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RADIO IN SERVICE OF THE STATE PROPAGANDA DURING THE 1930'S, CASES OF POLAND, YUGOSLAVIA AND BULGARIA

ABSTRACT: *Based on primary sources and relevant literature in this study, the development of radio and its role in the state propaganda of Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria during the 1930's will be analyzed.*

Key words: *Radio, Propaganda, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria*

In comparative history, two or more historical phenomena are systematically studied for similarities and differences in order to contribute to their better description, explanation, and interpretation. Frequently, one looks into another culture, another country or another society in order to better understand one's own.¹ During the Interwar period, historical, cultural and economic development of Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe had many similarities and even the study of the latest national history synthesis of the three countries under review confirmed this fact.² The development of radio was one of the phenomena that certainly affirmed this trend.

Propaganda spread via radio broadcasting during the period in question and this had a significant advantage in comparison to propaganda spread by the

¹ HG. Haupt, J. Kocka (eds.), *Comparative and Transnational History, Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, (New York/Oxford, 2010); D. Cohen, M. O'Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (London, 2004); Cf. B. Z. Kedard (ed.) *Explorations in Comparative History* (Jerusalem, 2009); C. Ragin, *The comparative method. Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1987); *Uvod u komparativnu historiju* [Introduction to Comparative History], (Zagreb, 2004).

² C. Brzoza, A.L. Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918–1945* [History of Poland 1918–1945], (Cracow, 2006); P. Даскалов, *Българското общество I–II* [Bulgarian society, I–II], (Sofia, 2006);

press. It knew no geographical or state borders and it could be heard on different continents at the same time, where even the illiterate could understand. In addition, it had the indirect effect of making personal contact with the listener and there was also practically the unlimited possibility of broadcasting in other states since the jamming devices used at the time were quite primitive.³

The first regular radio broadcasts in Europe started in the first half of the 1920's. One of the first radio stations of this type was set up in the UK in 1922. It was the *British Broadcasting Company* (later *Corporation*), known as the *BBC*. This station, as well as the others founded afterwards, were associated with the territory of the mother country. The first international radio station was *Radio Holland*, which started broadcasting in 1927.⁴ This year was of immense significance since it was the year when the short wave broadcasting began, which made transmission to long distance possible.

During the 1930's, radio broadcasting made a significant step forward. In 1937, radio stations in the world were divided as follows: Asia 161 (8%), Africa 19 (1%), Australia 130 (7%), America 1.142 (62%) and Europe 408 (22%). When one considered the power of the aforementioned stations, a different picture emerged: Asia 579 kW (5%), Africa 118kw (1%), Australia 271kw (2%), America 3.423 (27%) and Europe 8.096 (65%).⁵ Clearly America had the highest number of radio stations, but in terms of its power and development, Europe was way ahead.

The radio broadcasting in the Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria started about the same time as in the other European countries. Radio Warsaw („Radio Warszawa“) started in 1926. One year earlier, the society for control of the radio was formed („Polskie Radio Sp.Akc“). Secondly, a radio station was formed in Cracow (1926). After that, several radio stations were formed: Katowice (1927), Poznan (1927), Vilnius (1928), Lwow (1930), Lodz (1931), Torun (1931), Warsaw II (1937), Baranowicze (1938) and the national radio network was created. In 1929, the Ministry for Post and Telegraph gave the aforementioned society a 20 year concession for the use of radio until 1949.

Home radio stations in Yugoslavia started broadcasting regular programs by the second half of the 1920's. This was first done by the radio station in Zagreb in 1926, whereas Radio Ljubljana started broadcasting two years later. Only in

³ First mass and efficient jamming of radio-broadcasts of foreign radio-stations was conducted by Germany during the Second World War. It was not completely successful, but it represented one of the first attempts of its kind, M. Oreč, *Sloboda informacija i propaganda* [Freedom of Information and Propaganda], (Belgrade, 1966), p. 190.

⁴ N.Cull, D.Culbert, D.Welch, *Propaganda and mass persuasion, A historical encyclopedia, 1500 to present*, (Santa Barbara, Denver/Oxford 2003), pp. 331–333.

⁵ S. Miszczak, *Historia radiofonii i telewizji w Polsce* [History of Radio and Television in Poland], (Warsaw, 1972), p. 147.

1929 did the capital get its own radio station. Radio Belgrade (Radio Beograd), which started its regular broadcasts on 24th March.

The development of radio broadcasting in Bulgaria was a few years behind development in Poland and Yugoslavia. One of the most important steps in the development of radio in Bulgaria was the creation of „Native Radio“ („Родно Радио“) in 1930. In the same year, regular broadcasts began for a couple of hours per day. Only in 1936 was the national radio network formed when Radio Stara Zagora (Стара Загора) and Radio Varna were introduced (Варна).

Jurisdiction over radio in these three countries belonged to, at least partially, the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephones or the local equivalents to that ministry. In Poland, radio started more as a private society, but over time, the state control of the radio grew. Initially, the state had only a 40% stake in the society for control of the radio. In 1935, that stake rose to 96%.⁶ That meant that during the mid 1930's, radio in Poland was completely under control of the ruling circle.

