has been used only by a few countries. The most effective way to limit and control reception is, as mentioned above, wire broadcasting which precludes the reception of any "undesirable" programme.

The freedom to listen is not necessarily related to the system of broadcast. In many countries where radio stations are government-owned and operated the listener retains full freedom to tune in to any station his set is capable of receiving. However, there are frequently important differences caused by the principle of organization adopted. In the case of private broadcasting, listeners are seldom obliged to pay any licence fee or to make other financial contributions; in the case of government control or operation of broadcasting systems, the listener is generally under an obligation to declare and register his set, to pay for the right to listen - even if most of the time his receiver

/is tuned

is tuned in to foreign stations or if the revenue from the licence fee is used for purposes other than radio broadcasting and only partly for technical and programme services.

Rules and practices affecting the freedom to listen differ from country to country. They vary from the completely unrestricted ownership and use of radio receivers - freedom to operate any type of set and to receive any kind of radiocommunication - to the free but licenced reception of radio programmes (with the provision for payment of a licence fee by the listener); to restrictive provisions laid down in the licence; and finally to the interdiction of the reception of certain broadcasts, and the jamming of foreign radio stations.

Radio reception is entirely free in most of the American countries. In reply to the Secretary-General's request for information, made in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information, Brazil stressed that "there is no limitation or restriction of the right to possess radio receiving sets; they may be operated on any of the bands used by domestic and international stations".<sup>1/</sup> Colombia stated: "The possession and operation of radio receiving sets are absolutely free";<sup>2/</sup> Mexico declared: "There is no limitation on the possession or use of radio receiving sets";<sup>3/</sup> and the United States: "There is no limitation (of the right to possess and operate radio receiving sets) or regulation in the United States".<sup>4/</sup>

Canada, too, stressed the point that "there are no legal or administrative restrictions, limitations or regulations of the right to possess and operate radio receiving sets covering all bands used for domestic and international broadcasts", but the Government requires "that each private receiving set be licenced".<sup>5/</sup> Sweden replied: "Every resident is entitled to possess an ordinary receiving set", for which he has to pay an annual licence fee, and underlined: "there is no limitation on the right to listen on any band".<sup>6/</sup> The United Kingdom

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. E/CN.4/Sub.1/107/Add.6 p. 9 - Section 5(c).

<sup>2/</sup> Cf. Freedom of Information, Vol. I, p. 157 United Nations Publications 1950, XIV, 1.

<sup>3/</sup> Cf. Freedom of Information, Vol. 1, p. 161 United Nations Publications 1950, XIV, 1.

<sup>4/</sup> Ibid. p. 174.

<sup>5/</sup> Ibid. p. 155.

<sup>6/</sup> Ibid. p. 162

stated: "Licences, for which a small charge is made, are granted without question to all persons in Great Britain, permitting them to possess and operate radio receiving sets and to receive broadcasts from domestic and foreign stations including amateur stations".<sup>1/</sup>

Restrictive clauses are included in the licence granted by Belgium, forbidding the reception of frequencies between 1560 and 6000 kc, and in New Zealand where the licence-holder "shall not, without the consent of the Minister of Telegraphs, commit to writing, or cause, enable or assist any other person to commit to writing, for the purpose of publication in a newspaper or for the purpose of written publication in any form, any matter transmitted from any radio station either in New Zealand or overseas".<sup>2/</sup> Likewise, in the Union of South Africa, "any person who without the permission in writing of the Postmaster General, publishes any news or information in print, or gives any news or information to any other person for such publication shall, if the only source from which he has received such news or information is by radio, be guilty of an offense".<sup>3/</sup> The Swiss licence "does not authorize the holder to use the receiver for commercial purposes or to make public use of radio broadcasts".<sup>4/</sup> But no licence seems to contain an interdiction against listening to foreign broadcasts, the reception of which is, however, forbidden in Hungary<sup>5/</sup> and made rather difficult in countries where jamming is being used against foreign stations.

