

**April 27, 1967**

**Telegram from the American Embassy in Warsaw to  
the Department of State, 'Appraisal of RFE  
Broadcasts to Poland' [Declassified September 19,  
2016]**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

In Warsaw Embassy Airgram A-666, US Embassy officers analyze six weeks of RFE Polish broadcasts and conclude that they support US policy objectives by informing Poles about developments in Poland and the world and encouraging evolutionary change.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

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NEA	CU	INR	TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE			This document consists of 5 pages with a 7-page enclosure. Copy 1 of 6 copies. Series A		
E	P	IO	FROM : AmEmbassy WARSAW			DATE: April 27, 1967		
L	FBO	AIO	SUBJECT: Appraisal of RFE Broadcasts to Poland			ANALYSIS BRANCH		
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RFE has and maintains a large following in Poland. While some listeners are more enthusiastic than others, all find RFE a quick and reliable source of international and domestic news. They appreciate the fact that news reports are timely, items are interesting, and the style is objective.

Despite some small criticisms that might be made about particular broadcasts, taken as a whole RFE provides effective support for U.S. policy objectives in Poland. RFE keeps the Polish audience informed of continuing U.S. interest in the Polish people; RFE gives a fuller view of developments which are often treated in a simplistic, heavy-handed and biased manner by the Polish public media; and RFE provides information about significant events in Poland that often go unmentioned here and about which knowledge is confined to limited circles. The total effect of the information broadcast is to keep listeners abreast of developments in the world, to make them feel part of the Western world, to put pressure on the Polish press to cover news that might otherwise go unreported, and to encourage internal forces for change and modification. RFE is not inflammatory; it skillfully encourages evolutionary changes and shows a realistic understanding of the situation in Poland today.

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification.

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Contents and Classification Approved by:

DCM:VB Jenkins, Jr.

1/26/67

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The assessment contained in this report is based not only upon the intensive monitoring of broadcasts by Embassy language officers in the past month and a half and a careful reading of broadcast scripts, but by impressions gained over the past year or more by Embassy officers either in the course of interviewing visa applicants or in various other conversations with Poles

\* \* \* \* \*

RFE has a very large audience in Poland. Although there is no way of accurately measuring its popularity, it is our impression that it is probably the most popular of all foreign broadcasts-- especially among the better educated. It is frequently nicknamed "Warszawa Zachodnia." Anti-Party Polish intellectuals have almost a proprietary feeling towards RFE, while the non-party intellectuals have a lively interest in keeping up with RFE. Party members are also frequent listeners, but for good and obvious reasons tend to be critical, especially when commenting to Embassy officers.

Although peasants too listen to RFE, there is a tendency among them to confuse RFE with VOA and the BBC. Even among intellectuals there are some who confuse RFE with VOA. It should be noted that intellectuals rank BBC above RFE but this is in large measure a carryover effect from World War II. These people still think of BBC in terms of its broadcasts and the role it played during World War II.

Curious reaction among a wide assortment of peasant non-immigrant (NIV) applicants to RFE was recorded by the interviewing officer. The peasants were dissatisfied with what they considered biased RFE presentations when compared with what they read in the Polish press. When asked whether they consider the Polish press objective, they replied that they know a lot is not true but some of it must be. For example, they would often say, the Polish press reported that the U.S. is killing civilians in Vietnam and finally the U.S. Government was forced to admit it. Interestingly, educated NIV applicants avoided any comment whatsoever on RFE.

From other reports and opinions gained by the Embassy, it is our impression that the intelligentsia holds RFE in considerable respect. A typical comment was that of a Polish intellectual who said, "It is our window to the West; and we cannot afford to have it closed." The intellectuals value the information passed to it. While Party intellectuals will understandably be critical of RFE in talking to Embassy officers, those outside the Party will see it as a source of strength and sustenance in their own effort to liberalize the system. Many outside the Party will say, "I read the press, listen to RFE, and make up my own mind." When a controversial topic is pressed most often such an individual will end up by taking the position taken by RFE.

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The extensive treatment given to the KOLAKOWSKI affair by RFE is a case in point. Although a matter of keen interest in intellectual circles, with special importance for Party members, the Kolakowski case was discussed privately in Poland but never mentioned in the press. By providing information about the case, RFE first of all demonstrated that one cannot depend on the Polish press for news. Secondly, by presenting the issues involved it helped reinforce strivings for greater freedom of expression even within the Party.

