

**Final Report on the Research Conducted at the Open Society Archives during a Visegrad
Research Scholarship from 1-30 June 2013**

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My short research stay at the Open Society Archives in June 2013 was part of my research project concerning the inter-party relations of communist parties in Europe during the Cold War which is in turn part of a larger research project coordinated by the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland. This is a topic that has been under-researched in the hitherto scholarship on communism in Europe and, moreover, under-represented or blatantly ignored in the literature. Until present, it has in fact been assumed that the communist parties that formed the Soviet satellite regimes in Eastern Europe were completely subordinated and controlled by the Soviet ‘Big Brother’, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow, while the communist parties in Western Europe merely acted as Soviet ‘agents’ on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The premise of a genuine or ‘polycentric’ European communist movement was a priori dismissed as constituting a smokescreen for Soviet foreign policy interests, while little scholarly queries have actually endeavoured to verify such a claim based on an analysis of the sources. This is partially explained by the erstwhile Cold War political bias within the field of communist and Soviet bloc research and a somewhat inevitable result of the then inaccessibility of relevant archival sources. Meanwhile, times have changed and the former communist archives have become generally available to historians enabling previously impeded questions and problems to be researched. Cutting a long story short, my research proposes a re-examination of the constellation of the communist ‘partyscape’ in Europe during the Cold War and the mutual relations between individual communist parties not mediated by the Soviet power centre.

It is within this research framework with new questions in mind that I came to Budapest to look into the repository of Radio Free Europe archives. Radio Free Europe was one of the contemporary institutions that monitored the developments within the communist partyscape and the movements and contacts of communist activists in Europe. As such my assumption was that the repository would constitute not only an interesting collection of material, but also an essential addition and ‘roadmap’ to my other archival queries in the respective party and secret police archives. My main research focus upon arrival in Budapest was on the Polish party, the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* [Polish United Workers’ Party] and its relations with other communist parties after 1956, in particular with its Czechoslovak and Hungarian counterparts as outlined in my initial research proposal in my application for a Visegrad scholarship.

At the outset of my initial search through the archival catalogue I was confronted with a double search strategy that entailed a parallel examination of the hard-copy holdings in the archive and the digital repository. Concerning the latter, it was in particular the 'RFE situation reports', and the 'RFE background reports' that attracted my attention as they represented processed contemporary analyses based on the source material I was planning to work through during my research stay. Turning to that source material and owing to my primary focus on the Polish party, the collection held in the 'Polish Unit' of the Radio Free Europe repository in the 'Processed Fonds' (HU OSA 300-50-1) immediately caught my attention. Concretely, going through the 'Old Cold Subject Files' the boxes 348 to 367 seemed like the appropriate starting point for my work in the reading room during the month-long fellowship. Soon, I must admit, this turned out to be somewhat of an understatement as the material held in those 20 boxes proved to be a true goldmine. The boxes were conveniently titled 'relations with foreign parties [stosunki z partiami zagranicznymi]' and the files they contained were organised more or less chronologically. The material they held consisted of press clippings and transcripts of radio emissions. While these were at the time publically accessible sources of information they provided an immediate added value to my research, both with regards to the informative aspect as well as certain methodological elements. For example, it became quite clear that to understand the relations between the Polish party and its Czechoslovak and Hungarian counterparts it was worth to look into the contemporary Yugoslav communist establishment's assessment of those relations – mainly in the form of the transcripts of the emission of Radio Belgrade. Moreover, the collection of material in these boxes represented an extremely useful guide that will enable more directed queries in other archives outlining fundamental information on the actors, the issues, and the timeframe that is the subject of my research. While on the one hand the collection in the Polish Unit exceeded my initial expectations, it was on the other hand much more extensive and than that of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Units – respectively HU OSA 300-30-[1 to 9] and HU OSA 300-40-[1 to 3]. Admittedly I did not go through the Hungarian-language keywords in the archival catalogue for the simple reason that I do not read Hungarian, while the Czechoslovak Unit was somewhat chaotically organised in several collections of 'Subject Files' of which some of the more interesting materials appeared in the digital repository. This said, a simple query in the Hungarian Unit's 'Subject Files in English' produced some very interesting and useful materials in the likes of translations of contemporary Hungarian press and internal RFE telexes. Additionally, I went through some material in the 'Soviet Red Archives' collection (HU OSA 300-80-1) to crosscheck the material I found in the above-mentioned boxes.

To conclude, I can confidently state that my research stay at the Open Society Archives was a fruitful and productive undertaking. The findings will not only contribute to my ongoing research, but hopefully lead to a stand-alone publication. However, I must underline that due to the larger

amount of material than I initially anticipated, I must return at a later moment to conduct further research. Nevertheless, I will gladly undertake such a visit thanks to my positive experience of the past month. As they contributed to this experience, I would like express my sincere thanks to Katalin Gadoros for her amicable correspondence and framing of my research stay, to Czaba Szilagyí who as my supervisor not only welcomed me at the archive but also pointed me to interesting collections that I would not have thought of consulting beforehand, and last but not least to the staff of the reading room – in particular Robert Parnica and Örs Tari who were not only always prepared to help me with my practical questions but did this with a smile and created an atmosphere which made my research stay not only pleasant from an academic point of view but also as a personal experience.