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## **Final report**

### **Visegrad Scholarship at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives**

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**Research project:** Radio Liberty, Soviet Society and the Perception of the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968–1969 and the 1968 Invasion

#### **Short description of the project**

My research examines the activities of Radio Liberty Russian Service in the context of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968–1969, the reaction to Radio Liberty from the Soviet leadership, and the perception of the Czechoslovak crisis by Soviet citizens. Soviet citizens consumed information about Czechoslovak events from several sources. Firstly, the information basis of the Soviet population was formed by the Soviet official media. Secondly, foreign sources of information influenced the perception of the international events in the late Soviet Union. Soviet people had limited access to the media of the socialist countries and foreign radio stations, including Radio Liberty. Thirdly, personal experience had great importance for the image of the Czechoslovak crisis. People participated directly in the Czechoslovak events at different levels (for example, as military or journalists), communicated with foreigners, went abroad as tourists or specialists, etc. Previously, I have studied the information campaign in the Soviet press devoted to the Czechoslovak crisis as well as the different ways to get direct information about the situation in Czechoslovakia. Now, I am starting to explore alternative informational channels and the impact of these channels using the example of Radio Liberty. In the next stage, I will study the perception of the Czechoslovak crisis by various groups of Soviet people. The work at the Open Society Archives (OSA) plays a key role in my search for primary sources.

#### **Research conducted at OSA**

Working at OSA, I focused on the collection of Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute (fond HU OSA 300). One of the most significant for me was the subfond HU OSA 300-6 Media and Opinion Research Department, in particular, Series 300-6-1 Administrative Files. The collection includes Analysis Reports covering a variety of issues of audience perception of Radio Liberty; Program Series Reviews and Special Program Evaluation Reports evaluating individual programs and weekly broadcasting; Questionnaires, which were

used to study the audience, as well as research comparing the activities of different Western radios. Due to the quarter reports of the Audience Research Division I collected qualitative and quantitative data related to listening to Radio Liberty Russian Service in different parts of the USSR and other socialist countries; perception of RL programs by the audience; attitude of RL listeners to various internal and external events including the Czechoslovak crisis. I have gathered data for 1965–1971 which will allow me to determine how the Czechoslovak crisis affected RL in terms of spreading their information in the USSR and interacting with the audience; to identify the dynamics of perception of Radio Liberty by Soviet listeners, etc.

Archival boxes:

HU OSA 300-6-1:2

HU OSA 300-6-1:3

HU OSA 300-6-1:7

HU OSA 300-6-1:9

HU OSA 300-6-1:10

The subfond 300-8 Publications Department contains analytical and descriptive materials dedicated to a variety of subjects related to the socialist bloc. The main part of these materials was used in RFE/ RL broadcasting directly or indirectly. For my research, the utter important are Background Reports and Situation Reports (most of them available online), Research Bulletins, Information Bulletins, etc. The collection of Background Reports (BR) and Situation Reports (SR) of 1968–1969 devoted to Czechoslovakia is huge: 1968 – 329 BR and 187 SR; 1969 – 72 BR and 133 SR. The documents cover a wide range of issues. I was interested in such topics as the relationship between Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders, contradictions and ideological polemics within the socialist system, the position of Yugoslavia, Rumania, Albania, and others during the crisis, the perception of the invasion by communist parties around the world, public mood of the USSR and other socialist countries in the context of the crisis, etc. Working with Background and Situation Reports, it is very helpful to use quarterly and monthly indexes which contain lists of reports for individual countries and spheres.

Archival boxes:

*Available in research room:*

HU OSA 300-8-2:1

HU OSA 300-8-2:2

HU OSA 300-8-2:3

*Available online:*

Background Reports (HU OSA 300-8-3)

HU OSA 300-8-3:2

HU OSA 300-8-3:14  
HU OSA 300-8-3:18  
HU OSA 300-8-3:19  
HU OSA 300-8-3:65  
HU OSA 300-8-3:78  
HU OSA 300-8-3:110  
HU OSA 300-8-3:111  
HU OSA 300-8-3:134  
Situation Reports (HU OSA 300-8-47)  
HU OSA 300-8-47:1  
HU OSA 300-8-47:11  
HU OSA 300-8-47:31  
HU OSA 300-8-47:40

Among countries' collections RFE/RL Research Institute fond, I explored 300-10 Balkan Section, 300-60 Romanian Unit, and 300-80 Soviet Red Archives. I chose Albania, Romania, and Yugoslavia because they disagreed with the USSR during the crisis and condemnation of the invasion. Radio Liberty paid special attention to the contradictions within the socialist system and informed its listeners about the split in the Soviet bloc. In the Romanian and Balkan units, I studied materials related to the Czechoslovak crisis and media coverage of contradictions within the socialist system. The analyzed folders consist of press clippings (press of socialist countries and the main world periodicals such as New York Times, Le Monde, Der Spiegel, etc.), transcripts of broadcasts of Yugoslavia, Albania, Rumania, China, and others as well as the materials from the RFE/RL staff (reviews, interviews, analytical reports, etc.). The folders include some Background and Situation Reports that are also available in the subfonds 300-8-3 and 300-8-47 (see above). In the subfond 300-80 Soviet Red Archives, I have collected materials about Western broadcasting in the USSR, including Radio Liberty, reactions to Western broadcasting by the Soviet authorities, counter-propaganda work in the USSR, etc.

