Fostering A Feeling of Betrayal: United States Foreign Policy and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

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FOSTERING A FEELING OF BETRAYAL: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND
THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

BY

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Baccalaureate Degree BA, Gettysburg College, 2018

THESIS

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ORGANIZATION DIRECTORY

- Washington, D.C.
  - Central Intelligence Agency
  - Office of Policy Coordination (1948-1952)
  - Operations Coordinating Board (1953-1961)
  - National Security Council
  - Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems
  - United States Department of Defense
  - United States Department of State
  - United States Information Agency

- New York City, New York
  - Free Europe Committee Headquarters
  - Radio Free Europe New York Headquarters
  - United Nations General Assembly and Security Council

- Munich, West Germany
  - Radio Free Europe- Office of European Director
  - Radio Free Europe- Hungary Desk (Radio Free Hungary)
ABSTRACT

FOSTERING A FEELING OF BETRAYAL: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

by

Thomas Pelchat
University of New Hampshire, May 2020

This thesis seeks to explain the development and implementation of United States foreign policy towards Eastern Europe in general, but specifically Hungary under President Eisenhower. The Eisenhower administration created a system in which two distinct, and at times contradictory foreign policy messages were broadcast to the people of Hungary, one that supported a general idea of rolling back Communism and another that seemed to promise specific help doing just that. This pairing had the effect of instilling in the Hungarian people a belief that the United States would come to their aid when they revolted against their Communist government in October 1956. The events of the Hungarian Revolution illustrate this tragic miscommunication that had become a hallmark of United States foreign policy during President Eisenhower’s first term, as the rebels felt betrayed by the lack of American support. Sources for this thesis were drawn primarily from the archives of the Eisenhower Presidential Library, from documents found in volumes of the Foreign Relations of the United States, and others compiled by the Wilson Center, as well as transcripts with Hungarian Refugees compiled by Columbia University.
INTRODUCTION

Have you ever played the game telephone? A group of about eight people get together. You think of a phrase and whisper it to the person next to you. That person whispers it to the next person, and so on, until the final person hears the word or phrase and then repeats the message out loud. That is the game of telephone, and generally the odds are about 50/50 that the last person gets the message wrong. Now try it again. Think of a word or phrase and whisper it to the next person, but this time the third person intentionally whispers a variation of that original phrase to the next person. Do this say, twelve times, each time slightly changing the original phrase. When the game ends ask the final person, what it was they perceived the first and last message to be; chances are it might surprise you. Now for the final round repeat what you did in the prior game of telephone, this time though, the second to last person must translate the message into a different language. Do this twelve times and see how often the final person gets the message right. Does it mesh with the original phrase you spoke? If this sounds confusing you are right, but now imagine that this wasn’t a simple of game of telephone played in your living room or office. Instead, this game of telephone was occurring on a global level directed by the United States government and how the message was interpreted by the last person carried life and death consequences. This is what occurred between 1953 and 1956 as the United States sought to fan the flames of liberation in Eastern Europe under a foreign policy of liberation.

During his first term in office, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles implemented a foreign policy calling for the liberation of the nations of Eastern Europe. In a May 19, 1952 speech called “A Policy of Boldness,” Mr. Dulles called for the liberation of the nations of Eastern Europe from the yoke of the Soviet Union: “U.S. policy seeks as one of its peaceful goals the eventual restoration of genuine independence in the nations
of Europe and Asia now dominated by Moscow, and ... we will not be a party to any ‘deal’ confirming the rule of Soviet despotism over the alien people which it now dominates.”

Central to Dulles’s liberation policy would be broadcasting entities, such as Radio Free Europe (RFE). “We could welcome the creation in the free world of political ‘task forces’ to develop a freedom program for each of the captive nations… The activities of the Voice of America and such private committees as those for Free Europe… could be coordinated with these freedom programs,” he said. Although RFE was originally created in 1950 by the Truman administration, Dulles sought to use it as a political warfare weapon, funded by the CIA. When Eisenhower won the presidency in 1952, he implemented Dulles’s brainchild and “liberation” or “rollback” became official United States foreign policy. The game of telephone began.

Through the course of President Eisenhower’s first term, United States foreign policy toward the nations of Eastern Europe would be decided in broad terms by Eisenhower and his chief advisors. Once an overall policy had been decided, it would be sent to special committees in the National Security Council, State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, United States Information Agency, Operations Coordinating Board, and many other governmental divisions. These agencies would flesh out the policy, giving it specifics, and it would be returned to the President and often the National Security Council, to be confirmed as policy. When this had been done, guidance would be sent to the Free Europe Committee (FEC) Headquarters in New York, the parent organization of RFE. At this point, the new twist in the old game of telephone would come into play, with a deliberate editing of the guidance into a general message. The FEC would

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2 Ibid.
3 Johanna Granville, ‘‘Caught with Jam on Our Fingers’: Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956,” Diplomatic History, 29, No. 5, (2005), 823. In 1956 alone of RFE’s $21,000,000 budget, $16,000,000 was furnished by the CIA.
then forward this guidance, with slight changes to RFE in Munich, where it would be then handed down to the individual desks, Free Poland, Free Czechoslovakia, and for our concerns, Free Hungary. Here RFE employees translated the daily guidances into messages of the liberation of Eastern Europe’s captive peoples, to be broadcast to the same people. Thus, the final person in this international game of telephone received the message in a different language.

This arrangement would remain in place until November 1956, although the policy would undergo several serious revisions during the four-year period. What caused the downfall of this arrangement was an event half a world away from Washington, D.C. that would rock the foundations of American foreign policy. The event in question was the Hungarian Revolution.4

Scholarship on the thirteen days of the Hungarian Revolution has been led by historians, Csaba Bekes and Lazlo Borhi, whose monographs, The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents and Hungary in the Cold War, 1946-1956, have set the bar for any future scholarship. They examine the Hungarian Revolution as part of a larger geopolitical context and have unearthed evidence that shed light on the relationship between the United States government and Radio Free Europe as well as the devolution of Eisenhower’s and Dulles’ ‘liberation’ policy.5 My analysis in many ways benefits from their work and echoes their findings, yet my thesis focuses more attention on the complicated and tenuous thread that created and conveyed directives from one spectrum of the Eisenhower administration to the other, and in doing so, created two distinct messages. Other scholarship on the Hungarian Revolution can be drawn into three main categories. The first is occupied by historians such as Simon Hall, Peter

Boyle and William Hitchcock who see the Hungarian Revolution through the lens of larger policy problems during Eisenhower’s presidency. William Hitchcock views the Revolution in the larger context of American foreign policy. However, in his work American foreign policy is confined to the actions and words of the Eisenhower administration in Washington D.C., through the State Department and National Security meetings. Simon Hall and Peter Boyle also view the Revolution as part of larger decisions. For Hall it is in the context of the entirety of 1956, while Boyle views the Suez Crisis and the Revolution side-by-side, as a challenge for the Eisenhower administration.6

The second group of historians approaches their scholarship through European sources and actions being taken mostly in Europe. Gyorgy Litvan and Victor Sebestyen to an extent leave out the impact of the United States policy on the situation, focusing instead on Hungarian, Soviet, and other European actions during the Revolution.7 Finally, representing the third circle are scholars such as Robert Holt, George Urban, Arch Puddington and Johanna Granville, who write on RFE’s role in the uprising in Hungary.

These three scholarly groups not only diverge in their coverage of the Hungarian Revolution, but also split over Radio Free Europe’s role in fomenting it. Granville, Hall, Puddington, Sebestyen and Urban conclude through their research that Radio Free Europe was at the very least responsible for inspiring further Hungarian resistance in the face of overwhelming odds through its broadcasts.8 At odds with this conclusion is Robert Holt. Holt writes, “The

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most serious indictment, namely, that RFE incited the revolution and, when it had burst into flame, added oil to the fire by promoting armed intervention, is simply not supported by a study of RFE’s scripts.”

Finally, Boyle and Hitchcock do not in their respective works analyze the contribution of RFE in the Hungarian Revolution, merely commenting on US policy toward Hungary in broad terms, without critiquing United States policies. From this accumulated scholarship I believe there is an area which has been glossed over.

There did exist two distinct NSC and RFE policies, but Hungarian participants in the events of 1956 believed that RFE broadcasts spoke for President Eisenhower and the NSC. They heard a unified policy through their radios, but in reality crafted a third policy different from both NSC and RFE. Therefore, my thesis will seek to open a window into these unexplored dimensions. Utilizing documents and transcripts from the Eisenhower Presidential Library, the Foreign Relations of the United Series (FRUS), the Wilson Center, and refugee interviews at Columbia University, as well as prior scholarship, I will examine how the United States government in the heady days of October and November 1956, when the iron curtain was beginning to crumble, spoke with two different voices. The game of telephone had created two very disconnected messages that were being broadcast to the world by the Eisenhower administration, with terrible repercussions for the people of Hungary.

My thesis will be divided into three parts. In the first chapter, “Origins: Radio Free Europe and Liberation Policy” I will examine, as the title alludes to, the history and origins of Radio Free Europe and President Eisenhower’s Liberation Policy through his first term up to October 22, 1956, when students at Budapest Technical University prepared a series of demands.

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and in so doing prepared Hungary for Revolution. RFE was incorporated into United States Foreign Policy coming about as a result of the National Security Council Directive issued on June 18, 1948 creating the Office of Special Projects. This directive called for covert operations against foreign states, but ones “which are so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident… Specifically, such operations shall include any covert activities related to: propaganda, economic warfare.”10 RFE was to fulfill the covert activities related to propaganda, seeking to subvert the Soviet dominated Eastern European satellite nations. Dulles’s speech in May 1952, led to the evolution of RFE’s role in United States foreign policy. It now served as a central engine in spreading President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles’s liberation policy to Eastern Europe. This chapter will cover the evolution of President Eisenhower’s foreign policy and RFE’s role in it through Eisenhower’s first term. Significant time will be spent examining the ramifications of the 1953 East German uprisings and the 1956 Poznan riots on United States foreign policy.

The events which transpired in Poland in June 1956 will offer a bridge to the Hungarian Revolution in October 1956. In my second chapter, “Hungarian Revolution: Trial and Tribulations of Radio Free Europe and Eisenhower’s Policy of Liberation” the thirteen days of the Hungarian Revolution will be covered. While the events on the ground in Budapest and Hungary will be addressed, more attention will be paid to the goings on of the Eisenhower administration’s internal discussion in Washington D.C., RFE in Munich, and the United Nations in New York City. It was during these days that the disconnect in rhetoric crystalized. While the Eisenhower administration’s liberation policy had evolved, RFE’s rhetoric retained many of the

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elements first put forth in 1952. This disconnect was not visible until the Revolution and was exacerbated by individual sentiment within the Hungary desk of RFE. Despite this, for the men and women resisting Soviet tanks in Budapest RFE represented the United States government and its policies. Therefore, when broadcasts hinted at possible United States intervention Hungarian rebels took it at face value. It is for this reason that two distinct messages were being aired by the United States, NSC meetings and directives and RFE broadcasts, should be examined together, as if through the lenses of Hungarians in Budapest during the Revolution.

The second chapter will conclude with the Soviet re-invasion of Budapest on November 4th, which will lead into the third and final chapter, “Recriminations and Reexaminations”. This chapter will deal with the United States’ immediate response to the Soviet re-invasion and transition into an international questioning of United States foreign policy. Faced with this backlash of public opinion, the Eisenhower administration reacted, launching a vigorous defense of its actions during the Hungarian Revolution and the years preceding it. It was not until nearly a month had passed since the crushing of the uprising that the Eisenhower administration began to admit its mistakes in internal CIA and RFE memos, placing the blame on RFE’s Hungary desk and its personnel. This reevaluation was reinforced by hundreds of interviews with refugees fleeing the violence and reprisals in Hungary.\textsuperscript{11} These men, women, and children expressed their frustration towards RFE and the United States leaving many with a sense of betrayal. Professor Tamas Aczel put it best: “we learned what we didn’t know – that the West had written off these countries and only their propaganda machines pretended otherwise.”\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} For this thesis the bulk of interviews I will examine were conducted and compiled by Columbia University in 1957.
\textsuperscript{12} Sebestyen, 296.
The events of the Hungarian Revolution and the months to follow brought about a systematic change in United States foreign policy towards Eastern Europe and the use of Radio Free Europe. “Liberation” and “Rollback” were replaced with notions of “evolution” and “differentiation”.\textsuperscript{13} Stricter guidelines and supervision were put in place to ensure that Radio Free Europe did not overstep its instructions, and by 1958 RFE broadcasts were confined to news and music. It was no longer used as a tool of overt political warfare. The years following also saw international condemnation of Soviet actions in Hungary through the UN, but as the years passed outrage dissipated. By the mid 1960’s the Hungarian Revolution was only a memory as those refugees who gave impassioned critiques of the United States were now seamlessly integrating into their new country and culture. By 1968, the events of the Hungarian Revolution had been eclipsed by another uprising in Eastern Europe, this time in Czechoslovakia. All that was left were memories. The Memories and lessons of the perils of two disconnected messages, which continue to go unheeded to this day.

\textsuperscript{13} Bekes, 380-381.
Chapter 1

Finding Their Role in the Cold War: President Eisenhower’s Policy of Liberation and Radio Free Europe

Wary of security services, conspirators disseminated leaflets to their neighbors and family members just as they had been instructed. They worked to acquire arms in order to assist the expected invaders with the hope that they would bring more. This could have taken place on the eve of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, but this plot occurred in 1950. Gedeon Rath’s anti-Communist plot was foiled, just as Kalman Horvath, Gyozo Flossmann and Ottmar Faddi’s plots would be in the early 1950s. The leaflets that Rath’s group disseminated were encouraged by Radio Free Europe, and his followers believed that an American invasion was to occur based on the broadcasts of RFE.¹ The circumstances of the Hungarian Revolution six years later, then, were not an isolated incident, rather they were the result of years of growing differences in the rhetoric employed, first by President Harry Truman, and then for this thesis, by the Eisenhower administration and its propaganda arm, Radio Free Europe. Due to constant tinkering by Secretary of State John Dulles, President Dwight D. Eisenhower the National Security Council, and Radio Free Europe the language of ‘liberation’ and ‘rollback’ became distorted, resulting in a Hungarian perception which did not live up to reality.

The Origins of ‘Rollback’ and the Role of Radio Free Europe

The 1952 United States Presidential election brought with it a new concept for American foreign policy. The architects were Republican Presidential nominee, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and his foreign policy advisor, John Foster Dulles. In May 1952, using the title, “A Policy of Boldness”, Dulles first articulated this policy. In an interview with Life, Dulles laid out the undergirding principle of this policy, which was the liberation of captive nations in Eastern Europe. Dulles said, “Liberation from the yoke of Moscow will not occur for a very long time, and courage in neighboring lands will not be sustained, unless the United States makes it publicly known that it wants and expects liberation to occur.”\(^2\) This policy would seek as one of its goals the eventual peaceful restoration of independence in nations of Europe dominated by Moscow and make clear that the United States government would not be a party to any deal in confirming Soviet rule over those lands it then dominated.\(^3\)

On August 13th in Denver, Colorado, General Eisenhower expanded on Dulles’ program: “A true program for peace for the United States must include as one of its peaceful aims the restoration of the captive nations of Europe and the right freely and honestly to determine their own fate and their own form of government.”\(^4\) While affirming what his advisor John Foster Dulles put forth nearly three months prior, Eisenhower went one step further, criticizing the inadequacies of his predecessor’s foreign policy. Historian John Lewis Gaddis referred to that policy as containment, articulated in NSC 68.\(^5\) “The Republican nominee declared in effect that

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\(^3\) Ibid.


\(^5\) President Truman’s Policy of Containment and NSC 68 is addressed in John Lewis Gaddis’ monograph Strategies of Containment.
the present policy of ‘mere containment’ followed by President Truman’s Administration did not
go far enough in bringing freedom to peoples now ruled by Communist masters.”

Two weeks later, Dulles also spoke of the failings of containment, “The ‘containment’ policy of President
Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson must be abandoned. ‘That policy has not contained
Soviet communism.’”

While both Dulles and Eisenhower sought to replace the policy of
containment with a policy of liberation, they sought to retain several instruments of the former,
one such being Radio Free Europe (RFE).

Radio Free Europe, as part of the National Committee for Free Europe (NCFE), was
nominally a private non-governmental organization. NCFE received its authority from its
charter in New York City, but the policy which it dictated to RFE came from the United States
government. An outline of understanding between the Office of Policy Coordination, a
government agency, and NCFE, spelled out that NCFE “receive direct policy guidance, financial
support and other assistance from the United States Government.” Furthermore, “in recognition
of the fact that a substantial part of its (NCFE) revenue has and will continue to be provided by
the U.S. Government through OPC (Office of Policy Coordination), appropriate consideration
must be given to the high degree of government interest with which it is endowed and invested.”

