

May 26, 1958

**Memorandum from Cord Meyer, Jr., for Minister of
Central Intelligence, 'Criticism of Radio Liberation
Russian Language Programs'**

Citation:

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Summary:

Cord Meyer informs Allen Dulles about an International Organizations Division review concluding that AMCOMLIB co-founder Isaac Don Levine's criticisms of RL Russian broadcasts are largely baseless.

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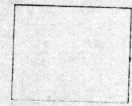
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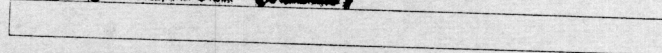


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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director (Plans)



SUBJECT: Criticism of Radio Liberation Russian Language Program.

This memorandum is for information only, particular reference is made to paragraph 1.

1. In a letter of 15 March 1958 to Mr. [redacted] Mr. Isaac Dan Levine cited forty-five items out of fifty complete daily Radio Liberation Russian-language programs for the period October 1957 - February 1958 which he termed "hateful, perverted, pro-Soviet items which follow a definite pattern of aggrandizement of Red imperialism and which show an unmistakable pattern of infiltration by elements set upon subverting from within the purposes and policies of Radio Liberation." IO Division has analyzed the same original script material reviewed and commented upon by Mr. Levine. The text of this analysis is attached (Tab A). The Division's conclusions, based on this analysis, follow:

- a. No substantiation of Mr. Levine's charges of aggrandizement and subversion is found.
 - b. Some of the items to which Mr. Levine objected do display errors of judgment and ineptness in detailed treatment.
 - c. Whole categories of programs attacked by Mr. Levine follow a basically sound [redacted] line, although some errors in the detailed implementation of that line were committed.
 - d. Mr. Levine has given an erroneous impression of the spirit and content of a large number of the scripts he cited,
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as well as of RL's over-all handling of a given subject.

c. The nature of many of Mr. Levine's comments raises the question whether he is, in fact, in agreement with RL's assigned role and mission.

2. Mr. Levine was fully justified in objecting to some poorly conceived programs and to errors in details of others, although many of his generalized conclusions were unfounded or based on mistaken premises. Outstanding among the poorly conceived programs were the two KKK scripts (p. 1, Tab A), the news report of Rep. Callier's harsh criticism of Secretary of State Dulles (and the error concerning the Congressman's Party affiliation) (p. 20, Tab A), and the broadcast in substantial part of the Kennan lectures (pp. 23 - 26, Tab A). Concerning the latter, it should be noted that, although the last four lectures were condensed for broadcast by RL, although RL dissociated itself from Kennan's foreign policy views and carried material opposing these views, RL nevertheless very evidently overplayed the lectures. Objections properly could be taken also to errors of commission or omission in the detailed handling of other RL programs. Thus, for example, greater care should have been taken in news reports of strikes in the West, both to avoid creating the impression of serious social disturbances and to point up the rights and achievements of free labor (pp. 9, 29 - 30, Tab A). The misquoted reference to U.S. publication of the Djilas book was a grievous error (p. 6, Tab A). Also, RL's dissent with State Department's action in the Bronstein passport case, while permissible in principle, should have been more restrained in its criticism (p. 17, Tab A).

3. RL operates on the basic premise that it must often report events, the immediate impact of which may be unfavorable to the U.S. and the West, so that, having displayed its "objectivity" to its listeners, it could effectively place these events into proper perspective. This was the approach followed in the cases, for example, of Sputnik and its resultant repercussions in the re-evaluations of American life and NATO. It is quite probable that RL may have gone too far to condition its audience in some cases. Nevertheless, programs such as those dealing with Sputnik and other significant world happenings clearly attempted to wring the maximum propaganda advantage from their subjects.

4. The methods employed by Mr. Levine in analyzing RL's scripts led, in the majority of cases (26 out of 45), to a significant distortion of their character and of RL's handling of individual subjects. This became evident when whole sentences, instead of fragments of sentences, when complete paragraphs, instead of parts of paragraphs,

when whole

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when whole scripts, instead of random passages, and when a number of related programs, instead of isolated programs, were examined. Among the materials thus shown to have been misrepresented were the programs on the Warsaw Pol Praxis demonstrations (pp. 1 - 2, Tab A); on Sputnik and the U.S. and USSR re-evaluations (pp. 3, 6 - 8, 11 + 12, 30 - 31; 21 - 23; 30 - 32, Tab A); the dialogue on the Bolshevik Revolution (pp. 9 - 10; Tab A); the feature on the October revolutions and Khrushchev's dismissal (pp. 10 - 11, Tab A); the Fact and Footley interviews (pp. 14 - 16; 26 - 29, Tab A); the programs on the N.Y. subway strike (pp. 29 - 30, Tab A), the Egypt-Syria merger (pp. 39 - 40, Tab A), the U.S.-USSR Exchange Agreement (pp. 35 - 36, Tab A) and the Summit Conference (pp. 41 - 42, Tab A). Even on the matter of the Korman biography, Mr. Levine's quotation of only part of a sentence created a seriously misleading impression (p. 26, Tab A).

5. It is not clear whether Mr. Levine's real quarrel is with the manner in which RI consistently tries to implement its assigned role, as recently formalized in the official paper "Soviet Broadcasting Policy Toward the Soviet Union," or with that policy, itself. He is aware generally, however, that in place of its former posture of fostering a violent, revolutionary overthrow of the Soviet regime, with its concomitant vilifying denunciations and curving propaganda approach, RI now follows the concept of supporting and stimulating those actual and latent forces in Soviet society which can weaken the fabric of totalitarian Party control and prepare the ground for the eventual elimination, in one way or another, of the Party dictatorship. Carrying out this "evolutionary" mission means that RI attempts to stimulate the thinking of the Soviet people, and primarily of the power elite groups, in a calm, reasoned manner. RI's criticism of Soviet domestic and international policies must be serious and thoughtful; the Soviet audience must be presented with a variety of thought-provoking material. To win the confidence of its listeners and to communicate better with them, RI tries to appear as an independent representative of their legitimate interests, utilizing their outlook and frames of reference. This mission and its implementation are much more difficult than was RI's former role, and the possibility of error is greater. All the more stringent, therefore, must be the pre-broadcast controls and post-broadcast reviews. RI is working harder in this direction.

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concentrating the letter function in a single individual of senior rank with an established reputation as an able anti-Soviet propagandist [redacted], it is hoped to prevent a recurrence of errors of judgment and lack of skilled professional treatment which some of the programs have reflected. Additionally, the Radio Liberation management in New York is now negotiating with a likely candidate to replace the present head of the News Desk in Munich.

[redacted]

8. Also appended is an analysis of Mr. Levine's charges by a committee of members of EL's supervisory staff in Munich (Tab B). This analysis was undertaken independently of the IO study, with which it is in basic agreement. As a further refutation of Mr. Levine's charge of a deliberate pattern of subversion, Munich points out that the sources and circumstances under which the programs were prepared were such too varied to permit such a pattern.

9. A copy of Mr. Levine's letter of 15 March 1958 to Mr. [redacted] also is attached (Tab C).

COLE METER, JR.
Chief

International Organizations Division

Attachments, 3
Tab A, B, C

[redacted] (26 May 58)

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