

An unvarnished blog that dips into the past and comments on the present of WBAI-FM, a New York station that once was a significant voice in the wilderness.

Saturday, August 27, 2011



As I prepare the promised facts related to my leaving WBAI's air, I thought I would give anyone who is interested an idea of what was happening at WBAI in the late 1960s—the hostility, the censorship, the u-turn regarding Vietnam.

On one of my returns from London, where I was working at the BBC, I found letters from three WBAI producers who complained of having had their programs suppress. The three were Barbara Dane, Bob Bisom and Tana DeGamez. They were, as it turned out, not alone. Here is a 1968 letter to Millspaugh from Charlotte Polin. You are probably not familiar with her, but she was on the wrong side of the State Department and, as you will see, astounded to discover that WBAI was making a u-turn.

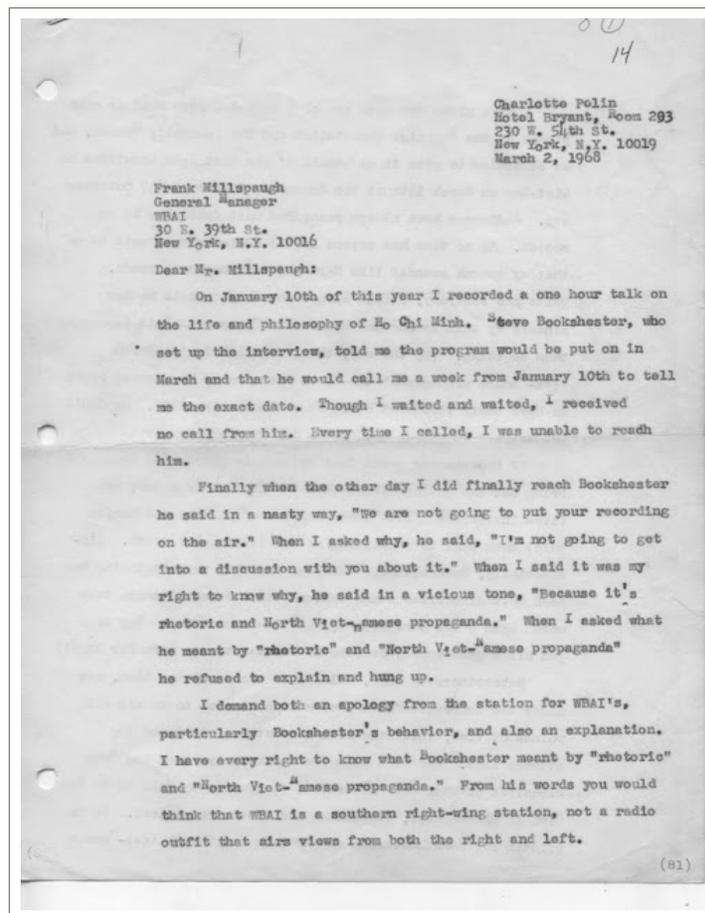
The link below should give you some perspective on Ms. Polin, followed by a her letter to Frank Millspaugh and a second letter to me.

Producers who experienced censorship at WBAI tended to come to me for help, although I was no longer connected in any official way. They saw how radically WBAI's policies changed under Millspaugh. It is interesting to note that Hallock Hoffman hired Millspaugh strictly on the recommendation of Chris Koch, who allegedly was *persona non grata* at Pacifica for having taken a trip to Hanoi. We found out later that Chris and Frank had both been U.S. delegates to a Peace Conference in Helsinki and that all members of the U.S. delegation were, in fact, working for the CIA. Hmmm (am I beginning to sound like Bonnie Faulkner?)

Be that as it may, here is the link re Ms. Polin, followed by her two letters. Her experience with both Dale Minor and Bookchester (I never met him) is eerily similar to Barbara Dane's, and both had to do with the National Liberation Front. One wonders how Chris Koch's trip to Hanoi plays into all of this—there is certainly something very hypocritical and suspect about it.

Here is the [link re Charlotte Polin](#).

And the letters (don't forget to click on images for readability):



I have given the same speech I recorded over WBAI at such places as the Humanist Association and the Community Church, and am scheduled to give it on behalf of the West Side Committee on Viet-Nam on March 11th at the Community Center at 647 Columbus Ave. Audiences have always responded most favorably to my speech. At no time has anyone in the audience ever said to me that my speech sounded like North Viet-Namese propaganda. Quite the contrary, people always come up to tell me how sincere my talk sounds and how unlike "propaganda" it impresses them as being. (By the way, though my talk isn't "North Viet-Namese propaganda" the North Viet-Namese have every right to have their viewpoint heard on stations like WBAI. Or don't you believe in giving both sides of the story anymore?)

If Bookhester meant that my talk is propaganda because I bring out the obvious truth that Ho Chi Minh is a good man (even inveterate Viet-Namese enemies of Ho have not denied this) then WBAI is penalizing me for telling the truth. (Incidentally, Bookhester's behavior from the very beginning has been most discourteous and dehumanized. He could ~~take~~ take more than a few cues from Ho Chi Minh's humanism. Why do you allow such snobby persons as Bookhester to work for WBAI?)