With this in mind, the “independent” agency, RFE, as early as 1949 in accordance with NSC
58/2 and 20/4, was intended to offer intellectual and political leaders in exile in the United States

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9 Ibid., 3-4.
a role in preparing the way toward the restoration in Eastern Europe of the social, political and religious liberties they sought.\textsuperscript{10}

Radio Free Europe was intended to play a central role in bringing about the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of Soviet power in the satellite states such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. It was designed to be part of a strong propaganda offensive against these Communist regimes, with messages designed to maintain the morale of the captive peoples and to hinder the efforts of the Soviet Union to establish full control in these nations. However, the Truman administration foreign policy decided that these broadcasts should not promise imminent liberation or encourage active revolt, contending that such a policy would be morally reprehensible because it could lead to brutal repression.\textsuperscript{11} This was to prove to be a difficult and contradictory task for RFE. In 1950 as a tool for containment, Rath and his conspirators believed an invasion was imminent based on Radio Free Europe, even though President Truman believed promises of imminent liberation were morally reprehensible. Future misunderstandings would only multiple in later years as an instrument for Eisenhowers’ and Dulles’ policy of liberation.

The problems of seeking to promote resistance in satellite countries, while not promising liberation as a reward for such actions, led RFE almost from its inception to operate at cross purposes. This is most notably seen in the Radio Free Europe Policy \textit{Handbook} issued in December of 1951. The purpose as detailed by the handbook was to “contribute to the liberation of the nations imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain by sustaining their morale and stimulating in them a spirit of non-cooperation with the Soviet-dominated regimes by which they are… being,

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 1; NSC 58/2 called for the United States to foster Communist heresy among satellite states and encouraged the emergence of non-Stalinist regimes through psychological warfare, Borhi, 270-272.

ruled.”¹² The central characteristic of RFE was that it was the “instrument of men who are engaged in fighting for freedom and justice. As such, it encourages resistance to every tyrant, great and small.”¹³ Yet, the Handbook, also advised speakers that to this point no unequivocal statement that that the West would actually use armed force to liberate these captive peoples had come from any Western government. Therefore, exile speakers were warned not to promise armed intervention by the West.¹⁴

The next paragraph of this text would lead those reading this handbook further down the rabbit hole. Beginning in 1950, RFE Broadcasters were instructed by the Handbook to assert that they saw no possibility of a lasting peace anywhere in the world while Moscow dominated regimes clung to power. Listeners were to take comfort in the fact that since the United States had gone to the aid of Greece in 1947 and South Korea in June 1950 to stave off Communist forces, the intentions of the Western powers to resist Soviet-Russian aggression could not be questioned. To provide further evidence of Western intentions, broadcasters were tasked with utilizing appropriate sentences from U.N. resolutions, as well as declarations by the President and Secretary of State, while excluding promises of armed liberation, to express an interest in the liberation of those listening.¹⁵ It can be understood why those listening to broadcasts constructed in this manner might begin to grow confused, yet hopeful.

Policymakers tasked RFE to keep the morale of its listeners up “by inculcating hope of eventual liberation through a convincing display of the superiority of skill, resources, and military strength of the West, and through reiteration of the promise that the West intends that

¹² Ibid., 2.
¹⁴ Ibid., 6.
¹⁵ Ibid., 6-7.
our listeners shall be free.”16 Broadcasters were instructed to utilize examples of the United States armed intervention, all the while being told not to promise armed intervention. By broadcasting the former it was difficult to take seriously the latter. Especially as the conclusion of the Policy Handbook read, “One of the functions of Radio Free Europe is to keep hope alive in our anticommunist listeners and to console them with the assurance that the free world intends that they shall be liberated.”17 For a man or a woman residing behind the Iron Curtain it would be very difficult not to have one’s hopes raised as to the possible liberation of not only themselves, but their families and nations. These mixed signals resulted in more than one group attempting to overthrow their Communist regimes, believing in statements of an impending American invasion and aid.18

The inability of policymakers in the United States to construct a clear and cogent message of hope, not help, for Radio Free Europe led to a meeting in Princeton, days before John Foster Dulles’ “Policy of Boldness” speech. Called by then Chairman of the National Committee for a Free Europe, C.D. Jackson, the meeting consisted of twenty-eight representatives of the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Radio Free Europe, the Psychological Strategy Board, Princeton University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Their purpose was to explore the possibilities of solving the problem faced by RFE in broadcasting persuasively to Eastern Europe.19 They hoped to answer the question of whether

16 Ibid., 2.
17 Ibid., 12.
18 Borhi, 282-283.
the Government of the United States would seriously engage in political warfare and enunciate a clear policy on the liberation of the captive peoples of Eastern and Central Europe.\textsuperscript{20}

The situation facing these representatives was that since the end of World War II, RFE’s listeners had been prisoners of Soviet rule, underfed, overworked, faced with indoctrination and brutalized by Soviet inspired government. Many of these captive peoples had listened to countless broadcasts by Radio Free Europe encouraging them to retain hope that liberation would eventually arrive, but apathy was beginning to take root. Letters from listeners were introduced that corroborated this apathy: “Up to now we gained strength from the free world but now we believe in nothing at all. We cannot help thinking of the West with hatred, because it is they, who in the guise of liberation, allowed this hellish power to come over us.”\textsuperscript{21} And “We Hungarians owe all our woes to America. If it had not been for American help, these bandits would not have come here. Now the Americans do not stir a finger.”\textsuperscript{22} These messages portrayed a dawning realization that the peoples of Hungary and other captive nations could no longer go on hoping for the promised day of liberation, a day that appeared less and less likely to occur.

To those in Princeton debating this growing apathy, the culprit appeared to be the actions, or rather the inactions of the Government of the United States. For up to this point, no western statesman had proclaimed that there could be no peace in the world until those residing in the


Soviet satellites were free to govern themselves. Many in Hungary and Eastern Europe thought the West had accepted the status quo conceived at Yalta. This combined with what was described as the “routine thinking, lack of imagination, ignorance of the concept of political warfare” demonstrated by the United States Government created a situation in which RFE could potentially no longer stay in business as its audience could no longer go on hoping for liberation.  

This assessment of the United States political warfare capabilities of May 1952 served as a damning indictment of President Truman’s and Secretary of State Acheson’s policy of containment, at the same time Eisenhower and Dulles were attacking it on the campaign trail. The Princeton meeting participants concurred that the policy of containment had “outlived its usefulness and should be replaced with a more dynamic and positive policy of ultimate liberation of the enslaved nations.”

The question that remained was how this dynamic policy would look. Representatives to the Princeton meeting were very cognizant of the wish of Eastern European peoples to be free but did not wish to include language in such a policy of a commitment of force to achieve such ends. Deputy Director of the CIA Allen Dulles stated that, “We should clearly state that peaceful means are envisaged of the liberation of the Iron Curtain peoples.” This sentiment was shared by Professor Walt Rostow of MIT, “No statement of aims should involve any commitment to use armed forces… No guarantee that we will re-establish their freedom through the movement of armies under our control.”

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26 Ibid., 8.
lingering doubts. Frank Altschul, financier and member of the board of directors for the Free Europe Committee, mused towards the conclusion of the meeting, “Maybe time is no longer working in our favor. Maybe sooner or later we are going to have to take the risk if war should come in spite of our efforts and we are to have the allegiance of the people we need and want to have with us in this struggle.”

Despite any possible misgivings, the meeting concluded with a statement on American foreign policy which sought the development of conditions in which people might freely establish the government and institutions under which they lived. The desire of the U.S. Government was to see political independence re-established in these captive nations without resort to war and to support the entrance of these nations as equal members of the family of nations. The statement prepared over two days in Princeton, New Jersey would serve as the groundwork for future United States foreign policy and give new direction to Radio Free Europe.

In the 1952 Presidential Election, Dwight D. Eisenhower defeated his Democratic opponent, Adlai Stevenson. Once in office, President Eisenhower transitioned his campaign rhetoric into actual policy. This was done in concert with his foreign policy advisor, now Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Utilizing many of the ideas proposed during the campaign and in the Princeton statement, President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles championed a policy of liberation and rollback of Soviet control in Eastern Europe. The unbridled optimism which accompanied this rhetoric during the presidential campaign had to be translated into cold reality at Radio Free Europe. In the weeks leading up to the election, Radio Free Europe had issued a special guidance to its broadcasters. “We of RFE… cannot comment upon these statements (on

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27 Ibid., 29.
liberation by Gen. Eisenhower and Mr. Dulles) with unqualified optimism, for to do so would be to deceive listeners by inspiring in them exaggerated hope of Western intervention.” The guidance continued, “not one word in these statements (on liberation) can be used to encourage militant anti-communists to go over from passive to active resistance in the expectation that such resistance will be supported by Western elements.”29 The fear of RFE in the aftermath of the Presidential campaign and Eisenhower’s election was that their listeners would rise up, believing that support would be forthcoming. If such a guidance had been issued in the days prior to the Hungarian Revolution, history might have been different. Within a year of Eisenhower’s electoral victory such an uprising occurred in East Germany.

1953 East German Uprising and the Defanging of ‘Rollback’ Foreign Policy

On June 16th, 1953 workers in East Berlin rose up in protest against government demands to increase productivity. Within days, nearly a million East Germans had joined to protest the East German government and rioting spread throughout East Germany.30 This amounted to the first test of President Eisenhower’s liberation policy: would the United States provide support to these rioters? The answer, no. The Eisenhower administration held firm to its policy tenets of achieving liberation short of war, by utilizing peaceful means to free Eastern Europe. Two days after the outbreak of riots the Deputy Director of the CIA, Frank Wisner, warned that the United States “Should do nothing at this time to incite the East Germans to further actions which will jeopardize their lives.”31 This view was shared by the Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles.

Director Dulles affirmed that the “agency would have to ‘play it very cautiously’ in East Germany, and that it would be ‘foolish and dangerous to distribute arms’ to the rebels.”

The same day at the 150th Meeting of the National Security Council, President Eisenhower expressed similar sentiments that in this particular case promoting resistance by the East Germans “would ‘just be inviting a slaughter.’” Held two days after the outbreak of riots in East Germany, Director Dulles echoed his earlier statement affirming the United States’ lack of complicity. Mr. Dulles said “that the United States had nothing to do with inciting these riots, and that our reaction thus far had been to confine ourselves in broadcasts which were not attributable to expressions of sympathy and admiration, with a mixture of reference to the great traditions of 1848.”

The conclusion of the meeting was that boundless discontent and dissension behind the Iron Curtain had led to this uprising, that men were willing to die for their freedom, they were no longer willing to be slaves of the Soviet Union. The question that lingered over the room despite this sentiment, was how the United States was to handle the situation.

One option that presented itself to the Council was acting upon a policy initiative entitled “United States Objective and Actions to Exploit the Unrest in Satellite States”, NSC 158. Proposed in May 1953, NSC 158’s psychological objectives were to nourish resistance to communist oppression throughout the Soviet Union’s satellites, undermine the satellite governments’ authority, and to convince the free world that love of liberty was stronger behind

32 Ibid., 25.
33 Ibid., 25.
35 Ibid.
the Iron Curtain than it had been hoped and therefore resistance to totalitarianism was possible.

To accomplish such a task, NSC 158 sought to covertly stimulate acts and attitudes of resistance short of mass rebellion aimed at placing pressure upon the Communist authorities to enact reform. A final course of action contingent upon developments was to “organize, train and equip underground organizations capable of launching large-scale raids or sustained warfare when directed.”

While action on the ground had outpaced several aspects of NSC 158 a vigorous execution could result in the latter half of it being implemented and perhaps prepare the Eisenhower administration for future uprisings. Such an occurrence was not a likely response for an administration set upon non-violent measures of supporting liberation. C.D. Jackson’s proposal that the US “should actively ‘help to make this [unrest] more serious and more widespread’” was declined by President Eisenhower. The administration decided to forego NSC 158, which would not be fully finalized, with amendments, until June 29th. In fact, as late as June 25th, slightly over a week following the riots in East Berlin, Secretary Dulles expressed his concerns that NSC 158 did not place enough emphasis on passive, as opposed to active resistance.

Thus, in the spirit of passive resistance, the NSC turned away from active participation in the East German uprising. Instead, the Eisenhower administration debated the merits of bringing a proposal to the UN on the brutal repression of the uprisings in East Germany before turning to

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37 Kramer, 25.
an aid program to feed the East Germans. Therefore, until October 1953, the Eisenhower administration supplied food to the suffering East Germans, a program which was not only popular with the East Germans, but highlighted the Communist system of repression and deprivation.\textsuperscript{39} While successful in displaying the privations of life under communist rule to the world, the actions taken by the Eisenhower administration during these fateful June days took the teeth out of NSC 158 before it was even fully adopted. In the aftermath of the June East German uprising, the Eisenhower administration was forced to reassess its doctrines of rollback and liberation of the captive peoples of Eastern Europe.

The repression of the East Germans by Soviet tanks and troops on June 17 led the Eisenhower administration to believe that the Soviets intended to keep control of its satellites by almost any means. Regardless of the size of any uprising, the Soviets had the power to maintain their control unless substantial military assistance was provided by one or more of the Western powers, which meant nuclear weapons. Since United States policy up to this point did not contemplate providing such aid, a CIA analysis concluded that “it would seem contrary to our best interests as well as those of the satellites to undertake any action which might be construed as sponsoring active opposition to the Soviets within any part of the Soviet Bloc.”\textsuperscript{40} The analysis continued in advising that broadcast organizations, such as Radio Free Europe, should not in any way be a medium for urging uprisings. Instead, appropriate action should take the form of


broadcasting about events which had already occurred, as was done during the East German riots.\textsuperscript{41}

In its conclusion, the CIA memorandum urged caution in encouraging opposition to the Soviet regimes without the promise of significant aid. A result of providing false hope could backfire, creating resentment from the local populace in case punishment were meted out by Soviet authorities and no real freedom obtained.\textsuperscript{42} This memorandum resonated with Eisenhower, who in the autumn of 1953 disavowed the concept of rollback during the NSC’s top-secret strategic reassessment, code-named Solarium. It now appeared that the detachment of any European satellite from the Soviet bloc was not feasible. The only mean by which the United States could detach a satellite was by war, but the United States was unwilling to go down this road.\textsuperscript{43} US leaders saw liberation, not as war, but rather as a continuation of striving for peace and freedom. Liberation meant that the United States would not be part of any deal confirming the slavery of Eastern Europe’s populace. It meant utilizing every peaceful means to maintain the courage and resistance of the nations and people dominated by the Soviet Union, and that ultimately the forces of freedom would triumph over Soviet despotism- in other words, not actual liberty.\textsuperscript{44} The Eisenhower administration, as it searched for a way to continue its liberation policy in a post East German Riot world, latched upon the ideas expressed in the CIA memorandum and the conclusions reached by Solarium. The message had changed. The result, NSC 174.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{43} Kramer, 27
A Period of Tinkering

The Eisenhower administration, through the events of the prior months, concluded in December 1953 that “the detachment of any major European satellite from the Soviet bloc does not now appear feasible except by Soviet acquiescence or by war.”45 In a coherent grasp on the American public mood NSC 174 continued, “A deliberate policy of attempting to liberate the satellite peoples by military force, which would probably mean war with the USSR and most probably would be unacceptable to the American people and condemned by world opinion, cannot be given serious consideration.”46 In accepting the document, Eisenhower was admitting that his campaign promise was moot. Therefore, while the United States would continue to attempt to foster the conditions which would make liberation of the satellites a possibility, the broadcasts should not include any encouragement for premature action on the part of satellite citizens, lest swift reprisals be brought down upon them.47 With open war off the table, NSC 174 proposed that the United States continue to utilize diplomacy, propaganda, economic policy and covert operations to maintain the morale of anti-Soviet elements and sow confusion, as well as discredit the authority of the regimes.48 While this new foreign policy was adamant that a policy of attempting to liberate the captive nations by military force was off the table, the pursuit of eventual liberation was the overarching goal of United States foreign policy. Not everyone understood the shift that had just occurred. The message continued unaltered in the game of telephone.

