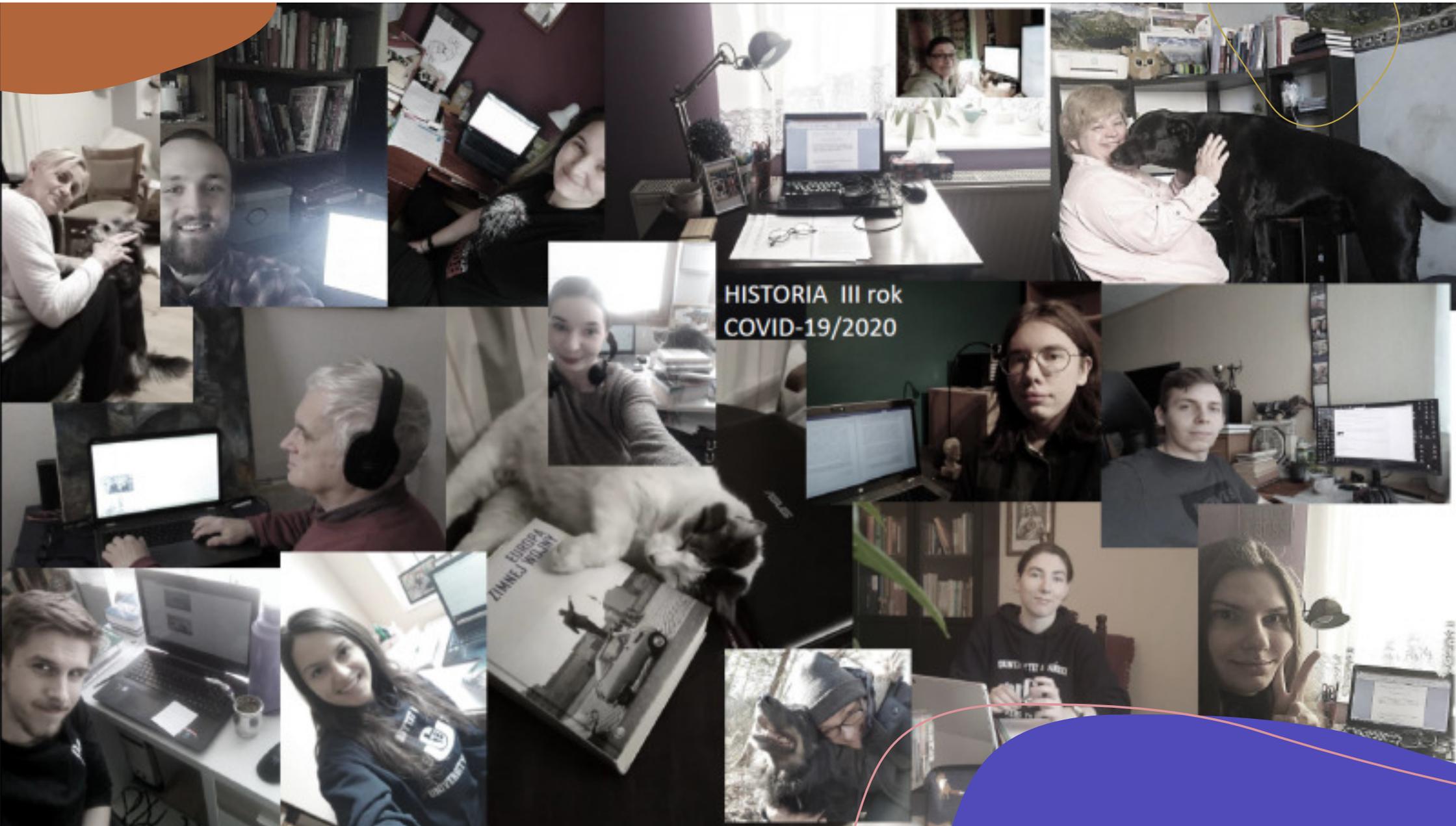




Finding the „hidden listener”

Report on the Student
Interview Project (Poland)

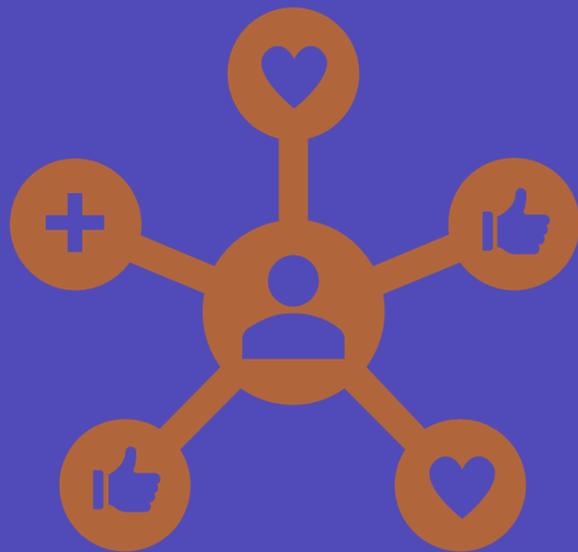


HISTORIA III rok
COVID-19/2020



Project description Spring 2020

- Radios - listeners (students' interviews) N=29
- Foreign v. domestic media (content analysis) N =8



