

May 18, 1953

CIA Criticizes American Committee for Liberation Policies

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Summary:

Dana Durand, chief of the CIA/DDP SR Division, now responsible for the Radio Liberty project, concludes that efforts to unify the Russian emigration have become counterproductive, that RL broadcasting should be separated from émigré politics, and that AMCOMLIB president Leslie Stevens is too wedded to the old approach to continue in office.

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18 May 1953

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DATE: 16-Feb-2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Plans)

SUBJECT: Recommendations concerning [redacted]

1. During the past six months, the [redacted] has been systematically reviewed by the SR Division and the PP Staff. On the basis of this review, we are of the opinion that fundamental changes of policy and of personnel are necessary. I have stated the principal steps which should be taken in a series of 39 recommendations to DD/P, accompanying the report of the [redacted] Task Force.

2. The fundamental issue is whether to continue the effort to bring about the unification of the Soviet emigration on a broad base. In the opinion of the Chairman of the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, and of certain members of the Committee and the State Department, this effort is both desirable and feasible. Admiral Stevens believes it to be desirable for a reason lying beyond, but including, the attempt to obtain "a reasonable sponsorship for the highly necessary and urgent operation of radio broadcasting." In essence this reason is that a Coordinating Center of united Soviet emigres could assume responsibilities in a post-liberation situation, which the United States Government should not assume. Admiral Stevens holds that such a Center can be established on a viable basis, given time, patience and money.

3. With a considerable measure of reluctance, we have come to the conclusion that this effort, however desirable, is probably not feasible, and that continuation of it may well serve only to intensify and advertise existing differences. We base this conclusion on the following considerations:

a. Experience of the Project over a period of nearly three years indicates that irreducible differences exist among emigre political groups, notably between Great Russian and non-Great Russian, and between left and right wing groups.

b. Experience of the Agency also indicates that the political validity, and effectiveness within the target country, of any emigre grouping has been over-estimated in the past.

c. The Agency is confronted by a mounting body of evidence that the security situation in [redacted] is very grave, and that Soviet penetration of the Coordinating Center is effective and damaging.

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4. We further conclude that, regardless of the decision with respect to the unification effort, the business of emigre politics should be separated as far as possible, both organizationally and geographically, from the operation of Radio Liberation. We believe that conclusions of RFE regarding this problem are sound, both for professional and security reasons. This does not signify any intention to "Americanize" Radio Liberation in the sense of trying to cast its programs in the U.S. commercial pattern, to deprive ourselves of emigre professional talent, or to eliminate nominal sponsorship by such an emigre grouping as we may in fact be able to keep in being. The intent, rather, is to [redacted] minimize the always distracting and frequently dragging effect of emigre political intrigues upon the personnel and policies of the radio operation.

5. These conclusions, if accepted by the Agency, will entail a departure from what Admiral Stevens rightly holds to be the policy under which [redacted] has hitherto operated. Prior to taking such a serious step, we feel that a final review should be made to confirm the validity of points a) and c) above.

6. In undertaking this review, I request approval of the following steps:

a. This review shall be conducted by the SR Division with guidance and assistance from the PP Staff.

b. A team of Agency personnel shall conduct this review during the month of June; the team shall consist of Chief, SR Division, Chief, SR Admin [redacted]

c. In the meantime, steps shall be taken at the Department of State and the Psychological Strategy Board to prepare for acceptance of the change in policy proposed above.

7. A number of practical considerations impose a rapid tempo on this review. The recommendations of the Loeb Report on the administration of [redacted] have largely been implemented. A management survey by an outside firm should follow as soon as possible. The 1954 budget has been submitted by the New York Committee and reviewed by SR Division. This review indicates that substantial reductions of the New York estimates are advisable. The revised budget will have to be submitted for FRC approval before the Munich review can be completed. For this reason, we shall recommend to FRC that allotments for the political aspects of the Committee's work be approved only for the period 1 July to 30 September 1953, [redacted] in the event that the review proves favorable to continuing the Coordinating Center.

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8. In substance, what is requested is authority to proceed on the assumption that the policy of [redacted] in the political field will be altered in the first quarter of FY 1954, and that the security and psychological warfare aspects of the Project will largely be separated from the political and will be given top priority. [redacted]

[redacted] This principle Admiral Stevens has been reluctant to accept. In view of this and of his generally low evaluation of the personnel of the Agency most closely connected with the Project, we do not feel that he will be able to adjust himself to the changes proposed. [redacted]

[redacted] We also feel that several of the key members of his staff will cease to be useful to the Project. Finally, we believe that sufficient competent personnel, within and without CIA, are available to conduct the Project successfully in the future.

[redacted]
Chief, SR Division

CONCUR:

Chief, Political and Psychological Warfare Staff

SR/ [redacted]
2 - Addressee
1 - [redacted]
1 - [redacted]
1 - [redacted]

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