RFE's treatment of Adam SCHAFF's article in the Austrian Party weekly Weg und Ziel in all likelihood also served to foster pressures for liberalization of the system. In that article Schaff pointed to the failure of socialism to overcome either in theory or in practice known forms of alienation. He noted that the state, bureaucracy, and planning system are sources of alienation. Were it not for RFE's dissemination of Schaff's expressed views they would have gone unnoticed except for the privileged few within the Party.

RFE broadcasts about U.S. activities in or affecting Poland are particularly valuable. They help correct the distortions and compensate for the omissions of the Polish press. Thus in reporting the recent zloty agreement and the negotiations leading to it, RFE emphasized the U.S. interest in finding mutually advantageous projects and the special efforts of the Ambassador toward this end. The audience was reminded of the highly concessional sales of almost a half a billion dollars worth of agricultural commodities to Poland in the period since 1957 and an appeal was also drawn to the Krakow children's hospital built with U.S. funds. This is typical of the kind of helpful broadcasts covering U.S. actions in Poland.

On broader questions concerning U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe RFE plays an educational role. The account of BRZEZINSKI's remarks in a roundtable discussion on Channel 13 in New York devoted to "What Happened to the Iron Curtain?" is a good example. The Polish audience was given a serious and thoughtful presentation explaining long term U.S. policy objectives in Eastern Europe which reflected the desire of the U.S. to reinforce ties between Eastern Europe and the West.

In terms of presenting the other side of the picture and explaining the basis for U.S. actions in Vietnam, RFE treatment of STEINBECK's letter to KHRUSHCHEV and Komsomolska Pravda were particularly effective. Such programs are important in the face of the anti-American and completely one-sided view of the Vietnam war presented by the Polish press.

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By pointing out certain developments in other Eastern European countries and holding them up as a model, RFE prompts the audience to ask itself "where is Poland?" In this way pressures for change are reinforced. Such RFE reports as that on the freer press in Yugoslavia (Feb. 20), on parliamentary reforms in Hungary (Feb. 21), or on Yugoslav and Bulgarian moves to open up their countries to western tourism are examples. RFE effectively applauds certain Polish actions while encouraging still more. This was so in the report of Poland's liberalization of visa issuance procedures for Scandinavians. In its treatment of the problem of handicrafts and private enterprise in Poland RFE conveyed the impression of a sound observer of the Polish scene interested in improving matters. The broadcast explained the problem, the measures taken to improve the situation, the shortcomings of these steps and the source of resistance to such actions.

On Church-State matters, RFE presents the problem in a balanced way. It contrasts with the one-sided view contained in the Polish press. RFE treated Monsignor CASAROLI's recent mission to Poland in a straightforward fashion. RFE explained the issues involved, pointing to regime tactics to undermine the Church and separate the Polish Episcopate from the Vatican. RFE has also broadcast critical but objective assessments of the Church problem in Poland. KISIELEWSKI's article in Die Furche, which was reported at length, is an example.

RFE has also dealt openly with the sensitive but important problem of anti-semitism. This problem is only hinted at in the Polish press. The February 26 discussion "Jews - About Us and Ourselves" gave mature treatment to an extremely complicated problem in Poland.

For a better understanding of international developments both inside and outside the Communist world, RFE is helpful to the listener. The Polish press reported the meeting of European Communist Party representatives in Warsaw last February but typically did not explain the issues involved. RFE, however, provided such information. In fact the meeting was announced on RFE before the Polish press carried it. Through RFE the listener can keep up more fully with international affairs than he can by relying on the Polish press.

Reports of scandals, like that in the Ministry of Health, draw attention to the seamy side of life. Gossipy items are of course fascinating to the Polish listener.

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Some small criticisms of broadcasts should be noted. One specific level: a) in referring to the VietCong, the word "partyzanci" is used. This evokes the sympathies of the Poles. It is suggested that the term VietCong be used instead. b) The program "o szostej dziesiec" might better concentrate on playing records than on the wonderful fan letters received from Poland. c) Interrupting records to insert commentaries is annoying. It is preferable to play the record out and then start with commentaries.

