

**April 28, 1959**

**CIA-State Department Differences on Radio Free  
Europe Polish Broadcasts**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Cord Meyer records sharply different views of the utility of RFE Polish broadcasts aired by State and CIA officials in a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Foy Kohler on April 23, 1959

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director (Plans)  
Assistant Deputy Director (Plans)

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
MARCH 2009

SUBJECT: Meeting with Department of State officials to discuss  
Radio Free Europe's Polish Service Broadcasts

PRESENT: State - Messrs. Kohler, Leverich, Sherer, McFadden,  
Curtis, Val Johnson  
CIA - Messrs. Meyer and [redacted]  
RFE - [redacted]

1. This memorandum is for information only.
2. The meeting took place in Mr. Foy Kohler's office from 3:00 to 4:30 PM on 23 April, and was called at the State Department's request to discuss the despatch from Ambassador Beam concerning RFE's Polish broadcasts.

SUMMARY:

Mr. Kohler took the position that Ambassador Beam's despatch and other cumulative evidence demonstrated conclusively that the Radio Free Europe Polish Service is operating contrary to U.S. policy interests in Poland, and that major remedial action is required. He outlined two possible choices: a shakeup of the Polish desk's emigre personnel, whom he described as out of control, or a review of the RFE Radio Policy Paper for Poland to preclude critical broadcasting. He said that it had been his understanding that Ambassador Beam's review of RFE's Polish output would be considered definitive in assessing the usefulness of current RFE broadcasts to Poland. He stated that he was prepared to accept Ambassador Beam's conclusions, although he did not feel that RFE should be taken off the air since it might be needed again and could not be put back into operation once dismantled. However, the RFE Polish Service as it is presently operating is not needed in view of the government's ability to work effectively with Western oriented regime elements, and in view of the damage which RFE's Polish broadcasting is inflicting on U.S. efforts to work with the regime.

Mr. Meyer took the position that CIA and RFE fully accept U.S. policy towards Poland, and believe the total effect of RFE's Polish broadcasts is assisting current policy objectives. He felt that Ambassador Beam's case was not substantiated by the examples Mr. Beam had cited, and urged that State not pre-judge its case against RFE. He pointed to the favorable results of the May 1958 joint State-CIA review of RFE's Polish output and stated that this review was the last orderly approach to an appraisal of

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the RFE output. He stated his understanding that Ambassador Beam's views would be solicited on an agreed script sample; Mr. Beam's views would then be given appropriate weight in the normal Radio Broadcasting Policy Committee script review forum. He noted that CIA had been urging for several months that such a review be undertaken. He addressed himself to some of Mr. Beam's specific complaints, and additional complaints which Mr. Kohler raised, and observed that in most of the cases RFE's treatment of press reviews and internal affairs had been fully authorized by the Policy paper. He raised the question of whether State accepted the present Policy paper authorizing such broadcasts or whether, in view of current U.S. diplomatic relationships with the Polish Government, State Department wished to revise the Policy paper. He further pointed out that the Department's complaints were based on RFE's internal broadcasts which comprise only 6% of the total Polish output. He asked that the full sample of RFE Polish Political, News, Commentary and Press Review scripts for the period 14 thru 20 March be examined by the Radio Broadcasting Policy Committee before any conclusions were reached on current RFE policy conformance. Contrary to Mr. Kohler's estimate that RFE's Polish Desk had not "shifted gears" to further U.S. policy interests, he felt it has made significant progress in revising its output in conformance with the Policy paper.

It was agreed that the 14-20 March script sample would be reviewed on Monday, April 27 before any conclusions about alternatives were reached.



CORD MEYER, JR.  
Chief

International Organizations Division

Attachment:  
Detailed Statement of Conversation

cc: DDCI

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Detailed Statement of Conversation

There follows a summary of the major exchanges during the meeting:

Kohler: The Beam telegram plus recent cumulative evidence through March 31, 1959 has convinced the Department that the RFE Polish Service is not a profitable venture and that it is in fact operating contrary to U.S. policy interests. The problem seemed to be "built into" the Polish service. Something needs to be done about it, whatever shake-up is required.

Meyer: Neither RFE nor CIA is in basic disagreement with the Department with respect to U.S. policy. There is no intent on the part of the radio to unseat Gomulka. For example: [ ] recently wrote a memorandum emphasizing his belief in the need for continuing U.S. aid to Poland.

