Wilson Center | Digital Archive
International History Declassified
digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

April 24, 1959
George L. Kline, 'Evaluation of Radio Liberation (Month of February 1959)'

Citation:

"George L. Kline, 'Evaluation of Radio Liberation (Month of February 1959)'", April 24, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Released by the Central Intelligence Agency on October 16, 2019, in response to Mandatory Declassification Review request EOM-2018-00930. Contributed by A. Ross Johnson.
https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/290919

Summary:

Professor George Kline reports his evaluation of RL programs for February 1959.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

7.1.3.5

EVALUATION OF RADIO LIBERATION SCRIPTS

(Month of February 1959)

George L. Kline

In general, the scripts for the month of February are of high quality -- solid, informative, and interesting. They meet the standards set by the RL POLICY MANUAL, with certain exceptions noted below (errors of fact or judgment, lapses in taste, etc.). But two preliminary points should be made: POLICY MANUAL (p. 14, V., B)speaks of encouraging Soviet intellectuals to "reexamine Soviet reality" by broadcasting "presentations of the best of traditional Russian democratic thought." This seems to me highly important; the democratic individualism and liberalism of such Russian thinkers as Belinsky, Herzen, Lavrov, Kavelin, Kareyev, Chicherin, Turgenev and Milyukov is little known to Soviet intellectuals, especially those of the younger generation, and would be eagerly received, if well presented. But nothing from this tradition appears in the February broadcasts.*

The station announcement speaks periodically of presenting Western developments in "philosophy, science,"...etc. But in fact, the February broadcasts contain nothing about philosophy in the West. (There is a brief biographical sketch of Fyodor Stepun on the occasion of his 75th birthday, but nothing about his philosophy. E.M. Forster's views of culture are presented briefly, but he is a novelist rather than a philosopher.) I would suggest that a monthly or bi-monthly review of some major Western philosopher's work, or of a new book in philosophy, would be welcomed by Soviet intellectuals -- who have heard the names, and have seen brief and destructive critiques, of the chief contemporary philosophers (including existentialists, pragmatists, positivists, "metaphysicians")

* "The dangerous Tolstoy" (17) is only a partial exception.

42/28-02727R/9/1
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

but knew very little of the actual positions in question.

Two terminological points: (In what follows, numbers in parentheses refer to the broadcast date, e.g., "(6)" means "February 6, 1959").

1) In both newscasts and foreign press round-ups (2, 6, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 25) the expression "Soviet zone of Germany" is used to refer to the "German Democratic Republic." (The latter name is occasionally used, always prefaced by "so-called.") I would suggest that the neutral term "East Germany" be used instead; this would be less offensive to Communist ears, more in accord with present practice in the West, and certainly would imply no acceptance or endorsement of the present East German government. Note that in one case (25) the expression "Soviet zone of Germany" is used to refer to an earlier period, to which it accurately applies (1949, in this case).

2) I raise this only as a policy question: in various broadcasts, most consistently in those of Kavalishin, "our" is used to mean "Soviet." E.g., "our country," "our cinema," "our newspapers." Perhaps this practice is justified by the resulting sense of identification which with Soviet listeners; but it is sometimes confusing, and may even become ridiculous in some cases — when the speaker in question is clearly a long-time emigre, dissociated in important respects from everything Soviet. (e.g., Weidle, 1).

In what follows I shall comment briefly on each major category of M. broadcast for the month of February 1959:

[redacted]: Generally good; above average on the 6th, 15th, 18th, and 20th. Once (19) the second newscast was better than the first. For the first few days of February (1-7) the news coverage of the 1st Party Congress largely duplicated what Soviet listeners were reading in Pravda and Izvestiya--an exception (7): news includes material not provided by the Soviet press. For the last few days of the month, (22, 24, 25, 26, 27)

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

NL newscasts duplicate considerable material on the Macmillan visit to the USSR available to Soviet listeners from their own newspapers. Exceptions: (25) Pontecorvo mentioned as working at Dubna Atomic Center; (24) Macmillan speech to Moscow University students was considerably edited in Sov. press, omitting reference to need for greater distribution of contemporary English books inside the Soviet Union, so that the image provided by Dickens' novels could be "brought up to date."

