



Newsletter of the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

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**Newsletter of the Institute of Slavic,
East European, and Eurasian Studies**

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Eurasian Studies

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Notes from the Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Some of what the study of our region involves is timeless: Dvořák's lyricism; the metre in Pushkin's verse; questions of economic and political development that we debate but never resolve. Yet our region also attracts more urgent attention because of unsettled questions of sovereignty and ethnic belonging. In the past few years we have been opening morning papers to read fast-changing stories with uncertain outcome, as disputes for influence flash across the region, unsettling global politics. We also find that anniversaries of historic watersheds, 1915 or 1989, cause us to reflect upon the past with special urgency. As usual, the activities at the Institute over the past year capture the timeless and timely, perhaps with a slight bias toward the latter.

On Friday, March 6 we looked back upon the decades since 1989 at the 39th annual Berkeley–Stanford Conference on Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, asking what we have learned about Communism as well as democracy. Speakers included scholars from both universities: Levon Abrahamian (Anthropology, Berkeley); Alma Vardari-Kesler (Fulbright Post-Doctoral Fellow, Stanford); Márton Dornbach (German Studies, Stanford); Piotr H. Kosicki (National Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford); M. Steven Fish (Political Science, Berkeley); George Breslauer (Political Science, Berkeley); Edward W. Walker (Political Science and Program in Eurasian & East European Studies, Berkeley); Berkeley alumna Gail Kligman (Sociology, UCLA); and Stanford alumnus Matthew Rojansky (Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars). Topics ranged from the general – problems with democracy in Russia, Armenia, and Hungary and crises of state building in the Balkans and in Ukraine – to the fascinatingly specific – elections in post-Soviet Armenia and Ukraine, and a scintillating presentation on property rights in Ukraine. The event attracted a large and attentive audience, and concluded with comments by Pavle Levi, director of Stanford's Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies.

From April 23-25 we hosted an international conference entitled *The Pleasures of Backwardness: Consumer Desire and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, asking how people in Communist societies coped with the economics of full employment and consumer shortage. Speakers included Mary Neuburger, (University of Texas); Alexei Yurchak, (UC Berkeley); Brian Porter-Szűcs, (University of Michigan); Zsuzsa Gille, (University of Illinois); Patrick Patterson, (UC San Diego); Andrew Janos, (UC Berkeley); Krisztina Fehérváry, (University of Michigan); and many others. Again themes ranged from general to specific, from fashion shows and provision of exotic goods (like coffee and tropical fruits) to the politics of drinking, punk rock, socialist soap opera, "capitalist" consumption in new socialist new cities, and, of course, present-day nostalgia for the shortage economy. Thanks to recent PhD Michael Dean for putting this together.

In April ISEEEES helped sponsor two further symposia. The first, co-sponsored with the UC Berkeley Armenian Studies Program bore the title: *The Origins of the*

Armenian Genocide: The Crucial Years, 1912-15, and was part of a centenary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, bringing noted scholars from Armenia, Europe, and throughout the United States for a series of thought-provoking presentations. The second, entitled *Comintern Aesthetics*, featured specialists in Russian but also other world literatures and cultures, ranging from Germany and Spain to Mexico, China, India, Uzbekistan, and the United States.

This year's Peter N. Kujachich Lecture in Serbian and Montenegrin Studies was given on April 28 by Dr. Marija Brujić of the Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology of the University of Belgrade, who spoke on the relationship between the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbia's integration into the European Union. In attendance were His Grace Bishop Maxim of the Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America and Father Sava Janjić, archimandrite and abbot of Dečani Monastery in Kosovo. We are grateful to Peter Kujachich for his generous support of Serbian and Montenegrin studies at Cal and for making this popular lecture series possible.

During the spring ISEEEES also hosted lectures by Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák on Central Europe's relationship with Russia in light of Russia's recent geopolitical maneuvering; and Dr. Sebastian Rejak, Special Envoy of the Polish Foreign Minister for Relations with the Jewish Diaspora, who spoke about Jews in contemporary Poland.

Throughout the year we have invited experts to speak on the unfolding crisis in Ukraine, including our own Edward W. Walker, but also Taras Kuzio (Alberta); Alina Polyakova (Atlantic Council); Andrei Tsygankov (San Francisco State University); Sergiy Kudelia (Baylor University); Valeria Korablyova (Kiev); Anna Schwenck (Berlin); and Andrej Krickovic (Higher School of Economics, Moscow). Walker blogs on this and related issues at <http://eurasiangeopolitics.com>.

We support a lively faculty/graduate student lunchtime seminar series, which featured former Institute-affiliated graduate students who are now leading scholars to discuss their intellectual trajectories. Speakers included Alina Polyakova (Atlantic Council); Stephen Brain (Mississippi State University); Dace Dzenovska (University of Oxford); and Daniel Kronenfeld (US Department of State).

For information about upcoming events, please visit our website and events calendar at <http://iseees.berkeley.edu/>; and include Wednesday, September 23, 2015, on your calendar as the date of our annual ISEEEES Fall Reception. We look forward to seeing you!

Sincerely yours,

John Connelly
ISEEEES Director
Professor of History

Campus Visitors

Joon-Hyeon Baik is a Visiting Scholar with ISEEEES during the 2014-2015 academic year. Dr. Baik is currently a professor in the Department of Russian Language and Literature at Sangmyung University in South Korea. His current research interests are Dostoevsky's works from 1859 to 1865. While at Berkeley, he will pursue research on Fyodor Dostoevsky and 19th-century Russian literature.

Iwona Kaliszewska is a Visiting Scholar with ISEEEES during the Spring 2015 semester. Dr. Kaliszewska is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Warsaw. While at UC Berkeley, she will be working with Johanna Nichols (Slavic) on a project related to Dagestan.

Simo Mikkonen is a Visiting Scholar with ISEEEES during the 2014-2015 academic year. Dr. Mikkonen is a Finnish Academy Research Fellow in the Department of History and Ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His main research interests are in Soviet history after World War II. While at UC Berkeley he will conduct research on East-West cultural exchanges and transnational networks of the art world. He is also interested in the Russian emigration in China, particularly in Shanghai 1917-1949.

Mila Oiva is a Visiting Student Researcher with ISEEEES during the 2014-2015 academic year. Ms. Oiva is currently a PhD candidate in Cultural History at the University of Turku in the Finnish Doctoral Program for

Russian and East European Studies at the Aleksanteri Institute. The title of her PhD project is "Creating Action Space. Marketing Practices of Polish Ready-to-Wear Clothes in the Soviet Market, 1956-1982," for which she will conduct research while in Berkeley.

Emil Persson is a Visiting Student Researcher with ISEEEES during the Spring 2015 semester. Mr. Persson is currently a PhD candidate in Political Science at Lund University in Sweden. While at UC Berkeley, he will continue researching and writing his dissertation examining national media coverage of the Sochi Olympics and the legislation on "homosexual propaganda."

Ina Pišová is a Visiting Student Researcher with ISEEEES during the 2014-2015 academic year. Ms. Pišová is currently a PhD candidate in Czech literature and Theory of Literature in the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. While at UC Berkeley, she will be researching her dissertation "Revision of the Ideology in the 'Normalization Period' of Czechoslovakia (1968-1989)."

Pavla Sýkorová is a Visiting Student Researcher with ISEEEES during the 2014-2015 academic year. Ms. Sýkorová is currently a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. While at UC Berkeley, she will be researching her dissertation "The Aspects that Impact Individual Student Reading."

Nuanced Creativity: Writing Imagined Biographies on Jewish-Gentile Coexistence in Modern Poland

Sarah Cramsey

Visiting Lecturer, History, UC Berkeley

Four weeks into the semester, all of my students received new identities. Literally.

The eight UC Berkeley undergraduates assembled in my seminar “Living, Together Apart? Jews, Christians and Coexistence in the Modern Polish Lands” (History 174B) gathered in class on that dry Friday afternoon to learn when they were born, where they grew up, the religion their parents practiced, and which first name would follow them throughout their lives. All of them shared the same birth year: 1914. They would all grow up in the Polish Republic, and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact would extinguish their country right around their 25th birthday. My students possessed a basic set of facts and this assignment required them to infuse the barebone circumstances of their birth with course readings and a bit of intelligent imagination in order to complete their final assignment: an imagined biography.

Who did they become, you ask?

Two characters given to my students, Rivka and Kazimierz, began their lives in Warsaw, but the whims of my class and the civilian catastrophe of World War II would propel them to places far away after 1945, to an artists’ colony in New York City and a Soviet gulag respectively. Moishe, another character created for a student, came of age in Łódź and embraced the Jewish faith of his parents. This religious identification did not preclude lasting bonds with his Roman Catholic neighbors, and as a young boy he began a lifelong relationship with a church-going boy just a few years older than him named Tadeusz. Decades and an occupation later, Moishe turned to his childhood friend Tadeusz in that hopes that his old friend could hide him on Warsaw’s Aryan side. And, finally, another character Barbara, from Kraków, preferred to shorten her name to the more colloquial Basia. But even this Christian name could not protect her from the pervasive Nuremberg Laws, which determined that her maternal grandparents’ conversion away from Judaism could never render her racially otherwise.

From a year, a first name, a religious affiliation, and a *heimat*, my eight students harnessed creative streaks and historical knowledge to transform a short litany of facts into a believable witness of Poland’s twentieth century. Now that the semester is over and all my students took this assignment seriously I can exhale with relief: the assignment succeeded. Had you asked me to predict the outcome of this gamble just a few months ago, however, I would have tensed up ... ever so slightly.

Asking my students to write an imagined biography (worth 25% of their grade nonetheless!) constituted a pedagogical risk. But difficult seminar topics demand innovative assignments. As John Connelly reminds us in his superb review article on the revisions of Jan T. Gross, “few if any narratives in contemporary European history are as fractured as that of Polish-Jewish relations

in the Second World War.”¹ Arguably, this statement regarding Polish-Jewish relations from 1939-1945 easily extends to other chronological periods as well. Our syllabus started in the early modern period and spent a fair share of time delving into the 19th century, but the real heart of this course on the contours of Jewish-Christian coexistence in modern Poland focused on the interwar period, the six years spanning World War II and the chaotic postwar years filled with civil strife, massive displacement, and the creation of the state of Israel. Readings exploring the three decades spanning 1918-1948 filled nearly one-third of the seminar assignments. I approached this time span and the polemical historiography exploring it with trepidation. Would the fractured nature of the historical record preclude a deep study of coexistence? How would my students absorb themselves into lives, hopes, and tragedies seemingly so far away in space and time? Was it possible to inculcate empathy and nuance simultaneously?

In short, the answers to these three questions emerged over the course of the semester: absolutely not; with imagination steeped in hard work; and, decidedly, YES.

Allow me to express gratitude to two innovative teachers, whose experience using projects like imagined biographies inspired me to try this approach. Edith Sheffer (Assistant Professor, Stanford University) and Kathryn Ward Ciancia (Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin – Madison) co-taught a course on modern German history together at Stanford’s Humanities Center a few years ago. Over one hundred students in that course participated in a project entitled “Creating Lives” and wrote biographies for two different characters, one that turned 18 in the year 1900 and the other that turned 18 in the year 1940.² In an article she published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sheffer explains how this assignment empowers her students to experience the twisting history of Germany’s twentieth century through the eyes of “unique historical actors.”³ Further, the process of situating one person in a broader narrative encourages a deeper understanding of change over time on both the individual and societal levels.

One facet of her assignment, however, might have been problematic in the context of my seminar. Sheffer asked her students to write weekly responses on an online learning platform, so that the other students could see what decisions their peers had made on behalf of their inherited personalities. But my course “Living, Together Apart?” spanned nearly three and a half centuries. One or even two personalities could not live so long! So, I decided to tweak the assignment, by replacing weekly responses with a 20-page final project that would concentrate on the 20th century

1 John Connelly, “Poles and Jews in the Second World War: The Revisions of Jan T. Gross,” *Contemporary European History* 11, 4 (2002): 641-58.

2 Kathryn Ciancia and Edith Sheffer, “Creating Lives: Fictional Characters in the History Classroom,” *Perspectives on History* (October 2013).

3 Edith Sheffer, “Creating Lives in the Classroom,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 22, 2009).

but include genealogical information and a family tree casting the students back toward the period of the Polish partitions. Each page of the final assignment had to include four references to readings in our class and each student had to meet with me individually at least once during the semester (many students, I happily discovered, wanted to meet with me once a week!). Sheffer and Ciancia's ground rules remained: the imagined people could not leave Poland voluntarily before 1945 nor could they die before the end of World War II. Students were required to submit a four-page rough draft before their Spring Break. If, when commenting on their draft, I recommended a reading assignment beyond the scope of our syllabus, the student was responsible for consulting it.

Finally, each student's success hinged not just on historical accuracy but on narrative and genre. Prodding them to look beyond the default "diary" or packet of letters miraculously found in war's wake, I asked them to consider how they could weave a story using documents from the life of this imagined individual and the documents (both primary and secondary) that we had imbibed together in class. The syllabus meshed historical analysis with a vast array of sources from across the modern period. On some days, we read about one particular event from a variety of perspectives, and I wanted them to approach the "event" of these lives in the same fashion.

