

June 2, 1958

Voice of America and Radio Free Europe Polish Broadcasts Reviewed

Citation:

"Voice of America and Radio Free Europe Polish Broadcasts Reviewed", June 2, 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by A. Ross Johnson. Referenced Ch4 n23 in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document numbers C05459016, C05459057. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115023>

Summary:

Minutes of a Committee on Radio Broadcasting Policy meeting on April 17, 1958, focused on State Department criticisms of RFE broadcasts to Poland

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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Mr Meyer

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June 2, 1958

MEMORANDUM TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON RADIO
BROADCASTING POLICY

- P - Mr. E. Allen Lightaar, Jr.
- U - Mr. R. Jordan Reams
- USIA - Mr. Saxe Bradford
- Mr. Henry Loomis
- CIA - Mr.
- Mr. Card Meyer ✓

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There is transmitted herewith for your information copy of the notes covering a meeting of the interdepartmental working group to review a sample of Polish language broadcasts. These notes have been cleared by representatives of each agency.

William A. McFadden

Dept. of State, ISS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.

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Enclosure:

Memorandum dated May 28, 1958.

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MEMORANDUM

May 28, 1958

Notes of Meeting Concerning Implementation of Existing
Broadcast Policy by VOA and RFE - April 17

The meeting was called on April 17 by EE, Mr. Kenrick, to discuss the results of a survey of broadcast scripts made by State, USIA and CIA to review current VOA and RFE broadcasting in the light of existing policy directives.

VOA

State Department representatives present noted that in one of the broadcast scripts reviewed Poland was described as a "Communist Bloc State". It was pointed out that it is current policy to regard Poland as not being a member of any "Bloc". VOA representatives expressed an awareness of this policy, remarking that this apparent divergence may well have resulted from an error in the translation of the broadcast script into English.

No further divergencies with current policy were mentioned and those present stated that they were impressed by the degree to which VOA had conformed with policy directives.

RFE

State Department representatives mentioned the following specific broadcasts involving policy questions:

(1) An "International Commentary" broadcast on January 30 made certain comments somewhat derogatory toward the SPD party in the German Federal Republic. It was pointed out that in view of the influence which this party exercises now, and the greater influence which it might come to exercise in the future in the political scene in the German Federal Republic, it would be unwise for the RFE to earn its disfavor. This is particularly true since Germany is the locus of RFE's broadcasting station. CIA representatives present expressed their agreement with this view.

(2) State Department representatives noted that a January 27 "Panorama" broadcast touched upon the delicate question of Poland's western borders. It was suggested that RFE should avoid discussions of the border issue. CIA representatives agreed with this view, remarking, however, that it need not preclude the reporting in a factual manner of any "hard news items".

(3) State representatives questioned whether it was in our interests to emphasize in broadcasts to Poland military preparedness measures being undertaken by the U. S. ("International Commentary" of January 26 and "Military Review" of January 29). They pointed out that emphasis could instead be placed on

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technological development in fields which are ostensibly civilian but which have obvious military application as well, such as electronics, earth satellites and space travel generally, peaceful applications of atomic energy, etc. CIA representatives expressed the view that a certain amount of such broadcasting is still appropriate in Eastern Europe, where the population has long been fed with propaganda concerning the military strength of the Soviet Bloc. They pointed out that the peoples of Eastern Europe are anxious for evidence that the West has the military strength to resist the Soviet threat and that it is vital that RFE maintain their morale in this regard. They further stated that it is highly unlikely that the peoples of Eastern Europe will accept any charges that the U. S. is a warmongering country since such charges are not supported by our record. They suggested that in order to obtain a better perspective on this point a careful study be made of the six-month survey of RFE broadcasting recently prepared. (Political report RFE/M (58) 4, Office of the Political Adviser, RFE/Munich, March 11, 1958). It was generally agreed that RFE would keep the observations of the State Department representatives in mind in planning its scripts and this matter would be kept open for review at a future date.

(4) State Department representatives referred to broadcasts of January 28 and 30 in the "Faith and Life Series" in which a Catholic clergyman instructed the Polish electorate regarding their duties in the local council elections. It was observed that such discussions and instructions on political themes from Catholic clergymen to Catholics in Poland should perhaps not take place over RFE's facilities since this brings the Catholic church directly into political commentary by RFE. State Department representatives emphasized that this broadcast series is effective and worthwhile, and that they objected solely to the January 28 and 30 broadcasts cited. CIA representatives agreed to ask their audience analysis people to obtain some listener reaction to these broadcasts, to ascertain whether any Polish sensibilities were offended, and to keep this matter under review.

(5) State Department representatives commented that RFE appeared to have involved itself more directly in the Polish elections than is called for under present policy directives. In urging Polish voters to cross names off ballots for the stated purpose of reducing the number of Communists in the government, RFE appeared to be electioneering against the Party and in effect against the government of Poland which the Party controls. They saw no objection to RFE's informing the voters of their rights under the Polish electoral laws but stated that RFE had gone considerably beyond this point in urging the electorate to vote the Communists out. (Broadcasts specifically cited included "Special Program" January 30; "No Curtain shall divide us" #581, January 30; "Special Program" February 1; "From Our Point of View" #1195, February 1.) CIA representatives responded that it had been RFE's intention to maintain the morale of the Polish voters by pointing out the privileges which were guaranteed to them under Polish law. They pointed out that present policy still calls for maintaining anti-Communist pressures in Poland. They concluded that this

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aim did not seem objectionable, but agreed that RFE might have exceeded the bounds of good judgment in some of the scripts. They stated that broadcasts of this type involve a very sensitive area in so far as content is concerned, and that somewhat greater caution might be called for in the future.

