

INACTION IN ACTION: AMERICAN MEDIA AND THE 1956
HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

by

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ABSTRACT

On November 4, 1956, Soviet military forces moved back into Budapest to once and for all suppress the Hungarian Revolution. Though Dwight Eisenhower repeatedly expressed his commitment to the liberation of Eastern Europe during his 1952 and 1956 presidential bids, the absence of an American military response revealed the inflated nature of “rollback” and led to a degree of international criticism for U.S. policies and institutions. This thesis examines U.S. press coverage of the Hungarian Revolution and reveals that American newsprint, far from being critical of the Eisenhower administration's decision not to intervene despite its aggressive posturing prior to developments in Hungary, helped the president to navigate the implications of his foreign policy promises by glossing over the apparent contradictions in his hands-off response and depicting these international developments through the lens of American foreign policy interests.

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INTRODUCTION

In October 1956, a popular demonstration of students and workers took to the streets of Budapest to protest the Hungarian communist regime and the Soviet leaders who maintained de facto control over it. After the demonstration exploded into violence following shots fired into the crowd near the radio building, Soviet leaders responded by sending troops and tanks into Budapest to quell the uprising. Soviet military forces then withdrew from the city for a short time to allow newly installed Prime Minister Imre Nagy to regain control. This conciliatory gesture proved short-lived. On November 4, after Nagy declared Hungary's independence and ended its participation in the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), the Red Army reentered the city and brutally suppressed the revolution once and for all.¹

While these events exposed Soviet willingness to use military force to maintain its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, they also made clear America's Janus-faced attitude toward the so-called satellite states.² American leaders President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles presented themselves as ardent Cold Warriors and advocated a policy of "rollback" that promised to assist the satellites should they endeavor to throw off Soviet hegemony. Yet no such assistance arrived for fear of triggering a larger conflict with the Soviet Union. These developments exposed Eisenhower's seeming commitment to the rollback of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe

¹ The Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact, a political and military organization, in 1955 as a way to strengthen its control over Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact provided a pretext for the stationing of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe and served as a countermeasure to NATO. See Bennett Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation: East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics since 1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 155.

² During the Cold War, commentators often used the term "satellites" to refer to those countries that fell under the Soviet sphere of influence after World War II.

as inflated rhetoric. As a result, the U.S. handling of the crisis drew international criticism from journalists, heads of state, and refugees.

American citizens appeared not to share these criticisms over the apparent contradictions in U.S. foreign policy. On the contrary, they praised Eisenhower's handling of the Hungarian crisis and reelected him to the presidency on November 6 by a wide margin. This thesis investigates the American response by analyzing domestic media output during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution to determine how media outlets portrayed U.S. noninvolvement for their readers and whether they offered support to the president and his handling of the crisis during this crucial time.

Media has long been and continues to be at the center of analyses of the 1956 revolution. America's use of soft power through the media has been the subject of numerous debates. These debates have centered around the Munich-based and American-funded Radio Free Europe (RFE), which was charged with broadcasting "free" and "reliable" counter-news behind the iron curtain in the interest of undermining the existing political systems under communist control. In the aftermath of the revolution, Western media outlets and refugees asserted that RFE, by assuring Hungarian listeners that American military assistance was on the way, unnecessarily extended the crisis if not outright incited it. Consequently, RFE's alleged complicity in the Hungarian crisis has received considerable scholarly attention. This has been especially true since the Bundesarchiv, Germany's national archive in Koblenz, released the recordings and transcripts of RFE broadcasts during the 1956 revolution in the 1990s after denying the existence of these records for nearly four decades. Despite the wealth of scholarship on the disputed connections between American-sponsored media and the Hungarian

revolution, there has not been a similar level of interest in the role of American media for domestic consumption. In this regard, this thesis offers a needed contribution to the scholarly literature, which has previously overlooked this issue within its broader discussions of 1956.³

Historiography

Though historians have yet to offer a detailed analysis of American media during the Hungarian crisis, they have provided considerable scrutiny of U.S. Cold War media and Eisenhower's masterful relationship with the domestic press. Kenneth Osgood has been a leading force in this field. In his many works, Osgood maintains that Eisenhower and his supporters lamented American unwillingness to fund domestic propaganda efforts and bemoaned the resulting "propaganda disadvantage" the U.S. faced in waging the Cold War.⁴ To fill in this perceived gap, U.S. officials relied heavily on American independent media in conveying "camouflaged" propaganda messages to the American citizenry embedded within the news. Furthermore, they considered these efforts to be informative and meant to educate U.S. citizens about the realities and dangers that their country faced on the international stage.⁵

³ For example, see Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 102; John P. C. Matthews, *Explosion: The Hungarian Revolution of 1956* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2007); George Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War Within the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006).

⁴ Eisenhower once claimed, "The Russians spent about \$2 billion a year in their propaganda and. . . it was ridiculous for us to spend only a small amount." See Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-55.

Using these means, U.S. leaders sold the Cold War to the American citizenry by reassuring them of Soviet duplicity and the impossibility of negotiated settlement.

Osgood details a telling example of how this strategy worked in practice. He contends that Eisenhower dismissed a Soviet peace campaign in the aftermath of Stalin's death in 1953 as deceitful because he considered the new Soviet leaders untrustworthy. Osgood quotes Eisenhower as saying, "Russia was a woman in the streets and whether her dress was new, or just the old one patched, it was certainly the same whore underneath."⁶

Likewise, American media outlets asserted that the Soviet calls for world peace amounted to nothing more than deceptive maneuvering. A *New York Times* editorial asserted that hope for peace by negotiation with the Soviet Union was nothing more than "wishful thinking."⁷

To drive his point further for observers at home and abroad, Eisenhower asked that the new Soviet leadership offer proof of its good will in his so-called "A Chance for Peace" speech. He called for a united Germany free to participate in organizations such as the European Defense Community and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as well as an Eastern Europe free of Soviet hegemony. However, as the president did not float the possibility of concessions from the West, nor any proposal for peace negotiations, the speech had little concrete impact on foreign policy. Nonetheless, newspaper editors reported on the speech heavily and favorably and presented it as proof that the Soviets never intended to achieve peace with the United States. According to Osgood, C.D.

⁶ Osgood relies on recently declassified documents to demonstrate that the Soviet initiative was sincere. John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: 10 Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1955* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), 683, quoted in Kenneth Osgood, "Eisenhower's Dilemma: Talking Peace and Waging Cold War," in *Selling War in a Media Age*, ed. Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 148.

⁷ "New Peace Drive," *New York Times*, March 22, 1953.

Jackson, a special assistant to Eisenhower and expert on psychological warfare, achieved this favorable press by utilizing his contacts as the former director of Time-Life International and publisher of *Fortune*. Consequently, the speech received “more public interest and excited more favorable comment. . . than any official statement of high policy” since the Marshall Plan. In this way, Eisenhower mobilized the American press to discredit the Soviet peace initiative in 1953, as he did in other instances throughout his presidency.⁸

Historian Shawn Parry-Giles has also argued that Eisenhower exerted considerable influence over the American media landscape during his presidency. In his article, “‘Camouflaged’ Propaganda.” Parry-Giles argues that Eisenhower exploited the ideology of an independent press to create an effective form of propaganda, which he channeled through American media outlets to bolster the efforts of governmental propaganda agencies. In doing so, he expanded propagandistic operations further than any American president before him. In making this claim, Parry-Giles relies on evidence of a covert propaganda campaign, referred to as “Operation Candor,” that mobilized American media outlets, both broadcast and print, in an attempt to garner support for Eisenhower’s policies, much as it had with the Soviet peace blitz in 1953. Operation Candor exploited connections with American publishers to guide media’s handling of international events and U.S. foreign policies to “inform” and “educate” citizens on these matters. This program was later folded into Eisenhower’s famed Atoms for Peace campaign, which sought to invent peaceful uses for atomic technologies.⁹

⁸ Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 65.

⁹ Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “‘Camouflaged’ Propaganda: The Truman and Eisenhower Administrations’ Covert Manipulation of News,” *Western Journal of Communication* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 146-167.

Journalist Douglas K. Daniel asserts that Eisenhower's relationship with industry leaders in the American media ran much deeper than covert campaigns initiated during his presidency. In fact, Daniel posits that the pledged support of leading media moguls played a key role in convincing Eisenhower to run for president. In particular, while president of Columbia University from 1948 to 1953, Eisenhower worked closely with *New York Times* publisher Arthur Sulzberg, who backed Eisenhower's campaign as the Republican candidate even though he had traditionally sided with the Democratic Party. During the presidential campaign, Eisenhower and his supporters continued to underline the importance of American media in their election prospects. A 1951 campaign progress report made special note of American media leaders who were friendly to the president, including Malcolm Muir, president and editor of *Newsweek*, and Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines. Furthermore, Daniel shows that publishers used their own news-gathering resources to benefit the Eisenhower campaign. For example, *Washington Post* publisher Eugene Meyer used his connections with the Gallup organization to provide Eisenhower with early access to the results of a February 1952 poll. Citing evidence such as this, Daniel demonstrates the fierce political partisanship of the major news publishers during the 1952 election and after, when Eisenhower, their candidate of choice, ascended to the presidency.¹⁰

Other historians, while acknowledging the close ties between Eisenhower and American media, have argued that this affinity was based less on publishers' preference for Eisenhower or the president's efforts to mobilize them in his favor, and more on their need for informational materials. Nancy E. Bernhard's *U.S. Television News and Cold*

¹⁰ Douglass K. Daniel, "They Liked Ike: Pro-Eisenhower Publishers and His Decision to Run for President," *J&MC Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2000), 393-404.

War Propaganda, 1947-1960, offers an excellent study of American Cold War television. In this work, Bernhard argues that government officials quickly came to view television as an invaluable mechanism for ensuring American resolve throughout the arms buildup. In response, network news divisions collaborated with American officials to produce state sanctioned propaganda in exchange for information and official footage for use in their newscasts. Regardless of the debated reasons underpinning this cooperative relationship, historians present a strong consensus that Eisenhower strongly influenced domestic media to make it more reflective of his own interests and agendas.

Argument and Methodology

This thesis illuminates similar correlations between governmental interests and U.S. media accounts in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution. As news of Soviet aggression against Hungary crossed the Atlantic, American reporters and news outlets presented accounts in such a manner as to uphold American inaction as an act of peace and downplayed discrepancies between Eisenhower's foreign policy promises and practices. American newsprint mirrored governmental attitudes toward various aspects of the revolution and offered vital support to the president as he rapidly transitioned from Cold Warrior to peace guardian. Furthermore, they mobilized the American public in a vast humanitarian campaign initiated by the president as a demonstration of the United States' commitment to Eastern Europe.

In addition to facilitating the domestic humanitarian effort, domestic print media provided extensive coverage of the global response to Soviet aggression in Hungary to assure readers that a seeming Soviet victory was, in fact, a defeat if viewed in terms of

the long-term consequences. The press suggested that by employing force in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union had isolated itself from the international community and created serious fractures within the global communist movement of major importance for Soviet leaders. In this interpretation, even if it had not achieved the withdrawal of military forces from Hungary, the force of world opinion, which stood in direct opposition to Soviet actions, had caused irreparable damage to long-term Soviet interests. Through these methods, American newsprint attempted to restore credibility to the president and his policies in the aftermath of events in Hungary.

This thesis draws from a source base comprised of America's leading mainstream newsprint periodicals, including *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*. These sources were among the most widely distributed news publications in the United States. In terms of circulation, over a million weekly readers subscribed to each of these publications with the exception of *Washington Post*. *Time* was the most widely distributed, with almost two million weekly subscribers. While *Washington Post* only reached 410,000 subscribers in the District of Columbia, it is included in this study as many of its readers were among the movers and shakers of American political life in the nation's capital. In addition to these newspapers' wide distribution, smaller regional news outfits often drew from these print sources to generate content for their own papers. Thus, the stories featured in these major news outlets found their way onto the kitchen tables of far more Americans than their subscription numbers indicate.¹¹

¹¹ William F. McCallister, ed., *N. W. Ayer and Son's Directory Newspapers and Periodicals 1956* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., 1956).

Eisenhower enjoyed a close personal relationship with the men who ran these publications. While all offered their support to the president during both of his presidential campaigns, the inclusion of *Chicago Daily Tribune* provides an additional and varied perspective. The paper's owner and publisher, Robert McCormick, an avid Republican, supported Robert Taft in the Republican primary elections. After Taft's defeat, the Chicago paper derided Eisenhower as a "poor creature" who "can't win." Though McCormick's wife Maryland expressed confidence that her husband would eventually come out in favor of General Eisenhower, McCormick initially responded to Taft's defeat by entertaining the idea of supporting a Democratic nominee for the first time in the paper's 104-year history. Undoubtedly, Eisenhower did not enjoy the same early and unwavering support of the *Tribune* that he did from other major news outlets. While McCormick's death in 1955 brought new leadership to the *Tribune*, a more cooperative relationship between the president and the paper would have still been under development during the Hungarian crisis.¹²

Government documents, correspondence, legation reports, and speeches offer additional materials of relevance to this study. The National Security Archive has made available many of these official records in a series of published readers.¹³ In addition, the State Department has included valuable documents in its publications on foreign relations.¹⁴ Lastly, Melvin Lasky's *The Hungarian Revolution: A White Book*, a

¹² "The Colonel's Dilemma," *Time*, August 11, 1952, 66.

¹³ Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer, ed., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957: Volume XXV, Eastern Europe*, John P. Glennon, Edward C. Keefer, Ronald D. Landa, and Stanley Shaloff, ed. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1990); and U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950: Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, eds. C. Thomas Thorne, David S. Patterson, and Glenn W. LaFantasie (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996).

compilation of eyewitness accounts, foreign correspondences, radio broadcasts, and worldwide reactions, further compliments the primary source base of this work.¹⁵

In addition, this thesis relies on a wide array of secondary sources to construct a contextual foundation for analysis. This work intersects with and builds on the established historiography on American Cold War strategies, postwar Soviet political history, U.S. diplomatic relations with Eastern Europe, international organizations, world opinion, and, of course, the 1956 revolution itself. In addition to providing a contextual base, these sources offer insight into the major debates surrounding these topics, and allow me to position my analysis within a broader scholarship.

This source base does not allow for an examination of the interactions between the newspapers and Eisenhower that may have occurred behind closed doors. The extent to which Eisenhower relied on the close personal contacts with press leaders that he forged prior to his presidency or calculated covert efforts like Operation Candor is beyond the scope of this work. However, the informational shortages that Bernhard asserts resulted in state-sponsored television propaganda would have undoubtedly existed throughout the revolution. At the time of the revolution's outbreak, U.S. intelligence officials lacked a single Hungarian-speaking agent in the European capitals of Hungary's neighbors and enjoyed only one in Budapest. Furthermore, they lost contact with the American legion in Budapest for much of the revolution. Consequently, officials heavily depended on RFE and international press reports for information. Struggling with similar informational obstacles, journalists may also have relied on these sources and

¹⁵ Melvin J. Lasky, ed., *The Hungarian Revolution, a White Book: The Story of the October Uprising as Recorded in Documents, Dispatches, Eye-Witness Accounts, and World-wide Reactions* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957).

turned to the American government itself for news from Hungary. What is clear is that their reports mirrored the positions maintained by U.S. leaders as the Hungarian crisis unfolded.¹⁶

In a similar vein, the Suez Canal crisis, which exploded onto the international scene within a week of the uprising in Hungary, offers a potential comparison study of media involvement in promoting American foreign policy in 1956 but is also outside of the range of this thesis. On October 29, British, French, and Israeli forces jointly attacked Egypt in response to President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. While a consensus has emerged among historians that developments in Egypt prevented the West from claiming the moral high ground regarding the Soviet action in Hungary, this thesis only addresses these developments as they appear in news reports alongside the Hungarian crisis. However, it should be kept in mind that these two international events developed simultaneously.¹⁷

Structure

The following study is presented in three chapters. The first chapter provides a contextual analysis of U.S. foreign policy and the Hungarian Revolution. It addresses Eisenhower's rollback platform, American propaganda efforts in Hungary before and during the revolution, as well the origins of the uprising itself, the revolutionary reforms of the Nagy government, and Soviet military intervention on November 4. It also details the international criticism levied against the United States for its aggressive foreign

¹⁶ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 95.