The system of licencing all receiving sets and practically all radio equipment including loudspeakers and headphones, constitutes, of course, at least in principle, a means of controlling the reception of programmes and information.<sup>6/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. Freedom of Information, Vol. 1, p. 164 United Nations Publications 1950, XA, 1.

<sup>2/</sup> Ibid. p. 161

<sup>3/</sup> Ibid. p. 164

<sup>4/</sup> Ibid. p. 163.

<sup>5/</sup> Cf. Monthly Bulletin of the International Broadcasting Union, January, 1950.

<sup>6/</sup> Cf. Memorandum on "Radio and Freedom of Information" (document E/CN.4/Sub.1/ ).

Even where the government never exercises its power and does not restrict or condition radio and television reception, the simple fact that it can deny permission to operate a radio set or withdraw the licence is a potential limitation.

Political and economic reasons cause millions of radio owners not to declare their sets, in violation of the law. Here and there the law is enforced: campaigns are launched in order to detect illegal, "black" listeners who are then subjected to penalties, usually several times the amount of the annual fee, and occasionally also to confiscation of the receiver and imprisonment. According to the radio magazine "amroepgids", agents of the Inspection Service of the Netherlands Radio, for example, made no less than 1,187,244 visits during the period of January 1947 to September 1948, and inspected 421,304 receivers. Only 30 per cent of these were operating as prescribed by the law; 44 per cent of the licence holders in 1947 and 55 per cent in 1948 were behind in payment, and 90,623 sets had not been declared at all. Some governments, however, do not enforce the law, either because the collection of the fees and the enforcement of the provisions would require a larger appropriation than the revenue from licences would yield or because they fear to reduce by such measures the size of the audience for their politically inspired programmes. This explains that in some countries the number of registered sets and the number of sets in use differ so widely. In one country, for instance, there are 800,000 licenced sets but actually, according to official estimates based on the number of sets imported or manufactured in the country, about 3,500,000 sets are in the hands of listeners.

Some governments grant free licences to certain groups of listeners. Radio owners who cannot afford payment of the licence fee, are exempted (or allowed to pay a reduced fee) and especially blind, aged and unemployed persons, disabled war veterans or indigent people. The United Kingdom exempts all registered blind persons from paying the annual licence fee of £1; occasionally, soldiers and officers do not need to pay the fee, and the same privilege is granted so sometimes to high government officials and members of the diplomatic corps. The USSR exempts press agencies, newspapers and radio amateurs engaged in technical experiments. However, with a few exceptions, the number of free

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licences is rather limited; only in one case does it exceed 10 per cent of the total number of licences. On 31 December 1950, there were 348,125 free licences in the German Federal Republic, 133,859 in Denmark, 106,351 in France, and 91,521 in Japan. In most cases, only a few thousand listeners are exempt: 1,855 out of 723,360 licencees in Finland, 2,801 out of 1,039,311 in Switzerland, and 1,748 out of 2,152,980 in Sweden. Free licences are sometimes given to hospitals, scientific and educational institutions, but frequently even the public schools are obliged to pay licence fees, although the use of radio sets and loudspeakers in the classroom is definitely in the public interest. It could be said that all educational and scientific institutions should be granted free licences, in the same way as educational, scientific and cultural materials - under the new UNESCO-sponsored Agreement<sup>1/</sup> - shall be exempted from custom duties and other charges; the amount saved could be used for the expansion and improvement of receiving facilities. Likewise, a substantial reduction of the licence fees, or possibly an exemption for the first two or three years, would stimulate the production and purchase of low-cost receivers and help to bring radio to lower-income groups.

