

August 21, 1951

Office of Policy Coordination History of American Committee for Liberation

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Summary:

Frank Wisner reviews the origins of the Soviet émigré project. He considers AMCOMLIB to be a cover organization without independent authority, notes the difficulty of uniting Soviet émigré groups, yet assumes that an émigré "political center" can organize publishing and broadcasting for the Soviet Union.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANS)

SUBJECT: History of Project [redacted]

1. In the summer of 1950, the Department of State through Mr. George Kennan, who was then Counsellor of the Department, requested CIA/OPC to undertake the development of a political center amongst the emigres from the Soviet Union. It was felt to be tremendously important to organize a center which could speak to the Russians in the name of Russians. At a number of conferences during August 1950 at the Department of State between representatives of State and OPC, the original concept of the operation was decided upon, and OPC received State Department approval and guidance to proceed to implement the project. One further major conference was held by [redacted] with Mr. Kennan at Princeton on 17 October 1950. Since that time, continuing guidance on important matters has been received from the Department, mainly through Messrs. [redacted]

2. The project as originally outlined had two major aspects:

a. The establishment of a cover committee in New York which would act as the ostensible source of funds and guidance.

b. The organization of a political center in Germany.

3. Certain general principles as to the organization of the committee had been decided upon at the meetings with Mr. Kennan during the summer. The most important of these were:

a. That the center would be one of the peoples of Russia, including both Great Russian and non-Great Russian emigres.

b. That as soon as the political center was established, it would undertake certain concrete activities.

c. That our main interest in the project was reaching the people still within the Soviet Union and that our main interest in emigres was in using them as a vehicle for reaching the people inside. However, an important though secondary interest was to organize the emigration.

d. That originally an attempt should be made to get four selected Great Russian groups together and that after this was

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done, certain non-Great Russian nationality groups, other Great Russian groups, and non-party individuals should be brought in. The four Great Russian groups were to be:

- (1) NTS
- (2) SBONR
- (3) Melgunov group
- (4) New York League

4. Certain general principles were also decided upon in relation to the establishment of the cover committee in New York:

- a. That it should be a small committee.
- b. That during the early stages of this project, publicity should be avoided. It was recognized that at some point in the future publicity would be necessary and desirable.
- c. The Committee should in general be composed of prominent people who had a known interest or concern in Russian affairs.
- d. That all the members of the committee should be "out-in" to the fact that this was a Government project.
- e. That the committee should be strictly a "front" and that at the outset this should be made very clear to them so that there would be no misunderstanding at a later date.
- f. That the committee would not publicly solicit funds.

5. In January 1951, the organizational meeting of the committee took place at the River Club in New York attended by Mr. Wisner and several other OPC representatives, and the following committee members:

Eugene Lyons
William H. Chamberlin
Allen Grover
William L. White
William Y. Fliot

Following this meeting, the committee was incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware as a non-profit organization, with offices in New York City, and was named "The American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, Inc." Following this,

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office space was rented in New York and an office set up under the direction of Reginald Townsend as Executive Director. At the present time, the office is occupied by a small staff which is carrying on the routine business of the Committee, covertly with Washington and overtly with the Committee's representatives in Europe. Since its organization, two new members have been added to the Committee: Former Governor Charles Edison of New Jersey and Isaac Don Levine. At the present time, a Foundation is being established in the Midwest to act as one of the ostensible funds for the Committee.

6. Upon the arrival of the [redacted] in Germany in the fall of 1950, negotiations took place with the four leading Russian groups in an attempt to get agreement for the establishment of a political center. In January at Fuessen, Bavaria, a meeting of these four groups took place. The meeting was unsuccessful because of failure to reach an agreement on two basic issues:

a. The admission of non-Great Russian nationalities to the political center on a basis of equality.

b. The failure to agree on the handling of the difficult question of the future government in Russia following the downfall of the present regime.

The Committee took the position:

a. That the non-Great Russian nationality groups which accepted the basic program of the political center must be admitted on the basis of equality.

b. That the issue of the future government for Russia should be decided by self-determination at such a time as the people could freely express their will.

Following the break-up of the conference, negotiations proceeded with the four main groups individually.

7. In April 1951, it was decided that a new European Representative of the Committee, [redacted] was necessary. [redacted] was selected for this task and he proceeded immediately to Germany to make a survey. Following a rapid survey involving individual discussions with the various groups and certain minority groups, he returned to the U.S. and reported to us. It was agreed that [redacted] should return to Germany as the permanent European Representative of the Committee for at least a year-and-a-half and that as quickly as possible another attempt should be made to reach an agreement among the four Great Russian parties.

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[redacted] returned to Europe in early July and continued his individual negotiations with each of these four groups and with certain non-Great Russian minority groups. From 17 to 20 August 1951, a second meeting took place in Germany. (As a result of the split in the New York League, the number of Great Russian groups had grown from 4 to 5, the new group being the Russian Peoples Movement (Narodniki).) These five groups met in Stuttgart over last weekend, and on 20 August reached an agreement on a protocol which was signed by two members from each group. The protocol will form the basis of the political center. The five parties accepted the two points which the Committee insisted on at Fuessen. At a press conference in Frankfurt on 21 August, an announcement was made of this agreement. The political center will be known as the Council for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia. A press conference is being held in New York on 22 August by Mr. Lyons, President of the Committee, to give out further details to the American press.

8. During the last few months, planning has been proceeding and certain action has been taken in regard to the "practical work" which the political center will undertake, which is of course the real purpose of the whole project. The major elements in this "practical work" are the following:

- a. Radio programs beamed at the Soviet Union
- b. A newspaper
- c. Political activities of the Center
- d. Research Institute in Germany

9. Last spring, the New York [redacted] and has since that time been strengthening and expanding its activities. [redacted] In addition to this, planning has been going forward for the other activities. Under the direction of [redacted] actual work on the establishment of the newspaper will get under way almost immediately. A Russian editor for the paper has already been selected. The five Great Russian parties have established an organization bureau to which non-Great Russian nationality representatives will soon be added which will direct the various activities of the political center from the Russian side, in cooperation with [redacted] and other representatives of the New York cover committee.

10. The largest and most difficult problem is that of establishing the radio facilities and programming necessary for large-scale broadcasts to the Soviet Union. A study has been prepared for us by [redacted], covering the basic technical factors involved in shortwave broadcasting to the Soviet Union and outlining the preferable areas for the location of radio transmitters. [redacted] former European Director of Radio Free Europe, has been hired by us

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in the name of the Committee to undertake the development of the technical business and administrative side of the radio program. He has submitted a preliminary plan for the radio project.

11. Now that the agreement has been reached to form the political center and the preliminary planning and collection of information has been completed, certain basic decisions must be made in regard to the radio project:

a. During the FY 1952, the maximum budget of approximately [redacted] must be approved.

b. Firm and final approval of the Department of State and CIA must be given to the establishment of radio transmitters to be used by the political center for broadcasts to the Soviet Union.

c. A decision must be made as to where to locate the transmitters and the Department of State's approval and assistance must be granted to the Committee to enable it to approach the Government in that area.

d. A working arrangement for the exchange of information and experience must be established with VOA.

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FRANK G. WISNER
Assistant Director for
Policy Coordination

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