

**WAGING COLD WAR:
RADIO FREE EUROPE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HUNGARY, AND POLAND,
1950-1956**

A Thesis
Presented to
the Division of Social Sciences
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Rex W. Steiner

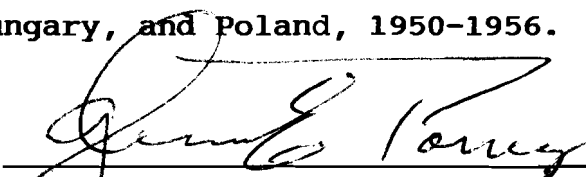
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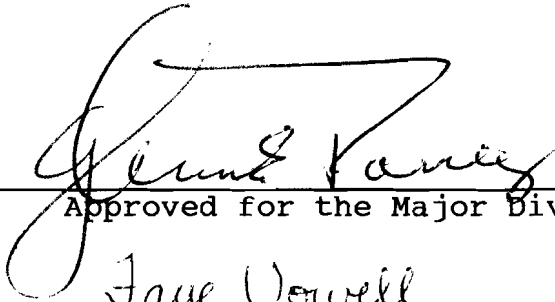
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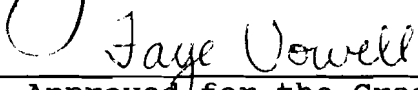
**Title: Waging Cold War: Radio Free Europe,
Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, 1950-1956.**

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rex W. Steiner', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

The thesis discusses Radio Free Europe's operations involving Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The purpose of this study is to examine what programs were aimed at these three countries. Also included is an examination of Radio Free Europe's intended goals. To send its message over the Iron Curtain, Radio Free Europe used unorthodox methods. Those methods had positive and negative effects on those who listened to Radio Free Europe. Those mixed results had a definite impact on Radio Free Europe's image at home and abroad. This paper is an attempt to give an overview of the events that occurred during 1950 to 1956 that were to change Radio Free Europe's policies up to the present day.


Approved for the Major Division


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I would particularly wish to thank my parents, sister, and brothers for their spiritual and financial help during this project--and during my entire collage career. I would also like to thank Kelley Newell who kept me going when I wanted to give up. Without these good people, I would never have completed this, or any other, degree.

PREFACE

As a student of Twentieth Century East European History, I have always been interested in how the West related to the East during the Cold War. How each side felt about the other often was portrayed in its press reports. Radio Free Europe has been a controversial figure in the propaganda portion of the Cold War since 1949. During the period of 1950 to 1956, Radio Free Europe debated as to what its policy should be.

During 1950 to 1956, RFE used three major propaganda campaigns to pound home its message. At that time, C.D. Jackson was involved in Radio Free Europe operations. His papers are now located at the Eisenhower Library, in Abilene, Kansas. In those papers, C.D. Jackson expressed his opinions and ideas regarding the role of Radio Free Europe. His papers were the primary sources for this study. Other sources included published materials by former Radio Free Europe employees.

Each country had similarities that suggested weaknesses in their political structure. In this thesis, I analyze each country and the effects of RFE's programs on that country. At the end of the study, I put forth some suggestions as to why each operation had a different result.

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Radio Free Europe Goes Into Action

By

Rex W. Steiner

In 1952, Harry S. Truman and Dwight David Eisenhower expressed their views on the Cold War. Both men explained their positions in these terms: "We cannot hope to win the Cold War unless we win the minds of men."¹ The Soviets and the Americans tried to use to the fullest every opportunity to spread their ideas and win the minds of men. One valuable weapon in this struggle for both sides was that of the radio. The Soviets had their weapons in this struggle, which included Radio Moscow. The United States had their weapons as well; they included the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe.

The Voice of America (VOA) was the official voice of the American government. The Voice of America was established during World War II; it was under the control of the United States Information Agency (U.S.I.A.), which was in turn directed by the State Department. Due to this

¹Edward Barrett, Truth is Our Weapon (New York: Edward W. Funk & Wagnells, 1953), Page ix.

government control, VOA took a cautious approach to events in Eastern Europe. An aggressive policy could backfire and reflect negatively upon the President and his Administration. As one U.S.I.A. statement declared, "As an official radio, VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively. VOA also will present responsible discussion and opinion on these policies."² Conservative policies saved VOA much of the criticism that Radio Free Europe was to receive whenever violence erupted in Eastern Europe.

In July 1950, privately owned (and bankrolled by the CIA) Radio Free Europe joined VOA in the propaganda battle. Radio Free Europe (RFE) aimed at the group of states in Eastern Europe under Soviet control. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Albania. Broadcasts to Albania ceased in September 1953 because there were only nine thousand shortwave radio sets in the country³. According to a document compiled by the National Committee to Free Europe (NCFE), Radio Free Europe was not interested in creating a "military machine capable of liberating the nations of Eastern Europe. It is interested quite [sic] simply in promoting the existence of certain attitudes, interests, and activities which will one day

²United States Information Agency, 34th Semiannual Report to Congress, January-June 1970, p. 13.

³Allan A. Michie, Voices Through the Iron Curtain (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963), p 17.

contribute to the successful fulfillment of the promises made at Yalta."⁴

The governing body of Radio Free Europe believed they could do more to help the people of Eastern Europe than could VOA because they did not have to follow the policies of presidential administrations. This freedom of action led RFE to carry out a program that involved three operations against three different countries that were similar in scope, yet different in result. With the backing of Allen Dulles, the Director of Central Intelligence, Radio Free Europe had the political support inside the Eisenhower Administration to carry out these programs.

The Free Europe Committee (formerly the NCFE), the controlling board of RFE, had several prominent members. Those members included Dwight D. Eisenhower and Allen Dulles. Many members of the FEC had conservative views about Eastern Europe and how the United States should deal with the Soviet Union. This conservative attitude permitted RFE to assert a more aggressive program than could the Voice of America. At times, this aggressiveness put them at odds with the State Department because many diplomats felt RFE broadcasts were making their jobs more

⁴Report on Czechoslovakia, Poland, FEP Operations, 15 October 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Committee, p.13, box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

difficult. Due to their connections in the CIA, and the government, RFE relations with the government were not always troublesome. One FEC member who had considerable influence in the Eisenhower Administration was C.D. Jackson.

C.D. Jackson was born in New York City in 1902.

Jackson's father was an international businessman, which allowed him to travel a great deal in his youth. Jackson graduated from Princeton in 1924, and had to take over the family business when his father died suddenly. He sold the business due to heavy losses during the depression.

Jackson then asked his friend Harry Luce to employ him as an assistant to the president of Time (though Jackson lacked experience in journalism). Jackson filled several important positions in Time, Incorporated. During his employment, Jackson also took several leaves of absence to do various jobs for his friend Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Jackson felt that "political warfare"--as Jackson called psychological warfare, should be the number one weapon in fighting Communism. This idea was supported by Eisenhower throughout the Second World War and during his Presidential Administrations. Jackson was also a close friend of Allen Dulles--the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (from 1953 to 1961). This was only one connection that Radio Free Europe had with the CIA.

The CIA was deeply involved in the creation of Radio Free Europe. The connection existed primarily through the Free Europe Committee, whose board consisted of several former members of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS later evolved into the CIA. Allen Dulles was the first president of the National Committee for a Free Europe when it was formed in 1949. The CIA (known in the FEC as "our friends from the South"⁵) consulted with the FEC before they selected any new officers. All diplomatic complaints about FEC and RFE activities were handled privately by the CIA. This was an important function because of the many complaints from diplomats in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The diplomats felt RFE was hampering them from improving relations because of their aggressive balloon/broadcast programs.⁶

Financially, the CIA played an extremely important role. It supplied millions to RFE set-up transmitting stations, balloons and other materials. "Surge funding" by the CIA provided RFE with much of its operating budget.⁷

⁵Sig Mickelson, America's Other Voice (New York: Praeger), 1983, p. 5. Mickelson was president of FEC from 1975-1976, president of Radio Liberty from 1975-1976, and president of RFE/RL Inc. from 1976-1978.

⁶For more on the use of balloons, see page 9.

⁷Cord Meyer, Facing Reality (New York: Harper & Row), 1980, p. 93. Cord Meyer succeeded Thomas Braden in September of 1954 as the Chief of International Organization Division (IOD). This division was in charge of overseeing RFE/Radio Liberty operations. Meyer was a consistent defender of RFE during his term (1954-1971) as chief of IOD.

These funds were provided by Congress to the CIA as grants. The CIA was to use the money to keep important groups functioning. This method also distanced many members of Congress and State Department officials from the responsibility of distributing the funds to any controversial groups. The CIA was also in charge of security for RFE. It would check the backgrounds of potential employees, and protect against attacks on the exile employees. One plot that the CIA discovered involved putting poison in the cafeteria salt shakers to terrorize RFE employees. The CIA also discovered a number of plans to injure or kill exiles. Most of the plots were created by agents from Eastern Europe.^a

Support for RFE was an ideal response to a National Security Council directive (68), released in April of 1950. That directive called for non-military, covert action against the USSR to stir-up revolt and unrest in the satellite countries. Thanks in part to the many former OSS members involved in RFE, the use of RFE to carry-out this directive was not difficult. It also provided the CIA with a perfect cover, since RFE was sponsored by a supposedly private organization, with no clear connection to the government. The CIA followed this directive, using RFE until 1971, when Congressional hearings confirmed that the CIA participated in RFE activities.

^aIbid., p. 120.

In 1950, Radio Free Europe needed to find locations for transmitters that would allow it to broadcast in medium-wave and short-wave. This meant finding a location close to the Iron Curtain for medium-wave transmissions, and a location farther away in order to utilize short-wave potential. The two locations first chosen were Munich for medium-wave broadcasts, and some short-wave broadcasts, and Lisbon, Portugal for the bulk of the shortwave broadcasts. The setting up of the Lisbon transmitter was not complicated, thanks in large part to many CIA and Free Europe Committee connections. The German station (and RFE headquarters) took considerably more effort.

The Germans had foreseen possible foreign policy problems by allowing RFE to transmit from Germany. They allowed the stations to be built after difficult negotiations with the Allied Military Government. The talks resulted in a six-point agreement that gave the German government some power over the RFE station. These conditions were "1) The radio installations may only be opened for the purposes of the Free Europe Committee; they may not be used for purposes of third parties unless prior written consent is obtained from the German government. 2) RFE is not allowed to change the technical specification of its transmitting installations or to put in additional radio transmitting installation without prior written consent from the Bundesminister für das Post- und

Fermmeldewesen. 3) Duly accredited representatives of the German government shall be given free access to all technical installations during or after office hours (the latter only upon prior notification). 4) Recordings will be made of all broadcasts and kept for at least thirty days. They will be made available at the request of the German government. 5) The license is not transferable; it can be revoked at any time without notice if one of the conditions should be violated and such violation should continue despite request to desist. 6) The license is valid for a period of five years and can be extended unless three months prior to its expiration date either the Free Europe Committee should renounce its rights or the German government announce its intentions not to renew the license."° Generally, relations with the Germans depended on the amount of unrest in Eastern Europe. A crisis in Eastern Europe usually caused a crisis for RFE and its relations with the Germans.

With these technical problems taken care of, Radio Free Europe could focus on its primary goal of supplying moral support for the people behind the Iron Curtain. The theme of RFE broadcasts was to tell the East Europeans to wait patiently for Communism to fall apart--at that point they could expect help from the West. Liberation through

°Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 54.

the force of a Western army was not the central theme. Liberation from within, and progress through political pressure were the primary themes of RFE throughout 1953-1955. It was not until 1956 that RFE set up a massive expanse of radio transmitting stations to carry its message to all of Eastern Europe. Eight short-wave transmitters were set up in Biblis, Germany, thirteen transmitters in Lisbon, Portugal (the most powerful of the RFE transmitting stations), and seven transmitters in Holzkirchen, Germany¹⁰. While the full power and potential of the broadcast system was being developed, balloons were used to supplement RFE's broadcast capabilities.

Until 1953, the Free Europe Committee had not developed an effective policy to coordinate both the balloons and the transmitting systems. Part of the problem came from within Radio Free Europe itself. A number of operations were carried out using only balloons, but, with only limited success. These balloons carried leaflets composed of script summaries, pictures, and news from the West. After 1953, RFE began to organize operations using both balloons and broadcasts. In these operations, the leaflets supplemented the broadcasts by using more detailed information that had not yet been aired. By coordinating balloon and broadcast subjects RFE hoped to create a demand for the leaflets, and increase interest in its broadcasts.

¹⁰Ibid., p 113.

Radio Free Europe would repeat any balloon/broadcast operations that seemed popular.

In 1950 opinions differed among members of the Free Europe Committee and the programming staff at RFE. One faction viewed any progress in Eastern Europe as only temporary, and felt any reforms would eventually be quashed by the hard-liners within the regimes of Eastern Europe. An aggressive faction of RFE felt that reforms were the first step toward changing the Communist Parties, and improving the lives of the populace. They believed these reforms were the early stages of a trend that would eventually lead to a greater momentum for change throughout the region. This momentum would eventually lead to the end of Communism in the satellite countries, and eventually the Soviet Union. This aggressive faction gained the upper hand in 1953 for two main reasons: the death of Stalin and unrest in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Large riots took place in Pilsen and Berlin that also played a role.

