

**April 5, 1962**  
**Reprise of Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian  
Revolution**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Cord Meyer reviews the history for DCI John A. McCone

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : ~~Deputy Director of Central Intelligence~~ *has copy*  
Deputy Director (Plans)

SUBJECT : Radio Free Europe (RFE) and the Hungarian Revolution

1. This memorandum is for information and has been prepared in response to your request for a brief description of RFE's activities during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.
2. During the Revolution all desks of RFE, of course, covered it fully including world-wide reaction to the uprising. One of the principal actions was RFE's rebroadcast to Hungary and the rest of the Bloc of the internal Hungarian freedom radios taken over by the Freedom Fighters. RFE's greater power made it possible for a larger number of Hungarians to hear what some of their local radios were broadcasting on relatively low power. In many cases RFE's rebroadcasts were requested by the local radios and considered at the time to be a very valuable service.
3. RFE was, of course, charged by the Communists - and some others - with having incited the Hungarian people to revolt. One of the charges made was that RFE made false promises of Western military and other support to the Freedom Fighters during the uprising.
4. Several investigations of these charges were undertaken in early 1957. CIA's review of the tapes of the entire Hungarian language broadcasts during the revolt found that:
  - a. Broadcasts were generally consistent with U.S. policy.
  - b. RFE did not incite the Hungarian people to revolt.
  - c. RFE did not directly or by implication offer hope that outside military assistance would be forthcoming to the Hungarian patriots, with one possible exception. RFE broadcast portions of speeches by the U.S. Representative to the UN which might have been interpreted as indicating

*CA Staff / 10/78*

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some Western support for the Hungarian patriots. In our opinion RFE cannot be held responsible for broadcasting statements by senior U.S. officials which it must be assumed reflect U.S. policy.

- d. RFE, in rebroadcasting programs and statements of the internal "freedom" radios, did to an extent identify itself with the demands of the patriot leaders.
- e. RFE offered tactical advice to the patriots.

5. The West German Government and the Council of Europe in 1957 reviewed RFE's broadcasts during the uprising and found that the charges against RFE were unfounded. Pertinent extracts from these findings are attached as Tab A.

6. The Special Committee on Hungary appointed by the UN to investigate the Hungarian revolt also reviewed RFE's role and published its findings in June of 1957. This Committee found that "certain broadcasts by RFE helped to create an impression that support might be forthcoming for the Hungarians." RFE, however, was found not to have incited the revolt which was described as a "spontaneous national uprising." Excerpts from these findings are attached as Tab B.

7. It should be pointed out that other Western radios including Radio Madrid and the NTS Russian exile organization in West Germany did broadcast offers of assistance to the Hungarian patriots from a number of exile military and other personnel. These broadcasts may well have been confused with RFE's programs. There are also reports that a Communist station in East Germany used RFE's call letters and broadcast misleading promises of military assistance from the West in order to confuse radio listeners in Hungary.

  
CORD MEYER, JR.  
Chief  
Covert Action Staff

Attachments:  
    Tabs A and B

cc: DDCI