Subscribers to WBAI, unless you are deceiving them, are under the impression that your station is set up to air all points of view, including both the extreme right and the extreme left. The fact that you can have Ayn Rand and John Birchites on WBAI and yet refuse to present my talk on Ho Chi Minh is disgraceful, disgusting and most hypocritical. It is idiotic for Bookhester to say my talk was "North Viet-Namese

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propaganda" anyhow because unless he is completely assinine he knows the word propaganda comes from "propagate" and that in that sense everything is propaganda, as it expounds a view.

You can't imagine how many people you have alienated by refusing to broadcast my talk on Ho Chi Minh. For five semesters I taught a course at the Free School on Viet-Nam, and have written a book manuscript on North Viet-Nam. I am known to many peace and political groups and individuals. Many of your previously avid listeners such as Carol Brightman editor of "Viet-Report" and Ed Millpenn of the Quakers are highly indignant about your refusal to broadcast my talk, as are many leading and rank and file members of the West Side Committee on Viet-Nam, LEMPA and the Parade Committee. In fact, it was at their very persistent suggestions that I decided to write this letter to you.

Most Americans know nothing about Ho Chi Minh--one of the greatest and most fascinating men of our era. His contributions to the world happen to affect the whole course of the war and America's future. Nothing could be more important than listeners hearing information about that. Since I am one of the very few in the U.S. knowledgeable about Ho Chi Minh I and many others consider it a crime that you are keeping this information from your listeners. You who decry "censorship" and "suppression of information!"

As I said, I demand an apology. And I hope that in your own interests as well as those of your listeners you decide to broadcast my program about Ho Chi Minh.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Polin
(Mrs.) Charlotte Polin

(83)

Charlotte Polin
Arvis House, Room 422
605 W. 117th St.
New York, NY 10025

My speech on the life and philosophy of Ho Chi Minh, which WBAI rescinded on its promise to broadcast, is here offered as documentation as I delivered it before the American Humanist Association, with the introduction by Joe Ben-David, President of the Association, and the question and answer period following it. Over the phone when I asked Steve Bookcheater why he had not contacted me to tell me the date when a similar tape I recorded for WBAI would be broadcast for that station, he said, after nastily telling me he wasn't required to give me any reason, that it was "North Viet-Namese propaganda" and that this was not just his opinion but that of others who had listened to the tape who worked for WBAI and that those "others" would be damned if they would let North Viet-Namese propaganda be broadcast over WBAI. When I said that this obviously showed that WBAI practiced censorship and lack of free speech, Bookcheater said some nasty things to me and hung up on me. He had to resort to vitriol because he couldn't deny my allegation.

When I asked if I could then have the tape back, Bookcheater and others at the station kept saying again and again, "No, we're afraid you might send it to Hanoi and WBAI would be connected with it." They seemed so paranoid about it, it was laughable. When I assured them I wouldn't send it to the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam but it was my property and I wanted it back, Bookcheater and others whose names I don't know said, "We threw it away, we can't be bothered with things like looking for your tape, we lost it, we can't find it." (Take your choice! It's my hunch they still have it on file at WBAI. And if they threw it away, what right did they have to do so?) They kept deriding my admiration for Ho Chi Minh in the most cynical and abusive terms; they also said things like "only an idiot could believe in any doctrine." They kept criticizing the Left for supporting the NLF and DRVN and seemed to me a degenerate, cynical bunch of people who believed nothing could be good or worthwhile; I kept wondering what they were living for.