The unrest gave the aggressive faction an advantage because people felt frustrated and wanted to do something to help the oppressed peoples of Eastern Europe. Playing on these frustrations, Radio Free Europe was guided toward a more assertive program. The aggressive faction claimed the unrest proved that there was a large unorganized middle class opposition that needed guidance. They believed this

group could create enough political pressure to force concessions from the government.¹¹

In January of 1954 Radio Free Europe developed a formal program of action (known as the Action Program within RFE). The idea was to fill a void in the opposition by giving it leadership, unity, and direction. This program was developed by Americans in collaboration with highly respected exiles from Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The contribution of the exiles was considered very important because their participation gave the action programs credibility within the target countries. The Americans were careful to edit any ideas that were too radical (the CIA vetoed any ideas considered too risky).

Setting policy for broadcasts and other programs came directly from the New York office controlled which the long-range policy for RFE. This office relied on contact with exile organizations inside the United States to get an idea of how RFE was being perceived in the target countries. Many exile groups still had contacts inside their old countries and were anxious to help RFE. New York closely monitored the international situation for signs of crisis that would require policy modifications. When policy changes needed to be made, Munich would be contacted

¹¹Ibid., p. 146.

immediately by teletype or telephone. This system was well tested by the end of 1956.

Munich concerned itself with the functions of daily broadcasts. Every morning, scripts written by exiles who manned the desks of the various countries were reviewed by the director of the Munich office. The desk chief for the country concerned and a political officer also attended the review whenever questions arose. Scripts considered radical (if any) were singled out by the political officer. Discussion of scripts took place and changes were recommended by the three men. Careful screening of scripts was necessary for two reasons. One reason was that the Munich office was keenly aware of the German government's concern about RFE broadcasts that might cause them political problems. The other rationale was that RFE did not want to take any chances on programs that might cause violence and loss of life inside the target countries. The efficiency of this system was instrumental in keeping RFE from being closed down entirely after the 1956 revolts.

During the period of 1950-1956, Radio Free Europe supplemented its limited broadcasting abilities with balloon aviation. During this early stage of programming RFE did not have all transmitters functioning on a daily basis. Therefore, RFE used the balloons to make-up for the shortcomings of their broadcast technologies. By 1956, RFE

was able to fully utilize their broadcasting capabilities, and use all the transmitters available.

Forcing Communist officials to implement change by creating political pressure was primary goal of the RFE programs. They were not designed to incite violent revolt by the peoples of Eastern Europe. RFE tried to help the peoples of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia make short-term progress in reform through political pressure, not violence. It was believed that this momentum would be transformed into long-term improvements in social conditions. A government that was sensitive to the needs of the people, and not Moscow ideas, was an important goal.

The main targets of the program became more specific after the East European riots of 1953. Those involved in the riots--the police, the workers, local party members--and the students were now the targets. The police became a target because in the riots, many of them sided with the protesters, and refused to stop the protests, or to fire on their fellow countrymen. The workers were obvious targets since they were in control of industry, and could use economic pressure to cause change. Local party members and students were also targets because of their ideological leadership. If they could be influenced to help the people and resist the government, then perhaps that would speed the pace of reform at the national level. The Action Program would be directed at these groups because RFE felt

these people exerted an everyday influence in the lives of the people. They also had an apparent lack of loyalty toward the government's policies.

These same people were the strength of the Communist Party in many countries--before they came to power after World War II. RFE tried to persuade these people to cross the "golden bridge." The "golden bridge" was the forgiveness of their fellow citizens, which could be obtained by working for the good of the people. This meant resisting the implementation of government programs, whenever possible¹². RFE also tried to convince these people that they should defect to the West, and help their homelands in their struggle for freedom from the outside. These were the people targeted by RFE in the operations known as VETO (Czechoslovakia), FOCUS (Hungary), and SPOTLIGHT (Poland).

The strategy behind the projects was to flood targeted areas of each country with broadcasts and balloon leaflet drops. Radio Free Europe handled the broadcasting part of the operation, and its sister organization, the Free Europe Press (FEP), handled the task of printing leaflets. Members from both organizations participated in launching the balloons. The launch sites were located throughout southern Germany (Adolf Hitler's former mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden was one location). Selection of landing

¹²Ibid., p.147.

points varied for each country, depending largely upon the co-ordination of the winds and any political events or tensions in a region.

Calculating the wind speed and direction on the ground and at higher altitudes was an important part of the balloon operation. Any miscalculations of the winds could mean the leaflets would miss the target zones. The Air Force gave RFE information concerning wind patterns and direction. They also helped calculate exactly where the leaflets would land. Using this information, RFE would decide how much each balloon could carry to the target.

Radio Free Europe purchased a large number of weather balloons to be used for the operation. Two types of balloons were used. One type was made of rubber and was a high altitude (from 30,000 to 40,000 feet) carrier. At a predetermined height, the balloon would burst and drop the leaflets over the target. The height and area that the rubber balloons would burst depended upon the amount of hydrogen used to fill them. The total weight of these balloons was minimal, but the size varied considerably. They averaged between three and five feet in diameter. In early 1955, the FEP attempted to launch much larger versions of these balloons from Germany to the Soviet Union. These balloons measured from thirty-five to fifty-five feet in diameter and carried a payload of over 400 pounds, including a battery operated motor and a bicycle

wheel triggering mechanism¹³. RFE ceased flying these large balloons due to concerns expressed by several airlines that they were a hazard to the commercial air-routes.

The second type of balloon used was a larger "pillow shaped" balloon. These hydrogen-filled balloons floated at a lower altitude (20,000 to 30,000 feet), and used a dry ice triggering mechanism.¹⁴ The balloon would be carried with the wind, and as the dry ice melted, it would eventually trip a metal arm, and unload a bundle of leaflets. After the bundle dropped, the balloon would destabilize and overturn. The hydrogen would escape and the balloon would fall to earth with some leaflets contained in a water-proof envelope. The pillow balloons were the heaviest, due to the triggering mechanism--they weighed from 2.2 to 7.9 pounds, and carried only one to eight pounds of leaflets. The size of these rectangle-shaped balloons varied from 8ft x 10ft to 10ft x 13ft.¹⁵

The balloon/broadcast campaign was soundly criticized by the press on both sides of the Iron Curtain, as well as some allies of the United States (particularly Germany). Attacks were based on the following four points;

¹³Allan A. Michie, Voices Through the Iron Curtain (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963), p.163.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁵Diagrams on Balloon Launch, 23 January 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Committee (FEC) thru 1956, p. 2, box 45, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

- "1) dissemination of printed matter by balloons is undignified and 'gimmicky'
- 2) balloons may actually be hazardous to aircraft
- 3) continued Communist complaints are occasionally embarrassing to the U.S. Government -- especially with respect to relations between the U.S. and its allies
- 4) no hard evidence of the effectiveness of balloon-leaflet operations exists"¹⁶

The members of the FEC responded by writing their evaluations of the balloon/broadcast operation. In a three page report, Samuel S. Walker refuted the first claim by explaining that balloons were unorthodox, but RFE and FEP were forced to use unorthodox measures. This was due to the strict control of the media in Eastern Europe by the governments. He also rejected the third item by explicating the facts that these operations were no more aggravating to the Allies than were any other operations¹⁷.

In a letter to Allen Dulles, C. D. Jackson confuted the second claim by referring to an U.S. Civil Aeronautic Board statement. That document claimed "a balloon of less than ten pounds is not a menace to air navigation . . .The mathematical probability of a jet getting a balloon square

¹⁶Report by Samuel S. Walker, Jr., 1956, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, p. 1, box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

¹⁷Ibid., pp.1-2.

in its air intake is about that of getting a bird."¹⁸ Jackson also rejects the fourth claim by pointing out that the Soviets had attacked the balloon campaign venomously in their press accounts. Jackson believed that this was a sure sign that the balloon campaign was going well. He felt that the Soviets "never mount a real press, radio, and diplomatic barrage casually," unless they want and activity stopped immediately. Jackson also sensed that to cease operations would give the Soviets a major propaganda victory. This would in turn cause tremendous damage to the morale of the peoples in the target countries. Jackson's basic view was "what the Commies don't want, they should get."¹⁹

RFE responded by having experts and exiles evaluate the effectiveness of their action program. Reports written by these experts were submitted to RFE for consideration.²⁰ One such report was by Hugh Seton-Watson, renowned historian of East European events. In that report, Seton-Watson defended the use of balloons. He believed that the balloon/broadcast system was effective and necessary due to the strict control exerted over the

¹⁸C.D. Jackson to Allen W. Dulles, 14 February 1956, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, p. 2, box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, box 44 contains several letters of support for balloon operations.

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¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, box 44 contains several letters of support for balloon operations.

media by the Communist governments. He also felt that the campaign could help bring about reforms in the target countries. Seton-Watson recommended that some leaflets could be improved by including more news, and more cultural information about the West and about other East European nations. In effect, he commended the campaign as very effective²¹.

²¹Report by Hugh Seton-Watson, 1956, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, p.4, box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

Chapter 1

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, BALLOONS, BROADCASTS, & VETO

Czechoslovakia was the newest member of the Communist Bloc (having fallen in 1948 to a Communist coup). This was one of many reasons Radio Free Europe saw Czechoslovakia as the weakest link in the Iron Curtain from 1950 to 1954. RFE's conclusions were accurate because the Czech people were still struggling to adapt to the Communist system.

RFE's goal was to exploit the tensions that existed, and put as much pressure on the new government as possible. They felt the best way to accomplish this goal was to supplement their broadcasts with the written word. The primary support document they used was a newsletter called Svobodna Europa (Free Europe). The newsletter and other flyers were published by the Free Europe Press, the sister organization of Radio Free Europe.

Radio Free Europe had, in 1951, experimented with

the use of balloons for dropping leaflets in a limited operation named "Prospero." Czechoslovakia was the target for this "ground-breaking" operation. In 1950, RFE had very limited transmitting capacity, and felt it had to find an effective way to get its message to the people of Czechoslovakia. With CIA co-operation in the form of balloons and personnel experienced in balloon aviation, RFE set out to boost the morale of the Czech people. In the first operation of 1951, over thirteen million leaflets were dropped on Czechoslovakia. Other balloon operations were carried-out from 1951-1954 on a smaller scale. No co-ordinated balloon/broadcast operation began until Operation VETO in 1954.

Free Europe Committee members felt balloon operations were an effective tool. They used information about these operations in several fund raising campaigns. In a speech on 26 September 1951, to the Association of National Advertisers, C.D. Jackson expounded upon the success of the operations. He cited a report that six Czech miners had defected to West Germany. Apparently, each of the miners had at least one leaflet with him when they crossed the border. Jackson maintained that they defected because of the "message of hope that they had received from the West."¹

¹Speeches-Texts 1951, Time Inc. File, Box 82, Selected Talks--Annual A.N.A. Meetings, September 1951, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 4.

Such initial positive publicity was to help FEC gain thousands of dollars in donations. However, reactions inside Czechoslovakia were not as positive.

Initial reactions by the Czech government to the early 1950's operations were subdued. At first they tried to ignore the balloons, but after VETO, that changed. World attention became focused on the launchings, and required an aggressive policy with military and diplomatic aspects. The first measures taken were of a military aspect. In July of 1953, soldiers were ordered out from their bases to collect leaflets. Other refugee reports from Plzen claimed that MIG jets were sent out every hour to shoot down the balloons. MIG jets were no longer used to hunt balloons after late 1953 because the jets were too fast. The task of shooting down the slow-flying balloons fell on flying clubs with old slow-going bi-planes. People were supposedly jumping like "frogs to catch the leaflets as they came down," claimed one report.² A follow-up measure involved ordering the postmen to ask everyone along their routes if they had any leaflets. If they discovered anyone with the leaflets, they were told to collect the leaflets and deliver them to the police.

After an operation involving the dropping of the

²C.D. Jackson Records, 1953-1954, Balloons File, Dispatch RFE L6, 24 July 1953, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

fake Czech crowns³, Radio Bratislava broadcast a story about an uncle who had found some of the fake crowns. He had put them in his pocket, and continued to walk to town. When he arrived in town he went to the tobacconist's shop and gave one of crowns to the sales girl. The sales girl recognized the fake crown and laughed while telling him that he could not get anything for that crown. The embarrassed man then had to pay for his goods with real Czechoslovak currency. This satire ran repeatedly on stations throughout the country⁴.

Radio stations outside Czechoslovakia became involved in attacks against RFE because of their Czech campaign. Inside the Soviet Union, Radio Baku lambasted RFE for its use of balloons in Czechoslovakia. Other stations inside Poland (which had apparently obtained some stray leaflets) ridiculed the Czechoslovakian balloon operations as "futile and worthless."⁵ A favorite method among the various stations was to accuse Radio Free Europe of being controlled by Fascists or

³Radio Free Europe dropped a number of fake Czechoslovakian Crowns called "Hunger Crowns." The idea was that the Communists had made the Crown so worthless that it was causing people to go hungry. RFE wanted people to place these in public areas. They did not intend to flood Czechoslovakia with counterfeit Crowns.

