

## The “Fight for Peace” in the Airwaves – Tito, “the Chained Dog of Imperialists”

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The radio broadcasts from countries involved in the *Cold War* had a major role in promoting relevant propaganda. Of course, this applied to the Hungarian Radio Corporation as well. In this study, with an analysis of the documents of the Hungarian Radio, we will present a segment of the *foreign language radio programs* broadcast between 1949 and 1951; the years of the campaign against Yugoslavia, and personally against Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav party leader, who turned against Stalin. The character of foreign languages broadcasts were subordinated to the political propaganda and followed well ups and downs of the Cold War. In 1956, after the settlement of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, disappeared not only the Cominform and so its newspaper against Yugoslavia the “New Struggle”, but changed the tone against the West as well.

[Cold War; foreign language radio broadcasts; propaganda; Yugoslavia; Cominform]

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<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian Radio Corporation started its regular broadcast on 1. December 1925. The first letter from Hungarians living abroad had already arrived at the Radio in May 1926. About the history of the Hungarian Radio I wrote three monographs: I. SIMÁNDI, *Politika, társadalom, gazdaság a Magyar Rádióban 1945–1948*, Budapest 2012; I. SIMÁNDI, *Politika, társadalom, gazdaság a Magyar Rádióban 1949–1952*, Budapest 2014; I. SIMÁNDI, *Politika, társadalom, gazdaság a Magyar Rádióban 1953–1956*, Budapest 2016.

ally against Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav party leader, who turned against Stalin.<sup>2</sup>

The documents of foreign broadcasts are only partially available in the Archives of the Hungarian Radio Corporation: the records from the period 1945–1948 are missing. Available are only the themes of the broadcasted programs from 1952 – these were analogous to the preceding years. However, in 1953, after the death of Stalin, changed both the content and the tone of the broadcast programs to abroad – especially in the case of Yugoslavia.

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The last assembly of the *Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties* (the Cominform), was held in Hungary 1949. The aim of the organisation founded in 1947 was to create Soviet structures in Eastern Europe – under the leadership of Moscow. However, Tito was not willing to take the role of the vassal and thus, Yugoslavia was expelled from the organisation; Tito, the heroic partisan-leader was now the agent of the imperialists, the “dog on chain”.<sup>3</sup> The campaign started immediately in the Hungarian Radio, as well.

#### **Answers to the Questions of Mihály Farkas, Party Deputy General Secretary**

Károly Ráth, head of the Special Foreign Service (editorial of programmes in foreign languages, after 1950 the Shortwave Department), made a report to Mihály Farkas, deputy of Mátyás Rákosi, party general secretary and minister of defence, on 31. March 1949 who in a previous letter had required an answer to *three questions*.

The first question was about how the programmes<sup>4</sup> in the Serbo-Croatian language support the formation of “organizations against Tito”. According to the documents: “almost nothing has been done in this area. In this regard, we did not receive any instructions from the Party”,

<sup>2</sup> At this time Tito wrote to Stalin: “Stop sending people to kill me. We’ve already captured five of them, one of them with a bomb and another with a rifle. [...] If you don’t stop sending killers, I’ll send one to Moscow, and I won’t have to send a second.” R. MEDVEDEV, *The Unknown Stalin*, London 2003, pp. 61–62.

<sup>3</sup> The most complete collection of the Cominform documents is only available in Russian: *Совещания Коминформа 1947, 1948, 1949. Документы и материалы*, Москва 1998, Milan 1994.

wrote the head of the department. "We have no contact with our Yugoslav comrades, and do not know anything about their fights or particular plans. The co-operation we had with comrade Brankov<sup>5</sup> for a couple of weeks did not make any difference, either. Comrade Brankov did not even mention the need of such communication on radio." According to the report, the newspaper *Nova Borba* (New Battle)<sup>6</sup> did not contain such information, either. Similarly, neither the broadcast in Moscow "nor the radio programmes from the people's democracies give specific organizational instruction to the Yugoslav comrades".

Later, Brankov made spoke of "disguised" instructions. The Radio however, did not get instructions from the MDP to implement this. The leadership of the department proposed to insert the disguised order into the "wadded instructions".

The second question of Farkas was about the slogans to "encourage our Yugoslav comrades to resist the Tito regime". The answer was: the department did not have anything like that, but Brankov had proposed this "some months ago". "To our best knowledge, he had it sent to comrade Rákosi for approval. We have not received any instructions on this issue yet. The broadcasts and the programs did not include anything that would encourage to direct fight, resistance, organisation or sabotage against Tito's measures." It was noted at the same time, that there are certain programs, that "encourage constantly to fight [...] though in a less tangible manner, but with formulations like 'it is the obligation of every Yugoslav worker to fight against Tito in order to lead Yugoslavia back to the camp of democratic peoples'. Or: 'it is the responsibility of Yugoslav communists and workers to use all means and oppose the traitorous politics of the Tito