The Cyprus agreements, including its prolonged preliminaries, was well handled in both Newscasts and Foreign Press Round-ups.

Minor errors in News: repetition of text (7, pp. 6-7); Senator Mansfield is called "leader of the democratic fraction" in the Senate (23). I'm not sure what this is intended to convey, but it seems clearly misleading, if not false. Incidentally, Izvestiya on Feb. 14 devoted nearly a column and a half to Mansfield's speech on the Berlin question; nothing about this appears in NL scripts until the brief report of his later statement on the 23rd. Some background or criticism might have been helpful at the earlier date. -- Lewis Strauss is pronounced "Straw" not "Strauss" (28). "Washington" is an error for "Warsaw" (17).

FOREIGN PRESS ROUND-UP is generally good; exceptions (1), only excerpt from Danish paper really good, remainder adequate. (6,7,) only adequate; (18, 19, 21, 24) very good.

A general criticism of the procedures of the press round-up: it is not made clear which quoted statements are from editorials (except in a few cases), which from signed columns, which from "news analyses" or regular news stories. Since there is no difference in point of view among these parts of a newspaper in the Soviet press, Soviet listeners may be confused. On several occasions (25, 26, 27) a western newspaper

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

is mentioned as devoting "its editorial" to a particular question; since Soviet newspapers have only one editorial per issue, this may cause RL's listeners to assume that American and European newspapers follow the same practice. In fact, of course, the N.Y. Times has as many as six or seven editorials in each issue.

Foreign newspapers are not ordinarily identified as to political position; this might be desirable with respect to such papers as Figaro, Le Monde, and L'Aurore. Apparently only democratic socialist papers are identified (Le Populaire, Avanti); but this is misleading. (3, 12) "A socialist newspaper" means to a Soviet listener "a communist newspaper." Perhaps some such phrase as "democratic socialist" or "social-democratic" could be substituted.

NEWS OF THE WEEK IN REVIEW: Here I find the quality uneven: the first broadcast (1) is weak at the beginning, duplicates available Soviet materials, and on the whole makes a rather poor impression. But later broadcasts are better (8, 17); and the "experimental" (?) round-table form of the news of the week (22 is most effective — lively, with human as well as editorial interest. I would suggest using this regularly.

NEWS NOTES AND ANALYSIS: generally good. I would pick out as especially effective: the analysis of Kirichenko's speech (4), except that the ending is weak; on Syria (6), except that its language is a trifle intemperate; Frank's analysis of Khrushchev's speech to the Moscow voters (electors) (26). The use of recorded excerpts from the speech is essentially effective, since the text printed in the Soviet press was heavily edited — both to make Khrushchev sound more literate and to tone down the aggressive and "I'm the boss" tone of his remarks (cf. Izvestiya, 2-2559).

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

FEATURE BROADCASTS: Most of these were good; I would single out the following for special commendation (as meeting all the standards of the Policy Manual, and being of direct interest and concern to Soviet listeners): Father Alexander's Sunday talks (1, 15). His distinction of two types of atheism, and his discussion of ritual without faith, is thoughtful and highly relevant to the lives and searchings of Soviet young people. Also: the Weidle broadcasts (1, 3, 10, 15) which are sophisticated and stimulating, though a bit intemperate on the 1st and 15th. His remarks on Pasternak (part of the Preuves round-table) (28) are excellent (this is also true of the other Preuves symposiasts).

Also: the Indian socialdgist Chandrasekar on his visit to Communist China (28), translated from the New York Times story. (But note that a briefer excerpt was given in the foreign press round-up on the 9th, translated from an Indian publication; this is not referred to in the later broadcast.)