46 Ibid., 45.
47 Ibid., 45-46.
48 Ibid., 45-46.
This failure could be potentially problematic, as a directive issued by Radio Free Europe addressed. This directive stated: “Radio Free Europe must recognize that the world has begun to talk in two tongues, that many things have ceased to mean the same to people inside and outside of the Iron Curtain.”\textsuperscript{49} To a listener grasping for hope in Budapest hearing liberation as it was framed in NSC 174: “The United States should vigilantly follow the developing situation in each satellite and be prepared to take advantage of any opportunity to further the emergence of regimes not subservient to the USSR”, potential support from the United States might still be a possibility.\textsuperscript{50} Thus an adaptation of Eisenhower’s 1952 liberation policy was born. This policy still had many of the same flaws as the previous one did. Namely, what would the United States do if its attempt to stoke the flames of resistance to Soviet rule worked?

If another East German uprising were to occur what would the United States policy be? This question is very similar to one which was posed by Director of the United States Foreign Operations Administration Harold Stassen at a National Security Council meeting two weeks after NSC 174 was unveiled. Stassen said, “That he had only one concern about NSC 174. That is that there seemed to be no course of action or plan which the United States would follow in the event of a successful revolt by one of these countries against its Soviet masters. Have we… really planned for the alternative of a success?”\textsuperscript{51} While he was assured at the time by both CIA Director Allen Dulles and Special Assistant to the President C.D. Jackson that plans were being made for such a contingency, Governor Stassen’s question would continue to lurk under the

surface as President Eisenhower’s Administration embraced NSC 174, which would dictate United States policy towards Hungary and the other satellites for the years to come.\textsuperscript{52}

At this point the situation on the ground in the Soviet satellite state of Hungary, where NSC 174 and President Eisenhower’s liberation policy were about to be applied, needs to be examined. As World War II came to a close, Hungary along with many other Eastern European nations, found itself first liberated from Nazi occupation, then subsequently occupied by the Soviet Union. This occupation was not to be brief, as the Soviets sought a buffer zone to protect their homeland from the possibility of any future invasions.\textsuperscript{53} Thus, while multi-party elections did exist for several years following World War II in Hungary with elections in 1945 and 1947 that gave a resounding endorsement of democratic politics, the democratic experiment was ultimately extinguished following the Communist coup of 1948.\textsuperscript{54}

In the wake of the Communist takeover came a plethora of Stalinist measures and repression. The policies of collectivization and industrialization were pursued ruthlessly by the Stalinist regime in Hungary. Agricultural laborers were transferred to work in heavy industries depriving many independent peasants of their normal supply of farm labor. The regime instituted a quota delivery under which a large portion of crops were sold to the state at low fixed prices. Independent peasants suffered further under heavy taxation, the withholding of seed, fertilizer, machinery and other essentials. While this occurred in the countryside, cities and towns exploded in population due to the industrialization. As these policies were carried out with little regard for the welfare and desires of the Hungarian people, the industrial labor force

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{53} See Map I for map of Hungary, Soviet Ukraine and Bessarabia.
expanded from a pre-war figure of 300,000 to 1,000,000. The additional workers were drawn from former peasants and middle class, female and child population. The result of these heavy handed policies and forced relocation was a marked reduction in Hungarians standard of living.55

By 1953 under these policies the Hungarian economy was approaching the brink of ruin, with wage earners’ income falling twenty percent since 1949. After the death of Josef Stalin in March 1953, Hungary turned towards a new course under a young leader, Imre Nagy, whose name “became emblematic of reform in Hungary.”56 Nagy sought to implement what was referred to as his New Course program of serious reform in Hungary. The program intended to focus on increased production of consumer goods, housing construction, and private initiatives in agriculture development. Nagy was unable to see his efforts come to fruition as he was removed from office in April 1955, to be replaced by his rival, hard-liner Matyas Rakosi. Rakosi was to rule Hungary on a platform of forced industrialization, with a heavy emphasis on military production and collectivization.57 During this period of fluctuation in Hungary from 1953 to 1955, United States policy continued to be guided by NSC 174 and did not differentiate between hard-liner and reformer. The United States foreign policy tool, Radio Free Europe, continued to try to subvert the authority and legitimacy of the Soviet Satellite states.

During the period of Imre Nagy’s New Course program, RFE implemented a balloon-leaflet operation beginning in October 1954 called Operation Focus. This operation consisted of goals which aligned with United States foreign policy as set forth in NSC 174. The first primary goal of this operation was to prevent the integration of the Iron Curtain countries into the Soviet

Empire. To accomplish this task, RFE was to utilize the talents of unemployed emigres in the United States. These emigres were to serve as the voice of the internal opposition and sustain the morale of the captive nations and thereby contribute to their liberation. The target of these goals was to influence the upcoming parliamentary elections in Hungary, a repeat of a prior RFE operation, Operation Veto, which had targeted the Czech elections. Operation Veto had actually caused the Czech regime to postpone their elections.58 RFE officials hoped to replicate their success in Hungary.

For five months, balloons dropped opposition ballots and stickers with the number twelve, which symbolized the twelve demands the people should make, including freedom of speech and higher wages. While Operation Focus was able to raise the citizen’s awareness of what they could legitimately demand from their government, the operation backfired. The balloons and the propaganda they disseminated irritated Communist leaders and eroded Imre Nagy’s popular support. These events contributed to Nagy’s removal from power, replaced by the hard-liner Rakosi, bringing Hungary closer to the Soviet regime.59 Radio Free Europe continued its broadcast to the captive peoples of Hungary and the Soviet satellites.

The year of 1955 brought with it messages of support from Western statesmen to RFE’s listeners in Eastern Europe. On the eve of the Fourth of July, former presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson extolled the virtues of those residing behind the Iron Curtain. Beginning his broadcast, “You have shown the world what men will endure to be free. In the dark night that covers your homes you have struck a bright spark, and it glows throughout the world wherever men and women love freedom. You are not alone in that dark. Americans, who won their

58 Ibid., 818.
59 Ibid., 818-819.
freedom in hard struggle, are with you.” Stevenson concluded by stating, “The day will come-the day cannot be far away- when courage, fortitude and devotion to the right will win through. You – and in you, freedom – will prevail.”60 Not to be outdone, President Eisenhower addressed the situation of the captive nations. “Eagerness to avoid war… can produce outright or implicit agreement that injustices and wrongs of the present shall be perpetuated in the future. We must not participate in any such false agreement. Thereby, we would outrage our own conscience. In the eyes of those who suffer injustice… we would have sold out the freedom of men.”61

As the Christmas season approached, President Eisenhower once more addressed his policy of liberation in two statements via RFE. The first on December 12th reaffirmed the ultimate goal of President Eisenhower’s foreign policy: “The peaceful liberation of the captive peoples has been, is and, until the success is achieved, will continue to be a major goal of the United States Foreign Policy.”62 The second, on Christmas Day was addressed directly to those behind the Iron Curtain. “I want you to know that the American people recognize the trials under which you are suffering; join you in your concern for the restoration of individual freedoms and political liberty; and share your faith that right in the end will prevail to bring you once again among the free nations of the world.”63 While full of uplifting rhetoric, Radio Free Europe broadcasts proved to be ineffective in stirring the hearts of many in Hungary.

A National Intelligence Estimate of January 10th, 1956 addressed the situation in Eastern Europe in stark terms. “The USSR now has, for all practical purposes, complete control over the Satellite regimes and will almost certainly be able to maintain it during the period of this

61 Ibid., 4.
62 Ibid., 4.
63 Ibid., 1.
estimate (five years) … We believe that it will remain firm Soviet policy to retain such control.” The conclusions of this report were further backed up by a study prepared for United States Army intelligence on Hungary’s resistance activities and potentials. The authors of this report found that dissidence in Hungary was singularly uninspiring and that compared to other Eastern European countries, active resistance was relatively low. In Hungary there was no evidence of any current partisan activity and any reports of underground activity were an expression of hope rather than of fact. Overwhelmingly negative on the prospect for potential liberation in Hungary, the report did hold out some hope. The study noted the relatively intense and widespread nature of passive resistance in Hungary, which might be converted to active resistance with the proper leadership. Although prospects were dim, it appeared that Radio Free Europe and the Eisenhower administration helped keep alive anti-Communist sentiment and with it the hopes of change behind the Iron Curtain. A month following these two studies, the Eisenhower administration was given a powerful new propaganda tool, Nikita Khrushchev’s Secret Speech.

After the death of Josef Stalin in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev emerged following a brief power struggle as the First Secretary of the Communist Party and leader of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev sought to break from his predecessor and did so at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956. In what is still called Khrushchev’s Secret Speech, he exposed the crimes of Stalin and his regime. The Eisenhower administration was now faced with a unique opportunity. Director Dulles in addressing Khrushchev’s Secret Speech commented “that these

66 Ibid., 86, 89, 105.
67 Granville, 819.
events afforded the United States a great opportunity, both covertly and overtly, to exploit the situation to its advantage.”

In light of the recrimination against Stalin, would any of his policies be repudiated? Further, what would the leadership in the satellites, all creatures of Stalin, now do? What was certain to President Eisenhower and his advisors was that pressure must continue to be placed upon the satellite states.

“We mustn’t be less aggressive in pursuit of our objectives simply because we had thus far not achieved the progress we would like to see,” Eisenhower stated. Director Dulles jumped upon this statement by his president stating that while no forward progress had been reported “the fact that the Soviets have not succeeded in getting further than they have in their satellites states constituted a gain in some sense. Thus the hope for liberation had not yet been blotted out in the satellite populations.”

Therefore, Eisenhower concluded, “it was essential that we keep the hope of liberation alive in the satellites as a force on our side.”

The policy of liberation would continue with RFE broadcasting, much to the chagrin of the Communist leaders, the text of Khrushchev’s Secret Speech. This and many other broadcasts continued to buoy the spirits of Europe’s captive peoples during the de-Stalinization days of 1956.

These broadcasts, according to a RFE assessment at the end of March, turned out to be too effective. While to some Hungarian listeners the RFE appeared to promise a “pie in the sky,” for others RFE symbolized to the Hungarian people the active interest of the United States government, in Hungary and Hungarians. The danger, as this evaluation pointed out, is that this

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69 Ibid., 7.
70 Ibid., 8-9.
71 Ibid., 9.
72 Granville, 820.
symbol was a static one in that RFE continued to symbolize to Hungarians future Western
liberation of their country. For RFE to continue to be effective, the report concluded, it “must
face up to the problem of transforming itself into a symbol not of future Western liberation but of
Western concern that Hungarians stubbornly wrest concession after concession form their
government.” This report reaffirms that rhetoric inside and outside of the Iron Curtain had two
separate meanings. Radio Free Europe, in its broadcasts, attempted to adhere to the constantly
shifting guidance and policies set forth by the Eisenhower administration which strictly excluded
Western participation in the liberation of the satellite countries, yet many of RFE’s listeners still
believed that the United States would actively assist them in their struggle for liberation. Despite
this perception of United States policy, the Eisenhower administration sought to up the ante as
the de-Stalinization campaign ramped up in Eastern Europe during the summer of 1956.

In contrast to the United States response to the East German uprising in 1953 when the
Eisenhower administration confined its actions to providing aid, now they sought to exploit the
developments of the de-Stalinization campaign in Poland for the United States national
interests. An opportunity was brewing.

Poznan Uprising and Repercussions

On Saturday, June 23, the workers of the Poznan Stalin Works (ZIPSO) locomotive plant
met and decided to send a delegation to Warsaw to persuade the central authorities to meet their
five demands, chief amongst them a 20 per cent wage increase. By June 28, the delegation had

still not received an answer about the wage increase, although the workers’ minor demands relating to bonuses and repayment of taxes, had been met. Critical to the situation were rumors that the delegation had been arrested.75

Acting upon these rumors, early Thursday morning, the night and day shifts of the Poznan Stalin Works decided to stage a demonstration, capitalizing on the presence of Western observers attending the 25th Poznan International Fair. Operating under the assumption that the original delegates had been arrested, the crowd attacked the city prison, intent on freeing the prisoners and seizing the guards’ weapons. Unable to find their delegates, the workers attacked the radio station which was jamming Western broadcasts. Finally, intent on finding their allegedly arrested delegates, the workers next attacked the building of the District Office of Security. It was here that the first shots were fired at about eleven o’clock. Soon the demonstration escalated into large anti-government riots in Poznan and other Polish cities. However, the Polish state cracked down upon the protestors, employing security personnel and tanks, ending the riots by June 30th.76 Although in the lead up to the Poznan riot, the Eisenhower administration sought to exploit any forthcoming developments, the United States’ actual actions were rather muted.

The Eisenhower administration reacted to the riots by offering food to the people of Poznan, without ever seriously believing that they could supply enough food to those in need. The intent of such an action was to embarrass the Communist Government of Poland.77 Similar

76 Ibid., 659-660.
to their response to the 1953 East German Uprising, US officials preached caution towards RFE broadcasts. In this spirit the Eisenhower administration issued two statements during the riots, which were disseminated abroad through RFE. These statements contained eye-witness accounts of the riots in Poznan and pointed to the fact that the riots were based on workers’ dissatisfaction with the Communist regime.\(^{78}\) This relative inaction by the United States did not prevent an attempt by the administration to make it appear as that they were more active. In a telephone conversation between Secretary of State Dulles and Ambassador to the UN Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, Dulles told his colleague, “We don’t want to be too negative in denying we had anything to do with it because while it is true we never instigated anything at all and no money has been spent, nevertheless we try to keep alive the spirit of liberty in these people.”\(^{79}\) While the actions taken by the Eisenhower administration did not speak of a reinvigorated policy of liberation, the rhetoric did. This could represent a change of thinking by key foreign policy advisors as de-Stalinization campaigns in Eastern Europe revealed cracks in the Iron Curtain. But alas, in their eyes liberation still appeared to be just out of reach.

In the aftermath of the Poznan riots, the United States National Security Council met to discuss policy changes to its liberation policy. NSC 5608 was based for the most part on the United States Army Intelligence Report and National Intelligence Estimate Report of January. NSC 5608 begins, “Soviet domination of the Eastern European satellites remains firm and there appears little immediate prospect of basic change in this regard.”\(^{80}\) As a result of this reality, the


\(^{79}\) “Telephone Call From Amb. Lodge,” Memoranda of Tel. Conv. General July 12, 1956 to Sept. 29, 1956 (6), Telephone Conversations Series Box 5, Dulles, John Foster: Papers, Eisenhower Presidential Library.

West had been unable to make the conditions of the satellites an issue at the negotiating table with the Soviet Union. The inability to offer a promise of the early elimination of Soviet control depressed the hopes of the satellite peoples for freedom and reduced their will to resist. Although they felt that liberation was remote, they nonetheless remained responsive to the United States interest in their independence, with one caveat. Their hope was conditional on the Eisenhower administration expressing persistently that liberation was the United States government’s basic foreign policy objective.\textsuperscript{81} While it was in the national security interest of the United States to oppose Soviet control of the satellites in Eastern Europe and to seek the eventual elimination of that control, the attainment of independence was remote. As stipulated in prior policy directives, NSC 5608 made plain that the United States was not prepared to resort to war to eliminate Soviet domination of the satellite. Therefore, the principal emphasis of U.S. efforts should be directed at encouraging revolutionary change to weaken Soviet control of its satellites, with the hope of national independence for these countries, however remote such a possibility was.\textsuperscript{82} On the whole, NSC 5608 did appear to be a continuation of NSC 174, albeit slightly more pessimistic. This was the case up until a draft of the policy arrived for debate at the National Security Council.

Invigorated by the events of the previous months in the Soviet sphere of influence, the National Security Council debated the merits of NSC 5608. Secretary of State Dulles appeared to concur with the policy set forth by NSC 5608: “Encourage the satellite peoples in passive resistance to their Soviet-dominate regimes when this will contribute to minimizing satellite contributions… Avoid incitements to violence or to action when the reprisals or other results

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 5-6.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 7.
would yield a net loss in terms of U.S. objectives.” To a fly on the wall, Secretary Dulles’s opening statement appeared to be more of the same, confining Radio Free Europe and other US agencies to their traditional roles. This fly though was to receive a jolt. Continuing, Dulles did not wish to discourage, via Radio Free Europe broadcasts, spontaneous manifestations of dissatisfaction and opposition to the Communist regime, despite the risks to individuals, when they would exert pressures on the Soviet Union. These operations would have to be authorized by the Secretary of State and the Director of the CIA.

Continuing on this line of thinking Dulles stated, “it might be quite useful for the United States to have some violent outbursts in the satellite countries. Moreover, we shouldn’t necessarily be appalled by the fact that if such uprisings occurred a certain number of people would be killed. After all, one cannot defend or regain liberty without some inevitable loss of life.” This statement by Secretary Dulles was a genuine break from past Eisenhower foreign policy. Dulles now appeared to support not just passive resistance to the Soviet satellites, but also active resistance to achieve these nations’ liberation. However, one key aspect of Dulles’ proposition must be examined. He encouraged violent outbursts in the satellite countries with the possibility of loss of life, but nowhere in NSC 5608 or in the National Security Council minutes does he talk of additional United States aid. He offered no promises of military intervention. These could just be musings, but it laid the foundations for a misunderstanding between the Eisenhower administration and the captive people have been laid, especially as

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84 Ibid., 4.

