

Anti-Communist Broadcasting and Slovak Catholic Diaspora in the Context of the Post-War Pontificate of Pius XII: Vatican Radio and Radio Free Europe

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Abstract According to the newest research in the Vatican archives of Pius XII's post-war pontificate the paper deals with the special role the Slovak post-war emigration played in the creation of anti-Communist strategies of the Holy See in the nascent Cold War. It also examines the activities of the Vatican Radio as an instrument of anti-Communism and as an important tool of communication across the Iron Curtain. It focuses on the role the Vatican Secretariat of State had in this process. Current research confirms that the Holy See respected the religious broadcasts of Radio Free Europe, even though its overall attitude towards it was ambivalent.

Keywords Pius XII. Slovak diaspora. Vatican Radio. Radio Free Europe. Anti-communism.

Summary 1 The Slovak Post-War Diaspora in Rome. Primary Roles and Characteristics in the Light of the Post-War Pontificate of Pius XII. – 2 Vatican Radio as an Instrument of Communication Across the Iron Curtain. – 3 Religious Broadcast of Radio Free Europe. – 4 Conclusions.



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1 The Slovak Post-War Diaspora in Rome. Primary Roles and Characteristics in the Light of the Post-War Pontificate of Pius XII

One of the most important features of Slovak emigration after the end of Second World War was its strong anti-Communist character. Anti-Communism resulted not only from the fact that the majority of the Slovak émigrés were Catholics (including former diplomats, politicians, deputies, journalists, soldiers, students and cultural figures), but also had to do with the influence the post-war pontificate of Pius XII. Pius XII watched with great concern the expansion of the Bolshevik ‘new Islam’ from the East, as well as the secularisation from the West. He understood Communist ideology in line with the encyclical of Pius XI *Divini Redemptoris* as an essentially perverse evil (*intrinsecamente perverso*) and perceived the struggle with communism as an eschatological “apocalyptic struggle with Evil”.¹ In the emerging bipolar world, the question for him was not taking the side of either bloc, but the question of “alliance with Christ” formulated in his well-known Christmas message of December 1947, in which he emphasised the neutral position of the Holy See as follows:

Our position between two opposing sides is free from all prejudice, free from all preference for this or that nation, this or that state, just as it is distant from any consideration of a worldly character. To be with Christ or against Christ, that is the whole question.²

After the Second World War, Pius XII re-evaluated his previous stance towards democracies, which he subsequently ‘rehabilitated’ and praised for their free religious environment that fostered the development of the individual. In 1949, in connection with the recent parliamentary elections in Italy – where the Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democratic Party were in competition – the Pope once again condemned communism.³

Pius XII was also well aware of the fact that the renewal of Czechoslovakia and its integration into the Soviet area of influence did not reflect the will of the majority of the Slovak, German and Hungarian population in the country. However, any other alternative arrangement of East Central Europe against the will of the victorious Allies was simply impossible.⁴

1 Hrabovec, “Svätá stolica a Československo”, 294.

2 Hrabovec, “Svätá stolica a Československo”, 294.

3 See more Chenaux, *Katolícká cirkev a komunismus*, 90-152.

4 Hrabovec, “The Beneš Government-in-Exile”, 104.

Anti-Communism and the Atlantic alliance, characterised by close collaboration between the Holy See and the United States, constituted two central features of Pius XII's post-war pontificate, which contemporary historical scholarship appropriately recognises as global one.⁵ These two orientations of the Pacellian pontificate overlapped and complemented each other, playing a significant role in shaping the emergence of the Cold War. The most recent research in Vatican archival sources demonstrates that Pius XII's anti-Communism was not intransigent; on the contrary, the Holy See repeatedly undertook initiatives aimed at establishing dialogue with Moscow.⁶ The failure or impossibility of such dialogue resulted either from the policies of Communist governments or from direct interference by Moscow itself - not from any unwillingness on the part of the Roman Pontiff to engage with the Communist East.⁷ Pius XII was open to negotiations and the possibility of an agreement, provided that the other side offered concrete guarantees for religious and civil liberties. However, when the Communist regimes broke off all dialogue, launched an overtly anti-Catholic campaign marked by brutal persecution, the Holy See discerned a deliberate intention to annihilate the Church and concluded that diplomatic efforts could no longer bring an end to the persecution. On the other hand, the pontificate of Pius XII represented a new political and religious initiative towards the Atlantic alliance, which may be regarded as significant innovation in the history of the papacy. Pius XII was convinced that "it is on the policy of the United States that the outcome of the fatal struggle between what remains of a free world and godless totalitarianism rests primarily" - as a letter from Pius XII to US President Truman in July of 1948 made clear.⁸ Together with the historian Roberto Regoli, it can rightly be stated that the United States became the new point of reference for the Vatican on the international chessboard.⁹

Despite his clear anti-Communist stance, Pius XII did not view himself as part of the Western 'crusade' championed by U.S. President Harry S. Truman, who called for major Christian churches to unite in the fight against Soviet communism.¹⁰ In his correspondence with the U.S. President, the Pope emphasised that true peace can only be attained when it is grounded in faith in the one true God, the

5 See more Valente, *A Vatican Atlantic Alliance*; Unger-Alvi, Valbousquet, *The Global Pontificate of Pius XII*.

6 See more Pettinaroli, *La politique russe du Saint-Siège*.

7 Regoli, "Vatican-US Relations", 21-6.

8 Regoli, "Vatican-US Relations", 28-9.

9 Regoli, "Vatican-US Relations", 33.

10 Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy*, 111-56.