Part 1: interviews

Students were free to modify the [questionnaire](#)

Conducted in person, via telephone, online

Time: March-May 2020

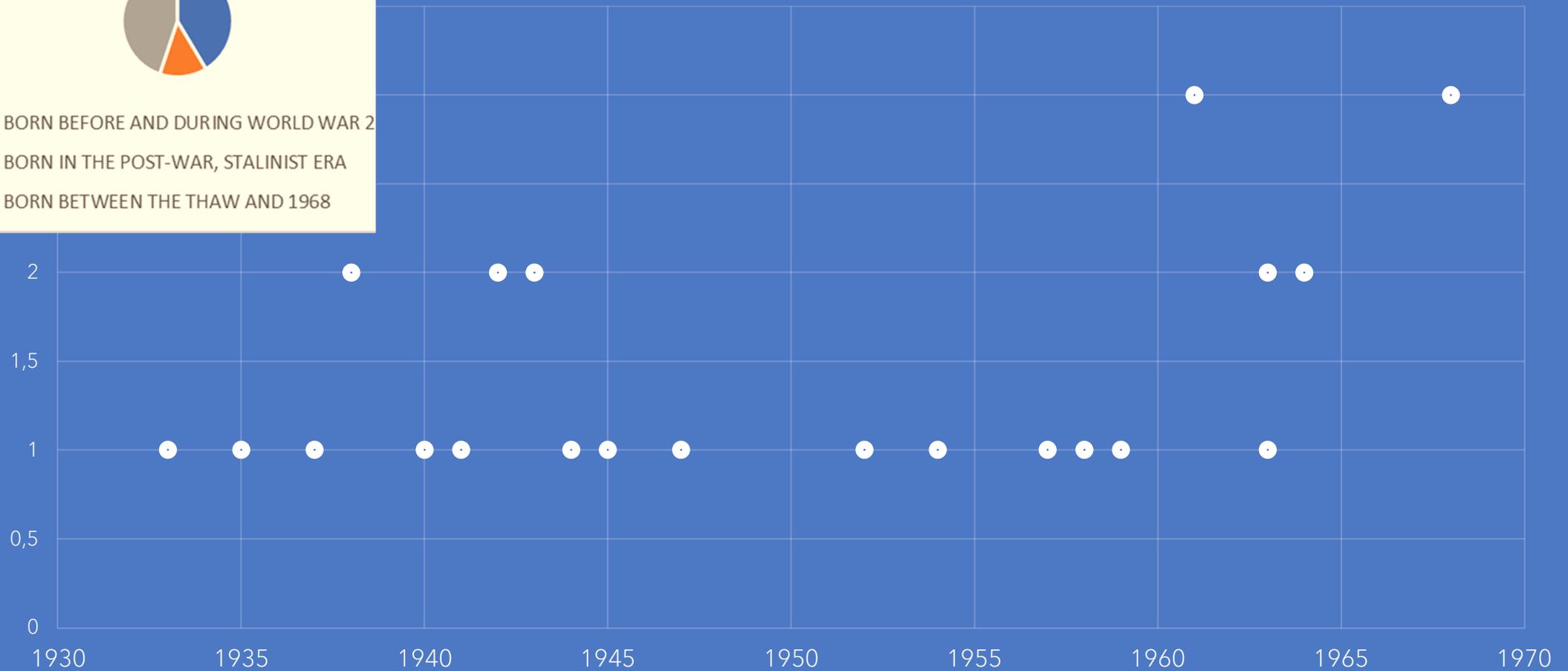


RESPONDENT SAMPLE

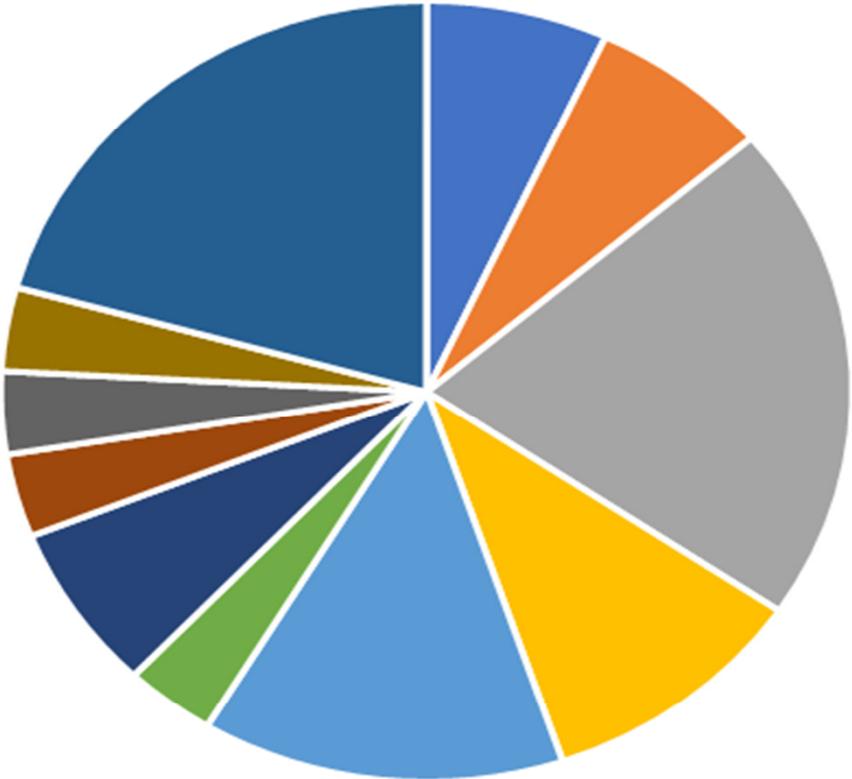


- BORN BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR 2
- BORN IN THE POST-WAR, STALINIST ERA
- BORN BETWEEN THE THAW AND 1968

NO. OF INTERVIEWEES BY YEAR OF BIRTH



INTERVIEWEES BY OCCUPATION



SAMPLE BY GENDER



- at home
- industry labor
- at school
- farmer
- managerial staff
- military
- nurse
- priest
- retired
- teacher
- technical staff



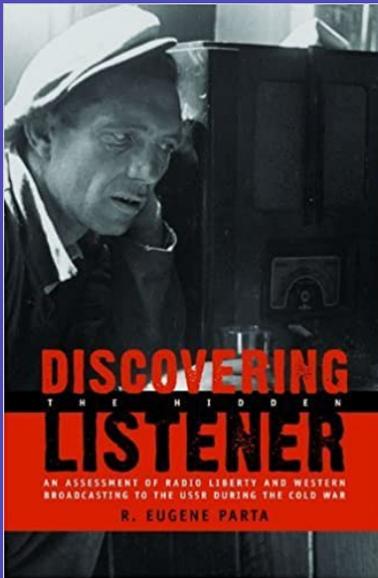
LEGNIMASIA
CZŁONKA
ZWIĄZKU
ZAWISZCIEGO



NSZZ „SOLIDARNOSC” 3051945 *Krepiet*
KOMISJA ZAKŁADOWA
przy Dyrekcji Wojewódzkiej PPTiJ
w Gdańsku
ul. Kallpowskiego 7/8
Gdańsk 280191 *Dawid*
miejscowość data *Grzegorz Dąbowski*

Foto: prywatne Zdjęcie: prywatne

Finding the “hidden listener”



- “Wolna Europa”
 - a common, yet not public knowledge
 - Growing up aware that there were alternative news sources.
- Multi-generational activity. Most interviewees mentioned grandfather, and father. In most cases – three generations!
 - Dad: introduction to, or attempting to stop from listening
 - Friends, parents, siblings
- Young start age – most respondents remembered they were teens when learned about the Western Radios.

All respondents mentioned both – Polish and Western media

State media:

- Press, radio, TV
- Few mentioned “radio by wire”/ “radio with no dial” – inhouse speakers (kołchoźnik – collective farm radio/toczka – (regional expression) company radio) – radio entertainment with political propaganda.



Western Broadcasts

- RFE – closest to the Polish sentiments (confused with other stations by the eldest respondents, referred to in late 1940s)
- BBC – most objective, at times used to verify
- VOA – least known, interpreted
- Luxembourg – popular, mentioned as entertainment by 1960ers (youth, for fun, easy to get access)
- No mention of Deutsche Welle, Radio France International

motivation

I listened because...

"I wanted to know the truth"

"to learn about the world".



motivations

- Why search for external sources?
- First contact with foreign radios.
Describe your sources of information (news) at the time.
- Did you trust the foreign broadcasts?
Which ones did you listen to?
- How did you evaluate domestic media?