85 Ibid., 4.
Dulles’s thoughts were added to NSC 5608 in the form of the following paragraph. “In general, however, do not discourage, by public utterances or otherwise, spontaneous manifestations of discontent and opposition to the Communist regime, despite risks to individuals, when their net result will exert pressure for release from Soviet domination.”86 This is the policy which guided the United States as it inched closer and closer to a potential showdown on its policy of liberation.

At RFE Headquarters in Munich, Germany, Secretary Dulles’ ideas were received by a receptive audience. In the agreed policy governing Radio Free Europe issued in August, which had to be confirmed by the Eisenhower administration under the 1949 policy discussed at the beginning of this chapter, an opportunity had arrived for the broadcasters to pour fuel on a growing fire. The political situation in Eastern Europe was more exploitable as events in the satellites were moving more quickly than their leaders expected or were prepared to cope with. In this situation, RFE was to continue to provide a steady diet of broadcasts promising the captive peoples liberation. As this was occurring, the United States was gearing up for a Presidential election, as President Eisenhower sought reelection. Accompanying the campaign rhetoric, Secretary Dulles and President Eisenhower took a moment to reflect upon where their policy of liberation was.

In a September letter to President Eisenhower, Secretary Dulles wrote, “The policies we espouse will revive the contagious liberating influences which are inherent in freedom.”87 With these policies Dulles believed, “we have thereby contributed toward creating strains and stresses

86 Ibid., 10.
87 “Letter From John Foster Dulles to President Eisenhower, September 6, 1956,” White House Correspondence- General 1956 (2), White House Memoranda Series Box 3, Dulles, John Foster: Papers, Eisenhower Presidential Library.
within the captive world, such as were manifested by the East German outbreaks of June 1953 and the Poznan outbreaks of this year. “Secretary Dulles’ observations foretold what was to come. In Hungary, Communist rule was beginning to crack under the pressure of discontent. Revolution was coming and President Eisenhower’s policy of liberation was about to face its greatest test.

88 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2

Hungarian Revolution: Trials and Tribulations of Radio Free Europe and Eisenhower’s Policy of Liberation

“Let us not ask for whom the bell tolls in Hungary today. It tolls for us if freedom’s holy light is extinguished in blood and iron there.”¹ These words were sent from United States Ambassador Clare Luce to Secretary of State Dulles on November 4th, as Soviet troops entered Budapest. This statement marked the ending of Hungary’s twelve-day Revolution. For a moment it looked as if the iron curtain would fall. But, with iron and blood, Soviet tanks brought to a violent end the Hungarian Revolution and, with it, proof of two distinct messages. Many Hungarians, who still believed in the broadcasts of assistance from Radio Free Europe, were unaware that nearly three years prior the Eisenhower administration had done away with its policy of ‘liberation.’ Now in the days leading up to the 1956 Presidential election, the game of telephone had broken down under the weight of the constantly changing messages from Washington D.C, and the final participant, the Hungarian by the radio, received the wrong message. This chapter will examine in detail the events of the Hungarian Revolution, especially the politics in Budapest and Washington. I will shed light on how directives from Washington, D.C. were implemented by Radio Free Europe and how Hungarians could have believed that US troops were over the next hill.

¹ “Eyes Only The President From Ambassador Luce,” Confidential File, Box 32, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Records as President, White House Central Files, Eisenhower Presidential Library.
Revolution Begins

The Revolution began with a meeting of students. As the sun set on October 22 in Budapest, students at the Budapest Technical University gathered to discuss the inflammatory idea of change. They sought reform of what they perceived as an authoritarian and corrupt system of government. The sixteen demands which they conceived that night for sweeping changes to the present government were a mixture of moderate demands, such as the installation of former Prime Minister and architect of the New Course, Imre Nagy as Prime Minister, a Party Congress with secret elections to form a new central committee, and the revision of industrial norms and more radical demands. These radical demands consisted of a multi-party system, free elections, civil rights, economic independence, and the removal of Stalin’s statue in Budapest. The Hungarian Radio and press refused to publish these demands in their entirety, primarily due to the first demand, “We demand the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary.”

Denied in the media, the students resolved to take to the street the following day.

At 3:00 in the afternoon on October 23 a demonstration began as students gathered to seek redress for their demands. The size of the crowd gradually grew as workers finishing their shift joined the demonstration. By the time they reached Bem Square, on the Danube bank opposite Parliament, the crowd numbered several tens of thousands. They would not stay here for long as the demonstrators driven by ever more radical slogans, continued their march to

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3 Ibid., 188-189.
Kossuth Square in front of Parliament, while other demonstrators gathered at the Radio Station and around the Stalin statue in City Park.4

Faced with the growing numbers of demonstrators, Hungarian authorities, under First Secretary Erno Gero, dispatched troops to the Radio station and employed other methods to disperse the crowds to no effect. Exacerbating the situation, at 8:00 pm Gero delivered a harsh and uncompromising speech denouncing the protestors and their demands.5

An hour after Gero’s speech, two events of consequence transpired. At Parliament, from a second story balcony, Imre Nagy addressed the assembled demonstrators. He urged moderation and a reform program similar to his New Course Program of 1954 and told the crowd to sing the Hungarian national anthem, Szazat, before dispersing.6 Nagy’s counsel was received rather coolly by the demonstrators, and, instead of returning home many protestors sought other likeminded crowds. One such crowd was still congregated around the Radio Station. For much of the afternoon, no blood had been shed as armed protestors and security forces had been in a standoff. The peaceful aspect of the protests was to soon cease, for as Nagy was delivering his speech before Parliament, the first shots of the Revolution rang out from the Radio Building. Within minutes, a battle had commenced, and a siege had been laid upon the building.7

As the events were unfolding before the Radio Building, protestors at City Park managed to topple the statue of Stalin, which, once brought crashing to earth, was smashed to pieces by the demonstrators. As the clocks of Budapest struck midnight, the demonstrations began to take the form of a violent revolution. Following the protracted siege of the Radio building, protestors

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4 Csaba Bekes, Malcolm Byrne, Janos M. Rainer, eds, The 1956 Revolution: A History in Documents, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 192; Figure II: Map of Budapest.
5 Ibid., 193.
6 Ibid., 193.
7 Ibid., 193.
had seized control, while in front of police headquarters, the Hungarian Secret Police, AVH, fired upon a crowd of 20-30,000 protestors, killing three and wounding six.\(^8\) In reaction to the violent clashes occurring throughout Budapest, First Secretary Gero requested and was granted the use of Soviet troops to restore order.\(^9\)

These were the events which had transpired before dawn broke on October 24\(^{th}\). The dawn’s early light would bring no respite to the situation in Budapest as Soviet tanks clashed with armed protestors. Amidst this rapidly deteriorating situation, Gero stepped down, and Imre Nagy was appointed Prime Minister by the Hungarian Central Committee. By noon he had declared a state of emergency, a curfew and called for an end to the fighting, with a promise of amnesty for all protestors who would lay down their arms.\(^{10}\)

As the situation in Budapest deteriorated at Post Office No. 188 Gusztav Gogolyak prepared to shut down for the day. This normally would not lead to a second thought, but Gogolyak as the head of Post Office No. 188 oversaw the technical headquarters of the jamming operation in Budapest. On October 24, Gogolyak, potentially fearing retribution ordered all radio technicians throughout Hungary to immediately close all jamming facilities, shred any documents, and lock the doors of the stations.\(^{11}\) RFE broadcasts were now able to come through Hungarians’ radios unhindered.

During the night of October 24\(^{th}\) into the early morning hours of October 25\(^{th}\), word had spread throughout Budapest of the previous day’s events. Thus, the morning of the 25\(^{th}\) found an

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 193.
\(^{9}\) Ibid., 194.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., 194.
ever-growing crowd in Kossuth Square outside of Parliament facing Soviet and Hungarian armed forces. As the crowd became more jubilant and self-confident, gunfire erupted in the square. Soviet tanks and Hungarian troops opened fire into the crowd and by the time the shooting had finished, one hundred Hungarians lay dead and another three hundred wounded.\textsuperscript{12}

This massacre sparked an escalation. For many Hungarians, it appeared as if change would not be achieved through peaceful means. Driven by this realization a mass demonstration materialized before the American Legation in Budapest seeking assistance from the United States. Without clear directives from the State Department and besieged by thousands of Hungarians seeking answers, Legation officials prepared the following statement. “We understand the situation and have reported to our government as fully as we are able. You will understand that we ourselves can take no decision; this is a matter for our government and the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{13} In issuing this verbal statement, the Legation let the crowd know that the United States government had been informed of the events of the previous days. Now the legation and the Hungarians awaited news of what action the United States government would take.\textsuperscript{14}

**The United States Reacts**

Caught off guard by the quickness of the unfolding uprising the Eisenhower administration in Washington D.C. and Munich scrambled to keep pace with the events in

\textsuperscript{12} Bekes, 197.

\textsuperscript{13} “Teletype conversation between American Legation (Hungary) and (State) Department starting at 6:30 a.m., October 25, 1956,” Confidential File, Box 32, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Records as President, White House Central Files, Eisenhower Presidential Library, 9.

\textsuperscript{14} Following World War II the United States maintained a legation in Hungary. It would not be until 1966 when the United States raised its legations to Embassy status. For more on this visit the *Foreign Relations of the United States, “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Hungary”*.  

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Budapest. On the one hand, it appeared as if Eisenhower and Dulles’ policy of liberation was coming true. A captive people striving for freedom had broken the shackles of an authoritarian satellite. Yet, Eisenhower and his chief advisors had ruled out armed intervention as early as 1953 with Solarium. Unbeknownst to Eisenhower due to the confusion created over the years-long foreign policy telephone game, many Hungarians had come to believe that Western aid was forthcoming, which was contrary to official United States policy. Therefore, when the American legation in Budapest was confronted by protestors demanding to know “What is America going to do for us in this hour,”\textsuperscript{15} the Eisenhower administration was not considering armed intervention. The position which the Eisenhower administration would take was best summed up by Director of the Munich Radio Center, D’Alessandro. In a telegram to a counterpart in Washington he wrote, “We [are] certainly in no position to encourage revolters, especially in view of explicit statement that US would not intervene militarily under any circumstances. Conversely unless we can suggest alternatives, we are in no position to discourage or describe as futile sacrifices Hungarians are making.”\textsuperscript{16} During the Hungarian Revolution the Eisenhower administration sought to articulate their position. They directed Radio Free Europe to broadcast a message of sympathy for the rebels and indignation over Soviet actions, yet devoid of promises of material and military support. The first manifestation of this policy was in a Radio Free Europe guidance issued on October 24\textsuperscript{th}.


Radio Free Europe’s daily guidance on the morning of October 24 said that broadcasts were to be informational in nature, “heavy and detailed coverage of the Hungarian and Polish stories is our obvious job for today. The total participation in the Hungarian events, paralleling that in Poznan, shows the irresistible desire of the captive peoples for real freedom and for a decent way of life.”\textsuperscript{17} Unfortunately, the guidance in recounting the previous day’s events contained a bit of misinformation. It was alleged, “That Nagy called upon foreign troops to restore order is a fact that he will have to live down. He can live it down by keeping his promises and helping to establish the climate of freedom and material satisfaction for which the people yearn.”\textsuperscript{18} In reality, as discussed previously, Gero requested Soviet troops, but they had not arrived until after Gero had stepped down and Nagy was installed as Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{19} With this said, the objective for RFE broadcasts in the coming days were to sift through fact and fiction and keep their audiences informed as the revolution unfolded in Budapest. In contrast to directives given during the heady days of the East German and Poznan Uprising, no explicit mention was made of not promising aid. In fact, Cord Meyer, the chief of the CIA’s psychological warfare division, ordered RFE to support the Hungarian rebels.\textsuperscript{20} Already the message in D’Alessandro’s memo had been altered.

The first evidence of this objective put into practice occurred later the same day. In a broadcast labeled Special Commentary III, RFE addressed its Hungarian audience. “Dear Listeners, also in our country the hour of history has arrived. All suppressed embitterment, privation, slavery and misery of past ten years caused an explosion of feelings which were

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{19} Bekes, 197.
\textsuperscript{20} Laszlo Borhi, \textit{Hungary in the Cold War, 1945-1956}, (Budapest: Central European University, 2004), 304.
expressed in open demonstrative protest and in the form of an armed uprising in the Hungarian Capital.”\textsuperscript{21} The commentary continued to link the demonstrators to their forefathers, who in 1848 rose up against Austrian and Russian autocratic forces. “About hundred years ago our youth rose firstly against the oppressive power and made an attempt to gain freedom in spite of foreign armed forces endangering any attempt on their side to gain inner and outer freedom.”\textsuperscript{22} The remainder of the Special Commentary dealt accurately with the events of the prior days, recounting the demands initially made by the students and the subsequent demonstration and violence. What stood out about this program was the unfettered access that listeners had. This was due in part to the actions of Gogolyak. As RFE sought to transmit news of events to Hungarians not directly involved or ignorant of the unrest in Budapest, the American Legation in Budapest and other sources relayed information to the Eisenhower administration.

By the afternoon of October 24\textsuperscript{th} in Washington, the events in Budapest were being discussed by Secretary of State Dulles and US Ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. The two officials discussed the heavy fighting in Hungary and the possibility of calling for a cease-fire and bringing forth a resolution before the Security Council condemning Soviet intervention. The two also discussed the possible repercussions of United States inaction. Secretary Dulles worried that “it will be said that here are the great moments and when they came and these fellows were ready to stand up and die, we were caught napping and doing nothing.”\textsuperscript{23} As Dulles and Lodge pondered the required steps to be taken, the massacre of October 25 had occurred.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{23} “Telephone Call to Amb. Lodge,” \textit{Memoranda Tel. Conv.- Gen. October 1, 1956 to Dec. 29, 1956 (3)}, Box 5, Dulles, John Foster: Papers Telephone Conversations Series, Eisenhower Presidential Library.
In response to the violent turn of the Revolution, President Eisenhower and his team met to discuss the United States’ course of action. In a meeting of the National Security Council, Director Dulles relayed the events to date in Hungary, which he believed constituted the most serious threat yet to be posed to Soviet control of the satellites, far greater than the riots in Poznan during the summer. He believed that the Soviets were faced with two options for the future of Hungary. Either crush the rebels in Hungary and revert to harsh Stalinist policies, or permit democratization to develop which risked the loss of Soviet control over Hungary. President Eisenhower believed that the former option would bankrupt the Soviet Union before the whole world, while the possibility of the latter occurring might tempt the Soviets to resort to very extreme measures, potentially even precipitating a global war. With the possibility of nuclear war hanging over his head, President Eisenhower believed the best action was no action. “He thought the best procedure would be to ask the NSC Planning Board to provide an analysis of what had happened in Hungary… and to make any suggestions which it could as to what the United States might do in the light of these developments.”

President Eisenhower chose to wait for further information before diving headfirst into a conflict which he believed could turn atomic. This did not mean however, that the engines of United States foreign policy ceased to turn. In a meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, officials from the State and Defense Departments, Central Intelligence Agency, United States Information Agency (USIA), Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) and

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26 Ibid., 5.
the Office of Special Assistant to the President, discussed the situation in Hungary and what actions were available for the Eisenhower government.

CIA officer Arthur Cox opened the meeting by addressing RFE’s role in Hungary. He reported that there was a decrease in jamming on United States broadcasts. This permitted all twenty-nine transmitters of RFE directed towards Hungary to operate on a full-time basis, showering its listeners with broadcasts. The vast majority of these broadcasts to date were mostly the facts and statements by the President and the Secretary of State. As Cox finished his assessment, he posed a question to the assembled officials. “Can we help the rebels?” Officer Cox’s question elicited a spirited debate among the group.

Several members present argued for military and material aid, yet others, led by State Department officials Robert Blake and Robert McKisson, urged caution. Blake stated that before any action was taken, they must examine all potential consequences. Blake’s statement appeared to dampen any action including military aid, but other officials still sought action. Colonel Oscar Schaaf proposed using Radio Free Europe and other broadcast programs to give directives to the Hungarian rebels. This sentiment was echoed by CIA officer Cox, who considered having RFE pick up and report broadcasts of rebel radio. Both of these proposals also received pushback, once again led by Blake and McKisson who cautioned against any such action as it could appear that the United States was running the revolt from the outside. So the meeting went, with a proposal of action met by its potential consequences and then abandoned. All but one.28 In the days to come Radio Free Europe broadcasters grew overwhelmed with the

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28 Ibid.
events occurring in Hungary. Acting on their own, they increasingly turned to picking up and reporting rebel radio broadcasts. This would have unintended consequences as the revolution in Hungary reached its apex, but for now, RFE was intent on reporting on the events of the Revolution, while not advocating any specific policy. This was where the first crack in United States foreign policy formed.

