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June 28
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BULGARIA

MORALE AND GENERAL MOOD /2000/
Political Situation /2004/

PROPAGANDA /2600/
Radio /2605/

RADIO REVIEW.

SOURCE TRIESTE: See below.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: May 26 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: This report is a valuable contribution to the study of the audience reaction to RFE in Bulgaria, as well as to the study of new political developments in the country.

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A 52-year-old Bulgarian emigrant on his way to Venezuela told an RFE interviewer:

"I followed the broadcasts in Bulgarian from practically all Western broadcasting stations but mainly those from 'the Voice of America,' RFE and BBC, which can be heard better than Radio PARIS, Radio MADRID and Radio ROME. Very seldom I listened to Radio 'Gorinian' and Radio BELGRADE. Of these two, I could only identify the specific pauses, but even so, I occasionally succeeded in picking them, because the 'radiotechnical motherland' /rodna radiotekhnika/ has attributed a specific deafening noise to each of them.

"I have no particular liking for any of the above stations, as the matters they broadcast do not greatly differ from one another, nor do their scopes vary much. I think, therefore, it is just a matter of technical and artistic presentation, which we have lost the taste for after twelve years of Communist Regime, and the capability of making intelligent criticism. The Communists in Bulgaria have not succeeded in imposing their artistic notions on us, they have succeeded, however, in suffocating our souls, to a certain extent at least.

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"Particularly on RFE, I may say that lately /in the last two years/ it has considerably varied its programs, though following a definite national line which gives its broadcasts a cohesion of opinions and ideas that is not to be found in Radio PARIS. In the BBC there is a tendency of imposing British standpoints on the Bulgarian listeners, even when expressing opinions on Bulgarian matters. My son developed a tremendous hatred for the BBC radio speaker owing to the latter's description of the soccer game between the Bulgarian and British teams in LONDON during which the speaker clearly showed his partiality, that is, as my son puts it, 'he sided with the British' /navival za anglichanite,/ often giving false results, then having to admit in the end that the game had ended in a tie. Do not imagine this to be something of small importance, it was the Bulgarian national pride which had been hurt.

"In Bulgaria, the radio represents the only hole through which the Bulgarian people peep at the Free World, and I cannot think what could happen if it were to be shut, which has been the Communists' aim since they came to power. The radio creates many difficulties to the Communists though LENIN defined it an important technical discovery to be widely exploited in 'mass mobilization.' Possibly LENIN may have not considered the possibility that it could be used by the 'enemies of the class' for the 'demobilization' of the same masses.

"I do not think there is anything superfluous in your broadcasts, nor have I anything new to recommend particularly. I think much has been done by RFE, and I hold hopes that in the future too, it may keep to its variety and width in the programs. We cannot expect more from a station beyond the Bulgarian frontiers, when the main scope has been attained: the battle RFE is carrying out against the Communist swindles is attaining success, mainly now that the events which occurred in the Soviet Union and in Bulgaria are completely to the advantage of Western propaganda.

"In the Free World broadcasts I heard many Bulgarian names, but I think that many of them are not true; yet I heard names of personal acquaintances of mine, and I recognized their voices too. I heard the appeal by Dr. Georgi PETKOV, whom I know from my childhood, broadcast by RFE and addressed to the Bulgarian workers for the May Day festivity. I also know Mr. MADZANKIEV personally, and I liked his talks, which I followed very often. I also listened to the speeches by some Bulgarian representatives in the organization of the peoples under Soviet domination. I must point out that in Bulgaria there are great expectations for this organization.

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"As regards the amount of the various programs and the duration of the broadcasts, I believe that RFE has adopted the best way, as I do not think anybody would listen to the radio for a whole hour during daytime. While at night, during leisure hours, at dinner time, which is normally late in the night and more or less coincides with the time of the first night broadcasts and after dinner, the listener can really dedicate one hour to listening-in. In daytime, a limited number of listeners only have the opportunity of following the broadcasts, as everybody is busily working in Bulgaria nowadays.