<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian Radio Corporation started to broadcast in Serbo-Croatian on 30 August 1938. From 7 September 1949, news were broadcasted in Slovenian, as well. Report. 13 April 1950, Médiaszolgáltatás-támogató és Vagyonkezelő Alap (hereafter MTVA KI), Box TD-282/6. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Lazar Brankov (1912–2011) Yugoslavian (Serbian) diplomat. From 1945 head of the Yugoslav military mission assigned to the provisional Hungarian government, later chargé d'affaires of the embassy in Budapest. After the decision on the exclusion from the Cominform he was entrusted with the organization of the committee of emigrants opposing Tito. 1949 he was sentenced to life imprisonment as second defendant in the Rajk show-trial. He was released in April 1956 and emigrated to Paris. *Magyar Nagylexikon*, Vol. 4, Budapest 1995, p. 495.

<sup>6</sup> *New Struggle* was a Serbo-Croatian weekly by Cominform by Yugoslav Communists in exile. I. BANAC, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism*, Ithaca – London 1988, p. 224.

*clique*'. Or: 'socialism in Yugoslavia can only be built if Yugoslav workers lead by the communists win over the traitorous anti-Semitic, anti-Leninist and anti-Soviet politics of the Tito group'. Such slogans emphasize the obligation of Yugoslav communists, patriots and Yugoslav workers to liberate Yugoslavia.

The *third question* of Mihály Farkas was about the "political" line of the programs of the Special Foreign Service. According to the report, "the broadcasts focus on uncovering". They highlight the connections between "the developments of the economic and political situation in Yugoslavia and of the different measures and the treachery of the Tito Clique. Our starting point is what problems there are current in the people's everyday life (food shortage, raw material shortages in the factories, increase of rail tariffs etc.) and then we show that all this is the direct consequence of the treachery of Tito. We highlight that the five years' plan and his other goals are unrealistic, serve only the eccentricity of Tito and his group and do not contribute to building socialism. We disclose facts Tito tries to hide from the people. (Arrests, pacts with the imperialists, etc.)

The shortwave programmes presented letters sent from Yugoslavia on problems "*people in Yugoslavia discuss among themselves, but [...] do not dare to speak about openly (the indiscriminate behaviour of the authorities, the indifference of the leaders for the concerns of the workers, etc.)*".

It was also reported that the programs broadcasted contained information "*to discriminate against the Tito clique (to present people the facts on how leaders live today, that they possess everything while the workers live in increasing poverty)*".

The programmes communicated the "*position of communist parties around the world on the politics of Tito. (Tito tried to convince people that only 'some' communist leaders would attack them.)*" Foreign programmes broadcasted news Tito had "withheld from the people". The programmes used "*relevant articles on Yugoslavia from the imperialistic press to prove that the imperialists do not consider Tito an enemy but an alliance against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies*".

The programmes quoted the "hypocritical, demagogue and untrue phrases of the Tito group", commented on Tito's speeches and explained "*the facts behind expressions like pro-soviet etc. and [...] that their own speeches and writings uncover their treachery, anti-Soviet and anti-Marxist politics*".

In celebrations and anniversaries, the programmes reminded "*communists and the working people of the heroic fights of the past*" and emphasized that "*the past obliges for the fight against the Tito-clique*".<sup>7</sup>

### **Mátyás Rákosi and the Radio Committee of the Hungarian Radio Corporation**

Sándor Barcs, chairman of the Radio committee of the Corporation, presented a note on his meeting with Mátyás Rákosi, General Secretary of the Hungarian Working People's Party (MDP) on 5 May 1949. "*Comrade Rákosi exercised especially condemning critique on the Serbo-Croatian broadcasts.*" Rákosi "*ordered Sándor Barcs to provide appropriate support to Károly Ráth, accountable manager of the foreign language news broadcasts*".

According to the order, the Radio committee had to ask *Károly Ráth*, to prepare a proposal in order to improve the standard of the programmes. The head of the foreign language broadcasts prepared the proposal by May 11. In his view, the condemning remarks of Rákosi were due to deficient programme-funding during the previous weeks and that Brankov was not actively involved in "drawing up" the programmes "either as a consultant, or as a liaison person". The proposal of the "Yugoslav comrades" did not prove to be good tactics: "*for the radio, the ideological education of the Yugoslav comrades through the ether is more important and more decisive than covering problems of daily politics, therefore articles and presentations with an ideological nature domineered in our programmes*".

Ráth underlined in his notes that the department continues to believe that "*the discussion of daily issues and the fresh and instant response to the developments is definitely better than over-ideologised programmes. Unfortunately, our hearing with comrade Farkas came too late and we could not clarify these questions. In any case, the six weeks without any direct contact with a comrade responsible for the broadcast, brought significantly lower interest for our programmes in Yugoslavia. According to the latest reports of the Hungarian ambassador to Belgrade, the Serbo-Croatian programmes have regained their previous strength after the programme-structure was re-organized in line with the guidelines of comrade Farkas and comrade Rajk*".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Report. 31 March 1949 documents of the Shortwave Department. MTVA KI. Box No. 3.