¹⁷ Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 69-70.

policy statements and its failure to act accordingly. In addition, it emphasizes how Eisenhower's outward commitment to his liberation policies prior to the revolution created a political dilemma for the president as he faced reelection in 1956.

Building upon this framework, the second chapter assesses the American domestic media's response to the revolution. This chapter highlights a number of distinguishable parallels between governmental perceptions and media presentations of developments in Hungary. It then follows Eisenhower's rapid abandonment of rollback in favor of a peaceful line of action, including humanitarian aid to Hungary and the admittance of thousands of refugees to America. Further, it establishes that newsprint played an integral role in mobilizing the American public in this effort as it extensively covered American donations, financial or otherwise, as well as American provisions of shelter and support to refugees as they adjusted to American life.

The final chapter illustrates American media's emphasis on world opinion in the days after the second Soviet intervention. It demonstrates that news outlets attempted to reframe American noninvolvement in the most favorable light possible. They suggested that Soviet losses in the international arena were maximized by American inaction. Newspapers stressed Soviet isolation from the international community through detailed coverage of developments within the United Nations, an institutional forum by which world opinion is shaped and expressed. Newspapers and magazines presented these reports on the U.N. in tandem with stories of international unrest and demonstrations against the Soviet presence in Hungary. They argued that these manifestations of world opinion, including criticism of Soviet actions from foreign communist parties, hindered

and might ultimately destroy Soviet ambitions to maintain its control over the global communist movement.

This study of American domestic media in the Hungarian revolution of 1956 presents Cold War media from a fresh perspective. Historians have adequately documented the state-controlled nature of press behind the iron curtain that made Soviet media reflect governmental interests on issues ranging from foreign policy to personal hygiene.¹⁸ This thesis extends this work to argue that American press outlets, though “free” and “independent,” served the foreign policy interests of their national government through their reporting. As Osgood and Parry-Giles have amply demonstrated, the ideology of a free press created a more effective form of propaganda cloaked as news and information. Such an approach effectively helped Eisenhower to pivot toward “peace,” while distancing himself from the rollback policies that he once championed.

¹⁸ See Ieva Zake, “Soviet Campaigns against ‘Capitalist Ideological Subversion’ during the Cold War: The Latvian Experience,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 91-114; Ronald Radosh, “A Tale of Two Trials: Soviet Propaganda at Home and Abroad,” *World Affairs* 175, no. 1 (May-June 2012): 80-87; Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); and Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

CHAPTER I

U.S. Foreign Policy and the Hungarian Revolution

Containment and Rollback

Rollback, as well as Eisenhower's seeming commitment to it as a staple of American foreign policy, emerged as an alternative to his predecessor's more gradualist foreign policy of "containment." In February 1946, George F. Keenan, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Moscow, first introduced the concept of containment in a routine report addressed to the State Department. Keenan's "long telegram" emphasized the xenophobic attitudes of Soviet leaders, their belief in the total incompatibility of communism and capitalism, and the consequential futility of postwar cooperative efforts in light of these immutable circumstances. The long telegram came on the heels of a speech by General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Joseph Stalin, which aimed to mobilize the Soviet population for postwar reconstruction by proclaiming the superiority of the Soviet system and its inevitable clash with Western capitalism.¹⁹

The long telegram won the support of many in Washington who clamored for the adoption of Kennan's policy recommendations to contain Soviet expansion by means of superior U.S. military strength and a demonstrated willingness to use it. The telegram also encouraged the government to actively appeal to world opinion and convince other countries abroad of the righteousness of liberty and capitalism. By building up positive

¹⁹ Though the "long telegram" is often associated with the "containment" policies that followed, Kennan did not use this term to describe his policy recommendations in the document. Rather, containment policies became more concrete following his appointment as the head of the new Policy Planning Staff in the State Department. See P. M. H. Bell, *The World Since 1945: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 75-76.

world opinion toward the United States and its international efforts, U.S. leaders, Keenan argued, could effectively limit Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. Keenan concluded that the Soviet system, supposedly hampered by its military inferiority and isolated in its existing sphere of influence, would erode and eventually collapse under the weight of its own oppressive and unworkable nature.²⁰

While the long telegram was arguably very popular with U.S. officials and dominated American foreign policy for several years, U.S. leaders revised their approach in response to ever-changing international developments. With the successful test of an atomic weapon by the Soviet Union in August 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, pressure for a less gradualist and more active U.S. stance aimed at undermining Soviet military advancement and influence abroad mounted.²¹ The Truman administration responded to these pressures in April 1950 by approving National Security Council (NSC) Report 68, which established rollback as an objective of containment and called for aggressive international efforts that relied on intelligence, sabotage, and assistance to underground resistance organizations in the Eastern European satellite states. This region had particular geopolitical significance as it could potentially serve as a staging ground for a Soviet attack on Western Europe. Subsequent NSC reports

²⁰ Though historians tend to agree that the “Long Telegram” was popular among U.S. officials, historiography surrounding the document has differed regarding the degree of influence the document actually had on policy directives. See John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 20-39; Hugh De Santis, *The Diplomacy of Silence: The American Foreign Service, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War, 1933-1947* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 172-76; and David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 272-273.

²¹ American action in Korea in 1950 contrasts starkly with its inaction in Hungary in 1956. U.S. leaders felt that the Korean conflict was a limited peripheral engagement that was less likely to escalate into a nuclear conflict. By contrast, they viewed Eastern Europe as more central to Soviet interests and feared that any confrontation there might result in a wider nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. See Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 54-112.

reaffirmed the importance of rollback efforts in the satellite states and called for their intensification.²²

However, U.S. officials quickly soured on aggressive rollback as Soviet military capabilities continued to advance. They grew increasingly fearful that aggressive efforts in Eastern Europe might provoke a Soviet nuclear response and ultimately decided against their use. Consequently, the Truman administration relied on less confrontational means of undermining Soviet influence during its twilight years. Psychological warfare took center stage as Truman called for a “great campaign of truth,” a public relations crusade designed to influence world opinion through an increase in “informational services.”²³

Radio Free Europe (RFE) was one such informational institution. Headquartered in Munich, RFE began broadcasting propaganda masked as news to the satellite states in 1949 with the aim of preventing the Soviet Union from achieving greater hegemony in the region. Its journalistic tone bolstered the legitimacy of its programming and allowed U.S. leaders a degree of plausible deniability even though the State Department secretly funded most of RFE’s operational expenses. Between 1948 and 1952, the State Department’s available budget for informational programs, including RFE, jumped from 20 to 115 million dollars.²⁴ RFE directors used these funds to equip the facility in Munich with a medium-wave transmitter three times more powerful than any in the United States

²² László Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945-1956* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 269-273.

²³ Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America’s Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 47-82.

²⁴ Matthews, *Explosion*, 566; and Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 42-103.

and capable of overpowering Soviet jamming equipment to broadcast RFE programming to much of Eastern Europe.²⁵

As the sun set on Truman's presidency, leading Republicans verbally assaulted the containment policies established and adhered to during his administration. They asserted that the strictly "defensive" policies of Democrats had immorally abandoned the peoples of Eastern Europe to their fate. By contrast, they promised voters the type of dynamism that Democrats had failed to deliver and stressed their commitment to realize an Eastern Europe free from Soviet hegemony. While Republicans hoped that this rhetoric would win votes from a general public frustrated by the snail's pace of containment, they also intended to appeal to the increasing numbers of immigrant voters of Eastern European descent concentrated in influential states in the Northeast and Midwest, states that could determine the outcome of the fall elections.²⁶

Republican presidential candidate Dwight Eisenhower and his future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles took the lead in this verbal assault on containment and sought to convince voters of their dedication to more aggressive policies. In a 1952 *Life* magazine article entitled "Policy of Boldness," Dulles, the more outspoken of the two, criticized containment as incapable of ending "the type of sustained offensive which Soviet Communism is mounting. . . . Ours are treadmill policies which, at best, might perhaps keep us in place until we drop exhausted. . . . It is ironic and wrong that we who believe in the boundless power of human freedom should so long have accepted a static political

²⁵ Richard H. Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), 10-12.

²⁶ Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation*, 112-13.

role.”²⁷ On August 26, Eisenhower echoed this position in a speech to the American Legion in New York, in which he implied that the time had come to abandon containment altogether.

Yet Republicans remained vague when it came to how they intended to implement rollback. Democrats, headed by their presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson, asserted that the opposition’s plans for rollback differed only slightly from their own approach and censured Republicans for misleading voters. Nonetheless, Eisenhower ascended to the presidency on January 20, 1953. In his inaugural address, Eisenhower emphasized his commitment to rollback and devoted forty-one of forty-eight total paragraphs of his inauguration speech to foreign affairs. Even so, James Reston of *New York Times* reported that Eisenhower still failed to clarify “what he meant by encouraging the liberation of the Communist satellites.”²⁸

Despite the rhetoric, Republicans soon realized that aggressive rollback could potentially carry grave consequences and quickly abandoned the policy after Eisenhower’s election. Several international factors influenced this change in tone. The brutal suppression of the East German Uprising in March 1953 demonstrated for U.S. leaders the zeal with which the Kremlin would defend its influence in Eastern Europe.²⁹ In the aftermath of this event, the NSC concluded that Soviet leaders had complete

²⁷ John Foster Dulles, “Policy of Boldness,” *Life*, May 19, 1952, 146-154.

²⁸ Russell Porter, “Harriman Rejects Eisenhower View: General’s Idea of Liberating Satellites a ‘Trap,’ He Tells Political Science Parley,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1952; and James Reston, “Inaugural is Held to Extend U.S. Commitments to World: Despite Republican Campaign and Policy, President Asks More Internationalism,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1953.

²⁹ Historians have traditionally characterized the 1953 uprising as a worker’s revolt. The June events began as a strike against increasing work norms, and gained support among youth in East Berlin. The revolt was quelled by Soviet forces as it seemed to be on the verge of a government takeover. However, recent scholarship has characterized the uprising as a broader people’s revolt, noting in particular the participation of peasants. See Gregory R. Witkowski, “Peasants Revolt?: Re-evaluating the 17 June Uprising in East Germany,” *German History* 24, no. 2 (2006): 243-266.

control of the political, military, and security organs in the satellites. In addition, Soviet nuclear stockpiles had grown to the point that they posed a threat to U.S. security regardless of American nuclear superiority, a development Dulles termed “enoughness.” In light of the unlikely odds for successful liberation of Eastern Europe and the growing nuclear threat that such efforts might provoke, U.S. leaders, including Eisenhower and Dulles, became convinced, as had Truman, that rollback posed an unacceptably high risk.³⁰

While circumstances prevented the Eisenhower administration from pursuing the type of aggressive and dynamic policies it had promised voters, it did not publicly acknowledge that it had abandoned this option. Though Stalin’s death in March 1953 opened the door for reduced tensions with the new regime in Moscow, Eisenhower understood that such any negotiated settlement regarding the German question or postwar spheres of influence in Europe could potentially be disastrous. In addition to giving the impression that America had accepted the status quo of a divided Europe for the sake of détente with the Soviet Union, the president risked losing the support of constituents and hardliners within his own party who counted on the unwavering resolve of the president in his pursuit of rollback. In order to maintain support at home, U.S. officials rejected the possibility of negotiations with the new Soviet leadership that might reduce tensions with the Soviet Union.³¹

Behind their seemingly all or nothing approach, decision-makers did little to achieve their stated goals. Much like their predecessors, Republicans once again placed

³⁰ Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, 288; and Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*, 147-148.

³¹ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 99-100.

psychological warfare at the center of foreign policy.³² Adopted in December 1953, NSC 174 called for the intensification of covert psychological efforts aimed at exploiting nationalism and disaffection among satellite leaders. While the document allowed for the scaling back of the more militaristic and aggressive aspects of rollback, it placed greater emphasis on “the operation of adequate technical facilities for broadcasting to the satellites...to conserve and promote anti-communist sentiment.” Directors in New York ordered RFE to emphasize the right of nations to have independent governments of their own choosing.³³

RFE participated in a number of campaigns designed to illustrate U.S. support for an independent Eastern Europe. One such campaign, referred to as Operation Focus, sent unmanned balloons carrying propaganda leaflets into Hungarian territory in 1954. While many of the leaflets touched down in remote regions of Hungary, Hungarians all over the country soon became aware of their existence as security forces took aggressive measures to prevent the circulation of these leaflets in an effort that became known as the “leaflet war.” Security forces threatened arrest for those distributing the leaflets, searched homes in the vicinity of reported balloon sightings, burned leaflets, and even attempted to shoot

³² In 1947, the War Council defined psychological warfare as overt and covert propaganda channeled through domestic and international informational programs to influence the minds of the enemy. The council divided weapons of psychological warfare into three categories. White operations were activities publicly acknowledged by and associated with the American government. Grey operations were only implicitly connected to the U.S. government. Black operations, such as RFE, were covert and designed to allow the government a considerable degree of plausible deniability. See U.S. Department of State, “248. Memorandum from the Deputy Director (Wright) to Director of Central Intelligence Hillenkoetter, Washington, November 4, 1947” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950: Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, eds. C. Thomas Thorne, David S. Patterson, and Glenn W. LaFantasie (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), 633-634; Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*, 147-148; and Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12-13.

³³ “Document No. 3: NSC 174, ‘United States Policy Toward the Soviet Satellites in Eastern Europe,’ December 11, 1953,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, eds. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 34-53.

newly arriving balloons out of the air. In Sopronkövesd, security forces in battle formations exhausted their ammunition supplies firing at the airborne leaflets. Civilians looked on excitedly as the officers supposedly failed to hit a single balloon. By February 1956, efforts to control leaflet distribution had proven so ineffective and detrimental that Deputy Foreign Minister Endre Sík censured the balloon campaign as a violation of Hungarian sovereignty and asserted that the balloons had caused a plane crash resulting in two deaths. These accusations helped to create the myth among Hungarians and Americans alike that American officials were working actively to liberate the satellite countries from Soviet domination. In fact, American efforts fell far short of the foreign policy stance Republicans had promised their supporters in 1952.³⁴

While Eisenhower spent much of his first presidential term sweeping the notion of dynamic rollback under the rug, his prospects for a second term rested on his ability to demonstrate his devotion to this same policy initiative. As the 1956 election drew near, prominent Americans such as Dr. Lev Dobriansky, a former Republican National Committee official and President of the American-Ukrainian Congress, criticized Eisenhower and declared that the president, despite his 1952 campaign rhetoric, had simply continued Truman's ineffective containment policies. Republicans, fearful that a weak foreign policy stance might cost them the election, attempted to demonstrate that their dedication to rollback remained firm. In a meeting with nine exiled Eastern European leaders, Secretary of State Dulles promised that the U.S. would not accept a divided Europe and would never compromise its pledge to work toward the liberation of

³⁴ "Document No. 6: Dispatch 1086, 'Balloons to Hungary,' March 24, 1955," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, eds. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 66-68; Matthews, *Explosion*, 97; and Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, 284-285.

these states. Eisenhower went even further in his 1955 Christmas address, promising that “if any East European country shows a visible opposition to the Soviet oppression, it can count on our help.”³⁵

As Eisenhower and the Republicans, under pressure from sliding public opinion, began to realize how foreign policy practices might cost them the upcoming elections, First Secretary of the CPSU Nikita Khrushchev addressed the Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow. On February 25, 1956, Khrushchev delivered a report to a closed session of the congress. His “secret speech” condemned certain aspects of Stalinism. In particular, he strongly criticized Stalin’s purges of the communist ranks, which resulted in the arrest of millions of Soviet citizens, including many top Party officials, on bogus charges of treason. Khrushchev noted that most purge victims were loyal Party members who falsely confessed to these unfounded allegations under torture.³⁶

While Khrushchev delivered this report to a closed session, its contents were soon known around the world. The speech implicated communist leaders who had been associated with the Stalinist crimes, including the so-called “mini-Stalins” of Eastern Europe who had directed their countries’ purges following World War II, and triggered demands that they be held accountable. The shockwaves that followed resulted in sharp political crises that threatened the stability of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.³⁷

Hoping to bolster support for his foreign policy practices as well as capitalize on a moment of Soviet vulnerability, Eisenhower pushed the National Security Council to

³⁵ Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 112-113; and “Administration Scared: G.O.P. Ex-Aide Says It Ignores ‘Liberation’ of Satellites,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1956.