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(6) State Department representatives referred to the broadcast "No Curtain shall Divide Us", #580, January 28, discussing the strike of the workers in the M-5 factory in Wroclaw. This broadcast discusses the government's reaction to the strike and concludes that the workers "certainly deserve something better than the cliché reply that a wage increase would be possible." State representatives observed that in this broadcast RFE is informing the strikers that the government's response was inadequate and, in effect, fanning their discontent and suggesting that they hold out further against the government. This type of broadcasting, it was stated, appears to constitute the type of "interference" in Poland's internal affairs which current policy directives would rule out. CIA representatives agreed to note this point.

(7) State Department representatives mentioned that "Panorama", #299 January 5, raises a question as to whether or not the Rapacki Plan is "an inspiration of Soviet foreign policy." They pointed out that it is currently U.S. Government policy not to suggest that the Rapacki Plan has been dictated to the Polish Government by the Soviets. Noting the early date of this broadcast, CIA representatives expressed doubt that clear guidance was available then concerning the U.S. position on the Rapacki Plan - a point in which the State Department representatives concurred.

(8) State Department representatives referred to the "Cultural Commentary" broadcast on January 28 discussing a poem by the Polish poet Wasyk. This poem is dedicated entirely to depicting current life in Poland in very depressing, grim and hopeless tones. State representatives point out that the broadcast script seemed to represent a purely negative approach which under current policy directives RFE is to attempt to avoid. It was observed that there seemed to be little that was positive or constructive in this particular broadcast. CIA representatives concurred in these observations.

(9) State Department representatives mentioned "Polish Press Review", No. 509, January 31, as an example of an "Emigre Liberation Posture" broadcast. It appeared that RFE was, in this broadcast, making its facilities available to Polish emigres and allowing them to broadcast phrases which at least came close to being inflammatory. CIA representatives stated that they were aware of one particular broadcast using the London emigre Giolkosz but remarked that the station's "Emigre Posture" had been markedly reduced over the past several months. State Department representatives concurred in this point. In this connection, it was generally agreed that the "Europeanization" of RFE should be increased, with more emphasis on Western European views and developments and correspondingly less on the U.S. CIA representatives stated that the Polish Deak of RFE in Munich is already implementing this policy.

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(10) State Department representatives mentioned that one of the broadcasts screened appeared to be telling the Poles that inflation in Poland could be cured by allowing private servicing establishments to prosper. It was pointed out that this broadcast appeared to over-simplify the solution of Poland's economic difficulties.

(11) State Department representatives made the general observation that in a few instances it appeared that RFE had adopted a "preaching" attitude, lecturing to the Poles as to how their country should be run. As an example, a passage was cited which began "We have called your attention many times to - - -".

(12) As an additional general observation, State Department representatives remarked that in a few places broadcasts had verged on the line of being "narrowly and contentiously" anti-Communist. Reference was made in this connection to the election broadcasts mentioned in paragraph 5 above. CIA representatives reiterated that in some specific instances rather poor judgment may have been exercised but pointed to the degree of improvement in this regard over the past several months.

(13) State Department representatives mentioned the "Panorama" broadcast of January 5 concerning Marshal Rokosowski as an instance where RFE had not refrained from satire and irony, thus departing from current guide lines.

(14) A broadcast concerning the drinking habits of Khrushchev was mentioned as being inaccurate.

(15) State Department representatives made the general comment that occasionally news broadcasts intended to be straight and factual seemed to be colored by the interpretations which Polish Desk officers in Munich placed on events.

State representatives commented that divergencies, such as those cited above, are far more likely to arise in the case of RFE than VOA, since RFE's policy instructions, unlike those of VOA, envisage the use of scripts commenting on Polish internal affairs. State representatives remarked that, judging from all scripts reviewed, RFE has gone a long way during the past several months toward meeting current broadcast policy objectives. It was emphasized that State's criticisms as outlined above were intended to apply to specific instances where certain aspects of broadcasting policy appeared to have been violated and are not to be interpreted as general criticism of RFE activities from the policy standpoint. State representatives asked that RFE be informed that the content of the scripts reviewed, generally speaking, seemed to involve a high degree of listener interest. RFE was congratulated on broadcasts in the "International Commentary" field and on a number of other specific broadcasts. Some of the outstanding scripts were:

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1. January 27 - "Bulgarian Writers"
2. January 28 - "What Happened to the One Hundred Flowers?"
3. January 28 - "Unemployment"
4. January 28 - "National Councils Election"
5. January 31 - "Iron Ore from Brazil - Coal to Argentina"
6. January 31 - "Moscow and East Berlin on MFS"
7. February 1 - "Horace Under Fire"
8. February 1 - "Foreign Trade and Balance of Payment."

Concluding the meeting, CIA representatives agreed to keep in mind the points which State representatives had raised and requested that State "maintain an understanding approach toward their positions and problems."