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25X1

**INFORMATION REPORT**

REPORT

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[Redacted]

COUNTRY

Czechoslovakia

DATE DISTR. 8 January 1953

SUBJECT

Effects of Voice of America Broadcasts

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PLACE ACQUIRED

[Redacted]

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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[Redacted]

1. Listening to foreign broadcasts is not forbidden in the Czechoslovak Republic (CSR); people are not forced to listen in secret. As a matter of fact, during important meetings of the Communist Party, functionaries encouraged the members to listen to the "foreign bunk" in the hope that they would more readily accept the CP line. Those who listened to Western broadcasts did, however, exercise a certain amount of caution for fear of being suspected of sympathizing with the democracies, or of opposition to the Communist regime. Occasionally a small group of friends who trusted each other implicitly would listen to the broadcasts together, but for the most part listening was done semi-secretly. If there was an active member of the CP in the house, then the caution with which one listened was increased. 25X1

2. The number of radio receivers in the CSR was steadily increasing [redacted] this may be attributed to the fact that the people were more eager than ever to learn what was going on in the world. Every radio set had to be registered with the post office; failure to do so was punishable by law. Each owner of a set must have a license. The monthly tax on a radio set was 30 Kcs. Spare parts for radio receivers were scarce; some parts were unobtainable. Community repair shops were established, but the wait for repairs was usually a long one. Repairs were never made well. Many people thought that the workers in such establishments took out the better parts of the radios left for repair and replaced them with defective parts. Whenever possible, the people tried to have their sets repaired privately.

3. There is not much choice offered in radio sets for sale in the CSR. The most popular was the Largo, which cost 12,000 Kcs., then Tesla and Harmonie, which cost 8,000 and 6,000 Kcs. respectively. On the basis of a newspaper advertisement [redacted] two radio tubes of German Blaupunkt manufacture for 325 Kcs.

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- 25X1 4. In comparing various Western broadcasts to the CSR, it seems [redacted] that the BBC was well-organized, and its commentaries and news broadcasts were well prepared. It also seemed to do a good job in maintaining close contact with elements inside Czechoslovakia. Radio Paris has the jump on VOA as far as time of transmission in the evening was concerned.
- 25X1 5. The Voice of America, [redacted] devotes too little time to actual broadcasts to Czechoslovakia. Since the majority of the Czechs and Slovaks are looking to the US as their eventual liberator, the VOA should devote much more time to broadcasts to the CSR. The half hour of transmission in the evening is simply not enough. VOA should be the first on the air in the evening (Radio Paris has an hour of transmission at 2200). Broadcasting is not too effective after midnight when most of the population is asleep; nor is the early morning a good time, because most of the people must hurry to work. [redacted] the best times for broadcasting are 2000, 2100, or 2200, Central European Time. 25X1
6. Whatever the hour of broadcast, there is always the problem of the programs being jammed. Sometimes the broadcasts cannot be understood at all. Unfortunately the voices of the broadcasters do not help the situation; some are very deep and fade out completely when there is jamming. Higher pitched and sharper voices come through much better. Nor should the voice drop at the end of sentences; this causes the voice to fade out completely with the least bit of jamming.
7. VOA should devote more time and care to the preparation of programs to be beamed to Czechoslovakia. It should have fresh material based on the current situation. VOA should bend every effort to maintain very close contact with the people "at home in Czechoslovakia". It sometimes seems that the VOA is very far away from the facts of life in the CSR. Every consideration should be given to the psychological attitudes of the Czechs. It is difficult for those who left when the Communists took over to know the hardships of living in the CSR today. VOA should contact refugees and defectors in order to obtain news and 25X1 information as well as to be better able to evaluate the effectiveness of their broadcasts. Such information should, of course, be carefully screened, compared and evaluated. In addition, it seems [redacted] the content of VOA's broadcasts could be improved if it could obtain, from Washington, material from intelligence reports that would be suitable for foreign broadcast.
8. Extreme care should be used in authenticating the truth of every item used on VOA. One of its broadcasts exaggerated the prices of certain items in Czechoslovakia; this created a bad impression on the people in the CSR who compared the prices as given with the true ones. Untruths breed distrust. It is often said in Czechoslovakia that both sides put out their share of propaganda, so the West should insure the truth of everything broadcast to the CSR. It would also be an excellent idea for VOA to answer Radio Prague's propaganda charges with hard, cold facts. To the people of the CSR this would be not only interesting and informative, but would actually build up their moral strength. The Czechs feel that no answer to such charges means that they are true, that the West just does not care enough to answer, or that they are completely unaware that the charges have been made.
- 25X1 9. It appeared [redacted] that much of the reporting of VOA was weak; it was not forceful enough. Since time is always so limited, as much information as possible should be packed into the time allowed. Every word, every sentence should say something. For instance, one program included an interview with one of the women who escaped on the "Freedom Train". The interviewer spent too much time asking meaningless questions; the Czechs would like to have heard how the woman was

