

Bianca Crainiceanu

NHD 2021

Process Paper

This project analyzes the effect of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty(RFE/RL) on the Romanian Revolution of 1989 and supports the claim that RFE/RL was crucial to the revolution. The reason I focused on the Romanian Revolution of 1989 was personal because it is part of my family's history. I started learning about the Romanian Revolution by talking with my family and relatives. I wanted to explore how people communicated when there was no freedom of speech or press. I wondered, what could not be controlled by the government or censored? Radio. I became interested in the effect of RFE/RL's broadcasts because it was one of the few reliable news sources for Romanians. Radio waves were difficult to jam, and American-funded radio stations such as RFE/RL, the Voice of America, and BBC took advantage of this. After researching these radio stations and their activities in 1985-1989, I realized that RFE/RL was the most consequential.

My research was conducted by interviewing Romanians who experienced the revolution, listening to the RFE/RL programs that aired from December 15-25, finding what primary sources had to say about RFE/RL and the Romanian Revolution, and exploring how secondary sources demonstrate the impact of RFE/RL. Conducting interviews was meaningful in the project because I heard the personal stories of my dad, grandfather, grandmother, and a close family friend. While getting an in-depth look at the perspective of Romanians living in communism, I also learned more about my personal history and the country of my origin. I used quotes from the interviews in the project instead of the interview recordings for partial anonymity. Some of the

interview exchanges happened in Romanian, so the quotes are translated from Romanian into English. The original radio broadcasts were recorded and available in RFE/RL's digital archives. To continue my research, I examined primary and secondary sources to understand the events that occurred, explored the perspective of the Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu's, solidify my knowledge on the perspective of Romanians living in communist Romania, and learn about RFE/RL's perspective of the revolution. This topic is significant because it shows how communication shapes history and how controlling communication helped the Romanian communist government stay in power. Radio broadcasting to Romania was so impactful because RFE/RL was trusted more than the propaganda heard on the national media. Today, we have more technology that helps us to communicate freely. Now, broadcasting does not have the same effect as before because there are so many other news sources, mainly from the internet. Regardless, technology, such as radio, is vital to communication and freedom of speech. Romanian communists prohibited unflattering news from reaching the mainstream media. RFE/RL is significant because it was among the few new sources that communicated to Romanians the truth. The integrity of RFE/RL's broadcasts was the key to communication during the Romanian revolution when disinformation and rumors were circulating.