

This was the first guidance issued by Radio Free Europe. Written in 1950, it spells out the station's mission and objectives at its inception. The language reflects the political environment of the early Cold War; indeed, by the standards of the time, this was a moderate document.

REVISED
(September 21, 1950)

POLICY GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM NO. 1

Objective of Radio Free Europe.

The objective of Radio Free Europe is to prevent, or at least to hinder, the spiritual, economic and military integration of the nations of Eastern Europe into the Soviet bloc. To this end we seek to hold or to capture, insofar as possible, the allegiance of the peoples in the nations to which our programs are beamed, and to undermine Soviet and native Communist influence in that area by every means available to propaganda.

Character of Audience.

To develop a line of approach calculated to attain our objective it is necessary first of all to consider the composition of our audience. In each of the prisoner states, in varying proportions, it will fall largely into the following occupational categories:

- 1. Peasants
- 2. Industrial workers
- 3. Intelligentsia
- 4. Military
- 5. Church
- 6. Functionaries
- 7. Business

For each of these categories specific topics and lines of approach should be developed with a minimum of delay, having due regard for such differentiating factors as sex and age. However, this memorandum is limited to the discussion of certain topics and lines of approach calculated to interest and influence our audience as a whole. To assist in the selection of these, the following assumptions have been made in regard to the preponderant majority of our listeners:

Appendix:
Policy Guidances

From their inception in the early 1950s until the late 1970s, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty established broadcast policy through the issuance of regular directives, or guidances. In most cases, the guidances were drafted by members of the American management and circulated to the editors of the various language services. On occasion, the guidances were written by RFE or RL administrators and then sent for approval to the Central Intelligence Agency or the State Department before being implemented as official policy. In a very few cases, broad policy documents were written by the State Department itself.

Several different types of guidances were issued by the two stations. Radio Free Europe issued daily guidances, which suggested points that broadcasters might highlight in commenting on the major news items of the day. Broad thematic guidances on subjects like Hungarian agriculture or the Sino-Soviet split included lengthy background analysis and recommendations as to how broadcasters should cover the particular issue. Finally, "country papers"—lengthy guidelines for RFE's strategy toward its target countries—were issued after consultation with the CIA and State Department.

Radio Free Europe issued hundreds of guidances during the 1950s. As RFE and RL evolved into normal international broadcasting networks, they made less frequent use of guidances and relied more on the professional judgment of the language service editors. By the late 1970s the use of policy guidances had been almost entirely discontinued.

1. That there is an almost universal and burning desire to be freed from foreign domination,
2. that, with the exception of those who profit directly from it in terms of power or privilege, there is a general detestation of the police state in all its aspects,
3. that life in a police state has enormously stimulated the longing for a measure of personal freedom, and in particular for freedom of worship,
4. that there is a widespread divergence of opinion as to the most suitable form of political, social, and economic organization to be instituted once national independence has again been achieved,
5. that the spirit of nationalism has lost none of its vitality,
6. that the attachment of the peasant to his land is as passionate as ever; and that there is a welling desire for land reform wherever feudal tenure has persisted,
7. that there is a general desire for economic betterment,
8. that life goes on in these countries and that the attitude of certain members of the population towards the regime may be conditioned by the way it has affected their personal situation,
9. that there is a certain amount of disappointment among the peoples of the target area in regard to the past policies of the Western world towards the enslaved countries of Eastern Europe,
10. that there is a strong desire to preserve the ties with Western culture and to prevent integration into the Soviet system.

Topics and Lines of Approach

The foregoing assumptions suggest certain topics and lines of approach with which it is now proposed to deal.

Liberation

For the peoples of the prisoner states everything else hinges upon the question of liberation. This is for them the vital preoccupation. Accordingly, liberation must be the predominant theme in any effective long-range program of propaganda.

This confronts Radio Free Europe with a dilemma. It is absolutely essential to keep the hope of liberation alive. Yet we should recognize that for the peoples of Eastern Europe another world war appears to offer the only chance of realizing this hope. If, accepting this thesis, we

state quite frankly that in our view there can be no lasting peace until Eastern Europe has been freed from the domination of the Soviet Union, we play into the hands of the Kremlin, who with their "peace" campaign are exploiting in every corner of the globe the almost universal fear and detestation of war. If, on the other hand, we do less than this, we run the risk of weakening the morale of our friends behind the Iron Curtain, who will surely be told, and may actually believe, that we have abandoned them.

Under these circumstances, what should be our line? The following suggestions, by no means all-inclusive, are put forward in a tentative vein. We should:

1. Make it clear on every appropriate occasion that the United States had not forgotten the pledge of national independence contained in the Yalta declaration and so flagrantly violated by the Soviet Union—that we expect to see this pledge eventually redeemed.
2. Make the point that because of the attitude of the Soviet Union, the world situation is at present in flux and that the time and manner of liberation will of necessity depend upon the way in which the conflict between the free world and the Soviet despotism may develop—a question which is still not yet clear.
3. Emphasize the growing awareness in the western world of the Soviet objective of world domination.
4. Recount the stages of increasing resistance to Soviet pressure, culminating in the action of the United Nations in Korea.
5. Tell of the overwhelming strength of the free world in terms of raw materials and industrial potential.
6. Tell of the increasing military strength of the free world and notably of the United States—making much of the readiness with which our industrial potential, designed for the purposes of peace, can be converted if need be from civilian to military production.
7. Develop the thesis that the first step in bringing about a retreat of Soviet power must be to arrest its further advance and that we are presently engaged in taking this step.
8. Draw attention to the forces of disintegration at work within a despotism, and their tendency to grow by leaps and bounds once the period of easy conquests has come to an end.
9. Express the hope, possibly with tongue in cheek, that when finally confronted with preponderant strength in being, the masters of the Kremlin may accept the ever open invitation to abandon their

mad dream of world domination and join with other nations of the world community in laying the foundations for expanding prosperity in a world at peace.

10. Define what we mean by peace, i.e., peace through freedom, the only peace that under any circumstances we would accept.

11. On every possible occasion make it clear that the existing world tension is not based upon a struggle for power between the United States and the Soviet Union, as it is so often represented, but that it is a recrudescence of the ancient struggle between freedom and tyranny, that in this struggle there can be no neutrals, that in this struggle we consider all of Eastern Europe, whether at present under Russian domination or not, by its whole history and tradition inevitably on our side.

After Liberation, What?

Our friends in the prisoner states are profoundly interested to learn what we see in prospect for them once liberation has been achieved. The answer to the question, "After liberation, what?" is to be found in certain fixed principles of American policy. We believe that once the prisoner states have been liberated they should be free to form governments of their own choosing without interference by any outside influence, including our own. We believe that in this manner they will be able to adopt whatever form of political, social, and economic organization is best suited to their needs. We stand ready to be of assistance to them in overcoming their initial economic difficulties.

Whenever there have been social advances, as for instance, in the opening of educational opportunities to a wider group, our disposition would be to see that the gains made were held as a prelude to further progress. It should be pointed out, however, that in a climate of freedom, teachers would once again be permitted to seek the truth and impart it to their pupils, who would no longer have to play the part of the propagandists for an alien philosophy or the mouthpieces for a steady stream of Soviet lies.

We hold the view that the nations of Eastern Europe form an essential and an integral part of any viable European economy. In general, we favor the maintenance of a high degree of national cultural autonomy within the framework of a European federation. We look upon such a federation as the best means to provide for the prosperity and the security of the European continent.

Under the stress of war we accepted the notion that the Balkan

States with the exception of Greece should fall within the Russian sphere of influence under certain very definite conditions. These conditions, agreed to by the Soviet Union, have not been met by them in practice. Accordingly, the whole question of spheres of influence can fairly be re-examined. Without prejudging this issue, we strongly inclined at present to the organization of peace through the instrumentality and under the supervision of the United Nations without conceding to any nation that degree of authority over its neighbors which the Soviet Union has read into the conception of spheres of influence. We believe that the prisoner states must be freed of Russian domination. This means for us as a minimum the withdrawal of the Soviet Army and its Secret Police, free elections effectively supervised, and the repeal of all measures illegally adopted. In general it means that frontiers imposed by the Soviets should promptly be brought under review and wherever possible finally determined by friendly negotiation between parties originally involved.

The American Example

Our friends in the prisoner countries are subjected to a constant barrage of misrepresentation about the United States. No opportunity should be lost to set this matter right.

A rising standard of living, an ever-widening horizon of opportunity, the dignity and worth of the individual, personal freedom and national independence in a world at peace are ideals responsive to the deepest longings of our people. We seek these things for others no less than for ourselves. Our thoughts are directed to the ever-present American vision of a brighter future. By way of demonstrating the truth of these assertions, we have but to present in broad outlines our national behavior in the domestic and in the foreign field.

