

**"TOO MUCH PROPAGANDA":
AUDIENCE PERCEPTIONS OF US VS. BRITISH
RADIO BROADCASTS DURING THE 1956
REVOLUTION IN HUNGARY**

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts/Sciences

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Budapest, Hungary
2007

Thesis Abstract

In this thesis I analyze the perception of difference between foreign radio broadcasts from the United States and Great Britain directed towards Hungary before and during the 1956 Revolution. I utilize the Donald and Vera Blinken Collection of Hungarian refugee interviews from 1957-1958. This collection shows that radio broadcasts from the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) World Service were preferred to all other foreign radio broadcasts. It also shows broadcasts from America's Radio Free Europe (RFE) were least trustworthy.

Purveyors of propaganda are faced with a choice. Either use emotional appeals to persuade and risk leaving your commitments unfilled, or only utilize facts and risk not persuading enough. During the 1956 Revolution, America chose the former strategy and ended up falling short on its promises, Great Britain chose the latter and emerged with a stellar rapport.

America's investment in the persuasion of Eastern Europeans to the point of revolt resulted in their distrust. Many perceived America would provide support and lost their trust in American radio because this support never came. Great Britain however had less invested in a revolt in Hungary. They persuaded with facts because of their smaller interest in the issue as well as their history of objective and impartial public service media. The BBC was founded before the start of World War II, and unlike American radio stations it had a pre-war state to return to. By following journalistic standards and taking a slighter role in the Cold War, British foreign radio was preferred to all other stations.

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 A SHOCKING PARALLEL	1
1.2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS	3
1.3 PUZZLE, QUESTION, AND HYPOTHESIS	4
1.4 RELEVANCE	5
1.5 STRUCTURE OF THESIS	7
CHAPTER 2- ANALYSIS OF HUNGARIAN REFUGEE INTERVIEWS	9
2.1 HISTORY OF THE INTERVIEWS	9
2.2 FORM OF THE INTERVIEWS AND HOW THEY ARE USED	11
2.3 FINDINGS	13
CHAPTER 3- WHY PROPAGANDA?	16
3.1 THE MAKING OF EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNISM	17
3.2 THE CHOICE FACED BY THE PURVEYORS OF PROPAGANDA	21
3.3 SOVIET PROPAGANDA AND ITS DISCONTENTS	26
CHAPTER 4- THE AMERICAN RESPONSE	30
4.1 AMERICA REVS ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE ENGINES	30
4.2 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AMERICAN RHETORIC AND ACTION	35
4.3 THE TRANSLATION FROM AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TO AMERICAN FOREIGN RADIO	37
CHAPTER 5- THE BRITISH RESPONSE	43
5.1 THE BBC: THE MODEL OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA	43
5.2 FROM THE BBC TO THE BBC WORLD SERVICE	46
CHAPTER 6- CONCLUSION	50
6.1 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WESTS	50
6.2 THE PERCEPTION OF DIFFERENCE	52

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

“I know, of course, that they never promised concrete help, but the implication of everything that they have said was, if you do something against this regime, you will not be left alone”
Interview #401¹

1.1 A SHOCKING PARALLEL

In March of 2004, the United States of America invaded the sovereign nation of Iraq. The decision to invade Iraq was a hard sell to the American people, but the justification used gained the support of American lawmakers and in October 2002 the US Congress approved funding to invade Iraq. While there were many justifications President Bush could have used to begin a war to topple the regime Saddam Hussein, the one eventually chosen was the best fit for selling the story. Before the invasion the imminent danger of stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) being developed by Iraq was the justification used. After the invasion and weapons had not been found, the secondary justification became Saddam Hussein's human rights record, for which he had gained the moniker “The Butcher of Baghdad.” The original justification, stockpiles of WMD, was guaranteed to resonate with Americans given that they were still very shaken by September 11, 2001, an event only one year in the past. This recent history had increased the fear that something similar would happen again on American soil, with even more casualties and destruction than 9/11.

The secondary issue, Saddam's human rights record, was much more detached from the consciousness of Americans because it did not present any imminent danger to their safety. Despite the fact that the human rights concerns were well documented and could be easily proven, and that WMD claims were shaky at best (and did indeed turn out to be false), Bush chose to use the justification that was most likely to achieve the end result he desired:

¹ Interview 401, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/O401_a.pdf. 13.

the invasion of Iraq. Once American troops were in place in Iraq, it became irrelevant whether or not there were, or ever had been, stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The choice to use the fieriest rhetoric is a choice faced by all who intend to persuade people towards a course of action. This rhetorical choice comes with consequences because it can exaggerate the problem, manipulate the facts, and offer promises that may not be able to fulfill. Other options do exist however when the purveyors of rhetorical persuasion have vested interest in a certain outcome manipulative routes are taken. The invasion Iraq represents a particularly recent example. This dynamic is true for rhetorical battles in the past as well. In October of 1956 the United States of America and Great Britain were involved with broadcasting subversive propaganda radio stations in Hungary. The decision to broadcast was logical given the absence of freedom of information and the pervasiveness of Soviet disinformation in Hungary, and the Western desire to counteract as much Soviet influence as possible. Despite their shared desire to counter the Soviets, the US and Great Britain had different approaches to this propaganda. The US broadcast in a way that played on mass anxiety, announcing America's solidarity with Hungarians while assuring Hungarians that help would come soon, in turn encouraging the revolt. The radio broadcasts from Great Britain's, on the other hand, shied away from the emotional broadcasts, only broadcasting the news and offering solidarity to Hungarians, but stopping short of promising assistance.

The American approach was guaranteed to resonate with Hungarians given that the chances of a successful revolution against the powerful Soviets seemed slim. While this American help was never truly an option, it served to revitalize the Hungarian effort. The British approach was less encouraging than the broadcasts from the US, they did not appeal to the uncertainties in the minds of Hungarians. Though the American radio may have been more inspirational to Hungarian listeners in the short term, in the end the broadcasts from the

UK were held in much higher esteem because they did not promise more than they could in order to have the most influence possible.

Much like President Bush making the case for the invasion of Iraq in 2002, the purveyors of foreign propaganda coming from the West during the Cold War faced the choice between using fiery rhetoric to evoke the emotions of Eastern Europeans or of giving a more honest story, despite its conflicts with national interest. In this paper I will look at the two Western countries, the United States and Great Britain, who participated most actively in propaganda directed towards Eastern Europe; how their approaches differed; how their propaganda was perceived by those subjected to it; and why it was perceived in this way. I will limit my topic to the propaganda directed towards Hungary in the years leading up to and including the 1956 Revolution, utilizing the newly digitized Donald and Vera Blinken Collection of Hungarian Refugee Interviews located in the Open Society Archives in Budapest Hungary.²

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Many terms and concepts need to be operationalized before further progress can be made. I will do this by placing limits on certain concepts and by defining some key terms. This will ensure the research done remains relevant to the question at hand.

Propaganda, for the purpose of this project, will derive its meaning from both modern and historical foundations of persuasion. First, propaganda is a technique that influences action by manipulating representations. Its second meaning comes from the use of propaganda by modern systems to spread their doctrine.³ The confrontation of Soviet and anti-Soviet propaganda in Eastern Europe saw both factors working on either side of the divide. In the

² For more on the interviews see Chapter 2.

³ Robert Jackall, "Introduction," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1995). 2.

aftermath of WWII, the Soviet Union used propaganda techniques to show how Communism was the answer to the horrors of Fascism. They achieved this by manipulating the past as well as the present to provide a justification for the seizure of almost total control. There was little room for derivation from their doctrine in the eyes of the Soviet Union; the only appropriate solution to eliminating Fascism was Communism.⁴

The United States and Great Britain attempted to show that life existed somewhere between the extremes of Communism and Fascism. They did this by employing a number of propaganda techniques, all based on the notion that Soviet ideology was pervasive in the countries where it had seized control after the War. These techniques required that the propaganda be transmitted covertly or by subversive means. This mainly included radio broadcasts, which were easy to transmit from the eastern border of the Western Bloc and were not completely blocked by Soviet censors.⁵ Other techniques were also used, including the transmission of anti-Soviet propaganda films and dropping leaflets from high altitudes over Eastern Europe. These, however, reached less people than radio broadcasts and were consequently used less frequently. The West was compelled to do this because of the perceived omnipresence of Communist ideology in Eastern Europe.⁶

1.3 PUZZLE, QUESTION, AND HYPOTHESIS

A cursory look at the Blinken collection and its sections concerning propaganda shows two very distinct features: the British radio broadcasts from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) were preferred by Hungarians to broadcasts from other stations, and the American radio broadcasts from Radio Free Europe (RFE) were not trusted at all. This is

⁴ Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).17.

⁵ Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War 1945-1961* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997). 2.

⁶ Johanna Granville, "'Caught with a Jam on Our Fingers': Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956," *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 5 (2005). 817.

striking because both the US and UK were on the same side of the global divide created after WWII. Despite their similarities as allies, however, they occupied different places in the world. The United States emerged as the most powerful Western nation after the end of the War, with the Soviet Union occupying the position of the most powerful Eastern nation. The UK, however, came out of the war badly wounded and less powerful than it had been in the recent past.

Based on this interesting information, the questions I pursue in this thesis are: *why was a foreign radio station from a country other than the US, with seemingly less interest in the situation, preferred? Why did many classify US radio broadcasts as untrustworthy propaganda? And how were their broadcasting styles different?* I hypothesize the distinction elucidated in the interviews between American and British propaganda emerged for two intertwining issues:

H1: *Increased interest in the Cold War decreased a country's capacity to differentiate its Foreign Radio broadcasts from its Foreign Policy.*

H2: *Foreign radio stations that existed before World War II were better equipped to transform their broadcasts after the war ended.*

1.4 RELEVANCE

While the Hungarian Revolution took place over 50 years ago, the importance of the event should not be underestimated.. At the very least, taking up the study of this revolution will be able to provide us with one history of the trying times at the beginning of the Cold War. Perhaps more significantly,, this account can be used to show a more accurate picture of what actually took place during this unique upheaval in Hungarian history. The utilization of these interviews ensures that the experiences of those who participated in and lived through the Revolution remain relevant to Cold War studies, and help maintain a more precise account

of the events which took place. This more accurate picture of the Cold War is not of passing importance. The events of the Hungarian Revolution, as well as the Cold War in its entirety, marked the beginning of proxy conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union and had a profound impact on the lives of all Eastern Europeans.

Similarly, the information produced as a result of this study can be used to show how the beginnings of the confrontation between the two ideologies espoused by the Soviet Union and the United States developed, how the confrontation played out, and how it was eventually resolved. This information can be used to show how opposing ideologies interact with each other. For instance, by creating competing systems to spread specific types of information amongst the people. Additionally, the presence of a non-super power nation, in this case the United Kingdom, shows how those acting in the relative periphery reacted to this bi-polar altercation.

