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DAILY REPORT

WEDNESDAY
AUG. 24, 1960

SUPPLEMENT

World Reaction Series

No. 3 -- 1960

WORLD RADIO AND PRESS REACTION
TO THE POWERS TRIAL

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE 12 SEP 1985

Foreign Broadcast Information Service

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WORLD RADIO AND PRESS REACTION
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NOTE

This report reviews significant radio comment--supplemented for some areas by material taken from newspapers--available to FBIS at the time of publication. It should not be inferred, however, that all shades of opinion in all countries are reflected or that there was no reaction from countries not mentioned.

WORLD RADIO AND PRESS REACTION TO
THE POWERS TRIAL

SUMMARY

NONCOMMUNIST COUNTRIES

The consensus of West European opinion, with some variations, was that Powers was merely a pawn in the cold war, and that Moscow's major objectives were to brand the United States as an aggressor, to indict American policy and America's leaders generally, to intimidate America's allies, and to tarnish the favorable U.S. image. The sentence was generally described as "lenient," "mild," or "reasonable," although the trial was a propaganda show with the result predetermined. The Middle East radios, for the most part, limited themselves to sparse factual coverage of the trial, but Cairo saw the trial as a confirmation of the danger facing the world from the existence of military blocs, and as a justification for a policy of "positive neutrality." The available Far East comment echoed West European opinions that the trial was a propaganda spectacle, with the United States generally the primary culprit.

COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

The theme that U.S. "aggressive" policies, not Powers alone, were on trial pervaded Moscow's voluminous comment. Soviet commentators saw as one result a "crippling blow" to U.S. prestige. They charged, at the same time, that the American "advocates of espionage and aggression" have failed to learn their "lesson"--that such "provocative" activities as launching spy flights from aircraft carriers in neutral waters and use of commercial flights over the USSR for reconnaissance are still planned. During and since the trial, Moscow has continued to utilize the spy-flight issue in its propaganda effort against U.S. bases abroad. Insistence on the "fairness" of the trial and the "humaneness" of Soviet justice was a second major theme. President Eisenhower's comment on the severity of the sentence was attacked as "hypocritical" because it came from those actually "responsible" for Powers' fate, and Vice President Nixon was accused of "slandering Soviet justice."

Peking media gave the trial remarkably short shrift. They reported the indictment on Aug. 11, two days after its original release by Moscow, then kept totally silent on the Powers case until the day after the trial opened. Brief, reportorial coverage was then provided, followed up to date by a single--though widely broadcast--PEOPLE'S DAILY article claiming that the trial "exposed" the true colors of U.S. imperialism. The Far Eastern satellites gave the trial considerably less attention than the European bloc states, which by and large followed the Moscow pattern.

I. NO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

A. West Europe

Great Britain: British comment to a considerable extent reflected the tenor of West European reaction to the Powers trial. The general view was that the sentence imposed was fairly lenient and that the trial, though staged as a propaganda exercise, was fair. The trial was also seen as an effort to indict the American leaders, to intimidate America's allies, especially those harboring U.S. military installations, and to demean the United States in world public opinion. The London TIMES, commenting that a Russian pilot forced down over Britain or the United States would probably have fared no better, found it "depressing" that the Russians, by using the trial as a forum for a bitter attack on the United States, suggested that they do not think they had anything to gain at the moment from maintaining fairly cordial relations with the West. The Manchester GUARDIAN called the sentence a lenient one and "unthinkable in Stalin's time." The mildness of the sentence led the paper to find some consolation that "no irreparable harm has been done," although the episode was bound to leave some hard--even bitter--feelings on both sides.

