

## INTERNATIONAL

## RADIO FREE EUROPE Station Break?

For two decades, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty have been household words throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. To many millions of people in the Communist bloc, in fact, the two American-financed stations have often been the sole source of unvarnished information about events around the world. This, not surprisingly, has made them constant targets for the wrath of Communist authorities. Forbidding their citizens to listen to these voices of "bourgeois ideology," the Soviet and East European governments have sought to jam the offending broadcasts. Their jamming efforts have largely failed and their



The Hungarian uprising: Rollback gave way to objective news

prohibitions have been ignored. Last week, however, the Communists got an unexpected assist from Washington when the U.S. Congress failed to extend government financing of the stations.

The trouble began a year ago when New Jersey Sen. Clifford Case revealed that while Radio Free Europe (which broadcasts to Eastern Europe) and Radio Liberty (which is beamed to the Soviet Union) both claimed to be privately financed, the bulk of their money actually came from the Central Intelligence Agency. Although this fact had long been an open secret, its public disclosure touched off a furor, since it fueled Communist charges that the two stations were propaganda organs of the U.S. Government. While an embarrassed Administration promptly transferred control of the stations' budget from the CIA to the U.S. Information Agency, Congress began to debate the organizations' ultimate fate. Recently, the House of Representatives approved an authorization of \$35 million until June 1973, while a nongovernmental means of funding was studied. But un-

der the prodding of Sen. William Fulbright, chairman of the powerful Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate balked.

In Fulbright's view, the disclosure of CIA backing underscored the fact that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty had deceived both their Iron Curtain listeners and the American people about their true nature. Contending that both stations were an anachronism in an era of budding East-West rapprochement, the Arkansas senator thundered: "These radios should be given an opportunity to take their rightful place in the graveyard of cold-war relics." And with that, he announced himself opposed to funding the two stations beyond next June.

**Slogans:** Defenders of the stations argued that it was Sen. Fulbright himself who was out of step with reality. They admitted that immediately after the stations were set up in Munich in the early 1950s, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty dedicated themselves to encouraging the citizens of Eastern Europe to "roll back" Communism—a policy that helped to spark the ill-fated Hungarian revolt of 1956. But following the Hungarian uprising, the stations changed their tune. Trading their old slogan of "liberation" for a new one of "liberalization," they have sought to enlighten their audiences with objective accounts of events suppressed by the heavily censored Communist media—a practice that has made the East European press discuss subjects it would otherwise ignore.

With their combined staffs of some 2,400 putting out 1,000 hours of broadcasting in 25 languages a week, the stations also have become a prime means of disseminating documents written by Soviet and East European dissidents that have been smuggled abroad. In support of present programming, partisans of the station quoted a recent letter from a Soviet scientist which said: "Radio Liberty is what a Russian station would have been like if we had freedom of speech."

**Adamant:** All of this was known to Senator Fulbright. For he had himself commissioned a Library of Congress study of the two stations that, contrary to his expectations, praised the professionalism of their staffs and the quality of their broadcasts and research reports, which are used by scholars all over the world. The study concluded that the demise of the stations would constitute a severe blow to the flow of information in the Communist world. Despite this, however, Fulbright remained adamant in his opposition to the stations. "The senator," said a staff member, "would like to see the whole operation liquidated." And, perhaps inevitably, no major Congressional figure seemed prepared to be as active in defending the stations as Fulbright has been in attacking them. Accordingly, although RFE and Radio Liberty have enough funds to stay on the air for several more weeks, it seems quite possible that, in the end, the senator from Arkansas may succeed in silencing them.

Newsweek, March 6, 1972