In the domestic field we can point to the enormous advances in the sphere of social legislation. A developing industrialism, together with the spread of popular education, has brought to masses of people a larger share of the good things of life than ever before, and this movement continues in the United States because we believe that in the world of today it is essentially just and right. We have thus placed ourselves securely on the side of progress. There has been recurrent criticism of the so-called "welfare state," but very little criticism of the obligation of the government to interest itself increasingly in the general welfare of the citizen with the result that a growing sense of

well-being and of security has been brought to the average man and woman. In the process our economy has not been disrupted, and our actual and potential productivity has reached previously undreamed of heights. It can safely be asserted that no other system devised by man has demonstrated such flexibility in the face of changing conditions as the American system, or such outstanding success in meeting them. Our propaganda should take full advantage of these facts.

In the foreign field we can underscore the efforts we have made to improve the standard of living in other countries and to advance the cause of world peace. The first of these was of course our major participation in U.N.R.R.A., an act of generosity never fully appreciated and already largely forgotten. Then came the Marshall Plan, which would have brought material help to many of the countries behind the Iron Curtain had it not been for the intransigence of the Soviet Union. Beyond this we stand committed to the widest possible extension of multilateral trade as a condition essential to world prosperity. And we have made a modest beginning in the implementation of that "bold new program" for the development of backward areas known as Point Four.

In the interests of peace with justice we have given wholehearted support to the United Nations, which we joined in good faith in the hope that it would be able to maintain international peace and security. Because this hope has for the moment been dimmed by the conduct of the Soviet Union, we have felt obliged to take measures both within and without the Charter which we deemed necessary to maintain security, if it did not maintain the peace, of the free world. We have scrupulously observed our international commitments to the utmost of our ability. We need not hesitate to spread these facts on the record.

Russian Objectives

Our friends in the prisoner countries have had experience enough of their own to have a pretty clear view of the objectives of the Soviet Union. It would not be surprising if they wondered at times whether our view was equally clear—whether we had at last taken the measure of the menace and whether we were prepared emotionally to meet it at whatever cost.

We should state without hesitation that the Soviet Union, in our view, is today an imperialist power seeking world domination as its

undisguised objective. It has made a prisoner of many states and now threatens the free world. Promising the millennium, it enlists the support of the toilers in many lands, postponing the disclosure of the emptiness of its promises until it is so well entrenched in power that the disillusioned have no longer any choice but to obey. It is this Bolshevik imperialism, using Communism as a weapon, which is the real enemy. And it is Bolshevik imperialism that should be the principal target of our attack. This is tyranny—naked and aggressive—with all the strength and with all the weakness of tyranny. We should point out that the strength of tyranny is notoriously transient, while its weaknesses, as history reveals, leads to its inevitable doom. We should play on the growing objection of the satellites to the Soviet Union's disregard for their rights, prestige and interests. Many useful variations can be developed on this theme.

Semantics

Wherever the voice of the Soviet reaches, the meaning of words is twisted out of all recognition. It is important on this account to devote some effort to clarification. The corruption of the idiom by the propagandists of the Kremlin should be debunked. The "peace-loving people's democracy" must be shown up for what it is—a totalitarian despotism bent upon conquest by subversion, or if need be by force. Communism as a weapon of subversion must be exposed. Its appeal lies in the fact that since the early days of the Russian revolution it has carried overtones of a release from oppression. On this account it has proved a useful slogan about which to rally the unwary. But however useful as a slogan, we should recognize and bring others to recognize that in no country, including the Soviet Union, has the visionary and unworkable system of Communism been tried as a form of economic organization. Wherever the power of the Kremlin extends, the form of organization is that of a tyrannical oligarchy enforcing its will on a mass of reluctant serfs by the adroit and unscrupulous use of the secret police. Misrepresented as a liberating movement, Bolshevik imperialism is in fact reaction incarnate. It is Red Fascism, and should be so designated. Other striking examples will no doubt suggest themselves.

Useful topics briefly noted.American Democracy

Recognizing our shortcomings, we make no claim to perfection. We do claim, however, that we strive to attain it, and that under our system injustices gradually yield to correction and the lot of the average citizen improves from year to year.

Fear

Native Communists in the prisoner states live in constant fear of liquidation from above or vengeance from below. We should recurrently play upon this fear. At the same time we should draw a distinction between those Communists who have behaved in a traitorous manner and who have shared in the responsibility for the sufferings of their fellow citizens, and those Communists who have merely passively accepted the party line as a means of self-preservation. To the latter we should offer the hope that the error of their ways may be forgiven.

Nationalism

We should do everything in our power to fan the flames of nationalism as distinct from chauvinism. Nationalism of the twentieth century contemplates the maintenance of the greatest possible degree of economic, political and cultural autonomy having due regard for the necessity of regional groupings and of world organization. This twentieth century nationalism may prove in the end to be one of the most effective forces working against the ambitions of the Kremlin.

Oppressors Versus Victims

We should make the point as frequently as possible that we never cease to distinguish between oppressors and their victims; that we have the most profound sympathy for the peoples of the prisoner states, including the Russian people; that our quarrel is exclusively with the tyrannical governments which oppress them.

Frank Altschul.

The guidance on the coverage of anti-Semitism was included in RFE's first policy manual, issued in 1951. East European anti-Semitism was a major issue at the time, since many of the defendants of the purge trials that swept the Communist parties of the region were well-known Jewish party officials. Both RFE and RL regularly condemned anti-Semitism in their broadcasts and frequently linked the persecution of Jews to Communist ideology and tactics.

Anti-Semitism

1. Anti-semitism in the Soviet orbit has two aspects. The minor aspect, which is virulent in Hungary and to some extent in Romania, where a relatively large number of Jews still live, is a carry-over from an earlier time, now reinforced by the presence of an appreciable number of Jewish communists in high governmental and party posts. With regard to the status of the Jews of these two countries, RFE's position is as follows:

- a. For Hungary, a special guidance has been written, recommending that Christian speakers warn against making scapegoats of the Jews, and pointing out that Jewish Hungarians suffer equally with other Hungarians under the Rakosi regime; that suffering should unite men and not divide them; and that Rakosi the Communist, not Rakosi the Jew, is the nation's oppressor—the oppressor of Jews and Christians alike.
- b. For Romania the situation is somewhat different. There are said to be 350,000 Jews in the country. By arrangement between Tel Aviv and Bucarest, Jews have been allowed, for about a year past, to leave Romania for Israel (at the reported rate of 2,000 a month). Our Romanian station should not discuss the subject of anti-semitism in order to avoid doing anything which might cause the regime to cancel the arrangement whereby Jews are allowed to leave the country.

2. The major aspect of Soviet anti-semitism is of a new kind for which the Stalinists have found the name of "anti-cosmopolitan-

ism.” This is the Soviet-Russian counterpart of Hitlerian anti-semitism. That is to say, it is not a mere sentiment in the population, it is a conscious governmental policy. The German doctrine was founded on the notion of race and “blood”; the Soviet doctrine is founded on the notion of race and history. The Jew is deemed inapt for Sovietism because he is historically a citizen of the world—specifically of the bourgeois world. He is therefore intellectually incapable of loyalty to a doctrine that is marked by two great negatives—for Sovietism is not merely atheistic, it is also not humanistic. Its core is not man—not even man without God; its core is the State, incarnate in a dictator. The Jew is deemed to be innately incapable of worship of the State.

3. Supplementing this fundamental doctrine, three considerations have impelled the Kremlin to intensify its anti-semitism:

a. The awareness of every people behind the Iron Curtain that they are being governed by agents of the Kremlin and exploited in the interest of Soviet imperialism, and the resultant threat of “Titoism,” have impelled the Kremlin to try to resolve a contradiction in its rule: it has sought, at one and the same time, to replace “national communists” by more reliable agents, and to pose as the defender of the national aspirations of each of the peoples we address.

The clearest example of how anti-semitism is used to further this purpose is to be seen in Czechoslovakia. In that country the regime began by placing Jewish Communists in “unpopular” functions, particularly the police. Beginning a year ago, when the regime started to crack, Moscow chose its scapegoats among its Jewish agents, both on the highest levels (Slansky) and on lower levels (Frejka, R. Margolius et al). The Czechoslovak purge has been notably a purge of Jews; and an important objective of the purge has been to give emotional satisfaction to people for whom a Jew is a proper scapegoat.

b. Secondly, since the concentration of Soviet fire against the USA (with a considerable diminution of attacks against our

allies) the Soviet rulers have bethought themselves that European Jews are people who have relatives and friends in the United States, and that to attack a Jew is to attack a “natural” ally of America. Jewish Communists, therefore, have become “unreliable” communists.

c. Finally, affairs in the Middle East encourage anti-semitism in the Soviet orbit. The Arab nations are anti-Israel; the Jews are pro-Israel. The Arab nations are anti-West; Israelis are pro-West. The West is “capitalist;” or at least anti-communist. Ergo...