Archival boxes:

HU OSA 300-10-2:19  
HU OSA 300-10-2:70  
HU OSA 300-10-2:104  
HU OSA 300-10-3:15  
HU OSA 300-10-3:80  
HU OSA 300-10-3:81  
HU OSA 300-60-1:71

HU OSA 300-60-1:73  
HU OSA 300-60-1:75  
HU OSA 300-60-1:90  
HU OSA 300-60-1:231  
HU OSA 300-80-1:632  
HU OSA 300-80-1:769  
HU OSA 300-80-1:770  
HU OSA 300-80-1:772  
HU OSA 300-80-1:773

My investigation of the subfond 300-85 Samizdat Archives has been very productive. This fond includes not only famous documents of the dissident movement, such as the Chronicle of Current Events or open letters in defense of political prisoners but also little-known writings about Soviet domestic and foreign policy, audience research, the materials about the development of Samizdat in the USSR (emigrant and Western press, RFE/RL reports, etc.) as well as RL listeners' letters. It is important to note that the collection of letters does not cover all the letters that RL received. Despite this, the gathered listeners' letters are of great interest to me, and I plan to conduct special research on this collection. The listeners' letters are of great interest to me, and I plan to conduct special research on this collection. It is also worth noting that some documents of Samizdat were published in Sobranie Dokumentov Samizdata (HU OSA 300-85-11) and are available in both published and unpublished form.

Archival boxes:

HU OSA 300-85-9:1  
HU OSA 300-85-9:2  
HU OSA 300-85-9:3  
HU OSA 300-85-9:4  
HU OSA 300-85-9:6  
HU OSA 300-85-9:7  
HU OSA 300-85-9:25  
HU OSA 300-85-9:27  
HU OSA 300-85-9:58  
HU OSA 300-85-11:1  
HU OSA 300-85-11:2  
HU OSA 300-85-11:7  
HU OSA 300-85-11:8  
HU OSA 300-85-12:260

HU OSA 300-85-12:263  
HU OSA 300-85-12:287  
HU OSA 300-85-35:13  
HU OSA 300-85-35:14  
HU OSA 300-85-46:1  
HU OSA 300-85-47:12  
HU OSA 300-85-47:13  
HU OSA 300-85-47:16  
HU OSA 300-85-48:31

I also studied several folders of fond 300-7 US Office. I was especially interested in the folders from Czechoslovak Subject Files (300-7-7) with materials about the 1968 invasion. These folders contain a large number of documents covering 21–25 August of 1968: messages for RFE, world media materials including American press and Czechoslovak radio, news agency releases, etc. The folders 3–5 mostly consist of the Background Reports and Situation Reports (see above) with some clippings from American newspapers.

Archival boxes:

HU OSA 300-7-5:17  
HU OSA 300-7-6:28  
HU OSA 300-7-7:11

Within my research topic, I am particularly interested in RL broadcasting records. In 2015, OSA published the collection of audio records of Radio Liberty Russian Service (HU OSA 297-0-1 RFE/RL Russian Broadcast) online. The collection covers the years 1953–1995 and contains 408 records for 1968 and 615 records for 1969. Analyzing the records, I noted the serious lack of Newscasts / Latest News and other news programs devoted to domestic and foreign policy in the audio collection. These were daily news blocks updated several times a day. The basis of the available audio collection consists of literary and historical programs, theoretical discussions, and different special programs. I will continue my search at the Hoover Institute, where another part of the RFE/RL archive is kept. At the end of my stay, I researched some books from the RFE/RL library collection devoted to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and the Soviet propaganda system as well as the Prague Spring and the 1968 invasion<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Here are some books: Ello, P. (1968). *Czechoslovakia's blueprint for "freedom"*. Washington: Acropolis Books; Maxa, J. (1970). *A year is eight months*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday; Panfilov, A. F. (1974). *Za Kulisami "Radio Svoboda"*. Moscow: "Mezhdunarodnyi otnosheniia"; Rukhadze, A. (1980). *Diversiia v efire: dokumental'no-publitsisticheskii sbornik*. Berlin; Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Agentstva pechati Novosti; Schwartz, H. (1969). *Prague's 200 days: the struggle for democracy in Czechoslovakia*. New York: Praeger; Tigrid, P. (1968). *Le*

My stay at the Blinken Open Society Archives was a great experience. I would like to express my gratitude to the Visegrad Fund for supporting my research. The materials I collected at OSA allow me to continue my project. I am grateful to the OSA team for their professionalism and hospitable atmosphere. I am especially thankful to Katalin Gádoros and Bianka Horvath for all their help, in preparing my trip to Budapest and after I arrived at the archive, my supervisor Andras Mink for his comments, Zsuzsa Zádori for her detailed consultation about the audio collection, Katerina Belenkina and Oksana Sarkisova for their advice, and Judit Hegedüs and Robert Parnica for their daily support and inspiring conversations.