<sup>8</sup> László Rajk (1909–1949) was foreign minister at this time; he was arrested on 30<sup>th</sup>

The topicality and the political importance of the Serbo-Croatian programmes can be increased – he wrote – *“if we contrast the results of the Hungarian construction to the facts from Yugoslavia and make the Yugoslav people perceive through in their own daily life, what are the major benefits of the friendly relations among people’s democracies and the attachment to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the facts clearly show that Tito joined the imperialists. We have rather little information on that”*.

In his proposal, he suggests to fill the following gaps:

1. He emphasizes, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should *“increase the frequency of the Belgrade-Budapest courier service, so that we get information faster and more frequently about the events in Belgrade”*. It would be also important that the *“information from Yugoslavia is passed on to the radio without any bureaucratic delay”* and is not withheld by the *“sea of bureaucracy”*.
2. The party leadership should decide that *“comrade Gábor Péter, after an appropriate but fast selection, shall send us the Yugoslav information we can use in our programmes (mainly on the living standard, the production difficulties, shortages of goods, the disintegration progresses in the army and the police) so that we can include it in our programmes, or rather, that we can build the programmes on such information”*.
3. Further, also on the basis of information from the State Protection Authority, we would need – after appropriate control – *“Yugoslav persons”* who were granted *“asylum”* in Hungary and who could tell about *“their own experiences in Yugoslavia and their own stories”* into the microphone.
4. He underlined in his proposal the need of establishing a *“constant and well informed”* connection with the party leadership. *“Therefore we need to receive the guidelines from our Party consequently and without delay, [...] so that we can make the necessary changes immediately and appropriately, whenever needed, both in voice and in approach.”*

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May 1949 and sentenced to death in a show trial. T. HAJDU, A Rajk-per háttéré és fázisaI, in: *Társadalmi Szemle*, 1992, 11, pp. 13–36.

He also remarked in his notes that *"apart from the often obsolete information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have not received relevant information on Yugoslavia from any other bodies or institutions"*. He was convinced, that his recommendations, if implemented, will result in *"an important improvement in the programmes in Serbo-Croatian language compared to their current quality"*.<sup>9</sup>

### **New Leader at the Head of the Radio – István Szirmai**

The parliamentary elections on 15 May 1949 brought substantial changes in the life of Hungary. The political power of Mátyás Rákosi was strengthened and the political legitimacy of the one-party system was consolidated. There were also changes in the leadership of the Hungarian Radio Corporation: by the instruction of Mátyás Rákosi, István Szirmai got into the chair of the *general director*. The new general director informed József Révai, Minister of Popular Culture on 29 August 1949 about his experiences in the Radio. Among them, about the state of the foreign news service. In his evaluation he also mentioned that the Post promised to resolve the technical problems of the shortwave broadcast by 1. October. The news service has to recruit *"cadres with appropriate language and writing skills"*. Decision has to be made on the department leader and the staff who speak foreign languages well. The department often broadcasts *"politically sensitive materials. It has to take a position in major issues of international politics. Therefore, party-line leadership, regular information and appropriate control by the relevant stances are indispensable. These are still unresolved questions"*.<sup>10</sup>

Béla Fenyő, another new leader, head of the Shortwave Department of the Radio, prepared a plan (September 7, 1949) and underlined in connection with the production of programmes in the Serbian and the Slovenian languages: the editors shall prepare uncovering programmes on Yugoslavia that increase the audience's indignation and hatred for the Tito regime. *"We want to have facts"* in the commentaries *"that our listeners will later discuss in the market, in the fields, etc., facts that move them,"* he wrote.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Note. 11 May 1949 MTVA KI. Documents of the Shortwave Department. Box No. 3.

<sup>10</sup> To comrade József Révai. August 29, 1949 MTVA KI. TD-322/3.

<sup>11</sup> Draft. September 7, 1949. MTVA KI. TD-282/6.

One of the documents of the department, dated from 9 October 1949, contains the topics of the Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian programmes. It enlists the most important activities and the commentaries on the main political events that took place during the autumn. A constant theme in the programmes was to *“unveil the Tito-clique for the peoples of Yugoslavia and to present the struggle of the working masses and of the new Communist Party to remove Tito and his band, to liberate Yugoslavia and to return the country to the democratic camp lead by the Soviet Union. The programmes have been militant and highly offensive, from their beginning. On the one hand, we unveil these facts so that we force the Tito-clique to deal with unpleasant questions or to take certain measures seriously; and on the other, we try to be at the same time the informant, the inspirer and – as much as it is possible through the radio – the organizer of the fight of the people in Yugoslavia”*.