4. This situation, which is clear enough in Czechoslovakia, is not one of which RFE can take advantage in Romania at this time, for the reason cited in par. 1 (b) above. It may be exploited in Hungary (chiefly) and in Poland, not in broadcasts to the nation at large but in scripts addressed directly to the Jewish members of the regime. We are already pointing out to members of the several regimes that their careers are, of necessity, short; their triumph can only be brief, in the nature of things. They are like the King-priest of Nemi (see Fraser, The Golden Bough, vol. I, ch. 1) who must prowl day and night, weapon in hand, because he who became king by murdering his predecessor is doomed to be succeeded by one who will murder him. To the Jewish official we say that his insecurity is greater than that of his Christian colleague because the Politburo, exactly like the Nazis, refuses to believe what everybody else knows to be true—that a Jew can be a loyal citizen of his political nation.

5. We take appropriate occasion to make clear that RFE is anti-racist on principle: that as Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, we know that so-called race theories are scientific absurdities and we believe in the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

The 1957 country paper for Hungary is interesting for several reasons. To begin with, the paper was drafted by the State Department and imposed on RFE and the Voice of America as a broad guideline for coverage. This was the first country guidance issued after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and its language and tone reflect the American government's determination to bring the policies of its foreign broadcasting stations in line with the government's policy toward Eastern Europe. The paper is also important for its instruction that RFE should regard itself more as a European station rather than an American station.

SECRET [stamped on original document]
Approved by Committee on Radio
Broadcasting Policy, 20 August 1957

RFE BROADCASTING POLICY TOWARD HUNGARY

I. Objectives:

In the interest of assuring maximum possible impact and effectiveness of the total U.S. broadcasting effort directed to the USSR and to the Soviet-dominated countries of eastern Europe, the methods and aims of both official and unofficial American radio stations broadcasting to the area have been thoroughly reviewed in the light of current U.S. policy objectives. In accordance with instructions of the Committee on Radio Broadcasting Policy, upon whose request this review has been undertaken, individual papers have been prepared for each of the target countries on each of the broadcasting operations concerned, outlining the role each should play in the furtherance of both general and specific American objectives in the area, and recommending such changes or modifications of present operating practices as may seem desirable to this end.

The following paper concerns only Radio Free Europe broadcasts to Hungary. It establishes practices and policies to be followed by Ra-

dio Free Europe in its broadcasts to Hungary with a view to assuring close conformity of the activities and aims of the station with current policy objectives of the U.S. with respect to Hungary and to achieving maximum effectiveness in this regard by defining RFE as a "gray" station a constructive and essential role, clearly distinct from that of the official Voice of America.

II. Policy Considerations:

A. Background of U.S. Policies:

The fundamental objectives of U.S. policy are to preserve the security of the U.S. and the vitality of its fundamental values and institutions, and to promote the general welfare of its people.

The greatest threat to these objectives at present is the Soviet Union, with its determination to destroy all rival power.

There is no foreseeable prospect of significantly reducing Soviet military strength, which is the core of Communist power, except by mutually acceptable agreements with the Soviets or by large-scale military action. The initiation of such military action is not an acceptable course for the U.S.

Accordingly, it is U.S. policy, approved June 3, 1957, to seek (a) to affect the conduct and policies of the Communist regimes, especially of the Soviet Union, in ways that further U.S. interests; and (b) to foster tendencies that lead them to abandon expansionist policies. This offers the best hope of bringing about at least a prolonged period of armed truce, and ultimately a peaceful and orderly world....

In the exploitation of Soviet bloc vulnerabilities, it is national policy, approved June 3, 1957, that the U.S. should seek to:

- a. Promote evolutionary changes in Soviet policy and conduct in ways that further U.S. and Free World security;

- b. Weaken the ties which link the Soviet Union and Communist China and their Satellites;
- c. Encourage bureaucratic and popular pressures inside the bloc for greater emphasis by the regimes on their internal problems; the effort should be to pose the necessity of devoting attention and resources to solve them or facing increased disaffection if they are ignored;
- d. Undermine the faith of the Communist ruling classes in their own system and ideology.

B. U.S. Policy Toward Hungary:

In the foregoing context, U.S. policy toward Hungary plays an important but a definitely subsidiary role. All actions with regard to Hungary must be considered with regard to their effect on the overall situation, particularly with reference to U.S. efforts to affect the conduct and policies of the Soviet Union.

Among long-term U.S. objectives are the complete independence of Hungary from Soviet domination and the establishment in Hungary of a representative government resting upon the consent of the people.

Recognizing the unlikelihood of attainment of this goal through internal revolutionary means, our short-term aim is to foster an evolutionary development resulting in the weakening of Soviet controls and the progressive attainment of natural independence. In doing this, we must seek to maintain the morale and the hopes of the Hungarian people, while indicating that their basic problems can only be solved in the long-term by pacific means and that patience and enduring quiet effort will be required on their part.

An initial U.S. objective is to encourage, as a first step toward eventual full national independence and freedom, the

establishment of a "national Communist" regime which, though it may continue to be in close political and military alliance with the USSR will be able to exercise to a much greater degree than in the past independent authority and control in the direction of its own affairs, primarily confined in the first stage to its internal affairs. However, "national Communism" and other tendencies and developments which may tend to weaken Soviet controls but which in themselves retain a basically authoritarian character do not offer solutions consonant with the ultimate aspirations of U.S. policy toward Hungary. Though they may be judiciously exploited in the interest of the immediate objective of promoting greater Hungarian independence from Moscow, exploitation should never be in the manner or to a degree detrimental in the long-run to the genuinely democratic and Western tendencies and developments which exist within Hungary.

The immediate goal of U.S. policy toward Hungary is to attempt to maintain the deep-seated psychological animus towards the USSR and Soviet communism which expressed itself in the October revolt, and to help preserve such of the gains achieved in the course of that revolt as may be feasible. These gains include greater freedom for the peasant, and a trend away from forcible collective farming. While they may be more emotional and temporary than concrete and permanent, these gains are nonetheless important as a step toward our immediate goal of bringing about a loosening of the ties between Hungary and the USSR. In carrying out this policy, it should be underlined that it is neither feasible nor desirable for us to run the risk of either local or general hostilities. . . .

III. The Role for Radio Free Europe:

The general nature and content of broadcasts to Hungary will be adapted to the characteristics of Radio Free Europe as (1) a voice of the people of free Western nations dedicated to the interests of the people of East Europe, and (2) an instrument, unattributable to the U.S. Government, for the furthering of U.S. policy objectives.

A. U.S. policy will control the overall policy position on RFE.

1. While its broadcasts must adhere to U.S. policy in general and avoid positions which would produce a net result injurious to U.S. policy, RFE will, at the same time, maintain flexibility and objectivity. With respect to the internal and external affairs of the U.S. which merit treatment in news to Hungary, RFE will report objectively, giving fair coverage to legitimate points of view which are not necessarily in accord with the public position of the U.S. Government.

2. Unannounced U.S. foreign policy will from time to time be conveyed to RFE. As an instrument for furthering unannounced policy, RFE will be governed strictly by the policy guidance furnished to it through appropriate channels. This guidance will relate to specific events and conditions and may, in some instances, appear to be in conflict with announced policy. (In most instances, guidance on unannounced U.S. policy will relate to objectives which can be undertaken by RFE as an unattributable radio, but which would be inadvisable or inappropriate positions to be taken by an official organ or spokesman of the U.S. Government.)

3. RFE will seek by all practicable means to broaden and improve its news coverage of world affairs and its cross reporting of events in the Sino-Soviet orbit. In its coverage of world news RFE will strike an appropriate balance between the need to avoid the appearance of an American propaganda instrument, and the interest in U.S. affairs which follows normally from recognition by the Hungarian audience that the United States is the keystone of the free world. In seeking this balance RFE will be guided by (a) impartial and objective selection of news based on its news value to Hungarians, and the reporting and commenting on such news from a viewpoint consistent with its representation of the people of the free world as distinguished

from its covert representation of U.S. policy, and (b) recognition that the principal role of official radios broadcasting to Hungary is to reflect the American point of view and to cover "Americana"; RFE broadcasts in this area should generally be in the European context as seen through European eyes. In its cross reporting of events in the Sino-Soviet orbit, RFE will place emphasis on coverage and comment relating to events and developments which serve to illustrate inconsistencies in the application of Communist methods, conflicts in interpretation of Communist doctrines among the orbit countries, and will treat extensively the gains in other satellite areas in the direction of liberalization and lessening of Soviet control.

4. RFE will avoid a tendentiously negative approach in its broadcasts to Hungary and, when possible, inject constructive criticism into its commentaries. The general tone of its broadcasts will be pro-Western, as distinguished from anti-Communist. Attacks on communist institutions will be characterized to the greatest possible extent by positive suggestions and commentaries which will illustrate for Hungarians possible means for overcoming the evils and defects of such institutions. (RFE will use "black book" technique for exposure of actions by Communist individuals and harsh conditions and excesses, provided the highest degree of care is exercised in the pre-broadcast development and authentication of the facts.)