Creator of the world who has endowed humanity with inalienable natural rights. He was also convinced that a genuine global order would emerge only when governments recognise the supernatural origin of their authority. Should a state arrogate this God-given right, the individual is reduced to little more than an object to the selfish interests of power groups.¹¹ A key problem with Truman's vision of involving Christians in this "apocalyptic struggle" was his insufficient awareness of the divisions within the Christian churches. Another significant shortcoming was the excessive instrumentalization of the churches as political actors, thereby overlooking their primary identity as spiritual institutions. In the summer of 1951, as a joint declaration by Christian churches condemning Communism was being prepared, the long-planned initiative ultimately faltered due to a conflict between Rome and the Protestant churches regarding the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which was met with reluctance by the Protestant world.¹²

Pius XII was well acquainted with the Slovak question, was helpful to Slovak refugees and perceived their needs. In this relation the former Slovak envoy to the Holy See Karol Sidor¹³ - a diplomatic representative of the Slovak Republic during Second World War - was a key person and a key source of information on the situation of the Church in Slovakia as well as in dealing with the complex issue of post-war Slovak refugees. At the end of the war, the Vatican granted him temporary political asylum until he left for Canada in February 1950 and the Holy See tacitly recognized him as Slovakia's representative even after 1945 and expected him to form a government-in-exile.¹⁴ In the first post-war years, Sidor continued making use of the position he enjoyed with the Vatican Secretariat of State to help Slovak refugees, report on the situation of the Church

11 Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy*, 123.

12 Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy*, 151.

13 Karol Sidor (1901-1953) was a close associate of Andrej Hlinka, founder and lifelong chairman of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, and, prior to 1938, belonged to its radical wing, a stance that was also reflected in his antisemitic statements. He served as the Commander-in-Chief of the paramilitary Hlinka Guard, was Minister without Portfolio between 1938 and 1939, and, in March 1939, became Chairman of the Slovak autonomous government. From June 1939 to May 1945, he served as the Slovak Republic's envoy to the Holy See. Being diplomat, he reconsidered his earlier radical views, adopted an anti-German and anti-Nazi stance, and acted as the Holy See's intermediary in efforts to mitigate anti-Jewish persecution in Slovakia. See more Sidor, *Šesť rokov pri Vatikáne*. For more on Karol Sidor post-war activities, see: Katrebová Blehová, *Slovenská emigrácia v Taliansku*, 21-62; Hrabovec, "Die III. Päpstliche Mission für die Flüchtlinge"; Sidor, *Dve cesty*. See also Sidor's rich post-war correspondence in the Slovak Institute in Cleveland.

14 Hrabovec, "The Slovak Émigrés", 28. For Sidor's diplomatic activities during the war, see Sidor, *Šesť rokov pri Vatikáne*, 239-71. See also Karol Sidor's personal file in the Slovak National Archives, boxes 7 and 10.

in Slovakia, and submit memoranda and statements on Slovak issues. Thanks to the initiative of Sidor the Vatican Radio addressed the audience in Slovak for the first time in 1943, after 12 years of the Radio's existence. Seeing that Christmas was near, and with it also a Pope's annual message Sidor came up with the following idea:

Why should our people in Slovakia listen to Vatican Radio's Latin or Italian broadcasts, if they could hear Slovak as well? We need to go for it and we will certainly succeed. The Vatican Radio station will air in the Slovak language.¹⁵

Still, it took four years until the Slovak language became a regular component of Radio Vatican broadcasting. The Slovak broadcasting joined the common Czechoslovak section in 1947, so in the time when the post-war Czechoslovakia gradually became part of the Soviet bloc with a strong Communist domination and the Holy See had to react.¹⁶ The establishment of the broadcasting was also the result of joint efforts of the Holy See and Czechoslovak diplomacy in the early post-war years. Despite all controversies, the notion was still present that relation between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See could be founded at least on the basis of a simple mutual respect – a fact that has been in historiography already well processed.¹⁷

The regular Czech and Slovak broadcasting started on the Christmas Eve 1947 together with two other Slavic languages – Croat and Slovene. While there were at that moment separate broadcasts for Slovenes and Croats respectively, the Slovak and Czech languages were included in a joint programme. It took more than a year and a half for the Slovak broadcast of Radio Vatican to become independent, and the road to this was not easy. The main credit for the independence of the Slovak service goes to the Slovak Jesuit Pavol Bajan, who since the summer of 1948 served as the Slovak editor of Vatican Radio and thus became the first person closely linked with the Slovak broadcasting. He later described this as the most difficult period of his life, as he refused to continue participating in the joint broadcasts conducted in a “rigidly Czechoslovak spirit” and consequently faced opposition from Czech priests in exile, who viewed his efforts to establish an

15 See more Petranský, “The Slovak broadcasting”, 92.

16 Petranský, “The Slovak broadcasting”, 93.

17 Petranský, “The Slovak broadcasting”, 92-5; Vodičková, “Slyšte to, všichni lidé, všichni obyvatelé světa, naslouchejte”; Vodičková, *Vatikánský rozhlas*, 77-84.

independent Slovak broadcast as “Slovak separatism”.¹⁸ The spiritual counsellor of the Pontifical College of St John Nepomucene (the Nepomucenum college), Václav Feřt, Czech editor of Vatican Radio, considered the efforts of Slovak Jesuits to get an independent Slovak broadcast to be signs of “Slovak separatism”.¹⁹

Vatican Radio did not serve solely as an instrument for the dissemination of the apostolate, but also pursued important diplomatic and propagandistic objectives. It stood at the forefront of the Church’s struggle against communism and one of the primary objectives was to counter Soviet propaganda.²⁰ It was not created as the official radio of the Holy See, since the Pope and the Secretariat of State did not exercise a strict control on it. Since the Holy See was not directly involved and Vatican Radio was said not to be its official agency than formally the Secretariat of State could not have been accused by the Communist governments of being a tool of anti-communist propaganda. There was also no predetermined plan of how to use the Radio and Pius XII and the Secretary of State only gradually learnt and become familiar with it, so that the flexibility was characteristic for their attitude towards the broadcasting of the Vatican Radio.²¹ The nature of the relationship between the Secretariat of State and the various broadcasts intended for the nations behind the Iron Curtain has not yet been fully clarified. A certain degree of oversight undoubtedly existed; however, it did not amount to censorship in the strict sense of the word.²²

18 The Slovak Catholic community in Rome frequently faced accusations of “separatism” for nearly all their efforts to maintain an independent national identity in the diaspora. Some exiled Czech priests targeted Sidor’s political activities and sought to denounce him before the Holy See. Czech priest Petr Lekavý denounced Sidor for a column he started publishing in early 1949 in the Slovak-French journal, *La nation slovaque*, which served as the press body of the Slovak National Council Abroad in Paris. Later on, being responsible for the spiritual well-being of Czech emigrants in Germany, Lekavý opposed the aspirations of Slovak Catholic refugees for an independent pastoral care. *Attività politica del Sig. Sidor (1949)*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte I, Serie Cecoslovacchia, pos. 253, ff. 208-16.