“forbidden fruit”

- Listening as sign of protest
- “forbidden”, “illegal” – shared belief.
- Secretive atmosphere (grandpa / father hiding)
- Fear of ORMО, outsiders (in the village – visiting town folk), people eavesdropping, kids talking too much at school
- Fear of persecution
 - Penalties unknown. Considered real: atmosphere + memory of 1950s.
 - Not able to name one person who was persecuted for listening
 - Imagined repercussions:
 - arrest
 - kicked out from school, problems at work, increased quota for peasants (worse treatment)
 - Precautions (closed room checking the yard, not letting the kids in)
 - “cicho-cicho” (be quiet)
 - Hard to be caught while listening (information about someone listening, dissemination, most dangerous: underground publications (samizdat)/ leaflets, brochures)

FACT CHECK:

WAS IT ILLEGAL TO LISTEN?

- Decree of June 13, 1946: REGARDING CRIMES PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS DURING THE REBUILDING OF THE STATE
 - *o przestępstwach szczególnie niebezpiecznych w okresie odbudowy Państwa*. Dz. U. z 1946 r. Nr 30, poz. 192; zm.: Dz. U. z 1947 r. Nr 65, poz. 390, z 1949 r. Nr 32, poz. 238 i Nr 45, poz. 334, z 1955 r. Nr 46, poz. 310 oraz z 1958 r. Nr 18, poz. 76.
- Art. 22: One who disseminates false messages that may cause significant damage to the interests of the Polish State, or reduce the prestige of its supreme organs, shall be subject to imprisonment of up to 5 years
 - Kto rozpowszechnia fałszywe wiadomości, mogące wyrządzić istotną szkodę interesom *Państwa* Polskiego, bądź obniżyć powagę jego naczelných organów, podlega karze więzienia do lat 5 lub aresztu.

spreading fake news....

- So, listening at home, even with a neighbor – **not public dissemination**, BUT
- „**fake news coming from RFE**” – shared at a workplace – 2.5 years in prison (1952)
 - When annuled by Poland’s supreme court (in 2004!), one of the reasons was that „fake news” it was not!

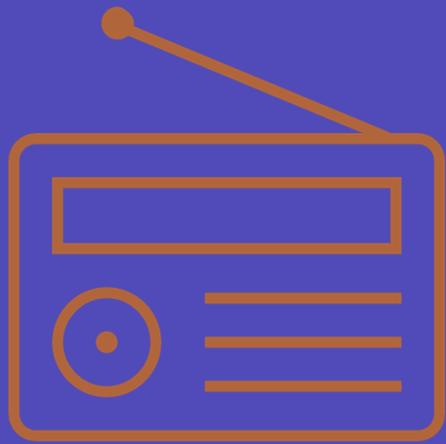
This law was annuled as of January 1 stycznia 1970

(based on act of April 19, 1969: Przepisy wprowadzające kodeks karny (art. VI p.4).

- Yet, **people believed** that any pretext would serve the authorities to punish them
- People believed **listening was dangerous** (discussed consequences: forced to join the party to show loyalty)

NEWS CHECK:

- Not needed. Polish media - lies.
 - Polish media - watched, listened with family - commenting live (ridiculing the content, exposing lies) - no trust
 - Curiosity about the West. In closed country.
 - "prawdę mówią" truth - believed without questioning motives.
- No way to verify either. Confront Polish with Outside.
- few respondents using „black-white” methaphor.