This inquiry will also be able to illuminate key features of the uses and effects of propaganda. Propaganda was not an invention of the Cold War; however the Cold War brought to bear new techniques which allowed information to be disseminated in a much more systematic and controlled way. This facilitated the creation of the single ideology that was omnipresent in all activities of daily life. By looking at the early uses of these new techniques, this research will be able to show how propaganda developed into its current form, and also demonstrate how it will develop in the future. In addition to exploring the effects of propaganda through this inquiry, the differences in types of propaganda, as well as options available to distributors, can also be examined. By connecting individual interpretations of propaganda from Hungary with the theoretical choices faced by the conveyors of propaganda, this research will show why each choice was made.

Having a vantage point of fifty years with which to examine these events is a great advantage, allowing insight which would not have been possible at the height of the Cold

War. In the past fifty years the world has changed significantly- politically, socially, on almost every level there have been shifts, both great and small. Most obviously for the purposes of this research, the ideological confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union has ended. While there was a period of warming relations between the two in the 1960s, this *détente* was short lived and pales in comparison to the relatively relaxed and friendly relationship the two nations enjoy today. The Soviet Union no longer exists and Eastern Europe is no longer controlled by Moscow's tight fist. Some believe that examining the past is a lost cause; the victors have written the history books, the present moves forward with an unshakable bias towards the winners, and over time the murky events of life become the "true" facts of history. However, there is much to be gained by re-examining the past through our lens of the present; new information, new attitudes, or even new access to old information can begin to chip away at history believed to be set in stone.

The fall of Communism brought many sets of data into the public sphere. They are ripe for study and have been largely un-mined. Previously this data had been shrouded in the secrecy of the Soviet Union. It was protected from Western researchers because it could have been compromised interest of the Soviet Union. One of the many useful collections of data cleared for public study is the Blinken Collection, whose interviews proved invaluable to conducting research for this study.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following the introduction I will follow the creation and execution of the Blinken collection of interviews. In the following chapter I will define how the interviews are used for this work and the results of my research into the interviews. Chapter Three, titled "Why Propaganda", will give the historical background needed for the discussion of propaganda from the Soviet Union distributed within Eastern

Europe. It also contains a theoretical breakdown of the choices faced by those practicing propaganda. Chapter Four, “The American Response” tells how and why the United States countered propaganda from the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. In this chapter I will introduce the contradictory strategies of the United States and draw out the issues they faced. Chapter Five, “The British Response” offers a comparison between the foundation, goals, and interests of American propaganda from RFE and British propaganda from the BBC, as well as a history of the BBC. Finally in Chapter Six I will conclude my argument by synthesizing the positions of the US and Great Britain.

CHAPTER 2- ANALYSIS OF HUNGARIAN REFUGEE INTERVIEWS

"On the basis of what the radio was saying all along for months before the revolution it was hoped that we would get effective military help from the west ones we told the world we wanted to get rid of our Communist masters"
Interview #17-M⁷

2.1 HISTORY OF THE INTERVIEWS

After the 1956 Revolution in Hungary, almost 200,000 Hungarians fled to the West. For the most part they all came in one wave of refugees after the suppression of the uprising by Soviet forces. These people witnessed and participated in the toppling of what had previously been considered an "unshakeable" regime. Western observers of the revolution were interested in the stories of these people not only because they had witnessed the toppling of a seemingly solid regime, but also because they had lived under the influence of Stalin's Communism. Any information that could be gleaned from these refugees would help the West understand the revolution and the inner workings of Communism. From this they could analyze the factors that went into the creation of the revolution and possibly predict a similar event somewhere else in the Soviet realm.

Many Western organizations compiled data from these refugees in the years immediately following the revolution, believing that these interviews would provide insight into life under Communism. The most comprehensive of these interviews is the Columbia University Research History Project (CURPH), which conducted more than 600 interviews. Each interview lasted from two to three days and produced 50 to 70 page interviews for each subject. The founding question of the CURPH was, "one which should provide the central theme of the project concerns the vicissitudes of Hungarian society and its individual members under the impact of sovietization and of the recent violent convulsion against it."⁸

⁷ Interview 17-M, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/17-M_a.pdf. 45.

⁸ András Mink, "Columbia University Research Project Hungary," Open Society Archives, <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/digitalarchive/blinken/curph.pdf>.

They covered many more topics than solely the revolution in their attempt to answer this question. Sections of the interviews were dedicated to topics which included: personal experiences during the revolution, work experience, the subject's opinion on social change since World War II (WWII), impression of and connections with the Hungarian government, evaluation of communication techniques (such as radio broadcasts from abroad), access to media sources, and their personal ideology.

The CURPH proposal noted, "the recent and continuing flight abroad of over 150,000 Hungarians provide a potential source of information about Hungary, the Soviet orbit, and the international Communist movement equaling and perhaps exceeding in importance the other major sources which have been available to Western scholars in the last twelve years."⁹ While there may have been enough Hungarian refugees from the 1956 Revolution in New York in the late 1950s to conduct the CURPH completely in America, the architects of the project foresaw limits to staying in the United States and conducted the bulk of the interviews in refugee camps in Western Europe. This strengthened the interviews because they included interviews with people who had yet to go the United States and also people who would not be admitted to the US because of their past, or who simply did not want to go the United States.¹⁰

While the CURPH had built-in elements for the protection of objectivity there is no way to verify the accuracy of the sample size and how much it represented the opinions of Hungarians as a whole. The creators of this study were aware of its shortfalls but determined that the collection of this information was more important than reaching the highest levels of objectivity. They noted:

At present, therefore, our judgment is that the information which may be gained from the Hungarian refugees is of such importance that we should not take the chance of failing to exploit it. If there is an element of risk in

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

embarking upon a major undertaking like this, it is a risk we could seriously regret not having taken if the recollections of the Hungarian refugees were permitted to fade and be dissipated without being collected, analyzed and made available to those interested in Eastern Europe, and the operation of the totalitarian system.¹¹

As time passed these peoples memories and opinions of the events during the Hungarian revolution and the daily life under Communism were bound to change. The interviews needed to be done as quickly as possible to avoid such degradation of this information

2.2 FORM OF THE INTERVIEWS AND HOW THEY ARE USED

Of the 600 interviews conducted by the CURPH a total of 365 of the interviews are available for this study. Others have been lost in the process of translation, transportation, storage, and digitization of the transcripts. These 365 interviews have recently been made available by the Open Society Archives in Budapest¹² and are located in the Donald and Vera Blinken Collection of Hungarian Refugee Interviews from 1957-1958¹³ in the 1956 Digital Archives.¹⁴

Two types of interviews were given in this project, Type A and Type B. Type A interviews were given to almost all the interviewees, as it was the general interview type. It had seven sections covering almost every aspect of daily life. Section R covered the revolution itself; section W covered the respondent's personal life and work experience; S covered social problems and education; section G covered the respondent's opinions of the Government, the Party, and the police; section C covered the respondent's opinion of all types of communication and media, including foreign media; section I covered their personal ideology, attitudes, and opinions of the Communist system and the revolution; and finally,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Open Society Archives," <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/>.

¹³ "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection - Hungarian Refugee Interviews 1957-1958," Open Society Archives, <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/digitalarchive/blinken/index.html>.

¹⁴ "OSA 1956 Digital Archives," Open Society Archives, <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/digitalarchive/>.

section X was a conclusion section where the respondent could tell any other information they felt was missing from the interview. A standard set of questions was provided for the interviewer but they were instructed to let the respondent's answers direct the flow of the interview. For instance, they were instructed to not stop the subject if they gave responses that were obviously biased or irrelevant.¹⁵ This was done to ensure the comfort of the respondent and to build trust between them and the interviewer.

Type B interviews were of a completely different nature. They were reserved for people who could offer special information on a specific topic. There are nine different permutations of the Type B interview. They are political affairs, the army, social problems, religious affairs, the intelligencia, the youth, the revolt, the economy, and Hungary and the Soviet Union.¹⁶ Active party members, factory managers, those involved in law enforcement, leaders of the youth organizations, and others in positions with access to information were given this type. These interviews followed a specified pattern, unique to each B type, and usually were much shorter. B interviews have been excluded from my study because the questions are not always relevant to the research. However those given B interviews were sometimes given A interviews first, so this study still include the voices of the leaders of the Communist system and the revolt.

From the Type A interviews my research centers on section C, focusing on communication. I look at the following questions:

1. Where did you use to get most of your information about what was happening in the world?
 - a. Which of these sources were the most important for you?
 - b. Which was the next most important?
5. Did you listen to the radio?
 - c. If no, why not?
 - d. If yes, did you have a set yourself? What kind?
 - e. To what programs in particular? Why?

¹⁵ "Columbia University Research Project on Hungary "A" Interviews," http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinden/pdf/B_SF_04.pdf.

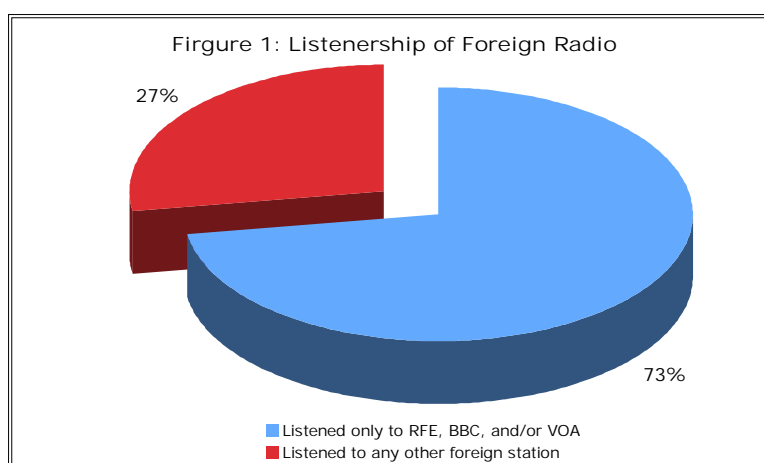
¹⁶ ""B" Interview Preliminary Persons Outline," http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinden/pdf/B_SF_05.pdf.

- f. How many hours a day? What time of day?
- g. Where did you listen?
- 6. Did you listen to any foreign station?
 - h. To which? Why?
 - i. How often, what hours?
 - j. What did you think of them?
 - k. What about the reliability of foreign broadcasts?
 - l. Did you know of any cases of punishment for listening to the foreign broadcasts?¹⁷

Because the respondent was able to dictate the flow of the interview, these questions cannot simply all be coded and tallied to come to any conclusion. Instead, after a cursory reading of the interview collection it became obvious that people had clear preferences for the media sources they utilized and the ones they avoided or distrusted. I took note of whether or not the respondent listened to foreign stations at all and if so which ones. Respondents preferred the radio broadcasts that came from the BBC and noted distrust in the broadcasts from RFE. I focused my coding on those criteria. I coded for a preference for the BBC, usually noted in question six, and “distrust” or mention of a lack of competence of RFE, also located in question six.

