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Resolution of the Politburo of HSWP on the experience of the fight against imperialist propaganda and its intensification

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I.

1. The regular monitoring and evaluation of hostile propaganda targeting our country has been conducted by the Central Committee since the third quarter of 1969 on the basis of the resolution of the Politburo¹. Since that time 15 quarterly reports and 5 thematic evaluations have been prepared. The materials are prepared by the so-called Evaluation Committee that works as a body coordinated to the Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee. The Evaluation Committee is made up of members representing the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Public Administration, the Department of Science, Culture and Public Education of the Central Committee and also includes representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior, the Hungarian Press Agency, the Institute of Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian Radio. The six state bodies mentioned above analyze hostile propaganda along their own line and provide their own reports, which then make up the final report. This final report is sent to the members of the Politburo and the Secretariat, the heads of departments of the Central Committee and the leaders of the affected state organs.

This work has become an integral part of the political activities of the above-mentioned bodies, constituting an established system today. It is especially the reports prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hungarian Press Agency, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior that show clear signs of regular data collection and deep analysis. The Hungarian Radio and the Institute of Foreign Affairs have been able to find the most suitable method only recently.

The evaluation in these reports is aimed at pointing out the main tendencies and changes. Therefore they can provide the political leadership with useful quarterly summaries concerning hostile propaganda and at the same time call the attention to possible tactical changes, based on the comparison of data in recent and earlier reports. The reports also provide good grounds for drawing the necessary conclusions.

However, one shortcoming of these reports is that the collection of data is not comprehensive enough (it does not even utilize fully the technical capacity of the monitoring station installed in Gödöllő) and the analyses are not deep enough. They often fail to amply show how the division of labor is managed by the various outlets of hostile propaganda, they

do not call attention to the characteristic features of bourgeois propaganda that impact the various classes and layers of the society – especially the youth – and they do not investigate thoroughly as to how the policy of disintegration conveyed by this propaganda becomes manifest in the area of tourism. The level of synthesizing work is not satisfactory. Several of the bodies concerned are still trying to find the most suitable methods to participate in the analysis of hostile propaganda and they replace their representatives engaged in such work all too often. Most of the real work is done at the end of quarters, it is not operative enough and there are very few evaluations prepared in between the quarterly reports.

2. The main goal of the analysis of hostile propaganda has so far been to provide information for the leaders of the party and the state. As a result, information flow was directed upwards and we failed to devote ample attention to two important tasks: providing information for the lower party organizations, which should be somewhat different from the reports sent to the highest leadership, and to the utilization of our experience gained through our fight against hostile propaganda in our political work, especially in our own propaganda activities.

3. Our sister parties show a genuine interest in learning more about our experience in the evaluation of hostile propaganda. For instance, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party has ordered the counselor of embassy of the Soviet embassy in Budapest to gather information at the Central Committee about our quarterly evaluation reports. Similar regular information is provided for the German Socialist Unity Party, and the Polish and Bulgarian diplomats are given occasional information. It would be practical, however, to send our sister parties a biannual report and request a similar evaluation from them.

II.

1. The main methodological and substantive experience gained through nearly four years of evaluation work shows that the hostile propaganda targeting our country intends to achieve the same goals by means of changing methods and tools with a view to the conditions of peaceful coexistence and the ongoing ideological fight. This propaganda is less sharp in its tone today but much more extensive in its scope.

Some of the methodological and substantive changes can be demonstrated by the following:

- It was a striking feature of the period in question that in general the hostile propaganda was not trying to incite the people directly to overthrow the system instantly. It took great pains to be viewed as an “opposition” rather than an “outsider” or an “enemy”, which criticized the system from the “inside”, so its tone pretended to be more “loyal.” It intended to relate very closely to the everyday problems of our public life, to exaggerate our troubles and to support their messages by referring to facts and events of our daily life. These endeavors are manifest e.g. in their intention to incite dissatisfaction towards the policy of the party, to attack the leading role of the party, to turn the various classes and layers of society against each other, and to extol apolitical technocracy. They also try hard to frustrate our endeavors by trying to push our policy to the right, e.g. urging “capitalistic” reforms in the economy and “liberalizing” reforms in extending socialist democracy.

- Open, anti-Communist propaganda is more and more often replaced by campaigns heralding the “improvement” of socialism in which important issues of Marxism are also discussed, often using Marxist terminology. At the same time it frequently propagates so-called new models of socialism, overemphasizes the importance of the divergent national features of socialist development, incites nationalism and turns the socialist countries against each other. It also maintains – often with an openly anti-Soviet tone – that there exists a so-called Hungarian model.