On a more general level, the discerning audience is inevitably going to find cause for criticism in any systematic program to provide information and analysis to a population that is deprived of the free flow of ideas and information, or is fed "managed" news. Some of the criticisms we have heard of RFE reflect this, but do not, in our opinion, add up to reasons for retrenching or reorienting the RFE "mission to Poland." On the contrary, we believe that the results of our program and script analysis, and of conversations with varied representatives of the Polish audience, add up to a vote of confidence for RFE broadcasts to Poland. We should remember that by stimulating thought and criticism, even when some of this criticism is directed back at RFE, the broadcasts are at the same time stimulating Poles to think critically about the extent to which they are informed, or misinformed, by their own media. The Polish Government's sensitivity and the considerable attention it devotes to RFE testify to the effectiveness of RFE.

  
GRONOUSKI

ENCLOSURE: Detailed working notes prepared by Embassy officers on monitored RFE programs.

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Detailed working notes prepared by Embassy officers on monitored RFE programs:

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Subject and Comments</u>
3/10 1915	7190	Too much interference to understand broadcast.
3/10 2000	11385	Program on Steinbeck's trip to Vietnam; discussion of his reply to attacks on him in Komsomolskaya Pravda. Reception poor. Program was interesting, however. In view of the considerable space recently devoted by Polish press to Steinbeck and his trip, program may be considered timely and apt. His defense seemed apt and concrete, a good antidote to the one-sided presentation of the Polish press.
3/10 after 2000	15145	News. Commentary on controversy at Warsaw University and case of Michnik in particular. Commentary on changes in Yugoslav Party. Interview with Winzer on his experience in Soviet labor camps. The latter was especially good by virtue of its graphic and concrete reminder that these camps continue to exist and Poles are still in them. Announcer promised that names of such Poles would be read out in subsequent broadcasts. I am told that this series of broadcasts has aroused considerable interest in Poland.
3/12 1930	719	Program of American pop records. Reception good.
3/12 2050	719	Program on Stangl. Good reception, very clear. Interview with Wiesenthal in Vienna, who was instrumental in tracking down Stangl (as well as other Nazi criminals in the past). Said he was glad to be speaking Polish, something he rarely did nowadays (his Polish sounded perfectly convincing to me). He detailed Stangl's war time activities, the circumstances leading up to his apprehension in Brazil and gave some reflections on the purpose of bringing such people to book, even though war over twenty years ago. (His reasoning was that trials, though they don't expiate the crime, are a constant reminder of

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		what happened, they put a whole generation in Germany on the defensive and served as the most "effective brake we have" on possible resurgence of Nazi movements. It will be necessary to run down Nazis as long as any of the people directly or indirectly responsible are alive.) This program was most interesting, and should have appealed to all listeners, whatever their political views as supplementing what has so far appeared in the Polish press. (Wiesenthal acknowledged that he was unlikely to get any credit in the Polish press.) One important aim of the program appeared to be to show that the Polish regime has no monopoly on the desire to bring war criminals to book. However, the collective guilt thesis that Wiesenthal developed has certain anti-German overtones. I think we should examine text of the broadcast carefully when it comes in with this in mind.
1/12 2230	719	Program of records. Good reception.
1/12 2245	719	Lecture on health. This program was a bore. Perhaps it was intended for people in the countryside, but I doubt whether they would be interested.
1/12 2300	719	News. This was a particularly good and intelligent coverage of day's news, with special emphasis on items likely to be of interest in Poland. Main news items covered were: French elections (announcer mentioned that several Government ministers defeated with help of Communists); defection of Stalin's daughter (Polish press next day reprinted TASS item which was referred to in broadcast, saying that she was abroad and it was her own business how long she stayed there); Vietnam (perfectly factual); new anti-Soviet demonstrations in Peking; new President of Indonesia; Mrs. Gandhi re-elected premier of India; power struggle in

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<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Subject and Comments</u>
3/13 1800		I was looking for a commentary on Ulbricht, but didn't find one. Must be a lot of material on Ulbricht "on Poland" which could be used.
		* * * *
3/13 2115	719	Commentary on defection of Svetlana Stalin. Gave details of her life and her defection (according to accounts in British press). Particularly timely. Subject is of great current interest in Poland. Commentary on Sukarno. Commentary on Polish Days in Vienna. Commentary on film director Skolikowski, a propos of a Belgian press article. Too short to be of much interest. Broadcast from London; English lords open their castles to the public. (A peculiar subject, not likely to be of much interest here. No real hint in program as to why this subject was chosen.) Report on London Olympia show. Concentrated on gadgets. Of marginal interest. (If comparison with Polish national spring show at Poznan was implied, this was not very clear.)
3/13 2150	719	Review of European sports events. (Nothing about Poles.)
3/13 2200	719	News. French elections; new Indian Government; U.S. disarmament head Foster in Rome for talks on non-proliferation treaty (useful item in that it showed that FRG is not only country raising questions about it as implied in Polish press); U.S. hits North Vietnamese battalion in South Vietnam (not the type of report on Vietnam which appears in Polish press); Svetlana Stalin; West Berlin elections (communists gained no seats in Berlin Senate); Romanian technical delegation in Britain; Worker in U.S. launches fund raising campaign (item designed to show that Worker is in financial difficulties because of low circulation); Jaroszewicz going to Moscow; houses in Sandomierz threatened by landslide.