2.3 FINDINGS

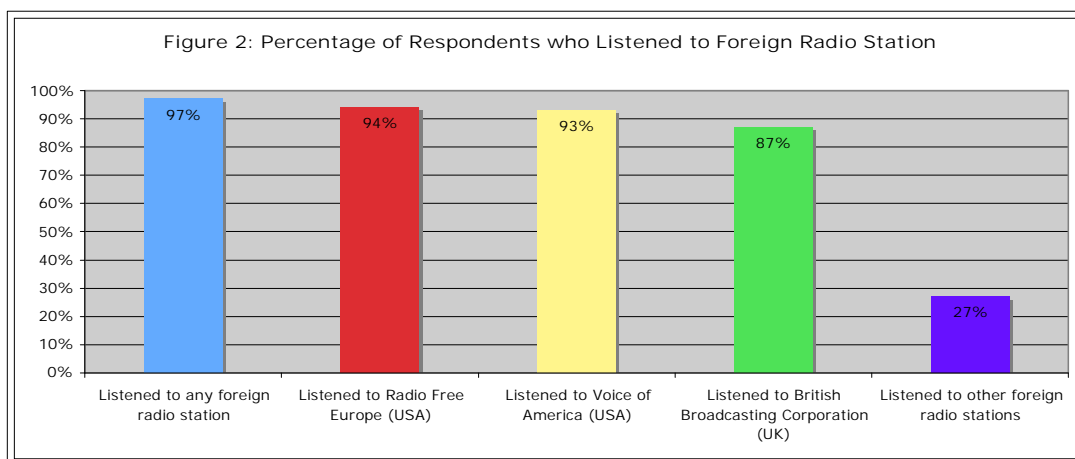
Of the 365 interviews available from the CURPH there were 182 interviews that met my criteria for evaluation.¹⁸ After coding based on the proceeding criteria I have come to the



¹⁷ "Columbia University Research Project on Hungary "A" Interviews."

¹⁸ This includes the following; the interview is available, the scan of the interview is readable, and it is a “Type A” interview.

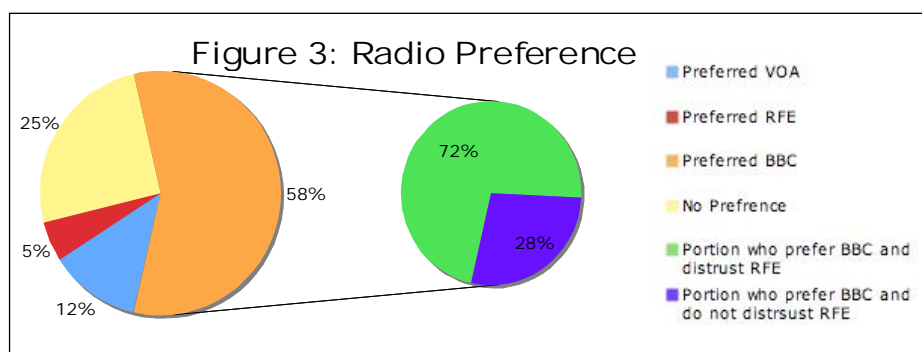
following results. Of the 182 interviews all but seven, or 97%, said they listened to foreign radio. Of the top three foreign radio stations all but eleven, or 94%, listened to RFE, all but 13, or 93%, listened to the Voice of America (VOA), and all but 23, or 87%, said they listened to the BBC (See Figure 2).¹⁹ In the structure of the interview the interviewer did not ask, “Did you listen to RFE, VOA, and BBC?” Instead, they asked which stations the



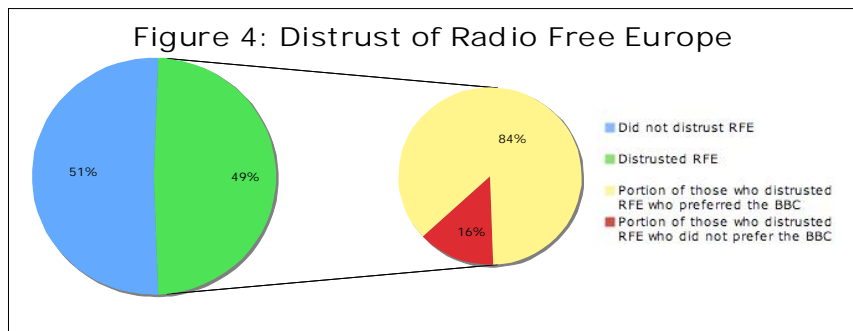
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included *only* these three. There are were many other stations being broadcast to Hungary from outside the Soviet sphere but these three were the only answers given for over 70% of the interviews. Those who did listen to other stations mentioned stations from Ankara, Madrid, Novi Sad, and Paris, but as noted, these were rare respondents (See Figure 1).

From these 182 interviews a significant number preferred outright the BBC to all other sources of radio broadcasts. 104, or 58%, of the respondents made this statement. Of the 30 respondents who had a preference other than the BBC, only VOA and RFE were preferred. The



¹⁹ Including the seven who do not listen to foreign radio at all.



other 48 respondents had no preference. Of those who preferred the BBC 72% distrusted RFE also (See Figure 3). RFE had

strikingly opposite rapport with the respondents. 89 of 182 or 49% said that RFE was untrustworthy or that their reports attempted to incite Hungarians. Of that 49% of the respondent pool that distrusted RFE, 85% of them also preferred the BBC to all other stations (See Figure 4).

CHAPTER 3- WHY PROPAGANDA?

"The whole country listened to the foreign radio stations. It was the spiritual bread for everybody out of which everybody tried to live."
Interview #243²⁰

In the aftermath of WWII, the Soviet Union began a process of creating a Soviet identity for the countries of Eastern Europe that were newly under their influence. To do this they harnessed the existing identities and reformed them in a Soviet light. They claimed their historical national heroes were proto-Marxists, and historical villains, proto-imperialists. The purpose of this identity-building project was to justify the tight grip the USSR held over the affairs of its new Eastern European satellites, and it was done by using techniques that ran the gamut from propaganda to terror. The West, fearful of a stronger Soviet presence in Eastern Europe and the increased perception Soviet westward expansion, attempted to stop this process with propaganda of their own.

The goals of this propaganda varied from country to country, from tacitly encouraging the population to rise up without directly causing the uprising, in the case of the US,²¹ to simply transmitting information across the Iron Curtain in the case of the United Kingdom.²² This paper looks at the opinions and preferences of Hungarians to the different types of radio propaganda coming from the West and will show why some stations were more preferred. These preferences include many outside factors. Here I will reconstruct the factors that produced those preferences.

²⁰ Interview 243, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/O243_a.pdf. 20.

²¹ Christopher J. Tudda, "Reenacting the Story of Tantalus: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Failed Rhetoric of Liberation," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 4 (2005). 3-4

²² Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996). 12.

3.1 THE MAKING OF EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNISM

Before moving to the CURPH itself it is critical to lay the foundations of modern propaganda and show how Western propaganda towards Eastern Europe began. As the Allies- the US, France, Great Britain, and the USSR- liberated Europe from Nazi Germany after WWII, all countries were acting “with strings attached.” The West’s “strings,” or expectations, included reconstruction plans and aid, like the Marshall Plan, that gave an equivalent of 130 billion dollars, by today’s inflation, in aid. This aid was, in fact, offered to all of the war-torn nations of Europe, but only given to those who entered the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). The USSR prohibited the nations of Eastern Europe from accepting this aid, thus indirectly forbidding them to join the OECD. Their justification included their Communist ideology that conflicted with the goals of the OECD and their expected influence and power over their sacrifice in WWII.²³

Instead the USSR installed its own regime of development after WWII. Stalin did originally toy with the idea of joining the OECD, but was persuaded otherwise by his advisors and initiated the Molotov Plan, later known as COMECON.²⁴ COMECON offered assistance at a very large price to the countries of Eastern Europe. For Soviet assistance each country sacrificed the freedom to make decisions for itself in relation to trade and foreign relations. Each county, as a result, forcibly oriented towards Moscow, giving the USSR a large say in its affairs.

To justify Soviet influence and change in ideology, opposed to Eastern European ideology immediately following the war, the USSR started their manipulation engines to retell the histories of Eastern Europe through Communist lenses. The process of rethinking history via Soviet lenses did not begin in Eastern Europe, but came from Stalin’s leadership in the

²³ "A Look Back at the Marshall Plan," in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Background Report* (Open Society Archives, 1987).

²⁴ Ibid.

early 1930s in the USSR. Like Lenin and Stalin required sacrifices from USSR in the 1920s through 1930s to build Socialism, COMECON asked Eastern Europe for a great deal of sacrifice to work towards socialism. “The architect of ‘socialism in one country’ needed the stimulus of Russian patriotism for the gigantic sacrifices he demanded from the Soviet Republic.”²⁵

Stalin and his closest circles retreated from the earlier Soviet views that historical figures such as the great tsars represented a bourgeois chapter in Russian history. Instead these figures were enshrined for the significant contributions they had made towards the progress that allowed the USSR to achieve its position in the world and achieve Socialism. Through manipulation of history, the past Russian national heroes were turned into “proto-Marxists”, or people who were working toward the same progress as Stalin, but before Marx touched pen to paper. In contrast, national enemies were turned into proto-imperialists/capitalists. If they would have been alive in the 1930s, Stalin would have claimed they were aligned with the “fat cats” of western capitalism.

Recalling “the olden days” has been discussed by many scholars of the nation and nationhood. Anthony Smith, in Myths and Nationhood, outlines why the “usable past” is rehabilitated and how it is used for nationalistic purposes. The usable past is a tool that can legitimize great social change, such as the USSR during the 1930s and Eastern Europe after WWII. Each of these time periods represents when these respective areas transformed their political and economic spheres towards Communism. During these times of transition the knowledge that the changes taking place are in line with the progress made in the past softens the pain in the present.²⁶

²⁵Edmund Gaspar, "Nationalism Vs. Internationalism: Hungarian History in the Re-Making," in *OSA Digital Archives- Background Reports RFE/RL Collection* (Open Society Archives, 1969).

²⁶ Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal," in *Myths and Nationhood*, ed. George Schopflin (London: Routledge, 1997). 42.

