

June 10, 1954

**Thomas W. Braden, 'Operation VETO' [Approved for
Release May 6, 2019]**

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Summary:

CIA official Thomas Braden assures the State Department that RFE broadcasts which took sides in Czechoslovak factory council elections, as envisaged in FEC Czechoslovak Guidance No. 13, have ended. (The Guidance and the cited FEC telegram are available in the Hoover Archives and the Blinken Open Society Archives as FEC teletype NYC 29, June 8, 1954.)

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10 June 1954

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MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. LAMPTON BERRY
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SUBJECT: Operation VETO

1. The matter of revising the controversial Czech Guidance No. 13 has now been completed in accordance with our agreement. We regret that this has taken so long and particularly that the controversy may have caused you some embarrassment with other officers in the Department, since you have taken such an affirmative and friendly position toward providing rapid policy support for F.E.C. operations. As you indicate in your letter of May 12th, our two offices have had a completely co-operative and most successful relationship. And I want to keep it that way.

2. As you know, VETO is a major operation involving many people here and abroad which makes policy control a complex matter. Speaking perfectly frankly, it should be said that our people in New York felt that the policy agreed to at the meeting in the Department was subject to greater flexibility than the formal decision that you passed on to us in your original memorandum. They still do feel that it would be desirable to take a less rigid position in anticipation of the Shop Committee elections next autumn. However, they have eaten humble pie and dispatched the following very firm telegram to Munich which was prepared by my staff with the assistance of Mr. Hulick:

"After review with appropriate officials Shop Committee part of CE Guidance No. 13 radically revised to insure no, repeat no possibility of misunderstanding regarding future policy even though Shop Committee elections have been postponed until next autumn. RFE should not, repeat not, during any phase of the campaign tell listeners how to conduct their balloting in any way. Workers who have the opportunity to elect an important number of anti-regime candidates should be free to do so voluntarily and spontaneously. If RFE were to suggest that workers elect trusted anti-Communist, individuals selected or elected might immediately be removed from potential key positions by the Communist regime. Action by workers will be much more difficult for regime to control if it does not appear to flow from outside (RFE) suggestions which can provide scapegoat for subsequent purges."

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3. Undoubtedly, it will be mutually advantageous to have further talks on Operation VETO, but as far as Czech Guidance 13 is concerned, unless we desire to make further changes, I think we can consider this particular subject closed. I appreciate your constructive criticism, patience and the cooperation of your staff in working out this problem.

[signed] THOMAS W. BRADEN

THOMAS W. BRADEN

IO/AMC/dm

Addressee - orig and 1

C/IO - 2

RI - 1

IO/ Br 1 - 2 cc

PP/JEBaker

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