

enhanced reception, Vichy Home radio was asking listeners to write in indicating the type of receiver they were using and providing their address – information that would be of value to Vichy internal security forces.³⁸ Caversham analysts were the first to note the collapse of Germany's media network in France, by reporting on 26 August 1944 that

for the first time since 1940 no enemy or non-Allied broadcasts in French were heard from France yesterday. The German-controlled Radio Paris transmissions and the Vichy Government network have been superseded by Radio Cherbourg, Radio Bretagne, the local station of the French Forces of the Interior, Radio Limoges, and the Radiodiffusion de la Nation Francaise.³⁹

Other Osint breakthroughs came from farther afield. After the conclusion of the Pacific War, as Allied forces sought to disarm Japanese occupation troops and re-establish French political authority in Indochina, French broadcasts foreshadowed the coming military confrontation between nationalists and colonial re-occupation forces. According to an edited summary produced by the Monitoring Service, on 30 October 1945 Radio France reported that armed Communist-led Viet Minh units, which the French termed Annamese,

are marching on Luang Prabang, capital of Laos. This Annamese move is interpreted as an attempt to dethrone [Laotian] King Sisavang Vang. The French authorities in Saigon say that, France having guaranteed the right of Laos to choose its own Government, it will, if necessary, defend its territory against any intervention by the Annamese.⁴⁰

Osint's Post-war Vulnerability in London and Washington

By July 1945 the BBC had begun a series of internal reviews to consider the post-war future of the Monitoring Service. There were two schools of thought. One argued that there were special cases of broadcasts of extreme importance which required limited expansion of the Monitoring Service's work. The Director of the Monitoring Service, M.A. Frost, urged that the coverage of Japanese broadcasts, particularly those on medium wave frequencies intended for domestic audiences, should be added to the Monitoring Service's coverage as a matter of urgency: at a meeting on 4 July 1945, various BBC Division representatives unanimously agreed that they 'should take steps to obtain the Japanese Home Service material at the earliest possible moment'.⁴¹ Even at this stage, with little monitoring material

³⁸BBC, 'Listening Notes,' 11 June 1943, BBC WAC E8/87/1.

³⁹BBC, 'Listening Notes', 26 August 1944, BBC WAC E8/87/2.

⁴⁰Edited summary, Radio France in French, 30 October 1945, in BBC Monitoring Service Transcript Archive, Box F116, Imperial War Museum, Duxford.

⁴¹M.A. Frost, 'Monitoring of Japanese Broadcasts', 5 July 1945, BBC WAC R34/479/1.

from Asian broadcasts arriving from Washington, the BBC decided to cable Washington to request ‘a full statement of the present activities of the FCC in the Pacific’.⁴² There was also the suggestion – apparently not implemented – that qualified staff from Caversham should be dispatched to operate monitoring stations in occupied Germany, because ‘this is the only way in which reception of certain key transmitters in the Russian bloc can be obtained’.⁴³

The greater emphasis in internal BBC discussions, however, was laid upon a second perspective. In the face of increasing pressure from the Treasury to reduce government expenditures and slow the onset of a national budget crisis, there was a perceived need to scale back the costs of the Monitoring Service. Proposed changes, which were soon the subject of interagency discussions between the Foreign Office, the MoI, the Treasury, and other Whitehall agencies, included relocating the Service away from Caversham, reducing the coverage of European broadcasts, reducing the volume of words sent as ‘flash’ announcements to certain subscribers from 30,000 to

10,000 words per day, eliminating the capture and transcription of Morse and Hellschreiber teletype machine transmissions, and radically trimming the *Daily Digest*. Urgency attended these discussions not only because of Treasury pressure, but also because of the excessive overcrowding in private homes in the Reading/Caversham area, where hundreds of Monitoring Service staff were still housed under British home defence regulations. BBC officials were also afraid that, with no assurance about the future of the Monitoring Service, key linguists essential to monitoring operations would depart. Under the proposed reductions, in July 1945 the BBC projected that it could cut costs by 25 per cent, or £100,000 annually, and still provide a Monitoring Service that produced information and intelligence products ‘of value both the BBC News Divisions and to His Majesty’s Government’.⁴⁴

While official British users of Monitoring Service output considered their post-war needs for coverage of foreign open radio broadcasts, the Service’s reception facilities at Caversham experienced some important technical changes designed to improve efficiency. It had been determined that ‘where reception is not ideal at the place where it is necessary for the monitors to work, a remote receiving point is essential’; there, engineers could tune the receivers to the correct frequency at the correct time rather than relying on language specialists to tune in the target broadcast. This was increasingly the case for the Monitoring Service, where by mid-1945 some 66% ‘of all the signals monitored at Caversham [were] received at the remote receiving point at Crowsley’.⁴⁵ Due to changing post-war demands from Whitehall, these monitoring targets were beginning to include many not regularly

⁴²M.A. Frost, ‘Aide Memoire: Points for Discussion with A/C(OS)’, 10 July 1945, BBC WAC R34/479/1.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Letter From R.A. Rendall, BBC To G. Kirk, Ministry of Information, London, 1 May 1945, BBC WAC E1/905.