

Kultura and Its Forgotten University in Exile

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Abstract: *Instytut Literacki Kultura* (ILK) was the core of anti-communist resistance during the Cold War: it promoted independent political thought and understanding among central and eastern European countries while showing resilience against Communist regimes. Although ILK is mostly known for its monthly exile magazine *Kultura*, edited in Polish, its founder-editor Jerzy Giedroyc had anticipated another project in addition to a Literary Institute after the war. Foreseeing a long period of exile because of the Soviet occupation of Poland, he envisioned setting up a university for young Poles. His idea, which was delayed a few years because of the beginning of the Cold War, developed into a project with Józef Czapski to create a university for young refugees fleeing their communist countries from behind the Iron Curtain. After three years of preparation within ILK, the Free Europe University in Exile and its study center, *Collège de l'Europe libre*, were established in 1951 under the auspices of the American anti-communist organization National Committee for a Free Europe, yet Giedroyc and Czapski were excluded from its activities. The aim of this article is to trace the history of this essentially unknown initiative of the Polish exile group using archival holdings in Europe and the United States, and to highlight its importance within ILK.

Keywords: *Kultura*, Jerzy Giedroyc, refugee students, university in exile, National Committee for a Free Europe, research, archives

Instytut Literacki Kultura (Kultura Literary Institute), established in Maisons-Laffitte, France, was the intellectual lighthouse of Polish emigration during the Cold War that sought to reach communist Poland behind the Iron Curtain, as well as the Polish diaspora around the “free world.” Founded by Jerzy Giedroyc in collaboration with his intimate wartime friends, Józef Czapski, Zofia and Zygmunt Hertz as well as Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, it outgrew itself into a sort of think-tank on the future of central and eastern Europe under Soviet occupation throughout 637 issues of its monthly magazine *Kultura*, all meticulously crafted by Giedroyc and complete with 172 issues of *Zeszyty Historyczne* (a journal devoted to topics regarding Poland’s history) and hundreds of books from leading contemporary Polish and foreign writers.¹ By upholding independ-

¹ These publications are available online: <https://kulturaparyska.com/pl/publication/2/year/1947>, accessed July 13, 2023.

ent political thought as well as promoting understanding and reconciliation among eastern European nations, the “categorically anti-communist” and “categorically anti-nationalist” Polish exile group – as Czapski defined it in a French documentary film² – became the core of anti-totalitarian resistance for over half a century.³

In addition to establishing a Literary Institute, Giedroyc had another brainchild at the end of the war that received almost no attention: a university for Polish youth who were forced to live in foreign lands, outside of Soviet-occupied Poland. With the beginning of the Cold War, the idea then expanded to include exiled students from central and eastern Europe following the Communist takeover. The Free Europe University in Exile (FEUE) finally came to fruition in 1951. Founded under the auspices of the American anti-communist organization National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE) in New York City, it helped approximately two hundred exiled youth per year to gain access to higher education in western Europe.

Beyond its noble aim of saving the intelligentsia from the destructive consequences of Sovietization behind the Iron Curtain and building the foundation for lasting peace within central and eastern European nations, which was Giedroyc and Czapski’s original idea, the American-sponsored University in Exile also pursued an openly political aim: to train future liberal, democratic-minded leaders among these refugee students in case the peoples’ democracies in the Soviet bloc collapsed. This task was entrusted to the FEUE’s study center called *Collège de l’Europe libre* (ang. Free Europe College), which opened its doors on November 12, 1951 at the *Château de Pourtalès* in the eastern suburb of Strasbourg in France. The study center, which also served as a housing facility, offered the refugee fellows “national seminars” to keep their national sentiment alive while in exile, as well as a series of summer lectures held by both Western and exiled lecturers, along with their university studies.

Although Giedroyc and Czapski planted the first seeds in establishing the FEUE and the *Collège de l’Europe libre* without “any shadow of personal ambition,”⁴ both were left

² Documentary film entitled “Comte Joseph Czapski” in the collection “Archives du XXème siècle”, directed by Philippe Collin and produced by *Société française de Production* in 1971 (in French), file CPD06021230, Archives of the French National Audiovisual Institute - Inatèque.

³ The French Association of *Instytut Literacki Kultura*, that inherited the task of preserving and shedding light on *Kultura*’s intellectual heritage after Giedroyc’s passing, published the first comprehensive anthology devoted to the Polish exile group’s multifaceted achievements this year, with more than twenty essays written by international scholars: Anna Bernhardt, Anna Ciesielska-Ribard, Iwona H. Pugaczewicz, ed., *Penser la démocratie et agir en exil : Les leçons de Jerzy Giedroyc et de Kultura, 1947–2000* [Thinking Democracy and Acting in Exile: Lessons from Jerzy Giedroyc and *Kultura*] (Paris: Association Institut Littéraire Kultura/ Centre de civilisation polonaise Sorbonne Université 2023), 560.

⁴ Letter from Czapski to Burnham (in French), 24 October 1950, Archives *Instytut Literacki Kultura* - ILK, KOR RED Burnham T.1.

out of the institutions' endeavors. The story is all the more interesting as the NCFE and its activities – the well-known Radio Free Europe (Polish: *Radio Wolna Europa*), exile organizations of all kinds across the “free world,” research and publication services, and fundraising campaigns – were all American Cold War assets, secretly run and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). They covertly took part in the United States' strategy to roll back Soviet power and liberate the satellite countries from the USSR's orbit by means of psychological warfare.

The *Kolegium Wolnej Europy* (English: Free Europe College) is addressed in only five articles in *Kultura* from 1952 to 1955. Nothing else was written about it. This is not only because both Giedroyc and Czapski were excluded from the institutions, even though the magazine remained their only chance to speak out, but also because they were aware of the NCFE's secret governmental support, and they had to keep silent. Organizing the university and contacting the NCFE was confidential and required the utmost care. If the CIA's involvement had been revealed, it would have put everyone involved in the project in a compromising position. Even more, *Kultura* never received any financial support from the CIA, as the exile magazine's life-long contributor Konstanty Jelenski stated in his 1981 article in the French intellectual review called *Le Débat*.⁵ At the same time, “foreign money is nothing to be ashamed of,” if it is provided openly and in the form of a gift, as Juliusz Mieroszewski, *Kultura*'s political writer and correspondent in London, wrote in issue No. 3/185 in 1963.

The history of the FEUE and its study center – especially its early years when Giedroyc and Czapski came up with the idea and the NCFE took it over – demonstrates that a dichotomy existed between central and eastern European emigration networks and the United States. Although émigré groups considered Americans their allies in breaking down totalitarian regimes behind the Iron Curtain, exiled voices struggled to be heard and to stay independent when faced with the overwhelming influence of the U.S. Giedroyc never overcame this. As he said in a conversation with Barbara Toruńczyk in 1981, “the only things the West can give you are tears and money.”⁶ In his autobiographical book, Giedroyc acknowledged the NCFE's support, but also expressed his reservations about Free Europe's interference in émigré affairs: “It is unfortunate that the Committee's archives are not accessible to researchers; if that were the case, it would be possible to say to what extent my reservations are justified, which would also help to dispel certain legends.”⁷

⁵ Konstanty Jelenski, “Kultura, la Pologne en exil,” *Le Débat*, no. 9 (1981): 65.