Up to this point, the Eisenhower administration in Washington D.C. remained firmly entrenched in a foreign policy based upon liberation through peaceful means alone. This message in the coming days, as already seen, would be subject, unfortunately, to the tendencies of man. In this ever-evolving game of telephone from Washington D.C. through Radio Free Europe to the people of Hungary the message began to get distorted. This confusion occurred primarily between RFE broadcasters in Munich and their listeners in Hungary. The men and women of the RFE Hungary desk interpreted the directives given to them by D.C. and New York City through the lens of emigres forced from their homeland by the Communists. This personal aspect led to messages which were not in line with official US policy. It created two distinct rhetorics, one official and one unofficial, one real and one perceived, as the world’s attention remained on the United States’ response.

**Eisenhower Holds Steady as Policy Splinters**

The first occurrence of shifting rhetoric also occurred on October 26th, as the Eisenhower administration was formulating its response. In the meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, it was decided that American broadcasters, such as RFE, had to avoid the impression that they were trying to direct the Revolution in Hungary.29 This was reaffirmed the

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day before, in Radio Free Europe’s Guidance of October 25th which urged broadcasters to curtail their broadcasts to reporting on the situation in Hungary. “Most complete cross-reporting of the developing Polish and Hungarian situation, in the main along lines suggested here yesterday, is again our job for today”. Nonetheless, in the 26th broadcast “Special Reflector #IV” Imre Mikes attacked Nagy and in doing so attempted to direct the revolution. He opened by stating “Imre Nagy is no solution any more… the people backed him, they demanded his return and raised him from the political grave where he was thrown by his Moscow rivals in the eternal fight for power.” Mikes concluded his program with a frenzied outburst shouting, “The last moment was over long ago. It was over when the first martyr of the freedom fight died. Imre Nagy missed the last moment. Yet he still has an opportunity; to follow the will of the people and the nation – away with the Soviets if not away with him forever!”

Mikes’ broadcast, while not promising aid, encouraged the Hungarians to pursue the removal of Soviet troops, an action which would undoubtedly precipitate a vigorous and deadly response from the Soviet Union. Mikes’ broadcast was received by a Hungary that found itself deeper in the throes of revolution. The following day the American Legation in Budapest urged a more vigorous response.

From a purely practical standpoint of maintaining the United States stature and influence amongst captive people and because of the moral responsibility to stand behind past statements, the Legation urged the US government to lead and press the Hungarian case in the UN.

32 Ibid., 470-471.
33 Ibid., 470-471.
Further, the US government should utilize “all its influence to mobilize world opinion against ruthless suppression of Hungarian insurgents by Soviet power.”34 Yet the Legation believed that the United States might have to go further than mere words.

It recommended that, “In view of widespread and violent reaction against Communist rule by Hungarian people, that careful consideration be given to means for supporting insurgent population and that some risk is warranted by emergence of this tremendous revulsion against Soviet domination.”35 Soviet repression had left those American officials on the ground with the belief that the United States must move beyond purely peaceful means to support the insurgents in Hungary, but by doing so, President Eisenhower’s policy of liberation would have to undergo an extreme change. This was not to be. President Eisenhower still held firmly to the belief of nonviolent liberation. He had no designs for Hungary or armed assistance. Speaking before the Dallas Council on World Affairs, Secretary of State Dulles made public Eisenhower’s sentiment.

Secretary Dulles opened, “These patriots value liberty more than life itself. And all who peacefully enjoy liberty have a solemn duty to seek, by all truly helpful means, that those who now die for freedom will not have died in vain.”36 Thus, “it is in this spirit that the United States and others have today acted to bring the situation in Hungary to the United Nations Security Council.”37 Stimulating political independence and human liberty had been part of the fabric that made up the United States. Abraham Lincoln said of the United States Declaration of Independence that it gave “liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
world, for all future time.”

While the United States felt connected to the people of Hungary, Secretary Dulles made clear that present United States assistance was confined to the United Nations and future aid would only be economic. As he concluded his speech, Secretary Dulles addressed an important member of the audience who was not in attendance that night. Speaking to the Kremlin, Dulles stated, “The United States has no ulterior purpose in desiring the independence of the satellite countries…. We do not look upon these nations as potential military allies.” Secretary Dulles’s speech reaffirmed Eisenhower policy that the United States would only support liberation in Eastern Europe through peaceful means and it appeared to be working.

The Revolution Intensifies

By October 27 uprisings in Hungary had spread beyond the confines of Budapest. Insurgent actions had been reported in the Hungarian cities of Szeged, Pecs, Miskolc, Debrecen, Komarom, Magyarovar, Gyor and spread through much of rural Western Hungary. In a meeting of the Emergency Committee, Nagy insisted that a cease-fire must be declared, that security forces must be ordered off the streets, and that the government must continue to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet forces. If these actions were not taken, he would resign as Prime Minister and the government would fall. This speech worked. The following day, October 28th, much of the violence had receded due to the ceasefire, and in this environment Nagy announced his newest initiatives. Broadcast over Hungarian radio and published on the front page of the newspaper, Szabad Nep, he referred to the insurgents in Budapest as part of a

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid. Unfortunately, none of my research has turned up any RFE broadcasts transmitting Dulles’ speech to its Hungarian listeners
41 Bekes, 201.
national democratic movement and promised to meet most of their demands. In fulfillment of this promise, he planned to reshuffle the party’s top echelons to give himself and his faction a majority in the new Presidium, replace the old Political Committee, dissolve the AVH, and to create a National Guard out of selected police and army units to take over responsibility for public order from the now defunct AVH. This marked a shift in policy by Imre Nagy, who seemed to be fulfilling United States policy aims. Yet, October 27-28 also marked a shift in stance for RFE as it proceeded to contradict United States foreign policy.

Radio Free Europe Begins to Overstep

As the Eisenhower administration continued to approach the situation in Hungary with caution and voiced the United States’ continuing stance not to intercede militarily Radio Free Europe portrayed a different situation.

In a series of broadcasts, Radio Free Europe went beyond the directives and policies issued to it by Washington D.C. These broadcasts violated their directives from Washington by informing their listeners how to effectively engage in partisan warfare and disable tanks with limited supplies. Julian Borsanyi’s “Armed Forces Special #A1” of October 27th gave detailed instructions as to how partisan forces should fight. It advised local authorities to secure stores of arms for the use of Freedom Fighters and to hide those fighters who became separated from their units. The broadcast tells Hungarians to sabotage railroad and telephone lines and implies that if the resistance forces succeed in establishing a “central military command,” foreign aid would be

42 Ibid., 203.
forthcoming. The following day, two reports by “Colonel Bell” went into greater detail on partisan activities.

Finding in history an example of a small force defeating a larger and more well supplied force, Colonel Bell told his audience about a group of 500 Yugoslavian partisans in 1943 who had effectively fought off a larger German force of 100 tanks and 15,000 soldiers. He went into depth on the tactics that these small groups of fighters utilized to destroy thirty of the German tanks and inflict 2,000 casualties. He told his audience that these same tactics could be used effectively to prevent Soviet reinforcements from the east and north-east to reach Budapest. As if this were not enough information, he turned his broadcast over to a fellow exile, Gyula Patko, to report on his own partisan experience of fighting tanks. In 1945 he had fought in the defense of Budapest and his company had destroyed nearly three dozen Soviet tanks, ten through the use of simple devices. The remainder of the broadcast was devoted to Patko instructing the Hungarian insurgents to develop and utilize Molotov cocktails and mine-pulling devices. RFE Hungary then turned its attention to the diplomatic arena in a broadcast by T. Sebok.

In his “International Commentary #C524”, Sebok sought to give his listeners an example of a successful UN intervention. He chose the UN intervention in the Iranian-Azerbaijan case in 1946, where the Soviet Union was forced to remove its troops from Iran. This broadcast could have created wishful thinking amongst Hungarians that the Soviets might be forced to withdraw from Hungary as they had in Iran. However, this broadcast was misleading in that it never

mentioned the very probable use of a Soviet veto to prevent any real Security Council action on the Hungarian case.⁴⁶

These broadcasts were supposed to be vetted by the RFE desk chief, however in many instances he did not read them before their broadcast. Therefore, they not only created a false narrative of imminent United Nations intervention and foreign aid but also instructed the Hungarian insurgents in tactics to fight Soviet tanks and troops. Such a message could only instill in those resisting a false sense of hope that if the United States was instructing the rebels on tactics, then most assuredly they would follow through with aid, potentially troops, if they continued fighting.

Conducted under the October 29th Guidance, RFE broadcasts went on to publicize the demands of the freedom fighters in Hungary through cross-reporting as directed by the October 29 Daily Guidance. This would give the widest possible publicity to the minimum demands of the Hungarian patriots, with which RFE identified.⁴⁷ These demands would include: (1) Immediate and total withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungarian soil. (2) Total and immediate dissolution of the Secret police. (3) Guarantees that no freedom fighters will be harmed. (4) Formation of a new temporary government with a majority from patriot groups and which does not include any compromised Communists, and (5) Immediate establishment of full political freedoms.⁴⁸ To further help unify the thinking of the many scattered patriot groups, RFE would play back their own programs and desires.⁴⁹ The guidance concluded with the

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⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.
⁴⁹ Ibid., 18-19.
words: “There can be no compromise with the final objective of total self-determination and human freedom and welfare.”

Skirting around both United States foreign policy and RFE directives, a broadcast was aired to the Hungarian insurgents entitled “Armed Forces Special #D1”. In it, the narrator, Gyula Litteraty-Lootz not only encouraged his listeners to fight, but told them how. He gave detailed military instructions, including the techniques of anti-tank warfare. Litteraty’s broadcast also appeared over-optimistic, making it seem that tanks are very easily destroyed. While this may appear as a minor affront to the cautious stance of the Eisenhower administration, it and other broadcasts like it had the effect of creating the illusion that the United States not only supported armed insurrection, but would lend significant aid when the time came. Litteraty’s broadcast and others which parroted rebels’ demands continued to apply pressure upon an increasingly cornered Nagy to give in to ever greater reforms. While intended to fulfill the policy of not telling Hungarian rebels what to do, RFE’s guidance gave a far greater audience to some of the Revolution’s most radical demands. Hearing their demands broadcast by an organization that they identified with the U.S. government might have led some to believe that the US accepted their demands and gave tacit approval to their action. This in reality ran opposite to what the administration believed, and disconcerting reports began to reach Washington, D.C.

While RFE broadcast the rebels’ demands, Secretary Dulles instructed the American Ambassador to Moscow, Charles Bohlen, to reiterate the United States’ position as laid out in the Secretary’s Dallas speech. “The US has no ulterior purpose in desiring the independence of the satellite countries. Our unadulterated wish is that these peoples, from whom so much of our

50 Ibid., 19.
national life derives, should have sovereignty restored to them… We do not look upon these nations as potential military allies.”

The United States only viewed Hungary as friends, not as part of NATO or the Warsaw Pact, but part of a new undivided Europe, a country which the United States would not support militarily. This reaffirmation of United States policy was weakened by RFE broadcasts which were audible to Soviet listeners. Back in D.C. the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems met to address the rumors that RFE had been veering away from United States Policy.

There had been reports that recent Hungarian refugees had expressed resentment against the United States and the free world for not assisting them. This report fueled discussion, and just as in the October 26th meeting, factions began to form. One led by CIA officers Arthur Cox and Laughlin Campbell believed that the United States should instruct the insurgents to not lay down their arms until the Soviet forces had left Budapest. Just as in the prior meeting State Department official Robert McKisson disagreed. He argued that the United States should not be in the position of telling the insurgents what to do. The best course of action would be to push through the UN resolution condemning Soviet action and setting up a committee to investigate the situation. As these administration officials debated whether to instruct the insurgents to put down their weapons or not, the situation in Hungary continued to bring Imre Nagy and the Hungarian insurgents toward a date with history.

53 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
Attempts at Reform

Harangued by RFE broadcasts echoing the insurgents’ demands, Nagy gave in to change. In the face of his citizens’ demands for the removal of all leading communists from the government, free elections within six months, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and a statement of Hungarian neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, Nagy enacted a series of sweeping reforms on October 30th.\(^56\) To placate the masses, Nagy dissolved the Hungarian Workers Party and created a new party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party. Nagy also created a new National Guard, dismissed several Rakosi-era general officers, which opened the way for the military to be a popular force dedicated to protecting the revolution. The coup de grace was Nagy’s order to release several political prisoners.\(^57\) This sweeping change stunned the Kremlin, who earlier that day, issued a “Declaration on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship between the USSR and Other Socialist Countries” which sought to uphold the peaceful coexistence and equality between the USSR and its satellites.\(^58\) It was enough to make Nikita Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders in the Kremlin begin to lose faith in Imre Nagy’s ability to lead following the announcement of his far-reaching reforms. They led Khrushchev to pose the question “Will we have a government that is with us, or will there be a government that is not with us.”\(^59\) Khrushchev’s fear would become exacerbated following the RFE broadcasts over the coming days. The Soviets were faced with a serious dilemma.

In a Special Intelligence Estimate issued by the Eisenhower administration the Soviets still sought some level of control over their satellite government in Hungary. Yet, their armed

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\(^57\) Bekes, 211.

\(^58\) Granville, “Caught with Jam on Our Fingers,” 834.

\(^59\) Granville, “Caught with Jam on Our Fingers,” 834.
reaction to the rebellion, which had come as a surprise, had the adverse effect of souring the
Soviet Union’s image in world opinion. As the rebellion became increasingly more nationalist
and Nagy relented to the reforms, the Soviet state was put in a difficult state. While the
Intelligence estimate issued by the Eisenhower administration did not have enough evidence at
present to estimate whether or not the USSR would occupy Hungary with additional military
force sufficient to quell the rebellion, its prognosis was not great. In the report’s opinion, “It is
unlikely that any Hungarian government will be able to reach a compromise between Soviet
security requirements and Hungarian nationalist sentiment.” Despite this dour report, the next
day it appeared as if the unthinkable had occurred.

“In dramatic overnight change, it became virtually certain in Budapest this morning that
this Hungarian revolution now fact of history” trumpeted the American Legation. Moscow had
withdrawn its troops from Budapest and appeared set to withdraw them from all of Hungary.
The uprising appeared to have been achieved by its popular nature. At this point, an
opportunity presented itself to Eisenhower and Dulles. They could use Hungary as the driving
force for a revamped and reinvigorated ‘rollback’ policy. Instead, NSC officials in Washington
reaffirmed Eisenhower and Dulles’ concept of liberation, with a Draft Statement of Policy, NSC
5616.

61 Ibid.
62 “148. Telegram from the Legation in Hungary to the State Department,” Foreign Relations of the United States,
63 “Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Uprising,” Free Europe Committee 1956 (2), Box 54, Jackson, C.D.: Papers,
64 “150. Telegram from the Embassy in Austria to the Department of State,” Foreign Relations of the United States,
Superpowers React

Learning from the events in Poland and more recently in Hungary the administration offered tentative conclusions on certain courses of action that could be taken to advance U.S. policies and objectives toward the satellites. Although the Red Army appeared to be withdrawing from Hungary, the participation of the Soviet troops after the initial “invitation” of the Hungarian government in fighting the Hungarian insurgents illustrated that the Soviet Union was willing to prevent the coming into power of a non-communist government, or any government that sought to alter the policy of close military and political alliance with the Soviet Union.65 Therefore, the report continues, “It seems unlikely that U.S. action short of overt military intervention or obvious preparation for such intervention would lead the USSR deliberately to take steps which it believed would materially increase the risk of general war.”66 Soviet suspicions of United States policy would also “probably increase the likelihood of a series of action and counter-actions leading inadvertently to war.”67 In light of this, the United States course of action pertaining to Hungary should be to discourage any future Soviet aggression by applying pressure through the United Nations and world propaganda, while reassuring the Soviet Union that the United States does not look upon Hungary or any other satellites as potential allies.68

While the Western world celebrated what appeared to be the triumphant revolution in Hungary, the Kremlin prepared to quash the insurgents once and for all. On October 31st,

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
speaking before the Presidium, Khrushchev stated, “We should take the initiative in restoring order in Hungary. If we depart from Hungary… the imperialists will interpret it as weakness on our part and will attack”\textsuperscript{69} What would appear as a sudden change of heart amongst Soviet leadership was neither sudden, nor unexpected. In the Soviet Cold War mindset there could be no neutrality. The skepticism of the Soviet leadership was exacerbated by RFE broadcasts, for as historian Johanna Granville pointed out; “By parroting the local Hungarian radios’ call for Soviet troop withdrawal and for Hungary’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, RFE- with its more powerful transmitters- amplified the public ground swell of expectations, which Nagy then felt obliged to heed.”\textsuperscript{70} The Hungarian people’s demands and Nagy’s acceptance of them to placate the insurgents, convinced Moscow that they had better act and invade before Hungary left the Warsaw Pact.\textsuperscript{71} And this is what they did.