5. RFE discussions of communist institutions and regime practices will be based on the presumption, rendered irrefutable by the October 1956 revolution, that Hungarians are almost unanimous in their hatred of the communist system and their will to resist Soviet domination. On this basic presumption, discussion and commentary will never suggest to Hungarians that the West has forgotten the lesson of the revolution; it will recognize that Hungarians have no need for purely negative discussions in refutation of communist ideology or condemnation of Soviet practices; but it will not neglect the small but influential group

of intellectuals and convinced Government officials who continue to represent a target for discussions of Marxist/Leninist ideologies.

This same basic presumption dictates the need for a positive practical approach to Hungarian audiences which will implicitly recognize the Hungarian national will to be free of Soviet domination, which will be sympathetic to the enormous difficulties in the way of liberation from the Soviets, but which will illustrate for the Hungarians the world-wide sympathy which their efforts to gain freedom from Soviet domination have won for them. Emphasis will be placed on reporting to Hungarians on the damaging effect which their revolution has had on the world communist movement.

6. Although the U.S. Government and its official media maintain a position of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it is permissible and desirable that RFE, within the limitations indicated in this paper, concern itself with the internal affairs to those matters which have a material bearing on subservience to the USSR, regime practices, legislation and control, and similar factors, the discussion of which will serve to promote policy objectives of the U.S. vis a vis Hungary. RFE will be sensitive to the will of the Hungarian populace and avoid involvement in affairs which Hungarians in general regard as peculiarly the concern of themselves.

7. In its discussion of Hungarian internal political affairs, RFE will not present itself specifically as the voice of the internal opposition to the regime, but it will seek to adapt its programs, insofar as consistent with the policies expressed in this paper, to points of view sympathetic to the Hungarian audience or to specific segments thereof. In making reference to the Kadar regime, RFE will not refer to it as a "government," and will make clear to Hungarians that the West regards the Kadar regime as nothing more

than a puppet which masks the Soviet occupation and responds primarily to the manipulations of the Kremlin.

8. In its discussion of international affairs and political systems RFE will attempt to convey to Hungarians the impression that the West wants for Hungarians a form of government of their own free choice, a government freely chosen and representative of the Hungarian people. While democratic rather than authoritarian forms should be made to seem more attractive, RFE will in no way suggest that the West seeks to impose any particular form of government on Hungary. RFE will not indulge in direct endorsements of the advantages of the various forms of freely chosen governments. RFE will combat the Soviet propaganda line which seeks to picture Western governments as adhering rigidly to the late 19th century pattern of capitalism by pointing to the progressive reforms enjoyed in free nations.

9. RFE will take steps toward a strengthening of its posture as a reflector of the free world to Hungarians. It will increase emphasis on European ideas, events and prospects for the future, both to lay foundations for future association of East European countries in the European Community, and to demonstrate the practices and achievements of free world peoples by the example of European nations whose traditions, resources and physical situations are nearest to those of the audience. This will be accomplished over a period of time by:

Development of appropriate relationships with "European" organizations, whose expressed interest and practical cooperation will balance the previous identification of RFE with the U.S. alone among the Free World peoples.

Greater use of European materials, points of view and speakers.

Emphasis on European integration and cooperation movements and trends, with frequent and explicit discussion of the potential role of Hungary in a free community. This discussion would exclude any direct or implied suggestion that Hungary join any western military alliance.

Discontinuation of identification of broadcasts to Hungary as the "Voice of Free Hungary," and the substitution of "This is the Hungarian Service of Radio Free Europe," or some similar designation, to be agreed upon which will foster the "European" concept of RFE while at the same time maintaining the identification of the broadcasts as specifically for and in the service of Hungarians. The approach that RFE represents the views of Hungarian political opposition, or any suggestion that it is an outlet for Hungarian emigre political opinion is to be abandoned.

10. Although RFE will not serve as an organ for the political views as such of the Hungarian emigration, under established policy controls it will make liberal use of outstanding recent Hungarian refugees for both programming and broadcasting purposes, and it will give coverage to those organizations and activities of the new emigration which will serve to convince Hungarians that the free world has not forgotten their heroic revolution and the aspirations of the Hungarian people.

B. In the implementation of the immediate goals of U.S. policy toward Hungary, RFE's programming will be directed toward:

1. Maintaining Hungarian belief in the continuing moral support and understanding of the peoples of the West for Hungarian people in their struggle. Emphasis will be placed on the theme that in the West, Hungary, because of its tradi-

tions and culture, is thought of as a logical and natural member of the community of western European nations.

2. Encouraging regime leaders and functionaries, especially potentially defectorist elements within the regime, to reckon with the eventual freedom of Hungary from Soviet domination, to question the security of their own future, and to think of courses of action independent of Moscow.

3. Encouraging but urging restraint upon the forces of Hungarian nationalism and patriotism, the desire for national independence and the hatred of foreign domination.

4. Satisfying the Hungarian hunger for western intellectual and cultural contacts.

5. Making clear that free men sympathize with those who are resisting regime measures of repression of intellectual and cultural expression.

6. Assuring that Hungarians are accurately and currently informed on events in the free world, in Hungary and within the Sino-Soviet orbit.

7. Negating tendencies toward belief in Hungary that RFE is a spokesman for a rightist West which, by blanket condemnation of all things communistic, appears to condemn some present institutions in Hungary which were established under communist rule and badly administered, but which the majority of Hungarians regard in principle as beneficial; such as land reform, including church estates, nationalization of basic industry, and the broadening of various social benefits to all social classes of the nation.

8. Encouraging thinking of solutions for internal Hungarian political and economic problems in the light of free Europe analogies. In this connection the examples of Finland and Austria may provide useful analogies.

rupted as Poles listened to RFE war coverage; even party members acknowledged reliance on RFE for accurate news of the war.

Finally, RFE devoted hours upon hours of coverage to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It broadcast the complete text of President Kennedy's October 22 speech revealing the crisis, and stressed the themes of American determination, the risk of nuclear war, and the subservience of East European governments, most of which were giving various forms of aid to Cuba, to the dangerous policies of the Soviet Union. When the crisis finally ended and Khrushchev agreed to withdraw the missiles, RFE received, for perhaps the only time in its history, instructions that veteran staffers claim emanated directly from the White House. The guidance consisted of just two words: "Don't gloat."³⁷

Broadcasting Freedom

8

"The Iron Curtain Was Not Soundproof"

That American youth culture has never been given due credit for its contribution to communism's demise is not altogether surprising, given that many of those who wrote the Cold War's history were convinced that rock music exercises a pernicious influence on all societies, especially the Capitalist democracies of the West. Yet while historians may consider it regrettable, there is no doubt that for Eastern Europe's younger generation, rock music's anarchistic rhythms and message of individualism and personal freedom signaled a rejection of the entire fabric of state socialism, with its stodginess, its censorship and prohibitions, its limits on travel, its bogus proletarian culture, its elevation of political reliability over merit and imagination.¹

It may come as something of a surprise that Radio Free Europe played a critical role in spreading American youth culture to Eastern Europe. The station's strength, after all, resided in the political shrewdness of its exiled editors, and not in their imaginativeness. The men who devised RFE's broadcast strategy were the antithesis of cultural radicals. They were firmly grounded in the history of the audience countries, the dialectics of Marxism-Leninism, the economics of peasant agriculture, the intricacies of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. Not that they dismissed culture as irrelevant to the RFE mission. Each broadcast service, in fact, offered several programs devoted to cultural themes. But these programs appealed to adults, particularly to those with an attachment to the music, art, and literature that had been repressed by

the new Communist rulers, and their content was often highly political, in a very direct sense, with readings from patriotic (and often anti-Russian) poems or books from the proscribed list or performances of musical compositions by banned composers or as played by exiled musicians. One of the Czechoslovak desk's proudest moments occurred on March 15, 1956, when it broadcast a concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the renowned Czech exile Rafael Kubelík. The program featured compositions by the two great Czech composers, Dvořák and Smetana, and the date was the seventeenth anniversary of the Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia. As a final touch, the concert was held in the Berlin Sportpalast, the site of many of Hitler's harangues.²

The appeal of the Kubelík broadcast to all patriotic Czechs and Slovaks is obvious; just as obvious are the reasons why Prague radio, with its relentless hostility to West Germany, could not have broadcast this moving and historically important event. Similarly, Hungarians appreciated programs featuring recordings or live recitals of compositions by Béla Bartók, whose music was officially out of favor under the Stalinist regime of Mátyás Rákosi. Indeed, it required little strategic ingenuity to compete with communism for the audience with an appreciation of music. Thus in Hungary, the Stalin-Rákosi period saw an attempt to manufacture a proletarian culture in which favored composers and hack musicians wrote oratorios and songs in praise of the Red Army, Stalin, Rákosi, and the Five-Year Plan. This was a time when Radio Budapest could promote a song with the memorable title "Produce More than the Machines."³

