

November 14, 1956

US Government Appraisal of Radio Free Europe Broadcasts

Citation:

"US Government Appraisal of Radio Free Europe Broadcasts", November 14, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by A. Ross Johnson. Cited Ch3 n59 in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document number MORI 1276085, 1426242. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114745>

Summary:

Cord Meyer forwards to Allen Dulles a State Department assessment dated November 13, 1956, of Radio Free Europe Hungarian and Polish broadcasts. The assessment was requested by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and was prepared by State Department official L. Randolph Higgs, responsible for coordinating RFE issues with CIA, and Meyer, who objected to an initial State Department draft.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: NOV 2006

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
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14 NOV 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Memorandum for the Secretary of State Concerning
RFE Broadcasts During Hungarian Revolt

This memorandum is for information only.

At the Secretary's request the attached memorandum was prepared jointly by [redacted] and me. The first draft which had been prepared in the Department had a tone which at least implied that RFE had been very irresponsible and not particularly responsive to guidance from Washington. I think this draft, which was delivered to the Secretary this morning, is a fair and balanced presentation of the actual facts as we know them. We are preparing with FIC a comprehensive analysis of the whole RFE effort during this period which will be forwarded to you as soon as it is ready.

[redacted]

OWEN HENK, JR.

Chief

International Organizations Division

Attachment (1)
Memorandum to the Secretary,
Dated November 13, 1956

IO/1: [redacted] (14 November 1956)

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November 13, 1956

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: C - Mr. Robert Murphy

FROM: U - L. Randolph Riggs

SUBJECT: Program Content of Radio Free Europe Broadcasting and During Hungarian Revolt.

In conformance with your request, following is my appraisal of Radio Free Europe broadcasts to Hungary during the period of active revolt in that country against Soviet domination as they bear upon charges in the press that RFE "stirred Hungarians to revolt and by promising help from the outside kept the fight going after all was lost".

RFE broadcasts to Hungary should be considered within the framework of the [redacted] which, with certain appropriate circumstances, received the concurrence of the Department. It should also be stated that policy with respect to broadcasts to Hungary was developed in close cooperation between the Department and CIA.

During the latter part of October my Office reviewed RFE policy guidance for all the satellites and satisfied itself that RFE guidance was aimed at (a) the liberalization and widening of the press in Poland and Hungary; (b) intensification of Nationalistic tensions in the satellites and (c) support for the removal from positions of authority of specific pro-Soviet leaders of the satellites. These aims were to be achieved primarily through factual reporting and any tendency to provide tactical advice or to identify RFE with indigenous opposition elements was to be avoided. RFE was specifically authorized to give full coverage to broadcasts of patriot radio which, because of their low power and Soviet jamming, could be heard in only limited areas. By this means the general population outside of Budapest undoubtedly became better informed of the course of the uprising.

However, on November 1, 1956, as a result of a demarcheⁿ on October 31 made to Mr. Murphy by the Yugoslav Ambassador, in which the Ambassador claimed RFE broadcasts to Hungary were inflammatory, this Office once again surveyed broadcasting policy with responsible officers of CIA and, after reviewing a "broadcast content report, just received that morning in Washington, for the week of October 20-26, it became apparent that both in its New York and Munich transmissions certain commentaries had exceeded the limits set forth in the policy guidance provided by the Department. This information was reported to Mr. Murphy the same day and, as a result of his telephone conversation with [redacted] took prompt action in the form of (a) requiring a

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rigid supervision and an immediate post-audit by a responsible American of all of RFE commentaries in Hungarian and (b) despatching two senior RFE officials to Munich to assist in reviewing broadcasts.

No difficulties with respect to Polish broadcasts have been encountered. Policy guidances have been rigidly adhered to.

Conclusions: (1) Program guidance for RFE provided by the Department has been promptly transmitted to RFE broadcasting personnel (2) no RFE broadcast to Hungary has stated or implied promises of American aid to the patriots, (3) there was for a short time a tendency attributable to over-zealous Hungarian employees of RFE to give encouragement to the patriots and to offer certain tactical advice, e.g., calling for a general strike, and of identifying RFE with Hungarian patriot aims (4) the chronology of events in Hungary and the statements of the Nagy and present Hungarian governments make it clear that the uprising resulted from ten years of Soviet oppression and was finally sparked by the shootings on October 23 of peaceful demonstrators in Budapest, and did not result from any external excitation such as RFE broadcasts.

Concurrences: CIA, Mr. Meyer