

3 June 1981
MAU-1043

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report - Austrian Bureau - May 1981

I. GENERAL

The death on 16 May of [] 57, an Austrian Bureau employee for nearly 23 years, after repeated hospitalizations for surgery and treatment of cancer discovered last December, deprived the bureau of the services of a loyal administrative assistant whose cheerful personality will be missed. Several bureau employees attended funeral and cremation services 27 May at Vienna's Baumgartner cemetery, as well as retired FBIS employees and friends [] Pending further experience, it was decided to cover the upcoming vacation leave in July of [] the other administrative assistant, by cross-training a teletypist and use of overtime as required. A copy of [] [] funeral announcement from son Simon is attached for FBIS friends worldwide.

The U.S. dollar's continued strength against the Austrian schilling throughout May, reportedly because of high U.S. prime interest rates, kept bureau budget estimates down and further reduced quarters allowances, per diem, and the post (cost-of-living) allowance paid all staff employees. The exchange rate remained above AS 16.00 to \$1.00 for all except 4 days in May, reaching a new high since 1977 of AS 16.735 on 3 June. In simple terms, this means dollar holders buying schillings now get about 1/3 more per dollar than they did only a year ago. Vienna per diem was reduced from \$104 to \$94 daily for the high, summer season, and the post allowance category to only 15 percent, meaning U.S. staffers mostly receive about \$1,700 per year, or 1/3 as much as when the COLA was at the 42 percent rate.

The Embassy Personnel Officer, who has had the FBIS bureau new position descriptions for six weeks, has not yet completed her review or forwarded the PD's with her recommendations to State Department, due to "press of other business" including local ICA classification work.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Special coverage and processing laid on during May included translations from Rome ANSA French-language reports on the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II on 13 May in Rome. Yugoslav monitor [] and Albanian monitor [] put their French to work. Additional staffing and coverage was laid on over the U.S. Memorial Day holiday weekend on 24-25 May to cover Sofia Bulgarian domestic broadcasts on the hijack attempt against a Turkish DC-9 airliner at Burgas airport, commendations being awarded to monitor [] and teletypists []

2. Continued unrest in Yugoslavia's southern, Albanian ethnic Kosovo province sustained additional coverage of Pristina domestic regional radio broadcasts in Serbo-Croatian mostly, and Albanian, as well as resumed sampling of Pristina television newscasts in Albanian carried on Belgrade TV by our Belgrade contractor. Heavy processing of Albanian and Yugoslav statements on Kosovo issues added to a heavy workload for Yugoslav monitors shorthanded because of leave. Headquarters approved a followup TDY sometime in June to Belgrade for the bureau chief to orient and meet the new TV contractor hired through Embassy assistance, []

3. Headquarters consumer interest in bureau videocassettes remained high, with 36 pouched off in May (19 from Belgrade, 11 from Prague or Bratislava, 4 from Budapest and 2 from Vienna) to Washington, as well as the monthly 3 for a BBC consumer's use. FCS advised 28 May that Headquarters consumers had agreed with the bureau that videoselection lists would be required on republic-level meetings only on merit.

B. Communications

1. The bureau communications section was named "Tributary of the Month" by Pirmasens ASC for its sustained low-error performance for many months, but on Headquarters' advice declined the honor to avoid undue publicity. Teletypists have held the reject rate below 2 percent for most of the last 13 months, including the last 7 months in a row, as well as May, when the rate for CIM's was only 1.45 despite a prolonged outage of 12:20 at Pirmasens on 21 May and a total of 14:44 downtime for May, with 400 words sent via London on the VCVC.

2. Upon request of the Hqs commcenter, information was supplied on charges and time required to connect bureau teletype circuits to the American Embassy Vienna for a future change to a high-speed communications channel now used by the Embassy that would obviate the need for any Skylink satellite connection, once planned for 1984.

C. Lateral Services

On request by Vienna American Embassy Charge d'Affaires ad interim Sol Polansky, a special Austrian television feature program on Yugoslavia's southern Kosovo province was recorded 19 May and pouched by Embassy Vienna to Belgrade and an advisory telegram sent. At the request of U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus Stone, filed FBIS reports on the Cyprus election results were passed to Ambassador Stone 23-26 May during his Vienna visit.

D. Technical

1. Technical personnel completed rearrangement of multicouplers and RF signal distribution, including routing of multicoupler-distributed FM and TV antennas via looping plugs and providing added cross-patching facilities for bureau and BBC use, greater versatility, flexibility, and easier spare repatching when faulty equipment is discovered.

2. With BBC agreement, Vienna began on 19 May to feed Prague Polish evening newscasts on the VCVC channel by means of a digital time switch when the Vienna main radio is unmanned late at night, an arrangement similar to that followed for Kiev Ukrainian radio coverage temporarily on BBC's coverage during the Polish crisis. The bureau will acquire two more of the AKAI Model DT-250 digital timers to permit more flexible use of this mode. Facsimile transmissions for London PMU on the VCVC remained high at 86 in May.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. Bureau teletypist [] was promoted to FSN-5 journeyman grade effective 31 May. STA

2. A copy of the new Vienna Embassy local employee handbook was forwarded to FBIS Administrative Staff with covering notes indicating certain problem areas involving grievance procedures, "jubilee" payments, retirement, and severance pay for some FBIS employees when all go onto the local schedule. STA

3. Dependent daughters [] of the bureau chief and wife arrived in Vienna on 23 May for a final educational travel visit. STA

B. Other

1. Headquarters auditor [] visited the bureau 18-19 May for a biannual look at the books; he reported no significant items would be placed in his report. There was considerable STA

interest in new-type documentation received by the bureau from RAMC Paris but unavailable in Headquarters for audit, and he indicated future audits may require an obligatory Paris stop before or after bureau visits.

2. Efforts to sign government leases on two nearby, desirable apartments for Deputy Chief [] and Senior Editor [] were somewhat stymied by a stubborn Viennese landlord and peremptory, mass vacation-taking by both the landlord and Embassy contracting personnel. Offers to sign private rental agreements on the landlord's terms were submitted, and early indications from a co-owner are that these may be successful when the owner returns from a long leave.

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Chief, FBIS Austrian Bureau

Attachments:

Publishable Wordage Report
Production Report
Engineering Attachment
Staff Personnel Report
Non-Staff Personnel Report
Funeral Announcement-[]

cc: Chief, FBIS London Bureau