Jurisdiction over radio in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was handed to several different ministries during the 1930's. Radio was controlled by the Ministry for Post, Telegraph and Telephone before it was handed over to the Ministry of Civil Engineering from April 1929 until December 1930. The transfer of jurisdiction continued and from December 1930 until September 1935, radio was controlled by the Ministry of Traffic. Only after that period did radio return under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Post, Telegraph and Telephone and remained there until the occupation of the country.

The main legislative characteristic in the field of radio diffusion during this period in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia could be summarized as follows: a) Normal regulation of radio diffusion followed valid international conventions, but it was partial and this was confirmed by the fact that no integral laws on radio diffusion had been passed; b) According to its character, the normative acts passed in this period could be classified as: acts regulating relations between owners of radios and the State and acts regulating between the State and prospective owners and founders of radio stations; c) High levels of distrust and caution of the State towards new media – radio, where the State from being the leading promoter became its sole controller; d) Numerous restrictive state measures towards „subjects“ wanting to broadcast, but also listening to radio programs; e) Insufficient dealing with copyright problems.⁷

The Department for Radio-Broadcasting was established later in 1939 to complete the diverse tasks in relation to radio broadcasting within the Central Press-Bureau (CPB). This affected the standard division into three departments: Administrative, Informative and Publicist, prescribed by the Regulations on

⁶ *Polska Niepodległa* [Independent Poland], (Warsaw, 2008), p. 505.

⁷ M. Nikolic, *Radio u Srbiji 1924–1941* [Radio in Serbia 1924–1941], (Beograd, 2006), p. 25.

the work of 1931 and 1935. The new Department for Radio Broadcasting was divided into as many as ten sections.⁸ Understandably, the importance of radio broadcasting became much greater.

Between 1937 and 1939, the mature program concept was presented and this was „mature“ in every sense. This was designed by the first generation of creators who had been educated at the radio station and who clearly knew what could be done with radio. Since listeners of radio broadcasts were known, the author referred to a structured and differentiated auditorium in which target groups could be recognized. This „golden era“ of Radio Belgrade finished with nationalization that was an essential reflection of the international socio-political situation.⁹

In Bulgaria in the first article of the „Radio law“ (1935)¹⁰, it clearly stated that radio was the state’s monopoly and the state was the only one that was allowed to „build, control and use“ radio stations.¹¹ After that law in Bulgaria was passed, the situation in the radio industry developed as follows: a) Bulgarian Radio was the property of Ministry for Information and it was run by the ministry; b) Employees of the Radio were the state’s clerks; c) Ministry for Information created all programs, members and duties of the committees and also conducted pre-emptive censorship; d) In the Executive Committee, people could only enter if they were delegated by the government. In the Program Committee, they could enter independent intellectuals but only in consultative roles. Chief of this committee was delegated by the Prime Minister on the suggestion of the Ministry of Communication; e) Radio was financed by taxes on radio and from commercials. The finances were controlled by the Ministry of Communication.¹²

In the new regulation for the radio service from 1938, the Program Committee entered representatives from the following ministries: Ministry of Post and Telegraph, Ministry of War, Ministry of Education, Ministry Interior, Health Direction, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Commerce. Their mandates were for three years.¹³ As one could see, the state put radio directly under its influence and propaganda tasks became the main function of radio in Bulgaria. It was interesting to note that the system created in the mid 1930’s remained almost unchanged under the communist rule in Bulgaria after Second World War until 1990.¹⁴

⁸ Secretariat, Editing board for the domestic program, Editing board for foreign programs, Editing board of the news in foreign languages, Editing board for overseas programs, office of foreign news broadcasts, Radio telegraphic office, Technical office, Information office – reportage, Cultural propaganda and Music section. AY, Central Press-Bureau (38), folder 1.

⁹ Nikolic, *Radio u Srbij*, p. 91.

¹⁰ First law considering radio in Bulgaria was declared in 1927.

¹¹ *Държавен вестник* [State’s Journal] number 22 from 31. January 1935.

¹² Р. Чолаков, *Право на радио-телевизионните организации в България* [The regulation of radio-television organizations in Bulgaria], (Sofia–Wien, 2000), p. 26.

¹³ A. Nowosad, *Wladza i media w Bulgarii* [Government and media in Bulgaria], (Cracow, 2008), p. 232.

¹⁴ Чолаков, *Право на*, p. 28.

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During the 1930's, Bulgarian Radio was organized in five departments: 1) Music department; 2) Educational and department 3) Professional and Economic department 4) Informational Department; 5) Propaganda Department. The departments were divided into the sections.¹⁵ At first glance, the extensive organization of Bulgarian radio was in reality created with very few experts and employees and this will be discussed in more detail later.