In August and September, one of the main topics of the broadcasts was the Rajk-trial. In the Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian broadcasts, *“we put on air both the indictment and the testimonies and quoted the most important parts from the trial literally”*. After the end of the trial, its former broadcasts were repeated on the basis of the “Blue Book”, the propaganda material of the trial and its main subjects were discussed *“thematically”* in several broadcasts. We presented *“articles from the press of the socialist camp, first and foremost from the Soviet Union but also from the capitalist press”*. According to the document, members of the Shortwave Department commented themselves the *“indictment and the testimonies”*; they underlined that *“the statements made in the testimonies drove Tito and his gang to the wall”* and stressed the importance of the trial. Not only its importance from the Hungarian and international perspective, but specifically from the angle of the Yugoslav people.

In the broadcast of September 20, the editor considered it to be important to emphasize that the Rajk-trial *“created a new situation for the people of Yugoslavia in their fight against Tito and his gang. The Rajk-trial has produced documentary evidence to the people of Yugoslavia, that those who tore the country out of the camp of the Soviet Union and the people’s democracies, those who plunged it into unprecedented misery and those who sold off Yugoslavia to the imperialists – are the agents of American imperialists”*.



After the end of the trial the programmes discussed how "it assists the fight of the Yugoslavian people". The conclusion of the trial was: "Tito and his gang are not erring, they are not building a separate path to socialism but have been enemies to socialism from the beginnings." The trial gives answer "to all who asked themselves: how is it possible that the leaders of the partisan fights shamefully betrayed their country and the goals for which the blood of the people of Yugoslavia flowed like water. [...] The importance of the Rajk-trial for Yugoslavia is not only that it gives answers and explanations but also that it shows nakedly: who have the power today in Yugoslavia and what goals do they follow. The importance of the Rajk-trial for Yugoslavia is the fact that it underlined from the perspective of the Yugoslav and of global politics, how significant the just cause is that Yugoslav patriots fight for under the leadership of the new Communist Party of Yugoslavia against the Tito gang".<sup>12</sup>

In the following years, the propaganda warfare against Tito and Yugoslavia did not lose momentum. A detailed report from April 13, 1950 described the time, the length and the content of the broadcasts in great detail. The political nature of the broadcasts was determined by the resolution of the *Information Office*, the articles of the newspaper *Tartós békéért, népi demokráciáért* (*For Constant Peace and People's Democracy*) and the emigrant press, the commentaries broadcasted by the Moscow radio and articles in connection with Yugoslavia from the *Szabad Nép* (*Free People*). The head of the Shortwave Department said in his evaluation on the work of the department that the articles and reviews – prepared on the basis of the sources mentioned before, "were very offensive. We do not argue with Tito and his associates, but unveil that they are American spies, the agents of the American war-plans, who sell off Yugoslavia and are the greatest enemies of the Yugoslav people. We often point to their contradictory lies and their obvious tricks they tried to cheat with the Yugoslav people and the world in a sarcastic tone. We often have witty commentaries or brief spots to ridicule Tito and his band. [...] We have many speeches of the Titoist leaders recorded on tape, so we insert some parts and replay in the commentaries and unmask them with their own voices".

In connection with the sources it was emphasized that: "speeches, articles are aired several times [...] in their complete form, often literally".

<sup>12</sup> 9. October 1949 MTVA KI. Documents of the Shortwave Department. Box No. 3.

In many cases, the articles were included in the commentaries in an abbreviated form.

*Whenever the Yugoslav press and radio broadcasts were used, the goal was to reflect on "the events as soon as possible". They presented "the new measures to the listeners" and highlighted "the real meaning of the speeches" but emphasized the importance of avoiding "any explanation of their propaganda"; instead, efforts should be made to present "the fascist nature etc. of the Tito system through specific (speeches, measures etc.)". The radio should only react to "speeches and measures" that are clearly interesting for the Yugoslav workers.*

According to the document, articles from the Western press were used to show *"the connections between the Tito band and the imperialists through accidental statements in the imperialistic press and to present Tito's role in the plans of the imperialists against the Soviet Union"*. Articles on the economic state of Yugoslavia, the treaties and the loans were also often used. They read out such news in the programmes and then asked if it was true. The answer could not be avoided.

Another source was the writings of *"Yugoslav political emigrants living in Hungary, especially of those working in the radio, about their personal experiences in Yugoslavia. They wrote on the occasion of different anniversaries"*. These commentaries *"are often novelistic and appeal to the emotions. It is quite common [...] for them to compare the happy and wealthy life here with the misery of the Yugoslav people"*.