19 Feřt translated even the most innocuous articles published in the Slovak exile press for the Secretariat of State, with the intent of undermining Slovak efforts for independence. Among these was Sidor’s article recounting a conversation with an Argentine bishop during his stay in Rome in June 1949. The discussion concerned the pastoral care of Slovak refugees in Argentina and carried no political implications. “Argentínsky biskup”; *Attività politica del Sig. Sidor (1949)*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte I, Serie Cecoslovacchia, pos. 253, ff. 24-5.

20 See more Perin, “Vatican Radio and Modern Propaganda”, 67-71.

21 Cf. Perin, “Vatican Radio and Modern Propaganda”, 74, 82-3.

22 To clarify some aspects concerning relations between the Pope, the Secretariat of State, the management of the Vatican Radio, and the exchanges between the foreign diplomats see more Perin, *The Popes on Air*.

At present, we cannot fully clarify what was the position of the Vatican Secretariat of State in connection with the separation of the Slovak and Czech broadcasts. We have only one document so far, the author of which was Corrado Bafile, a high-ranking official of the first section of the Secretariat of State responsible for Czechoslovakia.²³ The document was dated December 1952 and it stated that: “Fino all’ottobre 1949 le trasmissioni in lingua ceca ed in lingua slovacca della Radio Vaticana avevano luogo l’una di seguito all’altra. Allora furono separate perché esigenze tecniche lo suggerirono”.²⁴

From the content of the document, it is evident that the division had to be carried out in a manner that would not be construed as encouraging separatism (“come un incoraggiamento al separatismo”). Thus, the broadcasts did not use the nationality principle, but linguistic, and the call-sign of even the Czech broadcast did not mention Czechoslovakia as a state, but only the two languages, Czech and Slovak.²⁵

Based on the documents available from the Historical Archives of the Secretariat of State, it appears that the main office in Rome was primarily focused on avoiding accusations of separatism or excessive nationalism in the broadcasts directed at nations behind the Iron Curtain. When the delegation of American Slovak Catholics visited Rome in June 1952 to participate in the consecration of the new altar above the tomb of St Cyril in St Clement’s Basilica and the Vatican media should inform about it, father Štefan Smržík, the Slovak editor of Vatican Radio, was instructed that “la Radio Vaticana deve essere al di fuori ed al di sopra delle contese nazionalistiche”.²⁶ One and half year earlier, when three Slovak bishops, Ján Vojtaššák, Michal Buzalka and Pavol Gojdič, had been convicted in a spectacular monster trial in January 1951, the Slovak Catholic Federation of America had sent a statement to the Vatican’s apostolic delegate in Washington, Amleto Cicognani, requesting a broadcast in Vatican Radio.²⁷ The request was refused on the grounds that the Holy See

23 Corrado Bafile served in the first section of the Secretariat of State from 1939 until the beginning of John XXIII’s pontificate. See “BAFILE Card. Corrado”. https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/documentation/cardinali_biografie/cardinali_bio_bafile_c.html.

24 *Trasmissioni di Radio Vaticana*, 3 December 1952, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 33.

25 *Trasmissioni di Radio Vaticana*, 3 December 1952, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 33.

26 *Pellegrinaggio di Slovacchi di America*, 4 June 1952, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, ff. 365-8.

27 *A Protest by the Slovak Catholic Federation to the Czechoslovak Government*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, ff. 424-5; *Protesta contro Governo Cecoslovacco*, 28 March 1951, Cicognani to Tardini (the letter was seen by Pius XII), f. 423.

did not wish to be accused of supporting separatism. Father Smržík was advised to exercise caution and moderation.²⁸

2 Vatican Radio as an Instrument of Communication Across the Iron Curtain

When the Communists ultimately seized power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, relations between Prague and the Holy See – which had been fraught with controversy since the end of the Second World War and the renewal of diplomatic ties – began to deteriorate.²⁹ Clear evidence that the Holy See had regarded Czechoslovakia as politically lost well before the Communist takeover of February 1948 is provided by the definitive departure of the Apostolic Internuncio, Saverio Ritter, at the beginning of January that year. In the subsequent months, the Apostolic Nunciature in Prague was headed by the Chargé d’Affaires, Gennaro Verolino, a diplomat with extensive knowledge of Central European affairs. Verolino assumed his new responsibilities with notable vigour at a time when the precise tactics the Communist regime would employ in its campaign against the Catholic Church had yet to be determined. Through protest notes he fought to save at least part of the rights of the Church, the preservation of church education in the Czech Republic (nationalized in Slovakia already in the autumn of 1944), the Catholic press, and other Catholic institutions, which the regime gradually began to liquidate.

Verolino’s diplomatic mission concluded approximately eighteen months later, coinciding with the regime’s initiation of an open offensive in June 1949 through the so-called Catholic Action. This initiative sought to sever the Church’s ties with Rome and to establish a ‘national’ Church, in effect schismatic, under the direct control of the Communist Party. The campaign ultimately failed owing to the resolute refusal of the Slovak and Czech episcopate, the opposition of the clergy and laity, and a widespread popular uprising in Slovakia, to which the regime responded with police repression and judicial persecution. Branded as one of the principal ‘culprits’ behind the collapse of the anti-Church campaign, Verolino was expelled from Czechoslovakia in July 1949.³⁰ He proposed to the Secretariat of State that the Slovak- and Czech-language broadcasts relating to the schismatic Catholic Action be extended in duration. Their

28 *The statement of Corrado Bafile*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, f. 421.