Radio Free Europe did not ignore popular music. Jazz was effectively banned in the Soviet Union and the satellites—it was variously described as "the music of putrescent capitalism" and "sexual perversion in sound." But young people wanted to hear jazz; by the late 1950s, Willis Conover, the jazz disc jockey for the Voice of America, had acquired a huge audience behind the Iron Curtain, and RFE jazz programs were popular as well. But a thaw set in after Stalin's death, and jazz was once again tolerated by the officials who set the Soviet Union's cultural standards. Faced with more demanding competition, RFE bolstered its jazz programming by hiring respected Western experts as commentators on the music or by rebroadcasting programs that originally appeared on radio stations in New York City. While the music was first-rate and the commentary knowledgeable, these pro-

grams had one drawback: their featured experts were Americans whose remarks had to be translated, thus depriving the broadcasts of the intimacy that only native speakers could convey.⁴

The pragmatism that communism displayed in its acceptance of jazz did not, however, extend to the newest American fashion: rock and roll. Rock music was forbidden on state radio throughout the bloc, rock recordings could be obtained only by those few who were allowed the rare trip to Austria or some other Western country, and rock musicians were vilified in the regime press of some satellites (less so in Hungary and Poland), much as jazz had been during Stalin's time.

Radio Free Europe got into the disc jockey business almost by accident. Charles Andras, a hard working, nonsmoking, nondrinking, and culturally conservative Hungarian service editor, had been transferred from New York to Munich and named assistant editor of the service in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution debacle. Andras was given the formidable challenge of reviving staff morale and rebuilding RFE's credibility in Hungary.

One day Andras complained to a young colleague, Géza Ekecs, that his teenage daughter was driving him to distraction by neglecting her studies while constantly listening to rock music on the American Armed Forces Network. The two Hungarians were impressed by rock music's power over Western youth and soon talked over the possibility of launching a program to introduce rock to the young people of Hungary.⁵

Andras encountered resistance from some older Hungarian editors when the idea for a popular music program was broached. A few of the more hidebound veterans complained to the American managers, Ekecs recalls, insisting that a Hungarian radio station "should not play 'nigger' and Jewish music." But the American management approved the idea, perhaps out of desperation for new programs that could revive RFE's fortunes in Hungary. In 1958, then, Radio Free Europe inaugurated its first disc jockey program. It was called *Teenager Party* and aired once a week (with two repeats) for thirty-five minutes a program. Géza Ekecs was the disk jockey, a job he was to hold for the next three decades.

Ekecs was not an aficionado of rock music when his program was introduced; his success was due to a youthful, open mind and a unique

ability to communicate his enthusiasms to the young people of Hungary. His early biography was not atypical for an RFE journalist: a few years spent as a newspaper reporter on a journal of social democratic leanings in Budapest, dismissal after the arrival of Communist dictatorship, prohibition from newspaper work because of "bourgeois origins," escape to the West, occasional work on an émigré publication in Paris, and finally, employment by RFE, beginning in December 1951, three months after the Hungarian service began broadcasts from Munich.

Ekecs was initially assigned to cultural affairs, with a particular focus on cinema. Ekecs was an ideal cultural reporter, for he combined an aesthetic astuteness with a genuine passion for the new trends in music and movie making. He was not as intensely political as some of his colleagues; he believed that it was less productive to natter at the Communists about the ruin they had brought to Hungarian culture than to talk about the remarkable new films produced in France and Italy, and gently contrast the exciting developments in free societies with the wasteland that communism had created in a country with a rich central European cultural tradition.

Ekecs likewise kept *Teenager Party* free of overt politics. It was enough, he decided, to play the music young people loved; his audience would be alienated by lectures contrasting Western freedom with Communist repression. Hungarian youngsters instinctively understood the superiority of democracy and told him so in the thousands of letters they addressed to him at RFE.

Ekecs borrowed the top-forty format popularized by American rock stations. He would occasionally play a Sinatra recording, or something by Doris Day or Dean Martin, but his core audience wanted rock, and that is what he gave it. He kept his listeners informed about the shifts in the *Billboard* magazine ratings, explaining which songs were moving up and which were heading down. He scanned American newspapers and magazines for features about the latest rock sensations, so that he could tell his listeners something about Little Richard's biography, explain why Jimi Hendrix used a particular guitar, or delve into the relationship between African American history and rhythm and blues.

For a few years *Teenager Party* enjoyed something of a corner on the Hungarian youth market. The regime refused to poison the minds of its youth with this most execrable example of capitalist degeneracy.

Other foreign stations did broadcast rock; indeed, popular music was the staple of Radio Luxembourg, which boasted an impressive listenership in Western Europe. But only Ekecs spoke to Hungarians in their language. As the program's popularity grew, its air time was increased, until a new music program, also featuring Ekecs, was added to the schedule; it was broadcast daily at about the time when Hungarian youngsters returned home from school. And as *Teenager Party* gained in listenership, the other RFE language sections added disc jockey programs, some of which became important fixtures in the station's program mixture.

Ekecs worked diligently to translate the often absurd titles into Hungarian and interpreted the American slang. He also copied the American practice of listener requests. Because writing to RFE from Hungary could be a perilous exercise, Ekecs instructed his listeners to substitute code names for their real names; he would then announce the code names on air when he played the songs they had requested. He also invited listeners to send in a series of requests, which he would then play uninterrupted to enable young Hungarians to tape record their favorite numbers. He even interviewed many of the most popular performers, including the Beatles and Louis Armstrong.

The popularity of *Teenager Party* infuriated Hungary's cultural bureaucrats. They especially resented the brazenness of the program's listeners. Members of the older generation had, of course, listened to RFE. But they did so discreetly, in the privacy of their homes, and remained circumspect in discussing their listening habits with outsiders. Now their children flaunted their Western radio preferences. They listened to RFE's subversive, criminal, broadcasts in trains, on the street, at the beach, in school. The authorities were also disturbed by what they dubbed RFE's "sandwich strategy," that is, placing the nonpolitical *Teenager Party* between two openly political broadcasts as a means of spreading anti-Communist ideas to a generation that, having no memory of life before state socialism, was expected to accept the system much more readily than their parents. One publication suggested that *Teenager Party* had been introduced at the personal behest of President Lyndon Johnson as part of a sinister strategy "to gain the confidence of politically immature strata."⁶

Radio Budapest capitulated in 1965 by introducing its own version of *Teenager Party*. The state radio borrowed heavily from Ekecs's example, even to the point of using his translated titles. The regime

could not, however, resist the lure of ideology; it translated "Penny Lane," the Beatles' hit, as "Penny Lane: Street of the Poor." The station had to apologize after receiving a deluge of letters from listeners who, due to Ekecs's broadcasts, knew that Penny Lane was a street in the Liverpool business district.

Like most RFE journalists, Ekecs used a radio name to protect relatives back in Budapest. As Laszlo Cseke, he became a household name, a beloved personality whose voice was known throughout the country. Letters addressed to "Uncle Laci" poured in from all over Europe, from Hungarians living in Yugoslavia, Slovakia, and Romania, from Hungarians working in Moscow and East Germany, as well as from Hungary proper. Many letters were postmarked from Vienna, Belgrade, or West Germany; they had been given to travelers for mailing because some Hungarians still feared official reprisals for sending any sort of communication to the criminal radio in Munich. (Although the BBC would send Western records on request to the Soviet bloc, RFE did not, for fear of provoking official sanctions against listeners.) And some simply didn't trust the Hungarian postal service; correspondents complained of having mailed over thirty letters before Ekecs received just one.

Some wrote simply to express regard for their beloved Cseke; they called him their "best friend," a "vitalizing force," the person "who keeps us from falling into despair." Others reassured Ekecs that the Budapest rock program was but a pale imitation of *Teenager Party*. But many letters conveyed a political undertone. One inquired about prospects for political asylum; his class origins had disqualified him from dental studies, and he had been compelled to join the Communist youth organization to secure any kind of education. Another sent this plaintive message: "Uncle Laci, tell me please how I could get over to your country? There, perhaps, I could further develop my painting talent. I get no admission to school here, because I did not join the Red youth organization, because I did not want to become a Communist. Even if they killed me." Another lamented, "The Communists always plan in such a way which must lead to failure." But while Ekecs took understandable pride in the many listener tributes, he was less than pleased by a backhanded compliment from none other than János Kádár. When asked to comment on RFE broadcasts, the Communist leader replied laconically that the station "played good music," leaving Ekecs to fret over whether the American public would appreciate its

tax dollars subsidizing an ostensibly political station known best for its popular music.⁷

Ekecs continued his music programs into the mid-eighties, despite his dislike of some of the rawer musical fads—heavy metal and rap, for example. As the rhythms grew darker and the lyrics degenerated into obscenity, Ekecs provided fewer commentaries and translations. He would, however, occasionally do battle over censorship by production supervisors. He once persuaded RFE to make an exception in its antiobscenity policy for a song by Country Joe and the Fish that included the word "fucking" in the refrain.

