

July 28, 1960

Robert Tuck, 'Radio Liberty Programming II'

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Summary:

A report by Radio Liberty Policy Advisor Robert Tuck reviews strengths and weaknesses of Radio Liberty programming.

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7-1-3

July 28, 1960

R. Tuck - 10

Radio Liberty Programming II

Since my first report of 31 December 1959 on Radio Liberty programming policy we have made considerable progress in establishing effective liaison and guidance procedures. With the close cooperation of Munich and New York we have produced formally approved Policy Position Statements on such varied subjects as China, Poland, "Captive Nations," the Summit Conference, Disarmament, Latin America, and the Post-Summit Situation. This close cooperation and fast communications have also helped in getting tactical guidances to Munich quickly on such hot news developments as the U-2 incident, the break-up of the Summit conference, and the Japanese riots and cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit to Tokyo. Munich, in turn, has improved its reporting in daily telexed summaries and the weekly airgram so that we have a much better idea of how they handle such subjects in the actual broadcasts.

Because of the shortage and shifting of project personnel in the past six months, all policy guidance drafts (except for Munich's on Disarmament) have had to be originated by us rather than by New York or Munich, which has not been entirely desirable. Mr. Sargant's suggestion that we limit Policy Position Statements to brief sets of assumptions and objectives, leaving the methods of treatment to the desks, has made drafts both easier to prepare and coordinate and more meaningful for the project. My visit to Munich was of tremendous help to me in this latter regard, and I hope Munich has found those guidances prepared since my return more relevant and useful. I also hope that the assignment of Ed Van Der Hoop to Munich and Munich's Bob Shankland to New York will lead to initiation of more drafts in both places for treatment particularly of internal Soviet problems, not only because this will speed up the completion of necessary policy guidances, but because it might stimulate more of the kind of on-the-spot, long-range thinking and planning ideas necessary to make Radio Liberty programs more effective.

In this connection, after reading several months of recent Radio Liberty Russian language scripts, as well as the evaluations by fairly recent defectors and repatriates from the USSR, I have come to several conclusions and recommendations, for what they are worth.

1. Radio Liberty's coverage of major breaking developments in the world news has been first-class. Our Soviet listeners have been given a balanced picture of such stories as the U-2 incident, the Soviet break-up of the Summit meeting and disarmament talks, Mikoyan's trips to Latin America and Hongry, the Japanese riots, the Sino-Soviet ideological debate,

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Khrushchev's trip to Austria, the RB-47, Africa and Cuba, etc., in a responsibly informed, objective way which cannot but impress and interest them -- and make them realize what a one-sided and distorted account they receive from their own media. The Press Reviews on all these stories have been particularly effective, and I am glad to see they are increasingly weighted with non-American sources -- which makes the independent image more believable and the contents of the Review more telling.

2. This conclusion is supported by the Outside Panelists (recent defectors and repatriates from the USSR) whose reactions over-all have gradually become increasingly favorable to Radio Liberty newscasts and Press Reviews.

3. Radio Liberty's features and commentaries continue to be filled with interesting and provocative scripts on a wide diversity of subjects, internal and "internalized" external. This, too, is confirmed generally by the Outside Panelists' reactions, although there are and will continue to be differences of opinion based on the individual evaluator's analysis of the attitudes of the Soviet audience. (I personally like the "Open World" and "Notebook" series on America, Europe, Africa and Asia, but feel that some subjects are selected more on the basis of the interests and capabilities of the writers than of the Soviet audience [e.g., the number of scripts on emigres and Russians abroad], because they are "living documentaries" or interesting production jobs, or because some of our writers do not have enough information or are not up to consistently top-flight analysis of internal Soviet developments.)