29 See more Hrabovec, “Udalosti roku 1948 v Československu”; Hrabovec, “Stratégie Svätej stolice”.

30 Hrabovec, “Udalosti roku 1948 v Československu”, 143-55.

purpose was to expose the falsehoods of Communist propaganda, which alleged that a substantial proportion of the clergy intended to join the Communist Catholic Action – an assertion entirely without foundation.³¹ In accordance with Verolino's recommendations, the broadcasts were extended, and Vatican Radio transmitted reports on an almost daily basis detailing the background of the Communist initiative, the position of the Holy See, and the responses of the Czechoslovak episcopate. These broadcasts proved highly effective in countering Communist propaganda on the matter.³²

After Verolino's departure, the Internunciature was headed by the secretary Ottavio de Liva without diplomatic status. He lasted in this position only until March 1950, when diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See were definitively broken, and thus also direct contacts with the local Church.³³ In this extremely difficult situation, when the Czechoslovak Communist regime took a series of harsh anti-Church measures, such as the anti-Church legislation in the autumn of 1949, the dissolution of religious orders and congregations and the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in 1950, it was necessary to look for new forms of communication across the Iron Curtain. Vatican Radio was one of the appropriate instruments.

One of the first to point out the lack of communication between the clergy and the isolated bishops in Czechoslovakia on the one hand, and between the local Church and the Holy See on the other, was Ottavio de Liva – himself isolated and under constant police surveillance, with very little possibility of communication, especially with the Church in Slovakia.³⁴ His recommendations that Vatican Radio replace the missing communications came at a time when the National Assembly in Prague passed a series of

31 *Radio Conversazioni della Radio Vaticana*, 23 June 1949, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 181; f. 166, 14 June 1949, Verolino to Tardini (Emissioni Radio Vaticana). Verolino wrote in this connection in a letter to Tardini: "I giornali continuano a dare ogni giorno liste di sacerdoti aderenti alla pseudo azione cattolica. Ma la verità è che pochissimi sono quelli che scientemente e liberamente hanno dato il loro consenso. Appare sempre più chiaro che tutto il movimento è un cumulo di falsità, inganni e intimidazioni. Nelle liste figurano perfino dei sacerdoti morti e qualche tedesco già da tempo passato in Germania" (*Letter from Verolino to Tardini*, 21 June 1949, in AAV, Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Cecoslovacchia, b. 88, f. 689).

32 Archivio della Radio Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, Trasmissione Radio Vaticana, Lingua slovacca, broadcasts from 20, 21, 24, 25, 27 June and 11, 14 July 1949.

33 For further details on Ottavio de Liva's mission in Czechoslovakia, see Hrabovec, "Stratégie Svätej stolice", 184-91.

34 A good illustration of the police surveillance gave his journey to Slovakia in July 1949 when he was constantly monitored by the police. See *Viaggio nella Slovacchia*, 5 July 1949, *Letter from de Liva to Tardini*, in AAV, Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Cecoslovacchia, b. 88, f. 689.

anti-Church laws in October 1949. According to these laws, an office for ecclesiastical affairs was established, priests in pastoral care became employees of the state, provided they took the oath of allegiance. De Liva characterised the legislation as a “diabolically insidious act”, recognising that priests, once disoriented, cut off from their bishops, and placed under existential threat, would eventually yield to the regime. He therefore recommended that the Holy See employ Vatican Radio as a means of communication. In the ensuing months, the Slovak section of Vatican Radio broadcast a series of programmes providing information on the Church’s situation and conveying instructions that urged priests not to sign any declarations in support of the regime.³⁵ The faithful were advised on methods of countering Communist propaganda:

Dear listeners, we again caution you about the grave danger threatening the Catholic Church in Slovakia and throughout the Republic. We urge you not to be deceived, and not to acquiesce in efforts to weaken and ultimately destroy you. As you acted with integrity only a few months ago, when the enemies of the Church sought to undermine you through the godless so-called Catholic Action, so act now: do not allow yourselves to be misled.³⁶

Several instructions issued by the Secretariat of State had been implemented. They followed Ottavio de Liva suggestions and Pius XII acknowledged them.³⁷ In a confidential directive, Pius XII determined, first, that in order to avoid difficulties in communication between the ecclesiastical authorities and the clergy in Czechoslovakia, it was necessary to establish a service reserved for the clergy, comprising a small number of informative broadcasts, preferably in Latin. Secondly, to prevent Vatican broadcasts from being disrupted, it would be advisable – following the recommendation of the Apostolic Internunciature – to explore the possibility of linking the Vatican Radio Station with a foreign broadcaster, for example in the Netherlands. Thirdly, in view of the sensitive religious situation in the Czechoslovak dioceses, all Vatican broadcasts addressed to the

35 Hrabovec, “Stratégie Svätej stolice”, 186-7. See also the multi-part series of Vatican Radio’s Slovak Desk on the Congrua Law. Archivio della Radio Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, Programma slovacco, October 1949.

36 *Kongruový zákon*, in Archivio della Radio Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, Programma slovacco, 1 October 1949, no. 466; Author’s transl.