We recognize the uniqueness of the Polish experiment, but we also feel that it is necessary to recognize that there has been retrogression in Poland, as the most recent NIE has concluded. Has Mr. Beam personally accepted the fact of retrogression? It is our impression, based on the views of Mr. Donovan of the Warsaw Embassy staff, that Mr. Beam may not be in full accord with the NIE estimate. Furthermore, Mr. Beam's criticisms are based on internal affairs scripts which comprise only 6% of the total Polish service output.

Kohler: Nevertheless, the radio's overall tone must be judged by the internal affairs output, which is the part with political significance.

Meyer: Cited and quoted a favorable joint State-CIA review of a week's scripts in May of 1958. The radio's performance should be judged by its overall output and effect and the last judgment on this, the May 1958 review, was good. There has been no subsequent orderly approach to reach an overall review. Mr. Beam's despatch, for example, has picked out random scripts from October and November, 1958, January, 1959, etc. without reference to the total output in that period, which we believe would be found to have an overall favorable effect.

Kohler: Irrespective of the May, 1958 review, there are scripts of recent date, up to March 31 of this year, which contain policy errors. (Mr. Kohler had a group of RFE scripts before him. These were furnished the Department through the Munich Consulate channel).

Meyer: We would like to get down to cases and suggest an examination of the items cited by Mr. Beam. For example, Mr. Beam's complaint about the Innatowicz scripts was a case in point; these scripts were in fact carefully checked out, they had elicited a favorable audience response; responsible Swedish newspapers had reported the same facts on Innatowicz's evidence, and had also reported the regime's attempts to buy her off by offering her retirement in Switzerland; the regime had also closed the Mala Wies resort which Innatowicz had exposed. Contrary to Mr. Beam's contentions, these were sound, effective programs which had hit a key target group, especially the Natolinists in the regime.

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Kohler: Was disturbed by the tendency on the CIA side to rationalize or justify RFE output rather than to cooperate in correcting mistakes. For example: the Church-State controversy.

Meyer: Cited Wyszynski's testimony that RFE's programs concerning this controversy had been a positive aid to the Church in its efforts to preserve its freedoms. Embassy Warsaw had forwarded a report by AP correspondent, Stanley Johnson, alleging that Cardinal Wyszynski felt that RFE's broadcasts were hurting the Church in Poland. RFE had investigated this complaint during the Cardinal's visit to Rome, and received conclusive testimony from the Cardinal himself that the Johnson report was wrong. CIA's reply to State in this instance was not rationalization, but was based on hard evidence that the Johnson report should never have been forwarded.

Kohler: The Hlasko case epitomized the RFE approach and the wrong point of view of its people. The U.S. is not encouraging defection, and Hlasko could have done much more good by staying in Poland, whereas his career in the West was a total loss. Yet State had had continually to fight off CIA-supported RFE proposals to put Hlasko on the air, and in the end was forced to be downright nasty to get its decision enforced. Cord Meyer had emphasized to Mr. Kohler at the time that to reject RFE's proposal to use Hlasko would "cause a revolution" on the Polish desk of RFE. This was symptomatic, to his mind, of the attitude of RFE's Polish staff. With such an attitude, it is impossible to insure that the RFE Polish desk will carry out policy in spirit as well as in letter.

Meyer: Corrected Mr. Kohler's contention that he had predicted a revolution by Nowak, and stated that he predicted trouble if the proposal was turned down. There had been such trouble but CIA and RFE had taken care of it.

CIA feels that the RFE Polish desks carrying out of policy was O.K. except in two instances: The RFE response to the Jasna Gora raids was exaggerated, in the beginning; it forecast a wholesale regime effort to suppress Church liberties, which in fact did not happen. However, this line was straightened out thereafter; witness Wyszynski's own evaluation. And the service had demonstrated its judgment and responsibility; for example, by avoiding comment on the recent Vatican decree. (Mr. Meyer did not have an opportunity to cite the second instance).

Kohler: Agreed the Polish desk's restraint in connection with the Vatican decree was a good example (Bud Sherer agreed), but again re-emphasized his agreement with Mr. Beam's despatch.

Meyer: Re-emphasized the CIA/RFE belief that an appraisal of the RFE output must be reached by a review of the total output, and urged that the Radio Broadcasting Policy Committee proceed with a review of sample scripts for 14-20 March, now in State Department's hands.

Kohler: Cited new "mistakes" by RFE. 31 March Press Review included an item from the Swiss Die Tat which claimed that Eisenhower and MacMillan

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fully agreed with DeGaulle on the Oder-Neisse boundary issue. The radio's selection of this article was obviously deliberate and calculated to put across a definite point of view. The Die Tat report is contrary to U.S. policy and RFE should not quote European newspapers on U.S. policy.