When communism collapsed, Ekecs returned a hero to the country he had left forty years earlier. The response overwhelmed him: "In cabs, people recognized my voice; in shops they recognized my voice." Such was his popularity that Ekecs was invited to revive *Teenager Party* on a private radio station in Budapest after RFE eliminated the Hungarian broadcasting service in 1993. Now Ekecs travels to Budapest every two weeks to tape his programs, which run on Sunday afternoons.

He remains a passionate defender of popular culture's liberating qualities and argues that American rock music undermined the Communist system as surely as did the intellectual arguments of anti-Communists. Naturally enough, he has a far more benign view of rock's social impact than do many of his RFE colleagues, even those who may have welcomed rock's subversion of state socialism: "The message of rock is, 'Please don't accept everything the older people say.' Remember, it was the younger Hungarians who changed the system; the older people were the Bolsheviks. In the end, the Iron Curtain was not soundproof."

August 21, 1968

By 1968 the changes that were introduced in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution had transformed Radio Free Europe's coverage of the Communist world. This was particularly true of the station's positive attitude toward the controversial phenomenon of reform communism. Whatever the predisposition of the individual broadcaster, some of whom found the very notion of reform communism difficult to swallow, the station's official policy was to give a degree of credit to regimes that instituted policies of incremental change or that seemed to inch away from lockstep endorsement of Moscow's international stance.

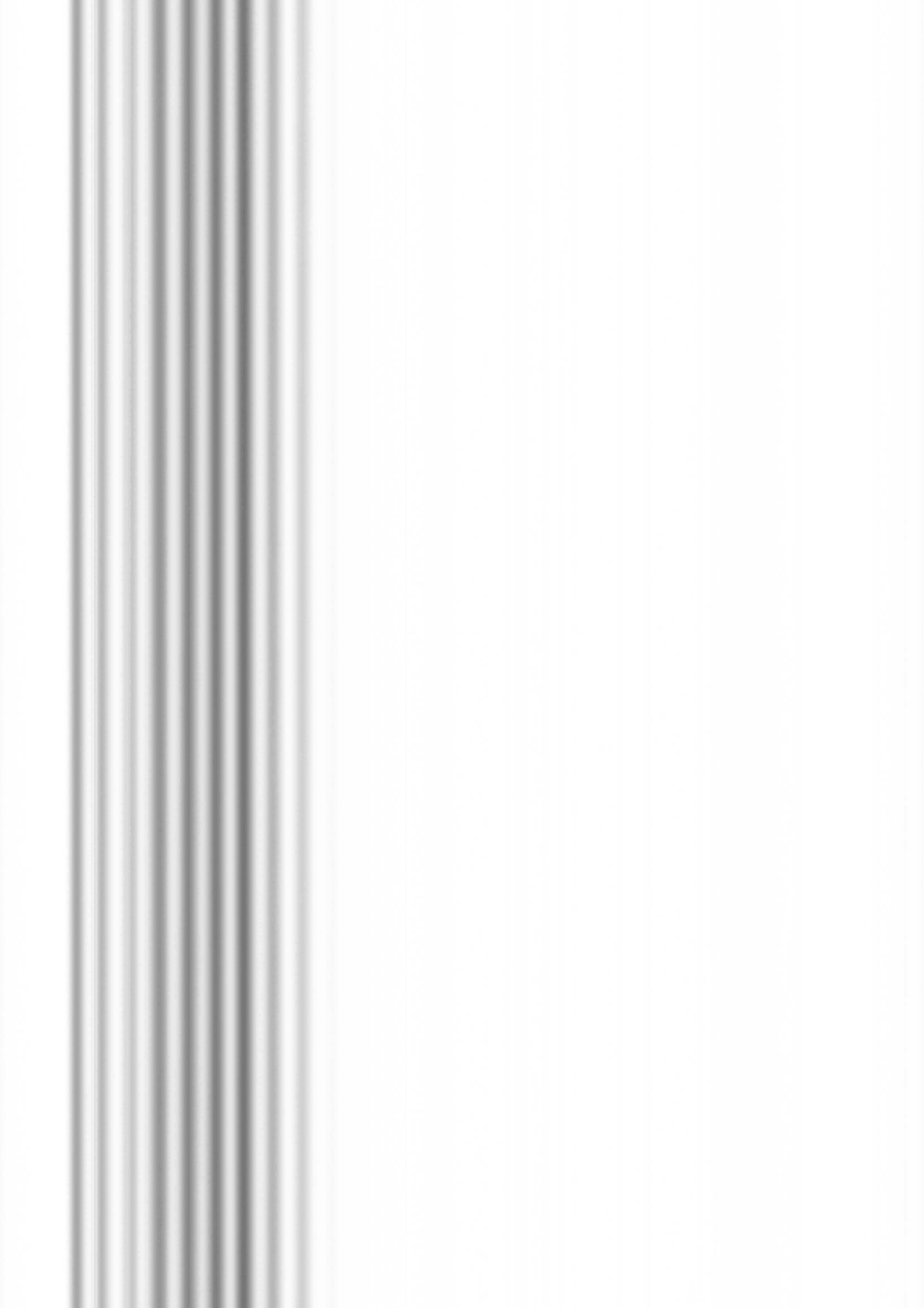
Radio Free Europe remained, of course, a powerful anti-Soviet voice. Every policy, every statistic, every claim of a successful harvest or overfulfillment of the plan, was placed under microscopic scrutiny. Furthermore, Radio Free Europe gave extensive coverage to the first stirrings of intellectual dissent in the bloc; if disaffected party members issued an appeal for democracy in Poland, Radio Free Europe ensured that, among others, disaffected party members in Czechoslovakia and Hungary were immediately informed of the most recent developments. And while a measure of control over broadcast content had been instituted, prebroadcast censorship was still rejected, and RFE remained by far the most free-wheeling of the major international broadcast services.

In accepting the potential utility of reform communism, RFE reflected the official policy of the American government. Reform communism, however, came in many varieties, and each presented a special problem for RFE editors. By the late sixties, it was clear that János Kádár was leading Hungary in a cautiously reformist direction; never-

theless, many Hungarians still despised Kádár for his betrayal of the revolution and his role in Imre Nagy's execution. In Romania, a new party leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, gained immediate popularity with Western diplomats for his country's shift toward a foreign policy stance that appeared to be independent of Moscow. To RFE's Romanian audience, however, Ceausescu's international maneuvering was less important than his authoritarian internal policies and the ominous early signs of a developing personality cult. And in Poland, the time had long passed since Gomulka was seen as a reformer; the only argument supporting his continued rule was the spectre of Moczar as the likely alternative.

To those responsible for the formulation of RFE's broadcast strategy, the argument for reformism was sustainable only if initial modest change was seen to be leading to the ultimate goals of freedom and independence. No one quite knew how the process of change would transform state socialism into something approaching social democracy, although it was assumed that the reform impulse would originate within the party, not from forces outside the system. The superiority of Western democracy was, however, self-evident, given the growing prosperity in Western Europe, especially in Germany. After the Hungarian Revolution, the credibility of Communist leaders depended increasingly on their ability to satisfy consumer needs, but it was abundantly clear that communism could not compete with the regulated market systems of Capitalist Europe without a significant economic reorientation. Thus RFE devoted program after program to the ruminations of economic planners whose ideas challenged the orthodoxies of the Soviet model. In practice, "market socialism" proved only marginally more effective than the Stalinist system of economic organization. But reformism's economic consequences were a secondary consideration to RFE, which was predominantly concerned with the impact of economic change on the ability of the Communist state to maintain strict political control.

As events developed, Czechoslovakia was to be the proving grounds for the most serious attempt at reform communism ever undertaken. Although widely considered as the most Westernized country in the Soviet bloc, Czechoslovakia had suffered under the rule of a series of dogmatic hard-liners, the latest of whom, Antonín Novotný, had retained power since the fifties through a strategy that combined the neutralization of potential domestic rivals with the reliable support of



the Kremlin leadership. By 1968, however, opposition to Novotný's uninspiring leadership had gathered force, and at a party Congress in early January, Novotný was removed as Communist chief and replaced by a little-known figure, Alexander Dubček.

The changes in party leadership were to trigger one of the most astonishing chapters in the annals of communism. Ultimately, the Prague Spring was to reveal not the potential of reform, but communism's utter inability to withstand real change. When the Prague experiment was finally crushed by a Warsaw Pact invasion, it was not simply the Czechoslovak reforms that were destroyed, but the then prevalent idea that communism was moving inexorably in a liberal direction. In January 1968, however, no one was predicting that the Dubček leadership was inclined toward radical change. To much of the world, it seemed as if one thoroughly mediocre leader was being replaced by a colorless party bureaucrat who was not likely to preside over major liberalization and would certainly not pose a challenge to Moscow's hegemonic authority.