37 *Bafile’s positions*, 19 October 1949, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 156. Pius XII acknowledged them on 21 October 1949.

clergy and public in Czechoslovakia should be submitted in advance to the Secretariat of State.³⁸

The situation of the Catholic clergy in Czechoslovakia, however, was considerably more complex. In the end, the bishops, in a joint letter, instructed the clergy that they were permitted to accept a state salary and to take the oath of allegiance, provided that it was accompanied by the condition: “insofar as it does not contradict God’s law and the natural rights of man”.³⁹ The Holy See’s response was cautious and measured, allowing room for the initiatives of the Czechoslovak episcopate. Nevertheless, confusion arose when the press service *Informazioni Radio Vaticana* (IRVAT) reported that the Czechoslovak episcopate had authorised the clergy to take an oath of allegiance to the Republic. The Secretariat of State criticised the press service for its unfortunate presentation of the matter, and the broadcast of the report on Vatican Radio was subsequently discontinued. In response, the Secretariat of State issued detailed instructions governing communications between Vatican Radio, the IRVAT press service, and the Vatican’s official journal, *L’Osservatore Romano*.⁴⁰

The Vatican Secretariat of State understood very well the importance of Vatican Radio as an alternative medium of information for Catholics behind the Iron Curtain. In the instructions for the broadcast, which appear regularly in the documents of the main office of the Roman Curia, Bafile stated in January 1951:

A ciò aggiungasi che, se oggi i nemici della Chiesa difficilmente possono riuscire a separare completamente i cattolici dell’Europa orientale dalla comunicazione con Roma, ciò sarà dovuto in parte considerevole all’esistenza della Stazione Radio Vaticana, ed alle trasmissioni nelle lingue di quei paesi.⁴¹

The statement formed part of the instructions addressed to Father Alois Kořínek, the Czech editor of Radio Vatican. In certain regions – particularly those areas of Czechoslovakia where the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans had left the faithful without priests – Father Kořínek initiated a series of broadcasts to guide listeners on how to live the Christian faith in the absence of clergy.

38 *Confidential statement addressed to Filippo Soccorsi*, 28 October 1949, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 157b.

39 Hrabovec, “Stratégie Svätej stolice”, 188.

40 *Informazioni Radio Vaticano*, 31 October 1949, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 135.

41 *Istruzioni pastorali attraverso la Radio Vat.*, 31 January 1951, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 113.

These broadcasts were in direct response to requests from listeners within Czechoslovakia. In this context, Bafile prepared instructions that were binding on Slovak and Czech broadcasts, which included recommendations to scrutinise specific developments carefully and, where necessary, to consult with the leadership of the Jesuit General Curia, especially Father Anton Prešeren, the Slavic assistant to the General of the Jesuits. Father Prešeren was well informed about Slovak affairs and served as an intermediary for the correspondence of Slovak Jesuits in exile.⁴² In the case of particularly sensitive topics, individual broadcasts were to be submitted directly to the Secretariat of State for prior approval.⁴³

Similar instructions appeared intermittently and addressed a range of contentious issues. In 1950, when the Communist regimes initiated a propaganda campaign for world peace (“campagna per la pace”) and the Catholic clergy came under renewed pressure to endorse it, Father Kořínek sought the opinion of the Secretariat of State. The resulting instructions emphasised that, although the Catholic Church had consistently upheld the cause of peace, Catholics should take care not to substitute the aspiration for genuine peace with Communist propaganda. The text of the instruction was personally approved by Pius XII.⁴⁴

Among the records of the Secretariat of State are recommendations concerning the content of Radio Vatican broadcasts, conveyed through various channels from behind the Iron Curtain. The actual audience, however, could not be ascertained through correspondence, as such letters were intercepted by the Czechoslovak secret police, with some correspondents subsequently sentenced to forced labour.⁴⁵ It should be mentioned that listening to Radio Vatican broadcast was a criminal act in the whole period of the existence of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia and particularly during the 1950s, when tuning in to Vatican Radio could result in harsh punishment. Interviews with priests who had succeeded in escaping across the barbed wire revealed that listeners desired catechesis on how to sustain their faith in the absence of priests, as well as reports on the life of the Church more generally. They also sought words of encouragement

42 Refer to the correspondence between Anton Prešeren and Slovak Jesuits in exile (Viliam Lacko, Frídrieh Osuský, Pavol Hnilica, Vendelín Javorka), in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Preseren), fasc. 1401.

43 *Istruzioni pastorali attraverso la Radio Vat.*, 31 January 1951, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 113.

44 *Istruzioni circa “Campagna per la pace” ed altre questioni*, 21 September 1950, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 128.

45 *Letter from Augustín Záh, Vicar of the Catholic Mission of the Pontifical Auxiliary Commission for Slovak Refugees in Germany and Austria, to the Vatican Radio*, 17 October 1950, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 110.

and sources of hope in those difficult times.⁴⁶ Other feedback on the broadcasts insisted that the atheistic nature of communism and the violations of the Church's rights be consistently highlighted. It was also deemed important to expose specific instances of persecution. The broadcasts, however, were not to voice direct criticism of the Czechoslovak government, which was highly sensitive to such attacks and dismissed them as "foreign propaganda", with the immediate consequence of intensifying persecution.⁴⁷ Particular care was to be taken in verifying reports, so that false or exaggerated accounts would not be broadcast, as these were exploited by Communist propaganda to discredit the Holy See.⁴⁸

One letter from Slovakia merits particular mention, as it was exceptional in its own right. Addressed to the Slovak-language broadcast of Vatican Radio, it was sent by Greek Catholics from Eastern Slovakia approximately six months after the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church, in October 1950. The authors expressed great satisfaction at the broadcasting of the Sunday service in the Byzantine Rite. Following the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church and its enforced unification with the Orthodox Church, many Greek Catholics had begun attending Roman Catholic services which, owing to the differences in rite, were unfamiliar to them; as a result, they often refrained from attending Mass on Sundays altogether. The letter stated verbatim:

Siamo cattolici di rito greco. Voi sapete, che qualcuno [sic] dei vostri sacerdoti hanno sottoscritto l'adesione alla chiesa schismatica pravoslava [sic]. Noi non vogliamo più assistere alla loro messa e funzioni. Avevamo deciso di andare a Sabinov, nella chiesa romano-cattolica. Ma non ci piace assistere a questa messa, perché non ne capiamo nulla. Perciò adesso preferiamo rimanere a casa. Noi cattolici di rito greco vi domandiamo di trasmettere qualche cosa anche per noi, così come avete fatto la Domenica 8 ottobre 1950, quando avete trasmessa la nostra liturgia e predica alle ore 10 di mattina. Credeteci, abbiamo pianto dalla commozione. [...] Ripetetelo, per favore, più volte.⁴⁹

46 *Letter from Alexander Heidler to Corrado Bafile*, 30 December 1950, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 108.