⁶ *Penser la démocratie*, 493. Piotr Kłoczowski quotes Timothy Snyder who cited Giedroyc in his book co-authored with Tony Judt. Tony Judt and Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

⁷ Jerzy Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce*, 4th ed. (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2006), 344.

The aim of this article is to provide insight into the materials related to the FEUE and the *Collège de l'Europe libre*, guiding its readers from one archival collection and record to another. It brings together a wide range of sources with the purpose of providing a comprehensive history of the University in Exile and its importance within *Kultura*. The archival sources will be presented in chronological order according to the origins and history of the University in Exile, summarizing the results of more than 10 years of research, based on records disseminated around the world and written in English, French and Polish, creating challenging language barriers for a non-Polish speaking researcher.⁸

Tracing the University in Exile in the Archival Holdings in France and Poland

At the onset of this research, it was initially unknown that Giedroyc and Czapski had initiated the FEUE and the *Collège de l'Europe libre*. An aide-mémoire on the university project from 1950, located in the Departmental Archives of Bas-Rhin in Strasbourg, helped reveal the origin of these endeavors. According to the document's introduction, the idea for the university was developed in 1948 by *Kultura* – “an independent and progressivist group of Polish intellectual émigrés” – and supported by the Congress of Cultural Freedom.⁹ Moreover, the American intellectual James Burnham also mentioned the subject in his latest book. This brief information led us to the exile magazine and its archival holdings at *Instytut Literacki Kultura* (ILK) in Maisons-Laffitte, France.

The keystone in tracing the history of the University in Exile is the relationship between Giedroyc and Czapski. They first met in the 1930s at literary salon meetings with Russian-Polish émigrés in Poland. They crossed paths again in 1942 in the Middle East, where thousands of Polish soldiers and civilians had been evacuated from the Soviet Union after the Sikorski-Mayski agreement. Czapski was the chief officer of information and propaganda of the Polish Second Army, while Giedroyc supervised the periodicals and books section under his control. From then on, they became inseparable for the rest of their lives. Even though Giedroyc and Czapski spent much of their time together afterwards when living with the Hertz couple and Czapski's sister, Maria Czapska, at *Kultura*'s headquarters in Maisons-Laffitte, their correspondence in Polish during their time

⁸ On the FEUE and the *Collège de l'Europe libre*, cf. Veronika Durin-Hornjik, “*Kultura séduit l'élite américaine (1948–1958)*”, in *Penser la démocratie*, 305–336.

⁹ Aide-mémoire with a letter from Professor Redslob to the Secretary of University of Strasbourg's Rector (in French), 19 February 1951, Departmental Archives of Bas-Rhin, Rectorate of Strasbourg, 1161 W, box 43.

apart – located at ILK and in the process of publication¹⁰ – provides insight into their concerns and social interactions.

The mission of the Polish Second Army was not limited to defeating the German troops in Italy. It also took care of thousands of civilians: elderly people, women, youth, and adolescents. The army set up high schools and technical colleges across the Middle East for Polish boys and girls who had received no education since the beginning of the war. Young Poles who passed their baccalaureate at these schools were encouraged to continue their studies at Italian universities. Czapski first paid tribute to this extraordinary educational endeavor in the Middle East in the 1965 German edition of his book entitled *Inhuman Land (Na nieludzkiej ziemi)*, first published in Polish in 1949, and later in the French documentary film as well.

Education was key for Giedroyc. After the successful campaign at Monte Cassino in May 1944, his duty consisted of training soldiers while the Polish army was stationed in Italy. On February 9, 1945, he wrote a long letter to Czapski, who had been waiting for a new assignment in Rome, to complain about the pro-Russian nature of Polish films he had to show to young soldiers and its propaganda effect on those who no longer knew Poland. Giedroyc understood the devastating effects of Soviet indoctrination in the current political context – the insurrection in Warsaw, the “liberation” of Poland from Nazi occupation by the Red Army, and the Yalta Conference – which sealed the fate of Poles living outside and inside the country. Further on in the letter, he wrote of his university project for young Poles that he had already suggested to Czapski:

I can see that you're not very enthusiastic about the university project. That's where the Domaradzki and Maurers come in. Keep in mind that the university is about creating and influencing a new generation of elite. It's up to you to do it and consult me personally. How nice it would be to have the magazine and a publishing house in Rome.¹¹

As a result, Giedroyc founded the *Instytut Literacki* in Rome in 1946, which he relocated to France the following year to be closer to both émigré circles and Poland. The Literary Institute and its team moved to a building that Czapski rented to store the records of his wartime service on Avenue Corneille in Maisons-Laffitte, a western suburb of Paris.¹² By 1947, the merged second and third issue of *Kultura* had already been published in Paris. While the launch of the magazine had priority over the university project, the latter remained of equal importance to Giedroyc.

¹⁰ The first volume was published this year: Rafał Habielski, ed., *Jerzy Giedroyc – Józef Czapski, Listy 1943–1948* (Warsaw: Więź, 2023), 825.

¹¹ Letter from Giedroyc to Czapski (in Polish), 9 February 1945, ILK, PoJcz 19/01.

¹² Konstanty Jelenski, “Le rôle du mensuel *Kultura* en France,” *Revue du Nord*, Special Issue, No. 4 (1988): 222.

On January 4, 1948, Czapski met James Burnham at a conference hosted by Charles de Gaulle. His meeting with the American intellectual led to *Kultura*'s participation at the Congress for Cultural Freedom two years later.¹³ Czapski's first letter to Burnham refers to their meeting in Saint Étienne. Decades later, Czapski remembered the "chance meeting" he had with Burnham, even if he had forgotten the details of that meeting.¹⁴ Giedroyc also recalled that Czapski met Burnham "by chance at a conference of de Gaulle in 1948."¹⁵ Thanks to a video recording available online, we can watch de Gaulle's visit to southeastern France.¹⁶ Attended by tens of thousands of people and given a presidential welcome, the general was officially there as the party leader of the recently established *Rassemblement du peuple français*. How was Czapski able to meet, at a political rally of such scale, the iconic Burnham, former Trotskyist and ardent anticommunist, who owed his world-wide reputation to his book *The Managerial Revolution* – published in 1941 and inspiring such novels as George Orwell's *1984* – in which he predicted a social evolution into technocracy instead of capitalism and socialism? The answer is the man who can be seen on de Gaulle's left throughout the footage: André Malraux.