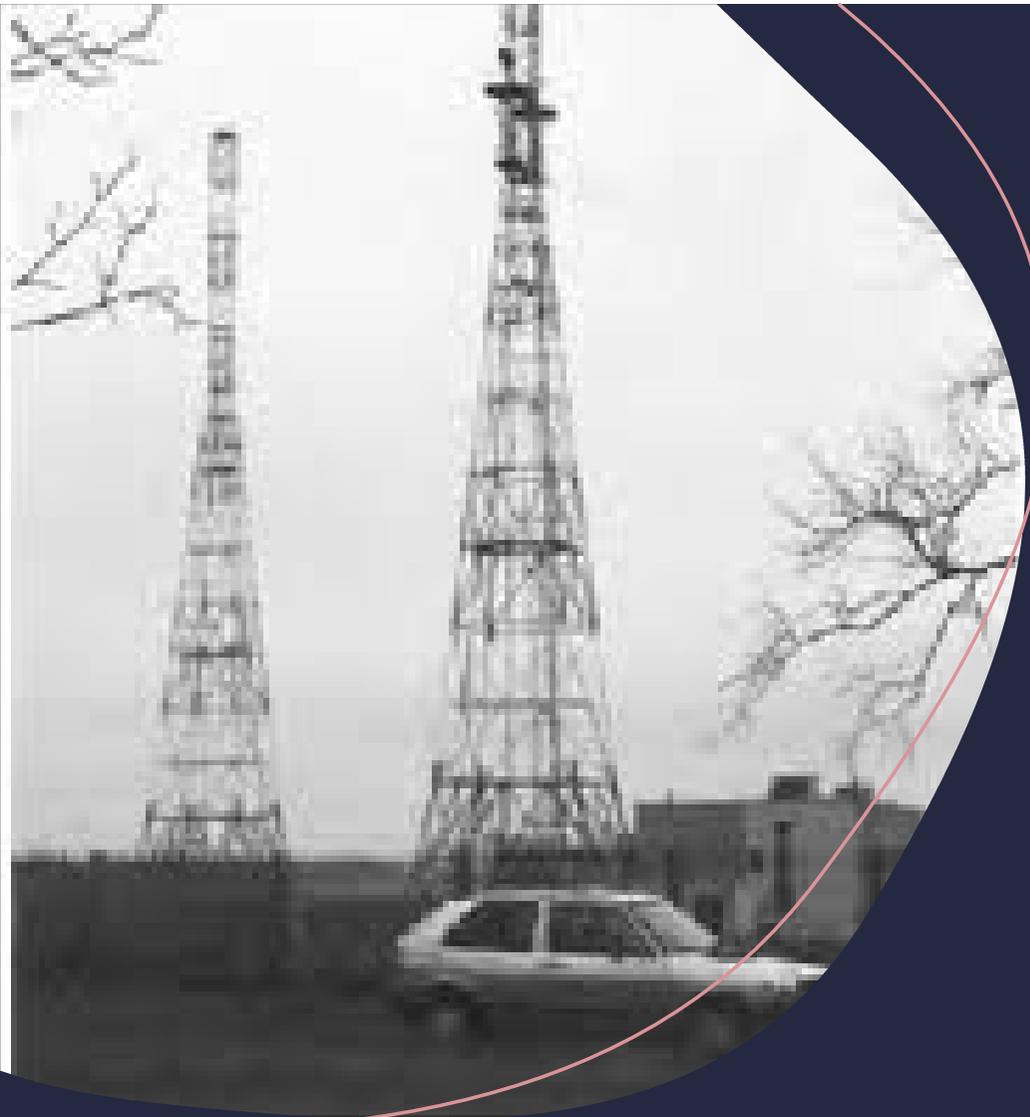
circumstances



- Who listened?
- Were they alone?
- Where did they listen?
- When, what part of the day?
- Was it easy to find the foreign radios on the radio dial? Which were easy to get?
- How did you identify a broadcaster/particular station?

Common patterns of listening

- Most say: evenings (8 pm), family gatherings (“celebration”)
- Knew it was an all-day program, broadcast repeated
- Radio receivers from abroad, purchased with RFE in mind
- No difficulties finding the station reported
- Almost all respondents mentioned jamming



JAMMING

- Jamming - feeling of doing something illegal, prompted difficulty
- Respondents did not complain much about, not discouraging from listening



content

- Most memorable broadcasts?
- Timing? Crisis?
- Were there any available printed versions of broadcasts (transcripts/reprints/reports)?
- Did you try to verify the information you heard from abroad? How?
- Whom did you tell/share the info with?
- Were there striking, observable differences among various broadcasters that one could reach on his/her radio?
- Did you consider news (free information) as the most important element of foreign broadcasts reaching your home?

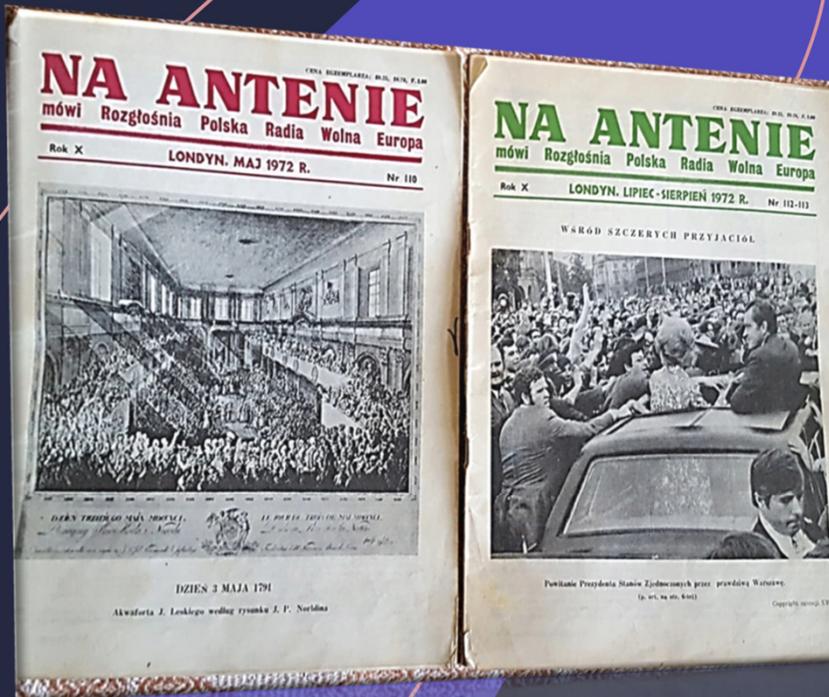
News - the most valuable part of the broadcasts (even the listening kids remember it). Key role, reason to listen: the news. History/culture – rarely mentioned (in passing).