Few radio laws and regulations contain any restrictions on the right to listen. There is occasionally a clause prohibiting listeners from disseminating private messages and information not intended for reception by the public and transmitted over other than broadcast bands, which however can easily be received with any set covering a wide range of frequencies. As already mentioned, the Belgian law for example provides that "no one may transmit or receive private messages, even by means of licensed radio sets, without the special authorization of the Government. All signals or radio messages, other than those addressed to the public indiscriminately, without indication of the recipient or address, are deemed to be private messages". Under the Ministerial Decree of 28 February 1947 it is forbidden to pick up frequencies of 1560 to 6,000 kilocycles and even to own a radio receiving set capable of picking up these frequencies, without special authorization.<sup>2/</sup> As far as is known, there is only one instance where the

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1/ Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials, signed at Lake Success, New York on 22 November 1950.

2/ Cf. Article 3 of the Act of 14 May 1930 and Article 5 of the Royal Decree of 27 June 1930. Reply of Belgium to the Request for Information. See: Freedom of Information. A Compilation, Volume I, p. 154; United Nations Publications 1950. XIV, 1.

government, in this case the Government of Hungary, has issued an order "prohibiting listening to certain foreign stations, and asking listeners to have their sets so adjusted that they can no longer tune in to broadcasts at a certain distance."<sup>1/</sup> A decree promulgated by the Ministry of Communications and Posts, dated 23 June 1949, even includes provisions for the prohibition of radio reception and for the confiscation of sets. According to official information, this order authorizes the Ministry to "cancel receiving licences or to forbid the use of a receiver, either temporarily or permanently, if such a measure is in the interest of public security, and this without any indemnity for the set owner. The receivers seized by the Government can be put at the disposal of the Administration or its officials".<sup>2/</sup> It seems that there have been several instances where listeners were discouraged from receiving foreign broadcasts; but as long as the reception of short-wave broadcasts from one country is recommended by the authorities, it will be difficult to prevent the reception of short-wave transmissions from other countries.

To hinder the reception of certain stations, to bar the entry of certain broadcasts into the homes of the listeners, some countries have been using the device of "jamming" or, as it is called in technical terms, "interference with radio signals". It is beyond doubt that this practice seriously affects the freedom to listen and the right to be informed, but its practical effect has apparently been over-estimated. It is certainly true that this kind of interference prevents a great many listeners from receiving international broadcasts or at least from enjoying them, since listening to jammed transmissions is a mental and physical torture. But it is also true, and has been proved many times, that jamming excites the curiosity of the listener, and that many listeners who would not have been interested in broadcasts from foreign stations, and in fact would never have listened to them, suddenly became attracted to this "forbidden fruit". Wartime experience has also shown that the desire of the people to learn what happens in the world is stronger than the fear of imprisonment or death. Millions of listeners in Germany and in German-occupied countries risked their lives and liberty, and endured the suffering caused by

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<sup>1/</sup> Monthly Bulletin, International Broadcasting Union, January 1950, p. 4.

<sup>2/</sup> Article 3 dealing with "Restrictions applied to the Ownership and Operation of Receivers". Cf. Information and Documentation Bulletin, International Broadcasting Organization, May 1950, page 52.

jamming, patiently trying one channel after another until they received the information they sought from the BBC and other Allied stations, and in particular from the German-language transmitters operated by anti-Nazi groups. In the last issue, jamming thus turned against those who used this device.