Czapski's personal archives, located at the National Museum of Krakow, Poland, provide insight into his correspondence with Malraux. Czapski met the French intellectual in Paris during the interwar period, who, after the war, entered politics on de Gaulle's side as a disillusioned Communist and fellow traveler. Czapski first visited Malraux when General Anders appointed the former as a representative of the Polish Second Army in Paris in 1945 to defend the interests of the Polish government-in-exile against the official recognition and thus gaining influence of the communist-led Lublin government. Malraux received his Polish friend with "a sentiment of fellowship"¹⁷ and support-

¹³ For more details, read Veronika Durin-Hornjik's essay "The Free Europe University in Exile, Inc. and the Collège de l'Europe libre (1951–1958)," in *The Inauguration of 'Organized Political Warfare': The Cold War Organizations sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee*, ed. Katalin Kádár Lynn (Saint Helena: Helena History Press, 2013), 440–51; and in Polish: Andrzej S. Kowalczyk, *Wena do polityki. O Giedroyciu i Mieroszewskim* (Warsaw: Więź, 2015), 221–47. For additional reading in Polish, cf. Mirosław A. Supruniuk, *Przyjaciele Wolności: Kongres Wolności Kultury i Polacy* (Warsaw: DIG, 2008), 176.

¹⁴ Józef Czapski, "James Burnham (1905–1987)," *Kultura*, no. 10/481 (1987): 138.

¹⁵ Giedroyc's note to Priscilla L. Buckley on Burnham's role in the support of *Kultura*, sent on July 1, 1987 (in English). ILK, KOR RED Burnham T.2. The note was later published in the special issue of *National Review* dedicated to Burnham's life (11 September 1987, Vol. XXXIX, no. 17), without the comment "by chance", 35–6.

¹⁶ "General Charles de Gaulle at St Etienne," British Movietone, accessed July 13, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWnbZ5NdF6M>.

¹⁷ Józef Czapski, "Malraux," *Kultura*, no. 1/352–2/353 (1977): 30–5. The English translation is available online: Józef Czapski, "Malraux," *Kultura*. Szkice. Opowiadania. Sprawozdania," accessed July 13, 2023, <https://kulturaraparyska.com/en/topic-article/malraux>.

ed Czapski and *Kultura* from 1947 onwards, as their correspondence in Krakow and Maisons-Laffitte testifies.

Their friendship aligned not only their artistic interests but also their political ones. De Gaulle's political party openly advocated an anticommunist policy, which was a bold political program in a country where the communists were holding civil disobedience strikes, the NKVD was openly kidnapping people in the streets, and Stalin's USSR was enjoying international recognition for its role in ending World War II. Malraux acknowledged Czapski's recollections of the brutality of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of ten thousand Polish soldiers in Soviet camps, as well as the importance of launching *Kultura* as the only Polish exile magazine.

Simultaneously, intellectuals close to de Gaulle, in particular Raymond Aron, became aware of Burnham's work and promulgated it in France. The American intellectual, a critic of the USSR, was also interested in the development of international relations and the polarization of political forces in Europe. With this convergence of interests between French and American anticommunist forces at the beginning of the Cold War, Burnham traveled to France in late 1947 (the first time he had been to Europe since 1932) and attended de Gaulle's political rally on January 4, 1948. It was thus through Malraux – “a man of incessant action”¹⁸ – that Czapski met Burnham in Saint Étienne.¹⁹

As a result of this meeting, *Kultura* and Burnham began their correspondence on April 9, 1948. Czapski and Giedroyc wrote letters in French or translated them into English, while Burnham understood French perfectly well but always answered in English. The decades of correspondence are divided into two periods, and the period 1948–1952 contains almost twice as many records (300) as the 1953–1987 folder (175). This clearly reflects the dynamics in the early Cold War period and the emergence of anticommunist forces, anti-USSR politics, and organizations on a transatlantic scale. Moreover, the Burnham-*Kultura* correspondence very quickly refers to the university project and the role it was expected to play in the ongoing political context, which underlines the fact that it had received much attention from the Polish exile group. On September 23, 1948, Czapski wrote the following:

If America does not want Central Europe to turn against itself in the event of a conflict, it must find a way to counterbalance the enormous amount of hatred and denigration in the propaganda released by the press at Moscow's will. But then America must create centers where thought, science, and intellectual practice can exist for the people there [i.e. in central and eastern Europe]. This is what gave us the idea for an American University in Europe for displaced youth and for those fleeing

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ At this occasion, Burnham met Malraux as well which led to their friendship and collaboration – they co-authored *The Case for de Gaulle: A dialogue between Andre Malraux and James Burnham*, published in early 1948.

from behind the Iron Curtain. Allow me to send you the project. I will not forget the impression I had when I left Soviet Russia and discovered an admirable and exemplary American hospital in Mashhad on the border of Afghanistan, but even more, we admired the American University in Beirut where Arabs, Jews, and Poles could study freely. Remember that Central Europe is moving towards barbarization. All the elites were massacred or deported by either the Germans or Russians, and the youth who are eager to learn only receive an education distorted by Soviet propaganda. (...) [The idea would be] a great American university where young Americans could study the problems of Europe alongside youth from behind the Iron Curtain who have experienced Russian communism and its destruction in Poland, Hungary, or Romania, with economics and history professors, and professors from these central European countries.²⁰

Burnham became increasingly enthusiastic about the university project, which he propagated in the United States at Czapski's request. From the outset of his relationship with Czapski and Giedroyc, and because of his appreciation and unconditional trust in them given Malraux's introduction, Burnham made it no secret that he had extensive contacts in the American government and military. Burnham was not only acquainted with the American elite but was himself trying to shape the US government's Cold War policy. His early 1950 book entitled *The Coming Defeat of Communism* called for an offensive politico-subversive American policy against the USSR and mentioned a project – implicitly referring to *Kultura* – which was “put forward in explicit detail by a number of refugees, now centered in Paris, for the foundation of an East European Institute, or University.”²¹ Meanwhile, in 1949 he was secretly recruited by the Office of Project Coordination (OPC), a top-secret unit within the CIA under the direction of Frank G. Wisner, whose mission consisted of formulating and pursuing psychological warfare against the USSR and its satellite countries to dismantle Communist regimes.²²

Reciprocally, at the turn of 1949–1950, *Kultura* adopted Burnham's political theory called “one world,” one of the different concepts that the exile magazine published concerning the future of Iron Curtain countries and their liberation from the Soviet occupation. It called for the United States to take an active role in safeguarding peace and saving the world from the Soviet Union's threatening physical and cultural destruction, as well as strengthening and mobilizing Western societies to fight communism.²³ *Kultura* not only adopted Burnham's theory but published excerpts from his book called *The Struggle for the World* (1947) in five serial issues (No. 9/26, 1949 – No. 5/31, 1950) and the book itself (*Walka o świat*) in 1950.

²⁰ Letter from Czapski to Burnham (in French), 23 September 1948, ILK, KOR RED, Burnham T.1

²¹ James Burnham, *The Coming Defeat of Communism* (London: Johnathan Cape, 1950), 202–4.

²² Daniel Kelly, *James Burnham and the Struggle for the World: A Life* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2002), 149–53.

²³ Janusz Korek, *Paradoksy paryskiej „Kultury”: Styl i tradycje myślenia politycznego* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2008), 92–6 and 111–7.