Take, for example, our two-class study of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. We read the report entitled "The Warsaw Ghetto is No More" by the Nazi Officer Jürgen Stroop, who orchestrated the successful battle and the consequent razing of the Warsaw Ghetto. The report included vivid pictures showcasing the capture of insurgents and nuclear-esque plumes of smoke rising from the center of Poland's largest city. Alongside Stroop, we read Marek Edelman's account of the Ghetto Uprising from his position as a ghetto fighter. He detailed in his work *The Ghetto Fights: Warsaw, 1941-1943* (published soon after the conclusion of World War II) how the Polish Underground helped Jewish insurgents with arms, ammunition, and escape liaisons who met Polish Jews fleeing from the wreckage of the Ghetto through Warsaw's sewers. A third account of this event came from Nobel Prize winning author Czesław Miłosz, who wrote a poem to express his sorrow on a beautiful Warsaw Sunday when he saw the smoke from the Ghetto rising above an urban park scene.⁴ And finally, we turned to Emanuel Ringelblum's *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War* to understand how a Warsaw Jew living outside the Ghetto (by this time Ringelblum was in hiding on the Aryan side) processed its destruction and how (if at all) Gentile Poles helped Jewish Poles in these crucial moments. Four very different voices approached the telling of the same event from very different vantage points. Over two lessons, we vetted these sources by comparison and asked when each had been written and under which circumstances. I hoped that the hard-scrabble analysis we embarked upon each day in class would trickle into their own imagined biographies and that nuance and creativity could coexist.

Perhaps the personality of Henryk, who returned to his childhood home in Szczepieszyn to become a teacher had regular contact with his hometown's most famous diarist: Dr. Zygmunt Klukowski. This country doctor painstakingly recorded how first the Soviet and then the Nazi occupation ripped asunder

the social fabric of his town and turned his neighbors into perpetrators in crimes against local Jews.⁵ We read the complete diary of Klukowski in our class to better understand how power vacuums before, during, and even after "invasions" like Operation Barbarossa create unprecedented opportunities for violence between otherwise coexisting ethnic and political groups.

What a great source for an imagined biography!

And if Basia found her calling as a teacher, perhaps her life story could be revealed in a conversation between her and a middle-school student, interviewing her two generations after her postwar departure from Poland and explaining to her interviewer how a speech by Janusz Korczak inspired her to become an educator? In his probing book entitled *Who Will Write our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, Samuel Kassow explains how Korczak's sacrifice for the orphans in his stead became an important moment for Ringelblum and others observing the event known as the "Great Deportation" in the summer of 1942. Kassow had met personally with a few students from my class over coffee during his visit to California this past March.

His words would certainly be useful.

And, finally, if Irena spent her childhood in Wilno, wouldn't it make sense that she shared a play space with Berkeley's own Czesław Miłosz and, as she made sense of wartime destruction, analyzed her playmate's verse as a response to the tragedy unfolding around him in besieged Warsaw just as we did in class ("Campo di Fiori" and "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto")?

That would be a wonderful twist!

I had strict rules regarding class absences, and the students soon realized why. Snippets from each day of class lecture and discussion could find rebirth in their imagined biographies. Even the movies we watched after class, the YouTube clips of interwar street scenes in the city and the *shtetl*, and the melodies of *klezmer* experts could infuse their projects, making each a unique sensory experience that had the capacity to astound their reader (and their grader!).

Overall, all of my students flourished within the parameters of this project. No student received a grade lower than a B- on their imagined biography, and each student pleasantly surprised me at least once as I graded their contributions. This assignment generated enthusiasm, positive nervousness, and deep critical thinking—a recipe, an honest teacher would readily admit, for unforgettable impact. Two of my students, however, dazzled me outright. The next few paragraphs take you up close to two imagined biographies to reveal how undergraduate projects can successfully fuse historical inquiry and creativity when given non-restrictive parameters, guidance, and a good list of reading.

Rivka: Born in Warsaw to Jewish parents in 1914

In the year 1950 an archivist working for the Jewish Historical

⁴ Czesław Miłosz, "Campo di Fiori," translated by David Brooks and Louis Iribarne, *The New York Review of Books* (October 23, 1980).

⁵ Zygmunt Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939-1944* (Champaign, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1993).

Institute in Warsaw stumbled upon a fascinating bundle of documents pulled from a milk can hidden under the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto. This cache included letters, poems, and diary entries from a Warsaw Jew named Rivka, who came of age visiting modernist poetry circles at cafés sprinkled throughout the Polish capital. The archivist explained in the introduction to this archival collection that many of these documents emerged when the second part of Emmanuel Ringelblum's Oyneg Shabes archive was found a handful of years after World War II. Rivka had spent most of her life in Warsaw, survived her time in the Warsaw Ghetto, hid on the Aryan side, and then made her way to New York City where she continued to gain fame as an ex-pat poetess. The poetry included in this personal archive spanned nearly twenty years and included Rivka's first poem dating from the 1930s. During Warsaw's occupation, Rivka utilized poetry as a coping mechanism to deal with the horrors, and some of her original poems are contained in this archive. Another important component of the archive was an interview that Rivka gave after the war in New York City.

My student Josh Wilner made Rivka's experience come alive in an ingenious way. His final project read like an archival folder, replete with an introductory passage by the archivist, a biography of Rivka's life, and even a hand-written document that survived from her pitch-black sewer journey away from the smoldering Warsaw Ghetto. Using Marci Shore's sweeping book *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism 1918-1968*, Josh submerged young Rivka in the exciting artistic world of interwar Warsaw, placing her at one of Julian Tuwim's poetry readings and even dabbling in a bit of Skamander-style poetry himself. Using a variety of "documents" and the gloss of an archivist, Josh catapulted his readers into the world of postwar Warsaw, where the experience of the World War II and the double uprisings impacted all aspects of life. His project evidenced two divergent options for Poland's Jews in the postwar period: to move abroad (in Rivka's case to the United States) or to stay and attempt to catalogue the not-so-distant past (like the archival narrator who, of course, shared a first name with Ringelblum).

Moishe: Born in Łódź to Jewish parents in 1914

Like Rivka, Moishe was one of the infinitesimally few Polish Jews who survived the war in Warsaw. He came to Warsaw as a student, following his Christian friend Tadeusz from their boyhood homes in Łódź. A variety of documents constituted Moishe's "imagined biography." Letters from his Aunt Sarah in New York to his mother. An article dating from 1913 about the closure of his grandfather's famous tavern. Postcards (replete with photographs!) that Moishe exchanged with Tadeusz during the years they were apart. His diary entries and telegrams and nervous letters sent from his parents as war came to Łódź. Moishe worked as a printer in the Warsaw Ghetto and then, with the help of Tadeusz, hid out on the Aryan side for the last part of the war. The words he wrote from his solitary hiding place, sometimes on the back of a newspaper (the irony of a printer with no paper!), chilled my blood as I read. How did he survive so many months in hiding? The last component of Moishe's "imagined biography" was an interview he gave to his daughter in 1961. Moishe is reluctant to share anything and, in essence, silences his daughter's questions with his own impatient

silence. The disparate documents spanning nearly 50 years were placed in an envelope destined to the Magnes Museum in Berkeley, CA, with a note from his granddaughter, Leah. She compiled these documents to learn "about (her) family's untold past" but also wanted to honor her younger grandfather, the man who (unlike his older self) wanted to talk and document "for the sake of posterity." And so, the first page of the final project was an envelope destined for Berkeley, CA.

My student Lauren Cooper devoted a fair share of her time on this project to aesthetics. The postcards sent in the 1930s looked breathtakingly real, a few of the later diary entries from Moshe's time in hiding had succumbed to water damage and the two newspaper articles she included looked original, replete with journalistic spacing and attention to font. Beyond her obvious skill with digital design, Lauren packed a dizzying array of sources from our syllabus into her documents, citing more than two dozen articles, books, and films. I was especially touched by the entries Moishe wrote in hiding, when he felt his friend Tadeusz had grown weary of helping him. He came to terms with the fact that writing alone could keep him sane, and yet, he possessed a dwindling supply of paper. The honesty of those words captured in 1943 stood in stark contrast to the "next" document, the interview between Moishe and his daughter two decades later when he refused to respond to her innocent probes. I found myself absorbed in his inability to speak and sympathetic towards both Moishe and his daughter in that awkward (and common!) moment.

In short, Lauren's project, like that of Josh, seemed like a puzzle on the cusp of being solved. When I read through both of their final projects I felt like ... a historian! Sitting in an archive, working through sources and trying to construct the diaphanous webs that eventually becomes (or fails to become!) causality in our narratives. Both Lauren and Josh created an imaginary biography for their assigned person and then fragmented that personality across letters, postcards, diary entries, and interviews. A careful reader could reconstruct Rivka and Moishe in all their delicious complexity from the pieces they provided.

I successfully bombarded the students in my seminar last semester. Their syllabus included significant reading each day from a plethora of sources: short stories, poetry, official reports, first-person reminiscences, cutting-edge historiography, theory, and movies. In class, I used video footage of interwar Warsaw, scenes from *Fiddler on the Roof*, clips from interviews with ghetto fighter Marek Edelman, klezmer concerts, and a fascinating digital creation of what a low flyover of Warsaw circa October 1944 would have revealed. With the support of the Institute for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, my students attended a Polish/Jewish cooking class in my kitchen where we sampled traditional foods like homemade *challah* bread, salads, *barszcz*, and (of course) potato and fruit *pierogi*. And, finally, our enjoyable class meetings three times a week forced them to listen, digest, and respond to conversations, documents, or footage on the spot.

And, I am also happy to report that the experience of reading my students' imagined biographies bombarded me with a new appreciation of the possibilities that ensue when creativity coexists with historical scholarship.

Sarah Cramsey finished her PhD in History with a Designated Emphasis in Jewish Studies from UC Berkeley in 2014. John Connelly advised her dissertation, which she is currently working on a book manuscript entitled *Uncertain Citizenship: Jewish Belonging and the Ethnic Revolution in Poland and Czechoslovakia, 1938-1948*. Sarah will begin a new position as a Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies at Tulane University in the fall.

Hungary's Autocratic Turn: Local, Regional, and Global Lessons

Márton Dornbach

Assistant Professor of German Studies, Stanford University

Looking back at Hungary's transition a quarter-century ago, it is easy to identify the moment when it became clear that the disintegration of the communist regime had reached a point of no return. On June 16, 1989, five executed martyrs of the 1956 revolution who had up until then been buried in unmarked graves could finally be given last honors. Thousands attended the solemn reburial ceremony on Heroes' Square in Budapest. By far the most stirring of the speeches was delivered by the leader of the newly founded party of radical liberals, a scruffy, long-haired young man named Viktor Orbán. Contrary to a tenacious myth, Orbán was not the first speaker that day to demand the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Hungary; and by this point, negotiations about the withdrawal of Soviet troops had actually been well underway. Nevertheless, Orbán's address quickly acquired legendary status on account of his passionate condemnation of the Soviet occupation that had entrapped the country in what he called "an Asian cul de sac." This was the debut of an exceptionally gifted spokesman for Western-style liberal democracy.

Fast-forward to February 17, 2015. Five years after his return to power, prime minister Viktor Orbán is receiving a visit from Vladimir Putin. Russia has just violated the second Minsk ceasefire, and Russian bombers armed with nuclear warheads have been intercepted over the British Channel. At a time when Putin is a *persona non grata* in Western countries, the cordial welcome extended to him by Orbán is a particularly striking sign of strengthening ties. The event is all the more remarkable for its historical resonances. Since the meeting between the two leaders nearly coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Budapest, Putin pays a visit to a Russian military cemetery in Budapest. Adjacent to the graves of soldiers of the Red Army killed in the siege of Budapest stands a communist-era monument to Soviet soldiers who fell fighting the insurgents in 1956. To the consternation of many Hungarians, journalists discover that the monument still bears a Soviet-era inscription referring to the 1956 "counterrevolution." Apparently, the Russian ministry in charge simply ignored the Hungarian government's request to change the inscription.

The fact that the Orbán government should condone such a throwback to Soviet-era justifications for dominance in Eastern Europe speaks volumes. The same Viktor Orbán who built his persona on a stridently anti-communist and anti-Soviet rhetoric is now the sole ally within the EU and NATO of a resurgent Russia led by an ex-KGB man. Hungary, the country praised throughout the 1990s as the poster child of post-Soviet transition to liberal democracy and market-based economy, has according to many commentators become Putin's Trojan horse within the EU and NATO. Indeed, since Orbán came to power in 2010, his autocratic governance has repeatedly invited comparisons to the Putin regime. For the most part, media reports and analyses have focused on specific controversial measures taken by the government. The

overarching logic of these changes is rarely understood, however, which is not surprising in view of their unprecedented nature. In what follows, I first attempt a comprehensive characterization of the Orbán regime and then suggest a few broader lessons.

Viktor Orbán's push for power began in the 1990s, when he oversaw the transformation of Fidesz (Alliance of Young Democrats) from a radical liberal into a national conservative party. The most charismatic politician of his generation, Orbán sidelined rivals, changed party bylaws and even hand-picked candidates for the national assembly to ensure his control over all levers of power within the party. The last step on Orbán's path to power was announced at a closed-door party meeting held shortly before the 2010 elections, where Orbán declared that he intended to do away with the partisan debates of parliamentary politics and establish strong governance for a period of fifteen to twenty years. Following his landslide win, Orbán accordingly showed ruthless resolve in cementing his power. Hungary's twenty-year old system of checks and balances was dismantled in the name of popular sovereignty. A new constitution and over a thousand new laws were passed in a summary fashion, without public discussion, circumventing regular parliamentary procedures. These changes, whose scope and the swiftness suggested an elaborate plan, resulted in a political machine whose interlocking parts ensure unimpeded execution of the central will. The legal changes drew heavy criticism from the Venice Commission of the European Council. Some legal scholars went so far as to claim that they amounted to a full-blown constitutional coup.