Most memorable events (great diversity).

- Turning points: March 1968; December 1970; 1976 Radom, Ursus; Solidarność/ 1980; Martial Law 1981; Bydgoszcz strike 1988
- murder of Rev. Jerzy Popiełuszko - Election of Pope John Paul II
- Reagan's Christmas Message 1981 - Gorbachev in power
- Defector stories (Światło 1953, Czechowicz 1971, Kukliński 1981)
- History books, most notably Katyn

- Names remembered: Jan Nowak Jeziorański

transcripts



- Selected broadcasts „Na Antenie: mówi Rozgłośnia Polska Radia Wolna Europa” ([1963-1989](#))
- Not mentioned even once
- many respondents mentioned samizdat, underground press (by 1970s)
 - which was much more dangerous as compared to listening to the radio (easy to conceal, change the frequency when approached)

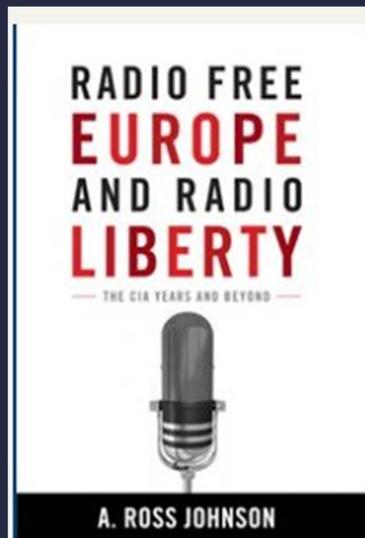
surroundings



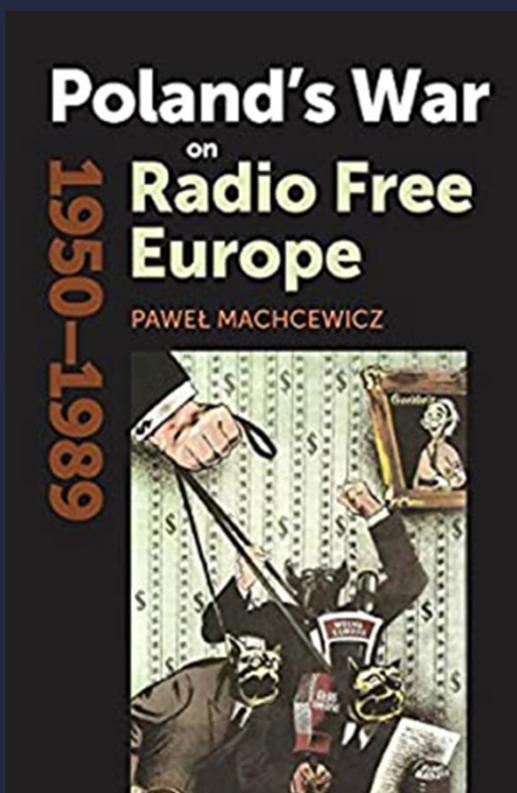
- Did anyone/anything interfere with the free reception of broadcasts from abroad?
- Was it common to listen to foreign broadcasts? Alternatively, was it a taboo to discuss?
- Was listening to foreign broadcasts persecuted? How?
- Were you – personally – afraid as you listened? Of what?
- Were you aware of your home government's actions to curb the foreign broadcasts?

“everyone listened but no one shared this fact”

- Universal phenomena – and yet:
 - Respondents did not know who else listened,
 - no one shared news about listening,
 - it was assumed since in private conversations people knew facts not shared by state media
- Sharing information only with few trusted people – most commonly
 - Intimate activity (few: family, friends, neighbors),
 - people want to learn - for themselves (about Poland, about the world)
 - Not disseminated widely. Everyone mentioned – they thought it was universal yet none of them shared it outside of close circle of friends.
- Common party members also listened – wanted to know, to compare the official party information line



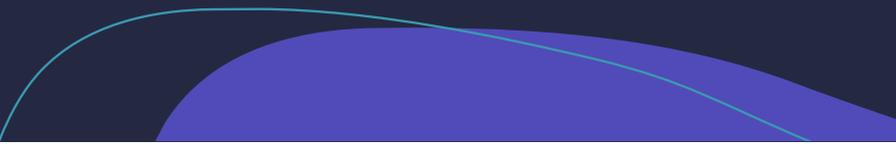
Fighting the radios?