⁴C.D. Jackson Records, 1953-1954, Balloons File, Monitoring highlights for 25 July 1953. Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

⁵Black Book of 1953, Time Inc. File, NCFE file, Box 65, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 16.

Nazis. RFE was an easy target for this kind of propaganda because the main headquarters for Radio Free Europe were located in Munich. Follow up attacks accused Adnauer of being a Nazi, and of controlling RFE operations in Germany.

Unlike many of their neighbors in the region, the Czech people were well educated, and very familiar with Western ideas. To many of these people, Communism was a step backward, which created resentment toward the Communist government. The large middle class in Czechoslovakia was angered by the government's economic policies. The Czechoslovakian economy was one of the most industrialized in Communist Bloc, and its technological advancement helped RFE to get its message across. Czechoslovakia had the most shortwave sets in Eastern Europe. In 1951, there were 2,717,000 sets in Czechoslovakia, compared to 1,747,148 in Poland and only 887,000 in Hungary⁶. This meant that Radio Free Europe could reach more people by radio within Czechoslovakia than other country in the region.

The Czechoslovakian Communist Party suffered from intense internal rivalry. Klement Gottwald consolidated his grasp on the Party through several purges from 1948 to 1953. Gottwald closely followed the Soviet model,

⁶Edward Taborsky, Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960, (New Jersey: Princeton, 1961), p. 551.

and attempted to imitate Stalin's actions whenever possible. Gottwald's purges created a governmental system that was totally subservient to his wishes--another "cult of the personality." Gottwald created a massive bureaucracy, which slowed government actions, and created frustration and anger among the Czech people. The death of Gottwald in March of 1953 (shortly after Stalin's death), combined with the currency reform of 1953 created more unrest. The currency reforms cut wages in half and devastated the savings of the people. This action caused the situation to erupt. These events sparked riots in the streets of Prague and Plzen.

In response to the unrest, the government of Antonin Novotny in 1954 attempted to appease the people. The government promised to cut down on investment in heavy industry. Higher pay for farmers, relaxation of collectivization, an increase in consumer goods, better housing, and an improvement in living conditions were included in Novotny's programs. To ease pressure on the Czech Communist Party, the government promised elections at the factory, local, and national levels, and a Tenth Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Novotny hoped these elections would give the government a new look, more credibility, and new power to the National Assembly. The National Assembly had its power and internal structures crippled during Gottwald's purges.

In democratic Czechoslovakia, the National Assembly had been one of the main sources of power, but under the Communists it had become largely a symbol of the past. The elections were also an attempt by the new Czech leaders to distance themselves from the policies of the past, and energize the party with new faces and ideas. Novotny hoped that the new energy brought into the Party would then be passed on to the people. He planned to declare the election results as proof that the people were behind the Party.

RFE saw chaos within Czechoslovakia and felt it was a prime target for the action plan--of which Operation VETO was its initial test. Czechoslovakia had the three things that Radio Free Europe felt would make the action plan a success--1) confusion within the Communist Party; 2) a mass opposition from within the middle class; and 3) a technological base in which many people had access to radios. Armed with the knowledge gained by earlier balloon/leaflet operations of the early 1950's, RFE prepared to launch a co-ordinated balloon/broadcast attack on Czechoslovakia in 1954.

Radio Free Europe planned to exploit the 1954 elections to show just how much unhappiness there was with the new Czech leadership. RFE hoped to use the elections as a central target that would solidify the various underground opposition groups. RFE also hoped

this operation would establish RFE as a voice from the West that would strengthen and guide the opposition by giving them the tools and direction to put political pressure on the government. Radio Free Europe wanted to help the people of Czechoslovakia to become aware of groups that were working to free Czechoslovakia from the Communist yoke. Hopefully, for the resistance movements, this would mean more members and a greater effect on the people.

Operation VETO was organized in January of 1954, into three parts: The first, or pre-election phase would attempt to discredit the policies of Novotny. RFE felt these policies were actually set-up to hasten sovietization and limit the people's rights. RFE ran a number of political commentaries that were aimed at several groups to try to discredit the Communist themes. Eight hours of original programs were broadcast each day.⁷ The programs would then be run two to three times each day, (depending upon whether or not RFE broadcast 24 or 19 hours on a particular day) with live ten minute news broadcasts between each program. These programs were specifically targeted to promote doubt in the Party, and erode any support for the Party among farmers, labor unions, women, and youth.

⁷Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 71.

The second phase was to be held during February - May 1954. By developing the People's Opposition RFE intended help all Czech and Slovak peoples resist the process of sovietization taking place in Czechoslovakia. An RFE leaflet of 1956 described the Voice of the Opposition as nothing like a political party. The leaflet described the People's Opposition by claiming that "it issues no cards, has no regard for years of service or 'merits,' and does not organize underground or illegal groups. What, then, is the People's Opposition? It is a name for the movement of the Czech and Slovak people, for a community of millions of Czechoslovak men and women united in a common hatred of their Soviet masters, and their Prague and Bratislava puppets, and equally united in their desire for independence, freedom, justice, and democratic government. In quotes, the 'Peoples Opposition' is a mere slogan. But the People's Opposition is a community of individuals and social groups conscious of what they want and of what they reject; it is a reality, the most terrifying for the regime and the party because it is invisible, intangible, a force that can move mountains, a feeling in a man's bones--a fact."^a

To legitimize the People's Opposition as a valid voice of the people, a platform was developed. Speaking

^aRobert Holt, Radio Free Europe, 1958, p. 228.

with Czech exiles, analyzing exile reports, reading underground newspapers from Czechoslovakia, and reviewing regime press reports provided an ample supply of ideas for a platform. Americans working with exiles developed the "Ten Demands of the People's Opposition."

The list was as follows:

1. Trade Unions for Trade Unionists
2. Better Pay
3. Workers must not be Chained (to their job)
4. No Meddling with Workers' Free Time
5. No More Farmers' Bondage
6. Smaller Quotas--Larger Crops
7. Local Autonomy instead of Bureaucracy
8. Goods for the People, not for the Soviets
9. Back to Serving the Customer
10. Housing for Families, not for the State⁹

To make this platform easily recognizable, the Free Europe Press printed thousands of stickers displaying the number "10." This campaign was supported with broadcasts encouraging the people to place the stickers in locations that were highly visible. Several reports from tourists, visiting foreign officials, and regime reports were filled with stories about "10" stickers.

During the increased broadcast hours to

⁹Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe, 1958, p. 155.
 Parenthesis added by the author.

Czechoslovakia, exiles discussed each point of the Ten Demands in detail. Other broadcasts explained the democratic processes used in Britain and the United States. In this way, the people of Czechoslovakia would understand what rights a voter had in real elections. Leaflets followed detailing how the United States and Britain had become democracies. The leaflets also explained the differences between the British and American democratic systems.

Dropping of small newsletters called Svobodna Europa (Free Europe) helped to spread the concepts behind the Ten Demands. Other leaflets were also formulated that aimed at specific groups and how the Ten Demands would better their lives. Following leaflets contained more detailed explanations, combined with pictures and news from the West.

Discrediting the parliamentary and shop elections was the goal of the third phase. RFE intended to portray the rigged elections as another scheme by the Communists to falsify claims of overwhelming support of the people.¹⁰ RFE attempted to single out hardline candidates by airing programs designed to make them look like brutal men who were puppets of Moscow. Exiles and refugees supplied RFE with the names and acts of officials considered to be unusually brutal or

¹⁰Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe, 1958, p. 152.

subservient to Moscow's wishes. RFE broadcasted these names so that the people would know which candidates were least interested in the people and more interested in themselves. Radio Free Europe urged people to vote for candidates who would put local needs ahead of individual goals. This was the major thrust of Operation VETO toward the National Assembly elections.

Shop Committee elections were held to give the workers more say in the operation of their factories. Operation VETO urged the workers to demand a review of candidates before the elections to keep out Party stooges. Another part of the program directed the workers to have the rights and powers of the committees (and the workers) posted. In order to have fair elections, one leaflet demanded that the elections be handled by the workers and not the union leaders. RFE hoped to eliminate representatives who were more concerned with advancement in the Party rather than the interests of the workers. Another goal of this movement was to allow free assembly of workers to discuss their concerns. A fair Shop Committee election that was not controlled by the Party (which controlled the trade union--ROH) was the primary hope.

Radio Free Europe used broadcasts to introduce and discuss general details about VETO. Leaflets were more detailed than the broadcasts. Any ideas that could not

be explained in a ten or fifteen minute broadcast could be expounded upon in more detail by using a leaflet. Facts and figures could also be better understood when printed on a leaflet--things like population tables or average income, etc. If it appeared the Czech people did not fully understand a particular point, RFE would then prepare a different leaflet or broadcast more programs dealing with that point. This would usually be determined from interviewing defectors or new immigrants.

Five goals attached to the VETO operation were expressed in a 1956 report. The first three were immediate goals: to attempt to undermine the Communist-promoted idea of an all-powerful state; to register all the gains of the opposition that were achieved against the will of the regime; and help focus the opposition's pressure for "practical and attainable targets."¹¹

The final two concepts dealt with the longer-term goals of VETO. According to the report "While welcoming these gains [referring to some material and ideological concessions that took place after the balloon campaigns took place], we took care that the opposition, engaged in the piecemeal struggle with the regime, should retain

¹¹Reports on Czechoslovakia, Poland, FEP Operations, 15 October 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Cmte thru 1956 (FEC), Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

a clear picture of the final aim -- i.e., complete liberation." ¹² The final design, was "By helping the opposition to act in unison, we increased its coherence, its feeling of solidarity, and its self-awareness. Thus, although we never attempted to create any organized resistance, we helped to give the opposition forces the character of a political movement conscious of its potentialities and of its tactical and strategic aims."¹³

Another hope placed in VETO was to maintain pressure on the Communist government. It was felt that if internal and external resistance was not kept up, it would look like the United States was abandoning the people of Czechoslovakia. The violence of Communist attacks against the balloon/leaflet campaign was seen as a moral victory, and a sign that VETO was doing its job.¹⁴

VETO also was a success in that Novotny had to postpone the parliamentary elections twice. When elections were finally held, thousands of RFE leaflets were reported to have been placed in ballot boxes. The reason for this was that RFE had dropped millions of

¹²Ibid.

¹³Reports on Czechoslovakia, Poland, FEP Operations, 15 October 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Cmte thru 1956 (FEC), Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

¹⁴Ibid.

fake ballots a few days before the elections. Most of the ballots were found in rural areas. RFE broadcasts and following leaflets instructed the people to post the fake ballots in public places or in mailboxes of local officials--and not to put them in ballot boxes. In the end, thousands of ballots were thrown out and the Communists claimed overwhelming support for their candidates.

Greater success was attained in VETO's efforts in upsetting the shop elections. Those elections were eventually cancelled when no suitable candidates were found. Election committees were composed of workers and Party members. The workers would not allow many candidates proposed by the Party to be placed on the ballots and workers threatened to stop working if elections were held without their approval of candidates.

Radio Prague set its sights against RFE in two attacks in October of 1954. They also attacked Czech exiles who broadcast for RFE during the Operation VETO. A favorite target of the Czech press was Ferdinand Peroutka. Peroutka had been a supporter of Thomas Masaryk and Edvard Benes in 1919, when he was a young writer. Arrested by the Gestapo during World War II, Peroutka spent much of the war in a concentration camp. After being liberated by the American Third Army, he

became a respected editor and writer of the newspaper Svobodne Noviny (The Free World). The newspaper was highly critical of Communist ideology, and on the first day of the coup in 1948, his paper was closed. Peroutka fled Czechoslovakia later in that year due to intense pressure from the Czechoslovakian secret police. After his defection, he accepted an offer as Chief of the Czechoslovak Desk at RFE.

The Czech Home Service claimed that the propaganda attacks by balloon and radio transmissions (including those of VOA), were a complete waste of money and time by large American corporations. They specifically took offense at some leaflets that criticized Czech trade unions. The Czech home service responded to these attacks by intense criticism of the American Federation of Labor and the American Legion.

The balloon campaign so angered the Czech government that it actually went before the United Nations to try to get the balloons stopped. They proposed an amendment to end all propaganda that "tends to create hostility and hatred among nations."¹⁵ The amendment was proposed on 26 November 1954 by the Czech ambassador Mrs. Sekaninova-Cakrtova. The item was later

¹⁵Manuscript of U.N. declaration, Time Inc. File, Underhill, Garrett, U.N. Czechoslovakia Item, 9th General Assembly, Box 87, 1954, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 2.

withdrawn by Mrs. Cakrtova. This was because the U.S. and several of its allies amended the proposal to the extent that it began to read like a condemnation of Communism.

In 1955, the Czech attitude toward the balloons seemed less intense. During Operation VETO, a 5 September article in RUDE PRÁVO described the hunting of the balloons as a type of game. The article was written for Czechoslovakian Air Force Day, which was on 5 September 1955. The title of the article was "A Play - But a Great Deal of Skill is Involved."¹⁶ The short article continued "The three came nearer, perform a loop - and presently the machines began hunting the balloons. There were 150 of them launched. The task of the pilots is to spot the balloons in the air and to strike them down. The planes make winding movements, sharp turns, at times there is a roar of the engine, at other times as if the plane would make a jump. Yes, it is a play, but how much courage and skill is hidden in it, how steadfast must be the pilot's hand."¹⁷ The caption under one of the pictures reads "In a dive, this plane was striking down the balloons."¹⁸ The pilots discussed in the article were part of the Pardubice Aeroklub,

¹⁶Letter to Dulles from Jackson, Time Inc. File, Dulles, Allen, Box 44, 14 February 1956, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 4.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 3.

which flew only old bi-planes.