West Germany: Several papers attributed the comparative leniency of the sentence to Powers' unequivocal display of remorse and the fact that President Eisenhower had freely admitted the espionage activities of the U-2 planes. Although papers emphasized that the trial was a propaganda show intended to brand the United States as an aggressive imperialist power, they conceded that it successfully created the impression of fairness. DER TAGESSPIEGEL of Berlin asserted that under Stalin such correct legal procedure would have been "unthinkable." DIE WELT of Hamburg commented that the trial, while failing in its objective to depict the United States as a warmongering imperialist state, was convincingly fair. The GENERAL-ANZEIGER considered that Powers' performance at the trial was "self-assured and skillful" since, being no idealist, he could not very well deny what President Eisenhower had previously confessed. It was the consensus that the conduct of the trial argued against any Soviet intent to further aggravate the cold war. No reference was made in available papers to U.S. bases in Germany, past West German commitments, or to the probable effect on future West German-U.S. relations.

Austria: The trial was generally assessed as fair--"amazingly correct," in the words of the independent NEUER KURIER. It was nonetheless considered a show trial serving political purposes: to brand the U.S. ruling circles as aggressors, to provide an excuse to tighten the reins domestically, and to demonstrate the apparent fairness of present-day Soviet justice. Most commentators conceded that the trial was successful

as a Soviet propaganda move and that it was expertly handled by Soviet authorities. There was general approval of Powers' conduct during the trial. The Socialist NEUE ZEIT said: "With the rope around his neck, he did not drag his country through the mud but remained upright." The semi-official WIENER ZEITUNG said Powers should not be blamed for having confessed: "a different attitude would have been not heroic but suicidal." There was general agreement that Powers showed no signs of having been brainwashed. There was relatively little speculation concerning future Soviet intentions or the anticipated course of U.S.-Soviet relations. WIENER ZEITUNG expected the greater tension engendered by the U-2 incident to continue. Other papers envisaged a resulting increase of secret police activities in the Soviet Union. Only the People's Party SUDOST TAGSPOST considered the mildness of the sentence an indication of a strengthening of Khrushchev's position that would bring an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. Criticism of the United States was rare and rather mild, confined for the most part to chiding Washington for lack of skill or clumsiness in dispatching the U-2 shortly before the summit talks were to begin.

France: Meager French radio comment termed the trial "part of the war waged untiringly by the Kremlin against the American network of strategic bases and ... the Western defense system." Some papers expressed regret that Powers, in his testimony, felt it necessary to condemn those who sent him on his mission, and by implication praise his captors. The New York correspondent of a Paris paper considered that Powers did not emerge a hero from his ordeal and that the trial and sentence were a humiliation to U.S. national pride.

Italy: The Rome radio and press considered the sentence rather mild in view of the admitted offense. IL CORRIERE DELLA SERA reflected the general sentiment in calling the trial "a play in which all had a part," and IL MESSAGGERO considered that Soviet Prosecutor General Rudenko's "falsehoods and misrepresentations" had proved once again that it was impossible to deal with the Russians. LA GAZZETTA DEL POPOLO thought the sentence proved that the USSR did not want a break with Washington, although LA STAMPA said the conduct of the trial belied the Soviet claims of a desire for peaceful coexistence, which involved "willingness to compromise, moderation, tolerance, mutual guarantees, and long and patient negotiations." LA GIUSTIZIA expressed the opinion that the facade of humanitarianism would not change the free world's image of the USSR. A prevailing opinion was expressed by IL TEMPO, which concluded that the primary objectives of the trial were to "interfere in U.S. internal affairs, create further embarrassment for the Eisenhower administration, and to influence the neutrals with the image of an aggressive United States with no respect for other countries' sovereignty."

Spain: Scant Spanish comment remarked too that the U.S. leaders rather than Powers were in the dock. The daily MADRID, noting the sordid history of Soviet espionage, said Powers' accusers were themselves "criminally responsible before the world of crimes similar in type but far more serious in consequences," for the information obtained was being used for aggressive and threatening purposes.