³⁶ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 270-274.

³⁷ Michael Kort, *The Soviet Colossus: History and Aftermath*, 6th ed. (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, Inc., 2006), 289-291.

adopt NSC 5608 which called for renewed efforts aimed at the liberation of Eastern Europe. RFE directors in New York directed broadcasters to exploit the implications of Khrushchev's secret speech. They criticized the Stalinist leaders of the satellite states, while favorably portraying independent communist leaders, in particular Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia.³⁸ The timing of America's renewed efforts was not without irony. Unlike Stalin, Khrushchev did not see an inherent contradiction between détente with the United States and revolutionary expansion of Soviet influence. In fact, he was quite hopeful about the possibility of cooperation with the West. However, these hopes vanished as U.S. policies and rhetoric became more aggressive in June 1956.³⁹

Events in Poland that year convinced both Khrushchev and Eisenhower that U.S. efforts abroad were having an effect. Workers in Poznań hoped that revelations of Stalin's atrocities would result in social and economic reforms. When this did not immediately happen, they took to the streets in a bitter protest for higher wages and better working and living conditions. These protests occurred in tandem with an intellectual movement that questioned Poland's own Stalinist path and broached the issue of greater independence from Moscow. Though Soviet forces surrounded Warsaw in October to quell the Poznań Uprising, the Soviet response was, in the end, conciliatory. Following a diplomatic standoff between Khrushchev and the newly elected Polish leader Władysław Gomułka, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops and permitted Gomułka to initiate

³⁸ By acting independently in his efforts to realize a Balkan federation and arresting Stalinist agents in Yugoslavia, Tito incurred Stalin's anger, but his defiance resulted in wide popular support and a decisive split with the Soviet Union. See Bennett Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States & Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 35-36; "Document No. 12: 'U.S. Policy Toward the Soviet Satellites in Eastern Europe,' July 6, 1956," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, eds. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 119-128.

³⁹ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 186.

reforms in Poland as long as they did not challenge the authority of the CPSU. In light of this perceived victory, American leaders were elated at the possibility for further breakthroughs in Eastern Europe.⁴⁰

As American elections neared and the uprisings in Poland seemed to signal the success of Eisenhower's policies, the Republican Party stressed its commitment to Eastern Europe and basked in the glory of its supposed achievements abroad. Republican Representative Patrick J. Hillings of California called the Poznań uprising a prime example of the "success of the Eisenhower foreign policy" made possible by the president's steadfast refusal to accept the status quo in Eastern Europe.⁴¹ In making claims such as this, the Republican Party publicly committed Eisenhower to a policy of involvement in the region. While it was easy to accept credit for the favorable developments in Poland, Eisenhower and subsequent administrations would find it much more difficult to accept responsibility for less favorable outcomes. In addition, they would face great consternation should they attempt to abandon their position as such a move might produce disastrous consequences for American prestige abroad and public support at home. Consequently, they hoped to maintain the fiction of a United States unwaveringly committed to the liberation of Eastern Europe. However, developments in Hungary would soon force them to navigate the implications of this strategy.⁴²

⁴⁰ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2: 419-420.

⁴¹ "G.O.P Asks Credit on Red Uprisings: 'Truth Squad' Member Says Foreign Policy Stimulated Iron Curtain Revolts," *New York Times*, October 25, 1956.

⁴² Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*, 175.

The Hungarian Revolution

After the conclusion of World War II and the de facto acceptance of a postwar Europe divided into spheres of influence, Stalin aggressively endeavored to achieve the Sovietization of Eastern Europe. Initially, social democratic parties had some electoral popularity in the immediate postwar period and functioned alongside communist officials in popular front governments. Over time, however, communist leaders, using secret police and other means, forcefully absorbed them into their own ranks. Furthermore, they abolished all other noncommunist organizations to establish de facto one-party states. After assuming political control, they adopted the Soviet model of a communist dictatorship in 1947. By 1948, Soviet-backed communist parties in Eastern Europe had successfully neutralized institutional and political opposition and brought Stalinist-style practices and leadership to Eastern Europe. Many of these “mini-Stalins” continued to hold power in 1956.⁴³

Mátyás Rákosi, the First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers’ Party and Prime Minister of Hungary, was one such leader, often referred to as “Stalin’s best pupil.” After his release from prison in Hungary in 1940, he served as Secretary of the Comintern in Moscow before returning to Budapest to organize and lead the Hungarian Communist Party in 1945.⁴⁴ Rákosi emulated the Soviet leader in his governance of Hungary by implementing collectivization of agriculture, creating his own cult of personality, and carrying out a series of brutal purges of the Party ranks. Using the secret police force, Államvédelmi Hatóság (ÁVH), Rákosi oversaw the arrest and prosecution of over a

⁴³ Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges*, 27-30.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Lenin established the Comintern in 1919 to promote a world proletarian revolution in order to provide the Bolsheviks with communist partners around the world. See Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 157-158.

million Hungarian citizens between 1949 and 1953. In doing so, he cut Party membership by nearly half as hundreds of thousands of loyal party members were jailed, exiled, or executed.⁴⁵ When Stalin ordered a purge of allegedly “Titoist” Party members in Eastern Europe in 1948, Rákosi seized the opportunity to clear the ranks of potential political opponents. The following year, the First Secretary had former Foreign Minister László Rajk arrested and convicted under false allegations that he collaborated with Tito in a plot to murder Stalin. Rajk was executed on October 15, 1949.

Unlike Rajk, Imre Nagy was among the Hungarian communist elites who survived Rákosi's purges. Nagy, like Rákosi, had returned to Hungary from Moscow in 1945 to help form the Hungarian Communist Party and participate in the postwar multiparty government before the communist takeover in 1948. By Stalin's death, Soviet leaders had soured somewhat on Rákosi, whom they blamed for mismanaging the economic and social crises caused by collectivization and the terror. They also expressed concerns over his concentration of power as both First Secretary and Prime Minister. In June of 1953, Soviet Premier Georgii Malenkov and secret police chief Lavrentii Beria of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), both supporters of Nagy in light of his record of service as an NKVD informant in Moscow, persuaded the Hungarian Central Committee to divide Rákosi's positions. As a result, Nagy assumed the position of Prime Minister in 1953 at the “request” of Soviet leaders in Moscow.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Victor Sebestyen, *Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 41-46.

⁴⁶ “Document No. 1: Notes of a Meeting between the CPSU CC Presidium and a HWP Political Committee Delegation in Moscow, June 13 and 16, 1953,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 14-23.

Though Rákosi complied with the Soviet request, he immediately sought to undermine Nagy's authority and his influence in Moscow. From his position as First Secretary, Rákosi ensured that Nagy did not enjoy Party support for his New Course, a series of land reforms that abolished the much hated compulsory agricultural requisitions. Though the New Course enjoyed strong popularity, the lack of bureaucratic support left it in a state of perpetual instability. In response, Nagy turned to communist intellectuals to bolster popular support for his reforms through their literature.

Nagy's already tenuous position suffered a second blow when support from Moscow vanished with the political death of his two primary patrons. As a result of Khrushchev's efforts to consolidate his authority within the Soviet Politburo, Beria was executed in 1953 and Malenkov was demoted to deputy prime minister in 1955. With Nagy's chief supporters removed, Rákosi seized the opportunity to go on the offensive. He criticized Nagy's appeal to dissidents and asserted that the New Course had gone too far. Khrushchev agreed with Rákosi and demanded Nagy's resignation. When Nagy refused, Rákosi expelled him from the Party in April 1955.⁴⁷

The Hungarian government did not execute or arrest Nagy after his dismissal, a clear sign of a break from the Stalinist model of the recent past. Instead, Nagy remained a free, but powerless private citizen in Budapest. Though Nagy's reformist tendencies only extended to the realm of agriculture, his expulsion from the Party ranks in 1953 effectively distanced him from Rákosi's regime and the taint that accompanied it after

⁴⁷ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 51-67.

Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956. As a result, Nagy continued to find support among reformist intellectuals.⁴⁸

As Soviet leaders attempted to distance themselves from the Stalinist practices of the past by easing repressive measures, Khrushchev's policy of destalinization resulted in a series of political convulsions in Hungary. These events unfolded in tandem with a period of relaxed cultural controls referred to by historians as the "thaw." The twin developments of destalinization and the thaw opened the door for intellectuals and social elites in Hungary to publicly critique Stalinism and revisit the Rajk affair without fear of reprisal. In this vein, on June 27, 1956, Rajk's widow, Julia, spoke about the affair and her own five-year imprisonment at a meeting of the Petöfi Circle, a burgeoning public forum for dissident communist intellectuals that met at the Officers' Club in Budapest. At this talk, Julia accused the Hungarian regime of murder in the death of her husband.⁴⁹

This challenge to the validity of the Rajk affair represented only one part of a broader critique of the postwar wave of repression, as similar political cases were reexamined in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself. In this climate, pressure for Rákosi's resignation mounted. Soviet officials in Moscow removed the Hungarian leader from power in July on the grounds of "ill health" and insisted that he move to the Soviet Union to seek "medical treatment." They replaced Rákosi as General Secretary with Ernő Gerő. This appointment, however, suffered from the fact that Gerő had also been an active Stalinist during the purges and could not easily be distanced from this past.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 141-148.

⁴⁹ Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 86-87.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 92-95.

Nevertheless, Gerő made an initial effort to embrace the destalinization policy that resulted in his appointment. When Julia Rajk appealed to him for the public rehabilitation of her husband, Gerő agreed.⁵¹ As part of this rehabilitation, the state formally reburied Rajk at the Kerepesi cemetery in front of nearly 100,000 onlookers, including Nagy, on October 6. This date had particular importance in Hungarian history as it marks the execution of thirteen Hungarian generals during the failed revolution in 1848. A week later, Gerő sought to further assuage discontent by restoring Nagy's Party membership on October 13, 1956. Ten days later, this plan catastrophically backfired.⁵²

On October 23, students gathered in front of the Sándor Petőfi statue in Budapest. The statute memorialized the famous poet and revolutionary figure in the 1848 revolution. From there, the students began marching through the streets of Budapest. Though the students described the march as a show of solidarity with demonstrators in Poznan at the outset, they had already articulated a list of demands for the Party to adopt known as the "Sixteen Points." The points included a call for general elections, reorganization of the Hungarian Workers' Party, a new government under Nagy's leadership, the extradition of Rákosi from the Soviet Union for crimes against the Hungarian people, and the removal of Soviet military forces from Hungarian territory, among others.⁵³

⁵¹ After Stalin's death in 1953, his successors sought to restore the principle of rule by law (*zakonnost'*) to Soviet society. As part of this effort, Soviet leaders established a series of commissions to reevaluate the legality of Stalin-era convictions for political crimes. By 1960, 715,120 victims of wrongful convictions were acquitted and rehabilitated, many posthumously. See Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform After Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 5.

⁵² Sebastyen, *Twelve Days*, 88-98.

⁵³ "Document No. 24: The 'Sixteen Points' Prepared by Hungarian Students, October 22-23, 1956," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 14-23.

As the demonstrators passed in front of homes and businesses, thousands of workers and residents joined the crowds. This growth in numbers was followed by an emboldened radicalization in mood. Soon the marchers converged in Parliament Square, demanding reform and chanting “Imre Nagy!” Nagy emerged to speak to the crowd, but he misjudged the mood. His impromptu speech awkwardly emphasized the Party’s commitment to constitutional order. After he nervously fumbled through his remarks, he began singing the national anthem. Meanwhile, the crowd grew angrier and began to heckle him. Despite his lackluster oratory skills and obvious failure to appease the crowd, Nagy would soon find himself at the head of the Hungarian Revolution.⁵⁴

At around the same time that Nagy addressed the crowd at Parliament Square, a separate contingent of demonstrators gathered outside the Radio Budapest facility and insisted that the Sixteen Points be read on the air. Rather than agree to this request, ÁVH officers opened fire on the unarmed crowd. Hungarian military forces arrived shortly thereafter, but refused to shoot more civilians. Instead, they surrendered their weapons to the crowd, giving rifles to anyone who asked. Soon police, military officials, and workers from all over Budapest opened their weapons stores. This show of solidarity transformed the demonstrations into an armed, anti-communist insurrection.⁵⁵

The Soviet Politburo reacted to the events in Budapest with alarm. Members of the Central Committee in Moscow considered whether to reestablish order in Hungary through force. After receiving a call from Gerő requesting military assistance,

⁵⁴ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 143-146.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Khrushchev deployed Warsaw Pact forces already stationed in Hungary to Budapest.⁵⁶ In addition, Anastas Mikoyan, the only Central Committee member to oppose military action in favor of a political resolution, and Central Committee Secretary Mikhail Suslov departed for Budapest to provide firsthand reports to the Central Committee and oversee the military operation.

Mikoyan and Suslov's dispatches from Budapest initially calmed the Soviet leadership. After arriving in Budapest on October 24, they asserted that the situation in the city was more innocuous than they had originally feared and even criticized the Hungarian leadership for exaggerating the level of danger they faced. For example, the two men commented that Nagy spoke at Parliament Square at the request of the demonstrators and noted that he enjoyed immense popularity with them. They also praised his cooperative attitude with regard to Moscow. Buoyed by this assessment of the situation, Soviet leaders brought Nagy back into the governmental fold as prime minister that morning. They hoped that Nagy's popularity would prevent the rebellion from escalating further. Furthermore, Mikoyan and Suslov's report spelled the political demise of Gerő. The men detailed Gerő's lack of support both within the Hungarian Politburo, Hungary's communist executive committee, and among the general population. In light of this view, Soviet leaders instructed Gerő to step down as First Secretary on October 25, replacing him with the more moderate János Kádár.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Soviet leaders requested that the Hungarian government submit a formal request in writing. This request was made retroactively by former Prime Minister András Hegedüs after he had already been removed from office in favor of Nagy. See Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 151.

⁵⁷ "Document No. 25: Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium, October 23, 1956," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 217-218; and "Document No. 26: Situation Report from Anastas Mikoyan and Mikhail Suslov in Budapest to the CPSU CC Presidium, October 24,

As Soviet military forces moved into Budapest, they occupied town squares, bridges, and governmental buildings. In response, revolutionary “freedom fighters” set up barricades all over the city and engaged Soviet forces in a violent struggle that lasted four days. The Killián Barracks was a site of particularly strong Hungarian resistance. Pál Maléter, a Hungarian colonel who joined the rebels during the first days of the fighting, defended the barracks throughout the first Soviet invasion. Such successes forced Moscow to reconsider the costs of a military operation as the death toll reach 1,500.⁵⁸

As the Soviet military operation became increasingly counterproductive in light of the resiliency of the Hungarian resistance, the new Hungarian leadership persuaded Moscow to shift its approach away from hard-line military action in favor of a political resolution such as had been achieved in Poland. Soviet leaders, realizing that suppressing a full-scale rebellion would require a much greater military commitment, but unwilling to face the embarrassment of forced withdrawal, acquiesced to Nagy’s appeal for a ceasefire on October 28 and authorized limited reforms that did not threaten the communist position and Soviet influence in Hungary. Though they agreed to withdraw the Red Army from Budapest and completed this operation on October 30, these forces remained in the Hungarian countryside just outside of the city. Nonetheless, Soviet leaders placed their hopes for a political resolution in Nagy and expressed confidence that he could restore order in Hungary.⁵⁹

1956,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 219-221.

⁵⁸ Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 126-198.

⁵⁹ “Document No. 40: Working Notes from the CPSU CC Presidium Session, October 28, 1956,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 262-269; and Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth, *Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary, 1956* (New York: Central European University Press, 1999), 70-71.

