

Visegrad Scholarship at the Open Society Archives for academic year 2014/15

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The title of the project:

**The General Secretary is dead, long live the General Secretary:  
Interpretation of Radio Free Europe and Czechoslovak Radio broadcasting on the  
events of the death of Joseph Stalin and Klement Gottwald**

## **Final Report**

The project *The General Secretary is dead, long live the General Secretary: Interpretation of Radio Free Europe and Czechoslovak Radio broadcasting on the events of the death of Joseph Stalin and Klement Gottwald* is one part of the Ph.D thesis that will cover a detailed text analysis of the media communication and its interpretation. The historic context, the ideological background and the structure and the administration of RFE and (communist) Czechoslovak Radio will be taken in account.

The project intends to open this chapter of Czechoslovak and world history and critically evaluate it with the help of current approaches to the analysis of media message and to involve it interdisciplinary into the broad context of history as well as to explore the strategies of gathering, proceeding, analysing, sorting and evaluating information on which the media message was based and built.

The archival material for the analysis of RFE and Czechoslovak radio (CSRo) broadcasting and the selection of broadcasting undertaken by monitoring recorded on both sides present a unique set, that has still not been explored in Czech scientific milieu, although the matter of exile media, especially RFE, is a big phenomenon not just for Czechoslovak post-war history. The set of the Research Institute records (items, clippings, press releases, background and situation reports etc.) is equally unique, since it can recover background of RFE production departments, undercurrents, which were not visible but from which the broadcasting stemmed. It can show much about the mission, character and purpose of RFE and thus create more stereoscopic image.

During the two-months research in the OSA, the main focus was concerned on researching following issue: how did RFE gather, treat, analyse and evaluate information from behind the Iron Curtain to the topic of the Stalin's and Gottwald's death.

The research was carried out through consultation with prof. István Rév on one hand and through exploring the archival material on the other hand.

The consultation with prof. Rév provided essential insight into scientific literature useful for theoretic background of research as well as important tool for interpreting explored data.

This includes following titles which were recommended by prof. Rév and studied (in CEU library) during research:

- Krakauer, Siegfried: *Satellite Mentality. Political Attitudes and Propaganda Susceptibilities of Non-Communists in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. A Report of the Bureau of Applied Social Research*, Columbia University. With a Foreword by Henry L. Roberts, Russian Institute/Columbia University, New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1956.
- Online OSA Exhibition "05.03.1953." | March 5 - May 11 (The exhibition focuses on Stalin's death, the mourning ceremony, the funeral and the fate of Stalin's remnants afterwards)
- Leah Dickerman: "Lenin in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". In: *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History, and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, Edited by Michael S. Roth and Charles G. Salas, Published by the Getty Research Institute
- "Ritual Pillages: A Preface to Research in Progress by the Bologna Seminar", coordinated by Carlo Ginzburg. In: *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, Edited by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, 1991 The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London
- Michel Foucault: *Discipline and Punish - The Birth of the Prison*. First Vintage Books Edition, February 1979.
- Ralph E. Giesey: *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France*. Librairie E. Droz, Geneva, 1960.
- Robert Hertz: *Death and the Right Hand*. Cohen & West.
- Ernst H. Kantorowicz: *The King's Two Bodies - A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1957.
- Louis Marin: *Portrait of the King*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1988
- Catherine Merridale: *Night of Stone - Death and Memory in Russia*, Granta Books, London, 2000.
- Edmund Plowden: *Commentaries or Reports*. London, 1816 (Originally 1571).

The archival research in OSA was held by studying and exploring following items:

- Burial Ceremony of Stalin (film FL 361)
- HU OSA 300-30-2 (box 18, 20, 31, 35, 40, 41, 193)  
Personalities, 1951 – 1961, Sovietization, 1951 – 1961; Communists, 1951 – 1961; Communist Party, 1951 – 1961; Ideology, 1951 – 1961; Personalities, 1951 – 1961; State Apparatus, 1951 – 1961, President and office, 1951 – 1961
- HU OSA 300-30-8 (boxes 10, 11)  
Czechoslovak Communist Party: Ideology; Czechoslovak Communist Party: Criticism; Czechoslovak Communist Party: Personalities; Czechoslovak Communist Party: Functionaries; Czechoslovak Communist Party: Cadres; Czechoslovak Communist Party: CPCS, Central Committee

- HU OSA 300-30-17 (boxes 3, 7)  
Gottwald, Klement, 1953 – 1968; Gottwaldová, Marta, 1953; Stalin, Jozef, 1957 – 1967
- HU OSA 300-30\_19/29 Biographical files I
- HU OSA 300-30-21  
Archival box 7 (Stalin)
- HU OSA 300-30-22 Monitoring of Czechoslovak radio broadcasting:  
Archival boxes 27, 28 (1 March 1953 – 11 April 1953)
- HU OSA 300-30-30 (3, 12, 13, 17, 18)  
Correspondence, January 1953 - December 1953; Producer's Board and Production Meeting, 1953 – 1960; Administrative Correspondence of the Production Department, 1951 – 1960; Production Department Administrative Files, 1952 – 1955); Items and messages to be broadcast, 1951 – 1953; Items and messages to be broadcast, 1951 – 1954); Messages Home, Items, 1951 – 1953)
- HU OSA 300-8-5  
A Biographical Directory of 100 Leading Soviet Officials)
- HU OSA 300-8-24  
Monthly Bulletin, 1953
- HU OSA 300-1-2 (box 18)  
Information Items concerning Gottwald and Stalin)
- HU OSA 300-5-151 (129 – 131)  
Stalin, Josef V. [Death, Symbol]

The current research showed a systematic, responsible and consistent work of RFE analysts. Although the detailed study of the collected material must be done yet, to prove initial impression, it can be stated that one interesting issue occurred, namely that RFE was much more focused on public meaning, real-life mood, opinions, attitudes and standard of living of “average” East-European citizens than on communist regime’s “V.I.P.s”. It tried to follow the events from bottom up (from the point of view of public) more than from the top to bottom (general political and social perspective) – a very democratic approach, I would say.