Fig. 1. A rare photograph showing the inner circle of *Kultura* with James Burnham on his visit to the Literary Institute on Avenue Corneille in Maisons-Laffitte. From left to right: Jerzy Giedroyc, James Burnham, Zygmunt Hertz, Józef Czapski, Zofia Hertz, Maria Czapska, and the writer Czesław Miłosz (*Instytut Literacki Kultura*, Sygn. FIL00838, fot. Henryk Giedroyc).

Czapski's trip to North America in early 1950 changed the fate of *Kultura's* university project. The correspondence between Czapski and Giedroyc – written with encoded reference to people for fear of being persecuted by Soviet and Polish secret services – contains breathtaking accounts of the “Foreign Minister” of *Kultura's* countless efforts to advertise the exile magazine and other projects on American soil. Thanks to Burnham's support, lots of doors opened for Czapski, including the inner circles of the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), which was covertly a psychological operation run by Wisner's OPC. In New York, Czapski met the NCFE's key members in their private residences and at the committee's office at the Empire State Building. These included Joseph C. Grew (Chairman of the Board of Directors), Frank Altschul (Treasurer), Dewitt C. Poole (President), Frederic R. Dolbeare (Secretary), and Allen W. Dulles (Chairman of the NCFE's executive committee), who was the liaison between Free Europe and the OPC.

Czapski was enlivened by his visit to the United States, as various archives testify. His essays were published in the 1950 issues of *Kultura* alongside his drawings of American cities and landscapes, and his personal diary – located in the National Museum of Krakow – contains sketches of places he visited and memos of meetings he held with, among others, Burnham as well as Free Europe representatives.²⁴ He literally found himself at the center of the American elite, just as he portrayed himself at the top of Rockefeller Center in the heart of Manhattan, holding a *Kultura* flag in his hand, on a postcard sent to Giedroyc during the tumultuous meetings with the NCFE.

As for Giedroyc, he assembled all the press clippings about Czapski's meetings with the Polish diaspora and American academic audiences and put them in a book, kept now at ILK. However, Czapski's talks with the representatives of the leading American anticommunist organization did not lead to any results, except Dulles' slight interest in the university project. Consequently, Burnham took *Kultura's* project into his own hands. He confidentially informed Czapski about a project in progress as follows: “He [i.e. Burnham] plans to build a group of about ten people, without a single opportunist, who could start an anti-Soviet business on a large scale. He said that we could bring people in and, if all goes well, it may be a start... of the institute.”²⁵

This led Czapski and Giedroyc to attend the first Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) meeting in West-Berlin between June 26–30, 1950, which was secretly created by Burnham's efforts within the OPC. It was on this occasion that Czapski publicly

²⁴ A selection from Czapski's diary has been published in an album entitled *Jozef Czapski: Wybrane strony, Z dzienników 1942–1991* (Warsaw: Instytut Dokumentacji i Studiów nad Literaturą Polską, 2010), vol. 1, which contains references to his meetings with Burnham as well as with Poole and Altschul on behalf of the NCFE in 1950 (p. 70), and later in 1951, on the *Collège de l'Europe libre* (p. 107).

²⁵ Letter from Czapski to Giedroyc (in Polish), 10 March 1950, ILK, PoJcz 19/03.



Fig. 2. Józef Czapski's postcard from New York City to Jerzy Giedroyc in Maisons-Laffitte on March 18, 1950, portraying himself at the top of Rockefeller Center during his tumultuous meetings with the National Committee for a Free Europe's key members. On one of these occasions, Allen W. Dulles became aware of the university project that the NCFE established on Dulles' initiative in 1951 (*Instytut Literacki Kultura*, PoJcz 19/03).

presented the idea of creating a university for exiled youth, anticipating the loss of their cultures due to the destructive Sovietization behind the Iron Curtain. The ILK's digital photograph collection takes us back in time to witness this historic moment.²⁶ The project was then approved at the first CCF meeting, and a University Commission was elected at the CCF's second meeting in Brussels on November 30, 1950.²⁷ Headed by Czapski in Europe and Burnham in the United States, the commission's task was to lay the groundwork for the future university.

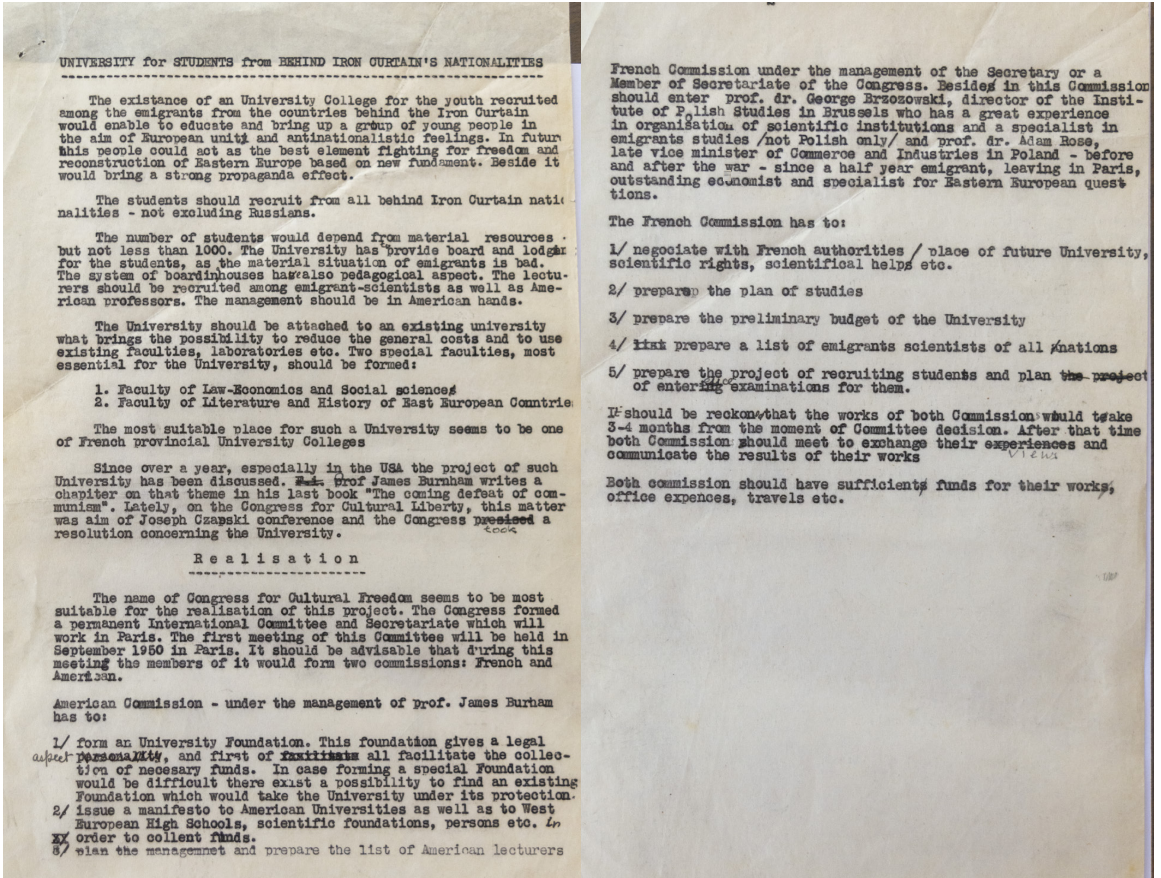


Fig. 3a and 3b. Draft of the university project, issued after the Congress for Cultural Freedom's first meeting held in West Berlin from June 26–30, 1950 (*Instytut Literacki Kultura*, KOR RED KWK, T.3).