While trying to evaluate the effectiveness of the balloon campaigns, the Czechoslovakian section of RFE closely monitored the Czech press. They reported an increase in press attacks after the beginning of Operation VETO (January to July 1954). In 1953 alone—the year before the major balloon campaign began, the Czech press attacked Radio Free Europe a total of eighty-nine times. Seventeen of those attacks directly mentioned the limited balloon launches that occurred in 1953.¹⁹ From April 1954 to February of 1956, there were a total of 1319 attacks on RFE. Attacks on the balloon operations VETO, FOCUS, and SPOTLIGHT averaged 58 press attacks per month.²⁰ During the April 1954 to February 1956 period, Radio Free Europe implemented more balloon/leaflet operations than it had in its first three years of existence. Regime press assaults increased in proportion to the number of operations.

The light-hearted mood of the Czech press came to an abrupt end on 19 March 1956, when Czechoslovakia charged that a Radio Free Europe balloon caused a fatal crash over the Tatra Mountains. The accident occurred

¹⁹Black Book for July to December 1953, Time, Inc., NCFE file, part 2, pp. 12-13, Papers of C.D. Jackson. Listings and scripts for a number of Czech papers and radio broadcasts are included in this book. The Black Book for 1954 is missing.

²⁰Radio Free Europe, Audience Analysis Monthly Report, Vol. II, No. 2, February 1956, p. 1.

in January, but was not protested until March. A new offensive by the Soviets and the satellite countries was underway to shut down RFE. As a result of these charges, Joseph C. Grew, Chairman of the Free Europe Committee in 1956, held a meeting on the same day with Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold. There had been complaints on 24 February from the Czech Foreign Ministry that American balloons had been creating hazards to civil aviation--violating the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation of 1944. However, in that complaint, there was no mention of the 19 January crash.

In defense of the Free Europe Committee, Grew submitted a lengthy rebuttal. Grew presented his defense before the U.N. Secretary General on Tuesday, March 20, the day after the Czechs presented their claims. Grew claimed that the UNESCO Conference in Montevideo of 1954, allowed for the "free flow of information" that would contribute to "understanding and friendship among peoples."²¹ Grew stated that the Communist governments of Czechoslovakia, as well as Hungary and Poland had been violating the UNESCO Constitution by violating the principle of free communication. The only way to overcome the state-

²¹Memo to director from Shepardson. 20 March 1956, Time Inc., File, FEC thru 1956, Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 4.

imposed barriers was to "resort to exceptional methods of communication, such as balloons."²²

According to the standards of the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Administration, FEC balloons could not have caused the fatal accident of 19 January. The Air Coordinating Committee of the United States defended FEC by stating that aviation problems could only have occurred if the balloons were over ten pounds. But, the maximum load of the FEC balloons was seven pounds. They also noted that scores of weather balloons were released every day, from all over the world. These balloons weighed less than ten pounds, and no accidents had been recorded because of them. The FEC balloons travelled at a maximum altitude of between 24,000 and 40,000 feet-- which was well above the maximum ceiling for commercial aircraft at that time.²³

The weather also made it impossible for any balloons to have travelled over the Tatra region on the date of the accident. The wind patterns would not have allowed for West to East balloon flight at the time of the crash. The visibility in the Tatra Mountains was only 70 feet on 19 January, and was noted as being hazardous for air travel in bad weather. The plane had been re-routed through an area of the Tatras that had

²²Ibid., p. 5.

²³Ibid., p. 6.

heavy fog and snow. Mr. Grew concluded his rebuttal by claiming that the bad weather was to blame for the accident. Grew felt the entire incident was promoted by the Soviet Union, as part of its continued attempts to defame FEC and check the free flow of information on Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary.

After Soviet pressure mounted, the German government began to press RFE to stop or postpone operations. Relations between RFE and the German government were always strained, and this situation did not help. The Germans also urged the United States to take some action to reduce tension between the Germans, Soviets, and Radio Free Europe. Ambassador Krekeler (of West Germany) pressured Washington to act. Allen Dulles, head of the CIA became concerned with the operations. In a letter to C.D. Jackson, Dulles stated "the balloon situation is getting badly fouled up and I am worried about the effects"²⁴ on future operations. Political pressure on FEC President Whitney H. Shepardson was conveyed on to other FEC members. The extent of the anxiety was noted in a 1956 memo in which Shepardson claimed "Ambassador Krekeler is pushing the U. S. Government to ask us to call this operation off. The push has suddenly become evident in the last forty

²⁴Letter from Allen W. Dulles to C.D. Jackson, 12 February 1956, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

eight hours."²⁵

The duress caused by the public and diplomatic protest was fended off, and balloon/leaflet operations continued for a number of months. However, the prodding had a negative effect on the health of the aging president of FEC, Whitney Shepardson²⁶. Pressure continued even though RFE advised its listeners not to take any chances that might lead to violence or personal danger. RFE was also cautious in its rhetoric in an attempt keep people from provoking people into violent acts. At the time, RFE's cautious tone was largely unnoticed, or ignored. Press organization in the West and the East preferred to take a negative tone toward RFE operations. As a result, public and political pressure mounted for RFE to cease their aggressive programs.

²⁵Memo to directors from W. Shepardson, 7 March 1956, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, Box 45, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 2

²⁶Shepardson retired his position in 1956 because of his poor health.

Chapter 2

FOCUS on Hungary

Matyas Rakosi established himself in the Hungarian Communist Party during World War II. Under the guidance of Moscow, Rakosi led several Communist resistance groups against the Nazis. After the war, he controlled the Party with the help of several hard-line members. It was in 1949, that Rakosi gained full control of Hungarian political system. In 1947, the Communists had managed to break-up the right wing parties and absorb smaller left-wing groups into the Communist Party. With the opposition confused, suppressed, and split, Rakosi called for elections. In these elections, his party gained received over ninety-five percent of the votes. A new constitution made the Communist Party the only political force in Hungary.

Over the next four years, Rakosi consolidated his power and strove for total control of the people's lives. The Communist Party received prominent mention at all cultural events. Slogans about the glorious Communist

Party were everywhere. Schools had to teach the Party line. Religion was repressed, as Rakosi tried to make Communism the new religion of the people. Terror was an effective weapon under Rakosi.

Rakosi followed Stalin's social policies as well. The people were reluctant to speak against him, for fear that they might be turned in to the secret police. Under KGB tutelage, the Hungarian secret police became experts in keeping the Hungarian people under control. Suspicion of neighbors and co-workers was commonplace because the Hungarian secret police supposedly had thousands of informants. Rakosi's picture was a common sight on the streets, as was his presence via the secret police. By 1953, he had effectively setup his own cult of the personality.

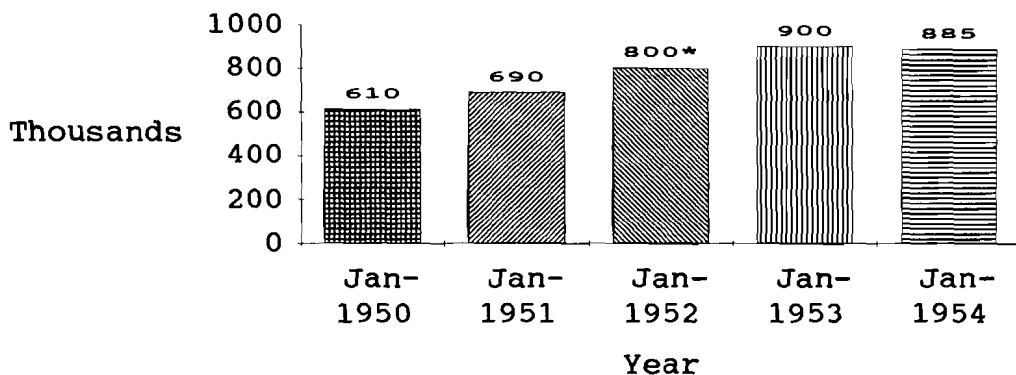
Rakosi maintained strict control of the Hungarian Communist Party. Like many of the communist leaders of Eastern Europe at that time, he had totally destroyed many organs of the past government. Any governmental institutions that he felt had the potential of threatening his power were either closed or rendered ineffective. The purge was the most effective tool that Rakosi had in maintaining a tight grip on the party. Anyone that could be a possible opponent for mastery within the government was purged.

Under Rakosi, Hungary suffered greatly on the economic front. Soviet economic models were faithfully followed. Central planning of industry and the collectivization of agriculture began in 1949 and continued into 1953. As a result, Hungary underwent a negative balance of trade for several years. The emphasis on heavy industry meant that Hungary needed to import raw materials from the Soviet Union. The Hungarians did not know how to extract what natural resources they possessed. They required Soviet expertise to teach them the best way to use their wealth. The Soviets were the main exporter and importer, and any offer of aid from the West was immediately rejected in order not to jeopardize Hungary's economic or political standing with the Soviets.

Increased industry created a greater need for workers. Most of the workers were brought in from the collective farms. Incentives of higher pay and better housing were used to lure young farmers to come to the cities. Enthusiasm to work in the cities waned after workers wrote back to the collectives. Life in the city was just as bad or worse than on the collective. When workers from the farms would not co-operate, the government opted to use forced labor. Impact of the government policy is shown on the following chart.¹

¹The following figures were obtained from Ernst C. Helmreich's book, Hungary (New York: Frederick A. Preager), 1957, p. 271.

Number of Industrial Workers



An increase in workers resulted in an increase in misery for the new city dwellers. The influx of workers created a severe housing shortage in the cities. Under Rakosi's programs, the number of live births increased from 185,820 in 1952 to 223,347 in 1954. Food shortages, declining health care, and cramped and unsanitary conditions created a tense environment. These reluctant workers were uneducated, unhealthy, and unhappy. The result was lower productivity and higher levels of bitterness toward the government.

Low wages and very few and increasingly costly consumer goods added fuel to the fire of bitterness toward Rakosi. In 1949, the average cost of food per month was 100.36 forints. By 1954, the monthly cost was 198.61 forints. The average income per industrial worker in 1954

* This number indicates the first full year of Rakosi's Five Year Plan.

was slightly more than 190 forints. Household expenses averaged 25.5 forints, and clothing averaged 38.45 forints in 1954--which meant that at least one, and sometimes two other members of the household had to work to pay the monthly bills.² Few households had money for consumer goods--what few there were in 1954. Just how much families were affected by Rakosi's policies can be seen in the following table.

Table of Expenses* for Selected Years³

ITEM	1949	1951	1952**	1954***
Food/month	90.36	155.85	223.06	189.61
Household/month	14.08	14.08	25.50	25.50
Clothing/month	25.56	31.49	42.72	38.45
Index	100	154.9	224.1	195

*All figures are in Forints--except index figures.

**The average wage in 1952 was 187.20 Forints.

***The first year of Nagy's reform programs.

The collectivization of farm land increased the resentment toward Rakosi. Lands that had been in families for generations were stripped away and claimed by the State. Many peasant farmers that had worked for the wealthy land owners felt they should have a right to own those lands. After all, many of the peasant families had

²Ernst C. Helmreich, Hungary, 1957, p. 281. Calculations for the figures take inflation into account for a more accurate estimate.

³Ibid., Inflation is included. 1949 was used as a base year because it was the year before Rakosi's Five Year Plan.

worked the same lands since the days of serfdom. These hopes were dashed, as were the hopes of many small farmers who had small plots. All lands were seized by the State and organized into collective farms. All individual ownership of land was outlawed. Several riots occurred thanks to the collectivization drive of the early 1950's.

When Stalin died in March of 1953, the new leaders of the Soviet Union did not approve of Rakosi's government. The Kremlin had been keeping a close watch on events inside Hungary, and feared that they could erupt if a change in leadership was not immediately made. Rakosi was called to Moscow by Khrushchev and severely reprimanded, and forced to give up the premiership to Imre Nagy.

Nagy had been a part of the government in 1945, and was closely aligned with Moscow. But, during the 1950's, he fell into disgrace due to his opposition to Rakosi's economic policies. Nagy had devised a plan called the "New Course," which was a blueprint for shifting the economy from heavy industry to "light" industry (production of consumer goods). Nagy recognized the discontent of the workers and attempted to raise wages and lower food prices.

Nagy never gained the full support of the Politburo, which was still packed with Rakosi's backers. However, Nagy did not let the lack of support stop him from trying to implement his reforms. He started his programs in

1954, but the Conservatives continually slowed or blocked their implementation. As a result, many of Rakosi's unpopular programs stayed in effect until the last half of 1954. The people who wanted change immediately in 1954, began to be upset with Nagy's programs. By late 1954, Nagy managed to get many of his New Course programs under way. Nagy removed some of the conservatives and replaced them with his own people. Due to Nagy's successful social reforms, tensions eased .