This optimism quickly faded as Nagy took the reins of the Hungarian government and proved incapable of normalizing the situation to the satisfaction of Moscow. Nagy had the perhaps impossible task of appeasing the revolutionaries at home and the Soviet leaders in Moscow. Caught between a rock and a hard place, he made the dangerous decision to prioritize the latter, relying on broad support from below. He installed noncommunists in key government positions and allowed noncommunist parties to organize, which they did at a rate alarming to Soviet leaders. This development was particularly radical as the Soviet system did not allow for nongovernmental organizations of any kind, political or otherwise. The new government even agreed to bankroll these parties with funds from the Communist Party account at the National Bank to get them up and running. This included helping them to establish newspapers unrestricted by Party censorship. Yet the new government displayed a worrying disorganization and indecision in its attempts to reestablish order. It struggled even to implement curfews for the city's residents.⁶⁰

As the government fumbled in its attempts to reestablish order in Budapest, the Hungarian population and the newly enfranchised political parties turned their attention to the WTO. The WTO allowed Soviet forces to enter and remain on Hungarian soil and thus had facilitated Moscow's swift military response. Given this situation, Hungarian revolutionaries called upon Nagy to withdraw Hungary from the organization, declare the country's neutrality, and form a neutral bloc with Yugoslavia and Austria. In a radical move, Nagy acquiesced to this demand, declaring Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact in a radio address on November 1. He must have understood the danger of

⁶⁰ Granville, *The First Domino*, 79-85.

taking this step, but did so under growing pressure from revolutionaries, workers' councils, and outside political parties. To protect the state from a likely hostile Soviet response, Nagy immediately requested that the U.N. Security Council guarantee Hungary's neutrality. At the same time, these actions irrevocably destroyed Soviet hopes that Nagy would protect Soviet interests. The CPSU Central Committee issued orders for a massive invasion of Budapest, and sent additional Red Army troops across the Hungarian border.⁶¹

On November 4, Soviet forces entered Budapest to ensure Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. With troops in place, Soviet leaders demanded Nagy's resignation in favor of the newly installed General Secretary János Kádár, who reestablished political control shortly after his return to Hungary from Moscow on November 7. Nagy refused to resign, and instead sought diplomatic asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy. After deceiving Nagy into departing the embassy by promising him safety, however, Kádár had him arrested on November 22. The state eventually tried Nagy for treason and executed him in 1958.

Hungarian citizens, though drastically outnumbered and outmatched, continued to engage Soviet forces in a losing battle that claimed some 20,000 Hungarian lives. Convinced that it was just a matter of time before Western assistance arrived, they attempted to withstand the second Soviet invasion long enough for American aid to turn

⁶¹ Jeffrey Simon, *Warsaw Pact Forces: Problems of Command and Control* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 1-2; Csaba Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Declaration of Neutrality," *Cold War History* 6, no. 4 (November 2006): 481-488; "Imre Nagy and the 'Century-Old Dream' of Neutrality," in *The Hungarian Revolution, a White Book: The Story of the October Uprising as Recorded in Documents, Dispatches, Eye-Witness Accounts, and World-wide Reactions*, ed. Melvin J. Lasky (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), 181-182; and Document No. 74: Telegram from Imre Nagy to U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, November 2, 1956," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 346.

the tide of the battle. While heavy fighting subsided with the fall of the Killián Barracks on November 9, smaller skirmishes continued for several weeks during which Hungarians took to the airwaves to broadcast pleas to RFE for the United States to liberate them, but no such help was forthcoming. In the end, they were left with only their radios, a new regime, and a city in ruin. Another 180,000 Hungarians fled the country for Austria where they stayed in hastily prepared refugee camps before being dispersed to France, Britain, and the United States.⁶²

Aftermath and Radio Free Europe

In the aftermath of the revolution, Hungarian refugees and European media outlets joined together in a condemnatory chorus directed at the United States. They asserted that the U.S. leaders' Janus-faced response to the revolution had resulted in tragedy for Hungarians, who had believed the alleged assurances of liberation that U.S. leaders espoused in their rollback rhetoric. The revolution exposed rollback as empty rhetoric that masked an essentially defensive U.S. posture.

Critics abroad focused their criticisms on RFE, the psychological centerpiece of Eisenhower's rollback policies. Some, including the exiled president of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Anna Keathley, claimed that RFE had promised the revolutionaries American military assistance, prolonging the crisis unnecessarily. Others, such as Michael Gordy of *France-Soir*, went even further. Gordy asserted that RFE had caused the bloodshed in Hungary by inciting the revolution in the first place. Arch

⁶² Soviet forces successfully took the barracks within a few days of reentering Budapest. Maléter was executed alongside Nagy in 1958. Sebestyén, *Twelve Days*, 263-293; Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 210-211; "Our Situation—Tragic, But Not Hopeless," in *The Hungarian Revolution, a White Book: The Story of the October Uprising as Recorded in Documents, Dispatches, Eye-Witness Accounts, and World-wide Reactions*, ed. Melvin J. Lasky (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), 239-240.

Puddington, a former manager at RFE, has aptly described the sudden and dramatic shift in international perceptions of RFE after the Hungarian Revolution: “Before the revolution, RFE was a respected and valued institution of American Cold War strategy; after Hungary, RFE’s reputation would be forever tarnished as historians, diplomats and journalists accused the station of having made a bad situation worse.” Commentators coined the term “Radio Free Europe Syndrome” to describe U.S. efforts to undermine Soviet authority in Eastern Europe only to ignore cries for help when they had finally succeeded.⁶³

West German newspapers first published these criticisms based largely on testimonials from refugees, who claimed that RFE played a major role in and therefore shared responsibility for the tragedy in Hungary. As early as November 9, *Freies Wort*, the official press organ of the West German Free Democratic Party, asserted that “RFE’s aggressive propaganda is responsible to a large extent for the bloodbath that has occurred in Hungary for the last two weeks. A propaganda whose opportunistic agitation has to be paid for finally with the blood of people who have been led astray is a crime against humanity.” *Freies Wort*’s zeal can be attributed to its political affiliation with the Free Democrats, who stood in opposition to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and his administration. As Adenauer had allowed RFE to broadcast from West German territory, this allowed *Freies Wort* to extend culpability for the Hungarian Revolution to Adenauer.

⁶³ “Radio Free Europe’s ‘Sin’ in Revolt Told by Hungarian,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 30, 1956; “Radio Free Europe Said to Stir Revolt,” *New York Times*, November 13, 1956; and Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 90.

After all, the paper reasoned, Adenauer had provided the means for RFE to incite the revolution through West German airwaves.⁶⁴

While the debate over RFE in Europe may have originated in the context of domestic political interests in West Germany, the story rapidly spread beyond German borders. As it gained momentum, it became more generally accepted that RFE had at least promised military support if it had not overtly incited the revolution. Even the U.N. criticized RFE for its role in the tragedy. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, characterized the general feeling in the U.N. as follows: “for 10 years we have been exciting the Hungarians through our Radio Free Europe, and now that they are in trouble, we turn our backs on them.”⁶⁵

While subsequent investigations conducted by the West German government, the Council of Europe, the Central Intelligence Agency, and Radio Free Europe determined that RFE had, in fact, not broadcast any direct assurances, they did find that RFE’s transmissions to Hungary during the revolution were reckless and had potentially exacerbated the crisis.⁶⁶ For example, RFE aired a press review of U.N. proceedings on November 4, shortly after Soviet troops reentered Budapest. This review featured an article from *The Observer*, but RFE presented the article with several significant

⁶⁴ Despite the accusations, the Chancellor had no influence over RFE activities. Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 74.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of State, “185. “Notes on the 46th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, November 13, 1956,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957: Volume XXV, Eastern Europe*, ed. John P. Glennon, Edward C. Keefer, Ronald D. Landa, and Stanley Shaloff (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 424.

⁶⁶ In recent studies, historians benefitting from declassified documents, including transcripts of RFE broadcasts, have echoed the findings of these earlier investigations. However, they have come to more nuanced conclusions, suggesting that Hungarian listeners fundamentally misunderstood RFE as a direct line of communication from the U.S. government and interpreted its broadcasts accordingly. See Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy*.

omissions to suggest that the U.N. would act in Hungary's defense, but would not make such a decision until after the American presidential election. The report went on to assert that should "the Hungarians continue to fight until Wednesday, we shall be closer to a world war than at any time since 1939."⁶⁷

Additionally, several commentators, such as Leslie Bain, argued that RFE subverted the revolution by undermining Nagy's authority in their broadcasts. A Western journalist, Bain covered the Hungarian exodus in the aftermath of the revolution. He addressed RFE complicity in the crisis in his 1957 monograph *The Reluctant Satellites*, one of the first major works to examine the Hungarian Revolution. In Bain's version of events, at the outset of the revolution, RFE officials in New York blamed Nagy for allegedly calling for Soviet intervention, and referred to it as "a fact he will have to live down." RFE's Hungarian desk, manned primarily by Hungarian nationalists in exile, responded by taking aggressively anti-Nagy positions in their broadcasts. Their basic strategy was to generate popular disapproval of Nagy so that he would be removed in favor of the Western-oriented Cardinal József Mindszenty. In doing so, RFE encouraged Hungarians to put greater pressure on Nagy and compromised the new leader's ability to regain control in Hungary.

Bain's coverage painted a damning picture of RFE as undermining Nagy's leadership throughout the critical period of Soviet intervention. As Bain asserted in *The Reporter* on January 24, 1957, "Radio Free Europe...greatly embarrassed the Nagy revolutionary government with their broadcasts by insisting on goals which by no stretch of the imagination that government could ever have reached." Bain quotes one refugee

⁶⁷ Johanna Granville, "Caught with Jam on Our Fingers': Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956," *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 5 (November 2005):825.

who claimed that “the demands of the Hungarian insurgents grew because RFE broadcasts encouraged the belief that decisive aid would come from the West. . . RFE would have better served Hungary’s cause by frankly informing the Hungarian people that the only aid which the West was able to supply was food and medicine.” Through his writings, Bain suggested that RFE made impossible demands of Nagy and encouraged the Hungarian population to believe that such extreme demands could be met.⁶⁸

Such accusatory declarations raised questions regarding RFE’s content during the revolution and prompted a series of investigations. In an internal investigation in December 1956, William Griffith, an RFE political advisor, blamed the total breakdown of control mechanisms at the RFE facilities in Munich for questionable broadcasts during the revolution. In an attempt to avoid pre-broadcast style censorship such as used by the Soviet Union, RFE officials had only required its reporters, primarily Hungarian exiles, to provide pre-broadcast synopses. Broadcasters at the Hungarian desk offered misleading summaries, an unsurprising outcome given the understandably strong nationalist sentiments of their authors. Moreover, it took considerable time to complete the post-broadcast review process as program contents had to be translated into English before being reviewed at RFE headquarters in New York, which was six hours behind Munich. As a result, by the time American officials read the transcripts and sent corresponding directives to Munich operators, these memos were already outdated and irrelevant to the fast changing realities.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Leslie Bain, “How We Failed Hungary,” *The Reporter*, January 24, 1957, 26-28, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/Reporter-1957jan24-00026> (accessed October 12, 2012); and Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, 305.

⁶⁹ “Document No. 105: ‘Policy Review of Voice for Free Hungary Programming, October 23-November 23, 1956,’ December 5, 1956,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba

These conditions made it virtually impossible for U.S. officials to effectively oversee RFE's activities. In fact, they were almost completely unaware of what was being transmitted beyond the iron curtain in their name. At the 39th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems in Washington on October 26, Chairman Jacob D. Beam inquired about RFE, "What are we telling Hungary?" Demonstrating his own ignorance about RFE content, Department of State official Arthur M. Cox responded, "Mostly the facts." Given the inability of U.S. officials to oversee the station's activities during the revolution, RFE reporters were free to engage in the reckless journalism so criticized after the revolution's failure.⁷⁰

Regardless of the reasons behind the bureaucratic breakdown at RFE, journalists and refugees stressed that RFE was, at the very least, partially responsible for the tragedy in Hungary. One Hungarian refugee asserted that "it would be sheer ingratitude on the part of the Soviets not to decorate the directors of Radio Free Europe with the Order of Lenin." In light of such criticisms, U.S. officials, already facing international embarrassment for failure to uphold their rollback promises, distanced themselves from the scandal. Though they maintained that RFE operated solely on the basis of donations from the American people and was managed by the independently run Free Europe Committee, this was far from reality. As Bain and others have noted, RFE received most

Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 464-484; Matthews, *Explosion*, 572; and Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy*, 227.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, "117. Notes on the 39th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, October 26, 1956," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957: Volume XXV, Eastern Europe*, ed. John P. Glennon, Edward C. Keefer, Ronald D. Landa, and Stanley Shaloff (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 300.

of its funding and guidance from the State Department and the CIA. It was, he remarks, “the best known secret in East and West.”⁷¹

Eisenhower appeared deeply committed to rollback at the outset of the Hungarian Revolution. In response to the dissatisfaction wrought by President Truman’s gradualist policy of containment, Eisenhower and Dulles stressed their commitment to aggressive and dynamic policies during the successful 1952 presidential campaign. Yet they quickly discovered, as had their predecessors, that rollback was not practical in light of Soviet nuclear capabilities. In light of this reality, the Eisenhower administration refused to publicly acknowledge that it had given up on the policy and even reaffirmed its resolve as the 1956 elections neared. However, the Hungarian Revolution in October abruptly exposed these campaign promises as mere rhetoric. Though officials had repeatedly promised U.S. assistance to Eastern Europe if these states took the first steps toward independence from the Soviet Union, no such assistance arrived in Hungary.

As a result of their failure to follow through on their own foreign policy statements, U.S. leaders faced international embarrassment in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution, a fact that was compounded by the subsequent criticism levied against the Radio Free Europe, the centerpiece of America’s rollback efforts. Though the U.S. sought to distance itself from accusations concerning its careless policies and methods, journalists eager to cover the story of U.S. inaction frustrated such efforts. While international support for U.S. Cold War policies suffered in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution, U.S. officials hoped to prevent a similar response at home.

⁷¹ Leslie Bain, *The Reluctant Satellites: An Eyewitness Report on East Europe and the Hungarian Revolution* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 207-208.

CHAPTER II

The End of Ambiguity

The Official Line

The U.S. response to the Hungarian Revolution brought the obvious discrepancies between American promises and policies out into the open. While revelations surrounding these contradictions prompted international criticism of U.S. policies and institutions, similar assessments were largely absent from the American media landscape. Far from echoing the sentiments of critics abroad, American journalists, with few exceptions, reflected the views of leaders in Washington and downplayed the shortcomings of and inconsistencies in American foreign policy. As a result, U.S. leaders were spared the kind of unfavorable response they had received around the world. This is not to say that governmental leaders necessarily directed journalists to report in this manner. As noted in the introduction, there are several possible explanations. Perhaps the president's close relationship with major news media publishers or covert media campaigns like Operation Candor motivated press leaders to avoid focusing on the negative implications of American inaction in their reports. As other studies have amply demonstrated, Eisenhower was no stranger to these tactics of media influence.

However, informational concerns are perhaps the most convincing explanation in the case of the Hungarian Revolution. News outlets, much like the U.S. government, faced considerable informational shortages throughout the revolution. Most foreign correspondents reported on the crisis from Austrian territory and focused on the throngs of refugees who crossed the Austria-Hungary border to find temporary refuge in Vienna

rather than the events in Hungary itself. They relied heavily on RFE, international press reports, and the American government itself for news from within Hungary. Perhaps as a result, their reports largely mirrored the positions maintained by U.S. leaders as the Hungarian crisis unfolded.

Following Nagy's appointment as prime minister, American officials voiced immediate skepticism that the Hungarian leader was anything more than a Soviet puppet given his background as a Moscow-trained NKVD informant. In a telegram to the U.S. embassy in Belgrade on October 25, Dulles expressed fears that the new regime had requested Soviet military intervention in order to retaliate against the revolutionaries.¹ Neither Dulles nor President Eisenhower saw in Nagy a figure who would challenge Hungary's close ties to the Soviet Union. In their view, Nagy was only a temporary leader. Thus, Dulles maintained that "the present government is not one we want to do much with."²

American news media echoed this negative and dismissive view of Nagy. *Washington Post* initially characterized Nagy as "a symbol of everything opposing Stalinism" and a figure who could help Hungary cope with "widespread political unrest and economic difficulties" following his reinstatement in the Communist Party on October 13. However, their depictions, along with those featured in other prominent

¹ Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles, State Department, to U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, approved by Jacob D. Beam, October 25, 1956, p. 1 "Flashpoints" Project, Box 2, Folder "10/26/56" Record #82362, National Security Archive, Washington D. C. quoted in Johanna Granville, "Caught with Jam on Our Fingers': Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956," *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 5 (November 2005): 828.