47 *Alcune osservazioni per la R.V.*, October-November 1951, *Confidential report*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 55.

48 *Slovacchia notizie sulla situazione - Trasmissioni della Radio Vaticana*, 3 June 1957, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 24.

49 *A letter from Greek Catholics from Eastern Slovakia*, 18 October 1950, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 266, f. 127 b.

The statement resembles the letters of Radio Vatican listeners during Second World War, who sought comfort in difficult times. Similarly, it confirms the role of radio as a new instrument of Apostolate.⁵⁰ It instructed the faithful on how to face communist propaganda, how to live a life of faith often without priests and sacraments, and, finally, provided them with important information about the functioning of the Church. In this sense, the role of Vatican Radio was both crucial and irreplaceable.

3 Religious Broadcast of Radio Free Europe

An important part of the anti-Communist campaign the West carried out in the first decade of the Cold War was psychological warfare in the form of radio broadcasting. Western intelligence circles called it 'white propaganda'.⁵¹ In the nascent Cold War, the National Committee for Free Europe (later Free Europe Committee) was created in June 1949 as a nongovernmental organization responsible for the broadcasting of Radio Free Europe. In the same line, the Council of Free Czechoslovakia was formed in February 1949 within the Committee.⁵² From the beginning, the Slovak exile organizations protested against the claims of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia to speak on behalf of Slovaks abroad as it was an almost exclusively Czech organization promoting Czechoslovak statehood and continuity with pre-Munich Czechoslovakia, as well as the 1920 Constitution of Czechoslovakia which in the post-war period was already outdated.⁵³ The Council of Free Czechoslovakia was also responsible for programming and staffing Radio Free Europe. The editors were supposed to promote the so-called Czechoslovak spirit and in this sense the broadcast ignored the national specificities in Central Eastern Europe. Further concerns were expressed as to whether the broadcasts would be prepared and carried out by exiles with clear anti-Communist views which was not always evident in the

50 Perin, "Vatican Radio and Modern Propaganda", 72-3.

51 See Kennan, "The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare", 30 April 1948. Wilson Centre, Digital Archive. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320>.

52 On the genesis of RFE, see Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*; Cummings, *Cold War Frequencies*.

53 "Aide-Memoire concernant les visées politiques du soi-distant Conseil de la Tchécoslovaquie libre", October 1949. The text of memorandum published in Kirschbaum, *Slovakia. Nation at the Crossroads*, 327-30, document no. 55. See also "Aide-Memoire".

case of the prominent exiles from Czechoslovakia after the February 1948 coup d'état.⁵⁴

The post-February exiles, their leftist orientation, and previous collaboration with the communists in post-war Czechoslovakia were well known within the Roman Curia. In this context, a noteworthy anonymous document from the Slovak exile community, entitled *History of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia and the Personnel of Radio Free Europe* (January 1953), likely prepared for American governmental authorities, was submitted to the Secretariat of State. The document contained information on prominent National Front politicians, detailing evidence of their pro-Soviet sympathies and collaboration with the communists between 1945 and 1948, which elicited considerable interest. Bafile observed in this regard:

Le persone che sono oggi a capo del Consiglio della Libera Cecoslovacchia ripetono quindi, la loro autorità inizialmente dai comunisti, e per di più, avendo partecipato fino al 1948 al Governo diretto dai comunisti, si sono resi responsabili di tutte le malefatte di questi ultimi.⁵⁵

The former post-war Czechoslovak chargé d'affaires by the Holy See, František Schwarzenberg – himself sympathetic to the Council of Free Czechoslovakia – acknowledged openly that the exile organisation failed to take into account the interests of Czech and Slovak Catholics. Merely a few weeks after the Council's establishment, he wrote the following in a letter to the Secretariat of State:

Il est regrettable que ni le choix et le nombre des représentants catholiques (surtout dans le secteur slovaque) dans le comité de 30, ni la première déclaration du Conseil forment une garantie suffisante, que les désirs légitimes des catholiques seraient respectés en avenir. On espère de pouvoir corriger ces défauts d'enfance.⁵⁶

The Secretariat of State did not view the Council of Free Czechoslovakia in a positive light and criticised the dominant

54 *Letter of the Slovak National Council Abroad to the National Committee for Free Europe*, Montreal, 18 September 1950, in University Ottawa, Special Collections Archives, Jozef Mikus X20-01, b. 15, f. 22.

55 *History of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia and the personnel of Radio Free Europe (1953)*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato di Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 286, ff. 287-308.

56 *Lisle – Francois de Schwarzenberg: circa costituzione, avvenuta a Washington, del "Council of Free Czechoslovakia"*, 12 April 1949, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato di Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 286, ff. 612-15.

influence of “anti-clerical figures” within its ranks.⁵⁷ In 1952, when the leaders of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia considered appointing a permanent representative to the Vatican (the appointment of former chargé d'affaires Schwarzenberg was under consideration), the Secretariat of State rejected the proposal. The Roman Curia argued that such a move would, on the one hand, exacerbate the situation of Catholics in Czechoslovakia and, on the other hand, that the Council of Free Czechoslovakia did not constitute a sufficiently representative organisation, as it “did not enjoy the support of the majority of expatriates, particularly Catholics, due to its association with Beneš’s party”.⁵⁸

