

November 19, 1956

Review of Radio Free Europe Hungarian Broadcasts

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Summary:

Final text of a CIA Memorandum submitted to the White House on RFE broadcasts during the Hungarian Revolution

Credits:

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Original Language:

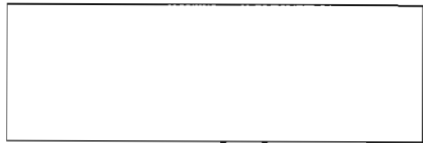
English

Contents:

Original Scan

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe

1. Broadcast Policy for RFE during period 20th CPSU Congress, 14-27 February 1956, and 23 October 1956

In line with National Security Council policy and with the guidance of the Department of State, the policy governing RFE's broadcasts to the European satellites during this period was based on the following principal points:

a. To encourage peaceful evolutionary changes working toward the liberalization of institutions, and decentralization of authority and decision making power to the point where a return to Stalinist measures would be politically impracticable for regime or party leaders.

b. To cross-report the progress of anti-Stalinism and the achievement of a degree of liberalization in the several captive nations.

c. To take full propaganda advantage of the Belgrade Declaration which states, "questions of internal organization or differences in social systems are solely the concern of the individual countries."

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Additionally, it is important to note that an RFE policy directive, dated 12 December 1951, stated categorically:

"Speakers are warned not to yield to a natural impulse to bring hope to their compatriots by promising armed intervention by the West. To raise the hopes of our audiences in this fashion would be to do them a cruel disservice; it would also constitute radical misrepresentation of the present policies of the western powers. Such talks may not be broadcast on RFE."

This directive has remained in full effect, and the peoples of Hungary, Poland and the other satellites have been encouraged to look not to armed revolt, but to the gradual relaxation of the de-Stalinization process as their best hope of eventual freedom.

2. Broadcast Content during the period 20th CPSU Congress and 22 October 1956

During this period RFE (as well as Free Europe leaflets) played the Khrushchev "secret speech" heavily; reported western reaction and the reaction of various communist party leaders in the West to the secret speech; gave full play to the Belgrade Declaration of "differing roads to Socialism"; gave appropriate treatment to the rehabilitation of various "Titoists" and national communists throughout the satellite area; reported all evidences of the liberalization process wherever taking place; and gave full play to the attempts of Gomulka to establish greater freedom from

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Soviet control in Poland.

RFE has also repeatedly broadcast messages of hope and encouragement expressed by President Eisenhower, Secretary Dulles, Adlai Stevenson and other American political, religious, labor, agricultural and business leaders, pledging that the cause of the eventual freedom of the captive peoples would remain a basic part of American Government policy and would be kept foremost on the world's council tables. It also broadcast the resolution of the United States Senate and the platforms of both the Republican and Democratic parties calling for freedom of the captive people by peaceful means.

3. Revisions in RFE's Broadcast Policy since 23 October 1956

With the fluid situation in Poland and with considerable ferment noticeable in Hungary prior to 23 October, RFE policy guidance was modified to:

- a. Give greater emphasis to the liberalization and widening of the "thaw" in Poland and Hungary;
- b. Give more emphasis to the nationalistic tendencies in the satellites; and
- c. Urge the removal from positions of authority of specific pro-Stalinist leaders.

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These aims were to be achieved primarily through factual reporting. RFE was advised to avoid tactical advice or the identification of RFE with indigenous opposition elements.

On 25 October, RFE was specifically authorized to give full coverage to broadcasts of patriot radios which, because of their low power and because of Soviet and other satellite jamming, could be heard only in limited areas.

RFE was also authorized to broadcast in Russian to Soviet troops in Hungary.