²⁶ „Kongres Wolności Kultury”, *Kultura*. Szkice. Opowiadania. Sprawozdania, accessed July 13, 2023, <https://kulturaparyska.com/pl/collection/media/show/kongres-wolnosci-kultury>.
²⁷ Pierre Grémion's fundamental book on the CCF contains some allusions on the university project at the movement's first and second meeting: *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme: Le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris (1950–1975)* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 44–64.

The archives held at ILK under the title “KWK” (*Kongres Wolności Kultury*), stored in three volumes (some 700 records), contain all items related to *Kultura*’s participation in the CCF meetings during 1950–1951, including their concerns about and critiques of the intellectual movement. Since the university project was associated with the CCF, the archives related to the *Collège de l’Europe libre* produced by Czapski and Giedroyc between 1951 and 1958 are also in this collection.

“To Dispel Certain Legends”: American Archives on the University in Exile

The Giedroyc-Czapski correspondence contains additional elements which explain how the CCF’s growing support for the university project was a catalyst for Free Europe to embrace *Kultura*’s project. As a matter of fact, the NCFE’s key person, Dulles, began to think seriously about the project after talking face-to-face with Czapski in New York. When the CCF approved the university project at its inaugural meeting in June 1950, Dulles rushed to meet Czapski in July during his stay in Europe. Czapski reported to Giedroyc on his conversation with Dulles in an encoded letter as follows:

D. [i.e. Dulles] carefully read all the notes I had given him. He will send them immediately to Washington and give us an answer, probably before he arrives. Of all the subjects, he was most interested in the university. He repeated his request for B. [i.e. Burnham], upon his return, to speak to his superior [i.e. Dulles’ superior, Frank G. Wisner], who could not only give us about twenty thousand [i.e. dollars] for organizational expenses, but its foundation could also do advertising for us.²⁸

According to Giedroyc’s reply to Czapski, “Burnham was very excited about this information and promised to take up his mission without delay.”²⁹

Several documents issued from July to November 1950, located in the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) collection on the Free Europe University in Exile (FEUE) at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, show that the NCFE started outlining a fellowship program for central and eastern European student refugees. Furthermore, additional records at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library held in the collection of the diplomat Adolf A. Berle, Jr. – who would become the FEUE’s leading figure – and in the collection of the University of Strasbourg at the Departmental Archives of Bas-Rhin in Strasbourg, France, prove that the NCFE approached the French university

²⁸ Letter from Czapski to Giedroyc (in Polish), 24 July 1950, ILK, PoJCz 19/03.

²⁹ Letter from Giedroyc to Czapski (in Polish), 1 August 1950, ILK, PoJCz 19/03.

in August 1950 and attempted to set up the university of exile based on *Kultura's* project, without any mention of *Kultura*, Czapski, Giedroyc, Burnham, or the CCF.

Regarding Czapski and Giedroyc, they were unaware of the NCFE's early actions during the summer and autumn of 1950. Burnham was somewhat aware of them since he regularly kept *Kultura* informed of some "favorable developments" in the United States, without providing any details.³⁰ In the meantime, Czapski and Giedroyc started spreading the word about the CCF-backed university project on the pages of *Kultura* (No. 7/33-8/34, 1950 and No. 9/35, 1950) as well as in their personal correspondence with Jerzy Stempowski in Switzerland – who closely followed the project from 1949 until the creation of the *Collège de l'Europe libre* in 1951, and even long afterwards – Mieroszewski in London, as well as Jelenski in Italy.³¹

The archives of the French Foreign Ministry keep the record of Czapski's meeting in January 1951 with key diplomats, Robert Rochefort and Jean Laloy – who were his prewar acquaintances – to survey the political support and legal conditions of the project's creation in France.³² In February 1951, Czapski made a trip to France to visit three university towns, including Strasbourg, to find the right place for the future University in Exile, as evidenced by the record held at the Departmental Archives of Bas-Rhin. Moreover, in his appearance on the French national radio to discuss the liberty of culture alongside CCF members (Raymond Aron, Georges Altman, Denis de Rougemont and John Lowe), he implicitly spoke of the university project for exiled youth from behind the Iron Curtain who no longer knew what it meant to live in liberty.³³

In mid-March 1951, Free Europe finally embraced the project: its president, Dewitt C. Poole, was eager to come to Paris with the mission of establishing a university in exile alongside the CCF. Records located at the Hoover Institution Archives and at ILK elucidate the reason for Free Europe's rapid move. There was a competing project to create a central and eastern European Institute, developed by Polish exiles Bolesław Wierzbianski and Dr. Zygmunt Nagórski, supported by another American anticommunist organization, the International Rescue Committee. On top of this, Józef Retinger – a London-based Polish exile and gray eminence of the European Movement who "pokes

³⁰ Letter from Burnham to Czapski (in English), 19 October 1950, ILK, KOR RED Burnham, T.1.

³¹ These correspondences were published by *Czytelnik* publisher in Warsaw in the collection *Archiwum KULTURY* as follows: Andrzej S. Kowalczyk, *Jerzy Giedroyc – Jerzy Stempowski, Listy 1946–1969*, vol. 1–2, Warsaw, 1998; *Jerzy Giedroyc – Juliusz Mieroszewski: listy 1949–1956*, vol. 1–2, Warsaw, 1999; and Wojciech Karpiński, *Jerzy Giedroyc – Konstanty A. Jeleński Listy 1950–1987*, Warsaw, 1995.

³² Note for the Directorate-General of Cultural Relations (in French), 26 January 1951, Archives of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs – La Courneuve, "Europe (1944–1970)", box 248QO/51.

³³ The broadcast entitled "La liberté de la culture" [French: Cultural Freedom] in the program "Tribune de Paris" was produced by *Radiodiffusion française* and broadcasted on February 19, 1951. Inathèque, file PHD86032297.

