

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT
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***Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Monitoring the Use of the Repressive Medicine in
the Soviet Union in the 1960s – 1980s***

My research is devoted to the repressive medicine, especially psychiatry, for dealing with dissent in the USSR in the 1960s-80s and how this problem was showing and broadcasting on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) waves.

After Stalin's death the Soviet authorities had branched the repressive apparatus for the struggle with dissidents, but, nevertheless, since the 1960s they began to use another method against some of them. They resorted to applying the repressive medicine, mainly psychiatry, against nonconformists. This meant the abuse of psychiatry methods, treatments, information, and mental hospitals for compulsory detention and "treatment" of people for their political, social or religious views. The Soviet authorities intended to avoid open trials and possible publicity by presenting freethinkers' views as mentally ill ones. At the same time the total control over the media in the USSR closed any possibility to make this information known inside the country.

Therefore, the West became the main recipient of requests for assistance from the Soviet dissidents and other nonconformists in helping to stop repression in their country. RFE/RL was one of the most powerful anti-communist sources of spreading the information about Soviet political abuse not only in the West, but in the Eastern Bloc as well during the period of the Cold War. In spite of numerous attempts of Soviet authorities to block this information channel, RFE/RL along with other western radio stations ("Voice of America", "BBC", "Deutsche Welle", etc.), broadcasted a lot of evidence, much information about human rights violations to its audience behind the Iron Curtain. RFE/RL was the major provider of the Soviet repressive medicine data in the world until the end 1980s, when the fact of such abuse was officially recognized by the Soviet state and such repression was terminated.

It is necessary to emphasize that I concentrate my main attention on that of RFE/RL's part that targeted the Soviet Union. So, further in the text I will appeal not to RFE/RL, but specially to Radio Liberty (RL).

The topic on RL was little bit new for me. My previous researches for Bachelor's and Master's degrees were all on the repressive medicine in the USSR and were devoted to the spreading of information about such psychiatric abuses in the West and to the Western public opinion about this issue in the Soviet Union in the 1960-60s respectively. Nevertheless, I didn't concentrate all my attention before only on the radio and especially on one the concrete radio station. So, this research became something like a new challenge for me, because this topic is quite complicated. RL wasn't an ordinary radio station at all and it is necessary to take into consideration different points and peculiarities related to its work and broadcasting.

It was very important for me to get opportunity to work at the OSA, to work where are sources which I need and support my research by archival materials. When I came here, I knew what I should look for, what I need to find to complete my research, but I didn't know what I can find in reality. As a result, I not only supported my research by the set of useful documents, but I received more information than I even expected as well.

The main Fond, which I hoped to investigate, was *HU OSA 300 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute*, especially such subfonds as "Soviet Red Archives", "Samizdat Archives", "Publications Department", "Communist Area Analysis Department", "Media and Opinion Research Department." As a result, I examined wholly or partly of 124 boxes. Most of all I was interested in those materials that shed light on main goals and principles of RFE/RL's broadcasting in relation to the Soviet Union during the period of the Cold War, its main types of sources about repressive medicine in the USSR and their value and reliability as a basis for producing news, mechanisms and tools of possible action of RFE/RL's activities on the Soviet policy towards dissidents, particularly those who suffered or could suffer from medical abuse, and, finally, the achievements of RFE/RL in stopping the use of the repressive medicine in the Soviet Union.

Also, I was lucky to find and even obtain the copy (with the permission of the OSA) of the video interview with the former soviet psychiatric prisoner Vladimir Bukovski, where he talked a lot about medical abuse in the Soviet Union (from *HU OSA 314-0-2 Oral history interviews with communist party officials, their relatives and dissidents*).

Important for me is the thing that the more I worked with the materials, the more new questions I received. These questions are not always to documents, but to the topic in general. And I think it is very essential that I have them, because it can help me to look at my research wider and understand it deeper. In my opinion, it is one from my achievement that I came with the concrete set of questions, but left with another, with new questions, and new areas for thinking.

In general, according to the examined materials, it seems that my hypothesis that the RFE/RL as a major anti-communist source of information during the Cold War due to its wide publicity had a certain pressure on the Soviet policy towards dissidents and an impact sufficient enough to stop the abuse of psychiatry in the USSR is correct. Nevertheless, only further research of this issue can prove (or disprove) the rightness of this statement finally.

