

**October, 1976**  
**Institute for the Study of Contemporary Problems of  
Capitalism, 'Propaganda of Western Broadcasting  
Stations about the So-Called Workers' Defense Committee  
and the Supreme Court Sentence on the Seven  
Participants in the Ursus Events'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

This analysis by the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Problems of Capitalism indicates regime concern over RFE's coverage of the first organized dissident movements in Poland.

**Original Language:**

Polish

**Contents:**

- English Translation

## PROPAGANDA OF WESTERN BROADCASTING STATIONS ABOUT THE SO-CALLED WORKERS' DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND THE SUPREME COURT SENTENCE ON THE SEVEN PARTICIPANTS IN THE URSUS EVENTS

### Analysis of broadcasts from Oct.1–4, 1976

The so-called Workers' Defense Committee and the verdict by the Supreme Court on the seven participants in the events in Ursus are still the most prominent propaganda themes on Western broadcasting stations. These issues were referred to in all Western broadcasts discussing the country's internal politics. Most attention to the subject was paid by RFE and DW, which, besides their own information and commentaries, broadcast the full text of a so-called appeal and introductory letter of the Committee.

The main themes of the Western broadcasting stations were focused on:

Efforts to create a so-called Workers' Defense Committee to defend workers' rights and civil liberty

Discrediting the trade unions' [role] in representing working-class interests

Spreading the argument that the Supreme Court verdict was dictated, not by the need to impose the rules of socialist legality in Poland, but by the Party's alleged fears of opposition activities intensifying in Polish society.

According to Western radio commentators, the establishment of the Committee was a spontaneous expression of the "connection of the intellectual environment with the workers' world." BBC stressed that the establishment of the Committee would mean the end of the "isolation of Polish intellectuals from other classes of society." The Committee was established, in their opinion, because the trade unions were slow to defend the interests of the working class. "Thus," they said, "the Polish episcopate and intellectuals had to defend the interests of the working world, although the formal defender of the workers should have been the trade union." Similar propaganda themes appeared in broadcasts discussing the verdict of the Supreme Court on the seven participants in the events in Ursus, which was interpreted as stemming from pressures by "opposition intellectuals" and the church. "Those who have the responsibility of defending collective and individual worker's interests," it was said, "did not meet their obligations in this case."

The main argument for attacking the trade unions was that they "didn't defend the workers who were arrested in Ursus and Radom," nor did the trade union press, nor the factory organizations. Such arguments also dominated the propaganda of the Western stations regarding the preparations for the trade unions Congress in Poland.

The aim was to confer on the so-called Workers' Defense Committee the status of the main defender, alongside the Polish episcopate, of the interests of the working class. At the same time attempts were made to underpin the authority of the Committee organizers. For example, it was stressed that J. Andrzejewski is "being considered by the Western literary critics as a Nobel Literature Prize candidate," and that E. Lipiński is "viewed as a great authority among economists."

According to RFE, the main motive for the [founding of the] Committee was to "sensitize Polish society to its predicament." The Committee's aims were compared with the activities of "inter-war social organizations protecting political prisoners" in Poland, such as the league for defense of Human Rights and Citizens. According to the broadcast, the founders of the Committee will play roles similar to those of Stefania Stempołowska, Andrzej Strug, Halina Krachelska, Teodor Duracz, and Wanda Wasilewska during the period between the wars.

Much attention was devoted to discrediting socialist legality and justice. Regarding the Supreme Court sentence on the seven participants in the Ursus incident, [Western] propaganda claimed that the “fate of a political prisoner in Poland was without doubt harder than the fate of a convicted criminal.” Analogies were also made with the legality of the Third Reich. In several broadcasts references were made to the E. Morgiewicz case and attempts to create in Poland a division of amnesty international.

All commentaries stated that the establishment of the so-called Workers’ Defense Committee “was already bearing fruit, as seen in the shorter sentence given to the seven workers in Ursus.” It was also suggested that the supreme Court decision indicated an “understanding by the judges of the workers’ right to protest.” According to RFE this is how the decision of the Supreme Court should be understood, “regardless of the fact that, in the view of obvious economic difficulties and the tense situation in work places, canceling the July sentences against the workers is, in a sense, beneficial to the authorities.”

The broadcasts saw the Supreme Court sentence as confirming the PPR authorities’ decision that, “in the case of participation in strikes or demonstrations which take place as a consequence of inappropriate decisions by the government, workers should not be punished.” In the RFE interpretation, the Supreme Court sentence confirmed that “workers from Ursus and other places, on June 25 of the current year, had serious reasons to spontaneously express discontent on a large scale.”

Thus the opinion that the aim of the “spontaneous” creation of the Workers’ defense Committee was “to fight for the basic rights and interests of the workers, which in light of the fourth Plenum of the CC PUWP and the recent Sejm session, authorities do not intend to question.” This role—in the opinion of RFE and DW—is one that the trade unions and other social organizations of the PPR are unable to fulfill. The main purpose of this propaganda is to assert that the activities of the so-called Workers’ Defense Committee are in accordance with socialist legality and the social-political program of the PUWP.