- Meyer: Quoted the Radio Broadcasting Policy Paper which specifically authorizes RFE to "report objectively giving fair coverage to significant viewpoints which are not necessarily in accord with views of the U.S. government." The Die Tat item, which was included in a comprehensive press roundup, appeared to fall within this authorization. If Mr. Kohler objected to such reporting, which we felt useful in the interest of credibility, then the Policy paper should be changed.
- Kohler: Citing an RFE Commentary of 24 March "Calling the CP" which commented critically on the effects of Gomulka's agricultural policy in the light of Gomulka's final speech at the 3rd Party Congress.
- Meyer: Quoted the Radio Broadcasting Policy Paper, which specifically authorizes RFE to criticize the regime when required. Quoted from the Gomulka speech itself to show that Gomulka's reference to the possible use by the regime of administrative measures to enforce agricultural collectivization appeared to justify the RFE comment. Again pointed out that if Mr. Kohler objected to this type of RFE criticism, it would be necessary to amend the Policy paper which clearly authorizes such criticism at the present time.
- Kohler: Cited RFE's 11 March "Other Side of the Coin" which stated that Gomulka's attack on Western missile policy endangers the Poles' chance of U.S. aid. This is a delicate issue which the Department prefers to handle quietly and only through diplomatic channels. RFE commentary on the subject during current negotiations with the Poles is contrary to policy interests.
- Meyer: This program appeared to be an indirect assist to our diplomatic efforts to tone down Polish criticism of the U.S. and seemed to be very much in line with Mr. Kohler's own remarks to the local Polish ambassador.
- Kohler: Re-emphasized that the RFE program was not timely and that the Department preferred to handle such a problem through diplomatic channels only. Went on to cite an RFE 8 March Press Review which quoted the German Sueddeutschezeitung on the German attitude concerning the Polish-Czech conference role (Kohler then dismissed this item as "German policy" which might legitimately be reported).

What concerns him is the continuing cumulative evidence that RFE is not observing policy guidance and is in fact working against U.S. policy interests.

- Sherer: The overall tone of RFE on the Gomulka experiment is negative.
- Meyer: The Kohler-Sherer conclusions should await a fair review of the RFE

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Polish output. Agreement was reached last Fall that Beam's views would be solicited. There would be agreement on the dates and content of the script sample. Mr. Beam's views would be given appropriate weight in a normal Radio Broadcasting Policy Committee script review.

McFadden: The current problem of RFE's Polish service is a broad political problem which transcends the normal Radio Broadcasting Policy Committee's approach to script review.

Leverich: The Department's questioning of the RFE Polish output started with the Rapacki complaint. RFE is jeopardizing the whole U.S. information program to Poland: exchanges, periodicals, etc., and above all risking a return of internal Polish jamming.

Meyer: This line of argument doesn't follow. We have intelligence reports that the Poles are disturbed about the influence of exchanges to the point of considering shutting off the Ford Program. The Polish attitude has nothing whatsoever to do with RFE. It is prompted by the effect of exposure to the West on the exchanges.

Kohler: U.S. policy is dependent on working with people in the regime who are nationalist minded, and who are interested in keeping open the lines to the West. They are admittedly minions of the regime, but nevertheless useful. For example, the local Polish attache in the Washington Embassy is sticking his neck out to maintain exchanges; we must encourage such people.

The Ford Program would be terminated only if the balance swung against the regime.

RFE's tone is contrary to U.S. interests. This can't be corrected by detailed guidances, probably; RFE's Polish service has run away with the game. Drastic steps are needed to achieve staff and organizational realignment which can be relied on to carry out U.S. interests. This may not require firing any specific individual, but the staff does need a thorough shaking up.

State has been worried about this for a long time, and is frankly surprised that CIA hadn't come to the same conclusion themselves, even though RFE would of course tend to defend its staffs and to protect the status quo.

Meyer: It needs to be said that it is to the regime's advantage to needle Mr. Beam and his staff on every pretext, since it is obviously in the regime's interest to get RFE out of business. The basic question in our mind is whether the U.S. wishes to speak with two voices to Poland.

Leverich: Did Dr. May have any views on this question?

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McFadden: Dr. May did not visit Poland and did not put forward any views on this specific question, although he did, of course, raise a series of related issues.

Kohler: The quick answer to Mr. Meyer is that earlier we depended on emigres to advance our policy interests with respect to Poland. We now depend on elements inside of Poland having an orientation towards the West. These elements have become more important than the emigres. Do you allow the emigres to act to the detriment of the inside elements?