Switzerland: Swiss papers echoed the prevailing West European sentiment that Powers was only a pawn through whom the Russians sought to indict the U.S. Government. The trial was generally assessed as "quiet," "objective," and "even human," with DER BUND viewing this unusual display of humanity as part of a concerted effort to erase the image of the communist rule of terror existing in the noncommunist world. The authoritative NEUE ZUERCHER ZEITUNG considered that the trial had to be evaluated against recent developments in the Soviet Union--the campaign to increase revolutionary vigilance, the persecution of tourists, and the emergence of the Soviet secret police. These phenomena, said the paper, suggest that the show trial is also intended as a signal for a new isolation of the Soviet people from the outside world. DIE TAT compared the trial with the postwar Nuremberg war crimes tribunals and observed that the "German war criminals will be greatly interested in learning the American arguments in defense of Powers, especially with regard to the problem of acts performed in carrying out military orders."

Scandinavia: Although the various radios carried factual reports of the trial and sentence, comment was sparse. The Danish home service noted speculation that the mild sentence was the result of Khrushchev's reluctance to inflame American public opinion should he head the Soviet delegation to the United Nations session in the fall. While some commentators noted Powers' "effectiveness" and "dignity" in his testimony, one speaker described the flyer as "perhaps painfully outspoken from the American point of view." Monitored Norwegian and Finnish broadcasts carried no comment. The Swedish radio carried a report from its correspondent in Moscow who thought the Soviet charges were intended to impugn both Allen and John Foster Dulles, as well as President Eisenhower, and to contrast U.S. foreign policy and its terrible consequences for world peace with the Soviet desire for disarmament. Noting recent sudden reversals in Soviet policy, the correspondent said "it might not be very long before the Russian barometer changes to fine weather again." There was no monitored reaction to Soviet efforts to implicate America's allies in the espionage activities against the USSR.

B. Latin America

The Latin American radios, for the most part concerned with matters much nearer home, gave only token news coverage to the trial and provided very little comment. A DIARIO DE CENTRO AMERICA article broadcast by the Guatemalan radio termed the Powers trial a "farce," a manufactured incident in the cold war to justify Soviet torpedoing of the summit conference. In contrast to prevailing West European opinion, the trial was considered inequitable in that Powers was not permitted to consult American defense counsel and had to submit to the "farfical defense by a Soviet attorney."

C. Middle East

Arab States: Arab radios gave the trial routine coverage, with Radio Cairo apparently providing the only comment. An Egyptian home service commentator observed that the trial confirmed the danger which threatened the world, a danger which would not exist if there were no military pacts or bases. The professed ignorance of certain members of these pacts concerning the activity of the U-2 planes was seen as proof that these countries did not control their own affairs, and as a demonstration of the correctness of the policy of "positive neutrality." The semiofficial MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY in its reportage of the trial relied almost exclusively on Soviet press reports with a resultant reflection of the Soviet bias. The Sofia radio quoted the Cairo AL-AHRAM as declaring that the trial had exposed the "hostile spirit of American foreign policy," but this comment was not heard from the Cairo radio. The communist Sofia radio also noted an article in the Lebanese AN-NIDA (communist) charging that American aerial forays over the Arab states had produced photographs which the United States had turned over to Israel.

Iran, Turkey, and Greece: Teheran broadcasts carried press agency reports without comment. An Ankara commentator took note of the Soviet charge that the espionage flight had begun at Adana, but did not discuss the implications of the charge. He viewed the trial generally as an effort to make the cold war colder. A somewhat contrary opinion was expressed by the Ankara daily YENI GUN, which saw the mild sentence imposed on Powers as evidence that Moscow did not want to intensify the cold war. An Athens radio commentator termed the sentence "neither very lenient nor very severe." Powers was not brainwashed, he said, because there was no need for it. The Russians, he thought, wanted to reassure their people that the Soviet Union was invulnerable but did not succeed since Powers did not confirm that he was shot down.