The manipulation of the past to fit the needs of the present elucidates some important features of evoking the “usable past.” Manipulation only takes place at the top level. This gives the elites a blank check from the past, which they can rewrite in almost any way, exploiting the past for their own needs. The usable past “represents . . . a construct of present generations to serve their needs and interest.” Smith carefully states, however, that this is not unique to any type of regime. In fact the past is manipulated by each political generation with emphasis on whatever aspects the elites deem important.²⁷

The past is not inherently a time that is better than the present, but in times of change parts of the past tend to be shown in the best light possible. It allows people to look back to a time when they think, or at least are told, they were “great”. Smith notes that often the “Golden Age” is recalled in the manipulation of the past. The question remains why the “Golden Age” makes such good putty from which to mold a new version of history. The first, most over-arching reason is its ability to hearken to a time when ‘we were great.’ That greatness is tightly linked with the quest for the truest and most pure identity. If the nation is worth the greatness it founds itself on, it sees its past and its past heroes almost as its holy center.²⁸

Returning to and venerating the “Golden Age” can be a way for the people to find their true selves. If they are to look to the past as the goal for the future, then they will be able to emulate those who the nation holds in highest respect.²⁹ In the nation’s eyes, the past can provide a way for the people to immediately change their status. Rather than identifying themselves as backward Slavs (in Russia’s case) or the losers of WWII (in the case of Eastern Europe), looking at the past as a justification for the present makes the drastic changes taking

²⁷ Ibid. 38.

²⁸ Ibid. 49.

²⁹ Ibid.

place seem less in vain.³⁰ The reassurance that the people are doing the right thing, or at least headed in the correct direction, comes from looking both towards the past and to the future. By shifting history to fit with the past a nation can be reassured that their path is in line with the path of the glorious forefathers and therefore be headed towards the same glorious future themselves.³¹

The reformation of national history is used to create a line between those in and outside of society. This partly explains the “purity” aspect of the charm of manipulated history. Those defined as “inside” are more closely related to the heroes of the past, thus closer to the national ideal. Those outside, therefore, are farther away and possibly even against the goals of these national heroes. The USSR marked the inside and outside of their society, and Eastern Europe was brought within the society. Through institutions like COMECON, Comintern, Cominform, and the International Communist Movement, Soviet ideology that promoted the Communist national ideal and a Communist identity was made to fit the people of each Eastern European nation. This put the many histories of Eastern Europe in line with the Marxist tenet that the world is equal on all levels and in line with the USSR.³² By aligning the interests of Eastern Europeans with the class struggle of Communism, Moscow was able to get Eastern Europe to give them the rubber stamp on policies that went clearly against their interests.³³ The result of this relationship between the USSR and Eastern Europe was the creation of a bloc that the Soviet Union could use to challenge the West.

Despite the fact a unified force was created throughout Eastern Europe aligned with the Soviet Union its foundations were weak and could not be sustained. After Stalin died the ties that were created from the Sovietization process in Eastern Europe as well as the strength

³⁰ George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). 41.

³¹ Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal." 52-53.

³² William Robinson, "Nationalism: Hungarian Problem Child," in *OSA Digital Archives- Background Reports RFE/RL Collection* (Open Society Archives, 1967). 2.

³³ Ibid. 3.

of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe were openly questioned. Once news of Khrushchev's denouncement of Stalin at the 20th party Congress reached Eastern Europe people felt their grievances could be redressed publicly. They felt as though the promises given to them in return for the transformation process after the war never materialized.

These unfulfilled promises are similar to the unfulfilled justifications highlighted in the Iraq anecdote in the introduction to this paper. Suppliers of propaganda are faced with an option. Either give realistic justifications whose expected benefit is minor, or give emotional justifications, like Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq or the utopia of Communism, to ensure support in the short run. However in the long run if promises are not kept, their makers can face a negative reaction. The 1956 Revolution is just one of those negative reactions.

3.2 THE CHOICE FACED BY THE PURVEYORS OF PROPAGANDA

Moral problems with propaganda were outlined in the article, "Mass Persuasion: A Technical Problem and a Moral Dilemma," by Robert K. Merton published first in 1946. His article follows the US War Bond fundraising efforts of the Columbia Broadcasting System. The particular broadcasts he studied were headlined by 40s radio star Kate Smith, who spoke for a minute or two at repeated intervals. Merton's conundrum was the dramatic increase in bonds sold during Smith's War Bond telecasts. In her first telecast one million dollars in pledges were received. During her second telecast she managed to bring in twice that amount and received two million dollars in pledges. By the third War Bond appeal the number of pledges increased almost twenty times, to 39 million dollars in pledges.³⁴ The fourth appeal saw an almost four fold increase over the year before, bringing the number of pledges to 110

³⁴ Robert K. Merton, "Mass Persuasion: A Technical Problem and a Moral Dilemma," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1995). 261.

million dollars, 55 times the amount of pledges from four years before.³⁵ This cannot simply be attributed to the common attitude towards the war the US entered during this study, but also must be attributed to her style of persuasion. “This was no simple event in which the use of ‘correct appeals’ alone served to persuade large numbers of people.”³⁶

Merton’s general finding was that it was not just what Smith said during these campaigns that resulted in her astonishing record of fundraising, but also the way it was said it. However, *even if* Smith’s words and appeals were substituted with her reading the phonebook aloud, two issues would still have worked in her favor for the bond drive. First is the fact that from the beginning of Merton’s study until the end Smith’s broadcasts the atmosphere in the US was increasingly becoming accustomed to being at war. By shaping her appeals to the war, Smith could ride the wave of patriotism developed by the radio, print, film, and word of mouth pronouncements and facts linking the bond drive to success of the war itself.^{37 38}

The parallel to Smith’s wave of patriotism in the 1956 Revolution is the fact that Hungary was already swept up in the waves of change. The death of Stalin and his denouncement by Khrushchev brought new ideas and interpretations of Communism to Eastern Europe. This can be seen in the Berlin revolt on 1953, uprising in Czechoslovakia in 1953, and the Poznań riots in 1956 leading up to the 1956 Revolution. Rather than attribute these events to propaganda, they should be seen as genuine uprisings that Western propaganda was able to capitalize on, just like Smith capitalizing on the war fervor that grew in the US during the time of this study.

The second factor that affected Smith’s fundraising record during the fund drives was the public’s opinion of her. She had been built up to be the ideal patriot, “at once a leader and

³⁵ Ibid. 263.

³⁶ Ibid. 262.

³⁷ Ibid. 263.

³⁸ This would not have been a tough task considering the bonds were use to pay for the war.

... 'one of the little people of American.'³⁹ By being seen as approachable as well as *the* patriot *nonpareil* she was able to bridge the divide between conflicting social groups. Her appearance was tailored to fit this view of her and was one factor determining the explosion of pledges she received during her third year.

The popularity of Western propaganda in Hungary during the 1956 Revolution parallels Kate Smith's charismatic marketing during WWII. Western propaganda enjoyed immense popularity in 1956, as well as the rest of the Cold War, because it rivaled the omnipresent, manufactured, and questionable sources of information that came from the Soviet Union. Many people listened to radio broadcasts simply to find out what was going on in the world around them. More importantly, the US and Great Britain were seen as the archetypes of freedom and many could not help but to listen.

The combination of the background noise of the war/revolution and the reputation of the vehicles for propaganda⁴⁰ created the atmosphere for these appeals to take effect. This context provided coherence to words and broadcasts that otherwise may have been less effective. The context of the appeals made the difference in amount of pledges in the fourth year. During year three she was criticized by her viewers for only giving sentimental appeals; a tactic which failed because some listeners would rather look at the appeal as a rational investment in the war effort. This was changed and by the fourth year her scriptwriters changed her appeals during times when "rational investors" would be paying attention to the bond drive. These rational listeners were identified as the men who would usually be at work during the day, so beginning with the early evening broadcasts Smith targeted her broadcasts toward these men.⁴¹

³⁹ Merton, "Mass Persuasion: A Technical Problem and a Moral Dilemma." 262.

⁴⁰ Smith or foreign propaganda stations.

⁴¹ Merton, "Mass Persuasion: A Technical Problem and a Moral Dilemma." 264.

Rather than simply presenting the “rational investor” argument, Smith couched it in rhetoric consistent with her emotional appeals for support. Parallels can be seen in the way Western propaganda was heard in Hungary during the 1956 Revolution. First Smith played on the fact that her rational listeners knew that the morally superior motivation for the purchase of war bonds was a moral obligation to support the war effort. She shamed the “calculating investor” by pulling on their emotions. She linked War Bonds to images of American boys dying in hospitals because they were fighting in the war.⁴² Only after creating a sense of inner conflict in her listeners she presented her argument. Smith said:

Yes, that’s what *they* say, *some of these wise people* who know only the world of dollars and cents, profit and loss, the jingle of the cash register, the cold figures in a bankbook. That’s what they say and gentlemen, I tell you now, I . . . DON’T . . . BELIEVE . . . IT! I say THEY LIE, these people who think American businessmen don’t like emotionalism, don’t harbor sentiment in their hearts.⁴³

First she put those she wished to persuade and evoked a strong emotion, in this case guilt, and then allied herself with the same people she made emotional. Merton notes, “[H]aving once activated feelings of guilt and remorse, Smith built an easy road to atonement. The purchase of a war bond, more specifically the purchase of a done from Smith who rejects out of hand the notion that bonds may also serve the one’s narrowly defined self-interest.”⁴⁴

The use of rhetorical techniques cannot be the end of the discussion. There are serious implications to mass persuasion. The practitioner of propaganda is faced with a dilemma because propaganda is a means of social control, and can be used maliciously, by choice or by fact. Because the war bond drive as well as American propaganda evaluated success by the number of people whose minds are changed by the broadcast. In the war bond case the more minds changed meant more war bonds sold, in the other more listeners meant more

⁴² Ibid. 264-265.

⁴³ Ibid. 266.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 267.

transmission of information and a greater chance that it would bring people to revolt without actually pushing them over the threshold.

The risks of social control put the practitioners of the propaganda in a dilemma. Either they do not use certain techniques and risk being less ‘effective’ or violate the prevailing moral code that prohibits this type of propaganda. “He must choose between being a less than fully effective technician and a scrupulous human being or an effective technician and a less than scrupulous human being.”⁴⁵ When the effectiveness of propaganda is the primary goal and when solely the number of people “brought to a desired state of action” measures effectiveness, “the choice of techniques of persuasion will be governed by a narrowly technical and amoral criterion.” Merton argues this exacts a price on the moral character of the propaganda practitioners and risks manipulation of society.⁴⁶

This choice between maximizing effectiveness and “the prevailing moral code” represents the disjuncture between foreign radio broadcasts from different sources during the 1956 Revolution. In Chapter Two it was noted that over 70% of the interviewees stated they only listened to RFE, VOA, or BBC. These stations came from either the US or the UK. The US chose to maximize the effectiveness of their propaganda by using techniques that appealed to the emotions of the listeners and they, much like Kate Smith, offered solidarity with the listeners.