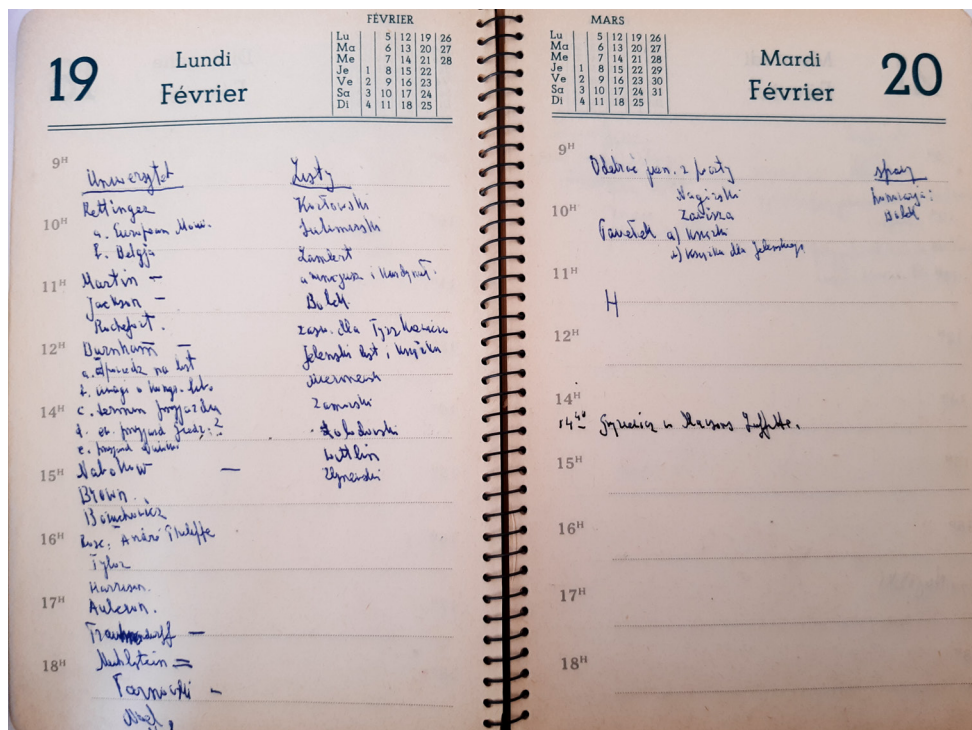


Fig. 4. After the establishment of the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s University Commission at the end of 1950, Jerzy Giedroyc’s diary was filled with appointments with American, French, and exiled figures during which he hoped to give an impetus for the project (*Instytut Literacki Kultura*, PoJG, 03.02.19).

his nose into everything³⁴ – was also well aware of the university project. After having expressed his concerns about *Kultura’s* plan, Retinger told Czapski and Giedroyc that the general Władysław Sikorski also had a plan during the war to set up an Eastern European Slavonic Nations University, because of the “great importance of democratic educational reconstruction throughout Europe after the defeat of Germany.”³⁵ Endorsed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in December 1942, his plan never materialized.

According to the NCFE’s records on the FEUE at the Hoover Institution Archives, Czapski entered the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 21, 1951 along with NCFE’s president Poole and NCFE’s European representative, Royall Tyler, to start negotiations with French officials. He was consulted by Poole once before and a few times after the meeting at Quai d’Orsay. On March 26, Czapski already complained to his prewar friend, Nicolas Nabokov – who was appointed Secretary of the CCF’s Parisian

³⁴ Letter from Giedroyc to Burnham (in English), 15 February 1951, ILK, KOR RED Burnham, T.1

³⁵ Letter from General Sikorski to President Roosevelt (in English), 16 December 1942, The Sikorski Institute in London sent this historic record to Czapski at Retinger’s request on February 5, 1951. ILK, KOR RED KWK, Lesniowski.

office – that the organization of the university looked “as if [he] should be eliminated from the essential work.”³⁶

The internal correspondence of NCFE members in 1951 contains only a few references to Czapski, which makes it clear that they had no intention of involving him in the organization nor in the membership of the future University in Exile. The official answer on behalf of the NCFE was that Czapski’s application “would be a provocation towards the Russian.”³⁷ Meanwhile, the CCF’s University Commission decided to abandon the university project during Czapski’s second visit to New York in May 1951, leaving its fate to Free Europe. Burnham – who was also bypassed by Free Europe but was consulted in the end because of his reputation and position – sought to change NCFE’s mind concerning Czapski’s application:

I had been given to understand that Joseph Czapski was to be drawn into close collaboration with the University, both in his own individual right and also as representative of the *Kultura* group and of the Congress of Cultural Freedom. (I recall being told that in order to accomplish this, Czapski was to be asked to become a consultant of NCFE.) This has not been done. Czapski may seem a little eccentric or Bohemian to some of those who are being assembled around the University. But it happens that there are few men in Europe whose integrity and courage, in life and war as in art, are more widely known and respected, especially among the youth from (and for that matter still in) the satellite nation. It should be added that the idea of such a University as ours was first formulated and made public by *Kultura*.³⁸

The reaction of the NCFE president, C.D. Jackson, to Burnham’s claim left no doubt about Free Europe’s ignorance of Czapski in New York:

I am totally mystified by the reference to Czapski [in Burnham’s letter]. Czapski has had the run of our office while he was here, has been welcomed by both Mr. Poole and Mr. Tyler in Paris whenever he wished to see them; his proposals have been listened to, several of them adopted, including giving him a monthly grant for *Kultura*. I believe Mr. Poole can add several paragraphs on the subject of Mr. Burnham’s confusion on the Czapski situation.³⁹

NCFE’s harsh refusal was even more disingenuous because Dulles remained in contact with *Kultura* until the autumn of 1951 – according to the Burnham-*Kultura* correspondence, in which the American was encoded as “D” – because of his plans with Czeslaw

³⁶ Letter from Czapski to Nabokov (in French), 26 March 1951, ILK, KOR RED KWK 07, Nabokov.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Letter from Burnham to Levering Tyson (in English), 17 August 1951, Hoover Institution Archives, RFE/RL Corporate Records, Alphabetical File 1948-1988, box 201, folder 7.

³⁹ C.D. Jackson to Tyson (in English), 20 September 1951, Hoover Institution Archives, RFE/RL Corporate Records, Alphabetical File 1948-1988, box 201, folder 8.

Milosz, who had secretly escaped to Maisons-Laffitte in February 1951, and a plan to post a *Kultura* correspondent in Berlin. However, these plans never came to fruition.

The Free Europe University in Exile educational corporation was created on July 22, 1951 in New York City, composed of NCFE members as well as American scholars, such as Burnham.