In general, the 1930's were the period of rapid development of radio. The following table illustrated the number of radios in the World and more importantly, the number of radios per thousand habitants in each country:

Number of radios in the World 1936–1938

State	1936 (in thousands)	1937 (in thousands)	1938 (in thousands)	On thousand habitants (1938)
United States	22.500	24.269	–	190
Danmark	609	652	704	190
England	7.403	7.961	8.480	182
Sweden	834	944	–	151
Germany	7.193	8.168	9.087	136
Netherlands	947	989	1.072	124
Belgium	746	890	1.018	123
Switzerland	418	464	504	122
Norway	189	240	305	107
France	2.627	3.219	4.164	99
Austria	537	594	620	92
Czechoslovakia	848	928	1.044	68
Latvia	82	96	114	59
Hungary	353	365	383	43
Japan	2.372	2.711	–	39
Poland	492	677	861	26
Lithuania	27	35	48	19
Italy	550	625	795	18
Romania	127	163	216	12
Yugoslavia	80	74	154	11
Bulgaria	–	40	62	7

**Maly rocznik statystyczny 1938* [Concise Statistical Yearbook for 1938], (Warsaw 1938), p. 338.

**For the countries with missing data for 1938. calculations were made for 1937.

¹⁵ Nowosad, *Wladza i media*, p. 233.

Of three countries under review, Poland had the most developed radio service. The power of Polish radio station grew significantly over the years. The following table illustrated the situation at the beginning of the World War II:

Power of the Polish radio stations 31st August 1939¹⁶

Radio station (in alphabetic order)	Power	Range
Baranowicze	50 kw	120 km
Katowice	50 kw	160 km
Cracow	10 kw	45 km
Lodz	10 kw	45 km
Lwow	50 kw	100 km
Poznan	50 kw	100 km
Torun	24 kw	60 km
Warsaw I	120 kw	300 km
Warsaw II	10 kw	45 km
Vilnius	50 kw	140 km

As one could see, the most powerful radio station was in the capital city of Poland Warsaw with a range of 300 kilometres. It was also interesting to note the station that was built in 1938 in Baranowicze near the border with the USSR. Obviously, this station was built to neutralize strong Soviet propaganda in the area at the time.

With reference to the growth of the total power of Polish radio stations, one could see the following table:

¹⁶ Miszczak, *Historia radiofonii*, p. 142.

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Total Power of the Polish Radio Stations 1926–1938

Year	Number of Stations	Total Power
1926	1	10,0 kw
1927	4	28,3 kw
1928	5	28,8 kw
1929	5	28,8 kw
1930	7	31,8 kw
1931	7	168,8 kw
1932	7	168,8 kw
1933	7	169.3 kw
1934	7	183,8 kw
1935	8	207,8 kw
1936	8	275,8 kw
1937	9	294,0 kw
1938	10	378,0 kw

*Data as at 31st December of the previous year¹⁷

The development of radio broadcasting throughout the 1930's in these two Balkan countries was slow and noticeably lagged behind the main European developments of the time. Very few radio stations existed in the Balkans during this period (four in Yugoslavia and three in Bulgaria) and the ones that did exist had a very weak transmission capability. The number of individuals who owned a radio was also quite low (during 1936, approximately 85,000 in Yugoslavia and approximately 10,000 in Bulgaria) with most of these people living in the cities.¹⁸

Nevertheless, there was a growing tendency towards the use of radio. The number of radio subscribers grew considerably in Yugoslavia as the range and influence of the radio stations became greater. The situation in Bulgaria was rather similar. Sofia built a radio station with a transmission power in the region of the 100 kW level and the number of subscribers grew to more than 90.000 in 1940.

Nevertheless, according to statistics released in 1938, both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were listed amongst the lowest of all the European countries in terms of radio usage. For example, Bulgaria had only seven radios per 1000 citizens and Yugoslavia had eleven. The only countries that were behind them at this time were Greece and Turkey with 4 and 3 radios per 1,000 inhabitants

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁸ Data taken from the periodical *Радио Београд* [Radio Belgrade] of 20 September 1936.

respectively. The Third country under review Poland was higher, with 26 radios per 1000 inhabitants, higher than its neighbor Romania (12) and even Italy, but lower than Hungary (43) or Austria (92).

The radio program in these countries mainly consisted of music, but news formed a significant part of the radio output. In Poland during the 1930's, radio output roughly consisted of 40% news and 60% music. The news aspect of radio was one of its key functions. According to data, the „word“ radio program of Polish radio (main and local) in 1937 consisted of 56.5% news and only 16.6% of radio was devoted to literature.¹⁹

Due to an increasingly developed radio network, the number of the employees working in Polish radio grew during the 1930's. In 1929, there were 180 employees, at the beginning of 1936, 790 and in June 1939, there were 1,456 employees.²⁰

In Bulgaria, music played a more significant part in the radio programs. During 1939, music had a share of 82% of total radio output while lectures had only 9.5% and news 5.2%.²¹ Bulgarian documents provided us with interesting social breakdowns of radio listeners. During 1938, the biggest group of radio listeners were clerks (33.7%) followed by free professions (29.1%) and merchants (22.4%). The majority of the listeners were in the cities, one third of the total number came from Sofia alone. In 1939, Sofia had 18,802 out of a total of 56,884 radio owners.²² The radio owners outside Sofia were mainly in the other major cities in Bulgaria while the use of radio remained rare in the villages during the period under review.

