

Hungary 1956-1959 - correspondence, resolutions, General Assembly and Secur...

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Hungary - 1959

22-24 Oct.

2 Memoranda concerning the question
of radio transmissions in Hungarian.

MEMORANDUM

The question of radio transmissions in Hungarian has to be judged in the light of the stated and approved principles for UN Radio transmissions in any language but the five working languages of the Organization. Unless relayed by the Government of the country to which such special sendings are addressed, they are made only in cases where the question concerning that country is under consideration by the Organization. The reason for this rule is, naturally, that UN should provide to the people in question full information concerning discussions or decisions regarding that people, irrespective of the stand of its Government. The special radio transmissions have no other political purpose than this one and cannot have any such other purpose. In the light of these circumstances, it is obvious that special transmissions should continue as long as there is anything substantial to tell regarding UN activities in respect of the country concerned and that the criterion that UN is seized with a question must not be given a purely formal interpretation; as is well known, quite a few controversial issues remain on the agenda of the main organs of the UN without any further action ever being taken or contemplated.

In the case of Hungary, the issue is not on the agenda, but the Special Representative of the UN has not finished his task. This creates a border case as regards the interpretation of the principles ruling the UN Radio transmissions. The continuance of such transmissions can be defended in view of the possibility of a renewal of the consideration of the issue and the possibility of further action, but it should be taken into consideration that for months, or at present for one year, there has been practically no information regarding Hungary to transmit. Thus, while a formal justification for the continuance of transmissions exists, it may well be held that there is, at present, no substantive justification for such transmissions on the basis of the principles established.

In fact, for one year the UN Radio has been able to transmit only two pieces of information regarding Hungary. One, a short notice about Sir Leslie Munroe's press release last summer announcing his failure to get anywhere, and one regarding

Foreign Minister Sik's speech in the General Assembly. It is an open question what the psychological effect on the Hungarian people of these two pieces of information may have been.

Under these conditions I have considered it natural to review the way in which transmissions are organized, so that, while maintaining the link with Hungary, in view of the formal situation facing us, a more satisfactory treatment of the substantive aspect would be possible. Thus, instead of five weekly sendings of four minutes, there will be one weekly sending of a quarter of an hour. While a sending of four minutes can only give the bare details of voting results, etc., it is possible to give a more balanced picture of UN activities over a quarter of an hour covering developments of the whole week. The change cannot possibly have any detrimental effect as regards the information received by the Hungarian people about UN activities, and I cannot believe that anybody could regard the change as indicative of any lessening of the interest of the Organization; in retrospect I feel that it is a much more serious fact that a listener, faithfully following UN sendings over the year, has registered only what we have been able to send so far concerning Hungarian developments in the UN.

I regret that the United States Delegation had no prior knowledge of this change of the form of our transmissions. I would have been happy to have such information given to it, although the Delegation is, of course, aware of the fact that the Secretary-General, under the Charter, is not even permitted to seek the advice of any Government as to the way in which he meets his obligations under the Charter.

It is correct that, at their request, the Delegation of Hungary has received transcripts of our sendings. As the text of those sendings is in the public domain, any Delegation could, at request, have received the same documents.

Were this matter to become the subject of public debate, the explanation given above would, of course, be the substance of our reply.

22 October 1959

SECRET

MEMORANDUM

In a meeting on Thursday, 22 October, with Mr. Lodge regarding Laos, he finally brought up the radio transmissions to Hungary. He did it in this form:

He brought out a paper saying that "then we have the Hungarian story. I had them condense it for me in this paper which I may read to you". He then read a brief roughly on the lines which we knew from numerous telephone calls from Frank Carpenter and other policy makers on the issue. Lodge read it very dejectedly and uninterestedly, slurring over the sentences, when he came to the end, regarding their need to give publicity to the protest, etc., etc.

I gave him our arguments as later set down in our memorandum on the matter, and to judge from his reactions he was entirely agreed in substance. I ended up by saying that I would put down what I had said in writing for him, "as that might be helpful". He said that it certainly would be. (So this was "the angry protest from Mr. Lodge".)

Later, without waiting for the promised text which, after all, they got the same evening, they released to the press the story of the Lodge protest. It did not arouse any interest in the New York Times, while, on the other hand, Pierre Huss and UPI carried stories attempting to be sensational. The identical phrasing of parts of those stories indicate that the journalists had been fed.

24 Oct. 59.

THJ.