-3-

treated by US authorities, what sort of job her husband was able to obtain, and the difficulties they experienced. Another example was a report on the American school system. Czech listeners are interested in learning more about the school system in the US; they are already familiar with the system of education. What they would like to hear is how the children are taught, what sort of examinations they are given, what they do during vacation, etc. On the other hand, [redacted] an interview with a former Czech in the US; he was asked where he worked, what he did, how much he earned, what he could buy with his wages, how he occupied his leisure, where he went on vacation, etc. Such an interview was not only interesting, but it gave those in Czechoslovakia an opportunity to compare their own living conditions with those in the US. It increased the desire for a better life especially among the young people. Some of the reports on life in the West should be repeated.

25X1 10. [redacted] the following suggestions with regard to programs on VOA:

- (a) Important news broadcasts should be advertised ahead of time in order to insure the maximum number of listeners.
- (b) In certain cases, important foreign news should be repeated. Repetition of news concerning the Communists in France, agreements with Western Germany, and the US presidential campaign, would strengthen the Czech's faith and confidence in the West.
- 25X1 (c) [redacted] it would be an excellent idea if news of Czechoslovakia were broadcast to other Satellites, and vice versa, since the Communists put out little news upon which the population can depend. In this manner resistance would be strengthened among the oppressed peoples.
- 25X1 (d) [redacted] stress as strongly as possible that neither VOA nor any other agency broadcasting to the CSR should relate the manner by which people escape from Czechoslovakia. Such disclosures make it impossible for other people to use the same method. It also impairs the work of those on duty in the border regions who are actually working against the regime.
- 25X1 (e) It seems [redacted] the staff of the Voice of America should be separated into divisions according to the subject matter of the broadcasts, ie, education, industry, agriculture, etc. It is a good idea to include on-the-spot interviews and eyewitness accounts. VOA should have people who not only are familiar with the Czech language, but know the country and the people well.
- (f) Denunciation of Communists and the regime should be backed up by facts. Mild irony as well as jokes could be employed. Active Communists should be constantly reminded of their activities and told that they are being watched very carefully by the people, and that there will be a day of reckoning when they will have to answer for their deeds. Whenever possible, the names of these people should be included. It has sometimes been the case that Communists, singled out by one of the Western broadcasts, have improved out of fear of reprisal. In any case, the Czechs are careful to avoid contact with them, and to watch what is said in their presence. The intelligentsia should be told not to be narrow-minded or afraid, and to cooperate with the Communists only to the extent that is absolutely necessary. It should be emphasized that there will come a day when each person will have a chance to give an accounting of his past activities for the Communists, and that they will not be able to say they were not warned. It should also be made clear that penalties will not be meted out for the mere sake of revenge but in the interest of common justice.

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-4-

- (g) The church is one of the most important opponents of Communism; therefore VOA should devote a certain portion of its broadcasts to religion. Freedom of religion as it exists in the US should be emphasized.
- (h) The Communists are trying constantly to re-educate the youth to think along Communist lines. It is of the utmost importance that VOA concentrate on this segment of the population. Subjects of interest to the youth of the CSR include: opportunities for young people in the West, reports on films, the theatre, sports, travelling, and books.
- (i) [redacted] music programs on VOA should vary and be more in step with what the people want to hear. Europeans also have a good store of classical music from which to draw, but American music is sometimes a far cry from European music. [redacted] it 25X1 would be a good idea if Czech listeners became better acquainted with contemporary American composers and their compositions, eg, Leroy Anderson's "Blue Tango". Something on the order of the "Hit Parade" would be very popular with Czech listeners. [redacted] 25X1 it would also be a good idea if semi-classical European music were interspersed with American tunes. If a 15 minute program is made up of jazz, rock-bop, or jive, exclusively, the people lose interest and switch off their sets.

11. Western broadcasts beamed behind the Iron Curtain are important; they serve to keep alive and strengthen the resistance of the people, build up their hope for eventual liberation, and maintain their ties with the West. It should be made evident every day that the West still has an interest in the people under the yoke of the Soviets, and that the West is determined to liberate the enslaved peoples.

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