D. Asia and the Far East

Although widely reported, the trial and its verdict drew little radio comment in the Far East. The consensus of Japanese press and radio commentators was that the trial was conducted "rather fairly" and resulted in a reasonable sentence, but it was generally agreed that the trial served primarily as a propaganda show dedicated to intensifying the cold war. TOKYO SHIMBUN felt that the United States placed itself at a disadvantage by the admission that reconnaissance flights were "national policy," but the paper observed that the USSR was in no position to make an issue of espionage in the light of known Soviet activities. A similar view was taken by a commentator for the government-sponsored JOAK radio, but he contended that the United States was at fault in violating agreements on international flights. A JOKR commentator, echoing the general opinion that the trial was primarily a propaganda device, contended that this latest cold war move grew out of the "questionable" American position; he asserted that "President Eisenhower's adamant attitude was a problem in itself."

Radio Jakarta's "International Review" commentator observed that the verdict was "not the important thing" since Powers was simply used to portray a tool of aggressive U.S. policy. The prosecutor's demand that the defendants be recognized as Eisenhower, Nixon, Herter, and other U.S. officials was the main point of the trial, he contended. The entire trial system was effectively employed to direct a political attack on the USSR's opponents, he observed, concluding that the Soviet Union had opened a new cold war campaign with a new weapon. Indian radio comment was limited to references to Prime Minister Nehru's contention that the trial resulted from the USSR's "understandable concern" about flights over its territory.

The South Vietnam newspaper NGON LUAN observed that the USSR used the trial to humiliate the United States, "a base and mean act unsuited to a great power." Despite the kind treatment afforded Powers by his captors, his mind had to be affected by his confinement in a communist jail, the paper asserted. The paper concluded that the proceedings in Moscow could not be considered a trial but an abuse of justice.

II. YUGOSLAVIA

Belgrade broadcasts provided factual summaries of the Powers trial and worldwide reaction but offered no original comment.

III. SINO-SOVIET BLOC

A. USSR: Indictment of "U.S. Imperialism"

Soviet propagandists summed up the Powers trial on its final day, Aug. 19, by reiterating the theme that pervaded Moscow's coverage of the proceedings: "American imperialism has been condemned." Voluminous comment during and since the trial has stressed repeatedly that not Powers alone, but U.S. "aggressive" policies were on trial. The verdict and sentence have been exploited as a warning to persons who pursue aggressive policies calculated to undermine peace. The Aug. 21 PRAVDA editorial was typical: "The sentence of the Soviet court is the pronouncement of the whole Soviet people, the whole of peace-loving mankind, pronounced on a dangerous criminal caught red-handed," PRAVDA said. "It is also a sentence on the adventurist policy of U.S. ruling circles who are striving to raise espionage, provocations, and violations of the sovereignty of other states to the norm of international relations."

According to TASS, the editorial of IZVESTIYA on Aug. 20 declared in a similar vein that "the Powers trial again showed who is to blame for torpedoing the Paris summit meeting; through whose fault the efforts of the 10-nation disarmament committee have been foiled; who throws wrenches into the nuclear test ban conference; who is striving to fetter the peoples of the East and Latin America; and who continues to poison the international atmosphere."

Blow to U.S. Prestige

U.S. prestige has suffered a "crippling blow" from the Powers trial, Moscow commentators insist. A talk in satellite languages on Aug. 19, for example, claimed that "the entire state policy of the United States" as well as "the American rulers and the maniacs of Wall Street have been covered with shame before the whole world." Indonesian listeners heard on the same day that "the United States has no more prestige in the eyes of the world." The attacks on the United States and its "ruling circles" have continued since the close of the trial. In addition to commentaries along the above lines, summaries of the Soviet note to the United Nations requesting that "the threat to universal peace created by U.S. aggressive actions against the USSR" be added to the General Assembly agenda have been broadcast widely to audiences around the world.