On November 1\textsuperscript{st}, Nagy received word that Soviet forces were not withdrawing from Hungary, rather another 75,000 Soviet troops and 2,500 tanks had crossed into Hungary from Romania.\textsuperscript{72} In response, Nagy took the bold step of declaring Hungary’s neutrality, renounced the Warsaw Pact and called on the other four permanent members of the U.N. Security Council for support.\textsuperscript{73} This support was not forthcoming. Events in the Middle East had begun to overshadow the life and death struggle being waged in Budapest and throughout Hungary. The Eisenhower administration’s attention was fixated on creating a cease-fire in Egypt. On October 29 Israeli forces invaded Egyptian territory in the Sinai and advanced towards the Suez Canal. The governments of Britain and France, intent on retaking control of the Suez Canal after

\textsuperscript{69} Granville “Caught with Jam on Our Fingers,” 835.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 835.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 835.
\textsuperscript{73} Bekes, 211-212.
Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized it, issued an ultimatum that Egypt and Israel should both withdraw ten miles from the Canal. When Egypt rejected this ultimatum, British aircraft bombed Egyptian airfields and a combined British-French force landed intent on securing the canal.\textsuperscript{74} Due to this, instead of hearing Nagy’s plea, the Security Council was considering a resolution condemning Britain and France.\textsuperscript{75} At the National Security Council meeting which was also held on November 1\textsuperscript{st} the discussion of the Hungarian situation was brief. “Upon entering the Cabinet Room from his office, the President informed the members of the Council that, except in so far as it was the subject of the DCI’s intelligence briefing, he did not wish the Council to take up the situation in the Soviet satellites. Instead, he wished to concentrate on the Middle East.”\textsuperscript{76} Although baffling now, considering what happened next, the United States believed the likelihood of Soviet military intervention in the Suez Crisis was greater than in Hungary. The Eisenhower administration also feared that the crisis could encompass the entirety of the Middle East.

The situation in Hungary would not be discussed again in an NSC meeting until November 8\textsuperscript{th}. The only discussion of events in Hungary to occur on November 1\textsuperscript{st} in Washington would take place in the 42\textsuperscript{nd} Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems. The assembled members agreed that the United States should concentrate on discussion and action in the Security Council. They were unable to get a discussion before the General Assembly at the moment because of the situation in the Suez, and the next regular General Assembly meeting was still twelve days off.\textsuperscript{77} With avenues for action cut off at the

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\textsuperscript{74} Boyle, 553.
\textsuperscript{75} Boyle, 561.
\textsuperscript{76} “302\textsuperscript{nd} National Security Meeting,” 302\textsuperscript{nd} Meeting of NSC November 1, 1956, NSC Series Box 8, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Papers as President, 1953-1961, Eisenhower Presidential Library 1.
\end{flushright}
Security Council and General Assembly, an understanding washed over the room. Defense official Roger Ernst broke the silence, “Since it appears almost certain that we will not be assisting the rebels, we should make an offer of asylum and a major effort to evacuate as many of the rebels as possible as refugees.” The United States response in the final days of the Hungarian Revolution was confined to uplifting words and good deeds. Radio Free Europe was tasked with broadcasting these words.

In its November 2nd Guidance, RFE instructed its writers and broadcasts to “avoid to the utmost extent any explicit or implicit stand for or against individual personalities in a temporary government. Our concern is with the achievement of the maximum demands by Hungarians on their own behalf… RFE’s place is to help them implement their desires and plans by publicizing and reiterating them.” Therefore, RFE broadcasts should continue to supply information on what was occurring in Hungary, which was hard to decipher. “Reports on Soviet military movements inside Hungary continue to be confusing. It is next to impossible in these circumstances to draw conclusions on their military or political significance.” To decipher Soviet intentions would be on RFE’s listeners. The situation which faced these listeners was growing grimmer.

Reporting on the situation in Hungary, the State Department sent a circular to several of its diplomatic missions as November 2nd ended. “Soviet influence has deteriorated to point where apparently growing number national communists are taking open anti-Sov line in

78 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 22.
supporting Hungarian Government.”

Outside of Budapest, Soviet troops controlled access to the city and retained commanding military positions throughout the country from which they could crush the Hungarian rebellion. The city and the world waited on edge for the next act of the unfolding drama.

**Soviet Re-Invasion**

“In the early hours of this morning, the Soviet troops launched an attack against our capital city with the obvious intention of overthrowing the lawful, democratic, Hungarian Government. Our troops are fighting. The Government is in its place. I inform the people of the country and the world public opinion of this.”

In this morning address, Imre Nagy broke the news to his people and the world that as dawn broke in Budapest and the clock approached midnight in Washington D.C, Soviet troops launched a vigorous assault upon the Hungarian population. From Budapest Istvan Bibo, member of the peasant Petofi party, addressed President Eisenhower.

“Altho (sic) the people of Hungary are determined to resist with desperation the attack upon them, there is no doubt that in this unequal struggle it will be defeated if it does not receive help. In this moment the most necessary kind of help is political not military.”

The subjugation of Hungary would not only signify the renewal of oppression in Hungary but would stop the liberation trends in other Eastern European nations. It would bankrupt the four-year-old

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82 Ibid.


84 “Address by Bibo of the Petofi Party to the President,” *Dulles, Foster Nov. 56 (2)*, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Papers as President, Ann Whitman Files, Dulles-Herter Series, Eisenhower Presidential Library, 1.
American liberation policy which was pursued with so much firmness and wisdom. A crisis of confidence would take hold amongst all Eastern European people.\(^85\) Bibo concluded his address with the following words: “the fate of Eastern Europe and the entire world depends on the action of the President; the next few critical days will determine whether we enter on a path of peace and liberation or whether we shall increase the appetite of aggression and proceed to a certain world catastrophe.”\(^86\) Bibo’s plea elicited a short statement from President Eisenhower, “It was decided that there should be no UN force for Hungary.”\(^87\) At the UN, the United States unilaterally decided to introduce a UN resolution condemning the Soviet Union. The Soviet delegate simply stated that the Western motives in raising the question was to provide a smoke screen for Anglo-French actions in Egypt, then vetoed the measure.\(^88\) The United States had exhausted its options, the Eisenhower administration would not consider armed intervention to save the Hungarian Revolution. This attitude was not shared by RFE writers, cementing the legacy of two rhetorics and two policies. RFE writers deliberately altered the message to Hungary. Eisenhower had ruled out armed intervention, but for those listening to RFE as Soviet tanks entered Budapest, the United States and Western World were on their way.

Radio Free Europe Cements the Legacy of Eisenhower’s ‘Liberation’ Policy

According to Zoltan Thury, assistance was on its way. Thury reported to his eager listeners that “In London, Paris, Washington and everywhere in the free countries the news of the Soviet attack has caused an immense indignation.”\(^89\) This feeling of indignation was captured by

\(^85\) Ibid., 1.
\(^86\) Ibid., 2.
\(^88\) Boyle, 562.
the British newspaper, *Observer*. Reading from the papers Thury said, the Soviet attack had created a situation in the United States that if “the Hungarians will hold out for 3 or 4 days, then the pressure upon the government of the U.S. to send military help to the freedom fighters will become irresistible.”

Adding his own commentary to the *Observer*’s report, Thury pointed out that, at present, the United States Congress cannot vote for war, as long as the presidential elections have not been held, but “If the Hungarians continue to fight until Wednesday, we shall be closer to a world war than at any time since 1939” and that “a practical manifestation of Western sympathy is expected at any hour.”

A promise of aid had been made, but those who listened to Thury did not differentiate between what was official United States doctrine and what was merely opinion. A language of duality, two rhetorics, one real and one perceived, had been created in Hungary. The Eisenhower administration remained committed to its peaceful liberation doctrine, but to Hungarians, the words of Thury, Borsanyi, Sebok and Litteraty were as much a part of the doctrine as Secretary Dulles or President Eisenhower’s speech. This misinterpretation would cost the Hungarians dearly in the days to come, and the recriminations which were to follow would wound the legacy of RFE and President Eisenhower’s policy of liberation.

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90 Ibid., 389.
91 Ibid., 389.
92 Ibid., 390.
CHAPTER 3

Recriminations and Reexaminations

In the early morning hours of November 4th, a young Hungarian sought to keep the Western world abreast of the unfolding situation in Hungary. Amidst the sounds of battle, this freedom fighter tapped away at the teletype keyboard in the office of the Hungarian newspaper, Szabad Nep, for nearly five hours. He transmitted the following: “They just brought us a rumour that the American troops will be here within one or two hours… Don’t worry about us. We are strong even if we are a small nation. When the fighting is over, we will rebuild our unhappy country.”\(^1\) Shortly afterwards, the line went dead. No more was heard from the young Hungarian freedom fighter. This situation was being repeated throughout Hungary as Hungarians resisted tanks with rifles, and many, like the young Hungarian at the newspaper office, eagerly awaited news of a Western response.

Less than a month later, resistance in Budapest and throughout Hungary had come to an end. United States and Western actions were limited, confined to diplomatic and psychological responses through the UN and RFE. While in line with the Eisenhower and Dulles policy of liberation, this relatively mild response was met with global outrage. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, for instance, ordered an enquiry into whether RFE had incited the Hungarians to rise up against their government.\(^2\) Faced with this outpouring of anger and resentment, the Eisenhower administration responded with vigor, denying these claims of wrongdoing, but this

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response was hindered by the administration’s own internal investigations and Hungarian refugees’ stories. This reexamination led to a significant altering of United States foreign policy, as all language of ‘rollback’ was dropped in favor of a more gradual approach, differentiation. This could not take back the lives that were lost during the Soviet re-invasion or cover up American culpability for the results.

Final Days of Revolution

Despite Hungarian resistance, Soviet forces had secured most of Budapest by the end of November 4th. Over the next week, resistance strongholds would fall one after another; Corvin Cinema on the 6th, Kilian Barracks on the 9th, and finally “Red” Csepel, where 70,000 people had been besieged by Soviet troops for five days, fell on the 11th.3 Since the beginning of the revolution on October 23rd, 2,600 Hungarians had been killed, two-thirds of whom died following the Soviets’ re-invasion on November 4th.4 Many of these Hungarian freedom fighters had placed their faith in Radio Free Europe broadcasts and mistakenly concluded that assistance would be forthcoming from the United States and the United Nations. Unfortunately, for reasons explained in the prior chapter no such aid was forthcoming.

After November 4th the Eisenhower administration confined its initial response to the psychological and diplomatic realm. In a memo from November 5th, NSC officials could see only two courses of actions open to the United States. The first focused publicity on Soviet terror tactics against the Hungarian people.5 Radio Free Europe was tasked with this. By November 6th as the fighting around Corvin Cinema entered its final hours, RFE was

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3 Ibid., 276-277.
4 Ibid., 277.
broadcasting appeals to the Soviet troops and preparing to distribute pamphlets urging them not to fire on the Hungarians. Although well-intentioned, the results of such measures were predictably negligible.

The second course of action put forth in the NSC memo was to work with other free countries to make a “concerted effort to alleviate the plight of the Hungarian refugees,” many of whom found themselves in Austria. In line with this, the Eisenhower administration planned to press for the distribution of relief in Hungary through the International Red Cross, while taking actions to make it easier for satellite refugees to enter the United States. While the United States government took steps to provide sanctuary for those fleeing the fighting in Hungary, the US delegation at the UN pushed for observers to be sent to Hungary and tried to pass a resolution condemning Soviet actions.

On Nov. 4th the Soviet Union had vetoed a Security Council resolution asking the Soviet Union to withdraw from Hungary. Later that day, in a special session of the General Assembly a similar resolution was passed fifty to eight, with fifteen abstentions. This resolution affirmed Hungary’s right to independence, and it demanded the immediate cessation of Soviet military

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action in Hungary, withdrawal of all troops, and the admittance of UN observers. Without the backing of the Security Council, this resolution was a paper tiger.\textsuperscript{10}

Amidst these internal discussions, reports began to trickle in from the United States legation in Budapest, due to spotty communication links. These reports shed light on the situation in Hungary. Since the re-invasion on November 4\textsuperscript{th} the Soviets had been systematically cleaning up the city, killing men, women and children, with hospitals and clinics also included among their targets, the report stated. It concluded that Soviet action in Budapest was calculated to starve out the city’s residents.\textsuperscript{11} Despite these reports of the systematic annihilation of the Hungarian Revolution the Eisenhower administration curtailed its response, still cognizant of the situation in the Suez and firm in the belief that events in Hungary should not lead to a war.

In a report compiled by the chairman of the Special Committee on Soviet Related Problems, Jacob Beam recommended several steps to the Operations Coordinating Board that the United States should take to register the nation’s revulsion against the Soviet attack on Hungary. These would include a suspension of the exchange of official delegations under the East-West contacts program and non-attendance at Soviet social functions.\textsuperscript{12} Yet, the report continues, “we would not wish to jeopardize some of the gains, small as they may be, resulting from the Geneva conferences.”\textsuperscript{13} Thus, the United States should continue the Amerika magazine exchange and

\textsuperscript{10} Paul Lendvai, One Day That Shook the Communist World, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 193. The eight nations which voted against the resolution were Albania, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and Ukraine.

\textsuperscript{11} “Telegram from Budapest to Secretary of State,” Confidential Series, Box 32, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Records as President, White House Central Files, Eisenhower Presidential Library.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
engage in limited cooperation with the USSR in the International Geophysical Year.\textsuperscript{14} As long as the USSR actions did not become more threatening, Beam recommended that the Eisenhower administration should refrain from drastic measures, such as blocking Soviet assets and intensifying trade embargoes.\textsuperscript{15} The penalty for crushing a revolution inspired by Western ideals and propelled by Western words would be to stop attending official social functions with Soviet officials.

A day after this report was prepared, in a NSC meeting on Nov. 8\textsuperscript{th}, in reaction to being informed that the Hungarian rebellion was days, if not hours away from being extinguished, President Eisenhower said, “This was indeed a bitter pill for us to swallow. We say we are at the end of our patience, but what can we do that is really constructive? Should we break off diplomatic relations with the USSR? What would be gained by this action?”\textsuperscript{16} President Eisenhower believed that the United States had remained true to his foreign policy. Although subject to some course corrections through the course of his first term, Eisenhower had been consistent. While he supported the liberation of Soviet satellites, such a goal would be achieved only through peaceful means. For while his heart and many others might yearn for action on behalf of Hungary, Eisenhower believed that military action would be detrimental. In a letter to his one-time advisor, C.D. Jackson wrote: “I assure you that the measures taken there by the Soviets are just as distressing to me as they are to you. But to annihilate Hungary, should it become the scene of a bitter conflict, is in no way to help her.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} “303\textsuperscript{rd} National Security Meeting,” 303\textsuperscript{rd} Meeting of NSC November 8, 1956, NSC Series Box 8, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Papers as President, 1953-1961, Eisenhower Presidential Library, 9.
Despite President Eisenhower’s heartfelt intention to prevent further bloodshed, historians should study the messages of Eisenhower’s foreign policy and the messages that were broadcast to millions by Radio Free Europe together. Albeit a “private” organization, RFE was an appendage of the United States government, and of far more consequence for the men and women sitting beside their radios in Budapest, RFE was the voice of the United States government. This perception would be the catalyst for the blistering critique delivered by Hungarians and allies alike, which caught President Eisenhower and his administration so off guard in the days and weeks to come. The first manifestation of these sentiments came from the United States Ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge.

Questioning United States Foreign Policy

Amidst the ongoing diplomatic dance between the United States and the Soviet Union at the United Nations a rumor began to float amongst the diplomats. In a phone call with President Eisenhower on November 9th, Ambassador Lodge informed Eisenhower that there was a feeling at the UN that for ten years the United States had been exciting the Hungarians through Radio Free Europe, but now that they were in trouble, the United States turned their backs on them. President Eisenhower reacted strongly to this claim, denying this accusation, amazed at what he viewed as the ignorance of fact. Eisenhower’s denial, though, did nothing to stop the belief that the United States had abandoned the Hungarian people.