² Dulles telephone conversation with Shanley, 29 October 1956, quoted in Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges*, 92.

American news outlets, became increasingly negative after Soviet leadership appointed him to his new post.³

As news of Nagy's political ascendance crossed the Atlantic, U.S. press outlets introduced the American people to the new head of the Hungarian government. Press reports reconstructed the basic facts of Nagy's background: a Moscow-trained communist who returned to Budapest as the Red Army swept through Hungary in 1944 in order to lead the Hungarian Communist Party in the postwar coalition government along with Rákosi and Gerő. Several reports painted Nagy as ruthless and power hungry. A biting editorial in *Time* suggested that Nagy capitalized on his position as Interior Minister to collectivize agriculture and establish control over Hungary's secret police. Furthermore, they implied that he oversaw the arrests of the Smallholder Party leaders in 1947, making possible the communist assertion of political control. In this view, Nagy had always been and would always be a Soviet quisling in whom Kremlin leaders saw "a soft face to smile at the workers."⁴ Granted, not all news articles were quite as scathing. For example, a *New York Times* editorial entitled "A Strange Communist" noted that other communists regarded Nagy as "peculiar and perhaps even dangerous," and mentioned his critical views on collectivization. In this regard, it is exceptional. Even so, the editorial repeated the usual tropes about Nagy's Soviet background and experience.⁵

American journalists were quick to blame Nagy for the arrival of the Red Army, claiming that he personally requested assistance from Soviet forces to crush the uprising.

³ "Nagy Restored to Party Role," *Washington Post*, October 5, 1956.

⁴ "Nagy is a Hard-Bitten Red, 'No Democrat,'" *Washington Post*, October 25, 1956; Lloyd Norman, "Pentagon Sees Hungary in Losing Battle: Reds Can Quell Revolt in a Few Days," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 28, 1956; "Two Communist Faces," *Time*, November 5, 1956, 34-35.

⁵ "A Strange Communist," *New York Times*, October 22, 1956.

The press framed the Hungarian revolution as equally a nationalist and an anti-communist cause. In this view, Nagy had betrayed the Hungarian people and requested Soviet military assistance in order to shore up the authority of his new government. Several articles referenced Nagy's "disturbing" request that Hungarians welcome the Soviet forces as friends and allies while being gunned down by them in the streets.⁶ A *New York Times* editorial explored why Poland had peacefully achieved some reforms while Hungary's movement ended in violence. It concluded:

Gomulka was the expression of the desire of the Polish people. . . . Nagy and Kadar have had to call out Russian tanks and Russian troops to kill patriotic Hungarians in the streets of Budapest. They came to power with hands stained with the blood of their people. . . . Their survival in power is made possible only by occupying Russian forces.⁷

Though the lack of verifiable information on the situation in Hungary might have warranted caution, American journalists presented Nagy's complicity in the Soviet military response as a foregone conclusion. A *Washington Post* article even used the lack of evidence to lend credence to its assertions about Hungary's new leader and his actions. After emphasizing the difficulties that reporters faced in gaining information from Hungary, the article asserted:

Nevertheless, certain points are clear enough. . . . It is inconceivable that the insurrection could have continued after the intervention of the Soviet forces in response to the desperate appeal by Nagy himself. . . . It will never be forgotten that it was Nagy who called in the Russians to slaughter his countrymen. . . and called upon the townspeople to "greet these friends and allies with love."⁸

⁶ "Mobs Battle Red Army in Budapest; Many Die," *Washington Post*, October 25, 1956; "Martyrs of Budapest," *New York Times*, October 25, 1956; and Joseph Alsop and Stewart Alsop, "Matter of Fact...: After the Bloodbath," *Washington Post*, October 26, 1956.

⁷ "Poland and Hungary," *New York Times*, October 26, 1956.

⁸ "Hungarian Apocalypse," *Washington Post*, October 25, 1956.

Media continued to mirror governmental opinions as they evolved throughout the crisis. Even after Nagy took the drastic political steps of securing the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Budapest, allowing noncommunist parties to organize, limiting censorship, and establishing a coalition government, Secretary of State Dulles remained suspicious of Nagy and continued to consider him untrustworthy and incapable of steering the Hungarians out of the crisis. In an intelligence report to the National Security Council, the Secretary of State contended that Nagy was incapable of steering Hungary out of the crisis and reported that rebels were demanding his resignation. He went on to speculate that Cardinal József Mindszenty, the Catholic Primate of Hungary who had been convicted of treason in 1949 for his oppositional stance against the communist government, might achieve success where Nagy had failed due to the prevalence of Catholicism in Hungary.⁹

Likewise, U.S. news outlets continued to evince skepticism of Nagy and his actions. In addition to downplaying his liberalized political initiatives, American journalists engaged in a campaign to defame and discredit the Hungarian leader. Even as Soviet forces withdrew from Budapest, editorials in *New York Times* and *Washington Post* suggested that Nagy intended to allow a Soviet military presence in Hungary and that his promises of Soviet withdrawal could not be trusted. In addition, news reports focused on Nagy's alleged lack of support among Hungarians who dismissed the Prime Minister's broadcasts over Budapest Radio and demanded that he resign. Articles and

⁹ "Document No. 62: Memorandum of Discussion at the 302nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, November 1, 1956, 9-10:55 a.m.," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, ed. Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 262-269.

editorials continued to emphasize Nagy's loyalty to Moscow leading up to his withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the second Soviet invasion.¹⁰

Several newspapers lavished praise on Cardinal Mindszenty, even as they dismissed Nagy's leadership. A front page article in *Washington Post* reported that while 2,000 demonstrators gathered in Kossuth and chanted "Out with the government of murderers!," Mindszenty, returning to Budapest after eight years in prison at the hands of Rákosi, "raised his hands in blessing to the throngs. Women knelt in the streets. Men bared their heads."¹¹ Like officials in Washington, the American press was enamored with Mindszenty. Noting that Catholics made up sixty to seventy percent of the Hungarian population, journalists claimed that prominent Hungarian citizens and politicians considered the cardinal the most logical choice to establish a new government. Furthermore, they maintained that freedom fighters, still wary of Nagy's government and its ties to Moscow, believed that Mindszenty was Hungary's best hope for bringing the revolution to a conclusion. In their speculations about who would lead Hungary in the future, American newspapers not only resembled the views of Dulles and other government leaders in Washington. They also paralleled those broadcast to Hungarians via RFE.¹²

American media outlets further reflected government attitudes in their coverage of Radio Free Europe. As news of the accusations by Hungarian refugees and European

¹⁰ "Nagy Gives In To Hungarian Rebel Forces: Pledges Elections; Begs for Support," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 31, 1956; "Nagy Says Soviets Will Withdraw," *New York Times*, October 29, 1956; and "Hungary Breaks Free," *Washington Post*, November 2, 1956.

¹¹ "Threatened Russians Pull Out of Budapest: 2000 Demonstrate Against Premier, Demand End of 'Regime of Murder,'" *Washington Post*, November 1, 1956.

¹² "Tenacious Primate: Josef Cardinal Mindszenty," *New York Times*, October 31, 1956; and John MacCormac, "Rebels Seek Leadership," *New York Times*, November 1, 1956.

journalists surrounding RFE's complicity in the revolution spread, American press reports maintained the fictional distance between Washington and Munich. Most articles reported that RFE was an anti-communist organization, privately financed by donations to the Crusade for Freedom, independently run by the Free Europe Committee, and operated by Eastern European exiles.¹³ Edmund Taylor, reporter for *Washington Post*, stressed the separation between RFE and the U.S. government more than most. In a December 1956 article, he described a U.S. commander who refused to allow military and civilian personnel under his command to contribute to a Hungarian fund because it had been started by the wife of an RFE employee.¹⁴ Though a few articles conceded that prominent Americans such as President Eisenhower and General Lucious D. Clay were among the contributors to the Crusade for Freedom, they asserted that the men made these contributions privately as "individual Americans."¹⁵

In a similar vein, American media did not echo the European criticism of RFE and its behavior. Nor did they ignore the accusations of RFE's complicity in the crisis either. Rather, articles and editorials addressed these accusations in a concerted effort to debunk them. News reports defended RFE against allegations of inciting the revolution or prolonging it unnecessarily with assurances of American help. In particular, domestic

¹³ Allen Dulles founded the Free Europe Committee in 1949 for the purpose of promoting American influence abroad and overseeing anti-communist propaganda efforts such as RFE broadcasts. In 1950, General Eisenhower initiated the Crusade for Freedom as a fundraising effort for RFE's operational expenses. However, in reality, the campaign served as a public facade to obscure the CIA's secret funding of the organization. See Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, 46-50; and Cummings, *Cold War Radio*, 20-23. For examples of media reports on RFE see "Radio & Revolt," *Time*, November 26, 1956, 65; "Bonn Studies Role in Hungary Played by Radio Free Europe," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1956; and Arthur J. Olsen, "Free Radio Poses Issues for Bonn: Charges Create a Political Problem-German Inquiry Results May Be Deferred," *New York Times*, December 10, 1956.

¹⁴ Edmund Taylor, "How We 'Betrayed' the Hungarian Rebels: Our Default in Hungary," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1956.

¹⁵ Arthur J. Olsen, "Free Radio Denies Inciting Hungary: Directors Hope to Prove Charges are Fake-Bonn Inspects Recordings," *New York Times*, December 9, 1956.

media minimized such accusations by framing them as a reflection of dysfunctional West German politics. *New York Times* reporter Arthur J. Olsen asserted that members of the Free Democratic Party promoted the RFE scandal to score political points against Chancellor Adenauer. Olsen noted that Adenauer had allowed RFE to operate on a West German operating license without any governmental oversight. This decision had resulted in an embarrassing Soviet propaganda campaign against RFE. A characteristic cartoon attack as part of this campaign featured “a Hitler-like figure snarling the old imperialistic threats into a Radio Free Europe microphone.” Furthermore, Olsen reported that no Hungarian refugees interviewed by RFE officials claimed to have heard assurances from RFE; most had just heard secondhand rumors.¹⁶ Though subsequent investigations would later corroborate this version of events, other newspapers went so far as to suggest that RFE had cautioned freedom fighters not to push too far in their demands at the risk of undermining the Nagy government. This claim was similarly discounted in later investigations.¹⁷

Certainly, U.S. media did not universally defend RFE. *New York Times* foreign correspondent in Vienna John MacCormac censured RFE and the U.S. government for their hand in the revolution. He asserted that RFE had continuously quoted Eisenhower and Dulles’ liberation rhetoric and assurances that the United States would help Eastern Europe in any attempt to break free of Soviet control only to go silent on the issue as Soviet tanks moved into Budapest. However, such reports were highly exceptional.

¹⁶ Arthur J. Olsen, “Free Radio Poses Issues for Bonn: Charges Create a Political Problem-German Inquiry Results May Be Deferred,” *New York Times*, December 10, 1956; and Arthur J. Olen, “Free Radio Europe Denies Inciting Hungary: Director Hopes to Prove Charges are Fake-Bonn Inspects Recordings,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1956.

¹⁷ “Long Live Hungary,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 1956; and Edmund Taylor, “How We ‘Betrayed’ the Hungarian Rebels: Our Default in Hungary,” *Washington Post*, November 18, 1956.

Furthermore, they did not receive nearly the attention as others that toed the official line more closely. For example, while some of the articles mentioned above were featured in the first few pages, MacCormac's story could be found 216 pages deep into the Sunday edition, in the E section.¹⁸

Defining Aid

In light of the revolution and the U.S. decision not to get involved, Democrats, led by their presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson, exploited the now apparent vulnerabilities in Eisenhower's foreign policy. Responding to prominent Republicans who credited the Eisenhower administration and its foreign policy initiatives for the developments in Hungary and Poland, Stevenson asserted that "No credit goes to men who in recent weeks have exposed themselves to nothing more dangerous than their own campaign oratory." In a speech to a crowd of 21,000 at Gilmore Field in Los Angeles, Stevenson called the recent praise "a gross effort to exploit the anguish of brave people to make votes in an American election." The crowd responded by booing at Eisenhower's name.¹⁹

Eisenhower needed to demonstrate to the American people that his dedication to Eastern Europe amounted to more than inflated rhetoric. At the same time, he and other Republican leaders feared that any hint of military action would escalate into a wider war with the Soviet Union, which they assumed would go to any length to protect its influence in Eastern Europe. Though it had always been ambiguous about what kind of aid rollback entailed, the Eisenhower administration rushed to clarify its foreign policy

¹⁸ John MacCormac, "U.S. Radio's Role in Revolt: Hungarians Declare They Were Misled," *New York Times*, November 25, 1956.

¹⁹ Robert C. Albright, "Adlai Sees U.S. Lax in 2 Crises," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1956; and Harrison E. Salisbury, "Stevenson Says Uprisings Caught U.S. 'Off Guard': Calls Eisenhower Ignorant of Crises-Charges He Is 'Shadow President,'" *New York Times*, October 28, 1956.

position in the hopes of convincing American voters that it had not reneged on its promises to act, while simultaneously reassuring Soviet leaders that it had no intention of doing so.²⁰

Eisenhower navigated these concerns by emphasizing his administration's commitment to peace. In a speech at the Philadelphia Convention Hall on November 1, Eisenhower, referencing U.S. noninvolvement in both Hungary and the Suez Canal crisis, claimed, "We have . . . been submitted to a less hopeful test of our principles. . . . I, as your President, am proud that the United States has declared itself against the use of force."²¹ This was a rather abrupt transition from Cold Warrior to peace guardian. While the president frequently had claimed to be a proponent of peace in past speeches, a fact that assisted him in making such a drastic shift, Eisenhower had framed peace as something to be won through more, rather than less, struggle. However, he now addressed it as a motive for inaction in response to the crisis in Hungary.²²

Yet Eisenhower was careful to make clear that his policy did not entail a total abandonment of assistance should the peoples of Eastern Europe desire to break ties with the Soviet Union. However, he now couched such assistance in purely economic terms. The president's four-point plan for U.S. relations with Eastern Europe promised to "help the freedom loving peoples who need and want and can profitably use our aid that they may advance in their ability for self-support."²³ Dulles affirmed this position, declaring,

²⁰ Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, 303-304.

²¹ Laurence Burd, "Ike Defends Foreign Policy: Proud of U.S. Stand Against Use of Force," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 2, 1956.

²² Kenneth Osgood, "Eisenhower's Dilemma: Talking Peace and Waging Cold War," in *Selling War in a Media Age*, ed. Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 146.

²³ Paul Sampson, "Ike Hints Aid to Nations Shedding Soviet Chains," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1956.

“[The satellites] must know that they can draw upon our abundance to tide themselves over the period of economic adjustment.”²⁴ Prominent Republican leaders echoed the economic nature of American assistance. Former Governor of New York Thomas E. Dewey praised Eisenhower for having given the satellites hope that they might be free from the Soviet yoke with the help of “the sure steady hand of America ever ready to send them food and economic aid.”²⁵

Eisenhower’s rather dramatic shift in position received a warm reception in American newspapers. Articles praised Eisenhower as an advocate for peace who had steered America clear of involvement in crises in Egypt and Hungary. *Newsweek* referred to Eisenhower as the “smiling man in the White House. . . who had proved himself a mighty figure in war, but who devoutly wanted peace,” and attributed the president’s electoral victory to his dedication to the principle.²⁶ Bernard Nossiter of *Washington Post* asserted that the government had established extensive sources of aid that totaled more than a billion dollars in preparation for events such as those that had developed in Hungary. As the Hungarian crisis unfolded, journalists proved willing to gloss over the administration’s earlier rhetoric, suggesting that a hands off approach was and always had been Republican policy.²⁷

In the days and weeks that followed the outbreak of revolution, newspapers reported extensively on the American government’s humanitarian effort. A *New York*

²⁴ “Dulles Offers Satellites Aid After Victory,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 28, 1956.