The ruling circles in Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria realized the importance of radio as a tool for the state's propaganda and during the mid 1930's, this became increasingly clear. Judging from the aforementioned indicators, it was clear that radio broadcasting in Yugoslavia, at the time of Milan Stojadinovic's Government coming into power in 1935 was at a very low level. Later in this study, the concrete Government measures in the field of radio broadcasting will be discussed and their achievements will be evaluated in greater detail. Stojadinovic was a politician who paid a lot of attention to propaganda and this was also manifested in this field. As early as the start of 1936, in a letter to a minister in charge, he stated his plans in the field of radio broadcasting. These plans involved setting up a new radio station, as well as enhancing its efficiency in the field of propaganda. Due to its exceptional importance, it was important to quote

¹⁹ Classical music only took 29% of the music part of the program. Dominant was „easy going“ music 67% while the dance music had only 4% of the share. Miszczak, *Historia radiofonii*, p. 171.

²⁰ Miszczak, *Historia radiofonii*, p. 83.

²¹ Димитров, *История на радиото в България* [History of Radiofony in Bulgaria], II, (Sofia, 1994), p. 128.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.

a part of the letter, which best summed up the place and importance meant by Stojadinovic for radio broadcasting in spreading the Government propaganda. In the letter, the following was stated: „Radio has played an immense role in state and foreign affairs, as well as in the social life of different countries, especially in the last few years. Therefore, great attention is paid to it in the countries with the highest level of culture as to a first-rate means of propaganda. It beats all the other means for spreading propaganda when it comes to speed, clarity and availability of the program. National propaganda uses all means available in far more powerful countries. It is also needed in our country to pay more attention to radio-broadcasting, both as an unequalled means of spreading propaganda and as a media that can play the role which no-one else can successfully play in our lives. Radio-broadcasting is not divided into spheres due to this or that alphabet or dialect – it is available to everyone in the most effective way. The Belgrade Radio-station has always met the needs of the state and of the national propaganda, but these needs grow on a daily basis and the Belgrade Radio-station cannot satisfy them in a way which a radio station, organized by the Central Press-Bureau of the Council of Ministers, could.“²³

The realization of the aforementioned plans was initiated by forming the Short-Wave Radio-Station or Radio Belgrade II at the beginning of March 1936. This station was built by the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone. However, the Central Press-Bureau was exclusively in charge of this program. Its original strength was 0.25 kW, but it was strengthened to 1 kW after only two weeks.

The main goal of the newly established radio-station was to promote the Government's politics, both home and abroad. The main part of the program of the Short-Wave Radio-Station was the news, which was also broadcasted in foreign languages. Apart from the political news, there were also lectures on Yugoslav culture, its natural beauties, economy and trade. The following table gave us an insight into the degree to which propaganda activity was intensified by setting up this radio-station:

News broadcasts in the program of radio-stations (in hours per year)

Radio-station	1935	1936	1937	1938
Belgrade	280	301	277	274
Zagreb	219	275	242	283
Ljubljana	132	140	88	130
Short-Wave Radio-Station	0	1020	1371	1240
TOTAL	631	1736	1978	1927

*Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1934–1939).

²³ AY, 38-116, The Letter of Milan Stojadinovic to the Minister of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, Branko Kaludjercic of 18 January 1936.

As many as 1,100 hours of additional news was broadcast, almost 300% more in 1936 than in 1935. This clearly demonstrated the endeavors and tendencies of the Government. Concrete achievements in this field resulted in additional efforts, as well as additional finance for this purpose.²⁴ In the budget for 1936/1937, five million dollars were allocated for the improvement of radio broadcasting.²⁵

Two Belgrade radio-stations broadcasted news from 7 am to 11 pm. At the Short-Wave Radio-Station, attention was paid to scheduling the news hours so that they were not broadcasted at the same time as those on Radio Belgrade. This created the feeling in which radio news from Belgrade was broadcast almost every hour and where it was practically „prepared“ in one center. The broadcast news had to be thoroughly checked in this case before it went onto the radio airwaves. Firstly, the news was gathered from reports from the daily press and from the CPB, i.e. from the materials that had already been censored. Afterwards, before the news was read by a presenter, they were „purified“ and adjusted“ to the instructions once again. Apart from the news in Serbo-Croatian, the Short-Wave Radio-Station also broadcast news in Hungarian, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian, French, German and English.²⁶

A report in 1936 showed that in the period from March 1936 to 31 December 1936, over 17,000 pages of news were read in nine different languages.²⁷ Regarding these details, there was no doubt that the top people of the CPB understood the importance of this media and that they considered its propagandistic possibilities very seriously. Broadcasting news in other languages was, above all, meant for Yugoslav citizens, but a certain level of exerting influence abroad was also considered important.

The regime also paid a lot of attention to the popularization of the radio station itself. In the letter sent to correspondents in May 1936, Lukovic asked them to write as much as possible about the Short-Wave Radio-Station and its work in the respective fields. Certain progress in the field of radio broadcasting in the period of the Government of Milan Stojadinovic was noticeable when it also came to the number of subscribers.