Moreover, I not only achieved my main objectives at OSA, but got new ideas and points for research as well. For example, on the issue of the sources of RL about cases of psychiatry abuses in the Soviet Union, other than RL's monthly reports, samizdat, interviews with persons who suffered from it, the Western newspapers, etc., I opened for myself such source of information about it as RL's interviews with people who emigrated from the USSR (among them are many Jews) and their listener's reports about RL's broadcasting inside the country and their stories about the life there. These people mentioned about political psychiatry cases quite often and illustrated them by names, places, some peculiarities of such cases and said about its showing on RL that they listened there. Such type of information is something like a new breathe for my research and a fruitful field for study of this issue.

Another point is that, searching the OSA's holdings, I found several of new for me names of persons who were in mental hospitals for political purposes too and about whom I didn't know before, and some information about their cases. And even more, I added new materials to other dissidents' profiles about whom I had very few information before this time.

The next important for me thing I understood at OSA that the Soviet press about "the bad Western "voices,"" and especially about RL too, and the level of their jamming in different periods of time, can serve as the unique source of information. The Soviet press contains a lot of articles that are devoted to subversive activities of RL's broadcasting about human rights violations in the USSR and about abuses of psychiatry there as well (and the great collection of these articles, press clippings located at the OSA). I fully

understand that the Soviet press is very specific source of information with own peculiarities and it is necessary to work with it very carefully, but I believe that it has special interest for me. Now I would like to give it more attention in my research. I am convinced that it will have the result.

And one more point, it is necessary to take into consideration that RFE/RL worked along with other western radio stations (“Voice of America”, “BBC”, “Deutsche Welle”, etc.) and they all together created the powerful anti-communist environment in their media area. The question of medical abuses in the Soviet Union was broadcasted by all of them. And it is a nice complement to the research to do some comparative analyses on it for deeper understanding of the situation with the radio and certain aspects that are related to my research too. This task became easier for me now, because I found quite enough documents in the OSA dedicated to these radio stations.

There is one more very nice and wonderful moment for me. The OSA gives the unique opportunity to help receive the external consultation from the authoritative in your field researcher or person, if necessary. And I asked about it Katalin Gádaros whether it possible to get consultation from Mr. Peter Reddaway or Mr. Robert van Voren. Somebody one from them, because both of them are very authoritative researchers and have many works on the repressive medicine in the USSR (but, of course, not only on this issue) and it would be great for me to receive some consultations or recommendations from them. And as it turned out, they both agreed. I have already received some responses from them. My questions had the quite specific character about some peculiarities related to my topic and Mr. Reddaway and Mr. van Voren gave me kindly some of them personal points of view on it, points from their experience, and advised some interesting materials that can be really useful for me. I am going to add all of them to my research. I very thankful for this opportunity to the OSA and Katalin especially, because she organised this connection.

The opportunity to examine the OSA, the OSA Library, and the CEU Library at the same time is a great advantage for OSA Visegrad fellows as well. I added a lot of new materials from the last two.

But there is one not a very nice thing for my research too. The reason is that the RL’s program audiotapes are not in the OSA, but in the Hoover Institution Archives. And this fact is the problem for me, because to write about RL’s broadcasting on the Soviet repressive medicine, but don’t have the audiotapes on it, can be quite strange and serious loss for the research. Thanks to my supervisor at the OSA Olga Zaslavskaya, I have copies

of two disks with such programs from her personal holdings. There are two programs about psychiatric hospitals in the USSR for political purposes. Unfortunately, it is really not enough. So, I have to think how I can deal with this situation in future.

Another disadvantage of my materials at the OSA is the dispersion of necessary documents in different kinds of folders and boxes. I take into consideration that maybe there is not the problem with the archive, because it can depend on different factors of its ordering, but still. My experience shows that documents that are related to the repressive medicine in the USSR can be in many different places inside the one fond and not only. I can illustrate one from examples. To view all folders with names in biographical files in the Fond 300, subfond 85 and documents for them that are related to my topic, I need to take approximately 70 boxes from 365 that there are. And it is only one such example, but it is really exhausting and time taking. The next thing is that there are a lot of the same materials in several different folders and boxes at the same time. It is a quite destructive moment as well.

I would like to thank the OSA for the opportunity to do my research. I have received the unique experience and the unique opportunities here. Without all this my research would be hardly possible. Special thanks to Katalin Gádoros for her assistance in all types of cases, to my supervisor Olga Zaslavskaya for her leading of my research, advices, consultations, and suggestions, to Robert Parnica and Örs Lehel Tari for providing by all necessary materials, and, of course, to all staff of the OSA for their help and the wonderful atmosphere inside the archive. Thanks to all of you I spent two very enjoyable and extremely useful for my research months.