4. Our only weakness, though a fundamental one, remains the basically negative approach of our commentaries on internal Soviet affairs. We do a very effective job in pointing out, albeit in a responsible way, the faults of the Soviet system, giving the lie to official distortions, and showing our listeners that we know their problems. For example, Munich's Mr. Shulga, who was certainly a workhorse in the June program, made some telling points in his scripts on "Monopolistic Capitalism and Communist Monopolies" (24 June) and "But Was There Only One Letter?" (25 June); New York's serialization of Petrov-Shitalov's "The Khrushchev Thesis Today" in "The Soviet Union Today and Tomorrow" and Denick's "Comprehensive Information" ("Open World," 25 June) and "Differentiations of Soviet Society" (26 June), and Hannes Sperber's script on "Problems of Discussions between Writers of the West and of the 'Socialist Camp'" (25 June) are all good, effective scripts -- so far as they go. But I wonder what the long-range impact on our listeners will be. My guess is that there will be a wide range of reactions, between the extremes of hostility, on the one hand, toward this "anti-Soviet propaganda" and pure glass, on the other, at being entertained by such articulate criticism of their system which many people resent but are themselves unable to so criticize. But does this get us where we want to go? Shouldn't Radio Liberty be saying something more positively pertinent to the Soviet citizen to help him help himself modify that system?

(Obviously, we cannot sit out here in Munich and New York and tell our Soviet listeners to stick their necks out by advocating radical changes in

the Soviet system. That would be not only pointless but dangerous to them and contrary to Radio Liberty's policy. But it seems increasingly incumbent on us, if we are going to devote more attention to internal Soviet affairs, to become more positive in our commentary, to suggest by indirection some alternatives and preferable courses of action within the framework of our listeners' existence and experience. More and more of these alternatives are showing up in the Soviet press, as economists and other officials discuss such proposals as inter-union unions, pricing policy, labor and wages, reorganization of local administration, etc. Radio Liberty's commentators could make a significant contribution by assuming the role of an open forum for these proposals which Soviet publicists often throw out as "trial balloons," discussing each on its own merits and weighing them against each other. (And in discussing such proposals and issues there is no reason why Radio Liberty commentators could not take sides, if their arguments are substantively well taken, in the interest of the Soviet people themselves, and their tone friendly and positive.)

I have several recommendations for achieving this:

(a) Encourage more emulation of scripts in which this more positive approach is taken. New York's Deminke made a laudable effort in at least two of his June "Economist" scripts. In one -- "The Country Without Taxes" (25 June) -- he nobly pointed up discussions of turnover vs. income taxes in the USSR, the decision of the Government to lighten the tax burden on the people, and then proceeded to show different ways of doing that, concluding that the graduated income tax was the most equitable method. Even better was his "Economist/Cookin'" script on the "Soviet Economy and the Free Market" (11 June), in which he discussed the "black market" which has arisen because of the Soviet citizen's desire for higher quality foreign products bought from tourists, etc., and showed how the problem of quality is solved in free markets by the consumer's choice. He modestly concluded that, while he could not pretend to call for a basic reorganization of the Soviet economic system, Soviet economists were seriously discussing ways to encourage production of higher quality merchandise and surely some changes could be made in the existing distribution system to provide for the consumer element. If this type of constructive approach were taken consistently, I think all of Radio Liberty's scripts on internal Soviet affairs would find an increasingly receptive audience.

(b) Solicit the views and positive suggestions of Western experts on this problem. I am confident that academicians and publicists like Fainsood, Imhales, Brzezinski, Robert Tucker, David Granick (and perhaps Solomon Schwarz and Hans Jany) in the U.S. and Leonard Schapiro and Edward Crankshaw in the United Kingdom could give us a hand. If Gene Sosin or Jim Critchley, for example, were to brief them on the problem and show them that we need serious help in steering our writers, we might kill two birds with one stone: (1) we could get some valid suggestions for positive long-range lines for treatment of the broad internal Soviet issues Radio Liberty will be discussing over the months and years ahead, and (2) we could do some

very effective public relations work by selling them on Radio Liberty's serious approach. March might try this out on and enlist the support of Leo Grullow, editor of the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, while he is evaluating Radio Liberty programs. (March's plans for Grullow's evaluation, incidentally, impress me as being excellent, and I hope that relationship works out well for both.)

(c) Encourage some really productive joint "skull sessions" by members of the Research Department and the Deaks with the purpose of laying down basic, long-range positive lines of approach for Radio Liberty commentaries on such issues as the CPSU, government and administrative reorganization, industry, agriculture, prices, taxation, labor and education. I still intend to revise my initial attempt on the CPSU along these lines, -- after I finish the PPS's on "Peaceful Competition of Ideas" and "Newly Emerging Countries of Africa and Asia."