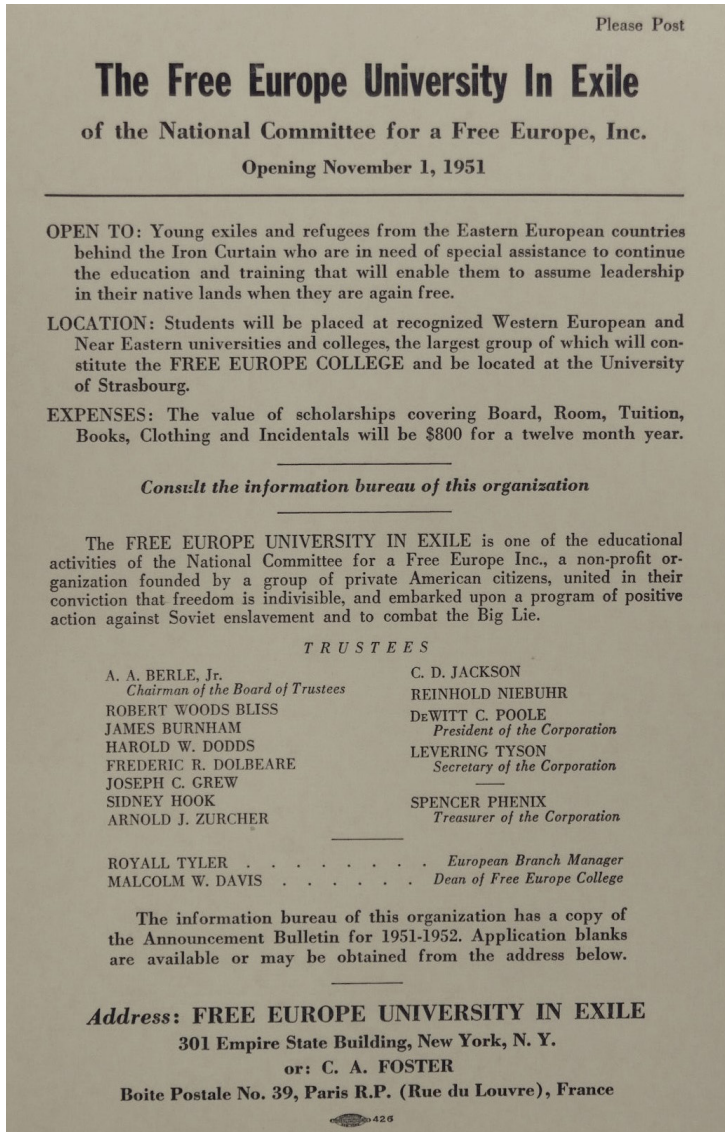


Fig. 5. Flyer from the Free Europe University in Exile, 1951 (Hoover Institution Archives, RFE/RL Corporate Records, Alphabetical File 1948–1988, box 202, folder 3).

The French association of *Collège de l'Europe libre*, which provided the legal basis to run the study center in Strasbourg, included French, American and exiled members. Ironically, Czapski's former acquaintances (Nicolas Nabokov, Anatol Mülhstein, Jacques Maritain), who in one way or another knew about the project, became members of the French entity, though not Czapski himself.

The *Collège de l'Europe libre* leadership kept *Kultura* informed of the progress during the summer of 1951 prior to the opening, but merely as a gesture of courtesy. Czapski and Giedroyc, both on an individual basis as well as at the Berlin Youth Festival, held in West-Berlin in August 1951, continued to send suggestions about student recruitment and applications for exiled teacher positions. The exile magazine even advertised the FEUE on its back cover in the special issue of 1952. While Burnham attended the opening in Strasbourg on November 12, 1951, *Kultura* was not even invited. Their further correspondence at ILK and Burnham's papers in the Hoover Institutions Archives testify how much the American intellectual relied on *Kultura's* judgment about the institution that he sought to disseminate to the FEUE's Trustees in New York.

While the FEUE and its study center became part of the American psychological warfare towards the liberation of Soviet satellite countries according to declassified records located at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, the *Collège de l'Europe libre* started moving away from the concept that *Kultura* had first dreamed of, that of a politically engaged institution with a well-developed academic curriculum. The exile magazine remained the only free platform to voice their concerns. The first article was based on Giedroyc and Czapski's impressions after their visit to Strasbourg.⁴⁰ Despite the initial friendly tone, the following articles attacked the institution head on.⁴¹ In parallel, Burnham's new book called *Containment or Liberation?* – published in 1953 and edited in Polish (*Bierny opór czy Wyzwolenie?*) by *Instytut Literacki Kultura* the same year – also criticized the FEUE as a failure of containment policy and called for a policy of liberation.

In late 1954, the FEUE had undergone operational changes as a result of the Trustees' decisions. According to the latter, the *Collège de l'Europe libre* ceased to operate as a boarding school from the year 1955/1956 and all FEUE fellows were free to study at any western European university, with the obligation to participate in the summer lectures series held at the *Château de Pourtalès* in Strasbourg. Consequently, Burnham and *Kultura* lost interest in the endeavor. The *Collège de l'Europe libre* was last mentioned in their correspondence on January 31, 1955 and in the March 1955 issue of *Kultura*.⁴²

⁴⁰ Józef Ursyn, „Kolegium Wolnej Europy,” *Kultura*, no. 1/51 (1952): 71–9.

⁴¹ Zbigniew Różycki, „Kolegium Wolnej Europy,” *Kultura*, no. 12/74 (1953): 65–74; Wojciech Zaleski, „Uwagi i wnioski w sprawie Kolegium Wolnej Europy,” *Kultura*, no. 1/75–2/76 (1954): 125–35; John Pelenyi et al., „Jeszcze o Kolegium Wolnej Europy,” *Kultura*, no. 6/80 (1954): 101–10.

⁴² Wojciech Zaleski, „Jeszcze o Strasburgu,” *Kultura*, no. 3/89 (1955): 89–92.