- By fear? Not in the 1980s, people still afraid – memories (stories) of the 1950s/1960s
- Lessons of the earlier generation, fear of neighbors denunciations
- Fear for disclosure: kids at school; neighbors listening/denouncing

The image features a dark blue background with abstract shapes. An orange shape is in the top-left corner, and a blue shape is in the bottom-right corner. The word "consequences" is written in white serif font in the center-left area.

consequences

- 
- How did you use the information from the foreign radios?
 - Did it influence the way you perceived domestic media? How?
 - Did the broadcasts influence your political views, shaped/changes the ideas you had? How?
- 

Impact?

- Birth of opposition, facilitating information and voicing support from abroad
- Opposition activists (imprisoned, persecuted, neglected in the media)
 - Experiencing support by foreign reports re: their fate
 - given hope by the fact that their actions were not in vain
 - Encouraged to continue by their actions (strikes) given publicity from abroad
- References to the present – but from both sides. TVP-TVN “just like today” – the phrase means the same, yet the indication of what is white (truth) and what is black (lies) totally opposite.
- Some reported it had a profound impact on their political views (mostly by respondents who identified themselves as conservatives)
- others said it was all about getting the real (truthful) news, but the habit stayed with them to this day – they use multiple resources of news info, and remain proactive in how the news reaches them