"Personally speaking, I find that the most interesting part of the RFE program is news, lectures, political comments, and labor problems. My son likes sports news and jazz music. I find that the comic column /humoréski/ is not always a success, but my wife appreciates it in full.

"Through the RFE broadcasts, the peasants form a better idea of the political situation, as the broadcasts on this matter are said in a simple style, easily understood by them. I remember that before World War II in the magazine 'Iliustrovana Politika' there was a comic column in which there regularly appeared, in verses, the correspondence of a town scrivener to a friend living in the country, dealing with political events and matters. In the peasants' minds the witty remarks and the jokes they heard on the Western radio broadcasts stick for long.

"I was not a regular listener to foreign broadcasts, but I had a particular interest for them when important events occurred in the world. I became a radio addict - and many other Bulgarians too - after the crisis through which the Communist world is going. But it is also true that after I listened to the Western radio, e.g. the 'Voice of America' and RFE, I did not care to listen to another station. That is mainly due to the fact that at the end of a day's work I felt very tired, and listening-in required close attention. On the other hand, the information broadcast by the various Western stations does not greatly differ. The difference rests only in the way of presenting it. It is only the news that counts for me. Very seldom I followed the RFE evening broadcasts /2200/ and I do not know whether that station broadcasts at other times. During a whole week I listened about three or four hours to the Free World's broadcasts.

"In recent years, the interest for Western broadcasts in Bulgaria has rather decreased. This may be explained with the moral dejection afflicting the Bulgarian people, and for many political and economic reasons. Peasants meeting around a radio set is a very rare event nowadays, although

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there is not such danger as there was three or four years ago. Due consideration must also be given to the fact that all those who are interested in Western broadcasts have succeeded, despite their sad material conditions in having a radio set, as they are now easily found on the market and at reasonable prices.

"I have already pointed out that the radio is a necessity for oppressed peoples. I consider it superfluous, therefore, to speak of the results, bearing in mind that the radio is the most important weapon in the cold war between the Free World and Communism, which war will end with the triumph of freedom. As the Communist Regime obstinately hides its weaknesses and the events which are unfavorable to it, trying to make the Bulgarians forget their recent history, the radio remains the only source of news which may arouse hopes of liberation. I insist in pointing out the serious danger the Bulgarians see in the so-called co-existence with Communism; once again the Bulgarian people ask for their liberation from Communism and not for a compromise with it; the possibility of making the present order lawful appeals to the Bulgarian Communists but discourages the resistance forces. No co-existence with Communism, but only liberation is what the Free World - and particularly RFE - must say to the Bulgarian people, otherwise the RFE name would become meaningless: 'Free Europe' between freedom and slavery, in the name of world peace!

"The so-called 'new political course' in Communist countries has brought about - for what concerns Bulgaria - nothing particularly new. Actually, it has been noted that lately the violent methods which were applied some years ago, at the time of land collectivization, have now been resumed. Tens of thousands of citizens sentenced for their ideas are still in prison, those who were acquitted are actually prisoners in their own homes and country. The economic situation gets worse and worse as unemployment is making its appearance again, and the standard of living remains unchanged.

"The replacement of Valko CHERVENKOV with Anton YUGOV has not been enthusiastically welcomed, neither by government circles nor by the opponents of the Regime. Anton YUGOV is ill-famed in Bulgaria as he may be the bearer of hopes for the democratization of the Bulgarian Communist Regime.

"I also know Mr. NIKOLAI... which I follow. "Actually, at present, the most effective programs are those which report the latest events within the Bolshevik Party ranks, the debunking of STALIN's myth, and the ideological chaos which exists both in the Soviet Union and in captive countries.

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These programs convince the resistance forces that Communism is not a monolithic power, as its propaganda tries to present it. The Free World guesses all that, and realizes the importance of making a more decisive policy toward the liberation of oppressed peoples."

End.