Economic barriers are an important obstacle to freedom of information, since they prevent a large part of the population from buying radio sets, from subscribing to wire broadcasting services and, in many countries, from installing electricity in their homes. Very few radio listeners have high-quality sets which are "ears" to the world, which enable them to receive short-wave as well as long and medium wave stations, and to get all the information they wish. The cost of manufacturing is but one reason for the high price of receiving sets; custom tariffs and other taxes, frequently also excessive retail profits of radio dealers, increase the price so that the average listener is unable to buy a better set or to use antennae capable of improving reception. Quite frequently, it would be possible to sell receivers at a lower price and in large quantities than is done today. Quotas, protecting domestic manufacture, and other restrictions concerning in particular the export of hard currency, may bar the mass import of radio sets. It is characteristic that 40 out of 43 countries covered by a recent survey of UNESCO<sup>1/</sup> apply custom duties and other charges on the importation of radio receivers; in addition, twenty of these countries also apply sales taxes. In most cases, the tariffs are extremely high, even in countries which are in great need of receiving equipment and where the purchasing power of the population is rather low. To quote a few examples: Peru ask \$76 per 100 kg, Colombia \$77 plus 25 per cent ad valorem, Brazil \$91 plus a sales tax of 6 per cent ad valorem, Czechoslovakia \$180 and Austria \$390. The general tariff for the import of radio receivers in Southern Rhodesia amounts to 35 per cent ad valorem, in the Philippines to 30 per cent plus 15 per cent sales tax, in Israel to 45 per cent and 25 per cent sales tax, in India to 50 per cent, in Pakistan to 58 per cent plus sales tax, in New Zealand to 65 per cent plus surtax and 20 per cent sales tax, and in Ireland to 75 per cent ad valorem. It is obvious that these duties and taxes are prohibitive; only a substantial

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<sup>1/</sup> Cf. Trade Barriers to Knowledge: A manual of regulations affecting educational, scientific and cultural materials. UNESCO, Paris 1951.



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reduction would make it possible to improve and increase substantially the receiving facilities in these countries.

A solution has to be found or the free flow of information will continue to be seriously hampered. Here arises the question of a low-cost receiver of good quality, fulfilling the needs of the audience in the different countries of the world and adapted to local transmission and reception conditions, especially to the climate, the supply of electrical current, and the degree of ability of the potential listener to handle a receiving set. The United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information has already called attention to this problem, in its Resolution No. 30, recommending "that a study be made of all appropriate measures so that the general public can obtain radio receiving sets at low prices."<sup>1/</sup> UNESCO is preparing a technical study on low-cost reception, and several governments are considering appropriate measures. Up to now, however, efforts to induce the industry to mass-manufacture low-cost receivers have only been partly successful. One reason for indifference on the part of the manufacturers has certainly been the lack of essential data and of co-ordinated action and planning, which are indispensable for the implementation of the idea and for the solution of the economic problems. How much can be accomplished, how radio can be brought to the people, to all classes of the population, has been proved every time the authorities have been willing to promote such a move and when a so-called "popular" receiver has been produced in appreciable quantities and sold without a large margin of profit.

The "Volksempfänger", introduced by the Nazi régime in Germany in order to strengthen the influence of its political propaganda, has, although of not too good a quality, increased the number of radio sets in Germany by several millions. The "people's receiver" now being manufactured in Hungary and sponsored by both the Government and the broadcasting service, has made it possible to bring radio to rural districts and to classes which, like industrial and agricultural workers, could previously not afford to buy radio sets. The most significant and conclusive experiment has recently been made in Northern Rhodesia where the authorities offered a battery set manufactured in the United Kingdom, the "Saucepan Special", for E5, plus E1.5s.0 for supplementary batteries. This action is about

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<sup>1/</sup> Cf. Final Act of the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information E/CONF.6/79, p. 42.

to transform an isolated territory without sets into an area where radio links the village in the interior to the capital and to the world. Whereas Northern Rhodesia had less than 1,000 sets two years ago, the number of radio receivers had increased to 12,000 by 1950, and thousands of natives are now able to listen to the programmes from Lusaka and to international broadcasts as well.

The problem of providing radio sets to those countries and areas where they are in short supply, is further complicated by the fact that radio manufacturing is limited to a few countries. With the exception of the United States, the United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden almost none can satisfy domestic needs and still less those of foreign countries. The United States alone is in a position to export large quantities of radio material without neglecting the domestic market, and even this has temporarily not been possible. Consequently, international action seems to be necessary, co-ordinating all the available facilities and asking the leading radio manufacturers to devote part of their activities to the mass production of a few standard types of low-cost receivers.