COLD WAR BROADCASTING



Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

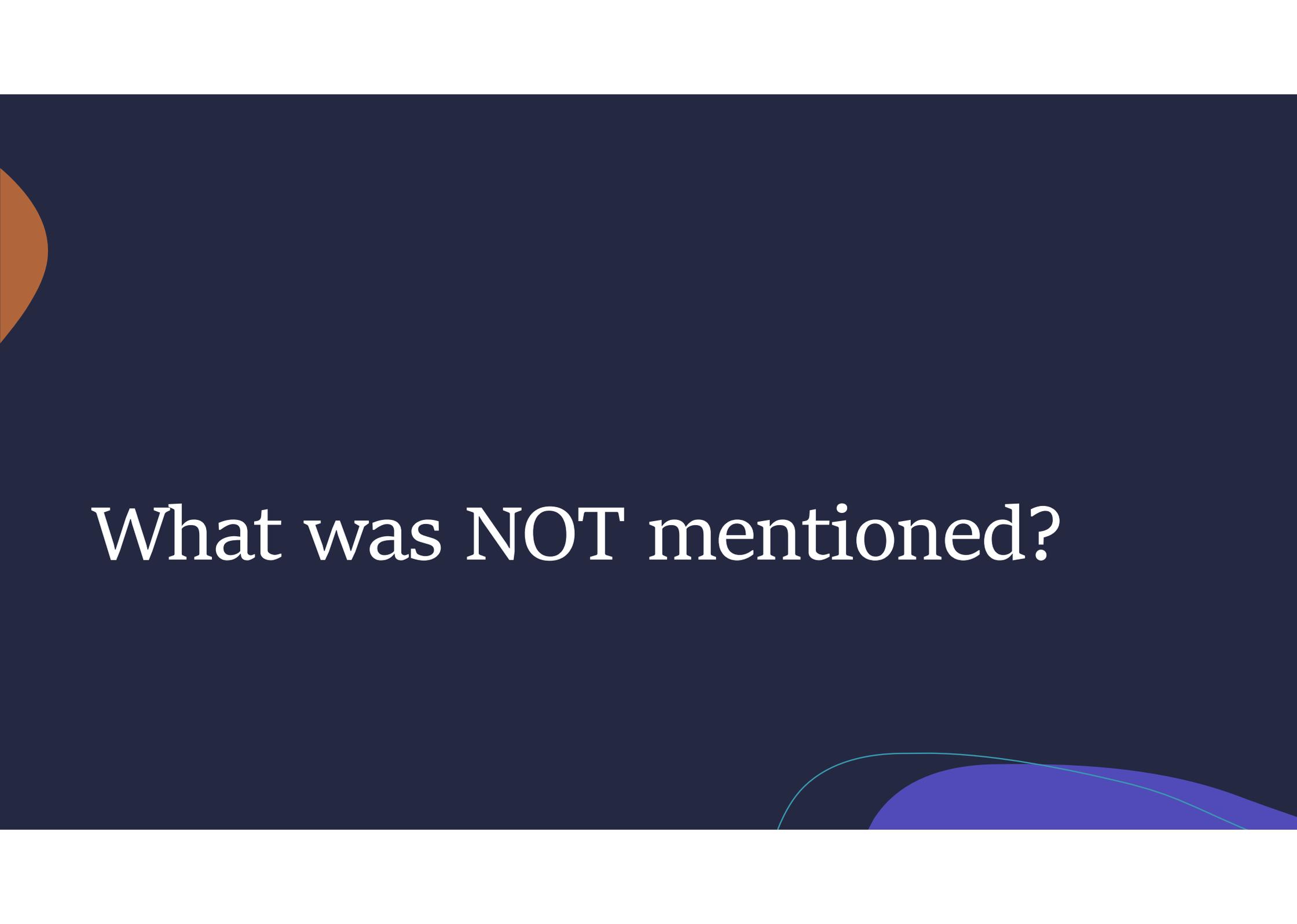
A Collection of Studies
and Documents

Edited by

A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta

Foreword by Timothy Garton Ash



The background is a solid dark blue. On the left side, there is a partial orange semi-circle. At the bottom right, there are decorative blue shapes, including a thin light blue arc and a larger, darker blue rounded shape.

What was NOT mentioned?



Little, or no mention on:

- US interest in broadcasting behind the iron curtain,
- broader Cold War context,
- Names of any exiles (notion of the exiles' role in the radios)



Part 2:

Media content
comparison



Students' selections of topics

1. Stalinism
2. Polish crises of 1956-1968-1970
3. Hungary 1956
4. Czechoslovakia 1968
5. Election of Pope John Paul II (1978)
+ visit to Poland (1979)
6. Martial Law, 1981
7. Murder of Father Popiełuszko, 1984
8. China in May-June 1989

Compared sources

- TV:
 - TVP1 (Dec. 1981)
 - Dziennik Telewizyjny (1989)
- Press:
 - Dziennik Bałtycki (1970; 1978)
 - Dziennik Małopolski (1953)
 - Dziennik Polski (1952-1953; 1956; 1968; 1978; 1979; 1984)
 - Dziennik Popularny (1978)
 - Echo dnia (1978; 1979)
 - Echo Krakowa (1978)
 - Gazeta Współczesna (1978)
 - Głos Wybrzeża (1970)
 - Słowo Ludu (1978)
 - Trybuna Ludu (1956; 1956; 1968;
 - Trybuna Robotnicza (1947, 1968, 1978, 1979)
 - Życie Literackie (1979)



STUDENTS' FINDINGS - general

- Opposite points of view (black-white); invasion/occupation versus brotherly help/defense (re: Czechoslovakia 1968)
- Opposite interpretation of events
- Different accents, focus points in the narrative (introduction of officials during Pope's first visit: church-state authorities)
- Timing. Delay in responding to crucial events (election of the Pope, Tiannanmen)

Student observations on attitudes

Western

- Represented the attitudes of the Polish people (in solidarity with the striking workers, patriotism)
- Reinforced Christian values (as Polish, patriotic)
- Emotional, engaged (election of John Paul II)
- Extensive commentary, rhetorics, more details
- „like a fresh air“

Polish state media

- Polish media – print the statements by the government, false interpretation of the events
- Silence by the Polish state media
- Propaganda (identify enemies)
- Disinformation, manipulation, identified lies
- Reprints of party papers, dry statements, basic facts (not all relevant info provided)
- „stuffy“ yoke of censorship

Dialog....

- Polish government hopes Pope John Paul II's visit will help unite the society
- RFE responds: it is desired because of the growing internal tensions
- Polish state media respond: there are no tensions

- RFE: Election of John Paul II; Polish print media by PZPR - silence (despite governmental press release), no photos of Karol Wojtyła
- RFE: enthusiasm; Polish press: states facts, later expression of pride and joy, soon: Polish Communists played a role in election of the Pope
- RFE: Polish media failed to report the election in time; Polish press: reserved, no attacks against the West, low key not to tarnish the prestige of the state, hoping for detente
- RFE: Communists claim they had a say in the election - ridiculed; see Polish media adjust to the mood of the Polish people; Polish state media adjust allow photos, special issue of Tygodnik Powszechny, express profound importance in country's history.

Dichotomy... (Martial Law)

Polish state media

- Situation is about to calm down,
- Martial law is necessary,
- Some people must be interned
- Dry, economic data

RFE

- There is nothing to prove that the situation is about to calm down
- Martial law is a war against the society
- Interned people are in poor condition
- More information about the common people

The Radio Preservation Task Force is working on multiple educational projects with archival and historical institutions. By identifying curricular goals as a part of the process of preservation, accessibility will encourage sustainable material appropriation of sound history.

Cold War Communication Project

<https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-plan/about-this-program/radio-preservation-task-force/current-projects/>