Solidarity in this case refers to one side of Eisenhower’s contradictory policy of “liberation” in public, but “containment” in private. The US offered solidarity with Hungarians from early on and was invested in this publicly. Privately, however, Eisenhower admitted the US was not willing to offer physical support for Hungary. This contradiction between rhetoric and action is the reason why RFE was not considered trustworthy. In the

⁴⁵ Ibid. 270.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

words of interviewee number 401, a 48 year old male who was a civil prosecutor immediately before the revolution:

We all expected help from the West. The basis for this expectation was the [RFE]. I know, of course, that they never promised concrete help, but the implication of everything that they have said was, 'if you do something against this regime, you will not be left alone!'⁴⁷

The implication of the liberation rhetoric coming from the United States was very effective at giving hope to Hungarians, however once it was clear that this hope would not come to fruition, Hungarians who had listened to RFE formed a distrusting attitude towards the station. This is not the form that broadcasts from the UK, on the BBC, took. In the following chapter I will show the differences between US and UK propaganda and why the BBC followed the other path Merton spells out. Where numbers are not the sole measurement of effectiveness in the end the moral character of the actor is preserved.

Smith and her script writers piggybacked calls to support the war effort upon the situation in the US at the time as well as their credibility to convince some who would otherwise be unwilling to buy war bonds to do so. The strategy 'works' because it first pulls on the emotions of those unwilling to donate and then offers solidarity with those who are targeted. This pattern did not only work for Smith, but is consistent with the pattern of propaganda that came from the United States. The BBC however had different origins, goals, and was run by a government in a different geopolitical position than the US, for these reasons the BBC was preferred to American propaganda stations and American propaganda stations were outright not trusted

3.3 SOVIET PROPAGANDA AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Merton's analysis of Kate Smith and my analysis of propaganda as an identity building process are hardly ships passing in the night. Rather, these two analyses interact with

⁴⁷ 401, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews ". 13.

each other a great deal. One of the tenets of my argument is that the United States mocked the decisions made by the USSR as a defining feature of their propaganda. The US did this to ensure it kept up pace with its enemy, who did the same thing in propaganda directed against American interests. This notion of staying on par with the Soviet Union was far from unique to the propaganda posters; in fact, the “keeping up with the Jones’s” mentality held the world in thrall in the most famous Cold War example of parity between the US and the USSR, nuclear parity.

The propaganda from the USSR and the US toward Eastern Europe after the end of WWII took the same choices outlined by Merton “Mass Persuasion.” Both nations chose the path where the greatest number of people would be affected, without regard for the ways that propaganda manipulated the population. I must admit at this point that the parallel between the Soviets and the West only goes so far, however, because the USSR used many techniques the US did not have access to and therefore the US could not possibly meet them in every aspect of propaganda. This is because the USSR was not just broadcasting foreign propaganda; their aim was to reform the entire society through a variety of methods, of which propaganda was just one.

As I have stated earlier, there were three aspects of propaganda that Merton outlined in Kate Smith’s War Bond Drives: the prevailing atmosphere, the public opinion to those practicing the propaganda, and the method of rhetoric used. Each of these factors can come together to make an efficient machine for social control. The conveyor of propaganda is faced with a choice: to use this tool to its fullest extent and likely not deliver its promises, or to limit the use of propaganda and likely deliver its promises.

Much like how Americans in the 1940s were already conscious of the ongoing war, Eastern Europeans were very much in the midst of a war-torn atmosphere when the USSR began transforming Eastern Europe. The USSR had rescued Eastern Europe from Nazi

domination in WWII, and the wounds and destruction were still very fresh in their minds. These wounds were attributed to the Nazi occupation by the USSR used as the setting for their persuasion. This is similar to how Kate Smith's scriptwriters placed the entrance of the US into WWII in the forefront of the minds of Americans, the Soviet Union made the atmosphere of war central in the minds of Eastern Europeans.

The public opinion of the USSR at the end of WWII was at its highest point ever in Eastern Europe because they had rid them of Nazi rule. Therefore, at the beginning of the Sovietization project of Eastern Europe, the USSR was able to use its prestige as the savior from Nazism to further its goals. In actuality, the opinion Eastern European's had of the USSR did not matter much, given the USSR's unchecked power in the region. In contrast, Kate Smith's listeners had a choice to listen. They could easily chose to simply turn their TV or radio off, but Soviet propaganda was all encompassing and its position could only be eliminated by something drastic.

The third aspect Merton analyzed about the practice of propaganda is the rhetoric used to convey the messages from the USSR. It has already been stated that the USSR used rhetoric that was intended to strike a chord with Eastern Europeans, yping up the dangers of fascism and the redeeming factors of communism. Much as Smith evoked emotions of guilt from *rational* potential investors in war bonds, the USSR evoked strong negative feelings towards the previous dominators. They then, as Smith was able to do so successfully, provided the people of Eastern Europe with a mechanism for eliminating those feelings. Smith's answer to the feeling of guilt was simple: *buy more war bonds*. The USSR's answer was just as simple. They made the argument that Communism was the only way to ensure the elimination of Fascism. This was intended to resonate with the people, giving reason to the drastic changes the USSR would put in place.

The USSR's choice to pursue the option where the most effective tools for propaganda are used is similar to the path the US used in its response to Soviet propaganda in Eastern Europe. Great Britain, however, chose to take a different approach. They applied standards of objectivity and impartiality to the broadcasts they made which broadcast in Eastern Europe, or at least appeared to be doing so. The BBC took a less hard line approach than the stations from the US or Soviet Union. By doing so they were compelled to make little promises, instead sticking to broadcasting pertinent information. They gave up the potential for their broadcasts to influence the actions of Hungarians. This also meant they did not give promises to Hungary, like the US and the USSR did. Those unfulfilled promises resulted in negative reactions from those who listened.

The eventual failure of Soviet and American propaganda came at the point where the promises made remained unfulfilled. For the US as well as the Soviet Union this came to head in Hungary in 1956. When Hungarians determined that the years of sacrifices to Communism would not produce the outcome promised, they voiced their dissatisfaction in the form of a genuine popular uprising. Similarly American propaganda failed at the point where the promises the people assumed the US made did not come true.

CHAPTER 4- THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

"I certainly would not say that RFE in particular helped to incited the Hungarian people by holding out promises of western help. Nevertheless, the radio broadcasts of RFE in the last ten years have made the people very optimistic and they were very easily carried away by wishful thinking"
Interview #38-F⁴⁸

Eastern European Communism intended to bring Eastern Europe in line with the USSR. This meant more than just the USSR having a few communist neighbors. It meant that the countries of Eastern Europe became satellites to the USSR, and could be used to counter the West. The West responded by using a competing interpretation of Eastern European histories and conveyed this message through intelligence and psychological operations to disseminate information and a view of the West untainted by censorship. However the United States attempted to convey a Janus-faced strategy, where publicly liberation was advocated but privately it was conceded this would only be able to take place without American assistance. American radio propaganda, under the direction of the US government, towed the line by giving encouragement to Hungarians through emotional broadcasting. After the dust settled from the revolution, America's unfulfilled promises caused Hungarians to distrust American propaganda.

4.1 AMERICA REVS ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE ENGINES

The American intelligence machine began to form at the beginning of WWII. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the creation of the Office of War Information soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, on June 13, 1942. Its purpose was to inform the media and public of government policy. Early on, they had offices in Europe, Africa, and East

⁴⁸ Interview 38-F, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/38-F_a.pdf. 57.

Asia. At home, they made propaganda movies with the help of Hollywood. In July 1942, their most crucial medium, radio broadcasting, began with the Voice of America (VOA).⁴⁹ These agencies, which were formed during wartime to combat the Axis, needed replacement after the war.

The end of the 1940s saw mistrust increase, and American ambassadors were expelled from Embassies across Eastern Europe in 1950. This year also saw the removal of Western cultural and charitable institutions from Eastern Europe. The American president at the time, Harry S. Truman, responded to this with a massive radio campaign ran through the Voice of America. Truman verbalized the many factors of fear and distrust that were brewing, in a speech he gave on April 20, 1950. He said that the Cold War was, “a struggle, above all for the minds of men” and Communism was winning the conflict by using systematic distortion and deceit. He warned, “Unless we get the real story across to people in other countries we will lose the battle for men’s minds by default.”⁵⁰ Truman’s Campaign of Truth initiated the United States’ determination to eliminate communism throughout the world.

The Campaign of Truth dictated the growth of radio operations from the US directed towards Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This would let America have a greater influence on the minds of Eastern Europe. In the 1950s American radio broadcasts had fallen to wayside. In the between the end of the WWII and Truman’s Campaign of Truth less emphasis was put on the US sway in Eastern Europe because it was under the influence of the Soviet Union and the shied away from meddling in its affairs immediately following the war. The Voice of America began broadcasting as a result of the Campaign of Truth, along with the existing broadcasts from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Both aimed over the Iron Curtain were at first jammed by the USSR in an attempt to protect Eastern European ears from bourgeois-capitalist broadcasting early on. However the West caught a break

⁴⁹ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War 1945-1961*. 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 14

because the USSR had originally planned on utilizing short wave radios to connect the great Eurasian landmass it controlled. This meant VOA, BBC, and other Western stations had a huge potential audience.⁵¹

After the initial surge of Truman's Campaign of Truth, VOA dramatically increased its audience. In 1951, VOA increased the number of production languages from 24 to 45. As a result it became America's, and the West's, premier tool for propaganda penetration into Eastern Europe. Western propaganda tried to fill the gaps left in Soviet media, religion, dissent from émigrés, and humor just to name a few. These foreign broadcasts attempted to replace Soviet broadcasts and did so by offering this wide variety of programs. They also offered competing programming, such as alternative views of history, news, and propaganda. The Western intelligence machine was working to counter the USSR at its foundations, with ideas that forced Eastern Europeans to rethink their status.⁵²

This ideological offensive was a direct attack on the institutions that were formed in the Soviet Union to create new identities for Eastern Europe. The USSR held its ideas in the same regard as it held its party. Just as the Party was the only party allowed to exist, its ideas were the only ideas permitted to exist. VOA broadcasted information that conflicted with the Soviet interpretation of Eastern Europe. For instance they consistently reminded the people of Stalin's cooperation with Hitler at the beginning of WWII, a fact Stalin would have wanted to downplay. The West encouraged blurring the differences between the Soviets and Nazis to vilify the USSR. VOA also offered:

[R]egular features such as the programs 'Life Behind the Iron Curtain' and the satirical 'Communist Paradise' to expose 'the sham and hypocrisy of communism's pretense of a better life.' The program 'Do You Remember When?' highlighted Soviet expansionism at the expense of weaker nations and alleged Kremlin violations of international, while the program "Where Are

⁵¹ Ibid. 33.