The reports from the Hungarian embassy in Belgrade were also an important source for the programmes. *"They were sent regularly for some time, they were specific and an immense help to our work. Then for months we received nothing. The situation improved a little in the last months, though. Information on prices was especially important. It is a major deficiency that the Hungarian embassy in Belgrade rarely gives us information that could help to agitate against the sufferings and the sorrow of the working people. In the commentaries on Yugoslavia we try to propagate the new JuCP (Yugoslavian Communist Party) and quote directly articles from the emigrant press or elsewhere or report on them when they deal with the party. Unfortunately, these hardly articles contain specific facts, by the very nature of things, to a certain extent."*

The articles and news on the *"achievements of the Hungarian people's democracy"* and of the *"other people's democracies"* were also used in the programmes as sources. *"We often draw parallel between the*

*Yugoslavian and the Hungarian situation in the so called profiling broadcasts.*" In this connection, we already highlighted the leading role and the work of the MDP, emphasized specifically the role of the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik Party and the support of comrade Stalin in building people's democracies and retaining their independence etc.

In his report, Béla Fenyő also wrote about the importance of propagating the Soviet Union. In the commentaries, they underline the leading role of the Soviet Union and especially, the decisive and "unswerving" love for Stalin and the Soviet Union. The programmes gave a picture of the "high culture and the joyful life of the Soviet people". The details were illustrated with the *Travel diary of the Hungarian Stakhanovist, Imre Muszka*.

"The battle for peace" assumed growing significance in the broadcasts. It was discussed in the news and commentaries with a focus on "the peacekeeping nature of the battle of the people of Yugoslavia".

The head of the department wrote about the echo of the Serbian and Slovenian broadcasts. "According to consistent information" the broadcast "is well listened to. The main reason to this is that the streaming of the Kossuth Radio can be received excellently throughout Yugoslavia." The same can be said about Petőfi Radio, too.

"Until the February 1949, we received hundreds of letters, 30–40 a day. In February 1949, Tito removed the possibility for our audience to write to us from one day to the other. In the factories and organizations of the People's Front, the Titoist propaganda-machinery decided that workers shall promise they will not listen to the broadcasts of the Budapest radio. The Yugoslav press and the Titoist leaders regularly discuss the broadcasts of the Hungarian radio in their speeches. In their satire magazines they do their utmost to make the radio from Moscow and from other people's democracies absurd but they focus mainly on the Hungarian radio. The radio in Belgrade broadcasts every Sunday a 'radio cabaret'. They constantly deal with the radio in Budapest. According to the Hungarian embassy in Belgrade, our radio has many listeners. Yugoslav emigrants in Hungary confirm the same. We regularly send a copy of our broadcasts to the *Nova Borba*. Comrades there say, that the broadcasts are good."

After enumerating the results the editorial achieved, Fenyő also wrote in his report about the deficiencies. Agitation is "not focused enough". Co-workers of the editorial are not always persistent in the "continued elaboration" of the most important topics. The knowledge

of “important materials” is often incomplete. They do not use well “the facts set out in the Yugoslavian and international media”. He pointed out on a negative note, that the commentaries are “not deep enough, they do not reach back to previous statements and measures”. Also, the columnists are too late to “react to important events”, the “commentaries” are therefore “often not specific enough, they tend to be insufficiently specific or too general. In particular the quality leaves something to be desired”.

In his proposal he underlined that “the Serbian section in the department for foreign language broadcasts in the Budapest radio needs a leading cadre who can strengthen the section and give guidance on how to interpret the articles in the Titoist and emigrant newspapers”. The “emigrants currently working at the department do not have an appropriately advanced thinking or vision and their perspective is not broad enough. Some of them do not even have the talents for radio-propaganda. There are serious mismatches in their behaviour and in their relation to the others. The quality of the work done by the Hungarian staff in the section is not high enough, either”.

#### Questions of Mátyás Rákosi, Secretary General of the Party

The letter dated May 3, 1950 suggests a strict party leadership over the Radio. It contained twelve questions by Mátyás Rákosi, quasi suggestions for the technology and the content of the broadcasts of the Serbian-Slovenian section.<sup>13</sup> Two days later, May 5, Szirmai responded in a 7-page report and sent it to the secretariat of Rákosi.<sup>14</sup> The document shows the importance attached to the foreign language editorial and the Serbian-Slovenian broadcasts against the background of the international events.

The fourth question in the letter of Rákosi was about the Cominform decisions related to the Yugoslav propaganda.<sup>15</sup> Szirmai wrote in his response: “The basis of our articles and commentaries is the decision of the TI.<sup>16</sup> In connection with the Yugoslavian events, we always rely on the considerations laid down by the TI.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>15</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>16</sup> TI, Information Office, Cominform.