²⁵ “Dewey Hails Policy on Eastern Europe,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1956.

²⁶ “Why It Went the Way it Did,” *Newsweek*, November 11, 1956, 61.

²⁷ Bernard D. Nossiter, “Aid to Lure Satellites Studied,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 1956; News articles did not universally take this position. For example, see Herbert Elliston “Words and Inaction: Search for a Policy,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 1956. However, articles such as this did not appear until relatively late in the crisis, were a minority opinion, and were not featured as prominently in newspapers.

Times editorial lauded Eisenhower for making the United States the first to respond to an appeal by the Red Cross League for Hungarian aid by issuing a \$25,000 credit to the organization.²⁸ As the crisis moved into November, articles continued to chronicle and praise the increasing generosity of the American government. On November 3, front page editorials in both *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reported that Eisenhower offered Hungary 20 million dollars in foodstuffs and medical supplies after having already sent 15 tons of provisions to Austria, Military and TWA planes delivered 10,000 vials of penicillin, 6,300 yards of gauze, 8,400 vials of anti-tetanus serum, and 407,000 vitamin capsules, as well as vegetable oil, evaporated milk, baby food, shortening, canned meat, and sugar.²⁹ Following Eisenhower's reelection, news reports and editorials extolled the president as he instructed his Inaugural Committee to reduce the expenses of the inauguration events and to donate the excess funds to the Red Cross's emergency Hungarian relief fund. This allowed Eisenhower to channel another five million through the U.N. for Hungarian relief by the year's end.³⁰ In light of the lack of information from within Hungary, the themes of American humanitarianism and generosity dominated the media landscape and suggested that Eisenhower readily provided the promised aid to Hungary. Most press reports failed to so much as mention the absence of any kind of military assistance as had been suggested by the president's rollback rhetoric.

²⁸ "Casualties Toll Put Above 10,000: Pleas by World Red Cross to Aid Hungary Number Needy Up to 50,000," *New York Times*, October 28, 1956.

²⁹ John M. Hightower, "Ike Offers Hungary \$20 Million in Food," *Washington Post*, November 3, 1956; and "Eisenhower Offers Relief to Hungary," *New York Times*, November 3, 1956; "Red Cross Lists Aid to Budapest: Eisenhower Releases Letter on \$130,000 Expenditures with Plea for Funds," *New York Times*, November 4, 1956.

³⁰ "Ike Suggests Inaugural Aid to Refugees," *Washington Post*, December 22, 1956; "Eisenhower Adds to Refugee Fund: He Allots \$4,000,000 More to U.N.'s Hungarian Aid-Lauds Work of Austria," *New York Times*, December 16, 1956; Paul Southwick, "U.S. Increases Aid to Refugees," *Washington Post*, December 16, 1956; and "U.S. Gives Million to U.N. Fund," *New York Times*, November 15, 1956.

In a similar vein, news outlets ballyhooed Eisenhower's determination to offer asylum to thousands of refugees pouring over the border into Austria. Editorials praised government agencies as they almost completely ignored a 1953 provision that required refugees to submit documented evidence of their political past before being considered for admittance. The State Department insisted that the mandatory parole status of refugees be lifted as well. Soon, the American consulate in Vienna was processing 300 to 400 visas per day. In late November, Larry Rue of *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported no concerns from American Consul Roger L. Heacock even as his office processed approximately 8,000 applications, in considerable excess of the 5,000 approved by the president. A few days later, a front page story in *Washington Post* praised Eisenhower as he raised the refugee ceiling by an additional 16,500. As the U.S. neared the 21,500 refugee allowance near the end of the year, the press once again responded positively to Eisenhower's order that admissions of Hungarians be extended indefinitely and his request that immigration restrictions be further relaxed to allow citizens of all Eastern European countries to seek asylum in the United States. A *New York Times* editorial claimed that "In that task the United States, with its vast resources and spaces, must take the lead." The editorial also noted that "It is gratifying that. . . Congressional leaders have risen to the occasion and endorsed the President's program."³¹

Private and military aircrafts and sealifts transported thousands of refugees to the United States where many were dispersed to various cities all over the country. Others

³¹ "U.S. Acts to Speed Refugees Entry: Officials Confident 5,000 Hungarians Can Get Visas Without New Legislation," *New York Times*, November 10, 1956; Larry Rue, "Cut Red Tape to Speed Entry," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 20, 1956; Larry Rue, "U.S. Expedites All Hungarian Visa Requests," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 29, 1956; "Envoy Pledges U.S. Will Take its Share," *Washington Post*, December 1, 1956; and "Ike Widens Door of U.S. to Refugee Hungarians: Extend Quotas on Parole Basis; Hill Leaders Get Report by Nixon," *Washington Post*, January 2, 1956.

were brought to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where U.S. military personnel set up living arrangements for up to 5,000 refugees while they waited to be processed by U.S. Army officials and welfare agencies and sent to live in sponsor homes. Articles lauded cooperation between federal agencies that cut the processing time on a single refugee down to fifty-five minutes and heaped praise on the over a dozen volunteer organizations who organized meals, clothes, and activities for new arrivals at Camp Kilmer.³²

Reports and editorials prominently featured and praised efforts to extend warm welcomes to the new arrivals and introduce them to American life and customs. On Thanksgiving, Hungarian “pilgrims” were treated to their choice of a traditional turkey dinner or Hungarian goulash in the mess hall before attending a special Thanksgiving service at the Hungarian Baptist Church of South Plainfield. For Christmas, vans delivered gifts of clothes and toys for 5,200 children and adults. New Jersey Governor Robert B. Meyner helped Santa distribute gifts from under the 40-foot tree. In addition, the refugees received personal welcome messages on White House stationery signed by Eisenhower and addressed to “My Friends from Hungary.” Though any discussion of the United States’ pre-crisis liberation policies was conspicuously absent from American news media, outlets had no shortage of examples of the U.S. commitment to peace and generosity toward those affected by the Hungarian crisis.³³

³² “U.S. Sets Housing For Refugees,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1956; “Army at Camp Kilmer Cuts Processing Time to 55 Minutes,” *New York Times*, November 30, 1956; and “4 Planes Bring in More Hungarians: 214 Arrive at McGuire Base, 73 at Milwaukee-Some Cry, Some Smile, Some Sing,” *New York Times*, November 24, 1956.

³³ “More Hungarians Arrive: 1st Group Eats Turkey Dinner,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 23, 1956; “‘Pilgrims’ of 1956 to Feast in Camp: First Refugees from Hungary Will Mark Thanksgiving with Kilmer Dinner,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1956; and “Santa Brings Day of Cheer to Refugees,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 26, 1956.

The Heart of America

While press coverage of Eisenhower's commitment to peace, economic assistance, and refugee support assisted government leaders in distancing themselves from their promises of an "aggressive" and "dynamic" foreign policy approach, news outlets also helped to mobilize the American public to make contributions as well. Following appeals from U.S. leaders that Americans open their hearts and wallets to Hungarians in need, newspapers featured informational articles about fundraisers, drives, and events aimed at raising money for those impacted by the events in Hungary and were replete with stories of American generosity. American Red Cross President Ellsworth Bunker referred to the outpouring that followed as "one of the greatest practical manifestations of sympathetic concern the world has ever known."³⁴

News articles encouraged Americans to make cash donations to organizations such as the American Red Cross and the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services and provided addresses for those organizations. They regularly featured updates on the American Red Cross's progress in raising money for Eisenhower's five-million-dollar drive. One *New York Times* editorial urged readers to follow the lead of retired Army colonel Harriman King and his family who set aside some of their Christmas budget for contributions. Newspapers heaped praise on individuals who endeavored to raise money for Hungarian relief, such as the organizers of a thirty-hour drive at Briarcliff Manor in New York, office girls who paraded to raise money in New York City, Long Island University students who raised and donated five hundred dollars,

³⁴ "Eisenhower Offers Relief to Hungary," *New York Times*, November 3, 1956.

and service club members in Salisbury, Maryland, who paid full price for their luncheons for a week to donate the extra money to relief efforts.³⁵ As humanitarian efforts moved into December, *New York Times* encouraged its readers to continue donating by reassuring them that Hungarian relief did not interfere with domestic charities. The newspaper reported that its Neediest Cases Fund had raised \$157,101 from 1,362 donors, while reassuring readers “that local suffering was not being overlooked.”³⁶

News articles also informed readers about entertainment events they could attend to help raise money for Hungarian relief. The proceeds from the gala opening of the Salzburg Festival performance of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* at Baronet Theater in Asbury Park, New Jersey on December 26 and all subsequent performances through January 1 went to provide aid for refugees at Camp Kilmer. Similarly, the proceeds from the opening night of the Cinerama series film *Seven Wonders of the World* at the Warner Theater in Washington benefited Red Cross efforts in Hungary and Austria. *Washington Post* encouraged its readers to attend a “Salute to Hungary” benefit concert at Constitution Hall on December 30 that featured such stars as Ilona Massey, Andor Foldes, Jack Parnell, and Louis Armstrong to raise money for food, clothing, and medical

³⁵ “Refugees Fly In; Aid Offers Grow: 138 More Hungarians Reach U.S.-State Calls Cash Help Best,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1956; “Red Cross Marks Another \$1 Million for Relief of Hungarian Refugees,” *Washington Post*, December 5, 1956; Laurence Burd, “Ike Urges U.S. Back Drive to Aid Hungary: Fund of Five Million for Relief Sought,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 30, 1956; “1,200,000 Added to Help Hungary: Red Cross Total for Refugee Aid Now is \$2,567,250-Sailors Give \$7,500,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1956; “Family Forgoes Gifts to Help Hungarians,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1956; “\$2300 Raised for Hungary,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1956; “Help from the Heart,” *Time*, December 10, 1956, 23; “L.I.U. Students Give \$500 for Refugees,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1957; and “Clubs on Diet to Aid Hungary,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1956.

³⁶ “Gifts to the Neediest Mount to \$157,101,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1956.

supplies. On December 31, the newspaper reported that the event had raised 149,619 dollars.³⁷

While news outlets heavily featured themes of American generosity by devoting considerable attention to private endeavors aimed at raising money for Hungarian relief, their pages were also filled with stories of individuals welcoming refugees to their new home. Following reports that stressed the importance of citizens reaching out to the State Department and other welfare organizations if they could house a refugee family in their home or find jobs for them in their communities, news articles depicted an outpouring of offers from the American citizenry. *Newsweek* featured a story about Hubert Bray of Kansas City, Kansas, and his wife Martha, who made their 360-acre Ozark farm available rent-free to refugee families who wanted to start their new lives there.³⁸ *Chicago Daily Tribune* featured an article on Reverend Arpad George of the Southside Evangelical Reformed Church, who believed that he had enough volunteers among his congregation to provide every one of the forty-five refugees who visited his church with jobs and housing. He added, "Since there are so few refugees and so many who want to help, we must share them."³⁹ Director of the American Institution of Public Opinion George Gallup reported in *Washington Post* that more than twenty-four million Americans were willing to temporarily house refugees until new homes became available, provided they had the necessary living space.⁴⁰

³⁷ "Movie Will Help Hungary Relief: Showings of Salzburg Fete Film, Dec 26-Jan 1, to Assist Refugee Work," *New York Times*, December 16, 1956; Richard L. Coe, "7 Wonders Aids Hungary," *Washington Post*, December 5, 1956; "Hungary Benefit Scheduled Dec. 30," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1956; and "Concert Helps Raise \$149,619 for Hungary," *Washington Post*, December 31, 1956.

³⁸ "From a Torn and Tattered Land," *Newsweek*, December 3, 1956, 36-37.

³⁹ "Refugees Arrive in Tears, Wonder: They Offer Yule Greetings at Church Here," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 24, 1956.

⁴⁰ George Gallup, "24 Million Americans Want to Aid Refugees," *Washington Post*, December 5, 1956.

Journalists followed Hungarian refugees as they entered the American workforce, stressing the enthusiasm and ease with which they were received and integrated.

Washington Post featured Hungarian refugee Eugene Sermely's successful audition with the D.C. Federation of Musicians on the front page. Reporter Harry Gabbett noted that Sermely had learned to play jazz piano by recording jazz broadcasts from Western radio stations and playing along with them. Though he had belonged to a jazz band in Budapest, the state had disbanded it due to its American style. Gabbett added that the federation helped the pianist realize his lifelong goal of musical freedom in America. The American National Theater and Academy aimed to help other Hungarian musicians, actors, dancers, and artists follow similar paths using a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.⁴¹ *Chicago Daily Tribune* featured two refugees who began working at a local soda fountain. Zoltan and his wife Magdolna both worked at Walker Brothers restaurants in the city using a written code to take orders since neither could yet understand English.⁴²

The themes of American generosity and refugee integration were common in American newsprint following the Hungarian Revolution. A feature story by Gertrude Samuels that spanned two double-page spreads in the December 9 edition of *New York Times* offers a strong example. Samuels followed the lives of Lewis Aukerman and his wife Ann as they hosted a Hungarian family of eight. After visiting the resettlement headquarters at the Pfister Hotel, the Aukermans invited the Ekkers to live in their home. The American couple quickly found jobs for the working members of the Ekkers family

⁴¹ Harry Gabbett, "1st Budapest Refugee Joins D.C. Jazz Band," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1956; and "Refugee Artists to Get ANTA Aid: Fund Set Up for Hungarians Here-Rozsnayni Arrives to be Guest Conductor," *New York Times*, December 17, 1956.

⁴² "Refugee Pair Fill Evanston Fountain Jobs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 25, 1956.

in city factories and hospitals with help from the Wisconsin State Employment Service and the Catholic Relief Services. The Aukermans owned real estate around the city and made a four-room apartment available to the Ekkers to help them get on their feet. Local Milwaukeeans furnished the apartment with contributions of clothing, toys, furniture, and bedding. As the Aukermans worked to help the Ekkers get settled, they were already making arrangements to host another group of Hungarian refugees. Samuels concluded the article by reporting that fifty-seven of the seventy-three refugees who had been brought to Milwaukee had been sent to live with thirty-two families within the week of their arrival thanks to a “great cooperative civic-philanthropic effort.”⁴³

Christmas provided an excellent opportunity to showcase these themes. A *Washington Post* front-page editorial recalled the tale of Lazlo Meszaros’ and his family’s first Christmas in the United States. The article reported that waves of visitors stopped by the Arlington residence of Mrs. B. R. Sornen to visit with the refugees and wish them a Merry Christmas. Lazlo, who spent much of the day learning English, responded, “Thank you. Thank you.” The editorial closes by reporting that the refugees sat down with their host family to enjoy their first Christmas feast, “thankful for the chance to start a new life.” Stories such as these were prevalent in American media in 1956. News articles painted a picture of Hungarians grateful for American generosity

⁴³ Gertrude Samuels, “Out of Hungary, Into American Homes: Refugees from Oppression Begin a New Life with the Help of Warm-Hearted Milwaukeeans,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1956.

with little desire to return to a noncommunist Hungary and altogether unconcerned with the lack of an American military response to the crisis.⁴⁴

In the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution, American news media diverged only minimally from the official line espoused by leaders in Washington. While journalists' defense of Radio Free Europe and their condemnatory accusations against Imre Nagy mirrored positions maintained by U.S. officials, their coverage of the American response to Soviet invasion of Hungary assisted Eisenhower in his rapid transformation from Cold Warrior to peace advocate. Far from echoing the criticisms voiced by European journalists, Hungarian refugees, and the administration's political opponents, American journalists heaped praise on the president for steering the country clear of crises abroad and aiding those impacted by Soviet aggression while downplaying the rollback rhetoric that the Republicans had championed since 1952. They closely followed governmental efforts to bring supplies to those suffering in Hungary as well as providing safe haven in the United States for those who had fled. In addition, news articles mobilized the American people to engage in a nation-wide humanitarian effort that raised money for Hungarian relief and placed refugees in sponsor homes and new jobs to help them start their new lives as Americans. These reports suggested that the refugees would not be returning home and implicitly offered bleak expectations for the political future of Hungary as they downplayed American commitments to the countries of Eastern Europe. In these ways, the American media response served governmental

⁴⁴ "Hungarian Refugee, Now in Virginia, Spends Christmas Learning English," *Washington Post*, December 26, 1956.

interests as U.S. leaders attempted to navigate the implications of their foreign policy rhetoric and their inaction in the face of crises abroad.