The common Czechoslovak service of Radio Free Europe failed to attract most of Slovak émigrés.⁵⁹ From its beginning, the Slovak diaspora and the Slovak-American organizations demanded a Slovak broadcasting on equal basis, criticised the low representation of Slovaks and Slovak Catholics in the leading positions, and denounced the leftist and even Marxist nature of the programmes. Until the 1980s, the Slovak exile organizations submitted protest memoranda to the leaders of RFE.⁶⁰ The memoranda pointed out shortcomings in the staffing and overall policy of the Czechoslovak editorial office in Munich. These were seen as the main reasons why the broadcast failed to achieve the desired effect on the anti-Communist attitudes of Slovaks beyond the Iron Curtain. The different programme sections were mostly led by Czechoslovak-oriented left-wing émigrés. The low representation of Slovaks in the leading positions was not proportional to the share of Czechs and Slovaks in Czechoslovakia and failed to reflect the social stratification and political pluralism in the country.⁶¹

Challenges were also encountered in relation to Slovak religious programming within the RFE Czechoslovak service. Research in the Historical Archives of the Vatican Secretariat of State confirms that

57 *Carte sciolte, 1952, Circa l'Attività politica di esuli in America*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato di Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 286, ff. 480-8. See note by Bafile dated 18 November 1952 regarding the report.

58 *Consiglio della libera Cecoslovacchia*, 6 October 1952, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato di Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 286, f. 254.

59 This position reflected in the correspondence of some leading Slovak exiles who had contacts in Slovakia and were familiar with the situation in the country concerning the reception of foreign broadcasts. *Letter from Konštantín Čulen to Peter Prídavok*, Montreal, 9 November 1950, in SNA, Slovak League in America, b. 9.

60 *Memorandum from the Association of Slovaks in Great Britain to the National Committee for a Free Europe, N.Y. City*, (draft) London, 29 October 1951, in National Archives, Public Record Office, London, FO 371/94482.

61 It was evident that of the 31 programme editors, 29 were Czechs and only two Slovaks, 27 had a socialist political background, and only four were non-Socialists. “Memorandum from the Association of Slovaks in Great Britain”, 1.

the Vatican's highest office was to some extent involved in this matter. The RFE's religious broadcasts began as soon as the radio was launched and one of its first and long-time editors was Czech priest Alexander Heidler, former Professor of Theology at Charles University in Prague. In 1949, Heidler emigrated to Bavaria and on 1 May 1951 he became editor of RFE's religious programmes – a position he held for almost four decades – and was director of the Czech Missionary Service in West Germany.⁶² A month after the regular broadcasts started, he wrote a letter to Bafile saying that he needed help finding a suitable Slovak priest. He argued that Slovak priests in exile were according to his opinion either not sufficiently qualified or refused to cooperate with RFE because of its Czechoslovak orientation. He asked the Vatican official to support his initiative.⁶³

It is not known how this initiative ended, but the fact is that an influential group of Slovak emigrants in France proposed Jesuit Father Fridrich Osuský – who was studying ascetics at Paray-le-Monial and sociology and political science at Sorbonne at the time and was the spiritual advisor of the Slovak Catholic group in Paris⁶⁴ – to host RFE's religious programmes in Slovak. Father Osuský's experience, intellectual formation and rhetorical skills made him the best candidate and the Jesuit General Curia immediately agreed to this proposal.⁶⁵ His religious programmes became popular in Slovakia.⁶⁶ Despite this obvious success, at the end of 1955 the Jesuit Superior General dismissed him from RFE. Not even the interventions by RFE Programme Director William T. Rafael and the chief of the Czechoslovak service Július Firt, who considered Father Osuský to be a “very important moral force”, bore any results.⁶⁷ Father Prešeren in his answer to Rafael argued that: “I must recall him for apostolic ministry in Canada, namely, for a post for which, as the frontiers of Slovakia are closed, I have no other subject among the Fathers at my disposal”.⁶⁸

62 Vodičková, *Vatikánský rozhlas*, 110.

63 *Lettera del sac. Dr. Alexander Heidler a Mons. Corrado Bafile, presenta di difficoltà dei sacerdoti cechi e slovacchi*, 31 May 1951, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 286, ff. 2-3.

64 See more “Fridrich Osuský”.

65 *Letter from Jozef Šramek to Anton Prešeren*, Munich, 14 December 1955, in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Preseren), fasc. 1401.

66 *Rev. Bucko, cappellano capo dei profughi slovacchi in Germania*, 30 May 1952, *Statement of Corrado Bafile*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, f. 3.

67 *Letter from William T. Rafael and Július Firt to Prešeren*, 3 December 1955, in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Preseren), fasc. 1401.

68 *Letter from Prešeren to William T. Rafael*, 12 December 1955, in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Preseren), fasc. 1401.

The General Curia sent Osuský to Canada, where he helped to build a centre for Slovak Jesuits in Galt.⁶⁹

Father Osuský was not enthusiastic about leaving Munich. In this respect, he wrote to Prešeren in February 1956 the following:

Ich habe Ihnen offen geschrieben, dass ich keine Lust habe, nach Kanada zu gehen. Ich war überzeugt, dass das [sic] eine objektiv nicht gute Entscheidung ist, weil ich eine Arbeit verlassen muss, wo ich mehr leisten kann und wichtige Tätigkeit entfalten kann als in Kanada. In diesem Sinne schien mir diese Entscheidung nicht im Einklang zu sein mit unseren Ignazianischen Prinzipien.⁷⁰

In his response, Prešeren emphasized that it was not the task of the young Jesuit to question the Ignatian principles or adapt them to his own wishes. He urged the father to obedience and advised him to depart for Canada as soon as possible.⁷¹ Following the advice of his superiors, Osuský finally came round, helped to create a community for Slovak Jesuits in Canada and became its first superior.⁷² From today's perspective, it seems questionable whether it might have been wiser to keep Father Osuský in the religious broadcasting of RFE. His successor, Felix Mikula, a priest with strong ties to the Czech environment, who worked as a religious editor from 1956 to 1973, could not, due to his predominantly pro-Czechoslovak orientation, serve the interests of Slovak Catholics and the Catholic Church in Slovakia to the same extent. It is therefore appropriate to ask whether the leadership of the Jesuit General Curia underestimated the importance of RFE's religious broadcasting as a tool in the anti-Communist struggle.