<sup>17</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

The fifth question of Rákosi was about the unveiling of the "Tito clique" and the agents of the "American imperialists – the warmongers".<sup>18</sup> While acknowledging the importance of the question, Szirmai replied: *"This is at present the central element of our broadcasts. In connection with the creation of the Athens-Belgrade axis we can point out that Tito and his clique are indeed the main agents of the American imperialists that the imperialistic America wants to set up an anti-Soviet base in Yugoslavia and use the People of Yugoslavia as cannon-fodder. From time to time, we return the discussion on why Tito is keeping one million men in arms."*<sup>19</sup>

The sixth question was about the Yugoslavian election propaganda.<sup>20</sup> Before the election 1950, the Serbian programmes broadcasted all "relevant materials they could use from the emigrant press. The central motto [...] was: *No vote for the Tito fascists*". The commentaries dealt with "different groups of working people" and drew their attention to the "anti-grassroot policy of the Tito band" from the perspective of their own situation. Short statements of the Yugoslavian emigrants' were also included in the programmes. They presented the individual "Titoist election candidates" as supporters of the "old reactionary parties" or as members of "Tito's gang of spies", the "bourgeois" who had no connection with the "working people".

The programmes underlined that *"the people of Yugoslavia should respond to the election-comedy with an increased fight against Tito and his gang. Many critical articles and sarcastic commentaries"* told listeners about *"the lies and the contradictions in the campaign speeches of Tito and his gang"*.

After the elections, the main topic was *"the hatred the people of Yugoslavia felt for the fascist system. The people of Yugoslavia do not recognize the 'parliament' and raise the war flag higher"*.<sup>21</sup>

The seventh question was about the *"difficult financial situation of Yugoslav workers, about the collapse of the economy, the crimes of the Gestapo-type of state apparatus and about the terror"*, further about *"how operational is the radio and how fast does it react to the Yugoslav internal political events"*.<sup>22</sup> Szirmai wrote in his answer: *"Only the emigrant press and*

<sup>18</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>20</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>22</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

sometimes newspapers of communist parties" provide usable information "on the deeds of the Tito fascism". This is regularly discussed and presented in the programmes. "The Titoist speeches from the radio of Belgrade and from the Yugoslavian press give many pieces of information on the situation of the workers and on the economic collapse." These are regularly mentioned in the programmes ("forced work, obligatory place of residence, employment of children etc.") and we often draw parallels between the "increasing poverty etc. of the Yugoslav workers and the economic growth and increasing welfare of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, first of all of the Hungarian people's democracy".<sup>23</sup>

The eighth question concerned how the fight of the people of Yugoslavia against the "Tito Clique" was presented and how it helped to strengthen the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.<sup>24</sup> In his short answer Szirmai wrote: "We propagate every piece of news we have on sabotage, escape, 'bad' work or resistance of farmers against surrendering their produce and interpret it as the struggle of the Yugoslav people against Tito." In connection with news on the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, we can only rely on the press, but there is very little about the party and so we can only deal with it in general terms.<sup>25</sup>

The eleventh question of Rákosi was about the sources of the programmes and the staff of the editorial.<sup>26</sup> Szirmai basically repeated what Fenyő, head of the department, wrote in his the proposition from April 13, 1950 on popularizing the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

In the last, twelfth point, Rákosi asked about the success and the shortcomings of the Serbian broadcasts.<sup>28</sup> The answer of Szirmai was tactful. Basically speaking, he found their work was successful. "This is confirmed by the fact that the Hungarian Radio is under the constant attack of the Titoist propaganda. The programmes are usually agitative, militant and often affect emotions. It is a mistake that they do not concentrate on the most decisive issues, which reflects a certain lack of plan or vision in the editing." The commentaries are not "deep enough, they do not go back to earlier events and so, they cannot demonstrate appropriately the progress of

<sup>23</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>24</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>26</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

<sup>28</sup> To comrade István Szirmai, Budapest. May 3, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

*Tito's treachery*". He thought it was a mistake, that the programmes do "not use the prosperity of the Hungarian workers as an inflammatory example". Or, that they do not use the speeches of "Tito and his gang" or "when the imperialists said something unintentionally".<sup>29</sup>

### **Work Plan of the Hungarian Radio Corporation and the Report to the Party**

The semi-annual work plan of the Hungarian Radio Corporation was completed by September 25, 1950. The work plan defined the most important activities for every department for the period between October 1 and April 1, 1951. The general principle for the broadcasters was that programmes need "to raise awareness for the close connection between true patriotism and international solidarity, to deepen the love of our people for the Soviet Union and to increase the hatred for the imperialists". In order to achieve this, the programmes should be "harsher" and "more militant". "A more convincing tone" is needed, too.

Foreign language broadcasts had to follow three guidelines. The first was a requirement to present the development and the results of the "Hungarian people's democracy"; the second was about "the propagation of the Soviet Union and people's democracies" on the one hand and about the "unveiling of the war-plans of the imperialists and of the betrayal of their people"; and the third was about "the agitation materials prepared for the different countries". The third guideline was supplemented by the following remark: the programmes need to tackle "internal problems of the county concerned" more intensively, the "internal and external enemies of the people have to be identified" and the "daily fight led by the communist party" needs to be supported. The forms of implementation: news, commentaries or articles, interviews and reports.