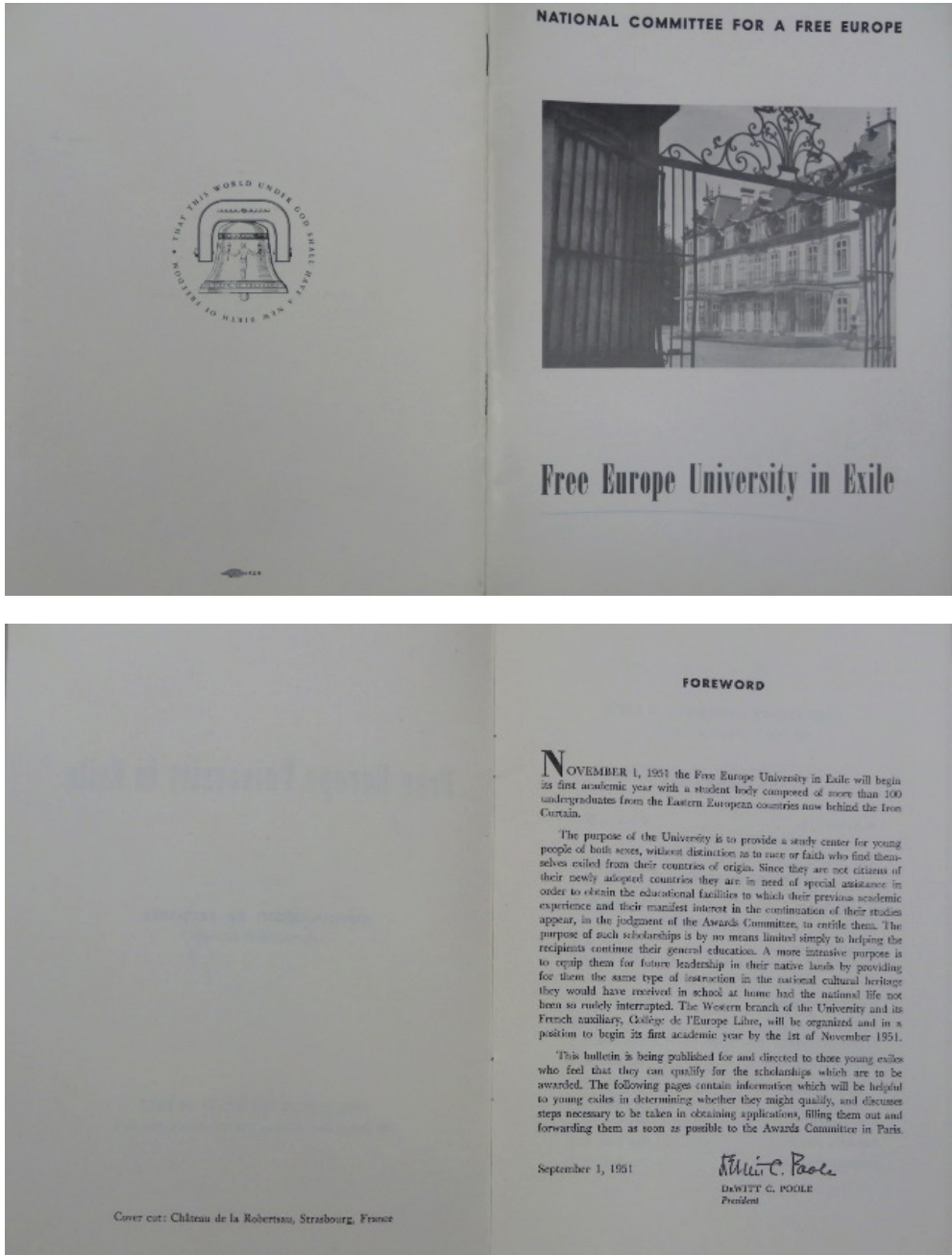


Fig. 6a and 6b. Announcement Bulletin for 1951–1952 from the Free Europe University in Exile (Hoover Institution Archives, RFE/RL Corporate Records, Alphabetical File 1948–1988, box 202, folder 3).

Kultura's disinterest in the University in Exile was also part of a fundamental breakthrough in the exile magazine's political stance in 1954–1955 on the United States and western Europe in defense of Soviet-occupied Poland and Iron Curtain countries. *Kultura* observed that American foreign policy was principally driven by the desire to defend its territory and by political and economic interests. Therefore, it would only react if its military and political domination would be threatened. Since Washington was indifferent to the Soviet occupation of central and eastern Europe – because this region did not pose a direct threat to American territories or interests – *Kultura* ceased to believe in the United States as a center of moral renewal, the heart of a new security system, and a liberator of oppressed nations. As regards to western Europe, the European unification encountered many difficulties, without considering the question of eastern Europe. This issue was ignored in complete silence on the international forum out of fear that the USSR would see it as a provocation. Because of its disillusion of the west, *Kultura* – which moved its headquarters to 91 Avenue de Poissy where it still stands⁴³ – turned its attention more and more to Poland and central and eastern Europe.⁴⁴

As to the *Collège de l'Europe libre*, three years later, according to the FEUE Trustees' decision on July 31, 1958, both the University in Exile in New York and its study center in Strasbourg had closed. The official announcement of the closure stated that both endeavors had only a temporary mission, namely, to assist refugee students who were displaced because of World War II or who later fled the Communist takeover behind the Iron Curtain. The Free Europe Committee's internal records show, however, that the geopolitical considerations – the consolidation of the Soviet bloc after the failed Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the evaporated hopes for a swift liberation of satellite countries – and internal considerations – the CIA's loss of interest in financing the FEUE – led to the University in Exile's phase out.

Reviving Jerzy Giedroyc's Legacy

Decades later, Giedroyc took a retrospective view about his life in his autobiographical book as well as in a Polish documentary film. He remembered Burnham as *Kultura's* only American friend.⁴⁵ Despite their opposite political views, the “right-wing” American intellectual from the “antiliberal” *National Review* and the “liberal and left-wing” *Kultura*

⁴³ On Malraux's help to *Kultura* in purchasing the property of its new headquarters in 1954, see: Czapski, “Malraux”, 33–34, and Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce*, 193.

⁴⁴ Korek, *Paradoksy paryskiej „Kultury”*, 212–4.

⁴⁵ Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce*, 172.

mutually respected each other's beliefs and were "faithful and selfless" friends.⁴⁶ Giedroyc also recalled the *Collège de l'Europe libre*, which was his initiative at the CCF, supported by Burnham. He acknowledged the value of the institution, which allowed hundreds of young refugees to study in the "free world," but he did not hide his regrets by concluding: "My idea of founding a scientific institution which could also unify eastern Europe failed."⁴⁷ Although the institution closed in 1958, the idea of a university unifying central and eastern European youth was reborn in 1991 under Central European University.⁴⁸

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet occupation in central and eastern Europe, *Kultura's* political program and main predictions became a reality – the United States' victory over the Soviet Union, the strengthening of international law and the United Nations as per the "one world" theory, the emergence of the European Union and the integration of a united Germany into its framework, the de-Sovietization process in the USSR and the democratization progress in the Soviet bloc, the independence of Poland's eastern neighbors (Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus). Even if its assumption that the central and eastern European countries could rely on their own potential as a federation and provide an alternative solution for both the West (Germany) and the East (Russia) did not come to pass – this was the price of integrating a unified Germany into Europe to stabilize the continent – *Kultura* succeeded in getting rid of eastern European complexes and developed an independent attitude towards the so-called West and the so-called East, by standing up for freedom of expression.⁴⁹

In recognition of this program and his own life's work in exile, Giedroyc received numerous honorary doctorates from universities in Poland and state awards from various countries. He supported the initiative of his Ukrainian correspondent and friend, Bohdan Osadchuk – whom Giedroyc met at the first CCF meeting in West-Berlin – in creating a Polish-Ukrainian University. Founded in 2000, the European College of Polish and Ukrainian Universities (EKPU) in Lublin operated from 2001 to 2011. After Giedroyc's passing, the Senate of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin established the Jerzy Giedroyc Prize for research on the heritage of *Kultura* and the creative continuation of Giedroyc's message in the sciences. Today, a journalism school and a university library, among other institutions, bear his name in Poland. This year, the University of Łódź opened the Jerzy Giedroyc Center, devoted to disseminating *Kultura's* legacy, while the distinguished Austrian *Institut für die Wissenschaft vom Menschen* (Institute

⁴⁶ Londyńczyk (alias Juliusz Mieroszewski), „James Burnham o 'Kulturze,'" *Kultura*, no. 11/169 (1961): 121.

⁴⁷ Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce*, 189. The extract of the Polish documentary film, in which Giedroyc recalled the *Collège de l'Europe libre*, is available online: <https://vimeo.com/66932500>, accessed July 13, 2023.

⁴⁸ Włodzimierz Bolecki, "Kultura (1946–2000)," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: A Compendium*, eds. John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 159.

⁴⁹ About *Kultura's* achievement, see: Korek, *Paradoksy paryskiej „Kultury"*, 471–80.

for Human Sciences) launched the Jerzy Giedroyc Fellowship for research on Poland and its north-eastern European relations.

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