Although there was nothing in the program on which Fidesz ran in 2010 to indicate the scope of these changes, the new system received a certain degree of popular legitimation when the 2014 elections confirmed the parliamentary supermajority of Fidesz. Yet the ruling party had the electoral cards stacked in its own favor. Beside extensive gerrymandering and the passage of a new election law, tailored to work against the fragmented opposition, Fidesz had transformed the media landscape to its advantage through a new media law and the targeted use of public advertisement spending. Outlets that present opposition viewpoints still exist, but only inside an invisible quarantine, with a limited ability to reach broader audiences. In view of these manipulative measures, the OECD concluded that the 2014 elections were free but not fair.¹ Even in the unlikely event of a future electoral upset, the elbowroom of a successor government would be minimal. Highly specific policies, including the new tax code, have been entrenched in so-called "cardinal laws" whose amendment requires a supermajority vote. Fidesz appointees with terms extending beyond the election cycle now control such key positions as the office of the prosecutor general, the National

1 OSCE International Election Observation Mission, "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, Hungary - Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/117205?download=true>)

Judicial Office, the state audit office, the media commission, and the Budget Council, ensuring the continued dominance of Fidesz.

As Orbán's unremitting push for centralization continues into its fifth year, all areas of everyday life in Hungary remain subject to the unpredictable disruptions of a permanent revolution. Administrative, institutional, and personnel changes are imposed often for the mere sake of projecting power and severing all continuity with the pre-2010 era. Within two years of its passage, the new constitution itself, initially celebrated as a foundation of granite-like solidity, was amended no less than five times to suit the changing needs of the ruling party. Again and again, Fidesz has swept aside such cornerstones of the rule of law as the prohibition on retroactive legislation.

By the time Orbán announced his ambition to build an "illiberal democracy" in July 2014, triggering international uproar, that goal had already been achieved. There are at best a handful of weak constraints upon the power of the ruling party, and its removal from power through elections has been made exceedingly difficult. The very processes of deliberation and communication by which the popular will takes shape have been distorted to the point where talk of democracy would be misleading. To be sure, Orbán's autocracy is not a dictatorship. Although those expressing dissent may face coordinated media attacks, harassment by authorities, and unemployment, up until now they have not had to fear imprisonment or assassination. However, with most checks and balances removed, there is little to stop Orbán's autocracy from morphing into a more overtly repressive regime in the event of a crisis.

While Orbán's push to entrench his power has attracted considerable coverage in the international media, the aims advanced through this concentration of power are often neglected or described in simplistic terms. Yet five years of governance have made Orbán's priorities abundantly clear. In short, he is pursuing a project of social engineering on a scale unseen since the 1950s. Apologists of the regime usually present this endeavor as an effort to rid Hungary of an entrenched communist-era elite. Indeed Fidesz could tap into a justified anger toward politicians and businessmen who used their ties to the pre-1989 nomenklatura to reap the profits of the rushed privatization process in the 1990s. Given how many of the Orbán regime's key figures are themselves former communist party members, however, it is hard to take the anti-communist rhetoric seriously. Unsurprisingly, Fidesz has sabotaged every attempt at passing a law mandating the release of communist-era secret service files. There is question, however, that Orbán is bent on marginalizing and replacing the political, economic, and cultural elites of the decades prior to 2010. The policies of his government are consistently geared toward the creation of a privileged and loyal national bourgeoisie, while maximizing burdens on, and minimizing obligations toward, all other segments of society.

To a great degree, Orbán has succeeded in achieving this aim. Near the narrow peak of the social pyramid we now find oligarchs close to the ruling party, whose businesses depend on lucrative government contracts and who often have a key influence on legislation. They reciprocate the ruling party's favors by helping to fund its media empire. Further down the food chain, we find a clientele numbering tens of thousands, including partisan appointees in the overgrown state apparatus, suppliers

of oligarchic businesses, party members granted tobacco sales licenses, as well as investors who were awarded state-owned tracts of land for long-term lease and now pocket generous EU agricultural subsidies.

The scandalous revelations surrounding the creation of this new elite are often discussed under the rubric "corruption," a mainstay of Hungarian politics since 1990. Yet many observers argue that this familiar term actually makes light of recent development in Hungary. Until 2010, Hungary was widely believed to operate according to a local variant of the unsavory *Proporz* system typified by Austria, whereby businesses close to the ruling party would get roughly 70% of government contracts and those with ties to the opposition parties 30%; in 2010, this ratio was clearly changed to 100 vs. 0%. Yet there is, in addition, something qualitatively new in Orbán's Hungary. In its country report, the anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International writes of a "symbiotic relationship between the political and the business elite" and concludes that "the Hungarian state has been captured by powerful interest groups."²

As one might expect, the accumulation of wealth enabled by this unhealthy symbiosis occurs at the expense of the majority. Perverse redistribution has resulted in a pronounced widening of the income gap. A recent working paper of the European Commission notes that in Orbán's Hungary "[t]he upper three income deciles receive more in social transfers than the bottom three income deciles."³ While the elimination of progressive taxation brought a significant rise in income for the wealthiest one-third of society, it has increased the burden on the middle class and lower-income groups. For them, the new regime has meant higher taxes, benefits cuts, curtailed employee rights and disenfranchisement. Unlike in most other EU countries, in Hungary the average living standard has continued to decline, and inequality has continued to increase, even after the worst of the economic crisis was over. According to Eurostat data from 2013, 44.1% of Hungarians live in "material deprivation," with 33% of Hungarian children living in "severe material deprivation." In the EU, only Romania and Bulgaria have worse figures. Of the seven regions of Hungary, four are included in the list of the twenty poorest regions of the EU.

To be sure, these dispiriting facts partly reflect a chronically high unemployment rate. The number of Hungarians who participate in the labor market is only a little over 60% of the working-age population according to official figures, and in reality significantly lower. In rural areas and urban centers hit by de-industrialization, large clusters of population, many of them Roma, lack employable skills and live in near-total disenfranchisement. The failure to address this social crisis is perhaps the greatest liability of the entire post-1989 political elite. The approach favored by the ostensibly Christian Fidesz government, however, smacks of outright Darwinism. As an economist close to Orbán divulged in an interview, Orbán came to believe that roughly one-third of the population was beyond rescue and must be written

2 Transparency International, "Transparency International Hungary Study Warns About Integrity of National Institutions, 8 March 2012" (http://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/20110308_hungary_institutions)

3 European Commission, "Country Report Hungary 2015 Including an In-Depth Review On the Prevention and Correction of Macroeconomic Imbalances, 18 March 2015" (http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_hungary_en.pdf)

off if the rest was to succeed.⁴ Indeed the Orbán government has effectively annulled the social contract with these citizens. The government's policies towards them are disciplinary in nature, as evidenced by the exploitative and economically inefficient public work program.

What little social mobility existed before 2010 has been severely curtailed through an overhaul of the system of education. Measured in percentage of GDP, Hungary's educational expenditure is now among the lowest in the EU. Universities have been hit by drastic cuts even as lavishly funded institutes are set up overnight for loyal intellectuals with dubious qualifications. The redistribution of resources in favor of vocational training suggests that the government is less interested in fostering an educated citizenry and a flexible workforce adapted to 21st-century conditions than in training droves of disposable, cheap laborers. Elementary education has been heavily centralized and the mandatory curriculum redefined along ideological lines. The results speak for themselves: a study conducted by PISA (Program of International Student Assessment) has shown a dramatic deterioration in Hungarian schoolchildren's basic skills between 2009 and 2012.⁵

The Orbán government's economic policies are inextricably bound up with its project of social engineering. By increasing burdens on all but the wealthiest one-third, these policies have tended to weaken internal demand and thus hamper economic growth. Ad hoc taxes levied on the private sector to fill budget gaps, combined with excessive state interference, an uncertain legal environment, and pervasive corruption have resulted in capital flight. Although the growth rate picked up impressively in 2014, many economists caution that this boost, due to such one-time effects as the election budget and the opening of large Audi and Mercedes assembly plants in Hungary, lacks sustainable structural foundations. The economy of the country remains heavily dependent on development funds from the EU. Measured in percentage of the gross national income, in 2013 Hungary's net receipt of such funds was the highest in the EU.⁶ Whereas in the EU as a whole the average share of such funds in infrastructural development is 10 percent, in Hungary a record-high 97 percent of such developments are funded from EU sources.⁷ Without this influx of money, the lucrative state contracts through which Fidesz maintains the loyalty of its clientele would dry up, and the regime could hardly afford such crowd-pleasing measures as the utilities price cuts introduced in the run-up to the 2014 elections.⁸

Given his vital dependence upon the EU, it is all the more striking that Orbán has repeatedly responded to criticism from

various EU bodies with a nationalist rhetoric of "freedom fight." While Orbán has on at least one occasion compared Brussels to Soviet-era Moscow, Moscow itself has re-emerged as an increasingly important ally. Amid talk of the decline of the West and references to Hungarians' Asian roots, the Orbán government initiated an "Eastern opening." The apparent aim of this overture is to secure capital from sources that, unlike such bodies as the EU and the IMF, do not raise quibbles about democratic principles. Orbán's praise for the model of "illiberal democracy" exemplified by China, Turkey, and Russia is in keeping with this reorientation. Yet, its consequences cannot be limited to ideological posturing. In 2014 Orbán signed an agreement with Putin about the expansion of the Paks nuclear plant, to be financed with a line of credit provided by Russia. Estimated to cost well in excess of 10 billion euros and set to constrain the country's energy policy for decades, this deal was made without any public discussion, preliminary studies, or competitive bidding. In fact, the terms of the agreement have been classified for thirty years. In view of Hungary's energy needs and the projected rise in the cost of nuclear energy, the Paks project appears to lack any economic rationale—unless one counts the opportunities for large-scale corruption that are well known to be associated with nuclear energy deals. Orbán's commitment to the Southern Stream gas pipeline, and subsequently to the Turkish Stream project, has further increased the country's dependence on Russia.

There is reason to wonder how this rapprochement with Russia might have been facilitated by vestiges of the Soviet-era apparatus within Hungary's "deep state." The price in terms of political influence on Hungary's affairs may be inferred from Orbán's equivocal stance in the Ukrainian crisis, and notably from his willingness to suspend "reverse flow" gas supplies to Ukraine a mere three days after a Budapest visit by the head of Gazprom. Some commentators fear that Hungary's alignment with a superpower willing to upset the European status quo might be partly motivated by the long-cherished nationalist dream of territorial restitution at the expense of neighboring countries with Hungarian minorities, and in particular Ukraine.⁹

Orbán's Janus-faced foreign policy, which combines pro-Russian orientation with dependence on the West, recently came under considerable strain as the EU and the US adopted a firmer stance toward Putin. In October 2014, the US State Department issued a travel ban against six government officials alleged to be involved in corruption, including the head of the Hungarian tax authority. Although it is true that in case after controversial case the Orbán government did nothing to dispel perceptions of corruption, the measure was widely believed to reflect Washington's discontent over the Orbán government's pro-Russian stance. The resultant diplomatic crisis exacerbated tensions within the Fidesz camp that had been rising ever since the failure of the left-liberal opposition in the 2014 elections left the party's diverse constituencies without a common adversary. A series of ill-considered proposals aimed at changing the agenda led to a precipitous drop in popular support for Fidesz. Meanwhile, the neo-Nazi Jobbik party surged ahead in the polls to become the most popular party of the opposition. As many had

9 A speculation encouraged by Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at the Munich Security Conference on 7 February 2015, in which he briefly invoked the rights of Hungarian minorities in Subcarpathia to criticize the ethnic policies of the Ukrainian government.

4 I. L. L. "Megszoritjuk Magunkat," *Heti Válasz* 15 January 2013 (<http://valasz.hu/itthon/megszoritjuk-magunkat-59267>)

5 Éva S. Balogh, "Pisa 2012: No Gold Star For Hungarian Education" *Hungarian Spectrum*, 4 December 2013 (<http://hungarianspectrum.org/2013/12/04/pisa-2012-no-gold-star-for-hungarian-education/>)

6 András Pethő and Anikó Vorák, "Orbán öt éve harcol az EU-val. Legszükebb köre addig gazdagodott belőle" ("Orbán Has Been Fighting the EU For Five Years. Meanwhile His Entourage Has Used the EU To Increase Its Wealth") *444.hu*, 26 February 2015 (<http://444.hu/2015/02/26/orban-ot-eve-harcol-az-eu-val-legszukebb-kore-addig-gazdagodott-belole/>)

7 Zoltán Batka, "Nálunk szinte csak az EU fejleszt" ("EU Almost Alone in Funding Development") *nol.hu*, 17 September 2013 (http://nol.hu/gazdasag/nalunk_szintecsak_az_eu_fejleszt-1413425)

8 "Átlátszó: Companies Close to Fidesz Awarded Billions in State Contracts in 2014" *Budapest Sentinel*, 12 January 2015 (<http://budapestsentinel.com/articles/atlatso-companies-close-to-fidesz-awarded-billions-in-state-contacts-in-2014/>)

predicted, Orbán's attempts at taking the wind out of the sail of the far-right party backfired and actually had the effect of legitimizing extremist discourse.