U.S. "Advocates of Espionage" Unregenerate

Reports of U.S. military plans have been cited by Moscow commentators as evidence that the "advocates of espionage and aggression" have failed to learn anything from the conviction of Powers. One widely broadcast commentary exploited reports that U.S. intelligence leaders are planning to launch "spy flights" from aircraft carriers in neutral waters and to use commercial civil flights over the Soviet Union for photographic reconnaissance. Another commentary linked the trial with the announcement of a new Pentagon agency to direct strategic target planning; and a broadcast beamed to North America charged that the Defense Department is planning to involve allied countries in the "new aerial schemes it is hatching." The argument that the U-2 flights were made to prepare for a future war was reiterated in comment on the trial. Rebutting the defense that the United States is justified in engaging in espionage, a commentary in Hungarian on Aug. 20 asserted that the Pentagon does not need intelligence about Soviet military activities to avert a surprise attack against the United States, but rather "to deliver a preventive blow in the future."

Oblique threats of retaliation against U.S. bases in foreign countries were pegged to the trial. Within hours of the conviction of Powers, a Moscow broadcast in English to Southeast Asia said the trial proved that U.S. bases on foreign territory are "strongholds of espionage and aggression" and that the Soviet Union now has "all the moral and juridical grounds to render harmless any bases from which an aggressive act against it is committed." According to TASS, a Pravda editorial the next day warned that "other states which lend their territories for U.S. military bases, for airfields and espionage flights, have also plunged into the dangerous game of 'brinkmanship.'" However, the only direct threat of retaliation was made in a broadcast beamed to Turkey on Aug. 18.

U.S. Election Campaign
 The effect of the trial on the U.S. presidential election campaign has been a pervasive but secondary theme running through the comments. TASS accused Vice President Nixon of "slandering Soviet justice" in his reference to "nonexistent Soviet statements" that the United States rather than Powers was on trial. One Moscow radio commentary called the trial "bad luck for Mr. Nixon." Other commentaries linked the Vice President with the establishment of the new Pentagon central strategic target agency, asserting that the Powers trial was "inseparable" from the actions of Mr. Nixon.

"Fairness" of Trial

The "fairness" of the trial and the "humaneness" of Soviet justice were stressed throughout the proceedings. Statements by Western lawyers and judges hailing Soviet procedure as fair and democratic were widely publicized. The sentence was greeted as "lenient." TASS reported on Aug. 19 that "profound satisfaction with the sentence passed on Powers is voiced by workers, collective farmers, and intellectuals in the USSR."

President Eisenhower's statement on the "severity" of the sentence was attacked as "hypocritical." The TASS report of the statement said that it had "an unconvincing ring" since it came "from those responsible for the lot that had befallen the American spy." Senator Fulbright's statement that the sentence was fairly lenient was widely broadcast. Powers an "Inveterate Spy"

Soviet comment has made only the slightest effort to dilute Powers' personal guilt. Commentators have not singled out the statements by either the prosecution or the defense on the pilot's "working-class origin" except to disparage them. In an article reviewed by TASS on Aug. 18, RED STAR asserted that "although he is nothing but a pawn in the gamble of the overseas warmongers," Powers is an "inveterate spy." One home service commentator rejected Powers' statement that he was sorry on the grounds that it came too late: "This air pirate and his masters should have thought about everything he did when they were nursing their provocations against the USSR." However, a later home service commentator contrasted Powers' "sincere repentance" with the attitude of U.S. leaders "who do not even think of repenting."

Volume and Target Audiences of Moscow Propaganda on the Trial

While the trial was in progress, Radio Moscow broadcast long running accounts of the proceedings, interspersed with editorializing by the announcer, to Soviet listeners and audiences around the world. Unscheduled news bulletins in the home service highlighted major developments. And commentaries beamed worldwide underscored the main themes.

Taken as a percentage of Radio Moscow's comment on all subjects, the propaganda on the trial (including the lengthy reportage of the proceedings and accompanying commentaries) reached its highest volume - 42 percent of the total - on the second day. The proceedings amounted to about 35 percent of Moscow's total comment on the first and third days.

The peak propaganda attention to the trial on its second day matched the volume devoted to the U-2 incident on May 1 and to the RB-47 on July 12. Forty-two percent is a very high but by no means unprecedented volume for a single event; thus Moscow devoted more than 50 percent of its comment to Khrushchev's U.S. visit to the United States on a single day while that visit was in progress, and a comparable amount to his visit to France.

