

Chief of Base, Frankfurt

7h-6-500

Chief of Station, Germany

23 Sept 58

Chief, SR

RUSSKIN/BEREKIN/Baltic Operations

RWPA-22576, 21 July 1958

SUMMARY:

The fact that the Baltic States, with the exception of the City of Riga, are officially closed to foreign travel makes BEREKIN operations into this area a unique problem. It must be assumed that the Soviets have special reasons why it is to their advantage to make exceptions to their general rule. In the case of each proposed BEREKIN mission to this area, we would like you to provide the reasons why you believe the Soviets made an exception in the given case. Also please state clearly what the proposed mission of the BEREKIN agent will be, and your assessment of the ability of the agent to perform this mission. As was explained at the 1958 BEREKIN Conference in Frankfurt, and as you note in reference, primary emphasis is being placed on developing internal assets, but in assessing potential BEREKIN agents careful consideration should also be given to other operational tasks and intelligence information collection. In the case where the primary mission of a BEREKIN agent is the recruitment of an internal asset, we would like some indication of the proposed future use of the internal asset. The Field has full authority to contact, assess, and if desired, reject potential BEREKIN agents. Headquarters reserves the right to approve the recruitment of BEREKIN agents.

1. In this dispatch we are presenting our views on Baltic BEREKIN operations. We are not discussing BEREKIN operations directed against the Soviet Union in general, but only those directed against the Baltic States. It is our view that BEREKIN operations mounted against the Baltic States have several unique problems, over and above the language problems, which distinguish them from other BEREKIN operations.
2. We would like to make several observations on the operational environment in the Baltic States. We admit that these observations are rather elementary. Our purpose in setting them down is to provide some background for our analysis, and to avoid any possible misunderstandings on our basic assumptions. If it should develop that you and we have different views on the operational environment in the Baltic States, then perhaps some of our differences in opinion can be traced to these different views on the operational environment.
3. We believe that the fundamental difference between the overall Soviet target and the specific Baltic target lies in the fact that most of the Soviet Union is open to foreign travel, while the Baltic States, with the exception of Riga, are officially closed to foreign travel. We further believe that the reason the Soviets have closed the Baltic States to foreign travel is that they consider the security problems within the Baltic States as extremely sensitive. Available information leads us to believe that the security threat to the Soviets results from the general dissatisfaction of the Baltic people with the Soviet regime as well as a strong sense of nationalism. Other considerations, such as the fact that almost all of the immediate frontiers in the Soviet Union are closed to travel, or the possible location of sensitive military or technical installations within the Baltic States, may have played some part in the Soviet decision to close the area. These seem to us to be secondary reasons, and certainly do not account for the closing of the whole area.

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4. This dissatisfaction

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h. This dissimilation of the population, of course, works to our advantage in attempting to recruit internal spies. We believe that while the Russians and a large number of the other nationalistic groups within the Soviet Union might desire to modify the present regime, the Baltic peoples would prefer national independence. From this it seems to us to follow that a substantial number of Baltics would be willing to cooperate with the KGB, if they were convinced that their personal security was reasonably assured and that by so doing they were aiding the cause of Baltic nationalism.

5. Our great advantage here seems to be largely negated by the closing of the area to foreign travel. We certainly agree with you that the Soviets have undoubtedly screened and closed travel from the Soviet Union to the West. It is equally clear to us that screening and closing also goes on in the case of travelers from the West going to the Soviet Union, and that this screening is especially thorough in the case of travelers going to restricted areas, such as the Baltic States. It certainly is a far different matter for a traveler to go to Kansas from going to the Baltic States. In the latter case, if the Soviets have made an exception to a general rule, they have specific reasons for doing so.