Not for the first time in its history, then, Hungary finds itself in a precarious position between Eastern and Western models. How could this happen after such apparently firm commitment to the Western paradigm in the 1990s? This question needs to be approached on three levels of analysis, with a view to local, regional, and global dynamics. That is to say, one must consider how discursive patterns and mentalities peculiar to Hungarian culture have shaped local responses to global tendencies and developments endemic to post-communist Europe. Accounts that sidestep any of these levels are bound to yield a skewed understanding of the country's predicament.

To begin, then, with a factor that represents a continued threat to the stability of the entire region, one must first of all recognize the over-all failure of Eastern Europe's bid for economic convergence with the West. Figures show that convergence with the Western standard of living slowed down after 2000 and stopped after the financial crisis of 2008.¹⁰ Purchasing power per capita in Slovenia, the most prosperous country in the region, is less than half of what it is in core nations of Western Europe; in Romania it is a meagre sixteen percent.¹¹ A recent survey concludes that "the income levels of the so-called middle classes in Eastern Europe are roughly equivalent to the bottom 20%, and in some cases the bottom 10%, in the West."¹² Clearly, the free movement of labor and capital do not suffice to level imbalances.

Already in the euphoric year of 1990, Timothy Garton Ash cautioned that Western Europeans might shrink back from the economic costs of helping the fragile new democracies of Eastern Europe: "how many politicians are prepared seriously to make the case for such help to their own electors? If presented with such a bill, most West European electors would, I fear, probably say: 'Sorry, no!'" "Ironically," concluded Garton Ash, "the kind of Western European consumer democracy to which East Central Europeans so passionately aspire may be the kind least likely to help them." The post-transition history of Eastern Europe has borne out this worry, and the unfolding tragedy of Ukraine only provides further confirmation of it. Few in the West have fully grasped the immense difficulties of accelerated transition to parliamentary democracy and market-based economy. In particular, the fiscal discipline that the EU imposed on its new member states—even as Germany and France repeatedly violated the EU budget rules they themselves had introduced—placed these fragile democracies under unsustainable strain. As a result, most Eastern European nations underwent periods of democratic backsliding at one point or another in the post-transition era and remain vulnerable to such regressions.

Yet this regional dynamic does not explain why democratic

backsliding became so thoroughgoing and hard to reverse in Hungary, of all countries, whereas parallel tendencies in Slovakia, Poland, and Romania have thus far been temporary. A proximate cause for the gravity of the Hungarian situation may be found in the so-called "goulash-communism" established in Hungary from the early 1960s onwards. Sustained by Soviet subsidies aimed at pacifying the rebellious Hungarians as well as by Western loans, the regime presided over by János Kádár granted Hungarians a degree of freedom and comfort that was unique within the Soviet bloc. In fact, no other period in Hungarian history was characterized by such a low poverty rate and such broad access to material goods, healthcare, education, and culture. As the country's abrupt transition to a market-based economy began to exact a heavy human cost, nostalgia for a paternalistic state combined with a belated, compensatory rejection of left-wing legacies to favor the emergence of right-wing authoritarianism.

There is, however, a less proximate but equally important set of historical causes that conspired to derail Hungarian democracy. In short, the country's political culture has been fatally deformed by what political philosopher János Kis aptly called a "hundred-year war." Toward the end of World War I, as the Austro-Hungarian empire fell apart, in quick succession Hungary underwent two major convulsions: first the establishment of a democratic republic that soon gave way to a short-lived Communist dictatorship; and then the Trianon peace treaty, in which Hungary lost two-thirds of its historical territory and one-third of its Hungarian-speaking population to the new nation states that emerged on its borders. This double trauma gave rise to a brand of right-wing nationalism that combined militant revanchism with a demonization of liberal and left-wing ideas. For complicated reasons that partly had to do with the demographic consequences of the Trianon treaty, in the interwar era this emergent Right became the breeding ground of anti-Semitism. Pursuing its obsession with territorial restitution, Hungary's Right aligned Hungary with Hitler's Germany and incurred a large share of responsibility for the murder of over four hundred thousand Hungarian Jews as well as hundreds of thousands of civilian and military casualties.

Out of this series of catastrophes emerged two rival narratives about twentieth-century Hungarian history, entrenching a centuries-old antagonism between champions of national sovereignty and advocates of progress inspired by Western ideas. The nationalist narrative centers on two traumatic events for which the blame is laid at the door of left-wing progressivism, namely, the Trianon Treaty and the decades of Soviet communism. By contrast, liberal and leftist constituencies have tended to see regression to Fascism as the paramount threat. The four decades preceding 1989 proved to be but a prolonged incubation period for the resentments perpetuated by these competing visions of Hungarian history. Once the antagonism emerged from latency, the strains of post-communist transition only intensified its polarizing force.

Needless to say, power and money were also at stake in the partisan feuds of the post-transition era. Yet the passions mobilized by these conflicts would not have proven so impervious to rational discussion if they had not been fueled by the deep-seated resentments that divided the nation's memory. Because neither side of the partisan divide could resist the temptation to define itself in terms of a conflict rooted in the past, in the end

10 Mark Adomanis, "Is Eastern Europe Economically Converging With the West?" *Forbes*, 14 July 2012 (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/markadomanis/2012/07/14/is-eastern-europe-economically-converging-with-the-west/>)

11 RegioData, "Purchasing Power Data Europe Edition 2013" (http://www.regiodata.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/regio-data_PP_Europe.jpg) and RegioData, "25 Years Later: How Prosperous Are Eastern Europeans Today?" (<http://www.regiodata.eu/en/25-years-later-how-prosperous-are-eastern-europeans-today>)

12 Zoltán Pogátsa, "Eastern Convergence? Not in Incomes!" *Visegrad Revue*, 27 March 2013 (<http://visegradrevue.eu/eastern-convergence-not-in-incomes/>)

both sides lost their ability to address the urgent problems of the present. And since each side was convinced that it had to save the country from its adversary no matter what the cost, all scruples fell by the wayside. This resulted in a downward spiral of political opportunism and reciprocal mistrust, as well as in an extraordinary dumbing down of public discourse. Viktor Orbán's Fidesz started out as a party of youthful innocence that could credibly claim to stand above the resentments of the older generations. By 2002 at the very latest, however, Fidesz too succumbed to the polarizing force of the historical divide and finally exploited that dynamic with ruthless cynicism.

Five years into the governance of Viktor Orbán, it should be obvious that the past-minded agenda of post-transition politics has led to a dead end. Although Fidesz still maintains control over all branches of power, its relentless centralization, the elimination of checks and balances, and the replacement of experts with loyal apparatchiks have resulted in a system that lacks vital mechanisms of corrective feedback, and which is therefore condemned to failure. Yet, despite a noticeable drop in support, in the 2014 elections Fidesz still garnered the largest share of votes. Most puzzlingly, the democratic opposition has remained incapable of reaching out to the masses of discontented voters, most of whom now gravitate toward the neo-Nazi Jobbik party. Lingering memories of the inept and corrupt governance of the socialist-liberal coalition between 2002 and 2010 go some way toward explaining this failure but cannot fully account for it. After all, the abuses and the failures of the Orbán government are hardly any less glaring.

To understand the weakness of the democratic opposition, we must finally consider the global backdrop. Viewed from that perspective, Orbán is fishing in troubled waters, that is, gambling on the demise of the post-1989 world order. His wager appears to be that the protracted crisis of the global order, and in particular the end of US hegemony and the crisis of the EU represent an opening for the creation of an autocratic crony state. To be sure, Orbán's "unorthodox" alternative to liberal democracy smacks of charlatantry. If advocates of liberal democracy are nevertheless hard-pressed to counter Orbán's talk of the crisis of the West, it is because this talk, however demagogical, contains a kernel of truth. In view of the evident failure of the EU to prevent the current crisis

from undermining the European project, it is rather difficult these days to build a persuasive case for commitment to that enterprise. Nor is it encouraging to observe how little clear-sightedness the EU has been able to muster in the face of Orbán's challenge to its core values. Responses from Brussels have for the most part been limited to legal quibbles that overlook systemic features of the Orbán regime and relatively inconsequential debates triggered by the Orbán's diversionary provocations (i.e., initiatives having to do with symbolically charged issues such as Hungary's role in World War Two, the death penalty, immigration, etc.).

To the extent that Hungary now finds itself, thanks to the stratagems of the Orbán government, in the middle of a tug-of-war between the European Union and Russia, a great deal depends upon the posture adopted by Germany for the country. For Germany is not only the most powerful member state of the EU but also Hungary's most important economic partner, with considerable power to influence Hungarian politics. Its role since Orbán's rise to power has been ambiguous. Although Berlin was at first quite vocal in criticizing Orbán's authoritarian push, the Merkel government eventually opted for pragmatic co-operation, seeking above all to secure favorable conditions for German businesses. Orbán's vision of a "workfare society," with curtailed employee rights and permanently low wages, may actually hold considerable appeal for Audi and Mercedes, whose plants in Hungary are now major contributors to Hungary's economic growth. In the European People's Party, to which Fidesz belongs, German Christian Democrats never risked losing the votes of Fidesz delegates by challenging Orbán. Yet the challenge that Orbán's wager poses to German policymakers is in the end bound up with the larger dilemmas looming on the horizon. Berlin has a decisive say in how the EU addresses the two existential challenges now confronting it, namely, the Eurozone crisis and Russia's assertion of its old sphere of influence. The EU's posture vis-a-vis each of these crises entails consequences for its handling of the other crisis as well. How European elites approach this double conundrum may well decide the question of whether an autocratic regime can survive within the European Union—and if not, what follows in its wake?

Faculty and Student News

George Breslauer (Political Science) has been appointed as the first Faculty Director of UC Berkeley's Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, effective March 1, 2015. The Magnes, located on Allston Way in Berkeley, is a research community museum with a collection of some 15,000 objects from the worldwide Jewish Diasporas, including that of the western United States.

Bathsheba Demuth (PhD candidate, History) was awarded a Mellon-ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship for 2015-2016. She also gave a paper, "Emptying the North Pacific: 19th century conceptions of whales as a non-renewable resource," at the American Society for Environmental History conference in Washington, DC, in March, where she also finished her tenure as graduate representative on the executive committee.

A two-day conference was inspired by the recent book from **David Frick** (Slavic), *Kith, Kin, & Neighbors: Communities & Confessions in Seventeenth-Century Wilno*. The conference, "Microhistories: Social and Cultural Relations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1387-1795)," was only one of a long series of "centenary" celebrations of the founding of the Center for Slavonic & East European Studies at the University College London. Professor Frick gave the keynote lecture, "What's in a Name? Conflict and Common Weal, Unity and Diversity in the Early Modern City."

Cammeron Girvin (PhD candidate, Slavic) organized a roundtable for the 2015 ASEES conference on "Digital Heritages: Innovations in Online Linguistic and Ethnographic Databases," at

which **Ronelle Alexander** (Slavic) and he presented their project, “Bulgarian Dialectology as Living Tradition.”

Luba Golburt (Slavic) was awarded the Marc Raeff Book Prize by the Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies Association for her book *The First Epoch: The Eighteenth Century and the Russian Cultural Imagination* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

Yuriy Gorodnichenko (Economics) published the following works: “The Cyclicalities of Sales, Regular and Effective Prices: Business Cycle and Policy Implications,” with Oliver Coibion and Gee Hee Hong in *American Economic Review* (forthcoming); “Is the Phillips Curve Alive and Well After All? Inflation Expectations and the Missing Disinflation,” with Oliver Coibion in *American Economic Journal - Microeconomics* 7 (2015); and “When does FDI have positive spillovers? Evidence from 17 emerging market economies,” with Jan Svejnar and Katherine Terrell, *Journal of Comparative Economics* 42 (2014).

Andrej Milivojevic (History) presented a paper, “A Critical Juncture? : The Purge of Reformist Cadres in 1970s Yugoslavia,” on the panel “Remembering and Disremembering Yugoslavia” at the Western Social Science Association conference in Portland in April 2015.

Eric Naiman (Slavic) has recently published the following works: “Kalganov” in the *Slavic and East European Journal* 58:3, Fall 2014; “When Nabokov Writes Badly: Aesthetics and Morality in *Laughter in the Dark*” in *Russian Review* 73, October 2014; “Tolstoy’s Hinges,” in *New Studies in Modern Russian Literature and Culture: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Rabinowitz*, eds. Catherine Ciepiela and Lazar Fleishman, Stanford Slavic Studies 45 & 46, Oakland: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 2014; and “Platonov’s letters home,” a review of Andrei Platonov, *Ia prozhil zhizn’. Pis’ma, 1920-1950*, ed. Natalia Kornienko in *Times Literary Supplement*, May 16, 2014.

Joy Neumeyer (graduate student, History) presented on the panel “Soviet Art and Urbanism” at the annual conference of the Western Social Science Association in Portland in April 2015. Her paper, “‘The Final Struggle’: The Art of the Soviet Death Mask,” was chosen as winner of the *Western Association of Slavic Studies Outstanding Graduate Student Essay*.