Propaganda on the trial went down in volume after its conclusion on Aug. 19. The Soviet spaceship launching overshadowed the trial as a propaganda topic on Aug. 20 and 21, with 32 and 29 percent of total comment devoted to the launching of those two days as compared with 23 and a sharply reduced 13 percent on the trial.

Target Audiences: The most noteworthy peculiarity about the distribution of Moscow's output on the trial to its various audiences was an underplaying of the subject to noncommunist Asian audiences. These audiences heard only nine percent of Moscow's comment on the trial, as against their normal quota of about 15 percent. Latin American audiences also heard slightly less than normal. African and West European audiences heard somewhat more than their normal quotas. The Soviet audiences heard, overall, about as large a percentage as might have been expected.

It should be noted that, despite the effort to caution countries harboring bases from which spy flights might take off, there was no significant effort to overplay the trial material to Norway, Turkey, Japan, and Pakistan.

B. East European Satellites: East European radios echoed Moscow in stressing that U.S. leaders were the primary culprits in the Powers case. They asserted that while it is true that the pilot was personally guilty, he really was only a pawn, a typical product of the American way of life whose only object was money. They also emphasized the complicity of U.S. allies who allowed their territory to be used for U.S. military bases. All East European comment insisted that the conduct of the trial was fair, just, and objective and that the sentence was humane, although there were differences of emphasis: An East German ADN correspondent said that the punishment was "just and severe," while his East Berlin radio colleague called it "truly lenient." Other comment declared that the Soviet Union could afford to be magnanimous because it was strong. Contentions that Powers' demeanor during the trial refuted allegations that he was "brainwashed" figured in many East European commentaries, as in Moscow's own propaganda. Almost all the commentators regretted that U.S. leaders, "the real culprits," were not in the courtroom.

C. Communist China

Peking has given remarkably short shrift to the trial. It reported the indictment on Aug. 11, two days after its original pre-trial release by Moscow, then maintained a total silence on the Powers case--in newscasts as well as commentaries--until the day after the proceedings began. This silence was the more curious in that Peking had played up the U-2 incident at the time, and might have been expected to anticipate the trial with publicity for the Soviet charges of U.S. aggressiveness.

Peking's first item on the trial came on Aug. 18--in an NCNA report for the Chinese press. A brief summary of that item was broadcast in the Chinese home service the next day. NCNA on Aug. 20 transmitted a TASS summary of the verdict to the Chinese press, and on the same day supplied the Chinese press with a report that the Soviet people supported the verdict. Similar reports appeared in the home service.

Thus Peking's coverage was belated and, throughout the period of the trial, wholly reportorial. Peking finally commented on Aug. 23, in a widely broadcast PEOPLE'S DAILY article claiming that the trial "exposed the true colors of U.S. imperialism as a gangster who masquerades for peace while pursuing the policies of war and aggression"--Peking's consistent propaganda line with regard to imperialism and the United States.

D. North Korea and North Vietnam

North Vietnam broadcasts have paid scant attention to the Powers trial. There was no advance publicity and the opening was reported in only a brief item stating that the "spy Powers" was going on trial in Moscow. The trial was then ignored until Aug. 19, when Hanoi radio carried another brief item noting that Powers' confession "clearly revealed the despicable face of the U.S. intelligence agencies." Two items on Aug. 20 reported that the sentence was "warmly welcomed" and that the White House statement ignored the fact that the U.S. Government and the President were responsible for Powers' fate. Hanoi also said that "the verdict is considered everywhere as too lenient." NHAN DAN declared that the indictment of Powers "constitutes an accusation by the entire world public against U.S. imperialism--enemy No. 1 of peace."

North Korea also said that U.S. imperialists led by President Eisenhower, "who directly organized and directed the act of piracy," were also on trial in Moscow. Pyongyang's coverage of the Powers case was limited to two similar commentaries and TASS reports of the trial.