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<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Subject and Comments</u>
3/13 2215	719	Review of Western press commentary on Svetlana Stalin's defection, mainly from <u>New York Times</u> and <u>Le Monde</u> . Point of these commentaries was U.S. delicacy in not wanting to give offense to Kremlin at time of growing detente by having Svetlana go directly to U.S. Review of <u>Neue Zurcher Zeitung</u> article on decision of writer Leopold Tyrmand not to return to Poland. This item would be of particular interest to Polish intellectuals. It was presented in factual way, as seen through eyes of Swiss press.

(General comment: Since this was day before Ulbricht visit, it seems strange that there was no mention of this in news broadcast or following commentary. Admittedly, I took in only about an hour and a half of the broadcasts, but seems to me they should have been hitting this hard.)

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2/22 2105	700 kc on BC band	Reception excellent. News broadcast. The news was delivered in a good objective style. Particularly noteworthy were two items: 1) the Red Guard item included a quote of <u>Izvestiya</u> regarding the arrest of officials in Canton; 2) the value of Nixon's talks in Romania was emphasized, without making any explicit reference to the Poles' refusal to admit Nixon. I think the ordinary Pole would be pleased to be left to his own conclusion after the blatant point-making of the local press.
3/22 2120	700 kc on BC band	Panorama Dnia. Two items on Easter celebrations in Rome and London. Again good that no explicit moral was drawn. The report on the Gypsy Moth passing Cape Horn was exciting, in marked contrast to the Polish reportage of the same event. Torret Canon story. I thought the emphasis on the owners' tremendous loss in dollars was a bit crass. No comment on the other items.

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<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Subject and Comments</u>
3/22 2200	7250 kc 4.9 M band	Reception excellent. Dzennik Radiowy. Here and elsewhere the VC were referred to as "partyzanci" in keeping with Polish press practice. I think this is ill-advised. The word is too evocative in the Polish mind and has not one unfavorable or even neutral connotation that I know of.
3/22 2220	6150 kc 4.9 M band	Reception poor, often blocked.
3/23 1205	11810 kc 25 M band	Reception good. News broadcast. Item on Russian spy ring was especially good, since the Polish press ignored it.
3/23 1210		Panorama Dnia. Same program as yesterday.
3/23 1225	11810 kc 25 M band	Musical dedication program.
3/23 1230	11810 kc 25 M band	Interference blocked signal.
3/23 1240	3650 kc 31 M band	Better reception.
3/23 2250	700 kc BC band	Good reception. Technika Dzis i Jutro. Interesting talk on development of air safety measures in U.S. Item on U.S. Far East policy from Washington correspondent. Balanced, but again the "partyzanci", this time in Thailand. Aside from the content, the reasonable and fair style of the reportage is in good contrast to the biased and sarcastic tone of the Polish press.
3/23 2300	700 kc BC band	News. East Germany referred to as "East Germany", rather than "FRD." This is tendentious, although I can see some good reasons for doing it. I don't think it makes a good impression on the Poles. Gossip items from Warsaw on officials, professors, protests and so on, naming names. I would think this would be very fascinating to the Poles.

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<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Subject and Comments</u>
3/24 1800	700 kc BC band	Reception excellent. News. Good items included the new constitution in SVN, Adam Szaf's health troubles, and the U.S.-French pipeline agreement. A very interesting and objective news broadcast all around.
3/24 1810	700 kc BC band	O szostej dziesiec. The panel of a record request program discusses their wonderful fans back in Poland and all the nice letters they get. It is hard to see that this program represents money's worth when they're not playing records.

Reporting Officers: OGrobel/RFOber, Jr./NTerrell:jpk 4/27/67

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