⁵² Ibid. 40-41

They Now?’ featured commentaries ‘on men who thought they could collaborate with the communists.’⁵³

President Truman left office in the beginning of 1953, succeeded by President Dwight Eisenhower. Eisenhower’s special assistant, C.D. Jackson, almost immediately urged that the President make psychological warfare the crux of the United States’ Cold War policy. It was noted by American officials that more propaganda over the airwaves would be better only because, “the busier we can keep the Bolsheviks in their own backyard, the less chance of their starting trouble elsewhere.”⁵⁴ In 1950, the CIA, unhappy with maintaining United States’ position of containment, inquired for input from thousands of refugees. This resulted in the creation of the National Committee for a Free Europe, which created a press and radio division called Radio Free Europe (RFE). Eisenhower would use RFE and later Radio Liberty (RL) to disseminate information across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The United States provided a different view than the one disseminated by official sources. In the eyes of the United States preventing the USSR from forming a whole continent of people who had the same interpretation of reality was at the very least disturbing. There were many people living in each Eastern European country that did not prescribe to communist ideologies. They were forbidden from voicing their opinion and Western broadcasts could reinforce the existence of an alternative. For example, because of the prohibition of religion in communist Eastern Europe and combined historical importance for Eastern European nations, Western broadcasters used religion as a tool to spread their ideology.

The USSR did not accept the influence of religion in the countries under their influence. Nationalism scholars attribute it to the fact that the *nation* is necessarily in opposition to religion. Religion competes with nationalism to mutual exclusion. Anthony

⁵³ Ibid. 41

⁵⁴ Ibid. 42.

Smith, in his book, Chosen Peoples, outlines how nationalism is a modern form of religion. The *nation*, like religion, attempts to bring its people to a more enlightened state of consciousness. This can only be possible when the member of the *nation* has the same interpretation of the goals, ideals, history, and future. “This idea of a national transhistorical, and even transcendental, destiny encourages us to image the nation as a pure and noble fraternity, which, like the family, is seen as ‘the domain of disinterested love and solidarity’; and this in turn encourages us to obey the nation’s summons to self-sacrifice.”⁵⁵ The USSR as proponents of a new national religion, communism, is, “essentially and ultimately good,” much like a religion. The comparison can be extended to the expansion of communism. The formation of Communism in Eastern Europe is essentially the same as the conversion of a people to a religion.⁵⁶

Nationalism, however, is seen as a very secular concept often missing the quasi-religious aspects. Smith notes that nationalism, often, can only be formed in the vacuum formed by the elimination of religion.⁵⁷ Poland is a good example of this point, for while it is a devoutly religious and the Catholic Church was not eliminated, it was severely limited during communism. The Soviet Union, in attempting to build Soviet nationalism, had to put limits on the church to succeed. RFE, Eisenhower’s retooled American radio broadcast directed towards Eastern Europe and the USSR, attempted to counter the USSR’s restriction of religion with broadcasting from exiled religious leaders, dissidents, and members of upper ranks of the party.⁵⁸

The competing interpretations of what an Eastern European is and whether they ascribe to communist ideologies can and did have huge impacts on their histories. Communist propaganda attempted to bring Eastern Europe in line with the USSR ideologically and in

⁵⁵ Anthony Smith, *Chosen People's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). 20

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 21.

⁵⁸ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War 1945-1961*. 61.

practice. Propaganda from the VOA and later RFE were established to be the main component of psychological warfare from the US towards Eastern Europe. Their goals were to inform those in Eastern Europe, who were contemplating the bankruptcy of Soviet ideology, of possible alternatives and to provide support, sometimes only emotional, for an alternate ideology.⁵⁹ If these broadcasts incited violence, VOA and RFE would have come closer to their goal, but RFE and VOA did not desire the violence they would be blamed for initiating.⁶⁰ According to Johanna Granville, the goals of psychological operations were officially “roll-back” and “liberation.”⁶¹ Due to America’s record of starting an uprising and the (lack of) help that followed as a result of American propaganda operations, one can doubt America’s commitment rested with “liberation” and “roll-back”.

4.2 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AMERICAN RHETORIC AND ACTION

Granville is correct in pointing out the disjuncture between the words that came from the US administration and their actual goals. One key component of Eisenhower’s strategy was a “liberation policy,” *liberation* as in the sense of freeing Eastern Europe from Soviet influence. The other component of his policy was, “to be able to compete with the Soviet Union without resorting to a war that neither side could win.”⁶² There is a contradiction inherent in this strategy because the US would not be able to “roll-back” Communism in any Eastern European country and avoid a war.

The genesis of the contradiction between action and rhetoric in respect to liberating Eastern Europe came in the run-up to the 1952 presidential election. Eisenhower’s foreign

⁵⁹ Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy*. 26.

⁶⁰ Tudda, "Reenacting the Story of Tantalus: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Failed Rhetoric of Liberation." 3-4

⁶¹ Granville, "'Caught with a Jam on Our Fingers': Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956." 817.

⁶² Tudda, "Reenacting the Story of Tantalus: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Failed Rhetoric of Liberation." 4.

policy plank, written by John Foster Dulles, attacked current president Truman's policy of "containment". It stated that since the end of WWII "containment" had allowed the Soviet Union to consolidate its power over Eastern Europe because it meant the US turned a blind eye toward anything the Soviet Union did on its own side of the Iron Curtain.⁶³ This strengthened the Soviet Union, something many Americans feared and wanted to avoid.

While publicly Eisenhower spoke of liberating Eastern Europe, privately the US assured its allies it would not do anything drastic. After Eisenhower won the election, "Dulles *privately* assured the British that the United States would not take any 'rash action in the direction of forceful liberation of the satellite people.' Yet *publicly*, calls for liberation during the next three years implied that the administration supported military, not merely rhetorical, liberation."⁶⁴

The death of Stalin in 1953 brought new calls from officials in Washington to try to facilitate a thaw in the Cold War. The US would use this time to actively try to split Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union through, "covert action and psychological warfare."⁶⁵ The need to confront the Soviet Union fueled by the American fear of Communism brought propaganda from the United States to Eastern Europe. The first test of "liberation" came in 1953 with the workers uprising in Berlin. In this case the US broadcasts from the station Radio In the Allied Sector (RIAS) to show American support for the workers. However it became clear after the revolution that if a successful revolt was to take place one of two things would have to be done on the American side. Either the US would need to supply the revolt with arms, a idea quickly discarded because of the magnitude of the risk if Moscow found out, or according to the Psychological Strategy Board, a body under the guidance of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that reported to the National Security Council (NSC), "seek to 'nourish

⁶³ Ibid. 9.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 11.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 14.

resistance . . . short of mass rebellion' in Eastern Europe and should 'covertly stimulate acts and attitudes of [defiance] short of mass rebellion aimed at . . . provoking open Soviet intervention in both the GDR and the other satellites"⁶⁶

Eisenhower took this advice to heart and secretly adopted it, while noting that Washington should not incite a revolt that would result in a bloody response because the US was not willing to supply any physical support.⁶⁷ Bidirectional foreign policy is not without its moral dilemmas. The actor, in this case the US or Eisenhower for that matter had to choose between what they wish were possible and what they were willing to do. Eisenhower chose to publicly call for what he hoped was possible: the liberation of Eastern Europe and the defeat of Communism in Eastern Europe. Privately Eisenhower was not willing to back this up. The result was American building up Hungarian hopes for rescue only to be left after the revolution with out aid.

4.3 THE TRANSLATION FROM AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TO AMERICAN FOREIGN RADIO

Immediately after the end of WWII the United States was faced with the choice of whether to not to continue broadcasting radio to a European audience. As a result of the victory of the Allies in the war, as well as the divisions that developed immediately following the end of the war between the Soviet Union and the other three victor nations, the US, UK, and France foreign radio broadcasting had to be revamped. For this study I will not go into detail about the changes to American radio towards Western Europe. Instead I will focus on the changes to radio received on the other side of the Iron Curtain. I have already shown the progression in the American foreign radio from its beginnings in WWII broadcasting to its state during the 1956 revolution. However, there are some unique features of American

⁶⁶ Ibid. 18.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

propaganda which illustrate the reasons interviews show almost half of the respondents did not trust RFE, and only 6% of respondents preferred either American station. These numbers pale in comparison to the 57% of respondents who preferred British foreign radio from the BBC, and the 0% who distrusted the BBC.

The history of American propaganda clearly distinguishes itself from the propaganda from the United Kingdom. Unlike the BBC, American foreign propaganda had no pre-war state to return to. The BBC and BBC World Service both had been created before the UK entered into the most trying phase of WWII. In other words, after WWII ended the BBC World Service was able to return to a state of normalcy because the war was over and it could return to normal. American propaganda however was created solely because the United States entered the war. After the war American radio had nothing to return to because it didn't exist before the war. Faced with the choice of how American propaganda should evolve there was no standard to return to.

The Voice of American was the first of the American radio stations available during the 1956 revolution to start broadcasting. The Interdepartmental Special Committee on Communications established its goals after the war in February 1945. At that point VOA was already under the direction of the United States Information Agency (USIA). The special committee established the broadcasts originating in the United States should continue on a daily basis and the quality and quantity of broadcasts should be similar to radio broadcasts any other country. This however did nothing to stop VOA's funds from being slashed in 1946.⁶⁸

Cutting the funds of VOA early on brought out the true colors of the VOA and the direction of American propaganda. Theodore Streibert, the director of the USIA said:

[Propaganda] has to be accepted as a useful and necessary instrument of national policy We don't like it. It is repugnant to us. It is not in the American

⁶⁸ Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens* (London: Brassy's, 1997). 17.

tradition. Propaganda methods are associated with dictatorships. We are running an information program overseas, without reference to the U.S., and it is forced on us by our enemies just as our immense armaments are forced on us. I think it's not only just as necessary but perhaps more so in an effort to keep down these tensions and have our policies understood and keep our friends with us. Congenitally I think most Americans don't want any part of it, but they must face it intellectually, that it is a necessary instrument even though emotionally we might not want to have anything to do with it, and more than we want anything to do with the atomic bomb.⁶⁹

Streibert outlines the same dilemma Merton noted in his study of Kate Smith. The United States was faced with a choice either successful propaganda or the preservation of a moral standard. Streibert thinks that America must dispose of its gut reaction against propaganda and the implications of social control in the face of the grave methods used by its enemies. The positioning of the US against the foreign enemy, whom we can assume is the Soviet Union and their satellite empire, is different than the positioning of the UK in this fight. Because of the historical independence of the BBC as a news agency and not just an extension of a wartime propaganda experiment after the war the BBC was able to revert to its prewar self.⁷⁰

Streibert's quote also seems to push the responsibility of the US's action to the Soviet Union. He says that propaganda is a tool of the dictator but if America looks at it "intellectually" they will realize it is a necessary evil. He likens the situation to the build up of arms on the American side of the Iron Curtain. It is only necessary because the enemy is doing it also. In a similar vein he notes that propaganda is the most useful tool to fight against the USSR, it is more important than weapons or diplomacy because it can be used to change the minds of the people on the ground. This is in opposition to the way the UK was able to use the BBC as a tool for propaganda. In the next chapter I will outline the disjunction between the two, but for now it can suffice to say that unlike the United States, where foreign

⁶⁹ Ibid. 16.

⁷⁰ Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy*. 30.

radio was simply a tool of the government, the UK was unable to control the content and goals of the BBC. For the US however, because propaganda was seen as the top tool for fighting the Cold War, they put more stock in the propaganda and in turn pushed the lines of acceptability.