4. Radio Broadcasts to Hungary during the period 23 October to 4 November 1956

RFE, largely basing its information on extensive monitoring of Hungarian radio stations, immediately began broadcasts of the demonstrations which began on 23 October in Budapest Square. As the peaceful demonstrations changed to revolution, and as various local Hungarian radios fell into the hands of patriots, RFE also began to report the broadcasts of such radios throughout the country. By this means the general population outside Budapest became better informed about the course of the uprising. RFE also broadcast western reaction to Hungarian events, including statements by the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and expressions of solidarity with the patriots on the part of western trade unions, student

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groups and other leaders and organizations. RFE gave full play to reaction against the use of Soviet military repression, and also fully covered the action on the part of the United Nations with respect to Hungary. During this period, RFE also broadcast various appeals to Soviet troops in Hungary not to fire on the Hungarian people who were fighting for freedom, and urged the withdrawal of such troops from Hungary.

As far as can be determined from a review of scripts currently available in English, no RFE broadcast to Hungary before the revolution beginning on 23 October could be considered as inciting the Hungarian people to armed revolt. No RFE broadcast to Hungary has stated or implied promises of American military intervention.

However, between 23 October and 4 November 1956, a few of the scripts reviewed do indicate that RFE occasionally went beyond the authorized factual broadcasting of the demands of the patriot radio stations within Hungary to identify itself with these demands and to urge their achievement. After the revolution was well under way, there was some evidence of attempts by RFE to provide tactical advice to the patriots as to the course the rebellion should take and the individuals best qualified to lead it. As soon as these deviations from policy were noted, additional steps were taken to insure rigid supervision of broadcasting content.

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Tapes of the actual broadcasts are expected shortly and will be reviewed by Hungarian language specialists.

5. Comments by the Government of Imre Nagy and János Kadar on Western Provocation of the Revolution

The first and most determined attack on RFE as a part of the "capitalistic plot" responsible for the uprising came from Kramlia sources. Radio Moscow and Pravda both linked RFE to the "imperialist plot to overthrow the Hungarian Peoples Democracy." However, the official Hungarian radio, speaking for the Imre Nagy Government on 29 October, quoted Szabad Nap, the official Hungarian communist newspaper, in response to the Pravda article as follows:

"In its last issue, Pravda published the report of its correspondent about the Hungarian situation. Its title is: The Collapse of the Adventure Directed Against the People in Hungary. This is an error. What happened in Budapest was not directed against the people. It was not an adventure and it did not collapse. Bombs were exploding for five days, the machine guns distributed death for five days, this town suffered for five days. The slogans of socialist democracy were the loudest and not those of the reaction or of the counter-revolution. The revolting people of Pest and Buda want freedom, and a life without arbitrariness, terror and fear. More bread and national independence. This is what Pravda called an adventure against the people? Something really collapsed; that was the rule of the Rakosi-Gero clique!

"The article pretended that the undermining work of American and English imperialists was the cause of the manifestations of the Budapest population and of the revolt. We must sincerely

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say that this declaration of the Pravda is insulting for the whole population of Budapest. The majority of Budapest - with body or soul - participated in the manifestation of Thursday, felt with the basic, patriotic and democratic aims of the popular manifestation. Not some undermining work produced the bloody, tragic but exalting fight that lasted five days but our own faults and crimes, and first of all the fault that we did not safeguard the sacrosanct fire inherited from our ancestors: the national independence."

On 11 November, János Kadar, present head of the present puppet Hungarian Government, broadcast over Radio Budapest:

"We must all agree that the real reason for the peoples movement which started on 23 October must be sought in the serious faults and crimes which have been committed by the Rakosi clique which was greatly influencing the regime of the country and the party and which caused great damages to the working population of the country."

6. Conclusions

- a. Policy guidance provided to RFE and by RFE to its Hungarian desk was consistent with U. S. policies toward the satellites. RFE broadcasts were generally consistent with such policies.
- b. From all information available to date, RFE did not directly or by implication offer hope that American military help would be forthcoming to the patriots.
- c. From all information available to date, RFE did not incite the Hungarian people to revolution.
- d. RFE broadcasts went somewhat beyond specific guidances in

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identifying itself with Hungarian patriot aims, and in offering certain tactical advice to the patriots.

e. The chronology of events in Hungary and the statements of Imre Nagy and of János Kádár make it clear that the uprising resulted from ten years of Soviet repression and was finally sparked by the shooting on 23 October of peaceful demonstrators, and did not result from any external force, such as RFE broadcasts or Free Europe leaflets.

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