This, in any event, was RFE's cautious response to the results of the party congress. Still, early commentaries were calculated not to emphasize the possible negatives. They stressed Dubček's roots in Slovakia and interpreted his election as largely due to the demands of Slovak Communists (Dubček was the first Slovak elected party leader) for an equal share in political power. An RFE policy document described him as an undynamic career party man. "We are probably going to witness a period of collective and cautious leadership in which it could turn out that Dubček is a transitional figure," the memo observed. "The new regime will very likely go to some lengths . . . to avoid startling policy changes of any kind. It will be important not to offend important sensitivities either inside or outside the country. Hence, in spite of the shakeup, we do not foresee a dramatic reorientation of major policies."¹

Given the modest expectations for the new leadership, it is hardly surprising that RFE broadcasts did not greet Dubček's elevation with unalloyed enthusiasm. Early commentaries stressed the Slovak factor, the fact that Dubček represented a generation untainted by direct participation in Stalinist excesses, and the new leadership's apparent lack of the older generation's anti-German attitudes. The station's analysts also believed that Dubček's having been elected by the entire central committee, instead of simply installed by a tiny clique, was an encour-

aging sign. Finally, RFE was convinced that after the stagnant years of Novotný, the new leadership deserved to be treated with cautious optimism until it proved itself unworthy of respect.

Within two months, it became clear that the Dubček group was not only prepared to advance bold plans for change but also willing to tolerate radical ideas from outside the party. Extensive democratic reforms were instituted, including near freedom of speech and press, the rehabilitation of the victims of political persecution, the restoration of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, a fair sharing of power among Czechs and Slovaks in a new federal state, and the acceleration of previously promised and far-reaching economic reforms. Political debate was freewheeling; there was practically no subject that was regarded as taboo, including the country's loyalty to the Socialist camp. To be sure, in public Dubček and the rest of the leadership continued to swear total loyalty to its East bloc allies. At the same time, they held to a reform course and refused to crack down on those who were impertinent enough to raise uncomfortable questions about Czechoslovakia's international commitments.

This was an exhilarating time for Czechs and Slovaks. The prevailing mood is vividly and, in light of subsequent events, tragically, captured in a letter written by a Czech intellectual and sent to Jiří Horák, a Czech exile academic who worked as a free-lance commentator for RFE: "I don't know what to do first: to read newspapers, watch tv, or listen to the radio. Panel discussions, interviews, and reports are so interesting we can't get enough of them. You probably can't imagine what this means to us. We are now living in a new world. To hear, after so many years, an open criticism and candid words. . . . We breathe better nowadays, people are shedding their passivity and indifference. . . . I envy our little Helene [their thirteen-year-old daughter]; her future looks better than ours did twenty years ago."² The media that so thoroughly fascinated the author of this letter, and millions of his countrymen, was Czechoslovak media, not, by and large, Radio Free Europe. For the first time since it initiated broadcasts in 1950, RFE was confronted by competition from a truly free press, a press committed to asking all the many forbidden questions that had accumulated during two decades of reactionary Communist rule. Radio Free Europe had been asking the right questions for years, but RFE was located in Munich and New York, not Prague. To even suggest assigning journalists to cover Czechoslovak developments directly from Prague would

have been regarded by Moscow as an act of brazen provocation. Thus RFE continued to cover the fast-moving events secondhand, leaving the station at a real competitive disadvantage.³

Compounding RFE's dilemma was a growing fear that the Prague reformers were inviting catastrophe by their aggressive challenges to the Kremlin's authority. Ralph Walter, who had recently been appointed the station's director, had served on the policy staff during the Hungarian Revolution and was determined that RFE would not repeat the mistakes of 1956. During the spring, RFE went on a crisis footing over the prospect of two potentially explosive challenges to the East European status quo. Whereas in Czechoslovakia, the party had opened the door to a challenge to Communist authority, in Poland student demonstrators posed a threat to the already shaky Gomulka regime. No dreamy reformer, Gomulka resorted to force in dealing with his adversaries, and order was restored, for the time being.⁴

To some degree, the Prague Spring stood as a vindication of RFE's endorsement of reform communism adopted after the Hungarian Revolution. The 1965 Czechoslovakia country paper—a document that set forth the station's broadcast strategy—emphasized that while the eventual objective was a total transformation to democracy, the growth of reform sentiment within the party represented the most effective available means of moving in that direction. The document stressed the importance of broadcasts directed to party functionaries, and suggested a policy of encouraging revisionist tendencies within party ranks and the stimulation of national consciousness among party members as well as the general population. Moreover, the document encouraged a policy of advocating socioeconomic models different from American-style capitalism, laying particular emphasis on European social democracy as an alternative to the Communist brand of state socialism. While endorsing a continuation of RFE's traditional support of a unitary Czechoslovak state, the guideline proposed an emphasis on a new system that guaranteed a fair division of power for Czechs and Slovaks in a federal state. The document also cautioned against any suggestion that the West might intervene militarily in the event of invasion by the Soviet Union.⁵

Three years after its adoption as official broadcast policy, this document seemed remarkably prescient. But while RFE was enthusiastic in its embrace of the Prague Spring, the enthusiasm was tinged with caution. Once it was clear that the Prague reformers were intent on

instilling serious changes, including guarantees of freedom of expression, Radio Free Europe refrained from exhortations to push matters even further. Instead, RFE took on a role that was, in certain respects, quite modest. A guidance issued in late February, entitled "The Winds of Change in Czechoslovakia," indicated that RFE intended to function as a national communications center for the reform forces by amplifying what was being said in a particular region or by a particular interest group or by forces outside Czechoslovakia.

This was relatively tame stuff, given the direct challenges to both the Communist system and the country's participation in the Warsaw Pact, which were being publicly aired in Prague itself. "Prague Radio said things which Radio Free Europe didn't dare broadcast," recalled Karel Jezdinsky, a reporter for Czechoslovak radio who later left Czechoslovakia and joined the RFE staff after the invasion. Jezdinsky himself produced a program for Prague Radio on the jamming of foreign stations that included an interview with the official who administered the jamming operation.⁶ In-depth reporting of this sort was beyond the capacity of RFE; it was, on the other hand, normal fare for the Czechoslovak media in the months before the invasion.

Not surprisingly, RFE's listenership declined, giving rise to rumors, apparently unwarranted, that plans were being made to shut down broadcasts to Czechoslovakia. But while RFE strategists were constantly debating how best to reach the Czechoslovak audience during this period of political upheaval, the policy of broadcast caution was maintained throughout the period. "We heeded the lessons of the Hungarian Revolution," said Walter. "We were cautious, because we were conscious of the possibility of an invasion. We were more cautious than Czechoslovak journalists were, because we did not want to be out in front of people who, we feared, were out in front of what the situation would allow. We felt that we had to be more responsible than the people who were enjoying this period of liberation."⁷

Walter's apprehension at the possibility of an invasion was, in fact, a minority view among the chief editors and policy advisers. Walter recalls that following a sharply worded note from the Warsaw Pact leaders to Dubček in July, he was almost alone in predicting that an intervention was in the offing unless the government backed off from some of the more confrontational policies. Only István Bede, the chief editor of the Hungarian desk, was in agreement. As Karl Reyman, a

key member of the policy staff, remembers the period, "We really didn't believe that the Soviets would invade, and this affected our judgment. President Johnson had just met with Kosygin, and the 'spirit of Glassboro' (their meeting was held in Glassboro, New Jersey) had been declared, signaling progress toward détente between the United States and the Soviet Union. We did not believe that Brezhnev would risk the new relationship with such a blatant act of aggression. We were convinced there would be no invasion, right up to the last minute."⁸

Nevertheless, Ralph Walker began to prepare for the worst, determined that RFE should not be caught by surprise if an invasion should materialize. He also was intent on ensuring that coverage of an invasion would not be subject to the emotional levels that had negatively affected broadcasting during the Hungarian Revolution. In mid-July he established contingency plans for centralized control of programming in the event of military intervention. Walter wrote in a memo that broadcast tone would be monitored "as part of an effort to keep down excitability in any form."⁹

Walter was also concerned about the attitude of the American government toward the disturbing rumblings from Moscow. In the past, RFE could usually depend on reliable sources from within the government to provide an accurate assessment of Washington's thinking on the controversial issue of the day. As momentum toward an invasion gathered force, however, Walter was given conflicting signals: either Washington had quietly warned Moscow that an invasion would damage the developing détente relationship, or the Johnson administration had decided to take a hands-off stance in the event of intervention, with little more than a pro forma condemnation. A few weeks before the invasion, he received a message indicating that "as regards U.S.-Soviet relations and progress towards disarmament and other things, the State Department feels that the Czechoslovak crisis should not cancel out things that have been in the works for years." The prediction that the United States was preparing a relatively mild response to Soviet military action was beginning to creep into the reports of the savvy diplomatic correspondents as well, leaving RFE with the dilemma of covering American policy both accurately and responsibly. While RFE was certainly not about to report that America was preparing to impose economic or diplomatic sanctions, much less a military response, it also did not want to bolster Soviet confidence by

reporting that the United States had decided to eschew a strong response in the name of détente. In the end Walter issued guidelines forbidding the broadcast of analyses that speculated that the administration had reached a decision to allow the Soviets freedom of action within their sphere of interest.¹⁰

With the arrival of August came an intensification of invasion rumors. Radio Free Europe's coverage stressed international solidarity with beleaguered Czechoslovakia, with a special focus on sympathetic quotes from Communists in Italy, China, and elsewhere, along with strong declarations of support from the non-Communist European Left. The broadcasts cast both Yugoslavia and Romania in a favorable light for their statements on behalf of the right of sovereign states to chart their own course of Socialist development. The coverage of America emphasized the debatable point (to put it mildly) that the administration's soft words were enabling the Kremlin to follow a moderate, non-interventionist path.

