

## **November 19, 1956**

# **Draft Review of Radio Free Europe Hungarian Broadcasts**

### **Citation:**

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### **Summary:**

Draft version of a CIA memorandum prepared for 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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Draft

19 November 1956

SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe - Draft Memorandum from DCI to President Eisenhower

I. Broadcast Policy for RFE During Period 20th CPSU Congress and October 23, 1956

In line with National Security Council and other general U.S. policy, the policy governing RFE's broadcasts to the European satellites included the following principal points:

A. Strategic

1. To induce the people and "the elites" of the captive nations to favor the adoption of national goals of freedom from Soviet control over internal and external affairs to the practicable extent that this may be brought about by neutralization on the Austrian or Finnish models, with the concomitant withdrawal of these nations from the Warsaw Pact and COMECON which today holds these nations militarily and economically in the Soviet Orbit.

2. The establishment of democratic institutions in the captive countries and the satisfaction of essential liberties for the individual including a constitutional government, allowing for non-communist parties, free elections by secret ballot, freedom of intellectual inquiry, assembly, worship, press and other components of a democratic bill of rights.

B. Tactical

1. To encourage 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.

2. To continue cross-reporting of the progress of anti-Stalinism and the demands for liberalization in the several captive nations.

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It is important to note that an RFE policy directive, dated December 12, 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 is still in effect.

#### II. Broadcast Content During the Period 20th CPSU Congress and October 23, 1956

During this period RFE (as well as Free Europe leaflets) played the Khrushchev secret speech heavily; reported western reaction and 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; widely cross-reported the Poznan uprising in Poland to other satellites; reported all evidences of the "thaw" and ferment wherever taking place; and gave full play to the attempts of Gomułka to establish greater freedom from 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 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.

#### III. Revisions in RFE's Broadcast Policy since October 23, 1956

With the fluid situation in Poland and with considerable ferment noticeable in

Hungary prior to October 23rd, 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.

These aims were to be achieved primarily through factual reporting. RFE was to avoid tactical advice or the identification of RFE with indigenous opposition elements. On October 25th, 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 to Soviet troops in Hungary.

#### IV. Radio Broadcasts During the Period October 23 to November 4, 1956

RFE, largely basing its information on extensive monitoring of Hungarian radio stations, immediately began broadcasting the disturbances which began on October 23 in Budapest Square. As the disturbances 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 the western reaction to Hungarian events including statements by the President of the United States, Secretary of State, and expressions of solidarity with the patriots on the part of western trade unions, student groups and other leaders and organizations. RFE also gave fully play to the action on the part of the U.N. 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.

As far as can be determined from a review of scripts currently available in

English, no RFE broadcast to Hungary either before or after October 23rd could be considered as provoking or inciting the Hungarian people to revolution. No RFE broadcast to Hungary had stated or implied promises of American aid to the patriots. Between October 23rd and November 4, 1956, there was some tendency to give encouragement to the patriots, to offer certain tactical advice calling for a general strike, and to identify RFE with various aims of the patriots.

V. Comments by the Government of Imre Nagy and János Kádár 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 Kremlin sources. Radio Moscow and Pravda both linked RFE to the "imperialist plot to overthrow the peoples democracy." However, the official Hungarian radio, speaking for <sup>the</sup> Imre Nagy Government on October 29th, quoted Szabó Rózsa, the official Hungarian communist newspaper, in response to the Pravda article as follows:

"In its last issue the 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 went forward, 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-Gyros cliques!

"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 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

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that we did not safeguard the movement first inherited from our ancestors: the national independence."

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

"We must all agree that the real reason for the people's movement which started on October 23 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 damage to the working population of the country."

**VI. Conclusions**

1. Policy guidance provided to RFE and by RFE to its Hungarian desk was consistent with U.S. policy toward the satellites.

2. From all information available to date, RFE did not incite the Hungarian people to revolution.

3. From all information available to date, RFE did not directly or by implication imply that American aid would be forthcoming to the patriots any more than did statements by American governmental leaders imply that such aid would be forthcoming.

4. The chronology of events in Hungary and the statements of Imre Nagy and of János Kádár make it clear that the uprising resulted from 10 years of Soviet repression and was finally sparked by the shooting on October 23rd of peaceful demonstrators, and did not result from any exterior force such as RFE broadcasts or Free Europe leaflets.