

February 2, 1971
Memorandum from [withheld] for Deputy Chief
[withheld], 'Recent Radio Free Europe (RFE)
Broadcasts to Poland' [Declassified September 19,
2016]

Citation:

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Summary:

CIA officials responsible for RFE question the criticism of RFE Polish broadcasts by the Polish Government, the West German Government, and the State Department and conclude that coverage of the December 1970 unrest in Poland was responsible and effective.

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2 February 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Chief,

SUBJECT: Recent Radio Free Europe (RFE)
Broadcasts to Poland

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REFERENCE:

1. Reference memorandum described the 6 January demarche made by Polish Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Winiawicz to U. S. Ambassador Stoessel on the topic of recent RFE broadcasts to Poland. The memorandum also discussed comments made to a U. S. Embassy Bonn officer by West German Foreign Office officials on this same subject.

2. Subsequent to our 19 January memorandum, Ambassador Stoessel, in a 21 January message (Annex A), expressed his concern over the content of five RFE broadcasts to Poland during the period 16-29 December. Ambassador Stoessel emphasized that the Poles are "sensitive" to the "use of vituperative language concerning Polish political personalities" and he noted that the West Germans are also "sensitive" to likely Polish protests on this matter to Bonn. He expressed the opinion that RFE "attacks on Polish personalities" may damage U. S. interests at a time "when it is not known how much influence General Moczar may have on the policies of the Polish party and government and the Polish attitude toward the U. S. is not yet clear." The Ambassador noted that he has previously recommended that RFE avoid "bitter or abusive language and tone" in its broadcasts and should not permit a "special bias" to be shown against selected

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political leaders. He concluded with a request that RFE "review its broadcasts with the aim of eliminating harsh attacks on personalities and, where necessary, moderating the overall tone of its broadcasts."

3. The question of recent RFE broadcasts to Poland was also raised by the West German Foreign Office officials on 25 January in the context of a U. S. Embassy briefing on Senator Case's proposals regarding RFE and Radio Liberty (Annex E). The German official mentioned that "it is no secret that Scheel, Bahr and Brandt are not enthusiastic about RFE and that additional problem broadcasts... would only cause heightened irritation." He also said that he was uninformed as to what action Foreign Minister Scheel might take with regard to the two broadcasts he had described earlier (referent memorandum, paragraph 3).

4. Polish diplomatic representatives in Washington have also brought up the question of recent RFE broadcasts with U. S. officials. On 21 December 1970 Polish Ambassador Jerzy Michalowski, in a conversation with Deputy Assistant Secretary (EUR) Richard Davies and Mr. Doyle Martin, Polish Affairs Officer (EUR/CHP), said that RFE had heaped "exaggerated reporting with an anti-socialist and anti-communist slant, hour after hour." During this discussion, the Ambassador also commented negatively on recent VOA broadcasts to Poland. Mr. Davies voiced his understanding that the Ambassador was not making a demarche and, in connection with the VOA broadcasts, said that he would be glad to look into the situation should the Ambassador provide him with references to specific broadcasts (Annex C). On 8 January Andrzej Wojtowicz, First Secretary at the Polish Embassy, discussed RFE and VOA broadcasts with USIA Assistant Director (USSR and Eastern Europe) Kempton Jenkins. Wojtowicz said that RFE broadcasts to Poland are "a different story" than the VOA broadcasts and he complained that RFE "is just doing its regular business... in a situation like the riots becomes an important irritant for the Polish government." (Annex D)

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5. [] discussed these developments concerning RFE's Polish broadcasts with Mr. Durkee, President of Free Europe, Inc., and arranged to have all of the pertinent official traffic shown to Mr. Walter, RFE's Director. We also provided our initial evaluation of recent Polish broadcasts to both men (Annex E). As a result of the recent proposals made by Senator Case regarding the Radios, we informed RFE that we consider it imperative that the Radio avoid broadcasting any commentaries which might be considered "problem broadcasts" by the West German and/or Polish governments (Annex F). Although we assumed that this was already being done, we have obtained confirmation from Mr. Durkee that extraordinary precautions are indeed being taken (Annex G). It should be noted, however, that this prophylactic action was initiated in order to avoid further complicating, in our relations with Bonn, the already difficult situation brought about by Senator Case. It does not indicate that we agree that either Ambassador Stoessel's or the West German Foreign Office complaints can be considered fully justified.