The status of women is an important factor with regard to the composition of the radio audience. Only in countries which grant equal rights to men and women, and where women have access to all places where people assemble, does the audience comprise a large percentage of female listeners. The proportion may otherwise be very small or even non-existent as, for example, in some countries where there are only a few thousand sets, most of which installed in coffee houses or other assembly places where women are not allowed to enter and to sit with the men.

Likewise, equal rights for, or discrimination against minorities plays an important role. In some countries, special programmes are broadcast to minorities in their own language, and care is taken that they are able to receive them. In others, however, the needs and interests of minorities are completely neglected: there is not a single programme except in the official language, and no efforts are made to put radio receiving facilities, not even community sets at their disposal. If they want to listen to broadcasts in their own language, such minority groups must then tune in to foreign stations. If considered as part of the national audience and provided with appropriate programmes, minorities would

benefit from broadcasting activities, and so would national unity. Otherwise, minorities constitute an unstable element in the audience, subject to all kinds of foreign propaganda and to broadcasts which are frequently directed against the very interests of the country to which it is beamed.

Radio amateurs and radio listeners have had a large share in the development of broadcasting and are to be credited with many pioneering efforts and achievements. Radio clubs and listener associations set up experimental transmitters which were subsequently converted into regular broadcasting stations and which served as a basis for the first broadcasting organizations. The steady increase of political and commercial interests, however, caused a decrease in the influence of the listeners. With the exception of a few countries, there are today no important listener groups and associations; even where listeners are organized, they seldom take an active and participating interest in broadcast operations and programme planning.

Most listeners in fact are passive and indifferent; it is, to a large extent, their own fault that they get what others - government authorities, advertisers and broadcasters - believe they like, or consider to be good and necessary for them to hear. Since the masses almost everywhere want to be entertained, first emphasis is put on entertainment; since the party, or parties, in power almost everywhere want to influence public opinion, national programmes frequently serve political interests.

The lack of co-operation between broadcasters and listeners, the lack of contacts and consultation concerning programme policy and planning is a serious deficiency in present-day radio broadcasting. As a rule, the listener is rather an "object" of radio broadcasts than, as it should be, a shareholder and trustee of the radio services. Commercial broadcasters think of listeners primarily as potential customers of the products advertised in their programmes, official broadcasters consider them mainly as pupils to be guided and educated. In most countries where, the operation of broadcasting services is financed by licence fees and other taxes, the burden to the listeners has increased with the expansion of radio services; but frequently, they are not even getting back any "interest" in the form of better stations and better programmes, but are paying for other activities some of which are not at all related to broadcasting or television.

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However, in private broadcasting at least, the listener is sovereign; he is, or could be if he were conscious of his power, the master of the broadcasting service. If he were aware of his rights as well as of his obligations and if, on the other side, the broadcaster, whether official or private, were aware of his responsibilities, radio and television could be developed along lines completely different to those followed so far.

Wherever listener associations are given the right to discuss programme plans with the broadcasters and where their suggestions and proposals are considered, radio services seem to benefit from such co-operation. The listener gets a better understanding and appreciation of the problems and difficulties of radio operations, and the broadcaster a better knowledge of the needs and reactions of his audience. Listener groups and associations help to prepare and to promote programmes the production of which they have suggested and which have been especially designed for their members and for listeners with similar interests. The advice of these groups has been of particular value with respect to special programme series - talks and lectures on political, economic and social problems - in view particularly of the fact that listeners, anxious to make up their own mind, will in most cases insist on an objective presentation of an issue. Audience research has repeatedly proved that, both in national and in international broadcasts, listeners above all want the facts about events and developments, and that the stations which present factual information and which separate the news from comments and interpretation, are considered "more reliable" than those which mingle news and views. The emphasis of the audience on straight reporting of the facts and the need for basic data should not be overlooked; the free flow of information could be promoted by cultivating this genuine interest. It is certainly not limited to political information only, but extends to the whole range of news about all aspects of life, all kinds of human activities and all kinds of cultural and scientific developments.