- The foreign propaganda paints a distorted picture of the domestic situation also by setting domestic and foreign policy sharply against each other. It suggests that Hungary can continue to conduct its “liberal, reformist” domestic policy at the expense of an “orthodox, Soviet-friendly” foreign policy. It recommends the same to other socialist countries too. In this context its aim was to instigate distrust among our allies, and even the cooked-up potential clash between the “conservatives” and the “reformists” was represented as a “proof of the instability” of the socialist system. It talked about a “Hungarian dilemma”, a “crisis in the leadership”, and when – after the November Central Committee meetingⁱⁱ – the desired “disintegration” did not materialize, it started speaking about “a tightening domestic policy”, “shifting the points” and “putting the brakes on reforms.” It sticks to the same attitude even today. At the same time it takes a good stock of the tactical situation, which is illustrated by its reaction to the events of March 15 or to those that took place in Balassagyarmatⁱⁱⁱ. It is also to be noted that it speaks differently about Hungary to the audience of capitalist countries than to a Hungarian audience.

- Within nationalist incitement the main goal of the propaganda has become to instigate anti-Soviet sentiments and to break away from the Soviet Union. A standard topic of this propaganda is the “Soviet pressure” on our domestic policy, “distrust on the part of Moscow”, the “superpower interests of the Soviet Union” and the “Brezhnev doctrine” as far as foreign affairs are concerned. It urges to challenge this doctrine and sets the Romanian foreign policy as an example. It describes the advantages of a possible “stronger orientation towards the West” and Hungary’s ability to “play the role of a bridge.” The fact that most of the propaganda broadcast to Hungary talks about the internal situation of other socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union, also demonstrates that the main goal is to set us against our allies.

- Imperialist propaganda pays increasingly more lip service to ultra-leftist views. It uses Maoist, Trotskyite “new leftist” ideas to demonstrate the “internal crisis of socialism” and speculates on making the most of the conflicts in international labor movement by exaggerating and sharpening them to an extreme degree. It encourages openly or potentially anti-socialist trends, various extremist groups and the pluralism of Marxism^{iv}.

- Utilizing the potentials of wide-ranging contacts between the East and the West it creates a lot of illusions about the capitalist system and Western lifestyle, and promotes the system of values prevalent in the capitalist world. The changes that have taken place in the policy of some capitalist countries as a result of the changes in the balance of powers are represented as if the nature of capitalist policy itself had changed, thereby giving rise to illusions about certain countries or politicians. This propaganda does everything it can to make the bourgeois mass media more appealing to a growing number of people.

2. The reasons for the changes in the content and methodology of hostile propaganda:

- the achievements of our domestic and foreign policy and the strengthening position of socialism which shattered any hope for a direct overthrow of the socialist system;
- the general crisis of the capitalist world and the decreasing appeal of it as a direct consequence of this crisis;
- accommodation to the tactics of disintegration and “selective gap-bridging”;
- social changes in our country and the recognition of developing socialist mentality;
- utilization of the potential of wide-ranging contacts between Hungary and the capitalist world.

3. Among the various tools of imperialist propaganda the mass media continue to try to expand the range of people who tune in on their programs especially by playing the role of acceptable and trustworthy channels of information. Though their messages are essentially the same, there appears to be a certain division of labor among them in that for instance certain things that the radio of Washington is reluctant to say for political reasons are conveyed through the BBC or the Radio of Free Europe.

In addition to the mass media an increasingly important role is played by the propaganda conveyed through cultural relations. The embassies of developed capitalist countries are becoming more and more active, and occasionally we also witness the propaganda activities of the right-wing emigration. The hostile propaganda makes use of the potentials in tourism through the training of western tourists visiting our country as well as by trying to exert an influence on the Hungarian tourists visiting their countries.

The tools used by the imperialist propaganda have undergone intensive modernization. The United States is already planning to introduce the use of satellites to broadcast television programs to socialist countries and the Federal Republic of Germany is going to install new, high-capacity radio stations.

4. The evaluation of hostile propaganda targeting our country is an extremely complex task. Our society is constantly exposed to a wide range of concurrent effects. When weighing the impact of bourgeois propaganda, our essential starting point is that Hungarian public opinion is largely influenced by the achievements of socialist development and the major elements of socialist public thinking. However, we should not ignore – and overestimate or underestimate – some impact of bourgeois propaganda.

