

June 16, 1954

State Department Reservations about Free Europe Committee Policy

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Summary:

State Department official Lampton Berry conveys to Thomas Braden reservations about FEC Special Policy Guidance No. 19 [available in the Hoover Archives] that emphasized weakened Soviet control in Eastern Europe.

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Memorandum for: Mr. Thomas W. Braden

Subject: RFE's Special Policy Guidance No. 19.

The interested officers in the Department appreciated having opportunity to review RFE's Special Guidance No. 19 on "The Turn of the Tide, June-July 1953". This guidance is regarded on the whole as being very good and one which, if not over-stated, should be effective with the target people. The guidance is, for the most part, the result of excellent analysis, and effective, imaginative operational planning on the part of the RFE staff. As of possible interest to the Agency and RFE, in what is intended not as criticism but constructive and helpful guidance, there are recorded below comments on a few questionable factual and substantive items contained in the guidance:

1. While agreeing in general with the theme of the guidance, the Department believes it would be over-playing it for RFE to stand on the proposition that "the tide had turned". The Department would agree that as compared to a year ago, the Communist regimes feel more insecure as a result of their basic weaknesses being openly revealed in June 1953; and that they are "divided by inner dissensions and are worried lest their plans fail". (para. 4, p. 13). It disagrees, however, and believes the target peoples will disagree and resent RFE's position that "the people feel secure in their strength" that "they are united in their new-won confidence;" that "they are in command of the situation"; and that "the workers and peasants have it in their power to see that the promised concessions are fulfilled". (para. 4, p. 13). Based on available evidence the foregoing flat statements of fact do not reflect the actual situation. The Department would concur that there has been some change; that the people probably are more conscious than ever before of their potential strength; that they may be more willing than before to bring more concerted pressure to bear on the regimes; and that RFE is justified in playing upon these themes so long as it exercises restraint and caution not to over-state the case. It must be remembered, as the guidance itself points out in another context, that the Communist instruments of oppression and punishment are still

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intact and being used. The people are very much aware of this fact. The East German and Czechoslovakian developments of June 1953 did reveal to the peoples their potential strength and the basic weakness of the Communist system. They also revealed the Soviet ability and will to use force ruthlessly to suppress any revolt and to penalize severely individuals for acts of opposition to the regime and its economic policies.

2. The topic treated in numbered paragraph 4 on page 4 is one which would warrant a complete policy paper in itself. The Department is concerned as to the implications contained in this paragraph. It would not argue as to the validity of the first sentence or the propriety of FEC including this in a background discussion of its guidance to the staff of RFE in Munich. As for the rest of the paragraph, however, the criticisms of U.S. actions and suggestions as to what the U.S. should have done in Germany during and immediately following the East German revolt of June 17 project FEC onto dangerous ground. It is suggested in the guidance, for instance, that during and after the events of June 17, the U.S. Army should have moved its troops to the Soviet Zone - West German borders for maneuvers. In a situation such as existed in East Berlin and the Soviet Zone on June 17 and several weeks thereafter, you don't unilaterally despatch your troops to a tense borderline as a political warfare measure, unless you are prepared to commit them to open hostilities and the commencement of World War III. By June 17 the Soviet troops throughout the East Zone were mobilized. Three mechanized divisions had been moved into East Berlin and taken up their positions. The security of the Soviet position in East Germany was in balance. The Soviets were taken just as much by surprise as the Western Allies by the spontaneous actions of the East Zone workers. There is not a shred of evidence to indicate that the Soviets would not have fought and committed their troops to hold their position in East Germany, if provoked, or if they thought U.S. troops were going to intervene in support of the East German workers. If U.S. troops simply maneuvered on their side of the line and didn't intervene, what would have resulted other than more bloodshed and East German casualties than actually did transpire? The fact is the United States was not prepared to risk World War III in Berlin in June 1953 in support of an open East German revolt. Those who believe in the advocacy of a preventive war can in good conscience suggest that the United States should have assumed the risks inherent in carrying out U.S. troop maneuvers on the Soviet Zone borders during the latter half of June 1953. It was not and is not the policy of the United States Government to advocate preventative war. There is a strong hint, undoubtedly quite unintentional, in paragraph 4 that U.S. policy should embrace this concept. The Department would regard it as a cause for serious regret, if the Czechoslovak and other political exiles working for RFE should so interpret the meaning of the paragraph under reference.

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The sentence regarding Otto Nuschke, suggesting he should have been held as a hostage, is likewise considered regrettable. It is believed FEC would not have included this sentence in its guidance paper, if it were acquainted with all the facts concerning the Otto Nuschke incident.

Undoubtedly, there were many aspects of the June 1953 developments in East Germany which could have been more adroitly and advantageously exploited. This has been the subject of intensive study in the Department and by the OCB, so that this will not be the case in the event of a repetition of such developments, insofar as it is humanly possible to predetermine strategy and tactics for such an event in advance and in consonance with U.S. policy objectives. It is open to question, however, whether it is wise for FEC to inject into a policy guidance to RFE Munich the criticisms and the suggested courses of action such as those under discussion.

3. At the top of page 3, in a discussion of Kremlin motivations for introducing the "New Course" tactic, it is stated "Another factor that is still obscure is the influence of the German problem as it stood in the Spring of 1953 when a Berlin conference was clearly in prospect".