In Austria, which was being inundated by refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion, the United States was the target of bitter criticism. The United States Embassy in Austria attributed this

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19 Ibid.
outbreak in hostility to past United States declarations of policy, specifically, RFE’s radio and balloon operations which led to the belief amongst many Austrians and arriving Hungarians that the United States would do far more than it actually did in the event of an uprising in a Soviet satellite.20 This sentiment soon spread to the media and was seen in the headlines of several of the United States leading newspapers.

A *New York Times* headline read “Radio Free Europe Said to Stir Revolt” and the *Washington Post* delivered a brutal critique in “How We ‘Betrayed’ the Hungarian Rebels: Our Default in Hungary”. Central to these articles was a statement given by a haggard, muddy Hungarian freedom fighter. “For eight years the United States has been telling us through Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America to resist communism. But when resistance finally leads to revolution, you stand by and watch Soviet tanks shoot us down without lifting a finger to help.”21 This sentiment was backed up by Western journalists who were on the ground in Hungary during the Revolution. Michel Gordey a correspondent for *France-Soir*, a Parisian newspaper, wrote: “We heard on Radio Free Europe programs whose impassioned tone and desperate calls did a lot of wrong. During those last days, numerous Hungarians told us: ‘These broadcasts have provoked bloodshed.’”22 The Eisenhower administration and RFE had broken the trust of those who listened. RFE gave the impression that volunteers were in route to assist the freedom fighters and even urged the Hungarians to arms and gave promises of arms, promises they knew would not be honored.23 Members of the clergy took up these claims.

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In front of a near-capacity congregation, Dean James A. Pike of the New York Cathedral stated, “The Blood of the Hungarians is on our hands.” For years the United States had been telling the Hungarians and other satellite peoples through RFE and similar institutions that “we were them, and we have encouraged them to continue in their thirst for freedom, but when they rise up, we are able only to say ‘Good Luck!’”

A more pointed critique of United States foreign policy was delivered by *Washington Post* writer, Edmond Taylor. Continuing along much the same vein as Dean Pike, Taylor stated that, “American actions not only failed to support what the United States radio was telling the Hungarians, but they belied what the highest officials of the United States Government had been telling the world for years.” However, Taylor did not end his analysis there. He believed that the real trouble lay much deeper. That United States foreign policy went awry due to a lack of coordination between United States propaganda which could never really give up its “liberation” rhetoric and the United States diplomatic and military policies. Taylor and other scholars have thenceforth attributed the confusion in U.S. foreign policy to this failure to communicate. This confusion, accompanied by denunciations and articles, served to weaken the Eisenhower administration’s credibility in the eyes of both its allies and nations which would be categorized as “non-aligned” or the third world. Eager to regain this lost credibility, the Eisenhower administration went on the attack in defense of its foreign policy record.

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25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
Eisenhower and Allies Respond

Speaking Before the White House Press Corps, President Eisenhower sought to redirect the narrative. “I believe it would be the most terrible mistake for the free world ever to accept the enslavement of the Eastern European tier of nations as a part of a future world of which we approve.”

Yet, “we have never asked, as I pointed out before, and never believed that, never asked for a people to rise up against a ruthless military force.”

The responsibility of Radio Free Europe in such an endeavor was to support and strengthen the resistance of Eastern Europeans and help them to cherish and strive for freedom and democracy. During the Hungarian Revolution, RFE kept the Hungarians “abreast of their responsible and realistic demands, but did not lead them; it rejoiced in their successes, but did not incite them to new violence; it urged them to unify, to concentrate their efforts on their most urgent goals… and to act coolly and responsibly and avoid giving the Soviet Union pretexts for further intervention.”

Eisenhower acknowledged the claims by some Hungarians that “Some of the Hungarian fighters, in their last hours of crisis, did hope for and seem to expect western military aid,” but the freedom fighters did not call for assistance until their battle was lost, explains Eisenhower. “They called for it then as Premier Reynaud, when France was already lost to German invaders, called for American intervention which all the evidence of American policy in 1940 told him could not come.”

The narrative presented by President Eisenhower in this November 15th Press Conference was that the freedom loving, and long-suffering Hungarians rose up in a spontaneous fashion.
against their authoritarian government. While heartened by such action, the Eisenhower administration never deviated from its rollback principles. While RFE had to identify with its listeners’ hopes and desire, RFE only kept its listeners abreast of the unfolding situation. To Eisenhower, any belief that aid had been promised was a simple misunderstanding by desperate men and women.

Predating President Eisenhower’s press conference was a meeting of the Executive’s Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems. The topic of the meeting was the allegations being made against RFE and foreshadowed what the President would say two days later. Cord Meyer of the CIA stated, “RFE has never promised Western armed assistance in case of revolt nor incited the Eastern European populace to any action on the basis that such assistance might be forthcoming.”33 This was the same Meyer who had ordered RFE to support the Hungarian rebels. A Mr. Boerner of USIA let his colleagues know that he knew a Hungarian defector, an eyewitness of the revolt, who was prepared to say that neither the VOA nor RFE incited the revolt.34 While this was all well and good for Mr. Boerner, the bone of contention was not whether the United States had incited the Hungarians to rebel, but whether a history of RFE broadcasts had created the perception that United States aid would be forthcoming. When pushed on the merits of that question, Eisenhower officials countered with an RFE directive from 1951.

The first to employ this response was long-time diplomat Joseph Grew. Responding to the criticism directed towards his organization, Grew, Chairman of the Board of Directors of

34 Ibid.
Free Europe Committee, Inc., which operated Radio Free Europe, decried the baseless Soviets’ accusations that the US had instigated the Revolution. RFE had never wavered from the principle laid forth in the Dec. 12, 1951 Directive to never promise armed intervention from the West. During the Revolution, RFE had faithfully reported the facts of debates and actions occurring at the UN, avoiding speculation and reporting on events within Hungary, without exaggeration. In responding to the claim that RFE had broadcast messages from leading United States politicians, such as President Eisenhower, Secretary Dulles, and Democratic Presidential Candidate Adlai Stevenson, Grew responded in the affirmative. This had occurred, but they were messages of hope and encouragement for peaceful liberation. Grew concluded in his defense of RFE, “It has never been the policy or practice of Radio Free Europe to incite rebellion; instead it has been the policy to keep the hope of ultimate freedom alive and to encourage the captive people to seek expanding freedom by peaceful means.” Grew’s defense of Radio Free Europe was reiterated by CIA Director Dulles and former Presidential Advisor C.D. Jackson.

“As far as can be determined from a review of scripts currently available, no RFE broadcast to Hungary before the revolution could be considered as inciting to armed revolt. No RFE broadcast to Hungary implied promises of American military intervention.” This conclusion reached in the Nov. 20th CIA Memorandum on Radio Free Europe, suggested that policy guidance to RFE and by RFE to its Hungarian desk was consistent with United States

36 Ibid., 2.
37 Ibid., 3.
policies toward the satellites. Coincidently, no transcripts were released to accompany this memo. C.D. Jackson echoed this sentiment in a letter to the incoming Chairman of the Free Europe Committee, General Crittenberger. “I can assure you from personal knowledge that there has never been a broadcast program designed to incite rebellion or expose [Hungarians] to personal danger.”

During this period “these stations have carried vital information that the Communist press and radio withheld, news of important developments showing that hope was not gone, and that the West had not abandoned these people.” These broadcasts, which exuded sympathy, set up an atmosphere of friendship, and in Jackson’s words “When trouble comes you hope our friend will help, even though he has said he could not.” To both Jackson and the authors of the CIA memorandum, the claims of betrayal were made by a desperate people, who misinterpreted kind words with proof of support and future assistance. By placing blame on the Hungarians, they willfully overlooked the contrasting policies created by the manipulating messages by RFE. This position though was being undermined in the very same CIA memorandum.

In the memo’s conclusion, the CIA made a previously unseen admission. “After the revolution was well under way, a few of the scripts reviewed do indicate that RFE occasionally went beyond the authorized factual broadcasting.” In addition there was “some evidence of attempts by RFE to provide tactical advice to the patriots as to the course the rebellion should take and the individuals best qualified to lead it.” For the first time, the Eisenhower

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39 Ibid., 4.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
administration acknowledged both that RFE broadcasts did not necessarily follow policy and that several of the claims made by Hungarian freedom fighters were accurate. RFE in a policy review in December expanded on this admission that several of the scripts went beyond what was authorized by RFE and its liaisons in Washington, D.C. This review, prepared by Mr. William Griffith, examined in full detail for the first time approximately 300 programs broadcast by RFE from October 23rd to November 23rd.45

Admitting Wrongdoing

Griffith’s team analyzed 187 translated English programs and 121 original Hungarian programs, which represented approximately 70% of all programming from October 23 to November 4th. In this survey, the RFE programs referred to as the Voice for Free Hungary (VFH) were divided into two halves, with the Soviet re-invasion of November 4th being the dividing line.46 From this examination, Griffith “found that the VFH did not measure up to our expectations during the first two weeks of the Hungarian Revolution… Many of the rules of effective broadcasting technique were violated. The tone of the broadcasts was over-excited. There was too much rhetoric, too much emotionalism, too much generalization.”47 In this one statement an axe was taken to the defense put up by RFE and governmental officials. RFE had not, as Chairman Grew stated, reported “factually the debate and actions taking place in the United Nations, avoiding speculation as to their outcome; reporting on events within Hungary and elsewhere without exaggeration, prediction or promise.”48

46 Ibid., 464-465.
47 Ibid., 465.
What should be noted of this critique was that it was not directed towards the Eisenhower administration’s departments in Washington D.C., but rather the fault was placed at the feet of the employees of RFE’s Hungary desk. The ire of the report was directed at the broadcasters and at the breakdown in the process. Targeting this breakdown, Griffith wrote “The normal programming schedule of the desk was disrupted during the revolutionary crisis to a degree,” and as a result, “Program distinctions tended to become meaningless and writers who would not ordinarily have been permitted to write political commentary apparently did so, as least during the period 23 October to 4 November, with very little supervision.”

Due to this disruption in the normal programming, “A rereading of the summaries originally presented at morning policy meetings for these programs makes it clear that the summaries often failed to reflect the content of the program as it was written.”

Particular criticism was reserved for the head of the Hungary desk, Andor Gellert. Griffith’s report states: “The most crucial failure of all was the failure of leadership within the desk. We overestimated Gellert’s ability to keep the desk under control… he had just returned from a long and serious illness from which he had not yet totally recovered. The strain of the revolutionary events was so great he collapsed at the end of the first week of November.”

Griffith attributes the 16 programs which were identified as involving distortions of policy or failure to follow policy application to the failure at the top. The gravest violation identified was one already addressed in this paper, Thury’s Nov. 4th Broadcast.

“He leads his listeners to believe that military intervention by the West can be expected within a few days” begins Griffith’s breakdown of Thury’s broadcast. Such a message ran

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50 Ibid., 465.
51 Ibid., 477.
52 Ibid., 466.
53 Ibid., 468.
contrary to the entire philosophy of RFE broadcasting. Furthermore, Griffith points out that on Nov. 4th an agreement was reached between Gellert and RFE political advisors that no promises of hope could be broadcast. RFE could only attack the actions of Kadar and the Soviets and that any Western reactions which indicated promises of more than what was entailed in Eisenhower’s Liberation policy would be misleading and must not be broadcast.\textsuperscript{54}

Thury violated these principles and other broadcasters stretched them to the breaking point during the Hungarian Revolution, yet Griffith concluded that there was no evidence that RFE could have incited the Hungarian Revolution. While some of these broadcasts could have encouraged Hungarians to have false hope, besides those made by Thury, no promises or commitment of Western or UN military support or intervention were mentioned. The key takeaway from this review was not the policy violations which occurred, but the regrettable bombastic tone used in delivering the messages. Laying the blame fully on the station’s émigré employees, “The VFH failed to measure up policy-wise to the challenges of the Hungarian Revolution primarily because of the preponderance of incompetent personnel in positions of major importance.”\textsuperscript{55} Of special note is that two subsequent monographs published by George Urban, director of the Munich RFE station between 1983 and 1986, and Gyula Borbandi, editor of the Hungarian service from its inception until October 1993, argue that Griffith and several other American program controllers shared the blame for the blunders, as it had happened on their watch and they were direct contributors on at least one occasion.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 468.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 481-482.
\textsuperscript{56} Lendvai, 188-189; Urban, 218-233. Griffith indirectly ordered Borsanyi to make the Colonel Bell broadcasts of October 28\textsuperscript{th} and 30\textsuperscript{th}. 

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The review issued by Griffith in December 1956 contradicts many of the prior statements issued in defense of Radio Free Europe by officials. It concedes that RFE broadcasts during the Revolution, particularly on or around Nov. 4th, the day of the Soviet re-invasion, violated guidance policies. The report shifts the blame upon Gellert, the Hungary desk chief and those who worked under him, many of whom were accused of having rightist leanings. What isn’t mentioned in this report is that the reason for this chaotic response to events in Hungary derived from its spontaneity and the inability of RFE and the Eisenhower administration to lay out a plan to deal with such an occurrence. Furthermore, potentially to cover up prior Radio Free Europe transgressions, by limiting his review from Oct 23rd to November 4th, Griffith missed the years of prior broadcasts and policies which precipitated the Hungarian revolution, broadcasts and policies which created the environment where Hungarians expected Western aid and intervention. In omitting this, Griffith missed the heart of Hungarians’ complaints and did not acknowledged, but then interviews with those Hungarians fleeing violence occurred forced a new reckoning.

Refugees Make Their Voice Known

In the months following the Soviet re-invasion, over 180,000 Hungarians fled the violence of the Revolution and the persecution that followed, to refugee camps in Austria. Within a short period of time approximately 150,000 were taken in by the United States.\(^{57}\) Columbia University, financed by the Ford Foundation, set out to interview these adult and child refugees. Over 600 interviews were to be carried out by specially trained, Hungarian field-workers in European and US refugee camps, as well as public opinion researchers at leading

\(^{57}\) Sebestyen, 280-281.
American universities. These in-depth interviews based on guided questions usually lasted between two to three days. The interviewers sought to learn about the social, economic, and political trends following World War II, the events of the Revolution, and, most important for this study, reactions to radio and leaflets as well expectations of help from the west.

In total, Columbia interviewed 356 refugees and for this thesis I will examine thirty, fifteen males and fifteen females. Of these fifteen, I attempted to divide them evenly by two further categories, age and location. These interviews were divided between those who were over twenty-five and those who were not. Females and males were also divided between those residing in Budapest and those outside of the city. While these were generally evenly divided, for the 15 female interviews I examined, eleven resided in Budapest. The thirty refugees in these interviews represent most aspects of Hungarian society, from lower class to upper class and from farmer and industrial worker to members of the intelligentsia. All fled Hungary in the days and weeks following the Soviet re-invasion, and of the thirty examined twenty-seven, ninety percent, expected western help. Their accounts illustrate the sentiments that I have been attributing to Hungarians in the prior chapters. This contrasts with reports prepared by the Eisenhower administration and RFE that no promises of aid were mentioned in broadcast. This leaves one with the question: Why the contradiction? A thorough examination of those thirty interviews explains their reasoning.58

From reading these interviews an immediate takeaway was the importance of foreign broadcasts to the Hungarians. They were a source of news, unhindered by government propaganda and censors. For this reason many of the refugees recount listening to these

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broadcasts during the Revolution. A 27-year-old bookkeeper recounts his experiences: “During the revolution, the activities of the foreign radio stations, especially of the Radio Free Europe, were of great importance to the revolutionaries. One had to rely mostly on the foreign broadcasts to know what was happening.” He was not an isolated listener, as a 21-year-old female Chemical Laboratory technician recalled that everyone was listening. “During the revolution however, everyone including myself listened to the Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America.” They listened day and night hoping that they would hear the news that the United Nations troops were coming to Hungary.

While most recounted listening to a variety of news outlets, the majority tuned into RFE during the fateful days of the Revolution because its reception was better than all others. Many of those who turned in during the Revolution had been listening for years. A 20-year-old maintenance man from Budapest stated: “We always had hopes that Hungary would be freed. The West had promised us aid time and again. Our hopes were especially high at the time when negotiations were in progress between East and West, concerning our hope for example, at the time of the Geneva Summit Conference. We never gave up hope.” The Geneva Summit Conference he references occurred in 1956- and 29-year-old female bookkeeper spoke of listening to US promises for twelve years, and for six of them through RFE Europe. The continuous supply of promises of aid created a perception for many Hungarians. According to a

60 “CURPH 14F,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 44.
63 “CURPH 70M,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 37.
39-year-old electrician, they expected the west to be unified: “Unified in the determination not to let the revolution and fight for freedom of a small nation be drowned in blood.”