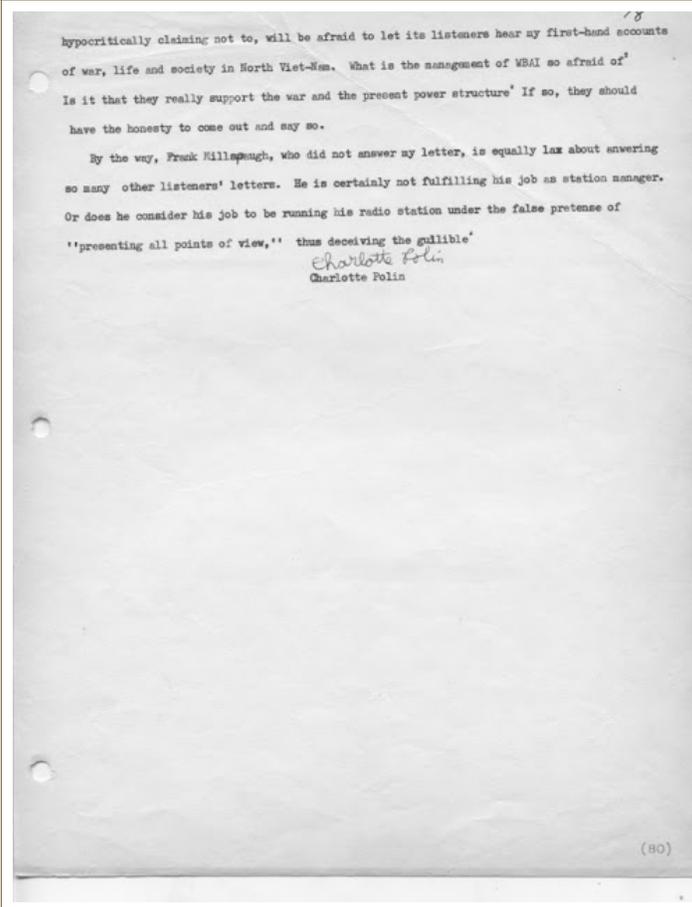
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Dale Minor. I was startled by his extreme ignorance of, and hatred of, the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam. Since he was in such a prominent position at WBAI and had been stationed in Saigon, I expected him to have at least as much knowledge about the NLF as a reporter for a commercial station. But he knew nothing, nothing at all about what a National United Front was, how the NLF had built parallel and penetrating structures from the hamlet level up, etc. It was impossible to carry on an intelligent conversation with him about the situation in Viet-Nam because his ignorance was so appalling. Yet he expressed his consuming hatred for the NLF not rabidly and emotionally as a right-winger might, but with sarcasm and cynicism that, along with other facets of his personality, gave me the impression that he is as complete a degenerate as I have ever had the misfortune of speaking to. One could only listen amazed as he went on and on, making outlandish statements, contradicting himself, etc. He said that the NLF had no popular support, when one could so easily obtain documented evidence from even the U.S. press and radio that quite the opposite is true— the NLF holds the allegiance of over 90 per cent of the people of South Viet-Nam. He refused to listen to any of this documented evidence, and even to statements by Dave Dellinger and Don Duncan to this effect. Dale Minor said at one point he hoped the Buddhists would rule South Viet-Nam. Further, he kept saying that the "Viet-Cong" was definitely losing the war, was on its last leg, etc. He said that more "Viet-Cong" are killed than the U.S. press prints in the "body count." I know that naturally his statements are not true. But supposing they were, he showed such cynicism when he said these things, such degenerate glee, such disregard for the life of the Viet-Namese people. Ugly cynicism and degeneration stamped everything and everybody he criticized, matched perhaps only by his ignorance which would have astounded almost anyone who listened, I believe. He seems about the most incompetent person possible for the job he is holding.

That I was qualified to speak on the life and Philosophy of Ho Chi Minh can hardly be disputed since I recently returned from Hanoi, where I spent nearly four months— longer than any other American. Though I have so many fascinating, poignant and meaningful experiences to relate about my experiences in the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, I can only assume that, under the present management of WBAI, which practices the worst sort of censorship while

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Final note on this post, the experiences Ms. Polin *et al* had regarding censorship at WBAI occurred during a period Knight shill Pamela Somers has described as some sort of "golden age", a time when the station—having gotten rid of me—blossomed!

I tried, repeatedly, to instill in her the merits of telling the truth.

If you wish to comment on the above, please use the option below. There will be a slight delay for moderation, and you can thank Somers for that.

Much more to come.

Posted by Chris Albertson at 8:18 AM 

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hypocritically claiming not to, will be afraid to let its listeners hear my first-hand accounts of war, life and society in North Viet-Nam. What is the management of WBAI so afraid of? Is it that they really support the war and the present power structure? If so, they should have the honesty to come out and say so.

By the way, Frank Millsbaugh, who did not answer my letter, is equally lax about answering so many other listeners' letters. He is certainly not fulfilling his job as station manager. Or does he consider his job to be running his radio station under the false pretense of "presenting all points of view," thus deceiving the gullible?

Charlotte Polin
Charlotte Polin

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Charlotte Polin
Hotel Bryant, Room 293
230 W. 54th St.
New York, N.Y. 10019
March 2, 1968

Frank Millspeugh
General Manager
WBAI
30 E. 39th St.
New York, N.Y. 10016

Dear Mr. Millspeugh:

On January 10th of this year I recorded a one hour talk on the life and philosophy of Ho Chi Minh. Steve Bookshester, who set up the interview, told me the program would be put on in March and that he would call me a week from January 10th to tell me the exact date. Though I waited and waited, I received no call from him. Every time I called, I was unable to reach him.

Finally when the other day I did finally reach Bookshester he said in a nasty way, "We are not going to put your recording on the air." When I asked why, he said, "I'm not going to get into a discussion with you about it." When I said it was my right to know why, he said in a vicious tone, "Because it's rhetoric and North Vietⁿamese propaganda." When I asked what he meant by "rhetoric" and "North Vietⁿamese propaganda" he refused to explain and hung up.

I demand both an apology from the station for WBAI's, particularly Bookshester's behavior, and also an explanation. I have every right to know what Bookshester meant by "rhetoric" and "North Vietⁿamese propaganda." From his words you would think that WBAI is a southern right-wing station, not a radio outfit that airs views from both the right and left.

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