Nagy abandoned the collectivization of farms, which greatly reduced pressures in the countryside. Memberships in the collectives fell over forty percent.⁴ Farmers were allowed to have some small plots. This was similar to the U.S.S.R., where members of the collectives were allowed to cultivate their own small plots.

Concentration on light industry also created a more relaxed atmosphere in the factories. Workers began to produce consumer goods. Some of the workers who did not wish to continue in the cities went back to the farm. Economic reforms included an increase in wages, which relieved some of the economic strain on the workers. Promises of better housing and social conditions were part of the "New Course." Some improvement was felt in late 1954, which can be seen in the chart on page 43, and the

⁴Bennet Kovrig, "Hungary," Communism in Eastern Europe (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press), ed. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, 2nd ed., 1984. p 92.

table on page 44. These programs helped to improve Nagy's standing with the masses.

Nagy also released most of the political prisoners jailed by Rakosi during his purges. One of these prisoners was Janos Kadar, who would later replace Nagy after the 1956 uprising. These reforms along with the shift to light industry created a conservative backlash, as Rakosi began to enhance his support in the Politburo. Many of the Politburo members felt threatened by the reforms and were ready to change leaders by mid-1954.

Radio Free Europe took careful note of the events inside Hungary. They were aware of the dissent inside the Communist government led by Nagy, thanks to interviews with exiles, and other information supplied to RFE by the CIA. RFE first responded cautiously to Nagy's programs. Initial limited criticisms of the "New Course" by RFE did not hurt Nagy. It actually helped put the conservatives in an uncomfortable situation.

If the conservative Communists supported Nagy, they would be admitting that they had made mistakes. This would not only embarrass them, but also the Soviet Union--since the hard-liners closely followed Moscow's economic policies. But, if they opposed him, then they would actually be agreeing with RFE. The conservatives reacted by biding their time. When Nagy's policies went too far, they would act.

Radio Free Europe developed Operation FOCUS in October 1954. Initial reactions appeared positive. In a letter to Allen Dulles, C.D. Jackson reported early successes. According to Jackson, the "Red flag is no longer displayed on public occasions; the Communist regime and Party members wear Hungarian national colors in their buttonholes; the Internationale is no longer sung, but the Hungarian National Anthem is; etc., etc."⁵ Jackson claimed that the Hungarians were taking to passive resistance quite well. One Hungarian told him that Hungarians "know how to do these things. We used to do it all the time to the Habsburgs."⁶

At that time, RFE was unsure of how committed Nagy was to reform. RFE hoped to test Nagy's resolve toward reform by urging his government to increase freedoms for the people. The strength of the right wing of the Communist Party within Hungary was also a target. RFE wanted the workers to be aware of how the top Party members lived, and which of these members abused their power the most. Radio Free Europe in their election rhetoric tried to attack the most conservative members of the Communist Party. A more cautious tone was used toward liberal party members.

⁵Letter from C.D. Jackson to Allen W. Dulles, 24 November 1954, Time Inc. File, Dulles, Allen, p. 1, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

⁶Ibid.

FOCUS was similar to VETO, the RFE project in Czechoslovakia, in its insistence that the people be given a greater voice in government and industrial affairs. RFE aggressively pursued Operation FOCUS as reforms in Hungary progressed. Much of the reform was due to Nagy's programs. However, RFE maintained pressure on Nagy. The pressure became so annoying to many in the Nagy government, that a formal protest was presented.

In Budapest, the U.S. Legation received the formal note of protest on Monday, October 15, 1954. The letter of protest objected to the fact that the balloons were being launched from the U.S. Zone of Occupation of West Germany. The letter proclaimed that "it is the openly avowed object of this plan that the inciting and slanderous leaflets should stir up discontent among the people of Hungary and invited them to put up resistance of their lawful government."⁷

The letter had the following three main points: "1) It is a basic principle of international law, derived from the sovereignty of states, that states must refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another. It is beyond dispute that the dispatching of the above-mentioned leaflets to the territory of the Hungarian People's

⁷Protest letter from the Hungarian Government, 15 October 1956, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, p. 1, Records of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

Republic constitutes an obvious interference with the internal affairs of the Hungarian People's Republic."⁸

The second point accused the United States of not controlling what was happening in its zone of occupation. Therefore, through negligence, the United States was violating international law by allowing the balloons to be launched. Not only was the United States breaking international law, but it was also violating the Potsdam Agreement. The Potsdam Agreement stated that four controlling powers would control events in their sectors, and not allow any provocations to occur. According to the Hungarians, the Americans were only interested in provoking the Hungarian people against their government.

Passage of the Mutual Security Act was the final point. According to the Hungarians, the "millions of dollars in support of subversive activities against other states, including the Hungarian People's Republic--lead[s] to the conclusion that the U. S. Government not only renders possible, but also gives support" to such endeavors.⁹ To prove that the United States actually did seek the relaxation tensions, the Hungarian government demanded that the balloons stop. Such a "hostile action"¹⁰ must be stopped by the U.S. government, or Hungary might have to take another approach, claimed the

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2.

letter. The entire text of the letter was broadcast on Radio Budapest at midnight of October 15.

By December, the State Department responded to the protest. It supported the action of RFE and blamed the Hungarian government for forcing RFE to take unusual means to communicate with the people of Hungary. The response also claimed that RFE and the Crusade for Freedom (the group that supposedly funded RFE) were both private organizations. As such, the United States had no jurisdiction over them.

The State Department claimed to have reviewed a number of the leaflets and felt they were not provocative. The leaflets only suggested that the Hungarian people follow legal means to have the Hungarian Constitution followed. As a further slap to the Hungarian government, the letter went on to suggest a number of reforms. Many of these reform ideas were taken from RFE leaflets. Included in the suggestions were equality of all Hungarians, accountability by the government, free speech and assembly, and a number of others.

One leaflet, dropped at Christmas time, showed on the front a famous painting by a fifteenth-century Hungarian Artist. The picture was of Mary and Jesus. On the back was a prayer and a few words added by Radio Free Europe. After discussing the picture, RFE added the sentence "Men bowed under sorrow and humiliation, men oppressed and

persecuted draw from this light the patience and strength to await the day that will bring them peace, truth and freedom."¹¹ This leaflet angered a number of Hungarian government officials. These officials felt RFE was exploiting Hungarian culture for their own ends.

Due to defectors and CIA reports, RFE became aware that Nagy was under intense pressure. They did not particularly like Nagy (after all, he was still a Communist), but they preferred him to the alternative. As a result of this information, RFE toned down some of its rhetoric. Radio Free Europe concentrated more on the hard-liners, who were still in the Party--such as Rakosi. By 1955, however, Nagy was beyond help.

By January of 1955, the conservatives took note of the support for Nagy among the workers. Conservatives feared that Nagy might become too popular and threaten their power bases. Rakosi played upon these fears, and rapidly gained more support. Rakosi used his contacts and supporters within the Soviet Union to weaken Nagy's position there. Attacks on Nagy from within the Hungarian Party also increased. Conservative within the Hungarian Politburo insisted on the return of Rakosi. Nagy, they claimed, was deviating from Marxist-Leninist ideology.

¹¹Christmas Message, 20 December 1954, Time Inc. File, FEC thru 1956, p. 1, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

Nagy held his opponents at bay until April 1955, when he was removed by the hard-liners for "right-wing opportunist deviation."¹² Nagy looked to Moscow for support, but found none due to Rakosi's intrigues. Even Khrushchev supported Rakosi, stating "I have to keep Rakosi in Hungary, because in Hungary the whole structure will collapse if he goes."¹³ However, the result of this "coup" was a split in the Hungarian Communist Party.

Some Party members stoically followed the policies of whoever was in power. The reformers refused to go along with Rakosi. They felt the programs of the past destroyed Hungarian society, and they wanted Nagy to return. However, the conservatives would have none of it, and Nagy was expelled from the party in November 1955. A deepening of the split in the Party was the result of the expulsion.

Public support for Nagy and his policies grew. Writers supported reforms and condemned the hard-liners for their actions. Rakosi instituted plans to repress the opposition that only angered the people more. Moscow paid careful attention to events in Hungary. At the time, tensions in Poland were increasing, and Khrushchev wanted to defuse the situation in Hungary. Khrushchev removed Rakosi and he was replaced by his second in command, Erno

¹²Bennet Kovrig, "Hungary," Communism in Eastern Europe, 1984, p. 92

¹³Ibid.

Gero. Gero was much like Rakosi, and his leadership did not improve the situation.

In mid-October 1956, while Gero was out of the country, demonstrations broke out. Crowds demanded the return of Nagy, "expulsion of Rakosi from the party, public trial for Farkas¹⁴ and others implicated in the Stalinist outrages, publication of foreign trade agreements including Soviet exploitation of Hungarian uranium, freedom of expression in literature, and finally, the evacuation of Soviet troops."¹⁵ On 13 October 1956 the shooting began, and did not stop until thirteen days later.

Nagy became premier and Kadar first secretary. The crowds demanded that they implement policies that would return Hungary to a Western-style society. The Soviets responded by massing troops on the border and increasing the number of troops inside Hungary. These movements sent clear warnings to Nagy. Nagy responded by organizing a new government that included some hard-liners and some non-party members. Nagy was also in contact with Khrushchev, demanding that Hungary be able to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. Khrushchev stalled during the

¹⁴Mihaly Farkas was the Minister of Defense under Rakosi. He was hated among the people for being a brutal lieutenant of Rakosi.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 93.

negotiations. He wanted the Red Army to prepare for an attack, and he wanted to find a new leader for Hungary.

While Nagy re-arranged his government, RFE broadcast the minimum demands of the people. RFE wanted Nagy to know what the people expected of him. Many of the people feared that Nagy's government would encourage invasion. The minimum demands included removal of Soviet troops from Hungary, free speech, fair elections, and the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Nagy tried to implement these reforms, but negotiations with the Soviets would not be easy. Khrushchev had yielded to Gomulka in Poland on some reforms. Khrushchev showed some interest in allowing reforms in Hungary, but could never accept a Hungary that was not a member of the Warsaw Pact.

President Eisenhower knew that Khrushchev feared that the United States would try to gain Hungary as a military ally. In order to calm those fears, Eisenhower made a speech that explained the position of the United States. He rejected the idea the United States had any military plans for Eastern Europe. Eisenhower also stated that "The United States has made clear its readiness to assist economically the new and independent governments of these countries . . . we do not demand of these governments their adoption of any particular form of society as a condition upon economic assistance. Our one concern is

that they be free."¹⁶ The speech was continually broadcast on Radio Free Europe from November 1 to November 4.

The Soviet saw a weaklink in Nagy's government. The weaklink was Janos Kadar. Kadar was seen as a loyal Communist by the Soviets. They convinced Kadar that Nagy was betraying everything that Communism stood for. Membership in the Party drastically declined, as people burned their Party cards in the streets. When Nagy proposed a withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, Kadar felt Nagy had gone too far. Kadar changed sides and secretly left Budapest. On 4 November, Kadar called for the Red Army to restore order to Hungary. By 7 November the Red Army destroyed all armed resistance and installed Kadar as Premier of Hungary.

By December 1956, Hungary was in shambles economically and socially. Kadar used arrests and deportations to restore order and remove potential opposition. During the unrest, RFE attempted to be a reliable source of information to the people of Hungary. To do this, RFE used some balloons in the countryside, but relied mostly on the radio. Balloon information had too much lag time to be very effective during the revolt.

¹⁶Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1958, pp. 192-193.

Radio Free Europe was easy to pickup inside Hungary during the revolt, because the jamming towers had been destroyed. RFE monitored a number of weak signals from within Hungary. RFE selected information from these broadcasts that it felt might improve the moral of the Hungarian people. RFE sent a number of reporters to the Austrian-Hungarian border to gather reports. The main themes of the RFE broadcasts were for Hungarians to keep calm. Radio Free Europe did not want any more bloodshed.

Apparently, some underground transmitting stations had started to broadcast, claiming that they were Western stations--such as Voice Of America, the British Broadcasting Company, and RFE. Some Hungarians were receiving two and three signals claiming to be RFE or VOA, which confused many people. It was this kind of confusion that may have led some to believe that military help was coming from the West. Some felt that the Soviets may have been responsible for some of the false western stations. Later, this would allow the Soviets to place blame on Western stations.

Radio Free Europe became the scapegoat for some East European regimes. Articles and news broadcasts expressed the feeling that RFE had provoked the crowds to fight the Red Army. Some inside Hungary claimed that RFE broadcasts promised swift and decisive military support from the

West. As a result of pressure from the West and East, several investigations were launched.

Interviews were done with people who had crossed into Austria during the unrest. One Hungarian defended RFE by stating that the "time of the Revolution was the greatest proof that Radio Free Europe is indispensable to the Hungarian people. It was our voice. And one thing is fact: RFE did not instigate any useless armed resistance. The Hungarian people did it, in their bitterness, without being encouraged by anyone."¹⁷

One Radio Free Europe report done in 1958 suggests that Janos Kadar did not blame RFE for the revolt. On November 11, Kadar stated that we "also have to know that the indignation of the crowds demonstrating against wrong deeds and methods was completely justified."¹⁸ However, later Hungarian Party members and publications did not feel the same way. Press attacks against RFE increased, using the Czech airplane crash, the Poznan riots, and the Hungarian revolt as three examples of RFE's interference in internal affairs.