Streibert also notes that radio propaganda from the USIA (VOA and RFE) is directed to people outside the United States. Because Americans were not directly affected by these broadcasts the rules could be bent to fit the goals of American foreign policy. The fungibility of the rules of broadcasting to countries other than the US is unique in this comparison between the US and UK. Because the BBC was established as more than a commercial endeavor, or as a public service media, and because of its history of independence, when the British government demanded the BBC World Service be the propaganda arm of the country the BBC rejected. It violated their standards of objectivity and impartiality, standards that did not exist for external radio from the United States. This came despite the fact that the broadcasts were aimed at people outside of their country, it can be assumed the air of standards of journalism came before the foreign policy goals of the country. Because no similar body existed in the United States to stop the use of American stations for propaganda, there was little to stop it from being used to this extent. Rather American foreign radio was created simply as a tool for propaganda and after the war this did not change very much at all.

The VOA was seen to be inadequate for the barrage of propaganda American intelligence believed was necessary to influence those in Eastern Europe. The intent of American propaganda was to bring Eastern Europe to the point of a revolution without actually causing the revolution. Beginning with its inception RFE intended to be different from the broadcasts of the BBC and VOA because rather than broadcasting for only a few

hours a day RFE was to broadcast eighteen hours a day and become a surrogate media outlet, because one was not available in the countries under Soviet control.⁷¹

The guidelines for RFE propaganda that were in effect during the 1956 revolution were published in 1952 showed that America was steadfast in its purist of propaganda and how it should take place. It contained many sections, including, “After Libation”, “Anti-Semitism,” and “Broadcasting to Youth,” and according to the most important section according to Michael Nelson in the War of the Black Heavens stated, “that RFE policy was based on ‘acceptance of the assumption that the West may display sufficient military power and skill in diplomatic negotiation for the Soviet tide to be forced to recede from our target countries without recourse to world war’.”⁷²

Before and even during the revolution broadcasts that supported Hungarians as if the West would show the military power to force the Soviet troops to retreat bolstered the Hungarian’s outlook of the world after the revolution.⁷³ It would seem in fact that the United States lead Hungarians to believe they had little to lose after the revolution. I do not intend to discover whether or not the United States caused the revolution itself, I will leave culpability where it lies, however the combination of the RFE broadcasts, the rhetoric of Eisenhower and his administration, and the guidelines of RFE created an atmosphere where Hungarians believed US troops would come to their rescue. Respondent number 17-m a Jewish, male, university student in Budapest backs up my claim by stating, “on the basis of what the radio was saying all along for months before the revolution it was hoped that we would get effective military help from the west once we told the world we wanted to get rid of our Communist masters.”⁷⁴ Number 60-f, a 35 year old Roman Catholic woman who drove trucks for the municipal gas works takes it a step further by noting that broadcasts of this type

⁷¹ Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*. 52.

⁷² Ibid. 52.

⁷³ Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy*. 31.

⁷⁴ 17-M, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews ". 45.

incited the people by giving them hope and the quick reversal of the US position after it became clear they were not going to give troops to support Hungary, "In Hungary before the revolution, as I said before they were decidedly inciting. When the revolution broke out we were under the impression that due to previous broadcasts western help would be forthcoming. During the revolution on the other hand, all of the sudden they revised their attitude."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Interview 60-F, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/60-F_a.pdf. 57.

CHAPTER 5- THE BRITISH RESPONSE

"On the other hand, the BBC we believed, because the relayed the straight news from the outside world in which we were interested"
Interview #106⁷⁶

When faced with a choice between using the most efficient and effective tools for propaganda and using tools that are less likely to be a form of social control the radio propaganda outlet from the United Kingdom, the British Broadcasting Corporation, opted for the latter. This chapter will show that the choice made by the BBC to forgo the most effective forms of propaganda contrasted with the choices made by the United States to reach and influence as many people as possible in the greatest way possible. This choice was not only a product of the differing origins and goals of British propaganda, but operating above that, it was a product of the position of Great Britain in the Cold War. The difference between US and UK propaganda is also clearly visible in the CURPH interviews. The Interviews show British propaganda was held with much higher esteem than American, This is attributed to the reliability of the claims and promises made by the BBC in its broadcasts to Hungary

5.1 THE BBC: THE MODEL OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

Like stated earlier the CURPH interviews clearly show the respondents preferred the BBC to all other foreign radio stations. Over a plurality, 57% to be exact stated their preferred radio station to listen to was the BBC. While praising the BBC the respondents noted they preferred the BBC because it was seen as the station that gave the most accurate news. Respondent 106, a 24 year old female student, stated that amongst her close contacts in Hungary RFE broadcasts were not given much weight but, "on the other hand, the BBC we believed, because they relayed the straight news from the outside world in which we were

⁷⁶ Interview 106, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/O106_a.pdf. 16.

interested.”⁷⁷ Other terms used to describe the BBC broadcasts included, “factual and matter-of-fact,”⁷⁸ and “objective and realistic.”⁷⁹

While these quotes in no way secure the assumption that BBC broadcasts in Hungary were in fact accurate, matter-of-fact, or objective and realistic, rather these findings prove that there was at very least an perception amongst those who listened to foreign radio that the BBC embodied these glowingly descriptive words. That perception was guided by the decisions the BBC made, which in turn was determined by the UK’s position in the world during this time.

The BBC started out as a conglomerate of other media outlets and was unified in the 1920s. Early on its goal of becoming the archetype of European public service media was clear. The goals of a European public service media outlet, as defined by the BBC include utmost respect for objectivity and impartiality. However it is not in the scope of this work to establish whether or not the BBC was in fact objective it is more important to establish the importance of objectivity in the standards of the BBC. These standards came from the origin of the BBC as the information agency of the British people and were not altered in a major way during or after WWII in order to change the rules of British broadcasting to other people.

The BBC was established as the premier public service media in Europe. The justification of public service media in Britain came soon after the creation of limits to access to broadcasting rights. In fact there was a trade-off, the British government justified their monopoly over the airwaves by providing the British people with a public media outlet. The public media outlet is not simply a means to inform the public, rather its service was to

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ 38-F, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews.". 57.

⁷⁹ Interview 25-M, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/25-M_a.pdf. 43.

elucidate public taste. More than simply entertainment and news it meant the news and entertainment conveyed was of superior quality.⁸⁰

According to Brian McNair in “News and Journalism in the UK” the quality of programming was an important factor in the evaluation of BBC broadcasts.⁸¹ By quality of programming he refers to two concepts that were critical to the goals of the BBC, *objectivity* and *impartiality*. Both of these concepts were applied to British radio and eventually the BBC World Service. Similar guidelines were applied to both types of radio coming from the UK, for domestic as well as foreign consumption.

Objectivity, in the sense McNair intended is defined as, “the concept that a person's statements about the world can be trusted if they are submitted to established rules deemed legitimated by a professional community.”⁸² This definition not only assumes that the BBC followed standards it set up for itself to be “objective” when broadcasting to the rest of the world, it also piggybacks the standards of the BBC World Service on the guidelines already set up. *Impartiality* is the amount of perceived legitimacy and the truth quotient of broadcast journalism and McNair notes this concept goes back to the creation of the BBC in the 1920s. It was established because the, “medium was set up as a public utility to be developed as a national service in the public interest.”⁸³

The BBC’s credibility is not only a composite of how impartial and objective their broadcasts were, a factor inherently tied in to credibility is the audience perception of these things. This is not something the BBC was unaware of rather it was something they embraced and saw as the tie-breaker between the American and British foreign radio. BBC personnel mentioned to Ralph White of the USIA, “You are cheating all the time of course. What

⁸⁰ John Keane, *The Media and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). 118.

⁸¹ Brian McNair, *News and Journalism in the UK* (London: Routledge, 2003). 32.

⁸² Ibid. 33.

⁸³ Ibid. 34.

matters is the appearance of objectivity when actually you are not completely objective”.⁸⁴

Cheating in this quote refers to the American style of blatant propaganda. At the time this style may have seemed to be more effective at mobilizing the public, however because the BBC had a reputation of objectivity to defend they resorted to more fact based news and less emotion based statements to the people.

5.2 FROM THE BBC TO THE BBC WORLD SERVICE

The beginnings of the BBC World Service can be traced to 1932 with the inception of the BBC Empire Service.⁸⁵ Its goals were to be the premier information agency for the rest of the world. This goal is in stark contrast to the goals of American foreign radio. One of the earliest stations of the BBC World Service to Russia and in an article in Pravda justifying and defending the BBC in Russian it was noted, “it should be noted that in selecting material for broadcasting to the USSR the BBC does not draw any conclusions of its own but leaves this to the listeners, who sometimes, through lack of experience or lack of knowledge, are hooked by those who for years have made it their practice to fish in troubled waters.”⁸⁶

This is not to say that the BBC World Service did not fit the definition of propaganda, because it did not slant the information one way or another. Rather the BBC prided itself in its objectivity and instead of hoping to change the minds of foreigners with admittedly exaggerated information, “by its presence it forced newspapers and broadcasters in authoritarian countries themselves to approximate closer and closer to the truth.” It is my contention that this difference was visible because of the differences between the positions of the UK in the Cold War in contrast to the America’s.

⁸⁴ Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda*. 10.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 12.

⁸⁶ Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*. 12.

The creation of the BBC World Service as an independent service in the model of the BBC domestic service was not a given. Its creation was marred with clashes between the heads of the BBC and the British Foreign Office who had differing opinions of the goals and format of the Empire Service. The Foreign Office insisted that broadcasts from the BBC to elsewhere in the world should, “simply replicate the government line of the day,” but this was rejected because it conflicted with the BBC ethics.⁸⁷ This remained a source of tension throughout the war; The BBC crossed the Foreign Office’s demands when by not countering the Italian propaganda station at Bari, as well as by reporting in 1938 on a Palestinian who had been executed on the orders of a British military court.⁸⁸ These were neither the first or last examples of conflicts between the BBC World Service and the Foreign Office, however their outcomes show that the BBC stuck to its guns and reported the facts, rather than line put forward by the government.

By “telling the truth in a bold and factual way,” the BBC created a president for itself during with its foreign broadcasts during WWII.⁸⁹ Providing a reliable source of news and not pandering to the government’s wishes magnified their reputation. One aspect of the BBC that many considered important to evaluating their credibility was their broadcast of allied victory as well as losses. “Often the BBC acknowledged more ally losses than axis propaganda.”⁹⁰ The same comments were often made during the CURPH interviews, the interviewer of respondent 23-m, a 21 year old student from Szeged, Hungary noted, he found the BBC by far the most objective. He judged its accuracy by comparing the events with what he heard. BBC was so objective, respondent adds, that it also told bad things which happened in the West. And this was very much appreciated.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda*. 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 13

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Interview 23-M, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/23-M_a.pdf. 72.