These increased from 66,504 in 1934 to 135,132 in 1938 and despite this development, new possibilities for broadening the field of operations were also

²⁴ Loans that Stojadinovic took out to set up the new Short-Wave Radio-Station resulted in an increase of the set budget for 1938/39 by 553.728 dinars, AY, 38-116, The Letter of M. Stojadinovic sent to D.Letica, The Minister Finances. See also: Б. Симић, *Пропаганда Милана Стојадиновића* [Milan Stojadinovic's Propaganda], (Belgrade, 2007), p. 150.

²⁵ AY, 38-116. The Letter of Milan Stojadinovic to the Minister of Post Offices, Telegraphy and Telephoning, Branko Kaludjercic of 28 May 1937.

²⁶ Б. Симић, *Пропаганда*, p. 153.

²⁷ The Central Press-Bureau, Report on the work of CPB for the year 1936, p. 56.

investigated. This was reflected in the letter of Kosta Lukovic, which was sent to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, in which he urged that the restaurants, cafes and holiday resorts provided the highest possible publicity to the Short-Wave Radio-Station. Furthermore, the correspondents were told that 'they needed radios for reception of short waves and not to broadcast programs of propaganda radio stations from countries with unfavorable attitudes towards Yugoslavia as it would lead them to confrontation with the authorities, who were asked to prevent broadcasting of this kind of program.'²⁸

In the reports of the correspondents of the CPB from Split, one could read that the inhabitants generally „did not care about that program“ and that newspapers refused to publish the programs of the radio stations.²⁹ The problems with disinterest and resistance to the broadcasts of the Short-Wave Radio-Station remained until the end of the aforementioned period, although the possibility of its reception was at a satisfactory level. In addition, the problem of availability of propaganda arose and it could not be truly effective as everything that came from Belgrade was rejected in some regions.

Realizing the importance of this media, Stojadinovic put considerable efforts into the development of radiophony in Yugoslavia. During his government, the capacity of Radio Belgrade was raised from 2.5 to 20 kilowatts. A new short-frequency radio station was also founded and it began broadcasting at the beginning of March 1936 and this became the center of the radio propaganda.³⁰

The task of monitoring and editing its radio programs was taken over by CPB and throughout 1937, the broadcasting for abroad was initiated and starting from 1938, this became a regular activity. The main task of the short-frequency radio station was broadcasting the news. This radio station practically became the one to which all the others were subordinated when it came to political news.

Considering the fact that this news was created „in the CPB's kitchen“, their main aim was to serve, above all, the interests of the ruling Party and its president. Notwithstanding the advancement of the radio broadcasting in Yugoslavia, it was still listed amongst the lowest of all the European countries in this field of advancement, with one radio per more than 100 people. The only countries that lagged behind Yugoslavia in this field were Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria (the last one only regarding the number of the subscribers).

The ruling circles in Poland had the same opinion about radio and its propaganda role. One introduction in the brochure from 1939 was entitled „Radio

²⁸ AY, 38-116, The Letter of Kosta Lukovic to the Minister of Trade and Industry. See also: B. Симић, *Пропаганда*, p. 154.

²⁹ AY, 38-11, The report of the correspondent of the CPB from Split of 6 March 1936.

³⁰ See: B. Simic, 'Milan Stojadinovic i razvoj radiofonije u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji' 1935–1939 [Milan Stojadinovic and the Development of Radiophonica in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1935–1939] *Tokovi Istorije* 1-2/2006, pp. 146–156.

in Service of the State and People“.

This stated clearly that: „Broadcasting is an organism which must remain in the service of nation and state. Observing the development of the radio world, it is clear that with the rapid increase in importance and influence of radio, privately run broadcasting companies are being taken over in many countries by the state, and others are closely controlled by them. The organization of the modern state in the period, in which the radio was considered solely for entertainment, quite expensive and only available to wealthy people, must be considered as history. Over the years, the number of radios in terms of subscribers grew and in proportion to the decreasing price of radios, broadcasting has become more influential in society and is therefore responsible to shaping the psyche, morality and division of our citizens. It is also responsible for and exploiting the dynamics of development of nations. Radio microphones have become an indispensable means of making direct contact with the masses of humans, impacting on their mood, directing their actions, mobilizing public opinion with accurate and timely information and informing the public about what is happening in the country and the world.“³¹

The two most important officials in the second half of the 1930's were the Polish President Moscicki (Ignacy Mościcki, 1 June 1926 – 30 September 1939) and Marshal Rydz-Smigly (Edward Rydz-Śmigły) and they addressed the nation by radio on numerous occasions. During the period between 1935 and 1938, the President made 12 public speeches on national radio whilst the Marshal made 20.³² Half of the president's speeches were related to the propaganda lectures about the late Marshal Pilsudski (6 of 12). The second marshal spoke about various issues such as public, military and local holidays and it was possible that radio in the last years of Interwar Poland leaned more towards Marshal Pilsudski rather than the president. For example, in October 1938, his speeches were transmitted live on four occasions.³³

On Polish radio, the news was broadcast three times per day until 1937 when this was increased to four times per day. In most cases, the sources of information were from Polish Telegraph Agency (PAT) and pro-government newspapers. The most important one was „Dziennik Wieczorny“ (Evening News) and they broadcasted at 20:45 each night. In the late 1930's, there were roughly 200 hours of news for one year.³⁴