Konrad Adenauer's West German government and the Council of Europe made extensive studies of the October-November 1956 events. Both of them cleared RFE of

¹⁷Radio Free Europe. The Radio Free Europe Story. Radio Free Europe: Munich, Germany. 1958. p. 9. This is an unpublished report obtained from Radio Free Europe.

¹⁸Ibid.

inciting the riots. Adenauer claimed in 1957, after the study was complete, that a review of the tapes and transcripts showed no intent of starting riots. Another report by the Christian Science Monitor cleared Radio Free Europe of the claims.

Many people felt that the timing of the Red Army invasion into Hungary had much to do with the situation in the Middle East. World attention had been shifted to the Middle East and the Suez Canal Crisis. The Western allies were busy trying to negotiate a solution to the Suez Crisis when the Hungarian situation erupted. Since the West was occupied in Middle East, Khrushchev was able to put down the Hungarian revolt and increase repression of the Hungarian people. Khrushchev may have believed that he was safe in using the military option because he knew that Western armies were concentrated in the Middle East.

In retrospect, only one report by RFE's governing board felt three broadcasts may have been considered too radical. The broadcaster of these three programs apparently disregarded the information he was supposed to read. The broadcaster was quickly replaced when the mistake was discovered. The other investigative boards did not think those reports encouraged revolt.

Some of the West German public and press protested the findings. They felt Radio Free Europe was a threat to peace. Demonstrations and editorials demanded RFE close

down. The West German paper controlled by the Free Democratic Party was the most severe. One of its editorials read: "A propaganda whose opportunistic agitation has to be paid for finally with the blood of people who have been led astray, is a crime against humanity, no matter from whom it may come or to whom it may be addressed. This holds true just as much for the strategists of the cold war in the so-called 'Fighting Group against Inhumanity' in Berlin as for Radio Free Europe in Munich; since the bloody suppression of the national revolution in Hungary, this station bears its name with even less justification than before"¹⁹.

A number of critical editorials filled the press for several months after the revolt failed. There were some defenders of RFE in the Western press, such as one editorial in the New York Times of December 15, 1956. That editorial stated Radio Free Europe's goals, and how RFE had fulfilled its role without causing violence.²⁰ However, negative articles dominated, and began to place blame on other groups they felt were involved with Radio Free Europe, the Crusade for Freedom, and the Free Europe Committee.

Suggestions were made in the West that the CIA was behind the RFE balloon/leaflet activities. Accusations

¹⁹Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe, 1958, pp. 194-195.

²⁰Radio Free Europe. The Radio Free Europe Story. Radio Free Europe: Munich, Germany. 1958. p. 10.

from the Eastern press that RFE was a CIA operation were common. But, when accusations began to appear in the Western press, action was taken. The Central Intelligence Agency did not want people to begin to investigate their connection with RFE. Therefore, as a result of all the bad publicity, RFE suspended all balloon/leaflet operations. Radio Free Europe hoped that the move would quiet their detractors and let the world shift its attention away from RFE.

Radio Free Europe believed balloon/leaflet operations could conclude in December of 1956. By the end of 1956, their technology was able to overcome the jammers and radios were becoming more common in many of the countries. RFE thought they could contact as many people without balloons as they could with them. Radio Free Europe also sensed that continuing balloon/leaflet operations might conjure up memories of the 1956 riots. RFE was anxious to bury that episode of their history, and move on to better times.

Chapter 3

SPOTLIGHT on Poland

Poland represented a target with great potential for a propaganda attack. By 1955, the Poles wanted their own identity in international relations. Tired of cultural, social, and political oppression, they began to demand reforms. The Poles blamed the Russians, and those that co-operated with them for their troubles. RFE's goal was to devise a program that would best exercise those feelings.

Radio Free Europe implemented their Polish program in three stages. RFE's first objective was to review Poland's historical and current relationship with Russia. The next step was to identify the major players in the Polish Communist Party. With the help of Polish exiles, RFE divided them by loyalty into nationalists and Muscovites. The final stage of planning was to determine the best strategy to attack the Communists most loyal to the Soviets. Part of the final stage was to determine the most effective ways to spread the word inside Poland. RFE had to decide which they would emphasize--balloons or

broadcasts. The name of this program was named Operation SPOTLIGHT¹.

Poland's past involvements with Russia were well documented. Russia had a prominent position in the political and economic situation inside Poland for hundreds of years. Poland in 1955 was no different. Polish leaders were puppets of Moscow, and even the Polish Army was under the command of a Russian general. Loyal Stalinists were in control of the government. Memories of the Second World War, and especially of the Warsaw uprising were still fresh in the minds of the people.

Stalin was seen as a destroyer of Poland and its culture. However, the Soviet-installed government wanted to stay in power; therefore they decided to extoll Stalin as a great thinker, teacher, and protector of Poland. An example of the governments position was displayed in the Workers Calendar for 1950, in which on passage stated: "The Soviet Union is the hope of mankind. It is the personification of everything that is wise and noble in human culture. The Soviet Union is a benevolent promoter of lofty ideas and is, therefore, loved and admired

¹The idea behind the name SPOTLIGHT was that the program would bring attention to those who opposed the will of the people. These people would be singled out, much like a spotlight singles out an actor on a stage.

everywhere."² Such acts instantly discredited the government in the eyes of the people.

Polish ties to the West had been broken. Connections that had been nurtured for centuries were cut-off or suppressed. The government tried to sever all bonds to the Catholic Church (90 percent of the Poles were Catholic) by closing Catholic schools and newspapers, as well as imprisoning clergy. Western connections existed in the fact that Latin and French were commonly spoken by the educated classes. Russian and German had less of a following due to past invasions.³

In an effort to try to eliminate any outside tampering with the minds of the pro-Western Poles, all prices for radio sets were greatly increased. Radio parts were kept close record of, so as to uncover any receivers that may have been hidden from the government. A massive amount of paperwork was necessary to purchase and license a radio set. The policy had the desired effect, and the number of sets decreased from pre-World War II figures. By 1956, there were only 166 sets per 1000 people in the city, and a mere 58 sets per 1000 people in the countryside.⁴

²Konrad Syrop, Spring in October (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1957), p. 10.

³Ibid., p. 11.

⁴Oscar Halecki, Poland, (New York: Frederick A. Preager, 1957), p. 138.

Life was drastically affected by the Communist policies. In agriculture, farmers were pressured into joining the collectives. High taxes and police harassment were common for farmers who did not want to give up their plots. Many farmers held out, and refused to yield to the bullying of the government. As a result of the repression, living conditions deteriorated. One unnamed Party writer described life on the farm this way: "dirt, hunger, misery, disease, prostitution, indifference, mass attacks of hysteria, attempts at suicide. But they do not let me write about these things in the name of 'Higher Goals'. . . Later I visited the state farms near Zielona Gora. The young people lived there like cattle, not like human beings. Somewhere in a wooden bed a young girl lay dying from disease and hunger. She had been fired because she had developed tuberculosis. They did not let me writer [sic] about that either, again in the name of our 'Higher Goals'..."⁵ As with most peasants throughout Eastern Europe, the farmers had a deep-felt bond with the land. Many plots had been in the same family for hundreds of years and throughout numerous invasions.

The leader of Poland, Boleslaw Bierut had been an agent of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. He

⁵Reports on Czechoslovakia, Poland, FEP Operations, Part III, p. 4, 5 November 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Cmte thru 1956 (FEC), Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

had been sent in to organize support for Communism in Warsaw. Bierut had been in Warsaw at the time of the uprising, but refused to believe the Soviets were at fault for the failure of the uprising. He blamed the West, and the government in exile, headed by Stanislaw Mikolajczyk. Backed by the Soviet Secret Police, and the Red Army, Bierut was rewarded for his support, and emerged as the leader of Poland.

Bierut led the country down a Stalinist path economically and socially. Propaganda was intensive through billboards and radio reports. "Socialist realism," in which all publications had to serve Party interests, was common. According to Andrzej Korbonski, Bierut was a "mediocre leader whose major achievement was that he managed to spare the country from the worst excesses of the mass political terror practiced in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary."⁶ Although Bierut could be brutal when punishing his rivals, he did not subject the Polish Communist Party to the purges that had helped create personality cults in neighboring countries.

Konrad Syrop states in his book Spring in October, that Bierut did in fact create an atmosphere of terror and repression. Syrop cites the fact that a large number of

⁶Andrzej Korbonski, "Poland," Communism in Eastern Europe, ed. by Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 70.

opposition leaders were exiled or imprisoned. However, several political outcasts were imprisoned in Poland, whereas many political rivals in other countries would have been executed. This was to help his case after the death of Stalin, and later when Wladyslaw Gomulka returned to power. Syrop rejects Korbonski's claims and states that Bierut did form a cult of personality. Communist Party slogans were everywhere, pictures and newsreels continually showed Bierut as a concerned leader, who was in touch with the people of Poland. Syrop claims that people could not go anywhere without seeing a picture of Bierut.⁷ Divisions among the Polish people were as common as the dispute between the two authors.

Differences in opinion among the resistance groups made it difficult for Radio Free Europe to organize a unifying program. Creating a People's Opposition was to be more difficult, not only due to political differences in Poland, but also because of geographical problems. The immense size of Poland required greater skill in balloon aviation. The problem was co-ordinating operations within Poland. Radio Free Europe attempted to organize events on a country-wide scale, so that the Polish government could not concentrate on one area.

Radio Free Europe was able to effectively utilize Operation SPOTLIGHT after the defection of a key person in

⁷Konrad Syrop, Spring in October, 1957, p. 12.

the Polish secret police. He was Jozef Swiatlo, who was part of the Polish inner circle, was Chief of Department in the Polish security services, and knew a great deal about the personal holdings and habits of the ruling elite. He also knew a great deal about the Party leaders because it was his job to keep watch on all members of the Polish government and the Polish Communist Party. Swiatlo was also valuable because the Soviets worked closely with him in order to find out which Party members might have had any sympathies toward the West.^a Swiatlo defected in late December 1953 at the U. S. embassy in Berlin. The CIA and other western intelligence organs completed his interrogation by September, after which, RFE was free to use him. Success of this program was to have a serious effect on the political life of Poland.

Swiatlo was a valuable tool in the psychological battles of 1954 to 1956. He held several news conferences throughout 1954, all of which were broadcast over RFE. From 1954 to 1956, Swiatlo broadcasted over one hundred and fifty programs to Poland on Radio Free Europe in order to embarrass his former superiors^b. RFE intended to use him to putting pressure on the government, and to show the people that their government was exploiting them.

SPOTLIGHT began in late 1954 by exposing through RFE

^aAllen Dulles, The Craft of Intelligence, (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 163.

^bKonrad Syrop, Spring in October, 1957, p. 21.

broadcasts and leaflets, the degree of luxury that many of Poland's leaders enjoyed. Many people inside Poland were infuriated. Because of Swiatlo's revelations, several purges and major re-organizations took place inside the Bezpieka (political police). Swiatlo's apocalypses and the continuing instability caused by Stalin's death induced the Polish government to take action.

Lower Party members were outraged when they heard Swiatlo discuss the private lives of the upper echelons of the Party. Unrest within the Party¹⁰ was an issue that RFE wanted to exploit, and Swiatlo was the perfect tool. He detailed how the top officials obtained vast amounts of wealth, and rewarded those who helped them. Swiatlo also explained how the security police systematically eliminated anyone who might have been a threat to the Party leadership. These revelations created a shake-up within the Party. Top members retired, or were removed from government (through imprisonment or execution). More popular members took the places of those implicated by the Swiatlo scandal. The key leaders of the government (such as Bierut) stayed the same, but many close associates were replaced to calm the unrest caused by the scandal.

¹⁰This unrest was evident in the tone of the writer who had described conditions on the collective farm-- mentioned in a preceding paragraph. Disbelief in the Party's programs and leadership is shown in his comments toward the "Higher Goals" policy.

One month after the Swiatlo press conference of September 1954, the Polish government responded. An official communiqué was issued to try to discredit Swiatlo's accounts. The communiqué stated: "Following an inspection ordered by the State Authorities in the middle of 1953 certain cases were brought to light of a gross violation of the people's rule of law. . . The authorities detected Jozef Swiatlo as an agent provocateur of the US secret service. . . Taking advantage of the absence of proper supervision, he selected certain persons and caused them to be arrested on false charges."¹¹ It was weeks before any action took place within Party, due to the dissention within the Politburo. Many members did not want to condemn openly the people who had protected them for so many years. After all, the people who replaced the purged members might not be as loyal as their predecessors. If the new officers couldn't be sure their leaders would support them they might do the same thing Swiatlo did. However, they had to quell popular dissent within their ranks, and that meant reorganizing the security services.