Bourgeois propaganda can achieve some results in issues related to some internal tension or problems in the country. For instance they have tried to give rise to some uncertainty and raise some concern over the future of our economic reforms and the correctness of our foreign policy. This propaganda also makes use of the weaknesses of our information policy. For instance, it wasted no time to grasp the opportunity when we were rather silent about the Vienna negotiations for quite a long time.

Its impact can be observed in three areas:

- some unfavorable features of public sentiment and attitude – nationalism, cynicism, adoration of the West, disparagement of the achievements of the socialist countries – can partly be attributed to the impact of western propaganda;

- hostile influence occasionally manifests itself in providing misleading information for the people;

- imperialist propaganda – as a major tool of ideological subversion – disseminates bourgeois ideas, conserves and revives bourgeois ideology.

This impact can be explained by the more intensive contacts between the two world systems, the ideological situation in our country, and our objective difficulties and subjective mistakes. The weak points of our work play an important role in its success: the shortcomings of our analyses and the failure to utilize our past experience. For this very reason priority should be given to a more offensive and active fight against hostile propaganda in the proper framework in addition to the currently ongoing evaluative and reporting activities.

Resolution

1. The Politburo accepts the report.^v It states that the system of analyzing hostile propaganda has been established on the basis of the resolution of the Politburo and fulfills its tasks.

2. It is the achievements of socialist development and the main aspects of socialist public thinking that play the most decisive role in shaping Hungarian public opinion. The fight against hostile propaganda – due to earlier party resolutions – has become more lively, argumentative, polemical and sophisticated. The organs of the mass media have played a key role in this development both at home and abroad. However, due to the change in the balance of powers, the easing of tension and the widening range of contacts between the two world systems we expect that the ideological fight will sharpen, and hostile propaganda and bourgeois ideological subversion will intensify.

3. The fight against bourgeois propaganda is part of our entire political and ideological work. We need to counter the effects of this propaganda by representing and convincingly arguing for our achievements, ideas and values, and by providing creative responses to questions raised in real life. Our work cannot be restricted to merely rejecting bourgeois propaganda, and the fight should be fought from an offensive, positive position rather than from a defensive stand, using every tool that is offered by our domestic policy and by the propaganda campaigns targeting foreign countries.

In addition to the press and the radio we should make a better use of the television as a tool, provide verbal information for members and non-members of the party, and utilize political training and the mass organizations and movements so that our people can be amply protected both ideologically and politically against hostile propaganda.

Investigations should be conducted as to how efficient our political and propaganda work is among the emigrants living in western countries. Efforts should be made to exert an influence on the intelligentsia of capitalist countries (especially in Western Europe) that shape public opinion by means of high-quality publications (newspapers, books, scientific studies, etc.).

4. In regard to the main lines of the offensive of hostile propaganda our political work lays emphasis on the following aspects at this stage:

- The permanent and changing elements of our policy constitute unity; they can not be set into any opposition.

- The socialist nature of our society is getting stronger in every area; the socialist elements of public thinking are constantly increasing.

- The relationship between the party and the people is good and is based on confidence; the domestic political situation is stable.

- We rely on cooperation and firm unity with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries based on firm principles so that we can serve our national and international interests and protect our security and sovereignty; the Hungarian-Soviet friendship is unbroken.

- Peaceful coexistence between countries with a different social system means cooperation as well as fighting at the same time. We are ready to act against any shortsighted, sectarian isolation but will never allow to obscure the ideological differences and make any concession to anti-Marxist views.

- We endorse the exchange of cultural values between nations living under different social systems and promote the expansion of tourism and information flow but we reject any endeavors that are based on the principles and practice of the cold war and the false theory of the free flow of information and ideas.

- In regard to the developments in tourism we stress the importance of state discipline, responsibility and the obligations of our citizens, and we will firmly hold our citizens accountable for their behavior both at home and abroad.

5. In order to strengthen our fight against hostile propaganda we intend to accomplish the following:

a) establish a more coordinated and operative system of monitoring and analysis followed by drawing the necessary conclusions. The observations made at different places should all be used for the preparation of coordinated reports that include every possible aspects of monitoring work.

The various departments of the Central Committee that take part in the analysis should summarize their work and ensure that their results are utilized in the reports in a systematic way. In the future the State Office of Church Affairs and the National Information Council should also prepare reports on any hostile propaganda efforts that can be observed in their sphere of activity, and if needed, other state and social bodies and organization should do the same concerning their experience in this respect.

