

May 1, 1958

**Memorandum [from Howland H. Sargaent]: Some
Highlights of Recent Events**

Citation:

"Memorandum [from Howland H. Sargaent]: Some Highlights of Recent Events", May 1, 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Released by the Central Intelligence Agency on October 16, 2019, in response to Mandatory Declassification Review request EOM-2018-00930. Contributed by A. Ross Johnson.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/290912>

Summary:

AMCOMLIB President Sargeant reviews the history of the criticism of RL programs by AMCOM founders Lyons and Levine and his responses.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

May 1, 1958

(18)

✓ 10/20/58

MEMORANDUM

Some Highlights of Recent Events.

1. In November, 1957 Eugene Lyons expressed some doubts to me about a possible "Marxist attitude" in the station. I reviewed with him, and wrote him a letter subsequently, the various evaluations that had been made of these allegations, showing that independent reviews had not supported the charges.

2. At about this time, the two "Mao" scripts were brought to my attention by my Director of Planning, as the result of independent spot post-broadcast audits I had asked him to have made of programs. I immediately requested a full report from Bertrandias. This came in on December 30 letter from him, and described the action taken to avoid similar incidents in the future: in case of argument over policy, each desk adviser was to refer the issue to Malamuth, Macy, Rubinstein, or Bertrandias.

a. I found this only partially adequate, so had Messrs. Lyons and Levine meet with me and Bob Kelley prior to his departure for Munich On January 10th. They reviewed their criticisms with him. I wrote Bertrandias a personal letter, and laid on Kelley the injunction of taking a discreet look at our system of checks and balances designed to assure output that conformed to basic policy, to see if any part of it needed correction. I also asked him to consider how we could get---independently and without involving the radio programming division personnel--- a real objective appraisal of Victor Frank's output. I asked Kelley to sit down with Bertrandias and see whether the Mao scripts indicated some inadequacies in our system.

b. Kelley suggested appraisals by several individuals located in the United States in subsequent letters, and told me he was taking particular care to review scripts and newscasts himself. He did not recommend any further changes in the system in effect.

3. Independently, I asked Messrs Lyons and Levine to listen to tapes of the broadcasts and make reports to me on their evaluations. Lyons produced short written comments on programs of December 11, 27, January 4 and 12. Orally, he told me many of the broadcasts seemed to him to be ineffective--- and some seemed to proceed from the mistaken approach of a "Marxist frame of reference.+" Levine took a bundle of scripts with him to Mexico, and a short time after March 15, 1958, I received his report of that date.

4. At this point, I felt we could proceed most effectively by having Dick Bertrandias come back here. He did so, and read the Lyons and Levine reports. On April 1st, he met with me and Messrs Lyons, Levine, King and Dunham for a four hour session in which their criticisms were spelled out.

5. Subsequently, I prepared my memo of April 9th, describing actions taken to strengthen the programming of Radio Liberation; discussed it with Cord and Stan at Lunch on April 11; requested that the Director be informed at once of the allegations and the steps we were taking ; requested Cord on his European trip to follow up certain measures affecting personnel.

6. On April 17, I informed Mr. Levine that I had taken these measures, in addition to those contained in my memo of April 9th, copies of which I had made available previously to Messrs. Lyons and Levine. On April 18, I received a letter from Gene Lyons, acknowledging receipt of my April 9th memo, but saying it failed to meet the problem. I discussed his letter --- which I assumed to be a personal communication to me---with him the next same day, April 18; reviewed the measures I had taken in addition to those noted in the April 9th memo; requested any suggestions he might have on able personnel, since this continued to be a difficult problem. I met with him again on April 22nd, when he furnished some names to me.

42 / 78 - 2915 / 6 / 4

H. H. S.