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6. [] views on this matter, some of which might be used as talking points with the Department of State, follow:

a. The three additional scripts, mentioned by Ambassador Stoessel but not by the German officials, are attached as Annex H. Of these three, one script contains no reference to General Moczar and the other two include comments similar to those objected to in the earlier two scripts. The pertinent phrases are: "... police elements, from their very nature the most regressive, grouped around Mieczyslaw Moczar, a supporter of the use of the most brutal and ruthless forms of ruling, based on violence and terror..." and "the bandit units, trained and prepared for their task according to the methods and instructions of Mieczyslaw Moczar, vastly contributed in March 1968 to the spreading of the student riots... the same thing happened now..." A third passage, attributed to reports in the French press, includes the statement that "... fear primarily

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seized the apparatus of violence and the man (Moczar) who is running it...."

b. We offered some comments on RFE's treatment of General Moczar in the referent memorandum (paragraph 5-b.). While we believe that the general thrust and objectives of RFE's criticism are valid, the language used in these passages could again be considered injudicious at the time of broadcast. The words "bandit units" should not have been used. In our view, it is indisputable that General Moczar is and long has been a central figure in Polish political life. He unquestionably exerts great influence on the policies of the Polish party and government and, in RFE's opinion, the political struggle between Moczar and Giarek is a dominant feature of the current political situation. RFE's Polish broadcasts would lack credibility with their audience should RFE ignore or downplay Moczar's importance. Moczar is the Party Secretariat member specifically charged with control over all internal security matters and the security apparatus is known by all Poles to be "brutal and ruthless" and it is guilty as charged for its role in the Gdansk disturbances. It is difficult to see how RFE can comment on Moczar and the U. S. in any but unfavorable terms. We would consider that the "generalized criticism" of the militia, as recommended by Ambassador Stoessel, without mentioning Moczar at all would be inadequate in terms of RFE's credibility with its audience. Without having solicited the RFE management's views on this matter, we would recommend that the Department of State offer its opinion on exactly how and in what terms RFE could or should treat General Moczar and the security services. (In this connection, it is important to note that the current State/CIA/RFE paper on broadcasting policy for Poland is dated March 1966. Clearly, it is in need of revision, and this action has been initiated.)

c. RFE's criticism of Moczar and the internal security forces must also be balanced against the totality of recent Polish broadcasts. Between 16 and 31 December, RFE's Polish broadcasting department was on the air for about 144 hours and most of this time

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was devoted to newscasts and political commentary on Polish developments. It appears to us that four short critical phrases on the internal security forces, at a time when these were killing large numbers of Poles in the disturbed Baltic area, is an indication of remarkable restraint under the circumstances. It should also be recalled that the members of RFE's Polish staff are and consider themselves to be Polish patriots. In this connection, we note that the international press has carried a number of stories concerning alleged atrocities committed in mid-December in Poland; these reports were not carried by RFE on the basis that the stories were inadequately sourced. An example of a draft script on this subject, rejected by Mr. Walter, is attached as Annex I.

d. One of RFE's principal functions is to level criticism of people, institutions and policies when such criticism is justified. Criticism must, of course, be constructive and petty recriminations and vituperation is prohibited. In this regard, an occasional slip cannot, realistically speaking, always be avoided. Obviously, if a prominent party or government leader--and Moczar is both--is a hardliner who deserves condemnation for his actions he will be sharply criticized, and RFE, as a result, leaves itself open to charges of showing a "special bias." Despite these comments, it is possible that RFE is, in fact, guilty of showing a "special bias" against Moczar and this will be discussed with appropriate RFE officials and, if true, corrected.

e. Ambassador Stoesel, in his second message (Annex A), mentioned again Winiewicz's accusation that RFE broadcast commentary to the effect that Party First Secretary Gierak went to Moscow in early January "to get his orders." Although the Ambassador could not locate an RFE script on this subject, it is presumably the one attached as Annex J. Insofar as we can determine after a thorough review, this is the sole commentary broadcast by RFE on the Gierak trip. It is clearly no coincidence that the Winiewicz demarche was made on the same day that this script was broadcast. It is evident

