

April 9, 1958

**Memorandum for the Record from the President
[Howland H. Sargeant]. 'Evaluations of
Programming by Radio Liberation '**

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Summary:

AMCOMLIB President Sargeant summarizes criticism of RL broadcasts by AMCOMLIB founders Lyons and Levine and by CIA officers and outlines measures to monitor and review programs.

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16

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April 9, 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

FROM: The President

SUBJECT: Evaluations of Programming by Radio Liberation

I have taken the opportunity of the visit of Mr. Bertrandias to New York to review Radio Liberation programming techniques with him and with Mr. King. In addition to the regular program evaluation reports by the two Munich panels and the one New York panel and the Svidetel Program Evaluation, we had for background and review prior to our meeting the following:

1) Evaluation prepared independently by the BOT of Radio Liberation Russian language broadcasts during the period extending from the end of October, 1957 through the beginning of January, 1958 comprising 30 complete programs and 6 tapes.

2) Evaluation prepared by Mr. Isaac Don Levine, member of Amcomlib Board of Trustees, based on his review of the Russian language scripts covering the period October 9, 1957 to February 12, 1958. Mr. Levine reviewed 50 days of programming, including the entire output for the month of December, 1957. (I am attaching a copy of Mr. Levine's report under date of March 15, 1958.)

3) Evaluation notes by Mr. Eugene Lyons, first President of the American Committee for Liberation and present Trustee, based on reading the English translation of the Russian language broadcasts for the following days: December 11 and 27, 1957; January 4 and 12, February 21, and March 1, 1958. (I enclose copies of those evaluations which Mr. Lyons has made available to me in writing.)

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Principal Points of Criticism of Present RL Programming

In summary, these evaluations revealed the following major criticisms:

- 1) What is described as a striking absence of internal USSR news.
- 2) Selection and preparation of news items in such a way that not only is the impression of "objectivity" given but that in some instances Soviet propaganda will be reinforced rather than weakened.
- 3) The use of techniques for reaching a listener within his Marxist framework, carried to the point that it sometimes gives the impression that the mechanics have become the end and that the station is open to the charge that it might seem to a Soviet listener to be promoting Marxism.

4) Occasionally carrying items attributing achievements to the Soviet regime without maintaining an adequate clear distinction between the Soviet regime and the peoples of the USSR.

5) Occasionally carrying items beyond any apparent need for their use to maintain the station's credibility and reputation for accuracy, reliability and objectivity with its audience.

6) Lack of skill and professional competence in presenting the news so that it will most effectively contribute to achieving Radio Liberation's operating objectives -- or, put in other terms, lack of skill in propaganda.

Discussion with Messrs. Bertrandias, King, Dunham, Lyons and Levine

The President held a meeting on April 1, 1958 to discuss the principal points of criticism of present Radio Liberation programming listed above. This meeting raised the following specific questions with respect to Radio Liberation programming:

1) Does Radio Liberation handling of news items reflect a treatment different from that of Soviet media when the news item in question is obviously one that will be carried by such Soviet internal media?

2) In seeking balance and objectivity has Radio Liberation moved too far in a direction which might be associated with views of elements of the British Labor Party or similar Socialist leaders?

3) Do we pick up enough items from local provincial papers in the USSR and play them in Radio Liberation programming?

4) Don't we have too many evaluators and advisors and are we not failing to lodge authority for editorial content in a single person dealing full-time with this problem?

Present Techniques for Review of Radio Liberation Russian Language Programming

There are three panels regularly evaluating Radio Liberation programs one day each week. All three panels listen to the same day's tape and fill out the same basic questionnaire.

1) Munich Staff Panel - This is a rotating panel made up of members of the Programming staff, the Russian Program Advisor, and the policy and planning staff.

2) Munich Outside Panel - This is made up of "Detachment R" personnel and recent defectors who are in the Munich area. The panelists listen to the tape separately.

3) New York Staff Panel - This is made up of regular staff writers, Sosin, Shub and at times, other members of the Amcomlib staff.

Questionnaires filled out by the panels go to the Manager of the Audience Research and Evaluation Department, who prepares a consolidated Program Evaluation Report * for the Director of the Radio Programming Division, who in turn prepares a follow-up report with recommendations for action. Action taken is reported back to the Director of the Radio Programming Division.

The consolidated Program Evaluation Reports, as well as the follow-up reports with recommendations for action, also go to the Director of RPSD in New York. The Manager of the New York Programming Department discusses these reports, insofar as they concern New York, with the individuals affected, and, in turn, advises the Directors of Programming of action taken.

Additional evaluations of Radio Liberation broadcasts are conducted in Munich by the most qualified and recent defectors available at the time. Currently the Russian programs are reviewed [redacted] on an irregular basis, and, since February 15, [redacted] on a 3.3(h)(2) daily basis.

Radio Liberation program evaluations are also undertaken on a regular basis by the Planning Division in New York. These evaluations, performed by Svidetel and Ganusovsky, are more in the nature of audits for conformance of the broadcasts to basic Committee policy, and they cover the entire week's program in Russian every week. The Svidetel evaluations, in English, are made available to a limited number of Committee officers, including the Directors of RPD and RPSD. Ganusovsky's observations are relayed only to the President through the Director of Planning.

* The first consolidated Program Evaluation Report using the Munich panels was prepared on April 23, 1957. The first report using the two Munich panels and the New York Staff panel was prepared on January 17, 1958.