The participation of the audience may take quite different forms. The interested listener writes to the station, to the radio service or the sponsor of the broadcasts, requesting information about programmes, and contributing praise, criticism and suggestions. Listener mail, although not reflecting the attitudes and reactions of the audience as a whole, has reached considerable

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proportions. American networks get millions of letters every year - the NBC alone received 914,000 letters in 1950 - and even a service like the "Voice of America" has received 237,828 letters in 1950 and as many as 39,741 from 82 countries and territories, in the single month of March 1951.<sup>1/</sup> Another form of co-operation is the interest many listeners take in audience surveys made by broadcasting organizations, advertising agencies and specialized research institutions. 901,368 licence-holders in Italy, i.e. 75 per cent of the total number then registered, participated in the "Referendum" of the Italian Radio in 1940, which thus attained the proportions of a plebiscite.<sup>2/</sup> Many thousands of listeners agree to reply to detailed questionnaires, to submit to extensive interviews, and to note their preferences and reactions in programme diaries. Voluntary "listener-correspondents", in the homeland as well as overseas, assist the BBC in the evaluation and development of its programmes; radio amateurs and listeners throughout the world enable the United Nations Radio to check reception conditions in different regions.

The majority of the audience observes, as stated above, a rather indifferent and passive attitude. But it is also true that a great number of listeners manifest their interest and desire to "help" the broadcasters in their difficult task. There is no doubt that the degree and intensity of such participation could be considerably increased by patient and intelligent efforts on the part of broadcasters. Once the listener realizes their willingness to co-operate with him and to fulfil his needs, he would be prepared to assume an active and more responsible role.

Many stations broadcast musical recordings "requested" by the listeners, even if the programmes so composed are void of any artistic or cultural value. But how many would be inclined to answer with the same eagerness requests concerning informative and instructive programmes?

Some broadcasters seem to be ready to give the listeners and their associations a voice in radio operations, others oppose any "interference" by the audience. Here are two typical examples of the different attitudes adopted. A listeners' association has recently been formed in Austria, with the declared purpose of establishing contacts between the audience and the broadcasting

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. Report on Audience Mail, March 1951 (AM #31); Department of State, International Broadcasting Division, II. Programme Evaluation Branch

<sup>2/</sup> Cf. "Radio-Henkund Morgen" by Arno Huth, Zurich/New York: Europa Verlag, 1944.

organization, of interpreting the listeners' wishes and, if possible, of collaborating in programme planning. The association purposes to convene an annual conference, a Parliament of Radio Listeners, and to entrust specialists in audience research with surveys carried out according to the most modern methods of polling. In turn, Radio Vienna has agreed to devote a weekly programme to the association.<sup>1/</sup> Similar projects were advanced in Germany, especially in the British Zone served by the "Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk". But the organization immediately took position against this move, declaring that "the payment of a licence fee merely gives one the right to listen to radio programmes but not to dictate on programme composition" and opposed the idea that even an association composed of 100,000 or 200,000 members should exercise any influence on the broadcasting service.<sup>2/</sup>

Few countries recognize the right of the listener to play an active and responsible role in radio operations, and provide the legal framework for the participation of listener associations and their representation in administrative and advisory bodies. Denmark, one of the leading radio countries of the world, has demonstrated how such co-operation could be established on a permanent basis - the Council which is in charge of the management of the State Broadcasting Service comprises, in addition to three representatives of the Government, two of the press and four of the main political parties, not less than six representatives of the audience, proposed by listener associations and appointed by the Minister of Education. Like the Danish Radio, most of the other Scandinavian services maintain close contacts with listener groups and associations, consulting them with regard to programme plans and, in particular, to series of educational broadcasts. The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation is instructed to "co-operate in the best possible manner with public and private cultural and social institutions and organizations, especially those dealing with music, the theatre, science, technology and popular education, and with institutions and persons connected with the commercial and industrial life of the nation"<sup>3/</sup> Similarly, the Radio Committee of the U.S.S.R. frequently invites

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1/ Monthly Bulletin of the International Broadcasting Union, No. 288, February 1950. p. 107.