Wladyslaw Gomulka was untouched by this scandal. Swiatlo had been the arresting officer of Gomulka in 1951, and indirectly testified to Gomulka's conviction not to yield to Soviet demands. Swiatlo never mentioned Gomulka

¹¹Konrad Syrop, Spring in October, 1957, p. 23.

as an abuser of power--a fact that many rank-and-file Party members respected. Because of this, pressure increased on Bierut to release Gomulka. Bierut agreed, on condition that Gomulka stay out of the political situation until the scandal was forgotten. Gomulka agreed, and was secretly released on Christmas Eve, 1954.

One report delivered to C.D. Jackson summarized the Swiatlo affair as follows: "within a few weeks of this campaign, which refugee reports agree provoked a public scandal in Poland, high ranking security officials branded by Swiatlo were dismissed from office on the grounds of 'glaring misuse of authority' and the 'application of investigatory methods forbidden by law.' The purge of officials implicated in the Swiatlo case continued throughout 1955-1956, and the regime's new 'legality' campaign left the security services badly demoralized. Police power in Poland remained formidable, but the rank-and-file Party members and the people sensed a new weakness in the regime. There can be no doubt that the weakening of the security police, the first organizational victims of the 'that,'[scandal] directly contributed to the present political crisis."¹²

¹²Reports on Czechoslovakia, Poland, FEP Operations, part III, p. 4, 5 November 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Cmte thru 1956 (FEC), Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library.

Jozef Swiatlo at first was happy to bring discomfort to his former overseers. However, there were signs that he was growing tired of being a propaganda tool. Many of the people near him, noticed that he began to look physically tired, and was becoming easily irritated. Late in 1955, Swiatlo no longer wanted leaflets containing his speeches to be dropped into Poland. RFE officials were uncertain as to why he requested this, but for a while they complied. However, after a few weeks, RFE began to drop leaflets with his speeches into Poland. When Swiatlo found out about the operation, he promptly told RFE, the CIA, and other Western media that he would do no more broadcasts. Swiatlo wanted to begin his new life in the West. Swiatlo's wishes were complied with and no new programs aired, although some broadcasts were re-aired.

By late 1955, Swiatlo's usefulness was played out. At this time, many of Swiatlo's former bosses had been removed from power. The initial shock had worn off the Party and the people. Swiatlo had done an effective amount of damage, and he could be retired to another life without any loss in the propaganda battle. However, some people felt that the mis-management of Swiatlo caused the loss of the most valuable tool in Operation SPOTLIGHT. But SPOTLIGHT's effectiveness was not solely based on Jozef Swiatlo. Radio Free Europe was staffed with a

wealth of capable Polish exiles, who knew how to manage operation SPOTLIGHT.

SPOTLIGHT depended upon several highly respected exiled intellectuals. The head of the operation, and head of the Polish Desk at Radio Free Europe was Jan Novak¹³. Novak was born on 15 May 1913 in Warsaw. He received a Master's degree in economics and political science from the University of Poznan in 1938. He worked at the University of Poznan until World War II began. During the war, he wrote an underground newspaper printed in German. The goal of the newspaper was to spread defeatist ideas throughout Germany. To do this, the writers needed to get the papers inside Germany. Most delivery routes were set-up to get the newspapers into Germany through Poland's western border. Once the papers were delivered across the border, Novak set-up a distribution system inside Germany. During the war, Novak crossed the Polish-Germany border several times to deliver the paper and organize new routes.

Novak continued to help his country in many other ways during the war. "In 1943, he was sent as a courier from Poland to Stockholm and after returning was sent to London with important dispatches for American and British authorities. The British parachuted him back into Poland in 1944 and during the Warsaw uprising he was one of those

¹³His real name is Jan Jezioranski.

responsible for the operation of the underground radio "Blyskawica" (Lightning). Shortly before the capitulization of Warsaw in October, General Bor Komorowski dispatched Mr. Novak to London with reports and documents. He crossed Germany and was the first man to arrive in London with an eyewitness account of the Warsaw uprising."¹⁴ After the war, he worked for the Polish government in exile in London. In 1946, he worked for Polish Radio in London and then for the British Broadcasting Company. In 1950 he was the first Pole to be employed by RFE, and was made the Chief of the Polish Desk.¹⁵

One report claimed that it was critical that a group of Poles outside Soviet control was willing to lead the opposition to the Communists. In this way, RFE is able to play upon Western sympathy, and allow the exile community to exert an influence within Polish borders. The exiles were "beyond Soviet reach and demonstrably supported by the United States, able to report on the West at first hand and able, through mass media of radio and leaflets, to play an active role within (their former) country's

¹⁴Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), pp. 50-51.

¹⁵Today, Mr. Novak resides in Virginia. He retired from RFE in 1976, and currently does speaking tours, as well as being very active in a number of Polish-American organizations.

borders."¹⁶ RFE effectively utilized its broadcasts to play upon the low living standards inside the iron curtain. Programs showed how advantageous life could be on the other side of the curtain.¹⁷

Based upon these conclusions, one author felt SPOTLIGHT was very effective because of the atmosphere inside Poland at the time. He wrote that Poland was the "weakest link in the Soviet-satellite empire; that political forces which may lead to the dislodgement of Soviet power from Poland have not yet matured and shown full growth; and that intelligent political warfare both has played, and can continue to play, a significant role in the process which may eventually lead to Polish freedom."¹⁸

SPOTLIGHT was well timed. Throughout 1955, Polish society was being polarized. This polarization showed throughout the press and the Communist Party. In January 1955, at the Third Plenum, Bierut soundly criticized many of the lower leaders and proclaimed support for some liberalization. This upset many hard-liners within the Party. As a result of Bierut's proclamations, the press continued the criticism of the Party. Many writers

¹⁶Reports on Czechoslovakia, Poland, FEP Operations, part III, p. 5, 5 November 1956, Time Inc. File, Free Europe Cmte thru 1956 (FEC), Box 44, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library. Parenthesis added by author.

¹⁷Ibid., p.5.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 5.

published articles that supported self-criticism because it allowed the Party to see where mistakes were made, so that they could correct them. Doubts about Marxist-Leninist principles were expressed. Highly critical articles continued to flow from the press, which greatly embarrassed and angered many hard-liners.

The dissent caused confusion and disbelief among the people of Poland, and RFE tried to exploit the divisions. The Polish desk wrote programs and articles that were highly critical of the Communists. Flaws in government policies were pointed out, with detailed explanations about how Western governments handled the same problems. The freedom of speech and the press in the West were explained through leaflets and broadcasts. Removal of unpopular leaders through democratic elections were used to stir up the Polish people. By using these themes, RFE hoped to supplement the doubts about Communism that were already present in the Polish press. RFE wanted to reinforce the doubts about Communist policies in the minds of the Polish people.

By 1956, the government was under severe pressure from the people. Splits within the Party were also becoming strained. More relaxation in the press resulted in more criticism of the government. Radio Free Europe continued to bombard Poland with messages about life in the West. Doubts about the leadership in the Party

continued to grow, as RFE criticized the Communist policies. As doubts were raised inside Poland, events outside Poland were to cause even more unrest.

At the February 1956 Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev gave his secret speech. In this secret speech, he denounced Stalin and his policies--thereby discrediting Communist policies of the past thirty years. After the CIA obtained two copies of the secret speech (one from the Israelis, and one from an agent), Allen Dulles (then head of CIA) by March released edited copies of the speech to RFE to use in their broadcasts. Outrage among the Polish people and more doubts were the result of the Secret Speech. Articles began to question the relationship between the Soviet Union and Poland--something unheard of until Khrushchev's speech.

The release and rehabilitation of former Party members once purged by Stalin caused even more turmoil. In Poland, this meant Gomulka and many of his supporters who were released in 1954-1955, were allowed to rejoin the Communist Party. These men were looked upon by many in the Party as heroes because they had stood up against Stalin and were loyal to their beliefs. Many of those released were national Communists. These people were considered to be more loyal to their countries than to the Kremlin--it was because of this nationalist stance that

they had been imprisoned. The release of these people caused great alarm among the conservatives.

The death of Bierut was another destabilizing factor. Bierut had died in Moscow while he was attending the Twentieth Congress. Many Poles felt that he had been eliminated by the Russians. Large crowds attended his funeral in Warsaw, as he became considered by many as a victim of Russian imperialism. Members of the Polish Communist Party used the opportunity to feed upon this feeling. Political maneuvering was also part of the ceremony, as Premier Cyrankiewicz gave a speech that suggested his closeness to Bierut.

The Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee met to select the next leader. Khrushchev had flown to Warsaw to oversee the selection process and give the Kremlin's approval to the selection. Edward Ochab was selected as the successor to Bierut. He was not popular among the people--a problem that was not improved by Khrushchev's presence at the Plenum.

According to Swiatlo's past comments, Ochab was favored by the Soviet leaders, and had been chosen to succeed Bierut long before 1956. Radio Free Europe distributed a number leaflets detailing Swiatlo's comments. Radio Free Europe re-broadcast past programs in which Ochab had been portrayed as a pawn of Moscow.¹⁹

¹⁹Konrad Syrop, Spring in October, 1957, p. 34.

This was the final straw for the Polish people, who showed their true feelings about the situation inside their country by rioting at Poznan on 28 June 1956.

The riots took place at a time when the economic situation was at its worst. The leadership was so occupied with trying to subdue unrest within the Party and the populace that they had not developed an economic policy. For six months after the end of the Six-Year Plan, there was no formal economic policy. As a result, prices rose and production declined--that meant lower wages for the workers. A lack of policy in agriculture caused a severe shortage of food in the cities. All these factors caused leading workers in the industrial city of Poznan to organize a peaceful protest. Workers at the Stalin Steel Works planned the demonstrations. A parade from the steel works to the center of the city was supposed to be peaceful. As the group proceeded, police attempted to stop them. Confusion took over, as a shot rang out and violence erupted. Looting and lynching took place throughout the day.

The government responded by calling out the militia. The plan backfired when the militia turned against the government. The people convinced the militia that they should not shoot their own people. The people told the soldiers that they should not do the dirty work for the Russians. Finally, the regular army was called out to

keep the protests from spreading to other parts of the city. Many of these units were trained by the Soviets, with officers loyal to Moscow and the Communist Party. Early the next day, order was restored.

At the time of the protest there was an International Trade Fair. Several Westerners were at the Fair. Many workers felt this was an excellent opportunity to show the West how unhappy they were with the Communist system. The police tried to keep many Western businessmen away from the unrest, but many of them witnessed what happened. Radio Free Europe later used some of these witnesses in their broadcasts.

The fact that the protests occurred while several capitalists were in Poznan allowed the Communists to blame Western agents for the unrest. Supposedly, many rioters were distributing and reading aloud many of the RFE leaflets.²⁰ They also blamed Radio Free Europe for inciting the workers. According to the Polish government, RFE broadcasts and leaflets had encouraged violence and provoked the people. The first buildings destroyed by the rioters were the jamming stations around Poznan.

Radio Free Europe immediately suspended Operation SPOTLIGHT after receiving reports of the rioting. Contrary to Communist accusations, RFE forthwith began to

²⁰Time Inc. File, Free Europe Committee thru 1956: "RFE and the Poznan Demonstrations," 6 July 1956, Papers of C.D. Jackson, Eisenhower Library, p. 4.

broadcast programs intended to calm the crowds in Poznan. On 29 June, RFE broadcast a response to the riots in this way: "Let us have no illusions. Incidents like that play into the hands of Ochab and his Stalinist clique, who want the return of terror and oppression. The struggle for freedom must end in victory, for no regime based on repression can last. But in that struggle prudence is necessary. And therefore in the name of the ardent desire, common to us all, Poland's freedom, we must call on the people to preserve calm and refrain from acts of despair."²¹

While many RFE programs tried to calm the situation, they also told listeners that the West was in sympathy with them in their struggle. Newspaper articles from Western Europe and America that condemned the Polish government were broadcast to Poland. RFE also had top labor leaders such as George Meany (AFL-CIO President), David J. MacDonald (President of the United Steel Workers), and several others expressed their sympathy with the Polish workers. These people gave several interviews and speeches on RFE shortly after the riots.

Radio Free Europe was also valuable in spreading the word of what was happening in Poznan throughout the rest of Poland. RFE tried to obtain accurate account of what was happening by interviewing as many eyewitnesses from

²¹Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe, 1958, p. 175.

the Trade Fair as possible. Accuracy and reliability were the top priorities. Many accounts obtained from the western businessmen who were in Poznan at the time were broadcast to other satellite countries. Included in the broadcasts to Hungary and Czechoslovakia were warnings. Patience and caution needed to be used while working for freedom. Violence was to be avoided because violence only played into the hands of the government and wasted valuable human resources.

The Russians took note of the anti-Russian tone of the protests. Trials began for many Poznan rioters just before the Central Committee meeting. Shortly after the first meeting of the Central Committee, a motion was made to remove Ochab and install Gomulka as the First Secretary. In response to this move, the hard-liners contacted Moscow. Khrushchev, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Mikoyan arrived in Warsaw the next day. Tensions arose, and the people prepared for an invasion by the Soviets.

After careful negotiation by Ochab and Gomulka (who had become the new leader of Poland), invasion was avoided. Poland was allowed to continue a more liberal policy--although at a much slower rate than before. The people found Gomulka an acceptable alternative. He may have been a Communist, but he was a Pole first. The fact that he placed Poland's welfare ahead of the Soviet Union

provided a firm populist base. Gomulka's popularity allowed for a relaxing of tensions.

