

December 4, 1956

Review of Radio Free Europe Broadcasting

Citation:

"Review of Radio Free Europe Broadcasting", December 4, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed to CWHIP by A. Ross Johnson. Cited in his book Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, CIA mandatory declassification review document number MORI 1376102, 1426217. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114785>

Summary:

Cord Meyer forwards to Allen Dulles as background for Operations Coordinating Board discussions a memorandum of that date on "Radio Free Europe - Review of Broadcasting Policy and Content."

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: NOV 2006

~~SECRET~~

EO 12958
3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
(C)

4 DEC 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe - Review of
Broadcast Policy and Content

The attached memoranda are for information only.

1. We are attaching a memorandum on the above subject in accordance with your request to serve as a basis for your discussions with Mr. Herbert Hoover, Jr. at the OGB lunch on December 4, 1956.

2. We are also attaching a copy of a speech made on November 2, by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, which you may also find useful.

3. Comments of the Inspector General on this subject are being furnished to you separately by his office.


CORD MEYER, JR.

Chief

International Organizations Division

Attachments:

- 1 - RFE - Review of Broadcast Policy and Content
- 1 - Ambassador Lodge's Statement, 2 November

(15)

67-72-77 77-02725 R
67-72-77 77-02725 R
67-72-77 77-02725 R

52/77-02725 R/X/555

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 12958 6.2(c)
(S)

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: MAR 2007

4 December 1956

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Radio Free Europe - Review of Broadcast
Policy and Content

The following is responsive to allegations made by various people to the effect that RFE incited the Hungarian people to revolution and promised outside military intervention during the revolution.

1. Sources of U. S. Policy

The activities of the Free Europe Committee (FEC) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) are guided by basic U. S. policies. The policies of FEC and RFE must be consistent with such policies.

These policies stem from relevant NSC documents pertaining to the Soviet Bloc, and from guidances supplied by the Department of State and CIA. More specifically they are guided by [redacted]

and by a paper worked out with FEC by CIA, "Agreed Policy Governing FEC Operations," dated August 7, 1954. Both of these guidances were concurred in by the Department of State. These policies are supplemented from time to time by guidances on specific issues worked out between CIA and State and furnished to FEC.

In addition, a daily teletype summarizing the pertinent conclusions on important news developments of the Public Affairs Area of the Department of State is transmitted to FEC by CIA.

2. RFE Policy

RFE strategic policy is contained in a policy handbook prepared in 1951 and supplemented by twenty-seven strategic guidances on major

119

~~SECRET~~

Memo - 4 December 1954

Page 2

events since that time. These documents have the concurrence of CIA and the Department of State.

Daily tactical policy originates primarily in RFE Munich. All political commentaries concerning affairs inside the target countries and the USSR are prepared in Munich. Guidance for these commentaries is provided by the Political Advisor's office in separate daily meetings with each of the country desks.

Most international commentary and news of American is developed in RFE New York. A daily international commentary guidance is prepared by the New York policy staff. Copies of these are furnished to CIA Washington.

2. Broadcast Content Review Procedures

Complete tapes of all RFE broadcasts are maintained in Munich. In accordance with agreements with the German authorities. The German Government is presently reviewing the tapes of broadcasts to Hungary during the revolution.

All political commentaries made in Munich are reviewed in English translation in a post-audit by the American staff of the Political Advisor's office.

New York's political commentaries are reviewed on a spot check basis in a post-audit. In addition, the Program Review Staff in New York reviews 10% of the New York output and an average of 20-25% of the Munich output. On the basis of this review, a brief report is produced each week, primarily for the purpose of providing the Director of RFE with a general idea of what is being said on major political subjects. These weekly reports are reviewed by CIA Washington.

There is no regular review of RFE scripts by CIA. We attempted to work out an arrangement with the Department of State for such a review in 1953, but this was believed not feasible because of limited budget and lack of language specialists trained in propaganda work.

_____ have carried out one time spot reviews of RFE scripts for periods up to one month.

~~SECRET~~

Miami - 4 December 1956

Page 3

4. Additional Controls

CIA, since the Hungarian revolution, has instructed RFE to institute the following additional controls:

- a. Changes will be made where and if necessary in the American policy staff in Munich to insure that the American policy advisors to each of the national desks are individuals with the required linguistic and editorial competence.
- b. All key political commentaries will be reviewed by such personnel in the national language prior to broadcast.
- c. The amount of political commentary and editorializing will be reduced.
- d. RFE will transmit to CIA Washington daily a teletype summary of the guidance governing broadcasts.
- e. Policy Advisor Munich, has been called to Washington about December 15, for further discussions of this matter.

5. Tentative Conclusions

Based on a review of some twenty political commentaries in English translation during this period, we believe that:

- a. RFE broadcasts were generally consistent with U. S. policy toward the satellites.
- b. RFE did not incite the Hungarian people to revolution.
- c. RFE did not directly or by implication offer hope that outside military assistance would be forthcoming to the Hungarian patriots.
- d. RFE went somewhat beyond specific guidance in identifying itself with the demands of the patriot radio and in offering tactical advice to the patriots.

~~SECRET~~Memo 4 December 1954
Page 4

It should be pointed out that Radio Madrid, and the RTB Russian emigre organization using a transmitter near Frankfurt, Germany, broadcast to Hungary during this period. Radio Madrid is reported by one Bela Zeldi, an atomic scientist and one of the patriot leaders of the revolution, to have broadcast that paratroopers were enplaning in London and Paris enroute to Hungary, that legionnaires were at the gates of Hungary and that the success of the patriots was only a matter of hours. Monitoring of RTB broadcasts indicates that an ex-fascist association of Hungarian servicemen in exile broadcast offers of their services to the Hungarian patriots. The patriot forces were requested to send a liaison staff to make contact with the Hungarian servicemen's association, thus implying at least that assistance was on the border. In addition, there are unconfirmed reports of a communist station in East Germany using RFE call letters in broadcasts to Hungary, which may well have been confused with RFE. We are checking these reports further.

We are arranging for the review by Hungarian language specialists of tapes of all broadcasts made by RFE during this period. We estimate that this will require some thirty days to complete. We suggest that final judgment be withheld until we have completed the full analysis in the Hungarian language of the actual broadcasts made.

Recent events in the Soviet Bloc profoundly affect not only RFE but all Free Europe Committee operations. This requires a re-assessment of this entire activity. We are presently engaged in such a reassessment and will come forward shortly with our proposals for both policy and operational revisions.

~~SECRET~~