Also: Leonhard on China and the USSR (2, 25); the discussion of revisionism (4) -- though this is a crucial subject, and deserves even fuller and deeper treatment. The Yugoslav jurist on India (4,5,), especially the second part (5). English astronomer Lowell (6) good, but a bit naive about conditions of scientific work in the Soviet Union. -- Articles on Jazz (5, 23) are excellent, and if the musical examples were well chosen (as I assume they were) should have an enormous impact on younger Soviet listeners.

Deniko on Aragon and "readers and reading" is excellent, although there is some overlap in his three Aragon scripts, which might have been avoided -- making them three parts of a single longer discussion. --The excerpts from Leopold Haimson's piece on "three generations of the Soviet intelligentsia" are good, but all too brief. -- Articles on

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

desegration in Virginia (10, 25) excellent; also those on English sports (26); Frank on the "blue riders" (or "blue horses"), a group of dissident young intellectuals in Kharkov, is excellent, especially the material on Kandinsky and expressionism. -- "Law and Freedom in India" (23) is very good, but the erroneous statement is made (twice) in introducing the article that India achieved independence 9 years ago (i.e. in 1950). In fact, it was 12 years ago (in 1947).

Also: the manifesto of (economic) liberalism (23); discussion of Soviet-Yugoslav policy (24); Mike Wallace talk (20 -- lively and provocative. Also stories on the "atomic knife" (20)and Swiss workers' libraries (20), and Kavalistin on the Soviet black market in books (21). -- Also "the dangerous Tolstoy" and Khrushchev as a new Stalin (both 17); living conditions of young German workers (19), Skaton on Columbia exhibit of Russian MSS and books (19).

Also: "Why I left the Italian Communist Party" (7), the Moscow Art Theatre in Japan (8), "socialists answer Khrushchev" (13). A. MacIntyre's discussion of Dr. Zhivago, as an echo of young Marx's views of human alienation and "reification" is stimulating (13); but he is wisely leadingly referred to as "well known." I know several dozen contemporary English philosophers, but I've never heard of MacIntyre.

Also: the piece on the Polish universities, their autonomy, etc. is excellent, as is the New Leader reprint on Yugoslavia (both 16). The material on Lincoln (11, 13, 14) is very good, including Adlai that Stevenson's article (14), but it is erroneously stated (13) that Lincoln was president during the 1870's!

Also: religion and French young people, and "two Berlins" (both 12) are very good, as is Crossman on China. (11).

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

I would make a few critical comments about the following feature scripts: David Burg's script on Soviet trade unions, though a solid piece, is too long and a bit dull (11). His piece on Czech writers is better. Denis de Rougemont (3) is not very impressive, and the theme of progress and leisure will be familiar to Soviet listeners from their own press and radio; the conception of Christianity as a culture-historical force, to be sure, will be less familiar. The Veraldi discussion of "technical humanism" is interesting, though not very original; but the strictures on "technocracy" add nothing to what Bakunin said nearly a century ago (and this connection might have been made for Soviet listeners). The discussion of the Swiss plebiscite (2) is adequate, but the quoted Swiss student's letter (about giving a woman your seat on the bus or letting her enter a room first) would be taken as a joke by Soviet young people, for whom such "bourgeois" customs have no meaning.

STUDENT BROADCASTS: generally good; student notebook on 23rd and 9th especially good. The stories about Norwegian-Soviet student exchanges and student architects' demonstrations in London (both 16) are excellent. Of course, students will be even more interested in the jazz broadcasts (see above).