At the time, work on radio propaganda in Poland had three main directions: 1) propaganda of the whole radio program; 2) development of radiophony in the country and increasing the number of megaphones; 3) development of short wave radio stations. After the long explanation of how a certain part of

³¹ *Radio w Polsce w latach 1935–1938* [Radio in Poland 1935–1939], (Warsaw 1938), p. 7.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 5–8.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

the program should be presented, the author of the document concluded: „The Polish radio stream has a different spirit. All employees from the janitor up to the managerial staff must have the only thought that they should work with enthusiasm and with a willingness and understanding of the role they should play in the State Radio“.³⁵

In 1939, when the outbreak and fear of war were eminent, leading circles in Poland expressed the need for the unification of radio programs. A document made in the Ministry of War set four main objectives: 1) Codification of the radio programs; 2) Control of an inferiority complex and restoration of historical traditions; 3) The struggle with the problem of life (individual and national); 4) The action primarily determined the character. Knowledge and talent were prerequisites, but not sufficient.³⁶ It was obvious that new tasks were aimed to strengthen the moral of the Polish people and as the main objective; radio was considered a national defense.

Initially, radio in Bulgaria was understood as a tool with commercial use, but in the mid 1930's, it became an instrument for education and state propaganda. Even in 1934, the newspaper „Черно Море“ (Black Sea) provided the information that key representatives of state propaganda, Penchev Petko, the head of propaganda institution Directorate for Social Renewal (further on *Renewal*) and chiefs of departments Polyanov and Kulishev, needed to make the decision to use radio as the main instrument for „national propaganda“. Later that year, a more developed plan was published in the semi-official government newspaper „Нови Дни“ (New Days). The article was entitled „The Radio and the New State“ and it began with the assumption of complete control over radio by the state.³⁷

The propaganda offensive in radio area began with the *Renewal*, which was created in 1934. In November 1934, the editor of Radio Sofia was named chief of radio propaganda. With this move, The *Renewal* took complete control over radio. From May until November 1934, 45 lectures were delivered by ministers and other important officials at Radio Sofia.³⁸ In the second half of that year, the number of lectures increased significantly. There were 250 lectures relating to the ideology of new the state as well as the government's measures, reforms and successes. Twenty-two of these lectures were delivered by either the Prime Minister or by members of his cabinet.³⁹ In the same document, the new

³⁵ Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), Gabinet Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych, I 300.1.531, document entitled „Wytyczne propagandy Polskiego Radia“ [Guidelines for the propaganda of the Polish Radio] from 4. VI 1938.

³⁶ CAW, Gabinet Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych, I 300.1.531, document entitled „Projekty do programu letniego“ [Projects for the summer program] from 16. II 1939.

³⁷ Димитров, *История на радиото*, II, pp. 124–125.

³⁸ Централен Държавен исторически архив (CDA), fond 284k, description 3, folder 42/51, Article by Petar Popzlatev, chief of *Renewal*.

³⁹ Ibid, 52.

Renewal director Popzlatev stated about the future role of radio: „it (radio) will influence the spiritual and the material values which the Bulgarian nation has and this will be accepted by everyone“.⁴⁰ Most of the information for Bulgarian radio was gathered from the domestic press and this was also the case for Poland and Yugoslavia.

Another significant step in the development of radio was to organize a radio program for the American continent. In 1937, a radio program was broadcast for North America via Holland in Yugoslavia, and at the beginning of 1938, this became a regular practice as this program was primarily meant for emigrants. The first show of this type was broadcast at night between 31 March and 1 April and this program lasted for an hour and fifteen minutes with the transmission controlled by The *Philips* company. The opening speech to the country during the first broadcast was delivered by the Prime Minister Stojadinovic himself „to whom we have to be grateful for this connection through the universe“.⁴¹ In the first months of 1937 when program was broadcast twice per month, introductory lectures were mainly delivered by ministers and other respected individuals.⁴² An important part of the program was „the news from the beloved homeland“. This aimed to inform our emigrants of the situation back home and the results that the Government had achieved. They stressed the great results that had been accomplished and Stojadinovic was depicted as a democrat with a Western emphasis and as the main implementer of an economic plan, similar to that in America. Furthermore, the dominant part of this overseas program was the broadcasts with cultural and music content. They were, of course, focused on news about the „faraway“ mother land. The result was that this program could be followed all over the world.

In October 1937, Polish radio began to transmit its programs that were accepted, even in the Americas. Broadcasting usually started at 18:00 and that specific program lasted 2 hours per day, except on Saturday and Sunday when it lasted for 3 hours. In September 1938, two more Short wave stations were set up and some South American countries were able to get a signal for Polish radio. The main recipients of transmissions were Polish emigrants throughout Europe, United States and Brazil. As one could conclude, based on available sources, the radio service in Bulgaria, during the interwar period, could not reach the same level for broadcasting its radio programs to the other continents, as Poland.

As one could see during the mid 1930's, this was the period when, in all three countries, the ruling circles took strong control over the running of radio.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 54.

⁴¹ A part of the text read by a presenter directly before the Prime Minister's speech.