During the entire crisis that began with the Poznan riots, RFE was able to correctly assess the situation. Three months of tension resulted in a change of leadership, stability, and a new economic policy. Radio Free Europe had supported Gomulka during the crisis. This was not a comforting thought for the Polish exiles at RFE. However, they felt that it was better to support a liberal national Communist than a hard-liner who was loyal to Moscow. The RFE Polish Desk staff believed Gomulka was the first step toward greater liberalization further down the road. They felt Gomulka was a transitional figure who would take Poland a step closer to Western-style government. Gomulka was a step in the right direction, but he was not the answer to Poland's troubles--after all, he was still a Communist.

Organizing Operation SPOTLIGHT effectively enough to exploit the unrest that was wide-spread from 1955 to 1956 was not easy. This program had to be more flexible due to the changes that were so rapidly occurring in Poland during 1955-1956. Policy directives from New York stressed caution. Munich operated on an hour-by-hour basis during the height of the turmoil that was common in 1956. SPOTLIGHT, unlike VETO and FOCUS, was planned on a day to day basis, with no step-by-step plans. VETO and

FOCUS were planned weeks to months in advance, complete with time frames for each part of the operation.

SPOTLIGHT was not as structured, and required more caution.

By early October, conditions in Poland were stable. A new balloon/leaflet campaign was planned for the last months of 1956. However, events of 13 to 26 October 1956 in Hungary created such political pressure that the plans were indefinitely postponed at the time of the Revolt. The backlash from the Western press and more Communist attacks against balloon/leaflet operations caused the Polish Desk to permanently cancel all future balloon/leaflet operations.

Radio Free Europe's Effectiveness

In 1950, Radio Free Europe had two main goals for Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. One goal was to create an environment inside these countries in which reforms would be made. To create that environment, RFE felt it had to make the people aware that members in the government put personal gains or Moscow's wishes ahead of the country's problems. The standard of living was declining in all three countries, which intensified the unrest. The people blamed their government for these problems. Radio Free Europe tried to connect faces and names with the failures in order to focus the peoples anger on the most conservative members of the Communist parties in each country.

The second goal was to unify the opposition inside the three countries. As discussed earlier, Radio Free Europe's success in this area varied in each country. Operations conducted by RFE from 1950 to 1956 were designed to accomplish both tasks. Analyzing the

effectiveness of programs was not easy for RFE. It used regime press attacks, interviews with refugees and immigrants, and letters as the basis for their evaluations. Using these criteria had drawbacks because Radio Free Europe examined factors which were extremely biased--either for or against the regimes in question.

Press attacks showed that Radio Free Europe's programs were being noticed. Attacks increased gradually throughout the first half of the 1950's. The Communist press in each country was the mouthpiece for the government. For that reason, Radio Free Europe viewed press attacks as an accurate gage of effectiveness against Communist programs.

Press attacks gave Radio Free Europe guidance and ideas for future broadcasts and programs. Any subjects specifically mentioned in press attacks could be interpreted as a Communist vulnerability. If a press attack disputed an RFE statistic on living conditions, for example, RFE might broadcast more programs about declining living standards. Radio Free Europe analysts tried to screen through the biases of the Communist attacks and find deeper meaning in the attacks than the Communists had intended.

Credibility was a constant concern for experts who tried to analyze interviews with immigrants. Immigrants left because life in their homeland was such a struggle.

Their views were obviously tainted for several reasons. One reason was hatred of the Communist government in their former country. Another reason was opportunism. If the person being interviewed thought it would help him get a good job, the interviewee would be highly critical of the Communists. These people often made Radio Free Europe look like a savior. Fear was another reason that objective interviews were difficult or impossible to obtain. People who still had relatives inside their former country could not speak freely, for fear of reprisal upon their families. Many of these people would not speak to anyone about anything that occurred inside their former homelands.

Letters were also used as a source of evaluation. Radio Free Europe discouraged people from writing to Munich with their ideas because they feared reprisals for anyone caught writing to them. Despite RFE's warnings, they received thousands of letters each month. These letters told RFE what issues the people wanted to hear more about. Yet there was difficulty in evaluating the authenticity of letters. The secret police in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland sent Radio Free Europe hundreds of letters with a different name on each. Radio Free Europe could not determine which letters had been forged and which were genuine and, double-checking all addresses and names was an impossible task.

Radio Free Europe showed a considerable amount of concern for its listeners. Its concern was evident even before violence broke out in any of the countries. Throughout operations during 1950 to 1956, RFE, knowing that a listener could be imprisoned for listening to Western broadcasts, told its listeners not to take chances with their personal safety. Radio Free Europe suggested that its patrons listen to broadcasts alone, or with close family members. Listeners were to mention RFE broadcasts only to close friends who would not turn them in.

Critics question the wisdom of the leaflet campaigns on the grounds that these campaigns indiscriminantly put people in danger. A person with a radio could turn on or off an RFE broadcast whenever he felt like it. The radio owner knew the risks if he got caught--he could go to prison. This was not always the true with the leaflet campaigns. At first, people in the countryside of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland were not subject to penalty if found holding leaflets. Many of the farmers were curious and would collect the leaflets and read them. If a policeman saw a citizen with a leaflet, the citizen was immediately taken to the police station for questioning. The leaflet would be given to the police and nothing more would be done.

As Radio Free Europe dropped more and more leaflets, the governments decided to discourage people from picking

them up. By the end of 1951, severe penalties were in place. Anyone found carrying leaflets could be imprisoned or fined. Leaflets gave the police an excuse to imprison anyone thought to be sympathetic to the West. Police would jail the suspect and later claim the person was carrying leaflets. Innocent bystanders were also made examples of and given severe sentences.

The leaflet campaigns caused resentment and anger toward RFE in many people. A Hungarian refugee, Dr. Alfonz Lengyel spent 1950 through 1956 in a prison camp for political prisoners. During that time, he met several "people who received eight to twelve years sentences because they picked up leaflets."¹ After leaflets were dropped in an area Dr. Lengyel explained, the "secret police roused the area and arrested everybody who did not destroy the leaflets."² He concludes that Radio Free Europe's operation aimed at Hungary "was a failure and unnecessarily jeopardized the life of the Hungarians. The average Hungarian know [sic] nothing about this program only those who were in the political prisoncamps. The victims of this 'saturation broadcasting' filled the prisoncamps and the prison coal mines."³

Testimonials such as Dr. Lengyel's raise valid questions about how well Radio Free Europe thought-out the

¹Letter from Dr. Lengyel to the author, April 1991.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

balloon/leaflet campaigns. It is possible that RFE felt it was worth the risk to jeopardize innocent people for the cause of reform. The ethical questions dealing with this decision can vary from person to person. However, few--if any--RFE documents open to the people address this issue.

Czechoslovakia

Early in the 1950's, Czechoslovakia seemed to be a very vulnerable area of Eastern Europe. The regime had little popular support and even less success in economic policy. Czechoslovakia had an efficient industrial base, and a history of capitalism. The Communists managed to decrease the efficiency of the industrial base and destroy institutions that supported capitalism (such as private ownership of lands and private enterprise). The results of the Communist policies generated widespread anger among the people.

It seemed that Czechoslovakia would have been the most likely place for violence to erupt in the early 1950's. It also seemed that Radio Free Europe would be the most effective in Czechoslovakia due to the tensions caused by failed economic and social policies. Czech cultural connections to the West were not easily severed, and attempts to do so were angrily received. It would not

have been surprising to see a demand for radical reforms and changes in economic policy in 1951. Surprisingly, Czechoslovakia did not push for radical reforms until 1968--when that movement was quashed by the Warsaw Pact. It was the last of the three states to push the Soviets for reform. One possible reason for this is that opposition inside Czechoslovakia had received a number of setbacks.

The Czechs had little success in resistance work. During World War II, Czech resistance movements were brutally repressed and the leaders executed. They had no highly visible and strong leaders left after World War II. Edvard Benes was a weak old man in 1948, and could hardly lead a resistance movement. Jan Masaryk seemed to be the only possible resistance leader, but he died under mysterious circumstances shortly after the coup of 1948. It took twenty years for the Czech resistance to find a leader.

Radio Free Europe tried to unify the resistance that existed, but had little success. RFE was able to gain small victories but, was not able to exploit the discontent that existed in Czechoslovakia from 1950 to 1956. A comprehensive and effective plan of balloons and broadcasts did not come about until 1954. Before 1954, the sporadic leaflet drops and restricted broadcast hours seemed to have little effect on Czechoslovakia. Had RFE

been able to develop a program as comprehensive as VETO in 1950 or 1951, success might have been greater.

Inexperience in organized propaganda may have been the reason for the lack of greater success in Czechoslovakian operations from 1950 to 1956.

Hungary

The situation in Hungary differed from Czechoslovakia in that there was a strong reform movement within the Hungarian Communist Party. That movement had a strong leader in the person of Imre Nagy. By 1954, Nagy began to move Hungary toward a more liberal economic and social policy. Radio Free Europe hoped to have an effect on Nagy's policies by promoting popular ideas. Many of these ideas about improved conditions for farmers and workers were promoted by Operation FOCUS.

The 1954 liberalization in Hungary gave the reform movement more momentum. Radio Free Europe took a cautious approach to the liberalization policies because they were uncertain about Nagy's convictions. However, when Nagy began to move Hungary's industrial complex toward light industry, RFE took note. After Nagy's policies took effect, Radio Free Europe tried to keep the momentum going. Radio Free Europe encouraged its listeners to ask for more freedoms and rights in the hope that when the

people of Hungary tasted a little freedom, they would be less afraid to ask for more.

When Nagy's programs stalled in 1955 due to hard-liner intervention, the reform movement also stalled. The year following the take-over was one of pent-up anger and frustration for the Hungarian people. During that year, RFE continued to urge the people to push for reform. This fact did not help to settle any nerves or help prolong the patience of the people. Critics suggested that RFE is to blame for adding to the insecurity of the situation. In this sense, Radio Free Europe may well have some indirect responsibility for what happened in 1956.

Stopping the reform movement in its tracks, and trying to return to the old totalitarian ways led to the eruption of 1956. As a result of the instability caused by violence of October 1956, the Conservatives (who controlled the Army and had the full support of Moscow) regained control of the Hungarian government. Radio Free Europe did not react by trying to incite violence by calling for more riots or protests. Instead, RFE called for calm and an end to all violence. Careful study of RFE's role in the uprising by the German government and others found no direct guilt.

Poland

The situation in Poland in 1956 closely paralleled that in Hungary. Tensions were high and the likelihood of violence was great. However, the Poles were more cautious and did not make as radical demands as did the Hungarians. Negotiations were the preferred method. Wladyslaw Gomulka also kept a firm grasp of the situation inside Poland, and was able to control the people much better than did Nagy in Hungary. For these reasons violence was avoided.

Radio Free Europe helped Gomulka to come to power. Thanks to Jozef Swialto's revelations, the Communist Party of Poland was under great internal strain.⁴ Many prominent leaders in the Party were replaced with people who respected and supported Gomulka. The leaders of the Party needed to take steps to improve their image with their people, and to do this, the Party leaders decided to release Gomulka. With Gomulka's supporters in the Central Committee, it was easier for Gomulka to return to power in 1956. Radio Free Europe was partially responsible for this because the Swialto and SPOTLIGHT campaigns indirectly forced the removal of many hardliners who were opposed to Gomulka.

During the time of crisis in Poland, Radio Free Europe advised its listeners to be careful. RFE's policy

⁴Robert Holt, Radio Free Europe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1958, p. 170.

and operations were much the same as they were later in Hungary. However, since violence did not erupt, RFE did not receive the scrutiny that it did after the Hungarian crisis.

Radio Free Europe's Polish operations may be seen as the model of what RFE had hoped for in its other operations. Reforms were implemented without bloodshed-- which was the main goal of Radio Free Europe operations. Ultimate freedom was not accomplished but progress was made. Radio Free Europe maintained pressure on the Polish regime, and forced changes to take place. RFE was able to do this without criticism from the Western press. Of the three target countries, Poland was the only one where Radio Free Europe met its goal.

CONCLUSION

Radio Free Europe did not free the satellites, nor did it force communism to crumble. However, it was a link to the West for millions of listeners and did boost the moral of those people. The aggressive programs of RFE did not bring about the result they wanted. In fact they contributed to the insecurity of the time. Although they did not intend to add to any crisis, some of their programs did just that. Excitement of the exiles that broadcast on RFE during the Polish and Hungarian crisis

could not be hidden, and contributed to the fear inside those countries.

The balloon/leaflet campaigns served their purpose in that they caused a great deal of attention to Radio Free Europe's cause. They also caused a great deal of pain to many who collected those leaflets. The propaganda value of these leaflets may not have been worth the oppression that they caused. However, the policy makers at RFE obviously believed it was worth the price to put hundreds of people at risk. After several riots and the bloodshed in Hungary, the Free Europe Committee decided that it was no longer worth putting thousands of Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians in jeopardy. A new majority controlled the Free Europe Committee after 1956. That majority promptly cancelled all balloon/broadcast operations in progress--as well as those planned for the future.

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