When asked what she wanted the West to know about the Revolution, a 57-year-old dressmaker stated: “I guess the Americans have to know how much we waited on them.” Hungarians for years had listened to the promises aired by RFE, which many of them believed came on behalf of the United States government. Many simply couldn’t believe that the Eisenhower administration had never entertained military assistance and abandoned its more aggressive ‘liberation’ policy in 1953. The same dressmaker told her interviewer, “We were absolutely definite about their help. We could have never imagined that so much talk can go out without any action, when the time comes for it.”

The failure to provide this assistance elicited feelings of anger and betrayal. A 20-year-old maintenance man from Budapest expected Western help when the revolution broke out because Radio Free Europe was constantly promising help if such a situation broke out in a satellite nation. With such promises being made, RFE had a very destructive influence on events in Hungary. He states “It kept promising help, but nothing came.” This sentiment was shared by a 29-year-old female bookkeeper from Budapest who resented Western and United States’ inaction because for the last twelve years, RFE had stated that if the Hungarians start a rebellion, help from the West will be forthcoming. The result of such promises were devastating as a 42-year-old female bank printer states, “People became braver and did more during the revolution

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64 “CURPH 41M,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 37.
65 “CURPH 90F,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 3.
66 Ibid., 3.
67 Ibid., 12 and 59.
because of these broadcasts."69 Many of these interviewees expressed similar sentiments. For them, the United States and the West, through RFE, had built a promise of assistance for years, only for the United States, at the Hungarians’ hour of need, to do nothing.

The severest critique against the United States and RFE was delivered by a twenty-nine-year-old mechanic who lived outside of Budapest. Although not witness to the effects the Soviet re-invasion had on his capital, this refugee stated: “Unfortunately, they played quite a role during the revolution, mainly the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe were heard all over Hungary during the revolution… After the Russians, the great killer of Hungarian people were those broadcasts which lacked foundation in reality!”70 The constant encouraging tone of these broadcasts in his words “was particularly responsible for a senseless continuation and blood-letting in the revolution.”71 Attracting particular scorn were the broadcasts of Colonel Bell and “The Reflector,” which according to a thirty year old reporter was responsible for inciting the people and turning their anger towards the Communists resulting in the killing of many secret policeman.72 While these two interviews represent the more bellicose ones, the underlying sentiment is consistent. Hungarians simply could not believe that when they heard RFE say “We are coming; hold out”, that the United States was not hours, days away from military intervention.73 Many Hungarians felt misled by the West, mainly through Radio Free Europe’s exaggeration of the facts and its misleading tone. One young miner went so far as to say that

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70 “CURPH 71-M,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 120.
71 Ibid., 120.
“Radio Free Europe should be held to account for its irresponsible promises.” The word irresponsible is important here, because in these interviews conducted after the Revolution, a majority found RFE as the least factual and unbiased broadcasting program, when compared to Voice of America and BBC. There is no easy way to tell if these were the fulminations of angry men and women stung by broken promises, but it does appear, that RFE was not the pillar of virtue and integrity that it had been made out to be. Many so jaded by this event demanded change within the RFE system. They did not want RFE to finish broadcasting, but they wanted it to stick to facts, “give straight political and economic news; also news about the refugee Hungarians in the Untied States. But for goodness sakes, stop with anit-Communist propaganda. There is no more need.” They no longer wanted the half-truths from RFE and this was of especial consequence as Hungarians saw RFE and the West in the same terms.

This view was encapsulated by a thirty-nine-year-old electrician from Budapest. When the interviewer asked the electrician’s view on radio broadcasts, his response was enlightening. “People did not make the difference between RFE and the West in general. They considered RFE the organ of the West which clearly reflects the prevailing political views and attitudes in the West.” This viewpoint which could have been shared by many Hungarians sheds considerable light on United States foreign policy, one which historians must take into account when researching this subject. It would be improper to examine the RFE-Eisenhower relationship from a Western point of view, meaning separate, when Hungarians viewed them as one and the same. Therefore, when Thury made promises of military intervention, many Hungarians saw

74 “CURPH 76M,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 4.
75 “CURHP 14F,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 44.
76 “CURPH 41-M,” OSA Catalog, CURPH Interviews with 1956 Hungarian Refugees, Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1957, 143.
this as a promise with the backing of President Eisenhower and his administration. This had the ultimate effect of creating a perceived foreign policy which ran contrary to the Eisenhower-Dulles liberation policy.

All of this instilled a feeling of betrayal amongst the thirty interviews that I examined. This conclusion echoes that of prior historians. Paul Lendvai uses in his scholarship a survey of 628 Hungarian refugees, who even before the revolution began, half expected American intervention. One such émigré interviewed, Sandor Marai, while discounting accusations against the United States for inciting the rebellion, wrote “it is true that for many years every Western station, every newspaper and every statesman told us there was such a thing as Western solidarity.”

Sebestyen writes of a poll conducted by American academics of approximately one thousand refugees on their thoughts about the Revolution. Approximately ninety-six percent claimed that the foreign radio broadcasts made them believe that help would come from the West. Among those surveyed, Sebestyen identifies the response of two Hungarian intellectuals. Tamas Aczel who would become a literature professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, stated: “Our heart was in the right place. The trouble was we imagined the West had similar feelings, toward us, would reciprocate our confessions of love. This probably foolish notion was greatly strengthened by the slogans and propaganda of the US calling for ‘Liberation’ and ‘rolling back’ of Soviet domination.” Since that period he continues, “we learned what we didn’t know- that the West had written off these countries and only their propaganda machines pretended otherwise.” Liberal intellectual Jozsef Kobol expresses similar sentiments, “When… America finally spoke… it was a brief message of

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77 Lendvai, 189.
78 Sebestyen, 296.
79 Ibid., 296.
80 Ibid., 296.
condolence. Of course no Hungarians expected a nuclear war on their behalf but probably we believed too deeply political rhetoric in election campaigns that we weren’t supposed to take seriously.”

Kobol did take some responsibility for what had occurred but laid a healthy portion for what had occurred on the United States. “The wrong was partly our fault for twisting words. It was partly America’s fault for thinking that words can be used loosely. Words like ‘freedom’, ‘struggle for national independence’, ‘rollback’, ‘liberation’ have meanings. If America wants to flood Eastern and Central Europe with these words, it must acknowledge a responsibility for them. Otherwise you are inciting nations to commit suicide.”

Almost half a century after the Revolution these feelings had not dissipated. Gergely Pongracz, one of the Budapest rebel leaders who had made his home in the United States, stated that “the US sold us out. We were promised help. It never arrived.”

Aczel, Kobol, and Pongracz all point out the importance of language. The Eisenhower administration, faced with the growing condemnation toward its actions, began to tinker with its foreign policy.

Tinkering with United States Foreign Policy in the Revolution’s Aftermath

Originating in mid-1956, the Eisenhower administration began to tinker with its foreign policy. This tinkering was still going on when the Hungarian revolution erupted. The Soviet re-invasion of Nov. 4th expedited a reevaluation of United States foreign policy by the National Security Council. In interpreting this new policy, it would not be a stretch to believe that the Hungarian response to RFE broadcasts played a pivotal role. The concept of liberation and rollback which had been a tenet of the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy since 1952 had been

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81 Ibid., 297.
82 Ibid., 296-297.
83 Ibid., 295.
replaced with the notion of evolution.\textsuperscript{84} This policy still sought to assist Eastern Europeans in acquiring representative governments, but the tactics were different. Gone were the days of emphasizing rhetoric and radio propaganda to create antagonisms between the governments of Eastern Europe and their citizens. In its stead was a policy that sought to expand direct US contacts with the people and governments of Eastern Europe through tourist travel, cultural exchange and economic relations. Liberation was gone in favor of what would be termed “differentiation,” the belief that the United States could nudge satellite regimes toward gradual internal liberalization and independence from Moscow by showing preferential treatment.\textsuperscript{85}

This policy of “differentiation” would be the Eisenhower administration default foreign policy for the duration of his second term and would continue well into Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency. This policy foresaw a different role for the RFE as well. To the chagrin of many “old” RFE hands who sought to employ their organization as a tool of political warfare, and fulfilling the wishes of many Hungarian refugees, by New Years Eve 1958 it had been limited to news and music. This change was driven by the State Department, which most likely sought to prevent any further political embarrassment following the Hungarian Revolution. In fact, in a letter written by C.D. Jackson, the former presidential advisor railed against the policies of several Ambassadors who wanted RFE to cease altogether.\textsuperscript{86} Yet, he was too late. RFE’s role was minimized, with the end of the Eisenhower-Dulles policy of liberation, relegated to news and music, no longer part of a policy of ‘liberation’. What had been begun by the East German Uprising and the Solarium conference in 1953 ended with differentiation. “Rollback” and

\textsuperscript{84}Csaba Bekes, Malcolm Byrne, Janos M. Rainer, eds, \textit{The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents}, (Budapest: Central European University, 2002), 380.


“liberation” had been replaced with notions of gradual change, instead of toppling the regimes of Eastern Europe, change could be achieved by interactions. With it came the end of our game of telephone. The complicated manner in which United States foreign policy was distributed to the peoples of Eastern Europe had been simplified by greater government control and lesser weight that the RFE broadcasts carried. Gone was the age of two policies, two rhetorics.
EPILOGUE

Ten years after the failed Hungarian Revolution, August 1967, General Andrew Goodpaster, gave an interview on his time working for President Eisenhower as his White House Staff Secretary. During the interview, General Goodpaster addressed a question on the United States’ response to the uprising in Hungary: “In Hungary, it came up quite suddenly, and it took rather radical forms that seemed to endanger the whole Soviet position. We were confronted with a situation that was very largely beyond our power to control or direct in any way.”¹ Faced with this insurrection, Goodpaster contends that intervention was never truly considered. “I don’t recall that anybody felt that this was an issue that would justify threatening or in fact engaging in conflict directly with the Russians.”² As the interview began to turn towards the subject of the Suez Canal crisis, Goodpaster was given an opportunity to address claims that the United States had enticed the Hungarian Freedom Fighters with promises of support: “The President had a very thorough search made… and was never able to find that there had been such commitments made by our government. There did appear, however, in some of the broadcasts, language that was ambiguous and that could have been interpreted that way.”³

This interview by General Goodpaster marked the completion of the transition of the Hungarian Revolution to memory that had begun, even as the Soviet tanks entered Budapest on November 4th. Spurred on by the Soviet re-invasion the Eisenhower administration reevaluated its foreign policy. “Liberation” and “Rollback” had been replaced by “evolution” and

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² Ibid., 77.
³ Ibid., 77.
“differentiation”. The goal was still the same, assisting Eastern Europeans in acquiring representative governments, but the means were different. Scrapped, was radio propaganda utilizing rhetoric to create antagonism between governments and the governed. In its place was a program which sought to establish direct contacts with the people of Eastern Europe through tourist travel, cultural exchange and economic relations, which it was hoped, would gradually nudge these nations toward liberalization and independence from Moscow. Radio Free Europe of the early 1950’s had no place in this new foreign policy. Led by ambassadors in the satellite nations, RFE’s political commentaries had been replaced by recitation of news and the playing of music. In the spring of 1957 a new committee had been created, made up from the CIA, State Department and USIA to issue new guidances to RFE and ensure that their broadcasts conformed to it. RFE “old hands” such as C.D. Jackson saw no reason for RFE to continue to exist if it was to be turned from an instrument of political warfare to what he termed “a private USIA-VOA for the satellite countries” broadcasting news and music.

In this new world, on January 10, 1957 the United Nations created a five-nation special committee consisting of Australia, Ceylon, Denmark, Tunisia, and Uruguay to investigate the events that took place in Hungary during the Revolution. Their final report concluded that the revolution was a spontaneous “national Uprising” and that “the present Hungarian regime had been imposed on the Hungarian people by the armed intervention of the Union of Soviet

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This scathing indictment of the Soviets and their puppets was endorsed by the UN General Assembly on September 14, 1957 by a vote of sixty to ten, with ten abstentions. No mention, though, was made of Radio Free Europe’s or the Eisenhower administration’s role in the Revolution. For the next five years the West placed the Hungarian question annually on the agenda of the UN General Assembly, until in December 1962, the question was taken off in exchange for a general amnesty announced by the Kadar regime.

Kadar’s amnesty was accompanied by an end to the reprisals against those who participated in the Revolution. For those who had stayed passive during the Revolution and the reprisals, the future looked brighter. In recognition of the fact that many Hungarians had been shaken by the suppression of the revolt and that they would be happy to see minor signs of freedom and opportunity, the Kadar regime sought to coopt the Hungarian population. A wide array of benefits were offered to the population, including a growing range of goods in the shops, tourist visas and the chance to buy $70 worth of foreign currency, and the removal of the category “social background” from university applications. In contrast to Rakosi’s regime, Kadar oversaw the limiting of, if not disappearance of, state intervention into the private lives of citizens. All that was required by the Kadar regime was for individuals to keep quiet and go along. In exchange for this freedom and opportunity, the regime sought to suppress any feelings and memories of the Hungarian Revolution.

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8 Ibid., 193.  
9 Ibid., 193.  
11 Ibid., 376.
memory, Hungarian refugees throughout the United States began integrating into their new nation.

For many of these refugees their attempts at integration were success stories. Their youthful makeup, relatively high level of education, skills and grasp of the English language facilitated their integration into the fabric of America. In many instances these newcomers adjusted with greater ease than prior waves of immigrants due to their youthfulness and the opportunities that were open to them. Due to this rapid adjustment, many refugees exhibited less attachment to Hungarian community organizations and institutions. This lack of attachment might have been attributed to their experiences under authoritarian and communist Hungarian government over the prior twenty years, or as some refugees expressed in their Columbia University interviews, contempt and disgust for organizations who were out of touch with reality. Whether it was one of these factors or a combination of all of them, as historian Peter Pastor wrote, “out of defeat in Hungary the refugees created success stories in the United States that conform to the model of America as both the melting pot and the multicultural world for the immigrants.”

As General Goodpaster talked of the past, six months prior to another uprising behind the Iron Curtain, the Prague Spring, the world and policies which had existed at the time of the Hungarian Revolution were vastly different. Through a combined effort by the United States, the Kadar regime, and even Hungarian refugees the tragedy of the Hungarian Revolution had been relegated to a distant painful memory.

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Yet, the lessons taught by the Revolution should not be allowed to slip away into memory, only dredged up by historians in the course of writing an article, book chapter, or master’s thesis. In creating their rollback foreign policy Eisenhower and Dulles employed two distinct rhetorics. Up until the East German Uprising in June 1953 they were for the most part in lockstep, but in its aftermath, President Eisenhower began to distance his administration from its earlier rhetoric of liberation. Unfortunately, this change of message did not reach the Hungarian people in this international telephone game. Radio Free Europe continued to employ liberation rhetoric. This system of two disconnected rhetorics continued to exist up until and through the Hungarian Revolution and had a devastating effect upon the Hungarian freedom fighters. For, as Eisenhower was distancing himself from intervention, Radio Free Europe insinuated assistance. In this instance individual personalities at Radio Free Hungary interpreted guidance issued by Washington D.C. or New York to promise assistance, as Hungarians earnestly looked for help.

The problems arising from these two disconnected forms of rhetoric should serve as both a warning and a lesson of what could transpire if the audience’s perception of the rhetoric does not keep up with reality. This was the case in Hungary in 1956, Vietnam in 1975 as South Vietnam collapsed under the weight of the North Vietnamese onslaught, Iraq in 1991 and Syria in 2019. In these instances, the United States’ promises did not live up to its actions, particularly in Iraq.13

Thirty-five years after the Hungarian Revolution and less than two years after Janos Kadar’s death and the fall of Communism in Hungary, President Bush through Voice of America urged the Iraqi people to launch a coup against Saddam Hussein’s government. In the following

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days, Voice of Free Iraq, allegedly funded and operated by the CIA called for the overthrow of Saddam’s regime. When the Iraqi people did rise up, they were ruthlessly crushed by Saddam’s security forces, as the Bush administration did nothing. Although the Bush administration reneged on a publicly made promise in a way the Eisenhower administration did not, this event is evidence once again of two disconnected rhetorics, one perceived and one real, and once again thousands dead. America’s foreign policy experts did not take heed of the past, did not look the nation’s history for ready examples of what could happen. It is a cliché, but as George Santayana stated, “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” It is this generation of scholars’ and students’ duties to break the cycle. Take heed of the Hungarian Revolution, for while it has receded to memory, its lessons can still be applied today.

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