

October 19, 1959

CIA View of Radio Liberty Broadcasts

Citation:

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Summary:

An International Organizations Division officer describes strengths and weaknesses of RL Russian broadcasts

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Original Scan

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CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: [redacted]

SUBJECT: Reactions to Radio Liberty Broadcasts

1. Six weeks after coming on board at this end of Radio Liberty I would say that our broadcasts are generally of a high substantive quality and are in full accord with the approved Policy Manual. There have been no violations of that Manual which I have been able to detect. Whatever shortcomings have occurred have been relatively few and minor errors from the point of view of what I would call a lack of sophistication and too stringent a tone. These, however, are more important from the point of view of a counterproductive effect on our audience than from the side of violations of policy.

2. The most encouraging thing to me is to see not only the amount of concern shown for getting all the facts and presenting a true picture to our audience but the various means used to assure good taste and to gain and retain the confidence of our listeners. Panels in both Munich and New York regularly review scripts each week. In addition, individual emigres who recently left the USSR review the scripts. The critiques are often cutting, with no punches pulled, and all are directed at improving credibility and good taste and increasing our receptivity among the Soviet audience. In addition to these regular review procedures, scripts are submitted to outside experts for their criticism. Such consistent review to assure quality has shown good results, and I am sure that if Moscow should ever reduce its jamming effort our broadcasts would quickly become the most popular in the USSR.

3. [redacted]

[redacted] I keep in daily touch with State through a regular morning meeting with Public Affairs officers from the European desks and receive daily USIA and State guidances, as well as the PP Bi-Weekly Guidances. These I relay to New York by mail and by daily telephone conversations. If there is a need for a formal RL position I ask New York to advise Munich to formulate one, but ordinarily Munich anticipates us and requests our views preparatory to formulating such a position. Both Munich and New York are very alert to breaking developments. The Program Coordinator in New York is able and informed and most receptive to [redacted] programming suggestions. When State urges caution, I inform him and he telexes Munich, if there is time to change a program line or if we wish to check on the source for a script. This arrangement has worked out very well.

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