With the new cycle of the Title VI National Resource Center and Foreign Language and Area Studies grant, ISEEEES has partnered with Florida International University (FIU) to provide K-12 Educator Outreach Training in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. **Jeffrey Pennington** (Executive Director, ISEEEES) and **Beverly Crawford** (Associate Director, Institute of European Studies) went to Miami to give the inaugural lecture for this partnership - “The EU and the Ukraine Crisis: The End of the ‘European Model?’” - at the School of International and Public Affairs at FIU in March. Jeff returned to FIU in June to present on an all-day panel for K-12 educators, “Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe in Historical Context: A Workshop for Secondary School Educators.” The panel had lectures by John K. Cox, Professor and Department Head, History, Philosophy and

Religious Studies, North Dakota State University; Mary Dakin, Independent Scholar and former Associate Director of the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies at Stanford University; and Rebecca Friedman, Associate Professor of History and Provost Faculty Fellow, 2015-2017, at Florida International University.

Brandon Schechter (PhD, History, 2015) has a chapter coming out in a collected volume, “The State’s Pot and the Soldier’s Spoon: Paëk (Rations) in the Red Army,” in Wendy Goldman and Donald Filtzer, eds. *Hunger and War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming). Two fellow UC Berkeley alums, **Rebecca Manley** (PhD, History, 2004) and **Alexis Peri** (PhD, History, 2011), have also contributed chapters to this collection. Brandon will also be busy this summer presenting at the following conferences in the US and Russia. In May he presented the paper “The Properties of War in The Red Army, 1941-1945” at “People and Things on the Move” Colloquium at the University of Chicago; in June he presented “The Trophies of War” at “Europe, 1945: Liberation, Occupation, Retribution” Conference at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow and “Cities of Earth, Cities of Rubble: The Spade and Red Army Landscaping” Violence in Twentieth-Century Russia and Eurasia: Experience, Affect, Memory, and Legacies” at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In the fall he will start a Post-Doc at the Davis Center at Harvard University.

Lily Scott (PhD candidate, Slavic) received a Berkeley Language Center fellowship for the Spring 2016 semester.

Agnieszka Smelkowska (graduate student, History) presented a paper, “Between People’s Revenge and Socialist Justice: Poland’s Volksdeutsche between 1944 and 1946,” on the panel “Building Socialism: Post-WWII Perspectives” at the Western Social Science Association conference in Portland in April 2015.

Barbara Voytek (ISEEEES) presented on the panel “Lithics Cowgirl, Household Archaeologist, Digital Doyenne: A Session Dedicated to **Ruth Tringham**,” at the 80th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in San Francisco. Her presentation is titled “From Russia with Love: Ruth Tringham and the Early Days of Microwear,” recounting her studies with Ruth at Harvard over 40 years ago. She also co-authored a chapter, “Lithics from the tell site Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa (S-E Hungary): typology, technology, use and raw material strategies during the late Neolithic (Tisza Culture)” with E. Starnini, Gy. Szakmány, S. Józsa, Zs. Kasztovszky, V. Szilágyi, B. Maróti, and F. Horváth in *Chronologies and Technologies: the Fifth and Fourth Millennia BC between the Carpathians and the Aegean Sea*, S. Hansen, P. Raczky, A. Anders, A. Reingruber (eds.), Archäologie in Eurasien 31. Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH. Berlin, 2015.

Katherine Zubovich (PhD candidate, History) presented a paper, “Consuming Moscow’s Skyscrapers: Popular Responses to Postwar Stalinist Luxe,” at the conference “Living Cities of the Second World,” the third conference in a series run by the academic group “Second World Urbanity” at the European University in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

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The ISEEEES General Support Fund is an unrestricted fund that is used to: provide travel grants to affiliated graduate and undergraduate students for the purpose of presenting papers at academic conferences; provide research assistance to affiliated faculty members; convene conferences, open to the public, that examine current topics in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies; host an annual reception to foster community building among faculty, students, and the public; and augment the state and grant funds that provide minimal support for ISEEEES operations.

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Radio Free Europe and the Rhetoric of Liberation

Stephanie Caitlin Thornton

Berkeley Alumna, History, BA, Spring 2015

Stephanie Thornton graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts in History in Spring of 2015. "Radio Free Europe and the Rhetoric of Liberation," her senior thesis, earned departmental Highest Honors. She will spend the next year working in San Francisco elementary schools as part of an AmeriCorps literacy project.

On February 28, 2014, President Barack Obama addressed the nation for the first time concerning the military mobilization of Russian forces in the Crimean peninsula. "The Ukrainian people deserve the opportunity to determine their own future," he declared, and without specifying actions the United States would or would not take, he assured Americans and Ukrainians alike that the United States "stands for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic future of Ukraine." Two days previously, pro-Russian armed forces had marched through the peninsula; the following day they seized the Crimean parliament building. I was on a bus returning to Prague from Krakow with a class group when the bus driver announced and translated the parliament building news for us. Numerous historians, pundits, and many more did not hesitate to compare these events to the invasion and subsequent occupation by the Soviet Red Army of Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1940s. On the bus, I was sitting next to a friend of our teacher—a Czech woman who had served as our primary translator and tour guide for the weekend—who sucked in her breath. "We remember this," she told me.

Two months later, as pro-Russian forces continued to push into Crimea, I handed my passport to a trio of stern guards and walked through an airport-style body scan machine to enter the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) headquarters in Prague.

As part of a Czech history class, we had been researching the history of the institution; a "surrogate broadcasting" station initially established by the CIA and the United States Free Europe Committee to "give the people of the captive countries reason to hope for liberation." Once cleared for entrance, we met with an Afghan journalist who had moved to Prague permanently to broadcast on women's issues after receiving continuous death threats due to her broadcasts at home. She spoke briefly about the stories she broadcasts on Radio Free Afghanistan each week, but really, everyone wanted to talk about Ukraine. The Crimean referendum, declared to be a sham by most of the West, had passed with 97% in favor of joining Russia. Pro-Russian militia had held *Vice* journalist Simon Ostrovsky captive the previous week. Clashes in Odessa just days earlier had left more than forty people dead. And RFE/RL had provided much of the coverage reaching European and worldwide audiences. Radio Free Europe (known as Radio Svoboda in Ukraine) had thirty-three journalists and staff members on the ground operating out of Kiev, and on February 20, 2014, the Radio Svoboda website alone received 2.8 million page views. In the following months, the site would be viewed 150 million times and receive numerous journalism awards for its extensive coverage of developments in the Crimean peninsula.

While the institution no longer receives funds or guidance directly from the CIA, it is still governed by a United States radio board and receives funding from Congress each year.

Although a glance at their stories today may not immediately reveal a particular American slant, the station remains a limb of the American foreign policy system. Throughout its more than sixty-year history, what has it meant for this limb to cover, and participate in, uprisings in foreign countries?

The current mission statement of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is to "promote democratic values and institutions by reporting the news in countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established." Although the Radio Free Europe of 2015 operates in an entirely different media landscape than it did in 1950, many of the challenges in reporting on the self-determination of other countries are very similar to those at its inception. In the first decade of broadcasting, these challenges rested on the term *liberation*. In the most literal sense, liberation is the freeing of someone or something from imprisonment or oppression. While the term was occasionally used to refer to direct military intervention by the United States to free the region of Soviet control, more often than not, it was used in an esoteric sense with continuously changing connotations and implications. In the past few decades, this term has largely fallen out of the public lexicon when addressing conflicts abroad, but it was the central preoccupation of most people involved with the Radio Free Europe project in the early 1950s. At a time when the recent technological innovations of the radio allowed for rapid cross-border communication not seen before, RFE/RL broadcasts became an avenue for experimenting with the dissemination of strategic political rhetoric.

In this paper, I examine the origins of Radio Free Europe to explore the transfer and representation of American foreign policy to the citizens of Soviet satellite countries through the media. With an emphasis on *liberation*, I discuss policy formulation in Washington, D.C., and how it was interpreted by the institution and by the journalists broadcasting for Radio Free Europe. Three tiers of communication form this institution: one between Washington and Radio Free Europe directors and executives, another from directors to the émigré journalists employed by the institution, and the third between the journalists and citizens of Central and Eastern Europe through broadcasts. For each of these communication channels, I focus on how the involved parties interpreted the discussion of liberation and how that discussion evolved over time.

Many historians have written on the varying strategies of the United States towards the Soviet satellites in this time period. In *Strategies of Containment*, John Lewis Gaddis traces

the approaches of administrations, from Truman to Reagan, to the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Other works, such as Anne Appelbaum's *Iron Curtain*, a history of the makings of totalitarianism in the region post-World War II, discuss the presence of Radio Free Europe in the region as a facet of United States policy. There are a number of institutional histories of Radio Free Europe written by former executives and directors of the organization. Three books form the base of the historiography about the institution; *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* by A. Ross Johnson; *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* by Arch Puddington; and *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* by Richard H. Cummings. While these texts explore the origins and structural specifics of the institution in much greater detail than this paper can, their discussions are somewhat narrow in regard to the relationship between Radio Free Europe policy and on-air broadcasts.

To bring together the challenges of the three channels of communication, I look at a combination of policy documents, broadcast transcripts, and internal correspondence between journalists and Radio Free Europe officials primarily from the Hoover Institution Radio Free Europe archives at Stanford University, as well as the digitized Woodrow Wilson Center Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty collection online. From the corporate records collection housed at the Hoover, I draw on budgets, employee instruction manuals, audience research reports, and numerous letters between the staff. Most instrumental to this project, though, was the Ferdinand Peroutka Papers—an entire collection on one of Radio Free Europe's most prominent journalists. Peroutka, a Czechoslovak journalist who had been held by the Nazis throughout World War II and then



Figure 1: Ferdinand Peroutka pictured in a 1960 Free Europe Committee News Bulletin celebrating his upcoming ten-year anniversary with the station.

immigrated to the United States after the communist coup in 1948, joined the Radio Free Europe team in 1951 as the Czechoslovak correspondent and began hosting the weekly Sunday Night Talks.

In the next two decades, Peroutka became the leading voice connected to Radio Free Czechoslovakia and one of the most well respected journalists and political pundits in the entire region. The personal collection is comprised of his letters to Radio Free Europe executives, newspaper articles written on him from both American and Czechoslovak sources, and transcripts of his weekly broadcasts. Peroutka provides the third layer in how policy was interpreted as it moved from United States presidents and their close strategists and advisors to the Radio Free Europe leadership, and from RFE leaders to the individual journalists projecting these attitudes to the peoples of Central Europe through their broadcasts.

I also look at the roots of liberation ideology in the earliest years of Radio Free Europe and the political theories behind it in the era of George Kennan and the advent of the Eisenhower administration. From here, I examine the messy practice of promoting liberation on-air as RFE came to find its foothold after a few years before the shaking of de-Stalinization and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, a profound failure and serious controversy for the station's liberation ideas. After 1956, the station lost some popularity because of its involvement in Hungary, but it also became less relevant as domestic presses gained more editorial freedom in the wake of de-Stalinization. On the ground, Peroutka adapted the topics of his shows to fill a different niche for his home audience, and from above, directors in New York experimented with changing the policy guidelines for journalists, both believing the actions in their channels would most affect those of the other party. In conclusion, I look to how the history of this institution can inform us about the relationship between self-determination, liberation, and American interests abroad, and how this relationship continues to be expressed across different media platforms.

Roots of Liberation

“This station daily pierces the iron curtain with truth, answering the lies of the Kremlin,” a forty-year old Ronald Reagan confidently proclaimed in a 1951 television Crusade for Freedom promotional video calling for public donations to Radio Free Europe.¹ Created during Reagan's time as president of the Screen Actors' Guild and FBI informant of the Hollywood Blacklist era, the commercials reached many across the country eager to do their part to fight the Kremlin. Among these viewers was a young Richard H. Cummings, future security director of Radio Free Europe and author of the book *Cold War Radio*. In the book, Cummings credits seeing these commercials in childhood as influencing his later decision to pursue a career at the organization.²

Although the commercials called for donations to the pledge campaign, the allotted budget for Radio Free Europe (\$8.7 million dollars in 1951, roughly equal to \$60 million in today's dollars)

1 “Crusade for Freedom Commercial Ronald Reagan,” 1951, Published April 5, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qayE8Rhwc_8. Accessed January 26, 2015.

2 Richard H. Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* (Jefferson: McFarland Publishing, 2009), 1.

was sufficient to cover operations.³ Rather, the public donations fit into a branding of the campaign as a collaborative American undertaking. The previous year, just as the new broadcasting facility in Munich was beginning its daily reports, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had introduced the Crusade and the station in a Labor Day Speech. In the 1950 speech Eisenhower describes the “campaign sponsored by private American citizens to fight the big lie with the big truth.”⁴ The following day newspapers across the country published reports of excited citizens willing to join the effort and sign Eisenhower’s Freedom Scroll.⁵ The speech and the Reagan commercials extolled the idea of individual American citizens working together for this new enterprise—an enterprise backed by a cut and dry paradigm: Kremlin equals lies; America equals truth.

While the Crusade for Freedom campaign was one of the first public solidifications of this attitude at the time, these ideas had been developing since the end of World War II. In 1946, American diplomat George Kennan sent the now famous “Long Telegram” back home to President Truman from his post in the Soviet Union with the warning that “world communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue.”⁶ Kennan proclaims that the United States must lead the world in opposing the Soviets by ensuring the “health and vigor of our own society.”⁷ At the time of his writing, the Soviet Red Army had “absorbed” Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union and was occupying the six countries which came to be known as the “bloc”: East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania.⁸ The fear that this “parasite” would continue to spread past this area preoccupied American politicians and diplomats. The following year, Kennan coined the term “containment”—the idea that, rather than directly combating communism at any cost, the United States should focus on ensuring it did not spread. Containment, which came to be the governing Cold War ideology of the Truman administration, allowed for a range of responses that could shift depending on the area which the United States determined to be of utmost importance at the time.