By mid-August, RFE was expressing outright concern over the confrontational steps that the Dubček government had taken or was tolerating. In a policy guidance issued on August 16, less than one week before the invasion, RFE was counseling the government to make concessions to the critics of their internal reform among more orthodox minded Warsaw Pact members to ensure breathing space for the reform process. The guidance, however, reflected RFE's internal agony, for while urging prudence on the Czechoslovaks, it also noted that "any attempt to restrain the hard won liberties or define the limits of democratization . . . raises the question of how much internal discipline is consistent with liberal reform." The Dubček government was thus advised to weigh "what particular gestures toward [Warsaw] Pact allies are justified and which threaten the national unity which was a response to pressure from those allies."

Within a few days, RFE actually concluded that intervention pressure had eased. A policy evaluation asserted that the Czechoslovaks had "won a victory in maintaining the integrity of key sections of their reforms," while the Soviets were thought to have abandoned a policy of immediate pressure in favor of tactics to contain the Prague disease over the long term. In the future, the evaluation went on, it would be increasingly difficult for the Kremlin to impose its will on foreign Communist parties. There was a prediction that an informal coalition of Communist mavericks—Tito, Ceausescu, Dubček—might

undermine Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, and, finally, a suggestion that Moscow might actually reap benefits from its toleration of the Prague experiments "if it accepts the limitations which modern political conditions place on superpowers."

This guidance was issued during the day of August 20. A few hours later, just before midnight, Red Army units, joined by troops from Poland, Hungary, and East Germany, crossed the Czechoslovak border. Once again, a challenge to Soviet authority was to be crushed by a massive show of military force.

On this occasion, however, there would be no question of RFE complicity in the tragedy. Immediately upon receiving news of the invasion, Walter imposed sweeping and, for RFE, unprecedented controls over the broadcast content of the Czechoslovak service. He or another member of his staff scrutinized every Czechoslovak script relating to the events in Prague, right down to the news items adapted from the wire services. This policy was accepted with good grace by the exile broadcasters and carried forward without serious dispute. But if the process of script analysis meant that news coverage would be delayed, and thus somewhat less timely, that was a price Walter was willing to pay in order to ensure accurate and responsible coverage. Karl Reyman, a chief policy aide during the invasion period, recalls a labored debate over how to characterize a declaration by President Johnson cautioning the Soviets not to "unleash the dogs of war." "The wire service dispatch described Johnson's statement as a 'warning'; Walter, however, thought the term too strong and, furthermore, believed that to report to an East European audience that the American president had issued a "warning" to the Kremlin might be construed as a threat of military response. Walter, of course, was proved right by the course of events; Johnson's words were meant as more of an admonition and certainly did not amount to any kind of threat. And while Walter did permit some information from clandestine, freedom radio stations in occupied Czechoslovakia to be broadcast over RFE, he absolutely forbade RFE's repeating the calls for Czechoslovak neutrality, which the underground stations and various groups were issuing in the wake of the invasion. "I more and more fear that Czechoslovakia is headed for disaster," Walter wrote in an August 23 memo in which he theorized that the Soviets were cynically allowing the underground stations to remain on the air "in the near certainty that their demands will become more and more extreme" and thus provide the Kremlin

with an excuse "to put finish to the whole business with as much violence as may be necessary."¹¹

Although forced to rely on the Western press for most of its invasion coverage material, RFE was uniquely equipped to interpret one of the most critical aspects of the crisis—the invasion's international ramifications, especially within what remained of the world Communist movement. As it turned out, the invasion's international implications were a major part of the story. Few Communist parties outside the Warsaw Pact supported the Soviets, and some parties were sharp in their denunciation of the action. The invasion also provoked a mood of anti-Sovietism among non-Communist leftists in Europe and the nonaligned bloc. That "progressive" world opinion had, however briefly, interrupted its perpetual crusade against American imperialism to express its anger at the Soviets may have been of little solace to the beleaguered Czechoslovaks. Likewise, Czechoslovaks may not have been overly moved by another RFE theme—that the Dubcek leadership had throughout the Prague Spring affirmed its loyalty to the Soviet camp and repeatedly denied any desire to subvert the Communist system. While technically accurate, this line of argument fudged the essential truth of the reforms, which is that they were leading Czechoslovakia almost inevitably, and rather quickly, to social democracy, something that most Czechoslovaks strongly supported.

On balance, however, RFE's performance during the crisis was an impressive combination of comprehensive news reporting, wise if cautious commentary, and expert analysis. In addition, many listeners appreciated the station's appeals for moderation and calm, such as was contained in a broadcast that urged Czechoslovak youth "not to risk too much, not to provoke the occupiers, and not to demonstrate heroism." A particularly important highlight was the intense coverage devoted to Foreign Minister Jiri Hajek's moving protest against Soviet aggression to the United Nations.¹²

With an independent press muffled, Radio Free Europe's listenership rose dramatically after the invasion; a poll taken by the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in the spring of 1969, and apparently suppressed by the normalization regime of Gustav Husak, gave RFE a rating only slightly below that of Radio Prague and Radio Bratislava, an impressive figure given the difficulty of reception under jamming conditions. At least part of RFE's enhanced appeal can be traced to the addition of several of Radio Prague's most respected political com-

mentators, such as Sláva Volný and Karel Jezdinský. No less a figure than Gustáv Husák gave testimony to RFE's influence, referring on two occasions to the station's baleful role in the course of his inaugural speech as party first secretary. Attacking "anti-socialist" forces inside the country, he said, "If one monitors Radio Free Europe one hears the same sort of talk and the same phraseology used by some of our editors."¹³

And again, referring to fears that Czechoslovakia might return to a Novotný-type regime, Husák declared, "We know how cunningly Radio Free Europe plays this tune, with Sláva Volný and similar heroes . . . spreading rumors about the horrible things which might happen. . . . The people who are doing most of this shouting are those who a few years ago were talking in an entirely different way. Now they are such torchbearers of freedom as the world has never seen before. Some of them went abroad, and now then want to enlighten fourteen million people about democracy and independence."¹⁴

Despite their superficial defiance, Husák's words betrayed the leadership's insecurity. Clearly, RFE was regarded as a powerful adversary; made even more formidable by the addition of journalists who represented the "generation of '68" and were still regarded back home as heroes of the failed experiment in liberal reform. Radio Free Europe's commitment to a broadcast strategy that stressed nonviolence and caution did not change. On the first anniversary of the invasion, a commentator urged his listeners to eschew violence. "In August last year our people refused to accept the standards of those who invaded our country," he observed. "They have no reason to sink to their level today. . . . Violence is not the Czechoslovak method."

From Liberation to Liberty

On March 1, 1953, a new international broadcasting station, Radio Liberation from Bolshevism (RL), inaugurated programming to the peoples of the Soviet Union. According to the recollections of RL veterans, Boris Shub, a Russian American intellectual who was a guiding spirit in the station's early years, had proposed that broadcasts include, over the ticking sound of a metronome, the announcement "The era of Stalin is coming to the end, the era of Stalin is coming to the end." The idea was rejected on the grounds that Stalin, then seventy-three years old, might rule for many years to come. In fact, Stalin was to rule for just five more days, his reign of terror coming to a close with his death on March 5.

Conceived as a weapon of psychological warfare during the darkest days of the anti-Stalin struggle, Radio Liberation—the original name for Radio Liberty—confronted a new political situation almost immediately. Nor was the challenge of crafting a message for the post-Stalin era the station's most immediate problem. Even before RL began its broadcasting schedule, internal strife had caused serious divisions within the organization that sponsored the station, the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, generally known as Amcomlib. Amcomlib had set itself the goal of forging unity among the more important of the Soviet exile organizations, Russian and non-Russian alike. What emerged from this undertaking was a series of acrimonious faction fights, pitting Russian exiles against other Russian exiles,