The attitude of the Slovak diaspora towards the broadcasts of the Czechoslovak desk was predominantly negative, particularly in West Germany. The management of Radio Free Europe was accused of including Catholic programming merely to create the false impression that the Slovak Catholic community in the diaspora maintained a positive attitude towards Czechoslovakia. In this context, Father Bucko – an exiled Slovak Catholic priest and, from August 1951, head of pastoral care for Slovak emigrants in Germany – wrote a letter to the Apostolic Nuncio in West Germany, Alois Muench, outlining the

69 See correspondence between Osuský and Prešeren in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Prešeren), fasc. 1401, Osuský ad Assistentem, 1956, 1957.

70 *Letter from Osuský to Prešeren*, 6 February 1956, in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Prešeren), fasc. 1401.

71 *Letter from Prešeren to Osuský*, 23 February 1956, in ARSI, Nuova Compagnia, Provincia Slovakiae (Archivum Delegati P. Prešeren), fasc. 1401.

72 For more details, see Ondruš, *Slovenskí jezuiti v Kanade*, 55-72; "Fridrich Osuský".

position of the Slovak Catholic community in the West. In the letter, he admitted that Osuský's religious programs were fully in line with the doctrine of the Church and free of any kind of political connotations. The issue, therefore, was not the Jesuit priest himself, but the overall line of RFE in the "service of Czechoslovakism".⁷³ During an audience with the Nuncio in Bad Godesberg, Bucko claimed that Osuský had agreed to cooperate with RFE despite the fact that the radio not only failed to serve the interests of Slovaks, but in his opinion also had an anti-Christian attitude.⁷⁴ The Secretariat of State did not share Bucko's concerns. On the contrary, it was convinced that Radio Free Europe's religious programmes commanded a significant audience in Slovakia and were not perceived as conflicting with national sentiment. To avoid any political implications, no further action was taken, and the matter was simply noted.⁷⁵

Several months later, in January 1953, Bucko met Bafile at the Secretariat of State's office in the Vatican. During the audience, Bucko reported to a senior Vatican official on the challenges of providing pastoral care to Slovak refugees in West Germany. During the meeting, he requested that the Holy See prohibit Catholic clergy from participating in Radio Free Europe's religious broadcasts, arguing that, in his view:

è sconveniente che ecclesiastici cattolici collaborino a quest'organizzazione che ha una impronta tanto poco Cristiana; sia perché - per quanto riguarda la Slovacchia - la stessa organizzazione sostiene l'idea 'cecoslovacca', cosa anche la rende male accetta agli slovacchi.⁷⁶

Bafile did not concur with Bucko's request. In a note to the Secretariat of State, he stated that there was no objection to religious broadcasts in Czech and Slovak, given that both religious editors, Father Heidler and Father Osuský, were regarded as capable and reputable priests. According to Bafile, the question of whether Catholic priests should collaborate with Radio Free Europe was open to debate, as there were valid arguments on both sides. He further cautioned against being swayed by the 'nationalistic excesses' of a faction of Slovaks,

73 *Letter from Vojtech Bucko to Alois Muench*, 7 May 1952, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, ff. 6-9.

74 *Letter from Alois Muench to Domenico Tardini*, 17 May 1952, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, ff. 4-5.

75 *Rev. Bucko, cappellano capo dei profughi slovacchi in Germania*, 30 May 1952, *Statement of Corrado Bafile*, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, ff. 3, 10.

76 *Colloquio col rev. Adalbert Bucko*, 22 January 1953, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, f. 357.

emphasising that the issue concerned all nations behind the Iron Curtain. Although Bafile's stance appeared somewhat critical of Bucko's views, the Secretariat of State nonetheless requested the Jesuit General Curia to provide reliable information regarding Radio Free Europe's religious broadcasts.⁷⁷ The results of this investigation remain unknown.

4 Conclusions

Slovak-language broadcasts by Vatican Radio were among the most popular foreign radio transmissions to Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. This popularity derived not only from the high degree of religiosity in Slovakia but also from the authenticity and relevance of the Slovak-language content. Of particular significance to members of the clergy were the Latin-language broadcasts, which provided timely updates on the internal affairs of the Church.

However, Vatican Radio's primary role extended beyond merely reporting on the anti-Church measures enacted by the communist regime, including the persecution of the faithful and other forms of interference in Church life. Above all, it sought to compensate for the absence of communication between the isolated bishops, clergy, and ultimately the laity, many of whom were compelled to practise their faith without the presence of priests. In a context where direct contact between the Holy See and the local Church behind the Iron Curtain was effectively severed, Vatican Radio functioned as the sole link - an alternative and indeed the only means of communication across the Iron Curtain. This reality remains insufficiently recognised and explored within historical scholarship. It should be there for interesting interviewing survivors or heirs on the topic.

Recent research into the archival records of the Vatican Secretariat of State - the body responsible for Vatican Radio broadcasts - reveals a notable degree of flexibility in both the procedures and content of these transmissions. Such adaptability was necessitated by the evolving tactics and strategies employed by the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia and contributed significantly to the credibility of this exceptional medium.

The approach adopted by Vatican Radio was characterised by prudence and moderation, with a strong emphasis on the rigorous verification of information. While deliberately avoiding direct attacks on Communist governments so as not to provoke further anti-Church reprisals, the broadcasts nevertheless articulated the

⁷⁷ *Colloquio col rev. Adalbert Bucko*, 22 January 1953, in ASRS, AA.EE.SS., Pontificato Pio XII, Parte II, Cecoslovacchia, pos. 287, f. 357.

Church's doctrinal positions and its resolute opposition to atheistic communism with clarity.

The importance of Vatican Radio during the fraught early years of the Cold War remains insufficiently acknowledged and merits further scholarly attention within historiographical discourse.

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