Further, it was emphasized in connection with the "special" goals of the different programmes of the Serbian and the Slovenian broadcasting: efforts have to be made to "react faster to the events and to unveil the treachery of the Tito-band in a more offensive manner, like challenging them and making them liable on behalf of the people. Specific facts and evidence has to be used to deprive the pro-Tito press and radio of the rests of their credibility".<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Report. May 5, 1950. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

Among the documents of the Hungarian Radio Corporation from the period between 1945 and 1956 were only some that compare to the report dated April 6, 1951 – *A report for the Central Control Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party (KEB)*. Beyond its historical importance, this document is significant because it was not required from the Shortwave Department by the party, but it is the initiative of Imréné Kenesei, deputy leader of the Yugoslavian broadcasting, and was written for the most important forum, controlling even the leadership of the party. The documents give an insight into the operations of the Yugoslav section, the virtues and the deficiencies in its management, the activities of the staff, the changes in the transmission times and the propaganda of the most important foreign events.

In the introduction, Imréné Kenesei explained her reasons for writing the report: *"I see certain things in our department that my comrades need to know about. Although I reported these events case-by-case to József-né Kovács, local party secretary and also to comrade Lajos Asztalos, leading cadre in the personnel department – I will try to recite the most blatant examples."*

She briefly described the responsibilities of the Shortwave Department, which included the news editing and foreign language news-service transmitted on shortwave frequencies. There were 96 colleagues in the department led by Béla Fenyő who did not have an assistant. The department was divided into "sections for every foreign country".

The Yugoslav section had a daily airtime of 145 minutes, 115 minutes regular broadcasts and "30 minutes of diktovka (dictation programmes after midnight)". Every Sunday, the regular broadcast was 60 minutes longer.

The longest programme within the 115 minutes broadcast started at 11:00 pm and was aired on the Petőfi Radio until midnight. According to the embassy in Belgrade, *"Petőfi Radio can only be received in Slovenia and in the North of Yugoslavia, but even there the transmission quality was very poor. It could not be received either in Belgrade or in other parts of Yugoslavia. This means, that on paper we demonstrate that we broadcast a lot of agitation programmes to Yugoslavia, but most of our programmes*

<sup>30</sup> The official work plan of the Hungarian Radio Corporation. October 1, 1950–April 1, 1951. September 25, 1950. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (hereinafter MNL OL), XIX-I-3-n. Box No. 2.



cannot be received. Only 65 minutes of all broadcasts on Kossuth Radio can be received, but 30 minutes of that is diktóvka. We can add to this the 35 minutes the Slovenian broadcast on Petőfi Radio".

Mrs Kenesei said that she had already reported this to Béla Fenyő, head of the department, who mentioned the problem to István Szirmai. They agreed, that *"nothing can be done. The construction of the transmitting station in the Trans-Danubian region started several months ago.<sup>31</sup> Only when that is completed, can we talk about relaying the broadcasts of Petőfi Radio. Nothing will change before that, only a great amount of lost work and resources, and a false image of how and how much we agitate against Tito"*.

The next problem was the lack of control over the broadcasts in the Serbian language. Klára Kadosa was responsible for this. The speakers read out texts that had been approved, but for control purposes there was no written second copy available. The head of the department was repeatedly informed about this but Klára Kadosa told her *"you just sit in the studio, listen and improve yourself politically so that you recognise the mistakes"*. In reality this meant that nobody controlled the programmes. Imréné Kenesei wrote: *"the Serbian programmes had for years been broadcasted basically with no control at all, and comrade Fenyő knew very well about it. A couple of weeks ago we made some changes, but without having agreed on it with comrade Fenyő"*.

Then she described the character of the head of the department: *"Comrade Fenyő has a very bad relationship with the reliable workers in the department. He is arrogant and contemptuous with them and does not care for their education. He was often criticised for this and he exercises self-criticism in every department meeting but never really does anything against."* During the party-group meeting they discussed their pledges for the congress and the party members proposed that one of the pledges should be that he becomes responsible for the *"workers cadre"*. Fenyő answered: *"I have no time for this."*

The report says that the number of politically reliable workers is not enough in the department. *"It is not an explanation that there are only few cadres who speak foreign languages, because you do not find a worker-cadre in a position where language skills are not needed, either."* Whenever the Personnel Department proposed a worker-journalist *"from a factory*

<sup>31</sup> The transmitter in Balatonszabadi started to operate on October 24, 1953.

newspaper”, “comrade Fenyő or comrade Szirmai found out that they are inappropriate”.

There is also a Hungarian section in the Shortwave Department. This prepares the background material for the programmes. According to Mrs Kenesei, Fenyő said the following about this: *“The problem is that the background materials are done people who are good communists but bad journalists. I wish they were less good as a communist, but good as a journalist.”*

Among other mistakes of the Yugoslav section, she also wrote about László Kővágó, who *“was known [...] for spreading a bad spirit and constantly inciting hostilities. In March, Kővágó stated: ‘The skull-form of short people is different from that of tall people. They have more developed brains. Stocky little men are always great personalities, take Churchill, Lenin, Mussolini and Rákosi’”*. The section decided, as Mrs Kenesei wrote, that an *“internal disciplinary proceeding has to be introduced against Kővágó”* for this remark. *But comrade Fenyő said to the head of the Yugoslav section: ‘I can settle this myself, why should I take it to the internal disciplinary board. He will get a written warning from me.’ On the intervention of the party organization and the personnel department, Kővágó was removed from the radio”*.