2/ Ibid., No. 290, April 1950, p. 291.

3/ Art. 1(2) of the Agreement between the Crown and the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation (Aktiebolaget Radiotjänst) on Broadcast Programming of 14 June 1947. Cf. Freedom of Information Vol. II, p. 115. United Nations Publishing 1950 XIV,1

listeners to discussions of broadcasts and programme plans. According to official information, thousands of listeners participate in these meetings - about 5,000 attended the six conferences organized in Moscow in April and May 1951. The Netherlands have gone one step further and have entrusted listener associations with the entire domestic programme operations, allowing them to use official transmitters, and reserving for the State only the right of supervision and the technical operation of the stations.

The first requirement for any improvement of the present situation is, as the organizer of one of the principal international programmes points out, "to define the audience which is to be addressed",<sup>1/</sup> the second, to provide radio listeners with better information about radio as a medium, about the stations, their wavelengths, their transmission schedules and in particular, the content of programmes. This kind of information is occasionally given by the programme magazines issued by different broadcasting organizations; but with the exception of the "Radio Times", published weekly by the BBC in 8,000,000 copies, not a single one seems to reach more than a small part of the audience. Many international broadcasting services have mailing lists of persons interested in getting monthly programme schedules - they frequently receive in addition, whether they want it or not, political propaganda material. However, little has been done to inform the audience generally, and to bring international broadcasts to the attention of those who are not already on the mailing list.

The volume of information received could be considerably increased if listeners were told which foreign stations are broadcasting special programmes for them, what kind of programmes, how and when they may receive them, and how they can derive intellectual satisfaction from listening to programmes and information from abroad. Such promotion of broadcasts, which in practice means calling the attention of national audiences to international programmes, requires of course friendly relations between the broadcasting organizations in the transmitting and receiving countries. Fortunately, many of them are anxious to co-operate, ready to assist each other, and to interchange programme material and information.

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<sup>1/</sup> Cf. "Teaching the World English", by R.J. Quinault, BBC Quarterly, Spring 1951 (p. 39).

Wartime experiences have demonstrated the effectiveness of a four-page leaflet giving, every month, some specific date and programme information to listeners. This and other measures, such as information specially designed for listener groups and associations, could increase the radio audience to a considerable extent and stir up a new interest for information programmes. Likewise, the reception of international information and the appeal of such broadcasts to listeners could be greatly increased if all international broadcasting services would invest some of the money they are spending for programmes, in radio and audience research, in order to inform themselves about developments in their own field of activity and about the needs and interests of the people to whom they broadcast.

There is no doubt that the reception of radio programmes, their value and effectiveness and thus the free flow of information could be greatly increased if broadcasters cared more about listener interests, needs and reactions; if listeners were more directly concerned with programme planning and operations; and if radio reception were developed on a broader scale and in full consideration of the problems of radiocommunications, of living and listening habits, of traditions, customs and religious beliefs, of social and economic conditions, of standards of education and secondary languages. Audience research and audience building have frequently failed by ignoring, or not considering, the essential facts about the media of communication, whether it be press, films, radio or television; conclusions have been reached which were invalidated by practical experience. In most cases, the broadcaster does not know very much about his audience, and seldom are the special interests of listeners fully satisfied. All too often, listener relations, that is to say close and direct contact between those who are in control of the radio stations and radio programmes and those to whom they are directed, are deficient - if existing at all. International broadcasting services, in particular, have with few exceptions neglected to establish relations with the public and little audience research has been done in this field.