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that this then appeared in the daily monitoring report which is prepared for the Foreign Ministry and other party and government offices. As a reading will show, this script in no way supports the charge made by Winiewicz.

f. It should be stressed that the West German official's view that the "Radio's general line on the causes of the rioting was incorrect" and that "RFE portrayed the workers' unrest as a result of anti-Soviet feelings" are both irrefutably erroneous. In addition, Ambassador Stoessel's seeming inclination to accept Winiewicz's charge with regard to the Gierak trip to Moscow is, as discussed in the foregoing paragraph, incorrect. In sum, both the Ambassador's and the West German Foreign Office shotgun-type criticism does, in fact, boil down to four short passages, all dealing with General Moczar, and one inconsequential remark concerning former Trade Union Chief Loga-Sowinski (see referent memorandum paragraph 5-a.). This is much different from the far more generalized West German and U. S. Embassy charges that the overall treatment given by RFE of the Polish situation is and was basically erroneous, that the Radio normally uses "abusive and bitter language and tone on its broadcasts," and frequently and harshly attacks numerous Polish personalities.

g. We are struck by the fact that Polish "sensitivities" are given such weight by Ambassador Stoessel. The Communists for their part, of course, pay little heed to U. S. sensitivities on this particular issue. Soviet and East European media report extensively and frequently on police brutality, storm-trooper tactics, etc. in the U. S. given any opportunity. This has been particularly true, for example, during their coverage of racial disturbances and incidents connected with the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention. RFE's occasional comments on communist security police activities are considerably more restrained than those made by the communist countries.

h. We should reiterate our conviction that RFE's coverage of the Polish situation has been entirely responsible throughout the

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continuing Polish crisis. The Radio should merit (and it receives from East European citizens and West European media) high marks for doing a remarkably effective job.

i. Declared West German apprehensions over a probable Polish demarche on RFE broadcasts are overdrawn. The definitive German position on this matter was outlined to appropriate Polish officials during the West German-Polish negotiations last fall. It should not be difficult for this position to be reiterated if necessary. In this connection, it might not be inappropriate for Bonn to indicate that Soviet Bloc broadcasting treatment of West Germany is also open to criticism. The "tit-for-tat" material, now available in Bonn, supports this position.

j. On many occasions, high-level Polish officials have taken pains to indicate that RFE broadcasts have little if any impact in Poland. These attempts to diminish RFE's actual importance, by portraying it as being no more than a minor nuisance, occur simultaneously with the continuous, heavy barrage of criticism, which is the truer measure of the Radio's effectiveness. The well-known West German correspondent Hans-Jakob Stehle, for example, reported that former Polish Party First Secretary Gomulka told him on 7 December 1970 that "...he neither reads nor listens to what RFE has to say, because only the opinions of serious opponents, not of slanderers, interest him..." (Annex K) Another view of RFE broadcasts was offered on 7 January to RFE's Geneva Bureau Chief by the First Secretary of the Polish Mission to the UN Headquarters in Geneva, Roman Wlasko. Wlasko, whose position would presumably make him familiar with regime views on recent RFE broadcasts, said that it is his impression that there has been a "trend toward moderation" in recent RFE's broadcasts to Poland. His comment, of course, stands in obvious contradiction to the statements made by Polish officials to U. S. officials and the treatment afforded by Polish media (Annex L).

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k. There is an obvious contradiction, of course, between [redacted] objectives and current RFE broadcasting policies. This

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argument cannot, however, be made with the Department of State. The subject matter of the criticisms that have been raised earlier by our Embassies in Bucharest and Prague, and now by Warsaw, might be considered to be entirely consistent with an [redacted] objective. As these, however, may be inconsistent with State/GIA/RFE broadcast policy papers, they are more difficult to defend. A broadcast which stated that Giersek went to Moscow "to get his orders" would be consistent with harassing the Soviets but inconsistent with RFE policy papers.

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Attachments:
Annexes A thru L

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