CHAPTER III

The World is Watching

As news of the revolution reached Washington, U.S. officials quickly agreed that a “hands-off” policy was their best option. While the risk of an escalated conflict with the Soviet Union obviously drove the American decision, U.S. staff reporter Murrey Marder of *Washington Post* reported that American diplomats favored this approach. They believed that the Soviet Union stood to lose from their use of force in Hungary regardless of the outcome. They arrived at this conclusion by assessing international wins and losses in terms of world opinion, an abstract principle that American leaders and foreign policy experts relied on to justify their decision-making throughout the Cold War.¹

According to leading twentieth-century American foreign policy historian Frank Ninkovich, U.S. leaders’ obsession with world opinion was central to their complex Cold War policies. As the U.S. nuclear advantage disappeared over the horizon in the 1950s, “nuclear weapons made sense *only* as a deterrent. Their usefulness consisted in the prevention of their use.” In light of this nuclear stalemate, U.S. policy relied on world opinion to influence Soviet actions. American initiatives were aimed at shoring up U.S. credibility abroad to create and maintain an imagined international community that shared their anti-communist outlook and could effectively exclude, isolate, and delegitimize the Soviet Union without challenging the status quo in Europe and thereby risking a nuclear conflict.²

¹ Murrey Marder, “Poland and Hungry Test Satellite Rule,” *Washington Post*, October 25, 1956.

² While U.S. nuclear superiority remained a reality for much of the Cold War, American leaders feared that superiority amounted to little in the 1950s when the Soviet Union maintained a large enough nuclear arsenal to make an American initial strike pointless. See Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 183-197.

American Cold War media was central to the formation and dissemination of world opinion. Frank Louis Rusciano's breakthrough study systematically analyzes world opinion in Cold War newsprint. His work asserts that newspapers have the ability to "manufacture consent" by filtering discussions of world opinion in a way that renders them compatible with national interests.³ Rusciano identifies several key components of world opinion found in journalistic reports and discussions. These themes include morality, isolation, national image, the power of world opinion to influence international developments, and the world as a unit bound by shared interests, attitudes and judgments.⁴

These themes appeared regularly in American press reports and articles regarding the Hungarian revolution. American media addressed world opinion on several levels and manufactured consent for inaction in doing so. They regularly featured articles that stressed international outrage and emphasized the extent of Soviet isolation as communists and noncommunists alike censured Soviet intervention. American newspapers almost completely overlooked international criticisms of American policies and left little doubt among their readers that the international community, far from being contemptuous of U.S. rhetoric and inaction, was unified in its condemnatory outcry against the Soviet military operation in Hungary.⁵

³ Rusciano borrows the term "manufacturing consent" from Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's examination of state-supportive propaganda in independent media sources. See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

⁴ Frank Louis Rusciano, "First and Third-World Newspapers on World Opinion: Imagined Communities in the Cold War and Post-Cold War Eras," *Political Communication* 14 (1997): 171-190.

⁵ Once again, this position among journalists was overwhelming rather than universal. Drew Pearson of *Washington Post* reported that "next to Russia, the United States is the most hated nation in Hungary."

World Opinion from Above

The United States has played a leading role in the United Nations ever since its inception in 1945. Through this capacity, U.S. officials have attempted to use the U.N. to serve their own interests while presenting the organization as a framework for diplomacy and a significant forum through which world opinion is institutionally shaped and expressed. In the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution and the Soviet response, major American newspapers closely followed developments within the U.N., focusing on the organization's overwhelmingly negative response to the Soviet invasion, which they viewed and presented as reflective of a broader world opinion. Suddenly, the supranational organization was at the center of media attention as U.N. meetings, votes, and resolutions condemning the Soviet action in Hungary became front-page news. News reports repeatedly emphasized the almost universal disdain with which the U.N. regarded the presence of Soviet tanks in Budapest and the international isolation of the Soviet Union due to its unwillingness to comply with the alleged dictates of world opinion.⁶

On October 28, the U.N. Security Council voted to put the Hungarian situation on the U.N agenda by a margin of nine to one. On the front pages of both *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, reports emphasized that all Security Council members with the exception of Yugoslavia (and obviously the Soviet Union) opposed the Soviet invasion and favored bringing the issue before the U.N. The papers clarified that Yugoslavia did

However, Pearson's article was not published until November 23 and was only printed on page D11. See Drew Pearson, "Hungarian Anger at U. S. Reported," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1956.

⁶ For the United States' role in the United Nations, see Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012).

not necessarily disagree with the measure, but had abstained from voting.⁷ Though the members of the Council acknowledged that the Soviet Union would veto any critical resolution, Thomas Hamilton reported in *New York Times* that delegates from France, Britain, Australia, Belgium, China, Cuba, Iran, and Peru joined the United States in the landslide vote to make “a real impact on world public opinion, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Asian and African countries,” and hoped that the “condemnation of Soviet action in Hungary by all [other] members of the council. . . would in itself have an effect on Moscow.”⁸ Hamilton concluded this article by adding that non-Security Council delegates endorsed the council’s decision. Some submitted their own letters of protest against the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary. Subsequent articles reiterated that a majority of U.N. delegates disapproved of Soviet action in Hungary. Even after Soviet troops withdrew from Budapest, the newspaper’s editorials lauded several countries that “expressed ‘deep concern’ over the bloodshed and the intervention of ‘foreign military forces’” and endorsed the council’s proposal.⁹

In response to news of the second Soviet invasion of Budapest on November 4, the U.N. convened an emergency session at which the seventy-six nation body adopted a critical resolution condemning Soviet aggression in Hungary, demanding the immediate withdrawal of military forces, and calling for the admission of U.N. investigators to Hungary to resolve the crisis. The resolution passed by a vote of 50 to 8; the only

⁷ Yugoslavia, though not a permanent member of the Security Council, held an elected seat on the council during this time. Though Khrushchev hoped to mend Yugoslav-Soviet relations, Tito opposed the use of Soviet force against Hungary and contented himself with the appointment of Kadar to prime minister. Thus, Yugoslav delegates abstained from the Security Council vote. See Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges*, 87-88.

⁸ Thomas J. Hamilton, “Case to be Heard: Use of Soviet Troops Assailed in Council - Vote is 9-1,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1956.

⁹ “Unusual Session Hears Reds Blasted; Delay Move Fails,” *Washington Post*, October 29, 1956; “Three More Urge U.N. Action on Soviet,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1956; and “3 More Nations Bid U.N. Act on Hungary,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1956.

opposing votes came from the Soviet bloc. Front-page editorials in *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *Chicago Daily Tribune* presented their coverage of the proceedings in the language of world opinion by reporting that the disparity of votes signified Western solidarity against Soviet immorality and emphasized Soviet isolation.¹⁰

Another U.N. session made front page news on November 10 when it adopted a U.S. resolution stressing the intolerability of a Soviet presence in Hungary and demanding that Soviet military forces cease interference with Red Cross efforts. Bruce Munn of *Washington Post* reported that the resolution passed by a vote of fifty-three to nine. The delegates rejected amendments proposed by Indian representative Krishna Menon to remove language from the bill harshly censuring the Soviet attack and the Soviet presence in Hungary. Lodge responded to Menon's proposals:

We have no interest in propoganda. We have no interest in revenge. . . . The fact is - and sometimes we forget it - that the U.N. is a moral organization. The U.N. has a moral standard. The U.N. charter does distinguish between right and wrong. The U.N. was never intended to be a mere sordid cockpit in which the values of the criminal and the values of the law-abiding were indiscriminately scrambled up. It is not that and it should not become so.

Munn reported that "country after country" responded to the American message by approving the resolution as it was originally submitted with only the Soviet bloc countries in opposition and thirteen abstentions. Further, Munn's article stressed Soviet isolation by noting that the delegates from Egypt, whom the Soviet Union had supported regarding the Suez Canal incident, and India, who had proposed amending the resolution, refused to side with the Soviet representatives in opposing the final resolution and simply

¹⁰ "Assembly Vote is 50-8 Only Opposition Comes From Soviet Bloc; U.N. Orders Red Troops to Pull Out of Hungary," *Washington Post*, November 5, 1956; U.N. Body Orders Study in Hungary: Assembly Votes 50-8 to Send-Calls for Troop Withdrawal," *New York Times*, November 5, 1956; and "U.N. Sets Up Mid-East Unit; Hits Russians: Calls on Soviet to Pull Out of Hungary," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 5, 1956.

abstained. Undoubtedly, headline news regarding U.N. developments articulated several components of world opinion in reporting that the international community stood decisively in the American corner.¹¹

Over the course of the next several months, American news reports painted a picture of an anti-Soviet momentum sweeping through the U.N. and widening Soviet isolation from the global community. These articles stressed that U.N. resolutions included increasingly harsh language in an effort to achieve Soviet withdrawal from Hungary and acquiescence from the newly installed János Kádár to demands that he allow humanitarian aid and U.N. investigators to enter the country. Furthermore, they stressed that Soviet and Hungarian failure to comply with U.N. mandates had resulted in greater Soviet isolation as countries that had previously abstained from voting later approved resolutions denouncing Soviet force in Hungary.¹²

Magazine articles contained similar themes. An editorial in *Time* asserted that a December resolution “contained the harshest language the U.N. had ever used toward one of its members. Yet, when roll was called, not a single nation outside the iron curtain joined Russia in opposing it.” An accompanying article entitled “The Roll on Hungary” illustrated Soviet isolation in the U.N. by individually listing the “ayes” and “nays” cast on the resolution.¹³ Another article leveraged a country’s noninvolvement in the U.N. to

¹¹ Bruce W. Munn, “53-9 Vote Blasts Soviet for Acts in Hungary as Menon Plea Fails,” *Washington Post*, November 10, 1956; and Lindsay Parrott, “Assembly Action: 3 Resolutions Voted Following a Debate Lasting Full Day,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1956.

¹² “U.N. Ask Moscow to Bid Budapest Admit U.N. Aides: Hammarskjöld Urges Soviet to Support Demand on Hungarian Regime,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1956; “Red Hungary Still Bans U.N.,” *Washington Post*, December 1, 1956; “U.S. Pushes Resolution on Hungary,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 1956; and Kathleen McLaughlin, “Move to Censure Moscow Growing: 15 Nations Now Join U.S. in U.N. Action on Hungary-Cuban Favors Sanctions,” *New York Times*, December 10, 1956.

¹³ “Acts Deserve Acts,” *Time*, December 24, 1956, 19; and “Roll on Hungary,” *Time*, December 24, 1956, 19.

further drive the point of Soviet isolation home. The editorial reported that Switzerland, though normally neutral and not a member of the U.N., denounced the Soviet Union and its involvement in Hungary. In a speech to the Swiss Parliament, Swiss Foreign Minister Max Petitpierre claimed that the Hungarian crisis proved “that Communism is an unnatural kind of government that cannot exist by itself but has to rely on the presence of intervention of a foreign army.”¹⁴ As Soviet and Hungarian leaders repeatedly failed to comply with U.N. demands, American newsprint made it clear that world opinion alienated them further and further from the global community.

World Opinion from Below

American news outlets accompanied stories on world opinion in the U.N. with stories of world opinion in the streets. Their coverage of an international popular movement denouncing Soviet aggression added a bottom-up component to their treatment of world opinion. In an editorial Biblically entitled “The Mark of Cain,” *Time* opined “Governments could do little, short of war, to stay Russia’s brutal repression of Hungary. Diplomats could only register protests. But the people could and did respond with a revulsion that grew into a worldwide cry of anguish.” American newspapers closely followed this international cry as they carefully detailed massive and often violent anti-Soviet demonstrations and the disgust with which international figures responded to the Soviet handling of the crisis.¹⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the second Soviet invasion of Hungary, demonstrations and heavy rioting swept cities all over the world. Upon receiving news of

¹⁴ “Neutrality is Not Indifference,” *Time*, December 24, 1956, 21.

¹⁵ “The Mark of Cain,” *Time*, November 19, 1956, 30-32.

developments in Hungary, a crowd of as many as 100,000 strong, at least according to American journalists' estimates, demonstrated against Soviet force and marched on the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, the entrance to the Soviet sector of the divided city. News accounts chronicled their angry chants of "Ivan, go home" and "Down with the Russian rapers of Hungary." They reported that demonstrators tore down signs that marked the entrance to the Soviet zone of the city and threw torches at the Soviet flag atop the gate.¹⁶ In France, a November 5 demonstration of thousands of Parisian citizens who marched from the Arc de Triomphe to the French Communist Party headquarters turned violent. The protestors set fire to the structure before assaulting the offices of *L'Humanité*, the French Communist Party newspaper.¹⁷ For almost a full week following the Soviet invasion on November 4, American newspapers were replete with stories of popular demonstrations around the world against the Soviet action. Other violent anti-communist demonstrations against Soviet embassies in cities across Europe covered the pages of American newsprint.¹⁸

These stories were not limited to Europe. *New York Times* reported that police dispersed a crowd gathered at the Soviet embassy in Buenos Aires while another demonstration in Montevideo, Uruguay, ended after 200 youths burned the Soviet consulate to the ground. *Washington Post* featured a front page article about 200 Indian

¹⁶ Harry Gilroy, "Berliners Shout for Soviet to Go: 75,000 in West Sector March to Border of Russian Zone after Mourning Hungary," *New York Times*, November 6, 1956; and "100,000 Vent Anger at Reds in West Berlin: Cry 'Ivan, Go Home' at War Memorial," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 6, 1956.

¹⁷ "French Protest Fall of Hungary: Paris Student Crowds March on Communist Offices and Soviet Embassy," *New York Times*, November 6, 1956; W. Granger Blair, "Quarters of Reds in Paris Wrecked: Thousands Storm Building – Protests on Hungary Staged in Other Lands," *New York Times*, November 8, 1956; and "Paris Police Bar New Disorders: Thousands March in Streets in Protest on Hungary – Rioting Occurs Elsewhere," *New York Times*, November 9, 1956.

¹⁸ "Anti-Red Storm Whirls in Capitals of Europe," *Washington Post*, November 7, 1956; "Luxembourg Embassy Damaged," *New York Times*, November 7, 1956; "Anti-Russian Rioting Sweeps Across Europe," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1956; and "Big Protest in Brussels," *New York Times*, November 7, 1956.

socialists who demonstrated at the Soviet Consular Office in Bombay, calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. Nor were American reports limited to coverage of massive demonstrations of violence. W. Granger Blair of *New York Times* reported that a caterer in Brussels refused to cater an anniversary celebration of the October revolution. She sent all the food she had ordered for the event to refugee aid organizations instead. American newsprint featured story after story on the global anti-Soviet movement spawned by the Soviet military response.¹⁹

American newsprint featured condemnations of the Soviet action by major international figures. A week after the Soviet attack, Pope Pius XII spoke on the Hungarian crisis in a speech broadcast to both sides of the iron curtain via Vatican Radio. The pontiff denounced the “illegal and brutal repression” of the Hungarian Revolution, making a direct appeal to the peoples of the world to unite and use the moral force of world opinion against the Soviet aggressors. In his speech, the pope urged the freedom-loving people of the world to “close their ranks as fast as possible and link in a solid public pact all those governments and people which want the world to proceed on the path of the honor and the dignity of the children of God.” He asserted that solidarity within the international community was

capable of efficiently defending its members from any unjust attack against their rights and their independence. It will not be the fault of the honest if only a desert of isolation remains for whoever strays from this path. . . . Perhaps it will come about . . . that the compactness of those nations who sincerely love peace and liberty will suffice to gentler councils those who disregard the elementary laws of the human community, and who therefore deprive themselves of the right to speak in the name of humanity, of justice, and of peace.

¹⁹ “Argentines Scare Soviet,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1956; and “India’s Socialists Back Hungary,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 1956; W. Granger Blair, “Quarters of Reds in Paris Wrecked: Thousands Storm Building – Protests on Hungary Staged in Other Lands,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1956.