As Mrs Kenesei wrote, Fenyő did not lead the department and did not give any “political-organizational guidance”. All his work was just checking programmes for broadcast one by one. *“This was a lot of work to him and he used it as an excuse for not caring for the people and for not being able to guide them. He does not build individual responsibilities, either.”*

In the next part of her report Mrs Kenesei enumerated other mistakes and the negligence of other sections and finally she declared: *The Shortwave Department and “within it the Yugoslav section, does not fulfil its duty as it should. I feel that the relevant organs of the Party need to be informed about this, and they have to know that we do not lead our fight either against Tito or against the Western imperialists as we should. I feel myself also responsible, that the work is not as it should be, therefore I ask the Party for help and to examine our situation”*.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Copy. Central Control Committee of the Hungarian Working People’s Party, April 6, 1951. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

The document from June 15, 1951 enlisted the themes of the Serbian and Slovenian broadcasts the previous month. Agitation in connection with Yugoslavia had two main themes: one was about "unveiling Tito and his band" and the other about "the mobilization of broad masses against Tito". The goals of the Shortwave Department concerning the content of the programmes of the Serbian section remained unchanged and continued to follow the instructions of the Hungarian party leadership. The document enlisted accurately the themes discussed in the broadcasts in the Serbian language and their frequency: there were two commentaries with the title "*Tito and his band is preparing as mercenary soldiers of America for war against the Soviet Union and [the] people's democracies*". An especially large number of commentaries (16) dealt with the creation of a Balkan Alliance.<sup>33</sup>

The programmes mentioned nine times that "*Tito will send Yugoslav soldiers to Korea*". Fourteen commentaries reported that "*capitalism is being restored at an accelerated pace, while workers are misled*" in Yugoslavia. Sixteen programmes dealt with the 1<sup>st</sup> May celebrations, the "Tito's relay" where the sole purpose was to hide the underlying "inciting chauvinism and war hysteria". Twelve broadcasts dealt with "Tito and the leading personalities in his band". Nine commentaries mentioned "the unveiling of the Titoist terror and its fascist power". The commentaries in the programmes continued to popularise the Soviet Union in the usual manner and "possibly with Yugoslav references". Similarly, they reported on "*the achievements of the Hungarian people's democracy: the increase of the living standard, our amended five-years-plan etc.*". They did not extend the pool of the sources they had used.<sup>34</sup>

Another report was made for the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Leadership of the MDP on 26. July 1951. This is one of the last such reports about the department preserved in the former Archives of the Hungarian Radio Corporation. The 23-page long report presented and evaluated the work of all foreign language sections. It described the duration of the programmes, the agitation

<sup>33</sup> The Balkan Alliance was initiated by Tito and the party general secretary of Bulgaria but Stalin stopped the ambitions of creating a regional centre that would limit his full power.

<sup>34</sup> The political line of agitation in Serbian and Slovenian languages. June 15, 1951. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.

criteria that served as basis for the programmes and enumerated the different forms of agitation. It described in detail the content requirements of the reports, commentaries and reviews. The previously presented sources were also enlisted. Deficiencies were described in great detail, but the formulation was almost always general and the majority of the points were already included in other, previously presented documents as well. The commentaries, however, were seriously criticised. Their tone “was often odourless, colourless”. Especially when they discuss “certain issues in general terms”. The language of the radio programmes “is not passionate enough” and the agitation not powerful enough. *“The main reason for this is, first, that we do not have any columnists. Second, there is no political culture and knowledge of the commented location and topic is also missing.”* The nature of the Hungarian broadcasts “is not Hungarian enough”. The number of comments with Hungarian themes in these programmes is very low. *“The Hungarian Radio Corporation does not have a well-known radio personality who could comment the different international events on behalf of the Corporation and explain the position of the Hungarian people.”* The same also applied the agitation in the Serbian and the Slovenian languages: this was increasingly recognised as a mere repetition of ready-made clichés and commonplaces.<sup>35</sup>

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The character of foreign languages broadcasts were subordinated to the political propaganda and followed well ups and downs of the Cold War. In 1956, after the settlement of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, disappeared not only the Cominform and so its newspaper against Yugoslavia the “New Struggle”, but changed the tone against the West as well.

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<sup>35</sup> Report for the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Leadership of MDP on the work of the Shortwave Department of the Hungarian Radio Corporation, dated from July 26, 1951. MTVA KI. Box TD-317/2. 2.