Abstract: This article examines recent initiatives taken by French governmental and commercial radio and TV services to aid in the development of broadcasting networks in Eastern Europe and to promote awareness of the French culture and language in those countries.

With the opening of Eastern Europe's borders, the already bubbling cauldron of trans-border and direct satellite TV broadcasting initiatives in Western Europe has spilled over copiously. France, concerned about the future of its flagging TV production industry and enthusiastic about helping old friends maintain new-found freedoms, has been one of the most generous and quickest to respond. France has also been swift to fill the gap in radio broadcasting left in a number of Eastern European countries by the withdrawal of Soviet broadcasting by GostelRadio.

Thierry de Beaucé, French Foreign Affairs Under Secretary for International Cultural Relations, recently announced a $5 million budget increase over three years to support TV and radio initiatives in broadcasting services and joint undertakings with Eastern European countries. The government of France has equipped all French cultural centers in Eastern Europe with satellite dish antennas, and plans to extend this endowment program to all Eastern European universities. In early May, June, and July, Canal France International, a state funded external program bank service which already rebroadcasts news and documentary programs from French public TV to some 30 African and Middle Eastern national stations four hours per day, will begin a similar service to Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and
Bulgaria.

The substantial budget increase announced by de Beaucé allows the government of France to move forward in the following areas:

—Radio France International (like the Voice of America) will increase power output and program hours in Russian, Polish, Hungarian, and Serbo-Croatian. RFI is also establishing, in Warsaw, the first private Polish radio station, in cooperation with the Solidarity’s daily newspaper "Gazeta." Radio-Gazeta, as it will be called, will be broadcast several hours per day on FM in Polish and French.

—Bilingual programming will be established for East Germany and Romania. Since Romanian is similar to French and the latter is thus understood by many Romanians, this country has been a primary focus of many other French cultural assistance efforts, including book programs and SWAT teams of French instructors to help beef up language teaching in schools.

—Canal France International will increase its TV broadcasting to Romania from four hours a day to five, and has recently signed an agreement to provide two hours of programming daily to Bulgarian TV, along with a dish antenna and subtitling equipment.

—TV-5, the joint Franco-Swiss-Belgian-Canadian francophone network, is already on the limited existing cable systems in Poland and Hungary, and is installing dish antennas in Gdansk and Katowice.

—Dish antennas installed in all the French cultural centers and Eastern European universities will initially allow reception of La Sept (Channel 7), a joint Franco-German network broadcasting cultural and educational programs by satellite. These installations may also be used eventually to broadcast the "European Audiovisual College" under the aegis of the trans-European university-by-TV network, "Olympus."

As a joint venture with Polish TV, and taking advantage of the recently vacated Channel 2, La Sept recently signed an agreement to broadcast three and a half hours daily by satellite throughout Poland. Transmissions begin in early May, and cost will be shared, with La Sept furnishing programs and rights and the Polish network bearing the cost of subtitling—expected to offset broadcasting by only a week. La Sept is studying a similar project with Czechoslovakian TV, and has plans to eventually extend service to Hungary, Romania, and the U.S.S.R. In a similar move, French TV networks TF-1 (commercial) and Antenne-2 (public) signed cooperative agreements with Soviet
Gostel-Radio in late January.

La Cing, a commercial French TV network, is providing 7 1/2 hours of free, sub-titled programming to Bulgaria as of the end of May, beginning with Sofia, the capital, and eventually expanding service to Plovdiv, the second largest city in the South and to Bourgas, on the Black Sea.

Private sector initiatives in radio include:

—Europe-1 is setting up AM broadcasting in Czechoslovakia and will set up FM broadcasts there in June.

—KISS-FM (rock music) will soon start local language broadcasting in Moscow and Krakow, Poland.

—Radio Nostalfie (oldies) is sending Radio Moscow programs by satellite as of May 1st, for AM broadcasting to 50 million Soviet listeners seven hours per day, and will set up Moscow's first FM station there in July.

France has been a leader in efforts to promote joint production of movies and TV programs among many Western European nations, in an attempt to save its own production industry and to stave off what it regards as an on-going "invasion" of American films and programs.

Initiatives in Eastern Europe, where a close bond of friendship is felt with many countries, are expected to provide a further boost to French producers, as well as to the spread of the language and culture.

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