⁴² After Stojadinovic, the guests were the Minister of the Interior, Anton Korosec, the President of the Senate, Zelimir Mazuranic, a Minister without portfolio, Miha Krek and the man presiding at the Parliament Stevan Ciric.

To do so, they had to remove all the „subversive“ elements. By taking a dominant position in the country in the field of radio-broadcasting, the CPB and the Short-Wave Radio-Station also started preparing news for Radio Belgrade. It was observed that „suspicious elements“ dominated Radio Belgrade and that control over it „proved to be insufficient“. It was estimated that its director Kalafatovic „belonged to opposition circles“ and that the director of program Veljko Petrovic „was not fully committed to the state and national political course“ and that the editor in chief of the musical program Vukdragovic had „leftist tendencies“.⁴³

Unlike the Belgrade radio-station, the one in Ljubljana was controlled by *Prosvetna zveza*, the central Slovenian educational association. The head of this society was the university professor Franc Lukman who was also a close friend of Korosec. The other members were also on the political course of JRZ so one could conclude that „the radio station in Ljubljana was in quite safe hands and that the Government could, by all accounts, count on it in respect of all the issues“.⁴⁴ This information was also indicative of the fact that in Drava Banovina, the JRZ had undisputed control, especially when it came to the Slovenian aspect of the overall operation.

After the state gained a 96% stake of radio in Poland, it was clearly time for a change in its management structure. The head of Polish radio became *Sanacja* with its prominent members Roman Starzynski (1935–1938)⁴⁵ and Kondrad Libicki (1938–1939). The program director became Dr. Piotr Gorecki, former director of the PAT and he was the man who knew how to inform the public. Other changes were the positions of secretary general and administrative director⁴⁶ so one could safely conclude that in the mid 1930's; the state control over the radio was complete. Radio now became the main instrument in the state's propaganda program.

The number of the employees in Radio Sofia had also grown during this time. In 1936, there were only 22 employees, but in 1941, this figure grew to 99.⁴⁷ Until the outbreak of World War II, Radio Sofia had three directors: Jordan Stubel

⁴³ AY, The Collection of Documents of Milan Stojadinovic (37), folder 75. This consisted of a short report on radio-stations of April 1938 which was made by Bogdanovic (possibly Bosko Bogdanovic, who was, for a while, the deputy in charge, and later, he was the successor of Lukovic on the function of the Chief of the CPB).

⁴⁴ AY, 37-75/537, Short report on radio-stations, appendix to the sent report.

⁴⁵ Roman Starzyński (11.IV 1890 – 5.VI 1938) was the older brother of Warsaw's major. He finished his studies at the University of Cracow. In the First World War, he was ensign. Starzynski stayed in the Military service until 1929 when he took up a position of PAT's director. From 1933, he was chief of staff for the Ministry for Post and Telegraph. As well as being Polish radio director, he was also a member of the International Radiophony Union and its budget commission. He wrote several monographs about military and telegraph agencies.

⁴⁶ Miszczak, *Historia radiofonii*, pp. 82–83.

⁴⁷ Димитров, История на радиото..., II, p. 55–58.

(Иордан Стубел), Sirak Sirakov (Сирак Сираков) and Konstantin Konstantinov (Константин Константинов). The most prominent one was Sirakov who remained in his high position until his death in March 1943. A man of many talents, Sirakov was the one of the key people responsible for the development of radio in Bulgaria.⁴⁸

From 1935 to 1939, the number of listeners more than quadrupled, from 11,000 to around 50,000. Income from radio was more than 12 million levas. According to the propaganda publications dedicated to the K joseivanov government, the ruling circles were happy to make radio „one of the most important institutions for propaganda and national culture“.⁴⁹

Another important novelty which took propaganda to a higher level was the introduction of live broadcasts. Throughout this period in Yugoslavia, different events had live broadcasts – Sokol rallies⁵⁰, tennis matches, eulogy for Nikola Pasic, the rallies of the party in power, etc. The first broadcast of the JRZ rally was in Skopje on the occasion of Stojadinovic’s visit to Vardar Banovina in the summer of 1936. The number of rallies and Prime Minister’s speeches broadcast grew rapidly in 1938, especially during the pre-election campaign.⁵¹

In the second half of the 1930’s, the number of live transmissions on Polish radio increased rapidly. Events on national holidays like the military parade on Constitutional day (Uchwalenie Konstytucji Trzeciego Maja) on 3rd May and Independence (Narodowe Święto Niepodległości) Day on 11th November were seen as the most important. One of the most important from the government’s propaganda point of view was the live transmission of the official Rydz-Smygli becoming a marshal in November 1936.

The number of live transmissions in 1937 was 285 (without sport events) which added up to 136 hours in total. With 82 sports events being transmitted live, Polish radio reached a level of one live transmission per day, which was very advanced in comparison to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.⁵² The first live transmission (outside the studio) in Bulgaria was in 1931⁵³ and those kinds of events were pretty rare in Bulgaria. Radio in Bulgaria was mainly focused on lectures that were delivered inside a studio by prominent government members and pro-government journalists.