There were of course limits to the claims of objectivity and impartiality of the broadcasts from the BBC. When the news goes against public interest the rules of impartiality are withdrawn.⁹² So one can assume during the heat of the Battle for Britain, when Coventry, London, and the rest of Southern England was under *Blitzkrieg* attacks from Nazi Germany the BBC governing bodies would have been more likely to broadcast something other than simply the news. However because the BBC was able to maintain the air of broadcasting without much slant, the United Kingdom placed less emphasis on the interest of the public to incite a revolution in Eastern Europe.

I have highlighted that British propaganda aimed at being objective as well as impartial. Both of these are part of a greater picture of the BBC as the UK's attempt at creating the archetype for European Public Service broadcasting. However, once again, it is integral to mention as well, that actual the impartiality and objectivity of the BBC means little to nothing for this paper. The BBC World Service maintained an air of objectivity and impartiality while broadcasting towards Eastern Europe. This air was perceived by those listening to their broadcasts and contributed to its final evaluation by those subject to its propaganda.

As already mentioned for America foreign radio broadcasts were seen as the most important tool for propaganda. Great Britain however did not have a radio station that was willing to perform as its propaganda rubber stamp. The BBC was unwilling to use its World Service broadcasts for this purpose and the British Foreign Office, after running into opposition with the BBC over broadcasting blatant propaganda, did not form another station that could fill this role. They had the capability as one of the wealthiest nations in the world, but instead allowed the BBC to determine the form of its foreign broadcasts. The extra freedom allotted to the BBC came from two sources, both the history of the BBC as an

⁹² McNair, *News and Journalism in the UK*. 36.

archetype for public service media, as well as, the lesser stake the British Government put in its fight against Communism.

Further proof of the lesser stake the BBC seemed to put in its psychological fight against communism is seen in the direction of American radio stations. Streibert noted in reaction the cutting of funds from the VOA that the Soviet Union was the ultimate enemy of the US and thus must be countered by any means possible, even those the US would otherwise see as unacceptable.⁹³ The United Kingdom did not have the same interpretation of the situation for one of two reasons. Either they did not perceive the Soviet Union as the ultimate enemy worthy of receiving the most vulgar types of propaganda, or the Soviet Union was the ultimate enemy of the UK and the BBC did not see this as a justification to break with its principles, at least openly. It does not matter which is most true, all that matters is that the difference existed.

⁹³ Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*. 12.

CHAPTER 6- CONCLUSION

"The news was not always accurate. I listened only to the news. The fastest news was that of RFE, the most accurate, that of BBC. I did not prefer one station to the other"⁹⁴

6.1 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WESTS

The United States' propaganda had much more freedom to broadcast in support of Hungary. The US position in the years leading up to the revolution was Janus-faced. Eisenhower gave open support for the liberation of Eastern Europe from the grip of Communism. This goal was echoed by those in the upper echelons of American foreign radio leading to an atmosphere where cautious support could be given to Eastern Europe. At the same time Eisenhower maintained privately his unwillingness to back his words up with physical support.⁹⁵ The open support of Hungary but private refusal of help put hope in the minds of Hungarians that the US would provide assistance after the revolution began. Even if the United States did not actually verbalize they would help the snippets given from the US created the assumption that the US would help.

The BBC however did not have to deal with the implications of what the British Government said because they had far more freedom in choosing what to broadcast. Even if the United States and British governments both had the contradictory approach the United States took the outcome would be similar because there would have been no mechanism for the British government to give open support to Hungarians without first passing the guidelines of the BBC. The differences between the US and UK however are still critical to my argument because if the British government also had the opinion that propaganda was the key tool for communicating foreign policy they could have either forced the BBC to change

⁹⁴ Interview 13-M, "Donald and Vera Blinken Collection- Hungarian Refugee Interviews." Open Society Archives, http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/other/blinken/pdf/13-M_a.pdf.

⁹⁵ Tudda, "Reenacting the Story of Tantalus: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Failed Rhetoric of Liberation." 3-4.

or could have set up their own stations in the form of RFE. There are many reasons why this did not happen, but in the end it is true that if the British government wanted to produce this type of radio, they had the means necessary. The fact that they did not shows loyalty to the existing media system and its guidelines.

While the US was able to make more emotional broadcasts it was more restricted by the United States policy line the BBC of the British policy line. After all RFE and less of VOA were simply propaganda arms of the United States. This meant that the RFE and VOA were encouraged to broadcast one side of Eisenhower's contradictory policy of openly supporting Eastern Europe while privately conceding it would not be responsible for a revolution. RFE also had at its disposal the willingness to broadcast as if the United States had the capability to force the Soviet Union to back down when the revolution occurred. Because the United States pursued this contradictory policy RFE was not trusted after no American help came after the revolution.

This distinction can also be seen as the United States taking a more hard-line approach to the issue. This is consistent with my argument that the US occupied a different position in the Cold War's bi-polar system. While hard-line positions are not always damned to failure, they are damned to a harder fall if the hard-line position is not backed up with anything more than rhetoric. Because of the US's hard-line approach and its eventual abandonment Gary Rawnsley notes that, "In stark contrast to others, and RFE in particular, the BBC emerged from its extensive coverage of the Hungarian Uprising with its reputation intact, and with its beleaguered audience having placed an even greater trust and confidence in its services."⁹⁶ By not becoming over zealous with its claims the BBC was able to offer less than RFE, however, what the BBC did not offer, not what RFE did offer is the reason why the BBC was able to emerge from the 1956 Revolution with its integrity intact.

⁹⁶ Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda*. 69.

6.2 THE PERCEPTION OF DIFFERENCE

The broadcasting style and the means by which the broadcasting is controlled by its home government differed between the United States and Great Britain. These differences produced noticeable differences between the perception of radio broadcasts from the US and Great Britain. While the data compiled and analysis made rest on perception, this perception is all that actually existed. It is of less importance to see if the BBC was in fact an objective news source then it is to see if it was seen as an objective news source. Further research will be able to evaluate the perception of foreign propaganda on many different levels. The Blinken Collection could be systematically analyzed for content and discourse to see how distinct sectors of Hungarian society saw propaganda and how different issues were primed in the perception of Hungarian who listened to foreign radio.

To conclude I will outline the questions these differences in the perception of foreign propaganda evoke. First *why was a foreign radio station from a country other than the US, with seemingly less interest in the situation, preferred?* The answer is rooted in Merton's analysis of Kate Smith's War Bond drives. He argues that there are two options available to the conveyers of propaganda, either use the most efficient techniques to gain the short term support of as many people as possible, or present more reasonable, less emotional arguments and risk being cast aside as ineffective. The foreign radio from the United States was wed to American positions, which were a contradiction unto their selves. They gave support for Eastern Europeans and did so as if the United States was capable and willing to back up the support with force. While the US may have not have told Hungarians it would come to their rescue, it came just short of that. The BBC however was less interested in the toppling of the regime. At least to the extent that they did not verbalize they wished to do so. Because the US thought the revolution would not be successful unless Hungarians believed support was

coming. They ended up, at least in the psyche of Hungarians stranding them in the middle of the revolution. As a result Hungarians put more faith in the less drastic, but more truthful broadcasts from the BBC.

Why many classified US radio broadcasts as untrustworthy? The answer to this question is tightly wrapped with the previous. Many Hungarians put significant stock in the words of the US. However what they believed the US was willing to do was in fact much more than what actually took place. They did not simply conjure up distrust for RFE, it was learned. Walter Hixon argues that America's propaganda went was continuously learning from its mistakes, and George Urban, RFE broadcaster notes that the 1956 Hungarian Revolution had many mistakes to learn from. In reference to RFE in general he notes, "No one advocated the violent overthrow of the system, or indeed, its overthrow at all. After the Hungarian debacle in 1956, RFE made no promises bandied and no inducements."⁹⁷ While Urban's analysis may point to a RFE that was held in higher esteem after 1956, it does nothing to conceal the lack of trust of RFE in 1956. In 1956 Hungarians perceived both promises and inducements from RFE. When this perception turned out to be faulty, those who listened to RFE felt betrayed and lost their trust in RFE, and American broadcasting as a whole.

Finally, *how were the broadcasting styles of the Great Britain and the United States different?* The differences between the radio broadcasting from these two countries towards Eastern Europe were linked to two related issues. First US propaganda stations, VOA and later RFE, were closely tied with the United States government. The positions taken by these stations were formed solely by the United States' policy line. This line however was a contradiction unto itself, American stations were instructed to broadcast as if the United States was ready and willing to give enough physical support to crush a the Soviet

⁹⁷ Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy*. 28.

opposition⁹⁸ but at the same time Eisenhower was unwilling to give this support.⁹⁹ This contradiction elucidates the difference that US foreign radio was willing to give support and play on the emotions of Hungarians where in actually the promises made never going to be backed up.

In contrast decision makers at the highest British echelons did not control the BBC. It as instead controlled by its own guidelines and standards. These guidelines at times came into conflict with the policy line put given by the British government. While the US notion that its foreign radio stations were its top tool for combating Soviet influence in Eastern Europe translated into propaganda that followed suit, similar feelings of the British government fell upon deaf ears. The BBC's standards of objectivity and impartiality came before the wishes of the government. The refusal of the BBC to rubberstamp the British official policy shows two things. First that the British government did not put the same stock in its policy line, at least not enough to force the BBC World Service to have different standards than its domestic services. The US on the other had made a distinction between regulations of radio broadcast to people inside and outside its territory. Second it shows the strength of the standards the BBC applied to itself. These guidelines existed since the beginning of the BBC.

The second aspect of differentiation between British and American radio broadcasting are the same guidelines just mentioned. The BBC, since its inception in the 1920s aimed at being the premiere public service media in Great Britain. Their rules in the 1920s were not changed in order to maximize their effectiveness during WWII or after it. The BBC, unlike American propaganda stations had a history of impartiality and objectivity to refer to after the end of the war so they could limit the content and style of their broadcasts. American stations however were created for the sole purpose of broadcasting the American policy line during

⁹⁸ Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*. 52.

⁹⁹ Tudda, "Reenacting the Story of Tantalus: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Failed Rhetoric of Liberation." 3-4.

WWII, after the war they had no rubric to tell how they should broadcast while not at war. Rather than retooling the radio to accommodate for the world post-WWII, it was retooled to compensate for the new Cold War. This meant increasing, rather than decreasing the expected impact of foreign propaganda because in the eyes of American purveyors of foreign radio, psychological operations were their top tool for fighting Communism. As a result of the failure for American foreign radio to change its broadcast style after WWII ended, the US overstated its goals while understating its lack of commitment. However:

One way of distinguishing between British and American propaganda to Hungary specifically, but also during the Cold War as a whole [is that b]oth accepted the importance of radio broadcasting, and both acknowledged that one intention of broadcasts directed behind the iron curtain was to encourage change. The difference was that the BBC never explicitly described these intentions to its audiences in Eastern Europe, preferring instead to quietly get along with the job in its own particular way.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda*. 84.

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