Two years later, as Soviet control over the Central and Eastern European states had tightened, Kennan authored a memorandum on “Organizing Political Warfare” for the United States Policy Planning Committee and the National Security Council introducing the idea of a “Liberation Committee.” The government-funded committee, he outlines, should be comprised of “trusted private American citizens” and should strive to “provide an inspiration for continuing popular resistance within the countries of the Soviet world; and to provide a potential nucleus for all-out liberation

movements in the event of war.”⁹ Throughout the memorandum he describes other mechanisms for promoting anti-communism groups and subversive elements within the Soviet-controlled countries, continuously invoking “American tradition” as the basis for the plans. The private-public enterprise of the liberation committee, for example, follows the “traditional American form: organized public support of resistance to tyranny in foreign countries.”¹⁰ Through this reasoning, liberating the peoples of the Soviet satellite states continues a tradition of opposing tyranny abroad rather than introducing a particularly new or revolutionary concept. This rhetorical strategy, likely employed to garner the necessary administrative and domestic support for the plan, was not without faults, though, as the people the plan advocated to liberate also came to believe in the American “tradition of liberation.”

The subject of the memo has added significance, as George Kennan is most famously associated with the policy of containment, not liberation. Though Kennan strongly opposed the creation of any definitive foreign policy statement stemming from his views, and so this document may not be the most representative of his legacy, it demonstrates the pervasiveness of the liberation conversation at this time.¹¹ The following year the National Committee for Free Europe (later renamed the Free Europe Committee) was created. While the outlines for the committee do not follow Kennan’s suggestions exactly, they do seem to express many similar sentiments. The Committee, in its original mission, aims to aid those anti-communist and anti-fascist leaders in useful occupations that have left their home countries for political reasons.¹² Specifically, the committee aims to “engage in efforts by radio, press, and other means to keep alive among their citizens in Europe the ideals of individual and national freedom.”¹³ After the formation of the committee itself, members turned to planning for the broadcasting station, and in particular, which émigrés and groups would be selected to represent what would then become Radio Free Europe. After a few brief months of broadcasting out of New York, a period former Radio Free Europe director A. Ross Johnson refers to as the “poison factory” because of the incredibly negative nature of the early broadcasts, the Committee purchased the Munich facility and re-branded as a “surrogate broadcasting” station.¹⁴ Compared to the hands-on effort of CIA agents and American directors in New York, “surrogate broadcasting” meant that the American government provided the infrastructure and air space (and quite a bit more, especially in terms of suggested themes), but the émigré journalists did their reporting and broadcasting themselves. In 1951, around the same time as the airing of the Reagan commercials in homes across the country,

3 “US Government Monies Provided to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty,” Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, May 1972, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Corporate Records. Collection 2000C71, Hoover Institution Archives.

4 Dwight Eisenhower “Crusade for Freedom Speech,” September 4, 1950, Denver, Pre-Presidential Speeches Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library Archives. <http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/index.html>.

5 Richard Cummings, “Labor Day, Crusade for Freedom, and Radio Free Europe,” *Cold War Radio Broadcasting*, August 31, 2012. <http://coldwarradios.blogspot.com/2012/08/labor-day-crusade-for-freedom-and-radio.html>.

6 George Kennan, “Long Telegram,” February 22, 1946, National Security Archive: George Washington University. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.

7 George Kennan, “Long Telegram.”

8 Anne Appelbaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012).

9 George Kennan “Organizing Political Warfare,” April 30, 1948, Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320>.

10 George Kennan, “Organizing Political Warfare.”

11 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). 95.

Kennan’s reluctance to a definitive policy statement is somewhat “ironic” as NSC-68 was written almost immediately after his resignation and was pretty much exactly that.

12 “Understanding between the Office of Policy Coordination and National Committee for Free Europe,” October 4, 1949, Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114332>.

13 Ibid.

14 A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 40.

the Office of Policy Coordination described Radio Free Europe's Soviet-specific sister project, Radio Liberty, as a "program of Russians speaking to Russians, not the U.S. government speaking to the Russians."¹⁵

In *Strategies of Containment*, John Lewis Gaddis argues that, under Truman and Kennan, "process triumphed over policy" through their focus on restraining Soviet economic and military strength without much regard for long-term policy or goals.¹⁶ When President Eisenhower took office in 1951, though, there was an increased focus on ideology in foreign policy development, particularly under the influence of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles. One of Eisenhower's first foreign policy acts was Operation Solarium—a program designed to study three potential courses of action that the administration could consider adopting in regards to Eastern Europe: continuing containment, deterrence, and lastly, liberation. According to Gaddis, while the official public strategy remained containment, Eisenhower's "New Look" foreign policy incorporated all three of these courses. It is the third option – liberation – that is particularly interesting to this study of Radio Free Europe, as it encompassed "political, psychological, economic, and covert means to 'roll back' Soviet influence areas."¹⁷ The idea of psychological warfare, though not novel to this time period, did develop in a new sense under Eisenhower and the influence of the Dulles brothers. "The most conspicuous example of 'psychological warfare,'" Gaddis writes, is "Dulles' 'liberation' strategy for Eastern Europe."¹⁸ This strategy, though, was not clearly defined or outlined anywhere, and some argue it did not actually exist to the degree Gaddis suggests.

A. Ross Johnson writes that, "liberation was a long-term aspiration, never a policy that guided RFE broadcasts... 'liberation' was American political rhetoric, never U.S. foreign policy."¹⁹ Throughout the book, Johnson continuously reaffirms this claim—especially when it later comes to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution—which clearly contradicts Gaddis' theory of Eisenhower embracing liberation aspects after Operation Solarium. As a former RFE director, Johnson may have a stake in preventing unnecessary responsibility from being placed on the shoulders of Radio Free Europe. Yet, a 1954 policy document lists one of the primary objectives of the institution "to give the people of the captive countries reason to hope for liberation."²⁰ While A. Ross Johnson may argue that this was pure rhetoric and that giving people a "reason to hope" does not constitute actual policy handed down from the administration, the journalists tasked with transmitting these messages on air may not have interpreted them in that way, especially formal policy statements like the one from 1954.

Ferdinand Peroutka, as expressed in his correspondence with

RFE officials, appeared to believe promoting liberation was an official stance of the institution. In a 1952 letter to Radio Free Europe chief Mr. Galantiere, Peroutka outlines what he sees as the station's tasks. "Answer the question of arming, the question of appeasement, and of the liberation of satellites sustained by the common will of the American people."²¹ The questions are repeated throughout Peroutka's correspondence with Radio Free Europe officials and seem to be a point of internal conflict regarding his role in translating the directives of the United States to the people of Czechoslovakia. In 1954 he writes again to Mr. Galantiere: "95% of the Czechoslovak population believed, up to the present, in a liberation continued but by war."²² Johnson's questioning of whether or not liberation was official policy seems much less important when examined with this in mind: if it was believed to be actual policy by those listening to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, it is not any different in impact than had it been official policy.

Liberation In Messy Practice

The 1953 report of the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was heralded as one of Radio Free Europe's most successful broadcasts at the time—they broke the news more than six hours earlier than the communist state news.²³ The ideological changes after his death, in particular following Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 denouncement of Stalin's crimes and the overall harshness of the regime, led to a period of "thaw" including the easing of restrictions of domestic press within satellite countries. Media sources within these countries began to include more local news, a wider array of voices, and less censorship by the communist administration. For Radio Free Europe this meant that much of their daily broadcasting became less unique and less relevant, as sources closer to the listeners were able to break the same stories.

In 1955 Peroutka prepared a summary for Radio Free Europe in the wake of a Four Powers meeting. The document details the differing attitudes towards liberation he had encountered among Western officials. He writes that, from an American perspective, any "liberation policy" is no longer different from the policy of containment. "Still, for psychological reasons," he advises, "it is better to refer to the containment policy as liberation policy."²⁴ Although official policy of liberation may no longer exist, the support for continuing to refer to it would come from Radio Free Europe. Communication of this policy by Peroutka and his colleagues to listeners, this report suggested, was more important than accurate transmission of policy from the United States government to the journalists.

Peroutka then goes on to discuss what he believes is a more promising term—"self-liberation." Increasing in popularity and use right around this time, especially by Western politicians, self-liberation is perhaps even more abstract of a term than liberation. "Self-liberation is not possible, but self-liberating

15 "Radio Liberty Objectives Outlined," August 25, 1951, Office of Policy Coordination, Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archives.

While the document particularly discusses Radio Liberty and operations in Russian, the attitude expressed in it is evident of an overall shift away from the "poison factory" model.

16 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 127.

17 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 144.

18 *Ibid*, 153.

19 A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond*, 54.

20 "United States Government Policy for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty," July 22, 1954.

21 Ferdinand Peroutka letter to Mr. Galantiere, November 20, 1952, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

22 Ferdinand Peroutka letter to Mr. Galantiere, January 11, 1954, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

23 "Czechoslovakia Audience Response to Western Broadcasts and Leaflets, 1954-1955," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Corporate Records. Collection 2000C71, Hoover Institution Archives.

24 Ferdinand Peroutka, "Summary of Liberation," June 1955, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives, 1-2.

movements of the masses behind the Iron Curtain are.” This, of course, has significant challenges as *self-* is predicated on the idea of the internal mobilization and lack of external control, and can therefore not be adopted as any “official policy” by the United States. The term is particularly useful in that it does not imply commitment to any anti-administration groups or actions within the Soviet satellite states. Peroutka ends the memo with the two ideas he believes are “certain” at this time: first, that “it is not possible to promise liberation behind the Iron Curtain,” but also “the hope of liberation can absolutely not be abandoned within the Eastern bloc or else the millions will assimilate into the monolith.”²⁵ Reckoning these two goals with one another is essentially impossible, which he acknowledges, but he does provide recommendations for economic sanctions and political moves the United States could take to demonstrate a dedication to opposing the communist regime and encouraging internal opposition movements within Central and Eastern Europe. These sanctions, writes Peroutka, send a clear and reassuring message to those opposing the regimes domestically, but do not carry the weight or expectation of military assistance or more forceful intervention.

At this same time, questions of station credibility often tied to the “liberation” attitude troubled many within the institution. In yearly Audience Research Reports, RFE and RL representatives would meet with groups of station listeners from the different broadcast countries who, for specific reasons, were able to travel to West Germany. While the institution acknowledges that this was not exactly the most representative sample of the actual listener composition, comparing the reports from year to year does create a picture of how attitudes towards the station formed over the years of its broadcasting. On the whole, these reports are overwhelmingly positive about Radio Free Europe’s programming and suggest high levels of trust in the reporters by listeners. The 1955 report, though still complimentary, does include a few more serious concerns than seen in earlier years. Many respondents noted that, more than occasionally, RFE broadcasts turned out to be false.²⁶

Ferdinand Peroutka also addresses the concern in this same year. In one letter, Peroutka informs the New York bureau of his correspondence with friends back in Prague, who have written to him warning that “RFE is losing the confidence of our people because of the false reports it broadcasts.”²⁷ The year 1955 was characterized by attempts at smoothing out many of the wrinkles still in the broadcasting system, wrinkles which would run much deeper the following year as these two issues—the extent to which liberation would be promoted on-air and how the truth of the broadcasts were verified—came to head the following year in the Hungarian Revolution.

After Nikita Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” in which he denounced the many crimes of Stalin was released to the press, countries across the region underwent leadership changes and reforms to rid much of the heavily entrenched Stalinism. In 1956, student protests in Budapest blossomed into a national uprising against Soviet control of the country and in support of Prime

Minister Imre Nagy, who days earlier had announced Hungary’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. On November 4, Soviet forces entered the country with tanks to crush the rebellion and kidnap Nagy to the Soviet Union. Roughly twenty-five hundred Hungarians were killed in the process.²⁸ That same day, as Soviet tanks were crossing the Hungarian border, a Radio Free Europe on-air press review highlighted an article from the *London Observer*, which had confidently declared “the pressure upon the government of the U.S. to send military help to the freedom fighters will become irresistible.”²⁹ After quoting this piece, the Hungarian broadcaster added, “in the Western capitals a practical manifestation of Western sympathy is expected at any hour.” This broadcast has since been accused by many of providing misleading information suggesting United States support for resistance fighters. After the news spread of how bloody the crushing of Budapest by the Soviet troops had been, Radio Free Europe came under considerable fire for their role.