⁴⁸ More about Skitnik’s life and work see: Кръстев, К., *Сирак Скитник, Човекът, поетът, художникът, театралът* (Sirak Skitnik, Man, Poet, Artist, Actor), (Sofia, 1974).

⁴⁹ И. Минчев, *Управление на творчество и дела* [Government of construction and deeds], (Sofia, 1939), p. 231.

⁵⁰ Form of mass physical activity practiced in the country with the strong Yugoslavian character.

⁵¹ The last pre-election rally in Belgrade on 9 December 1938 was broadcast by all four radio-stations.

⁵² *Radio w Polsce*, p. 97.

⁵³ It was a live transmission of a celebration for the Day of Bulgarian Revival. Professor Zlatarov and general Kratunkov addressed an audience.

As one could see earlier, radio was poorly developed in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, but this was more advanced in Poland. There were many differing reasons for the insufficient development of radio broadcasting in both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Apart from the small number of radios in both countries, one could perhaps mention the high price of radios, the insufficient electrification of these countries and the lack of skilled personnel available. The first two factors were a result of insufficient radio development and the financial hardship that most inhabitants had to endure in both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The lack of skilled personnel led to an inappropriate use of available technology and enormous repair costs.

Bearing in mind all these problems, people from Radio Belgrade organized a special „autocar“ during the summer, which travelled around the provincial towns to spread the word about radio broadcasting. This was purposefully meant to increase the number of listeners through practical discussions „on the field“, collecting information and improving working conditions. During 1938, places in Sumadija and Vojvodina were visited.⁵⁴

Polish radio also undertook radical measures to increase the popularity of radio. In the second half of the 1930's, around 100,000 popular brochures were delivered to people throughout the country. The titles of those brochures were: „How to put together a radio“, „How to set up a radio“ and „How to use a radio“. ⁵⁵ The brochures were well illustrated and easily written for the mass population. As in the Yugoslav case, there were also special „propaganda cars“ involved.

In Bulgaria, those actions were not particularly well developed but one could find some brochures like „What is the radio“ („Какво нещо е радиото“) by Svetozar Preneverov. Judging by his son's testimony, Preneverov gave many interviews and had conversations with the different social groups with the purpose of convincing them that „radio in Bulgaria was reality“. ⁵⁶

It was important to mention that the radio industry was profitable for governments. The income of Polish radio in 1937 was 17,127,024 zlotys and costs were 14,745,830 zlotys, thus the profit was 2,381,194 zlotys. ⁵⁷ The majority of that income was raised by taxes paid by the listeners and only a small portion was raised from advertisements. ⁵⁸ The income of radio service in Bulgaria was significant and growing: in 1934, this was 3,060,029 levas, in 1936, this was 6,747,819 levas and in 1938, 15,257,524 levas. During the war years, income

⁵⁴ *Radio Beograd*, July-August of 1938.

⁵⁵ *Radio w Polsce*, p. 135.

⁵⁶ Димитров, *История на радиото*, II, p. 100.

⁵⁷ All data was taken for fiscal year beginning from 1 April until 31 March of following year. Miszczyk, *Historia radiofonii*, p. 82.

⁵⁸ For example in 1930. Taxes brought 5,270,220 and commercials only 120,543 zlotys. M.J. Kwiatkowski, *To juz historia* [That's already history], (Warsaw, 1975), p. 109.

continued to grow and in 1941, this was more than 35 million levas.⁵⁹ After the outbreak of war, the radio stations in Yugoslavia and Poland were either destroyed or used in servicing the invading forces. Radio in Bulgaria continued to serve state propaganda and new war objectives.

As one could see, the mid 1930's in Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was a period of real transformation of the radio as a medium of state propaganda. Even with its slow development, in comparison to some European countries, radio was a powerful tool in the hands of the ruling circles in Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

Резиме

Мр Бојан Симић

Радио у служби државне пропаганде током 30-их година 20. века. Случајеви Пољске, Југославије и Бугарске

Кључне речи: Радио, пропаганда, Пољска, Југославија, Бугарска

У раду се говори о развоју радиофоније у Пољској, Југославији и Бугарској током тридесетих година XX века и њеној употреби у служби државне и партијске пропаганде. Почетак развоја радиофоније у поменути државама се поклапа са европским и светским тенденцијама, али је њихов развој био успорен добрим делом и због компликоване економске ситуације. Владајући кругови у све три земље брзо су схватили значај радија као тада модерног средства пропаганде. Током тридесетих година улагана су значајна материјална средства у његову модернизацију, подизане су нове радио станице и појачавана снага и капацитет постојећих. Број власника апарата и слушалаца константно је растао из године у годину, али су и поред тога три државе остале у доњем делу европске лествице. Владе у Пољској, Југославији и Бугарској покушавале су да домаћу радио службу потпуно потчине својим интересима и плановима. Радио се фактички нашао у државном власништву, из уредништава станица су уклањани неподобни и непослушни. Истраживање је показало да је у другој половини тридесетих година XX века радио био значајно средство пропаганде и за владајуће режиме у Источној и Југоисточној Европи.

⁵⁹ Димитров, *История на радиото*, II, р. 71.