More thematic evaluations should be prepared in relation to certain important events. The bodies concerned should investigate the activities of hostile propaganda targeting the various classes and layers of our society, with special attention to the bourgeois propaganda targeting our young people. The analyses should investigate how the division of labor works between the various outlets of bourgeois propaganda (e.g. radio stations) and what sort of other tools this propaganda intends to utilize in addition to the outlets of mass media: tourism, relations with emigrants, propaganda among the national minorities.

The quarterly reports should be continued, but it is also important to process the incoming reports and any other information on a daily basis. To that end the monitoring of hostile radio broadcasts should also be developed. The personnel problem that hinders the full utilization of the monitoring radio station in Gödöllő should be promptly resolved. The full content of monitoring should be sent to the Hungarian Institute of Foreign Affairs. This institute should be turned into the scientific center of the long-term analysis of hostile propaganda.

The information materials concerning hostile propaganda coming from different sources should be coordinated, such as the press reviews prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the confidential materials of the Hungarian Press Agency and the various reports that process the materials published in the newspapers of the Hungarian emigration.

b) The experience gained from the analyses should be used more effectively in our domestic political work and foreign propaganda. By unveiling the slanders and false statements we should deprive bourgeois propaganda of its credibility. We should do our best to exert an influence on the public opinion of the capitalist countries by presenting our own arguments and facts. In the meantime we should be aware of the danger of letting the enemy to decide what questions and issues should be raised in our work. We should generally refrain from direct disputes and engage in arguments only if it is justified by our political interests.

Taking into consideration all the experience gained through the analysis of hostile propaganda and building on the quarterly reports made for the leading bodies we should prepare materials which contain data, arguments and facts that can be used to refute any falsification and assist the fight against hostile propaganda and send them to lower-level party organizations through existing information channels.

Regular recommendations should be made as to what sort of tasks should be performed in our political work in order to counter the effects of hostile propaganda effectively. We should specify concrete tasks in this respect for the mass media organizations working at home and addressing a foreign audience.

The special tasks of each relevant area (such as tourism, political work concerning the emigrants, the national minorities, etc.) should be regularly analyzed in the fight against hostile propaganda.

The Institute of Social Studies should take an active part in the analysis of hostile propaganda and point out the relationship between the bourgeois ideological subversion and this propaganda in its research studies and reports.

c) We should expand our cooperation with our sister parties. This should be achieved gradually, in a sensitive manner, through bilateral negotiations with each party. We should offer the option to the parties of all the European socialist countries (except for Albania) that in addition to the use of our existing channels for the exchange of information verbally we are ready to send them a written biannual report on our experience with hostile propaganda. We should also urge similar cooperation with those of our western sister parties in whose countries this hostile propaganda against our country is very sharp (Italian Communist Party, French Communist Party, German Communist Party, the Communist Party of the US, Austrian Communist Party).

6. The Politburo proposes that the Propaganda Committee should review the system and methods of the press-administration involved in countering the effects of hostile propaganda and take a position on its modernization.

7. The Politburo deems it necessary to establish a new political post at the Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee with the function to implement the provisions of the resolution and coordinate the analysis of hostile propaganda.

MOL 288 f. 5/611 ő. E. – Printed copy. The resolution adopted on May 22, 1973 –as can be seen at the at he top of the first page – was declared invalid ten years later by a resolution made on October 11, 1983 (see document No 51).

ⁱ The resolution that set up the Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee and defined its organization, tasks and working methods was adopted by the Politburo on March 10, 1969 (MOL 288. f. 7/323 ő. E.). The evaluation Committee was set up later. The first report of the Evaluation Committee was discussed by the Politburo as part of the “Miscellaneous” item on the agenda on December 16, 1969 (see MOL 288 f. 5/507 ő. e.)

ⁱⁱ The November meeting of the Central Committee can indeed be regarded as the prelude to counter-reforms. In a wider context it was this development in domestic policy that underlay the procedures against some philosophers and sociologists in 1973.

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1972 young people started to commemorate the anniversary of March 15. On March 15, 1973 the people commemorating the event clashed with the police. Several people were beaten, detained and dismissed from their job.

^{iv} The debates over the pluralism of Marxism can be found in earlier documents.

^v The resolution was based on the report prepared by the Department of Propaganda for the Propaganda Committee. The text was hardly changed in the resolution, so its publication is not justified.