## V. CONCLUSIONS

The freedom to listen, and the rights and obligations of listeners, raise many and complex questions. As has been shown, this freedom implies:

- (1) Equal rights for all to use a radio receiver and to listen to radio programmes, whether man or woman, rich or poor, member of a majority or of a minority;
- (2) Freedom of programme choice and in particular, the right to seek and to receive information from any broadcasting station;
- (3) Removal of controls and legal restrictions concerning the reception of radio programmes;
- (4) Removal of economic barriers to radio reception, including prohibitive license fees and other taxes;
- (5) Representation of the audience in the radio organization and the opportunity to express likes and dislikes and to participate in the planning of radio programmes;
- (6) Promotion of the listener's interest in, and understanding of, broadcasting, and the establishment of close contact between broadcasters and their audience.

Practical measures, in addition to legislative and administrative ones, could advance the cause of freedom of information, promote and improve the reception of international information. They should include the development of the facilities at the disposal of the audience; the reduction of license fees at least for popular receivers and other taxes, and in less developed countries; the planning and production of special programmes appealing to those groups in the audience which have a special interest in international affairs and developments; and, last but not least, better promotion of international broadcasts, better listener relations and international audience research.

The development of existing facilities is a primary condition for the expansion of information broadcasts. It could be achieved in many ways: through the mass production of low-cost receivers; through the granting of special import licenses for radio and television sets and through economic devices similar to that of the Book Coupon Scheme of UNESCO; through practical instruction of the audience on how to use a receiver and to increase its capacity by simple technical devices; by taking advantage of the experience gathered in different parts of the world, and by adapting different reception methods to local needs.

Another step, which could be taken without too great difficulty, would be to ease the burden of listeners and of educational and cultural institutions

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by granting free licences to those who cannot afford to pay them or are active in the public interest. Only in one country does the proportion of free licences exceed 10 per cent of the total. The fact that the country which has adopted this practice (Denmark) is one of the most highly developed, clearly indicates how great the need for free licences really is, and that the radio audience could certainly be increased through the adoption of a more generous attitude on the part of the authorities. In any case, the structure of licence fees should be simplified, especially where four, five and more different rates are imposed upon the different categories of receivers and licence-holders. Likewise, it would probably be in the best interests of a country to reduce custom duties for all low-cost receivers in order to keep their retail price low, and to make them accessible to a larger part of the population.

Most effective would be the adoption of a programme policy taking into account - to a far greater extent than is done today - the needs and interests of the audience and, particularly, of those groups in the audience who want to learn and to inform themselves. This may require in some cases a very great and difficult effort but special programmes for special audiences have always "paid off" and have made possible the building up of a large audience.

Radio could help to teach the people about the United Nations, about human rights, technical assistance and international co-operation, but certainly not all the people at the same time and in the same way. The story has to be told differently, to different audiences, even within the same country, and on different levels; in a simple way for children, for less educated people, for the masses of the listeners; in a more elaborate and concrete way, with all the facts, for students, for the educated, and for opinion leaders.

Radio reception, and in particular the reception of information, could be promoted if listeners knew more about radio programmes. In some countries, programme magazines published by broadcasting organizations, are read by a considerable number of people but with one exception (the BBC "Radio Times") they only reach a limited percentage of listeners. Other means of promotion have to be developed, the most effective of which is probably a weekly one-page sheet distributed free, mailed to every radio owner and giving information about the principal broadcasts.

Listener interest and listener participation in programme operations should be stimulated and encouraged; it would help to activate the service and probably

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also to increase the interest in international affairs. A programme in which the listener has taken a part, which he has suggested, and which his representatives are producing together with the professional broadcasters, will definitely appeal to the audience and ensure greater interest from the very beginning.

As a whole, it seems necessary to adopt a different and more constructive attitude towards the listener, to expand and intensify audience research and listener relations, and to find out how radio can best serve the people and how much and what can be done in order to convey information which is needed and wanted by the audience.

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