He didn't conclude that RFE should be taken off the air since it might be needed at some later date, however, the problem is that we don't need the RFE Polish service now in view of the success we are having in working with the regime. Ideally, if RFE could be resumed once it were turned off, then he would ask that RFE be put off the air for the time being. But this is obviously impossible. Therefore, what is the middle road? He recommends that we put RFE in low gear to try to get the payoff in the immediate future through other means. For example, the recent OCB paper shows vastly increased contacts. The Polish experiment is doing well on the basis of the regime's stand on collectivization, Church/State, dealings with the Soviets, no jamming internally of Western radio broadcasts, etc.

Meyer: We feel that on the Church/State issue incidentally, some weight should be given to Wyszynski's testimony to the effect that RFE has helped maintain the Church's position inside Poland.

Kohler: The Church/State fight is being decided inside Poland. RFE doesn't have the influence imputed to it on this issue, and in any case it is not the RFE mission to keep the Polish people good Catholics.

In our view there is no conflict and no competition between the other examples of progress Mr. Kohler has cited and with RFE, which is attempting through its medium as a radio to advance the same policy interests.

Meyer: This is an important point and it should be recognized that the exchange program helps RFE with information, and we feel that the RFE broadcasts to Poland may in fact whet the appetite of the Polish people for increased contacts with the West.

Gomulka came to power in Poland in the wake of many pressures as the best attainable compromise. We feel that it is important for RFE to keep the pressure on Gomulka to allow him to stay in power.

Kohler: Don't see the requirement for RFE in the face of bad RFE output.

Meyer: Do you really feel that this case is proven? Let's review the problem together as we have suggested, or perhaps you have some other suggestion.

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Kohler: The case against RFE has been proven to me. Something is wrong. The RFE Polish service must be shaken up since it is giving the U.S. Government real trouble rather than assistance. It was our understanding that Ambassador Beam would review the RFE output and that the Agencies would be guided by Ambassador Beam's conclusions.

Meyer: We did not understand that Mr. Beam's findings would be determinative. We have been pressing for months for a review by all parties, including Ambassador Beam, on an agreed script sample.

Kohler: We thought that the Beam review was it as the final check. The Department agrees with Mr. Beam's conclusions.

Meyer: We agree fully that as the local Ambassador Mr. Beam's views are important, but we do not consider them as the last step in the review process. Furthermore the cases Mr. Beam has cited are not fully accurate. For example, a careful reading of the text shows that it does not say and does not necessarily imply that the jamming which can be heard by a Polish listener originates from within Poland.

Kohler: In my judgment since the script is in Polish to Polish listeners, it clearly implies that the jamming is by the Polish regime. The RFE script could have been considerably improved if it had labeled the jamming as emanating from the Soviets.

Mr. Kohler is correct on this point and many other RFE scripts have so labeled the jamming.

Meyer: We agree with Mr. Kohler's point about labeling the jamming. However, we would like to point out once again that the Radio Broadcasting Policy Paper authorizes internal criticism.

Kohler: Then we need to revise the paper because the Polish service has abused this criticism privilege. VOA had a similar problem in 1948 in its Yugoslav programming, but VOA successfully changed gears so as not to frustrate U.S. policy interests in the process. The RFE Polish desk, however, has not shifted gears.

Meyer: We have difficulty in accepting this judgment inasmuch as the first review in May, 1958 was quite favorable and it showed that RFE Polish output had made excellent progress in adapting its programming along the desired policy lines of the Radio Broadcasting Paper.

Kohler: There seem to be two choices:

1. Clamp down completely since we can't trust the RFE Polish service. Rewrite the Policy Directive to allow for no comment on internal affairs and no coverage of adverse material in press reviews.
2. The other alternative is to leave the directive as it is and reform the organization and staff to achieve wholehearted compliance. He doubted, however, that this could be done successfully.

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Meyer: New American personnel changes may help, for example, David Penn's appointment as European Deputy for Policy and Control.

Kohler: Expressed considerable respect for Penn's experience and judgment.

[ ] We see no need to change the whole organization in view of the improvements in Polish output to which Mr. Meyer has referred.

Kohler: As of last month, drastic changes were needed.

Meyer: We could consider restricting the RFE Polish output on internal affairs to news only with no commentary. This would, however, require a revision of the Policy paper.

Kohler: Would prefer a dependable Polish service which could still be safely given some latitude, since realize importance of maintaining listener interest. Could [ ] be transferred to other duties?

Meyer: Possible middle solution would be clearance of each commentary.

[ ] This would be extremely difficult.

Kohler: While we doubt seriously that the results will have any effect on our estimate of the Polish service's output, we will agree to review the 14-20 March sample scripts before coming to any conclusion about alternatives.

It was agreed that such review would take place at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 27.

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