MILITANT NOTEBOOK: generally adequate, although ex-Lt. Kartashev's statements are occasionally too abusive (e.g., 6, 10, 27). He is better on Sartre and the zigzags of the Party line (3) and on Malinovski vs. Zhukov (20). He is also good on the 13th. The military discussion of

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

"large and small bombs" is very good (3). But a serious error of judgment and taste was committed in the broadcast of Feb. 20th. One of the topics is "The best pilot in the world"; it turns out that the pilot in question is former Luftwaffe officer Erich Hartmann, while the second best pilot in the world is his comrade-in-arms Herd Barkhorn. They are reported to have shot down 352 and 301 planes, respectively, on the Russo-German front during World War II. This seems a singularly inappropriate story to broadcast to present-day Soviet soldiers (especially airmen), men whose friends and comrades were among those killed. Furthermore, the figures for the top Soviet ace (62 kills) and top U.S. ace (40) seem paltry compared to the bag of these two Germans. But in fact the comparison is not so clear-cut: German fighter planes and gunsights, at the beginning of the war (1939-1943) were far superior to anything the Russians had during this period. Hartmann's superiority was in considerable measure the result of better equipment; but nothing is said of this in the R. broadcast. Furthermore, the figures are given as though they were perfectly definite and certain: as an ex-Air Force officer, I know that this is far from the case. A great deal of guesswork and "probability" enters in, to say nothing of official exaggeration for propaganda purposes. In sum, this broadcast was a serious mistake; I hope it will not be repeated.

AMERICAN NOTEBOOK: Generally good; I would single out for special praise: "music while you work" (6), Brazilian tribes, Latin-American poetry, and Peruvian leadership (18). The American notebook for the 4th has an interesting account of public-opinion

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

research, and a good comparative study of three mayors. But why should "Mexico City" be given in Russian in the English form (Meksiko sitti)? Similarly with Guatemala City. It should either be given in Spanish, or translated into Russian. — The story of Sr. Trumbley starts interestingly, but ends with a kind of let-down (11).

EAST-EUROPEAN NOTEBOOK: Generally good. The following are especially impressive: Report on Hungary and Albania (10) (but is it wise to use the term "Communist empire"?); Yugoslav writers on China (17); Yugoslavia and the 21st Party Congress (18); Polish writers (3) (but on this same broadcast the comments on Bulgaria are unduly abusive); Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe to Israel (25); Church in Eastern Europe (24).

AFRO-ASIAN NOTEBOOK: Generally very good, especially on the 2nd and 16th. I found the article on the diamond rush more interesting than the survey of African economics (2); but this may tell more about me than about the broadcast!

MOTION PICTURE REVIEWS: I liked the review of "Earth to Moon" (based on Jules Verne) (10), and the North Africa Campaign picture ("Beaten Tanks"?) (24). But I am a bit concerned about the serious and detailed treatment of "The Buccaneer"; there would seem to be many American films of greater importance and artistic merit than this wide-screen DeMille spectacular. (Has "The Defiant Ones" been reviewed?)

[redacted], RADIO PLAYS: I was most impressed by "Tsenny podarok" ("A Precious Gift"); it is quite clever as satire, and hits home at Soviet bureaucracy and "officialese." But it errs, I think, in poking

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

Wilson Center Digital Archive
C06768118
Original Scan
Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118

listeners' viewpoint, of course): (1) the memory of Lenin, (2) Soviet achievements in science, technology, and exploration. It would have been better to use a bust of Stalin or Khrushchev; and it would have been preferable not to hold Soviet Antarctic exploration up to ridicule.

PROFILES, INTERVIEWS, OBITUARY NOTICES I found all of the profiles interesting and effective, especially those of the Peruvian statesman (18), Indira Gandhi (14), MacMillan (21), Willy Brandt (17 and 28), the Hungarian-born chemist, Hevesey (27), and Ben Bayin (interview) (26). The interview with Sen Mitra (7) is solid and important, but not too exciting. And I wonder whether so much attention should have been paid to DeMille (obituary, Feb. 3rd).

In conclusion, let me mention two lapses in Russian style both from the broadcast of February 24 (cf. Vystupleniya II); "...otnoshoniya ... ezhche bol'she uglochnilis' chem eto bylo ran'she" and a reference to articles published "neskol'ko ran'she v toi zhe gazete i posvyashchennye neskol'ko inym voprosam." Otherwise, so far as I can judge, the Russian style is good.

(signed) George L. Kline

submitted April 24, 1959

Approved for Release: 2019/09/25 C06768118