To this day, the 1956 broadcasts remain one of the most significant controversies the institution has faced. In fact, A. Ross Johnson’s book began as the 2006 article “Setting the Record Straight: Role of Radio Free Europe in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956,” which seeks to defend the institution against criticism that has continued well into the present day.³⁰ Much of his article is in response to Charles Gati’s book *Failed Illusions*, a portion of which was published in *The New York Times* in October of 2006, including the claim that “RFE kept encouraging its Hungarian listeners to keep fighting for all they sought and more—whether these goals were realistic or not.”³¹ Anne Appelbaum, in her 2008 book *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe*, is even more critical of RFE’s Hungarian broadcasts and their representation of American political interests:

The Hungarian service of Radio Free Europe, based in Munich and staffed by angry émigrés, egged on the revolutionaries. But despite his earlier calls for the ‘rollback’ of communism and the ‘liberation’ of Eastern Europe, the hawkish American secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, could do no better than send the Soviet leaders a message: “We do not see these states [Hungary and Poland] as potential military allies.”³²

In the immediate aftermath, the United States government ordered multiple official investigations into the broadcasts in question. A preliminary memorandum from the Free Europe Committee dated November 12, 1956, opens with the following statement: “the degree to which the West... encourages the captive peoples to resist or change the present regimes whilst at the same time... is not willing or able to assist them in a situation like that in Hungary, presents serious questions which ought to be realistically thought through.”³³ This is one of the most direct challenges to the institution’s practices from an internal source at this point in time,

28 Anne Appelbaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe*, 450.

29 A. Ross Johnson “Setting the Record Straight.” December 2006. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 11.

30 A. Ross Johnson, “Setting the Record Straight.”

31 Charles Gati, “Failed Illusions,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 2006.

32 Anne Appelbaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe*, 457.

33 “Rethinking the Role of the Free Europe Committee,” November 12, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114744>.

25 “Summary of Liberation,” Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 7.

26 “Audience Research Report: 1955-1956,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Corporate Records. Collection 2000C71, Hoover Institution Archives.

27 Ferdinand Peroutka letter to Mr. Egan, July 15, 1955, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

yet the suggestion for this to be “realistically thought through” is not a punitive condemnation, considering the problematic nature of encouraging resistance but not being willing to assist when that resistance comes to head. Two weeks later, the CIA prepared their official review of the situation, which reached two primary conclusions. “RFE broadcasts were generally consistent with U.S. policy toward the Satellites,” the report states, and “RFE did not incite the Hungarian people to revolution.”³⁴ While this decisive verdict may have been in line with policy of the time, it does seem to prematurely end the conversation and questions posed by the FEC memorandum and—much more strongly—by external critics of RFE concerned with its practices.

After the revolution and crushing defeat, Ferdinand Peroutka addressed the matter in his November 17, 1956, Sunday Night Talk. In one of his most declarative and forthright statements, and much more directly than the CIA or RFE leadership, he stated: “We here are a broadcasting station—not a liberation army.”³⁵ He then moved on to more optimistic tones quickly though: the Hungarian Revolution is much broader than the defeat; the very existence of the uprising signaled the growth of democracy behind the Iron Curtain.³⁶

At this time, Radio Free Europe’s main challenge was the need to offer something different than the state news sources while simultaneously communicating to listeners that RFE’s aim was not liberation through direct intervention. Although perhaps the institution was in support of self-liberation (discussion on this term became more mixed after the Hungary broadcasts and the thaw), it was certainly not—as Peroutka stated—a liberation army. Its livelihood rested on journalists like Peroutka convincing Eastern Europeans of this without giving the impression that the Americans were turning their backs on them. In the following years, Ferdinand Peroutka’s broadcasts significantly shifted their scope and focus to encompass more international news and less domestic politics and affairs.

Soft Liberation: A Journalist Adapts

“Eleven years is a long time; not many things remained in their place,” Peroutka writes in his 1961 report to the Radio Free Europe board of directors entitled “The Political Situation.”³⁷ “RFE has a cleverer competitor now,” he writes of the evolution of the Communist state radio post-Stalin, noting the increased scope of their broadcasting and higher approval by citizens in the satellite states. Specifically in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution, and a perceived attitude of “passivity” by the Americans, the opinion of RFE had dropped in the satellite states. “The hope that was so lively when RFE was beginning and so closely allied to faith in the West’s superior might, is fading.”³⁸ According to Peroutka, discerning what the United States’ goals and tactics were towards the region at this point was “more difficult than it used to be to

stimulate hopes of a not too distant liberation.”³⁹ This concern seems to influence the uncertainties he has of Radio Free Europe’s role as much as, if not more than, the death of Stalin. Not only was Radio Free Europe daily news less novel when it also came from stations at home, but the conclusive American rhetoric Peroutka used for inspiration had dwindled.

An undated, unsigned report in Peroutka’s personal correspondence file from around this time makes explicit policy suggestions for Radio Free Europe in the wake of de-Stalinization.⁴⁰ The memo discusses how RFE’s ability to report scandals that listeners were unaware of due to the censorship of the domestic press led to its early popularity, but now “the position is reversed: now RFE learns about matters from domestic sources.”⁴¹ The report suggests new programs such as “Read the *NY Times* with Us,” which would bring news from America and around the world to listeners in Central and Eastern Europe.⁴² These programs would also be more beneficial from the station’s perspective, as “not a word of propaganda would have to be added...the listener would gradually be shifting onto a different level.”⁴³ Radio Free Europe should pursue international and cultural reporting, the report concludes, if it wishes to retain listeners who are receiving more and more of their news from local sources.

As early as 1957, Peroutka began adjusting the topics of his shows in line with the suggestions in this report. On April 6 of that year, he opened his broadcast with a description of the view of Carnegie Hall from his New York office and broadened that to a more general discussion of the merits of the American tax system.⁴⁴ On April 20, his broadcast focused on civil rights in the United States, comparing his status in Czechoslovakia as much less than that of African-Americans. (“The Negro in America enjoys every civic right,” he announces, in a rather out-of-touch declaration.⁴⁵) From 1961 through 1965, though, his Sunday Night Talks centered on the struggle for independence in Algeria and Laos, American involvement in Vietnam, and the Cultural Revolution in China. Much less often came discussion of Czechoslovak news and politics, and entirely absent were the rallying cries to rise up against the administration so common in his early years on the air.

This international focus seems to support the propositions set forward in the undated document about a broadening focus on international events to support Radio Free Europe’s relevance. But also, focusing on other countries—even ones going through their own liberation struggles—temporarily removed the focus

39 Ibid, 5.

40 I came across this document in the Peroutka Papers Collection at the Hoover Institute in a file with the 1961 Political Situation Report. While it seems probable that Peroutka authored it at well, it is written with a seeming detached tone towards the actual broadcasts that I would assume it is written by an outside consultant. It is clearly written post-1956 as it references the Hungarian broadcasts, and I would estimate it to be written close to 1961 because of how similar the suggestions and questions are to Peroutka’s in “The Political Situation.”

41 Undated, unsigned document. Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

42 Ibid, 12.

43 Ibid, 13.

44 Ferdinand Peroutka, “Ferdinand Peroutka’s Talk,” April 6, 1957 Radio Broadcast, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

45 Ferdinand Peroutka, “Ferdinand Peroutka’s Talk,” April 20, 1957 Radio Broadcast, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

34 “Review of RFE Hungarian Broadcasts,” November 26, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114782>.

35 Ferdinand Peroutka “Weekly Commentary,” Radio Free Czechoslovakia, November 17, 1956, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives, 1.

36 Ibid, 3.

37 Ferdinand Peroutka, “The Political Situation,” April 17, 1961, Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives, 1.

38 Ibid, 3.

from liberation within Eastern Europe. Shifting to international stories proved beneficial not only because it provided listeners with new information, but also removed some of the pressure of reporting on internal issues, especially in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution. In the next two decades, as those in Washington, D.C. were forced to examine many of the operational practices Ferdinand Peroutka had attempted to answer in his work for them years earlier, Peroutka himself left the station to author five books, including *The Democratic Manifesto* (his ideological response to *The Communist Manifesto*) before his death in 1978 in New York.

Soft Liberation: The Institution Adapts

Throughout the 1960s, as seeming evidence of some insecurity about the future of the institution in a changing domestic political environment, the United States government ordered more comprehensive studies of Radio Free Europe's operations. As public opinion moved away from the antagonistic attitude towards the Soviet Union of the 1950s, many questioned what role Radio Free Europe would fill in the long-term future. United States foreign policy was quite different by the 1960s as it had been at the conception of Radio Free Europe in 1949. In 1963, John F. Kennedy used the term "détente" for the first time to describe the relaxing of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States.⁴⁶ More formally adopted by President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the following years, the détente period loosely refers to the years between 1963 and 1979 in which the Soviet Union and the United States increasingly negotiated with one another.⁴⁷ While John Lewis Gaddis argues that détente was not a substantively different goal than containment, as both aimed to alter Soviet behavior, this new strategy did encourage negotiations despite ideological differences.⁴⁸

The first of these reports was authorized in 1960, while the Cold War was considered quite "hot," and tasked to the President's Committee on Information Activities Abroad, referred to as the Sprague Committee after Chairman Mansfield Sprague. Overall, the report stated, the institution has been slow to adapt to the changes in the Soviet world, and much more frequent reexaminations of its progress was needed to ensure it keeps up with political and technological advances.⁴⁹ It also highlighted the "dependence on refugee or émigré script writers and announcers who have had difficulty adjusting their personal aspirations and resentments to our broadcast policy."⁵⁰ The report concluded with hope for the future, with an official recommendation in support of continued government funding of the institution, as long as it is accompanied by an increased frequency of performance reviews.

In the years following this report, domestic support for sweeping anti-communist rhetoric and policies by the government dwindled in large part due to the Vietnam War and revelations of CIA funding for the National Students Association and other

organizations abroad. As early as 1964, the book *The Invisible Government* discussed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in its chapter entitled "Black Radio," however it was three more years before the CIA connection was revealed by other media sources and, eventually, confirmed by a politician.⁵¹ On January 21, 1967, Senator Clifford Case from New Jersey delivered a speech to congress publicly discussing the funding of RFE/RL.⁵² In this speech, he cited earlier statements from Lyndon B. Johnson that "no federal agency shall provide covert financial assistance or support, direct or indirect, to any of the nation's educational or voluntary organizations" as support for the separation of the CIA and Radio Free Europe.⁵³

Amidst growing discussion over the ethical implications of the funding for the stations later that year, another report—authored by the Radio Study Group this time—was issued. It echoed many of the same sentiments as the Sprague Committee report had seven years previously, but pushed concerns about the association with the CIA further. In its policy suggestions, the report states "it will not be feasible to deny government support of the radios, and we propose that such support without identifying CIA explicitly as the source." It is clear that at this point the group was aware of the negative public opinion implications of disclosing the CIA connection. The stations should not be regarded as permanent, it states, but they are "not incompatible with a policy of bridge-building."⁵⁴ Despite its discussion of the potential pitfalls in the government-funding model, the report ultimately advises that it does not see Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty able to continue operations without this government support. "It will not be feasible to deny government support of the radios, and we propose that such support (without identifying CIA explicitly as the source) continues," the report ends.⁵⁵

In December of 1967, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms approved "surge funding" (increased support) for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty through 1969.⁵⁶ In the next two years, he predicted, the funding structure would likely become a bigger point of contention in the political arena, and the surge funding would ensure that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty could continue to operate through 1968 midterm elections. Funding was extended in 1969, though, in an effort to leave the decision up to the next presidential administration.

Shortly after taking office in 1971, Richard Nixon signed a proposal by the Office of Management and Budget that recommended eliminating Radio Liberty's funding altogether, and maintaining only a very small budget for reduced Radio Free

51 A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond*, 204.

52 Ibid, 205.

53 Press, CQ, ed. *Congress and the Nation, 1965-1968 Volume II: The 89th and 90th Congress*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press., 1969, 852.

Johnson issued this statement after the disclosure of CIA funding for the National Students' Association sparked outrage.

54 "Report of Radio Study Group on the Future of Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL)," September 8, 1967, Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115107>.

55 "Report of Radio Study Group on the Future of Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL)," September 8, 1967.

56 "CIA Implementation of 303 Committee Decision on Funding and Continuation of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty," December 21, 1967, Woodrow Wilson Center Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115110>.

46 John F. Kennedy, "Address at the University of Maine," October 9, 1963, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California, Santa Barbara. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php>.

47 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 286.

48 Ibid, 287.

49 "Sprague Committee Critical of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty," December 1960, Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115040>.

50 Ibid.

Europe operations. Particularly interesting is the reasoning in the report to support the decision; the institution “no longer stresses the need to liberate the Soviet Union from communism.”⁵⁷ According to A. Ross Johnson, this characterization of the Radio’s role was indicative of a “fundamental misunderstanding” of the roles of RFE and RL by a new Budget Office unfamiliar with its workings.⁵⁸ Perhaps this document is an anomaly, and there was some misunderstanding by the office. Still though, the idea that funding could be cut because the radio is *failing to stress liberation enough* suggests that, as late as 1971, liberation was a worthy goal and an assumed function of the radio to at least some in the Nixon administration.

After outrage within Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe over the cuts, President Nixon agreed to reconsider his position and took the debate to Congress. On June 30, 1971, after days of debate on the floor, Congress passed a resolution to end CIA direct assistance for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The following day, the CIA issued its official declaration, stating that it would cease all funding and other forms of support to both stations effective immediately.⁵⁹ In March of the following year, Nixon signed Senate Bill S-18, which designated the State Department the agency now responsible for all of the activities of RFE/RL.⁶⁰ The extent to which this change actually altered day-to-day operations of the institution is debatable, but similar to the debate over the use of liberation, the rhetoric and image purported by the decision proved as important to its continued existence as actual policy.