Comment: As a matter of fact a Berlin conference was definitely not in prospect until after the revolt of June 17 in East Germany. The Soviets had been pushing a four-power conference under conditions unacceptable to the Western Allies, particularly the United States. It was only after the revolt, which we considered had considerably weakened the Soviet negotiating position, that the United States believed there might be an advantage to taking the initiative in proposing a four-power conference on Germany and dropping some of our previously enunciated pre-conditions. While it has been recognized that the "New Course" concessions announced by the East German communist leaders on June 9 were tailored to have their effect on the German unity question, it has been the consensus of opinion that the more compelling reasons for Moscow's decision to follow such a course of action were of a more basic internal nature, not the least of which was the necessity to stop the large loss of manpower, particularly farmers, which had been steadily mounting during the preceding six month period in the form of East Germans fleeing to West Berlin.

In the foregoing connection, it is stated on page 9, under the heading East Germany, that "In the first four months of this year, 41,443 East Germans entered West Berlin as political refugees. (1) Most must have come from the land, which was already critically short of farm labor a year ago."

Comment: Weekly

(1) Prior to the "New Course" of June 1953, the monthly figure was over 40,000.

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Comment: Weekly statistics on the volume and category by profession and age group of the East German refugees are maintained. As a matter of fact the proportion of farmers within the total flow of refugees, dropped drastically following June 1953. Since then it has consistently been the smallest fraction, the workers having become the largest single category by profession.

4. The final sentence in the aforementioned paragraph on page 9 states: "If the East German regime is arrogantly stupid enough, we may still see, on June 17th next, a swing back to the revolt of last year, even without benefit of Free World encouragement."

Comment: The Department is not aware of any evidence indicating that the current policies or actions of the East German regime are producing a mood among the workers conducive to precipitating them into spontaneous actions of defiance such as in June 1953. The workers are not cooperating with the regime and are still keeping up pressures for fulfillment of the promised concessions. This takes the form of slow-downs, absenteeism, non-attendance of political meetings, etc., and small acts of sabotage.

5. In numbered paragraph 9 on page 10, in a discussion of the reasons for the spread of the "New Course" from Soviet Russia to the satellites it is stated: "There can be no doubt that the spread of the "New Course" from Soviet Russia to the "satellite" states was hastened by the demonstrations of the Czechoslovak workers. It was certainly out of need for the workers' good will - if not actually out of fear of them - that the East German authorities were permitted by Moscow to offer unbelievably wide concessions on June 9, one week before those workers revolted".

Comment: It is strongly doubted whether there was any real direct connection between the June 9 concessions in East Germany and the demonstrations of the Czechoslovak workers. It should be remembered that the "New Course" as announced on June 9 in East Germany contained concessions to every segment of society except the workers. In fact a prior imposed 10% norm increase for the workers was retained under the "New Course". It was this combination of factors which sparked the workers' explosion of June 16. It was only after this event that concessions were made to the workers. The evidence indicates that, if anything, the Soviets disregarded the clear warnings of the Czechoslovak workers and proceeded in East Germany on the false assumption that the workers were loyal to the communist regime.

The foregoing comments are not presented for the purpose of suggesting that RFE should not take the line that the Czechoslovak workers' actions had a beneficial influence on subsequent Soviet policy throughout

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the Satellite area. This is a perfectly legitimate propaganda line. However, it is a line which must be put forward more as a generalization and not supported by an analysis of events in East Germany which the facts do not support. To do this would only result in fooling and confusing ourselves and our friends.

6. The final paragraph on page 4 is an over-simplification. It, in effect, minimizes the features of a Soviet war economy before the Korean war. It creates the impression that prior to the Korean war, the Soviet Union and its Satellites were actually concentrating their efforts on "building of a socialist economy" at the expense of a military build-up which, of course, was not the case.

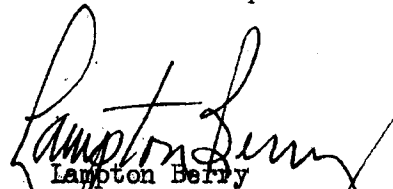
7. Under numbered paragraph 6 on page 6 it is stated that "whereas war preparations are taken with desperate seriousness by the Soviet rulers..., war preparations are taken merely as a nuisance by the American people...".

Comment: The Department cannot agree with this analysis of the attitude of the American people with regard to war or defense preparations. The Department believes the vast majority of the American people reflect a very serious concern and are anxious to see our defense preparations maintained to whatever extent is necessary, even though this may entail genuine sacrifice on their part.

8. The Department considers the reasoning in numbered paragraph 1, on page 12 under section "II Guidance", as weak and of questionable utility, in the light of Indo China, particularly the final sentence, which the Department believes should be deleted.

9. In numbered paragraph 3, under the Guidance Section on page 13, it is believed that the communist concessions should be referred to as promises and real only to the extent they are implemented.

10. In paragraph 5 on page 14, the Department believes it is important to mention the Kremlin's system of collectivized farms as one of the contributing reasons why Communism is incapable of ensuring a satisfactory standard of living.


Lampton Berry

Deputy Operations Coordinator

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