

June 05, 1957

Radio Free Europe Coverage of Imre Nagy Reviewed

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Summary:

An International Organizations Division (IOD) officer in the CIA critically reviews treatment of Imre Nagy in RFE Hungarian broadcasts in October-November 1956

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Memo for

Re your note to me concerning the SPD attack on RFE for its treatment of Imre Nagy, I have not been able to locate the note which you refer to -- the one from to you -- but the attached cable seems to be on same subject. Additionally, during my two days in NY I had a chance to hear Delgado discourse on the subject of Hungary. Although I did not know about this Nagy/RFE flare up at the time, it is now abundantly clear to me that Delgado knew about it and was getting all the mileage he could out of ~~what~~ what seemed to me to be nothing more than hindsight but which now is clearly an offspring of the latest development in the game of trying to tag RFE with some culpability in the Hungarian affair. Delgado was most emphatic in his statements that the big mistake of RFE during the revolution was its treatment of Imre Nagy. His discussion grew out of a discussion of the need for policy guidance and he seemed to me, at least, to be using the Nagy treatment theme to point out that RFE received no guidance on the subject. Or, in acknowledgment of my increasingly Machiavellian thought processes, I might state that his motivation could have been to make an impression which would be present when we got into the subject and discovered that NY guidances were fairly moderate and restrained on the subject of Nagy and Munich guidances were on the aggressive side. At least that is the picture one gets in reading the outline which RFE prepared for the Kelly Committee. ✓

Whatever may be the RFE inner machination in the matter the fact is that RFE did attack Nagy. I have read again the Hungarian scripts and can summarize them as follows:

- A. From 23 thru 31 October not only did Nagy get no breaks from RFE, he was very openly and uncompromisingly attacked with such admonitions

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as advice that the Hungarians should put no faith in him since he was nothing but a Communist of the died in the wool order and they could expect nothing from him, etc. He was accused of being ~~xx~~ nothing but another Muscovite stooge. In general, RFE gave him the complete works, urging Hungarians to view his statement and his acts as being only in the interests of the Soviets.

B. It was not until 1 Novemebr that any sort of let-up on the attacks against Nagy could be discerned and that was a backhand deal which, even in the face of the Russian withdrawal, went out of the way to point out that even if the Nagy Govt survived there could be no guaranty that Hungary would not fall back into the old regime ways. It made specific condemnatory refernces to the number of compromised members of the Nagy Govt, and did not in any way temper the condemnation with hope that the presence of the few non-Commie members would indicate hope for the future.

C. On 2 Novemebr RFE with Gellert talking (or maybe it was authored by Gellert) made its first sympathetic refernces to Imre Nagy and even these were most grudging. ~~It~~ It reads almost as if they hated doing it but had no choice in view of Nagy's having that day called on the UN for recognition of Hungarian neutrality and announced withdrawal from the ~~Sx~~ Warsaw Pact. The boradcast referred sympathetically to Nagy's desperate appeal fro national unity, but it could not resist, apparently and unfortunately, a rehash of Nagy's actions during the past few ~~x~~ days. In sum the broadcast would have to be chalked up as favorable to the things which Nagy was then urging on Hungarians (national unity in face of the new Soviet attack) and unfavorably to Nagy.

I don't know what we are supposed to do about the SPD attcak on RFE but it seems apparent enough that we can not deny it. I believe that hindsight again is our biggest problem. Nagy is a much greater hero now than he was at any time before and during the revolution up to the time he was arrested, except for the day

when he reached ~~immediately~~ the heights by defying the oncoming Russians and asking for help. Who is now to judge whether it was

A sincere act of Hungarian patriotism

A bid for western intervention as the only means for preserving his power

A bid for western help based on his conviction that western help would be coming and he would need a position of friendliness to the rebels

Certainly RFE was right in questioning the motives of a Communist leader. If RFE did not back off in time and urge Hungarian cooperation with Nagy's pleas for the restoration of order it may ~~have~~ now be called a mistake but I did not hear any advice to that effect during the events. I assume the SPD will assert that were it not for RFE the Hungarians would have listened to Nagy, restored order, and gone on with the sort of position in hand which would have produced another Poland in Hungary. Maybe that would have happened but it seems remarkable that not a single one of the 175,000 loose Hungarians have come up with such a suggestion -- to my knowledge. Everyone says it is too bad that the Hungarians went beyond the Russian toleration point, and maybe RFE would now enjoy a better position if it had urged the Hungarians to go easy, but I doubt if the outcome would have been any different.

As I recall the policy during the time [redacted] it was to neither attack nor support Nagy. [redacted]

NY, if the summarization for the Kelly Committee is accurate, seems to have advised Munich to avoid attacks on Nagy and other personalities. Muni did not carry it out.

[redacted]