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CIA HISTORICAL STAFF

**The Clandestine Service
Historical Series**

COVERT ACTION OPERATIONS
SOVIET RUSSIA DIVISION
1950 - 1968

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B. Reward and Further Planning

1. Moscow Youth Festival, 1957

The foresight and planning that initiated these activities was handsomely rewarded in the summer of 1957 through the involvement [redacted] in the Moscow Youth Festival. This event, whose significance at the time could be equated to that of Khrushchev's secret speech in its impact on the outlook of the younger generation of Soviet citizens, was probably the most wide open mass encounter between the youth of the West and the youth of the Soviet Bloc in history. The most important [redacted] [redacted] involved was the Yale Russian Chorus, a group of students from Yale University, most of whom had some facility in the Russian language and several of whom had outstanding competence. It would be misleading, however, to attribute the impact of Western youth on its Soviet counterpart primarily to the chorus project [redacted]. What happened was largely spontaneous, and to a considerable degree that spontaneity was responsible for the significance of the Western impact.

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The Khrushchev speech and the Polish and Hungarian events of 1956 had made a deep impression on youth all over Europe and the United States. The hope for genuinely peaceful coexistence and for the beginning, at least, of the end to Communist tyranny gave the Festival participants an almost evangelistic spirit. The ignorance and the curiosity of Soviet participants about the outside world and apparently a lack of foresight on the part of Soviet security and party officials resulted in a laxity of controls and a consequent openness and genuineness of communication that, with the possible exception of the events of the summer of 1959, were unique in Soviet history since the 1920's.

Copies of the United Nations (UN) report on Hungary, for example, were brought in by Western participants and read to large crowds at the Festival. One member of the Yale Russian Chorus read parts of the report from the steps of Lenin's mausoleum in Red Square. These portions of the report were translated into Russian by other members of the Yale Chorus who were scattered throughout the crowd. Although that was perhaps the high point in agitational

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activity, numerous contacts were made with the then nascent Soviet dissident group by members of the Yale Chorus. These provided the first links to the movement which in later years was to achieve recognition throughout the world for its criticism of the Soviet system and the willingness of its members to sacrifice themselves for the cause. The debriefings of [redacted] members of the Yale Chorus and other assets upon their return from Moscow stimulated great enthusiasm for this kind of approach and greatly accelerated the development of operations aimed at exploiting similar opportunities in the future and at taking the fullest advantage of the increasing accessibility of Soviet targets on a person-to-person basis.

Not for release
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2. FY 1959 Program

These influences were strongly reflected in the SR operational program for FY 1959, drawn up early in 1958:

SR PP [CA] operations during the past year have the general objective of promoting evolutionary changes within the USSR. With this broad mission SR concentrated increasingly on the development of operations not requiring mass media, designed to hit limited targets

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