

July 16, 1969
**Radio Liberty Broadcast Position Statement:
Developments in Eastern Europe**

Citation:

"Radio Liberty Broadcast Position Statement: Developments in Eastern Europe", July 16, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Released by the Central Intelligence Agency on October 16, 2019, in response to Mandatory Declassification Review request EOM-2018-00930. Contributed by A. Ross Johnson.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/290948>

Summary:

Radio Liberty outlines the current communist situation in Eastern Europe, and describes their goal as convincing listeners in East Europe that the Warsaw Pact and COMECON are self-defeating.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

Third Draft

July 16, 1969

(14)

Broadcast Position Statement

DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPEI. Basic Assumptions

Radio Liberty, in its programming dealing with Eastern Europe, is guided by the following basic assumptions:

1. That the trend in many East European countries toward nationalism, liberalization internally, and greater independence in foreign policy will continue over the years despite any Soviet action or negative attitude -- although a non-threatening stance by the Soviets would of course speed up the loosening process.
2. That the internalization of East European developments stimulates pressures in the USSR for economic and political reforms. East European trends towards economic decentralization, political decentralization, and cultural freedom are closer to Soviet experience and therefore more possible to implement.
3. That the Warsaw Pact and COMECON constitute essentially instruments of Soviet politico-military and economic control, respectively, over the member states and that their strengthening into supra-national organizations, as being urged by the USSR, would be inimical to the further internal liberalization and greater freedom in international relations of the East European states.
4. That gaining international recognition for the status quo in East Europe is the key to understanding the Soviet Union's overall European policy, including the USSR's latest initiative for a European security conference, as expressed in the Budapest appeal of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee of 17 March 1969.
5. That efforts to hold the East European states rigidly within the Soviet sphere of influence by military force and economic dependence will prove counter-productive to Soviet European policies in the long run. This is a short-sighted policy which also is costly to the peoples of the USSR in economic, military and political terms, and through recurring crises poses strains on the leadership and domestic policy, causing instability and retrogression; only development of a community of interests on the basis of mutual advantage and full respect for the sovereignty of each country offers the USSR a viable basis for fruitful, enduring relations with East Europe.

72 / 000 42 R / 11 / 20

II. Listener Attitudes

Soviet citizens have varying reactions to developments in Eastern Europe and to Soviet policies there. Many have no particular interest in what goes on there and do not see its relevance to their own lives. Some envy the comparatively greater freedoms and better living conditions of their East European neighbors. Other, more politically aware, individuals have been sensitive to progressive changes in Eastern Europe as opening the way for, or suggesting possibilities for, similar changes in the Soviet Union. Those concerned with the extension of national rights in the USSR, are highly sensitive to the implications for their own struggle of both the formal independence of East European nations and the success or failure of those countries to carry out independent policies.

Although it may well be that a great many Soviet citizens have been indifferent to Soviet repressive policies in Eastern Europe, at least among the more thinking elements of the population the use of force in Hungary and Czechoslovakia caused widespread dismay. The Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia led to the first open demonstration on a foreign policy issue by Soviet dissidents, who risked being tried and sentenced, and were, for their act. Reports from Soviet officers and soldiers on the real nature of events are circulating among the population and provide a yeast for the further development of disagreement with and shame over official policies. For many Soviet citizens, however, the threat of West German re-vanchism or the dangers from China provide an adequate justification for Soviet policies.

III. Objectives

1. Radio Liberty's main objectives are to convince its audience both that Soviet dominance of East Europe through the Warsaw Pact and COMECON is self-defeating and also that the Soviet Union should welcome and learn from the more advanced economic and political reforms manifested in East Europe, including those in Yugoslavia. In this connection, we press for full freedom of information, exchange of ideas, tourism, etc. between the USSR and East Europe so as to enrich each others' experience for mutual benefit. There is room in East Europe, and Europe as a whole, for a healthy balance of regionalism and nationalism.
2. To convince listeners that the "Brezhnev Doctrine" is both a threat to peace and an obstacle to normal relations between sovereign states, and that only full respect for national sovereignty will provide an adequate basis for genuinely friendly relations between the USSR and its East European neighbors.

-3-

3. To acquaint our listeners with such aspects of cultural, political, and economic life in East Europe which are distorted or ignored by domestic news media. In this coverage is included reportage of developments re. the national question in East Europe, particularly such as the granting of substantial autonomous powers to the Slovak minority of Czechoslovakia, that can be shown to be intrinsically desirable and workable, and without carrying with them to the USSR any manifest danger of ideological infection. The East European people's evolution toward diversity, national autonomy and creative application of Marxist principles does not threaten the USSR but does aid in creating stability in Europe and progress in the Soviet Union.

IV. Treatment

In discussing East European developments RL shows much sophistication in differentiating between the various countries. Eastern Europe is not a monolith and presents a wide stratum of both positive and negative developments which should be reflected in programming. Even when discussing the most progressive reforms RL does not present them as cure-alls, but rather as possible alternatives which the listeners may find useful in improving the internal situation in the USSR.

In informing our listeners about the progress of economic reforms in East Europe, we try to distinguish between the theoretical reform models in each country and the degree of their practical implementation. Thus the Bulgarians and the Rumanians have said a great deal about reforming their respective economies but have done relatively little. In contrast, the East Germans' reforms were conceptually modest, but they have been thoroughly and methodically applied. Much of the formerly centralized decision-making process has long been transferred to the VVBs, whereas Soviet planners are still complaining about the lack of progress in setting up industrial associations (obedineniya). The Czech reforms are in danger of being emasculated, but the Hungarian model - after a late start - is almost as progressive in its concept and more advanced in the degree of its implementation. Hungarian enterprises enjoy considerable autonomy in the planning and marketing of products, in price formation, and in wage setting. The Hungarians and the Czechs are still pledged to work towards full convertibility of their currencies within the next few years.

-4-

The Yugoslavs are over a decade ahead of the other East Europeans in economic reform. As Michael Gamarnikow has put it: "For the East Europeans, the basic question is what degree of decentralization and quasi-market economy is still compatible with central planning and party control. For the Yugoslavs the essential question seems to be how much central planning can be tolerated in an economic system geared to a relatively free market mechanism." But, here again, Yugoslavia should not be presented as a kind of an infallible model, but rather as an interesting and positive experimentation.

The same caution is exercised in discussing political reforms. We discuss reforms in the fields of Party organization, nationality problems, parliamentary life, etc. without giving the impression that we are fully endorsing them, but rather as food for thought which will stimulate pressures for change in the USSR. A special emphasis is laid on the dangerous implications of the "Brezhnev Doctrine". We show our listeners that the "doctrine" contradicts their peaceful aspirations inasmuch as it is directed against the national sovereignty of East European countries and thus poses a threat to world peace.

We avoid generalizations and do not make inaccurate or misleading descriptions of "orthodox" states as "pro-Soviet" and reformist leadership as "anti-Soviet". In this connection we do not speak of any "anti-Soviet" stand taken by Rumania or Yugoslavia but rather of their natural affirmation of national sovereignty.