American journalists and press outlets extensively covered portions of the pope's discussion of world opinion that aligned with American national interests by articulating a global community of shared interests and attitudes, Soviet isolation, and the power of world opinion. However, they downplayed other aspects which did not line up quite so well. A portion of the speech in which Pius appeared to hint at American responsibility by asserting that the Western world should not fail the people of Hungary by "abandoning them to the destiny of a degrading slavery" was only included in *Washington Post's* coverage of the speech.²⁰

American newsprint also featured accounts of international intellectuals and scholars censuring the Soviet handling of the crisis. In late November, a group of Latin American artists, poets, writers, and others protested the Soviet use of force in a statement signed by 1945 Nobel Prize in Literature winner Gabriela Mistral, 1947 Nobel Prize in Medicine winner Bernardo A. Houssay, and novelist John Dos Passos. Twenty-six signatories in all signed the statement, and *New York Times* listed each of them in a November 27 editorial.²¹ *Washington Post* featured several articles addressing condemnations of the Soviet attack by intellectuals, several of whom were communists. On November 7, an editorial noted that prominent French communist intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Claude Bourdet, among others, had publicly criticized the Soviet use of force in Hungary. Five days later, Ernie Hall reported that Sartre had severed his connections with other communist writers who failed to voice

²⁰ "The Churches in Hungary," *Time*, November 19, 1956, 30-32; Arnold Cortesi, "Pope Bids World Unite for Peace: Delivers First Such Appeal Since the One he Made on the Eve of World War II," *New York Times*, November 11, 1956; and "Pope Appeals to World for Peace," *Washington Post*, November 11, 1956.

²¹ "Fate of Hungary Protested Anew: Scholars Writers, Artists of This Hemisphere Assail 'Brutal Aggression,'" *New York Times*, November 27, 1956.

similar protests. World famous painter and communist Pablo Picasso also spoke out against the Soviet invasion. A November 22 editorial outlined his demands that the Soviet Central Committee hold a Party congress so that communists from around the world could publicly debate the issue.²² In showcasing this broad opposition to the Soviet handling of the crisis from both above and below, from noncommunists and communists alike, U.S. news outlets seized every opportunity to stress that an American victory in the arena of world opinion did not require any form of American military action.

The Decline of Global Communism

Through their representations of the global response to the crisis, American media outlets manufactured consent for American inaction through their discursive reports on world opinion. Newspapers and magazines painted a clear picture of an international community universally opposed to military action in Hungary and of a Soviet Union isolated by its refusal to comply with the collective demands of this community. All the while, the press avoided any discussion of world opinion surrounding U.S. inaction and suggested that quietly waiting while the force of world opinion pressured the Soviet Union into withdrawing from Hungary was America's best course.

Soviet troops remained in Hungary despite the supposed force of world opinion. Though American newspapers repeatedly upheld the influence of world opinion on international developments, global solidarity on the Hungarian issue seemed to have little effect. Nonetheless, American journalists and media outlets maintained their position that

²² "Anti-Red Storm Whirls in Capitals of Europe," *Washington Post*, November 7, 1956; Ernie Ball, "West Europe Communism Reportedly Falling Apart," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1956; and "French Reds Ask Debate on Hungary," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1956.

world opinion represented the key to the Cold War in the long term. News sources asserted that world opinion, though it had not brought a withdrawal of Soviet forces, had resulted in very real losses for Soviet leaders. American newsprint followed developments within communist organizations throughout the world to demonstrate that Soviet hopes of heading an international communist movement had all but collapsed as result of its use of force in Hungary. An editorial in the November 11 edition of *New York Times* entitled “The World Vs. the Soviets” captured the triumphalist sentiment that dominated the media landscape after the Hungarian Revolution and left little doubt that the best possible U.S. response was no response at all. The editorial asserted:

It took the naked savagery in Hungary to . . . spread a realization of its barbarism not only to those who had hitherto maintained a blind spot toward it but also beyond the Western to the masses of Asia and Africa whose preoccupation with anti-Western “anti-colonialism” had prompted them to ignore the far worse Soviet colonialism. In consequence, we now see not only constantly recurring anti-Communist demonstrations throughout the free world. . . . Soviet brutality has also split the ranks of the Communists outside the Iron Curtain. In the United States, Britain, France, Italy and elsewhere fellow-travelling “intellectuals” are severing their Communist ties. Communists themselves . . . are leaving in droves. . . . As a result, the Soviets now see themselves more isolated than ever. . . . The chances of a popular front abroad. . . have been shattered and the free world should be the gainer thereby.²³

For the remainder of the year, periodicals surveyed the global communist movement in various countries around the world and highlighted the fractures that had formed within it over the Hungarian issue. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was an important component in the Soviet strategy to expand its hegemony through a popular communist front in Europe. It offered the best possible European foothold as it maintained high membership numbers in its Communist Party under the leadership of Palmiro Togliatti throughout the 1950s. Though Togliatti had welcomed Khrushchev’s

²³ “The World Vs. the Soviets,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1956.

secret speech in February and argued that global communism should be more “polycentric,” he quickly proclaimed his support for the Soviet military action in Hungary that October. Italian communists responded with disgust. American news media picked up on this development and closely followed the story of a subsequent rebellion within the Party ranks that threatened Togliatti’s position at the head of Italian communism.²⁴ News articles reported that Italian communists tore up their membership cards and boycotted Party meetings. In a speech before a crowd of Party members in the predominantly communist city of Leghorn the day after Soviet tanks reentered Budapest, Luigi Longo, the “tough man” of the Italian Communist Party, supported the Soviet operation against “reaction” in Hungary. The angry crowd responded by calling Longo a “liar” and heckling him. A page-three *New York Times* editorial emphasized that no one in the crowd called for the hecklers to cease.²⁵

In addition to rank-and-file Italian communists, *New York Times* editorials cited several prominent Italian Party members who denounced the Soviet operation and Togliatti’s support for it. Antonio Giolitti, a member of the PCI Chamber of Deputies, offered a scathing critique of Togliatti at a meeting of the PCI Congress. He suggested that the communist leader should be thrown out of the Party altogether if he persisted in supporting Soviet aggression in Hungary. Former minister of Italy’s first postwar cabinets and communist Deputy Fausto Gullo echoed Giolitti’s scathing analysis and asserted that PCI was completely isolated from masses of Italian communists. Emmanuel Rocco, editor of an Italian communist daily *Il Paese*, censured the official arm of the PCI

²⁴ David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 337-338.

²⁵ “Togliatti Testers,” *Newsweek*, December 17, 1956, 32-33; “Italians Angered by Hungary’s Fall,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1956.

L'Unita for blaming the Hungarian crisis on “fascist counter-revolutionaries” in Budapest. Rocco was fired after his refusal to renounce his statements.²⁶

As the year came to a close, American newspapers continued to closely monitor the fractures that the Hungarian crisis had created within the PCI, presenting them as a defeat for the Soviet Union in the arena of world opinion. In a *Washington Post* article, Leo J. Wollemborg wrote that Togliatti’s stance on Hungary might result in “the largest and most dangerous Soviet fifth column in the West. . . be[ing] cut down in numbers” as a “morally indignant” Italy took to the polls in local elections that year. In mid-December, *New York Times* seemed to confirm Wollemborg’s assessment as it reported that the PCI lost nearly a quarter of its votes in local elections in the Gorizia province near Yugoslavia. Though the Party had received 19,891 votes three years prior, they only garnered 13,446 in 1956, a shrinkage of 28.9 percent. *New York Times*’s coverage of these elections was in itself exceptional as the results of local Italian elections are not usually featured in the publication’s first few pages.²⁷

According to American media, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was also reeling in the aftermath of the Hungarian crisis. The communist daily newspaper *The Daily Worker*’s treatment of the crisis was a particularly divisive point within the CPGB. On November 9, *New York Times* reported that *Daily Worker* cartoonist James Friell quit due to the paper’s support of Soviet intervention after working there for twenty years. American media outlets followed the story closely over the next month as *Daily*

²⁶ “Red Scores Heads of Party in Italy: Suggests Togliatti Should be Ousted if he Persists in Following Soviet Line,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1956; “Italian Red Deplores Hungary,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1956; and “The Disenchanted,” *Time*, December 17, 1956, 70.

²⁷ Leo J. Wollemborg, “Hungary Could Wreck the Italian Reds: Italy Morally Indignant,” *Washington Post*, November 25, 1956; and “Red Lose Italy Votes: Election in Gorizia Province Shows Major Drop,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1956.

Worker features editor Malcolm McEwan, special correspondent Peter Fryer, and motion picture critic Patrick Goldring followed Friell's lead and resigned from the positions in protest of the *Daily*'s position on Hungary. Nineteen of the thirty remaining staff members at *The Daily Worker* signed a petition censuring the paper for its "whitewash[ing] of Soviet brutality."²⁸

The Hungarian crisis created divisions that ran through the CPGB leadership. In response to the Soviet invasion, Parliament member Arthur Fullard tore up his Party membership card and called the Soviet operation a "murderous intervention." Shortly thereafter, Thomas P. Ronan of *New York Times* covered the resignations of General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union John Horner and National Union of Mineworkers executive committee member Alex Moffat's from the Party on October 14. The following day, the *Times* reported that seven more Party members had quit, including trade unionists, party functionaries, and university staff members.²⁹

The American media did not simply focus their reports on the cracks that had formed within the global communist movement abroad over the Hungarian crisis. They also stressed that Soviet actions had alienated American communists as well. From the outset, the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) opposed the Soviet military presence in Hungary. *The Daily Worker*, the American communist press organ that bore the same name as the British periodical, called the Soviet act of aggression "deplorable." However, its proclamation was not confined to its own pages.

²⁸ "London Reds' Cartoonist Quits," *New York Times*, November 9, 1956; "Critic Quits London Worker," *New York Times*, November 18, 1956; and "Rebellion at the Worker," *Time*, November 26, 1956, 36.

²⁹ "Passage in the Storm," *Newsweek*, November 26, 1956, 37; Thomas P. Ronan, "Split in Britain Widens," *New York Times*, November 14, 1956; and "7 More Reds Quit Party in Britain," *New York Times*, November 15, 1956.

New York Times picked up on the paper's position as well. *The Daily Worker* reiterated that this was the official position of the CPUSA for the remainder of the year and even defended the Party's position in the face of criticisms from the Soviet theoretical journal *Kommunist*.³⁰

However, *New York Times* made it clear that communism in America had experienced setbacks as a result of its ideological ties to the Soviet Union. Reporter Peter Kihss claimed that the national committee of the CPUSA was split in its response to the Soviet attack. Furthermore, the Party was denied the use of over twenty hotels and halls for its national convention. In Michigan, Norman Thomas, head of the Socialist Party of America, refused to meet with CPUSA member and chairman of the Michigan Communist Party Carl Winter at a symposium entitled "Which Way to Peace." Thomas wrote that he could not discuss peace with a representative of a Party associated with Soviet imperialism. He noted that he considered "the Communist police state the enemy of democratic socialism." Through these stories and others like them, major American news outlets effectively asserted that the cause of global communism was falling apart on both sides of the Atlantic due to the Soviet military operation in Hungary.³¹

In the days, weeks, and months that proceeded the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Revolution, American newspapers and magazines avoided mentioning any

³⁰ "Use of Soviet Troops in Hungary Revolt is Called 'Deplorable' by Daily Worker," *New York Times*, October 29, 1956; and "Daily Worker Reaffirms Charge of Soviet Error," *New York Times*, November 26, 1956.

³¹ Peter Kihss, "Soviet Attack Hit by Daily Worker: Hungarian Action is Scored as Harmful to Socialism - Party Board Splits," *New York Times*, November 5, 1956; "Reds Hunt Hotel: 20 Buildings Here Denied to Party - Assessment Made with Call for Parley Assessment is Levied," *New York Times*, December 9, 1956; and "Thomas Shies at Red; Refuses to Appear at Forum with Michigan Communist," *New York Times*, December 11, 1956.

global expectations of American involvement, which, given the outbursts surrounding RFE, undoubtedly existed. Instead, they asserted that victory could be achieved through the vague Cold War abstraction known as world opinion. American periodicals closely followed the one-sided developments within the U.N. that isolated the Soviet Union as it refused to comply with demands to withdraw its military forces from Hungary and admit U.N. investigators. Detailed reports about popular uprisings around the world and denunciations of the Soviet action by important global figures, including several communists, became headline news. They upheld world opinion as a moral force of a global community united by principles and attitudes capable of altering international developments.

As time passed, though, it became clear that expressions of world opinion from both above and below failed to have the desired effect as Russian tanks remained in Hungary. Still, American news media endeavored to convince readers that the effects of world opinion were very real and beneficial to anti-communism around the globe. They prominently featured articles that addressed the declining memberships of and fractures within the communist parties of the world and asserted that the threat of global communism had been neutralized by its own proponent. America only needed to sit back and watch.

CONCLUSION

Through the end of 1956, the Hungarian Revolution was depicted in newsprint through the lens of American foreign policy interests. Open revolt in Budapest caught U.S. officials off guard and raised significant questions concerning the wisdom of U.S. foreign policy during the Eisenhower administration. Throughout his 1952 and 1956 presidential campaigns, Eisenhower repeatedly professed his own dedication to the rollback of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and steadfastly maintained that America would act to help the Eastern Europe states should they attempt to break free from Soviet hegemony. However, the outbreak of the revolution in October 1956 and the subsequent lack of response from the United States revealed the inflated nature of Eisenhower's posturing just as the incumbent president faced reelection.

The American media response to the events in Hungary played a significant role in helping the president to navigate these turbulent political waters. As Eisenhower attempted to sidestep the issue by proclaiming his commitment to peace, newspapers and magazines glossed over the apparent contradictions in his foreign policy maneuvers and praised the president's "hands-off" approach in handling of the crisis. They followed his lead in addressing American aid in purely economic terms and largely ignored any suggestion that the United States had not made good on its promises to provide assistance by closely following, prominently featuring, and even actively participating in the massive humanitarian campaign that followed. News articles and editorials further served Eisenhower's foreign policy interests by emphasizing Soviet isolation and the seeming collapse of a global communist movement under Soviet influence in their coverage of world opinion while hardly mentioning the international criticisms aimed at the United

States' Janus-faced response to the crisis. In doing so, they suggested that an American victory on the international stage did not necessarily require any type of armed response. By accentuating these points in their news presentations, American media outlets swept any inconsistencies between Eisenhower's foreign policy promises and practices under the rug. In presenting this evidence, this work lends credence to Osgood's assertions that Eisenhower relied on independent media outlets to convey "camouflaged" propaganda messages to the American citizenry.

While this study reveals a strong correlation between U.S. foreign policy interests and American media's treatment of the 1956 revolution as it unfolded, Tibor Glant of the University of Debrecen has demonstrated that *New York Times* frequently revisited the Hungarian crisis as it faded into history and argues that the paper's presentations of the revolution shifted alongside ever-evolving foreign policy interests. While the *Times* initially derided Kádár for his role in the ordeal, these condemnations faded as articles began to express tolerance and even support for the communist leader in their coverage of these events. In addition, editorial references to the revolution decreased drastically as the Cold War came to a close and foreign policy interests moved on. Thus, the relationship established in this thesis between governmental interests and media presentations of the 1956 crisis endured in the years and decades since.¹

As U.S. foreign policy will continue to be, as it has been so often in the past, a point of continued debate among Cold War historians, this thesis illuminates points to be considered in conducting such analyses. Though U.S. leaders and diplomats often present

¹ Tibor Glant, "The New York Times and the Memory of the 1956 Revolution," in *Remember Hungary 1956: Essays on the Hungarian Revolution and Wars of Independence in American Memory* (Boulder: Eastern European Monographs, 2007), 1-66.

their approaches to international relations as concrete and immutable for the American public, Cold War foreign policies were, in reality, amorphous and responsive to ever-changing international realities. In rendering foreign policy decisions, U.S. leaders and diplomats were consequently forced to navigate between domestic and international concerns which were often diametrically opposed to one another. Due to their lack of real influence over international developments, they employed methods capable of swaying American public opinion in their favor by adjusting it to coincide with rather than differ from evolving foreign policy interests. As the example of 1956 illustrates, American news media has been a significant component in this process.

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