Internally, Radio Free Europe experimented with its own image modification strategies. The years following these reports, coinciding with a partly *thawed* relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, saw increased autonomy of journalists working with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. This attitude was short-lived though, as a series of Russian broadcasts believed to be anti-Semitic and anti-American in 1975 and 1976 led to a reexamining of the recent changes in employee policies. An updated policy manual had been released in 1974, and had relaxed much of the language about promoting western-style democracy through radio programming. In response to the outcry, Radio Free Europe Vice President Walter Scott created a side-by-side comparison of the 1971 and 1974 official program policy guidelines. The 1974 policy manual, he writes in the attached letter to director Sig Mikelson, “played a role in triggering the unprecedented and disruptive ferment which has taken place in the Russian service.”⁶¹ Some journalists, Scott argues, took the manual’s relaxed language as a sign of the “weakening of American management’s positions as to the exercise of control over the basic thrust of programming and the exposition of democratic principles.” In the document following the letter, he highlights the key areas in the 1974 guidelines and places them next to their more pro-American, pro-democracy aims in the 1971 manual. For example, the “Purpose” section in

57 A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond*, 208.

58 *Ibid.*, 208.

59 “CIA Ends All Involvement with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: A Timeline,” September 19, 1972, Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115135>.

60 *Ibid.*

61 Walter Scott, Letter to Sig Mikelson, 1976, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Corporate Records. Collection 2000C71, Hoover Institution Archives.

1971 read that RFE and RL were “dedicated to the task of helping citizens of the USSR in their efforts to achieve freedom from dictatorial rule,” whereas the 1974 Purpose section read that the institution was a “professional medium committed to the principle of free information as embodied in the United Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”⁶² The emphases of these statements (freedom from dictatorial rule to free information) are clearly different from one another and the international focus of the 1974 manual is noteworthy in its continuation towards an international focus to shift the burden of responsibility away from the United States.

In the Broadcasting Objectives section, an entire paragraph of the 1971 version describes the “Ultimate Goal” as seeing “all the people’s of the USSR acquire the opportunity to live in freedom with truly democratic political institutions.” Although the 1974 manual does include a Broadcasting Objectives section that echoes some of the other goals present in 1971—the broader objective of the dissemination of free information, for example—the “Ultimate Goal” paragraph is removed.⁶³ Scott created this document, he explained, to guide the creation of the new policy guidelines and a manual that would help avoid broadcasts of the sort that provoked this discussion. The creation process of the next round of policy guidelines lasted for many more years than perhaps Scott expected: a preliminary guide was released in 1982, but it was not until 1987 that the directors, government officials, and journalists finally agreed upon a final set of revised program policy guidelines.

The dozens of drafts and letters exchanged about these new guidelines sum up some of the most pressing questions Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty had faced since its inception thirty years earlier—what languages should they broadcast in? Is “self-determination” an acceptable terms to continue to use? By the time that this new manual was released, the geopolitical landscape had again entirely changed. The 1987 Professional Code opens with the following statement: “The essence of RFE/RL’s mission is the practice of independent, professional, and responsible broadcast journalism in order to provide uncensored news.”⁶⁴ By 1987, the tone is much closer to the 1974 international focus on responsible journalism as opposed to adamant support of democracy in undemocratic regimes. While the concerns Scott notes in his 1976 letter and report may have fizzled a decade later, the extensive discussions they prompted about journalist autonomy and the rhetoric of self-determination and autonomy demonstrate the continued challenges remaining since the drafting of the first policy documents in 1950.

Conclusion

Three years later, RFE/RL would contribute extensive—yet not always factually accurate—reporting on the fall of the Soviet Union and the democratic revolutions across the region. Most famously, a Radio Free Czechoslovakia broadcast during the first days of the November 1989 protests in Prague reported that state police had killed a student protester, which later proved to be completely false. Even though the misstep raised similar concerns to the 1956

62 Walter Scott, Letter to Sig Mikelson, Attached Memo “1971 Compared to 1974.”

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Radio Free Europe Professional Code*, 1987, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Corporate Records. Collection 2000C71, Hoover Institution Archives.

Hungarian broadcasts, potential controversy over the broadcast was overshadowed by the success of the demonstrations, and the sheer enormity of political overhaul at this time period. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the entire foundation of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty needed to be reexamined. Although some bureaus had begun to be established outside of Europe at this point, all of the journalists and infrastructure was geared towards Central and Eastern Europe. Since 1989, though, coverage has expanded to more than fifty countries “struggling to overcome autocratic institutions, violations of human rights, centralized economics, ethnic and religious hostilities, regional conflicts, and controlled media”⁶⁵ and the headquarters have since moved from Munich to Prague. The structure of the institution also changed dramatically in 1994 when President Bill Clinton ended State Department funding and control. To replace it, he created the Broadcasting Board of Governors, a bi-partisan agency that oversees RFE/RL as well as other American radio operations, and receives its funding from Congress each year.⁶⁶

With the exception of the crisis in Ukraine this past year, European coverage has diminished considerably since the mid-1990s, with an increased focus on the Middle East.

RFE/RL now operates “Under the Black Flag,” a blog on their website which tracks the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq.⁶⁷ Many stories in this collection of reports focus on those leaving their home countries of the former Soviet Union to join IS forces in Iraq and Syria. Bill Clinton’s decision to detach the institution from the State Department was designed to depoliticize RFE/RL. The stories published today, while always political because of the conflict areas they focus on, have a more detached, objective nature than the calls-to-action Peroutka broadcasted in his early reports. Perhaps the largest shift for the continued operations of RFE/RL though, has been the decline of the radio in general, and the advent of digital social media. The United States’ tradition of free press—the same tradition heralded as reason for establishing this institution—has always been ideologically at odds with the idea of a state-controlled media. The pluralistic, participatory media of today makes the very idea of a state agency controlling a media outlet—particularly one that yields considerable political and military power at home and abroad—seem archaic. However, the State Department’s current efforts to combat IS on social media seem to have adopted practices from the earliest days of Radio Free Europe.

In 2014, the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism, a division of the US State Department, launched the social media campaign *Think Again Turn Away* on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and YouTube.⁶⁸ Through blurbs of 140 characters or less, @ThinkAgainTurnAway aims to sway those on Twitter—primarily teenage boys in the Middle East—who are on the fence about joining Islamic organizations such as IS. Extremist Islamic

65 “Mission Statement,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. <http://www.rferl.org/info/mission/169.html>.

66 “Broadcasting Board of Governors,” *All Gov*, 2015. <http://www.allgov.com/departments/independent-agencies/broadcasting-board-of-governors?agencyid=7292#historycont>.

67 “Under the Black Flag,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, <http://www.rferl.org/archive/under-the-black-flag/latest/17257/17257.html>.

68 Think Again Turn Away social media sites include: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ThinkAgainTurnAway>; <https://www.facebook.com/ThinkAgainTurnAway>; https://twitter.com/ThinkAgain_DOS; <http://thinkagainturnaway.tumblr.com>.

terrorist groups are increasingly relying on social media to recruit new members and maintain active presences themselves, and if the United States does wish to enter this ideological battle, social media is an important arena. It is not apparent that the State Department is entering this arena in the most productive way though. The account has been highly criticized for its practice of responding directly to the tweets of IS members and supporters, therefore disseminating their message to a wider audience. As Director of the international terrorism research center SITE Intelligence Group Rita Katz writes in her scathing review of the program, “The State Department’s Twitter War with ISIS is Embarrassing,” the engagement has often been tactless on the part of the State Department—in particular she cites a conversation the account entered into with one former ISIS member about Abu Ghraib, not exactly a convincing argument for American moral supremacy.⁶⁹

Recent tweets from the department focus on petty rumors about individual leaders within IS in a way reminiscent of the early “poison factory” years at Radio Free Europe⁷⁰:



In another recent post, the account responds to a pro-IS photo collage posted by an Iraqi account that has now been removed with the following messages:⁷¹



While most of the tweets denounce the organization for their acts of mass violence, the tweets like those above, which seem designed solely to provoke rather than actually provide meaningful information to the public, do not reflect well on the professionalism of the State Department. The ideology behind the

69 Rita Katz, “The State Department’s War with ISIS is Embarrassing,” *TIME Magazine*, September 6, 2014. <http://time.com/3387065/isis-twitter-war-state-department/>.

70 Think Again Turn Away Twitter Feed, April 28 2015, 8:40 am. https://twitter.com/ThinkAgain_DOS/status/593016684488830976

71 Think Again Turn Away Twitter Feed, March 2, 2015, 7:06 a.m. https://twitter.com/ThinkAgain_DOS/status/572412777475661825

account's existence, that the United States has an obligation to confront the messages of our "enemies" even if the messages are not initially aimed at us, recalls early Radio Free Europe rhetoric about "answering the lies of the Kremlin." An occasionally fumbling United States media campaign attempting to "answer the lies" of IS seems to be the 2015 Radio Free Europe. And with that connection come the same questions and dangers as those of the 1950s. Is it the role of the State Department to address the peoples the US determines are "victims" of an enemy regime or organization? Do tweets necessitate engagement and support? Could tweets crafted by the State Department imply a commitment to fighting IS that may not actually exist?

In discussing Radio Free Europe with people, primarily those alive in the 1950s and 1960s, I am struck by how it is so often considered a relic of the American Cold War propaganda machine and not something with a visible presence today. Beyond its continuous operations out of Prague and coverage of events

around the world, RFE has also laid blueprints for state-level use of media for other ventures. The *Think Again Turn Away* campaign is asking their journalists and policy makers to strive for the similarly impossible goals Peroutka outlined sixty years ago: America must show those in foreign countries that there is another way—a better, more democratic way—than what they are being told, yet we cannot, and should not, always pledge to these actions. In 1956, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty realized the dangers and impossibility of their original goals, and spent the next three decades attempting to continue "the fight" through means less destructive to the American image abroad. While the individual journalists and policy directors within the institution may have successfully worked towards figuring this out internally, as a country, we continue to search for ways to responsibly exercise soft power abroad.

Figure 1: Free Europe Committee News Bulletin. June 1, 1960. Ferdinand Peroutka Papers, 1935-1978. Collection 84052, Hoover Institution Archives.

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Save the Date



*Upcoming event during the Fall 2015 semester***

ISEEEES Annual Fall Reception

Wednesday, September 23, 2015

4:00 p.m.

Toll Room, Alumni House
UC Berkeley Campus

***Please note that event details may change. Updates will be sent out by email and can be found online at <http://iseees.berkeley.edu/>.*

Spring 2015 Courses

Selected course offerings and selected area-related courses

Anthropology 189	Modern Discourse on Armenian Identity	Abrahamian, L.
Comparative Literature 100	Children's Literature in Theory, Context, and Practice	Nesbet, A.
Comparative Literature 254	Studies in East-West Literary Relations	Ram, H.
History 100B	Berlin and the 20th Century	Hoffmann, S.
History 100U	World War II	Connelly, J. / Barshay, A.
History 101	Writing the Consequences of Conflict in the Modern Period	Cramsey, S.
History 101	Post-Wars: <i>Economy and Society in Western and Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century</i>	Milivojevic, A.
History 103B	From War to Peace: Europe in the 1940s	Hoffmann, S.
History 103B	Soviet History through Film and Fiction	Slezkine, Yu.
History 160	The International Economy of the Twentieth Century	Milivojevic, A.
History 171C	The Soviet Union, 1917 to the Present	Slezkine, Yu.
History 174B	Poles and Others: the Making of Modern Poland	Cramsey, S.
History 177B	Armenia: From Pre-Modern Empires to the Present	Astourian, S.
History 280B	State and Religion in Imperial Russia, 1700-1917	Frede-Montemayor, V.
Int'l & Area Studies 45	Survey of World History	Beecher, D.
Near Eastern Studies 126	Silk Road Art and Archaeology	Mehendale, S.
Political Economy 133	Universities and Dissidents	Beecher, D.
Political Science 2	Introduction to Comparative Politics	Fish, S.
Political Science 191	Nations, Nationalism, and Conflict in the Soviet Successor States	Walker, E.
Public Policy 285	Nuclear Security: The Nexus between Policy and Technology	Nacht, M.
Slavic R5A	Magical Machines: Living with Technology	Kendall, M.
Slavic R5B	Moscow, Real and Imagined	Schwartz, C.
Slavic R5B	Childhood	Johnson, Z.
Slavic 39C	Images of Eastern Europe "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Ukraine, Poland, Russia"	Frick, D.
Slavic 39F	Balkan Cultures	Alexander, R.
Slavic 46	Twentieth-Century Russian Literature	Ram, H.
Slavic 50	Introduction to Russian/East European/Eurasian Cultures	Kavitskaya, D. A.
Slavic 109	Business Russian	Alexeev, A.
Slavic 134F	Nabokov	Naiman, E.
Slavic 138	Soviet Film Style, from Silence to Sound	Nesbet, A.
Slavic 158	Gdansk/Danzig/Gedanum: A City Shaped - Histories and Cultures	Frick, D.
Slavic 172	Topics in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian	Alexander, R.
Slavic 181	Russian Drama	Muza, A.
Slavic 200	Graduate Colloquium	Paperno, I.
Slavic 222	Descriptive Grammar of Slavic Languages	Kavitskaya, D.
Slavic 246B	Contemporary Russian Literature (1920-present)	Matich, O.
Slavic 280	Graduate Literature Seminar: <i>Close and Distant Readings: Literature and its Contexts</i>	Naiman, E. / Paperno, I.

The Slavic Department offers courses in Armenian, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian. The German Department offers Yiddish.