6. As examples of the screening and closing, we cite the following illustrations:

- a. An American citizen who was born in Lithuania applied for a Polish visa. She was turned down at first, but subsequently obtained a second application, was informed by the Polish Embassy that her visa had been approved. While in Poland the Polish Intelligence Service attempted to recruit her, saying that they could arrange a meeting between her and her parents, who now live in Lithuania. While this may have been a purely Polish Intelligence operation, we believe that the KGB may have also had a hand in the operation.
- b. Three American Baptist ministers, one of whom Jack Lubria in 1946, applied for Soviet visas, and asked for permission to visit Riga. While the two who were not born in Riga received permission to go to Riga, the Latvian was not given this permission, but was told that he could go to Moscow and that his request to go to Riga would be considered there.
- c. A second generation Lithuanian living in New Jersey applied for a visa to visit relatives in Lithuania. She was informed that while she could not go to Lithuania, she could meet with her relatives from the Lithuanian SSR in London.
- d. A Latvian artist living in New York applied for a visa to visit her sister in Riga. After having filled out a number of forms, and having received an affidavit from her sister that she would be welcome, she waited for over a year for a visa. She finally gave up and cancelled her request.
- e. A second generation Lithuanian American while in England developed a contact with a Soviet Embassy official and applied for permission to visit relatives in Lithuania. He was told flatly that he could not go to Lithuania.
- f. Two tours have been organized by the Soviets to visit Soviet Lithuania - one from Barbados, Guyana, and one from Canada. In both cases all the participants were pro-Soviet and the Soviets published the visits for their full propaganda value.

g. General Lubria,

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6. Several Latvians, now Swedish citizens, were turned down when they requested visas to make a standard guided tour in the Soviet Union which included Riga.

7. The above examples, as well as those cited in references A and B of your dispatch, seem to indicate that while the Soviets do make exceptions to the general rule against foreign travel in the Baltic States, they have special reasons for granting such exceptions. We can think of several reasons:

- a. The KGB agrees to the proposed travel because they wish to make use of the traveler.
- b. The Soviets wish to make propaganda use of the travel.
- c. They have correctly or incorrectly concluded that the proposed visit presents no security problem and that it is impracticable that the proposed visit has any intelligence implications.

8. We feel that in such cases it is important on both Headquarters and the field to analyze carefully the circumstances through which permission was obtained to visit the Baltic States, and at least to attempt to determine why the Soviets granted an exception. We think the analysis should include any information the Soviets would have that may appear derogatory to them, and an indication of how they might react to this information. Much of this analysis, of course, would be guess work. However, if we are going to take risks, we should at least attempt to calculate them.

9. There seems to be little argument about the fact that travel to the Baltic countries is limited. In view of the small number of travelers to these countries, we feel that the KGB can, and probably does, derive a considerable amount of effort to watching the few travelers who do get permission to visit there. The surveillance of the movements of foreign visitors to Moscow is beyond the capability of any contemporary organization. In the Baltic countries, where espionage undoubtedly a fairly large organization as a result of the peculiar security problems there, the partisan activity after World War II, and the collaborationism in 1949, the job of surveilling and checking on travelers and their contacts in the Baltic area would be nowhere near as great in Moscow or other well-traveled areas in the Soviet Union.

10. It is essential that every traveler whom we recruit have a clear-cut operational end/or intelligence assignment, such as spotting agent candidates, recruiting, visiting Latvians, or spotting dead drop sites. For any proposed mission, we think the operational benefits in carrying out the mission should be weighed against the potential gain from the operation. One potential gain from the operation should be clearly spelled out, especially in those cases where the anticipated gain is the recruitment of internal assets. We do not wish to convey the impression that we are interested only in recruiting members of the Academy of Sciences, of the Central Committee, or guided missile experts. However much we would like to have this type of person, we would not reject any recruit of the Soviet Union solely on the grounds that his current source is low. His willingness and ability to follow instructions, as indicated by identity, type of residence, intellect, education, health, etc., are most important considerations, however. It is only by weighing the potential gain against the risks involved for the traveler and the person to be recruited, and against the chance of KGB involvement, that an estimate of the worth of the undertaking can be made.

11. We do not

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11. We do not think that it is absolutely necessary to make the primary mission of every RUBIN mission the recruitment of internal assets. The decision of how best to use a prospective traveler should be made on the basis of your assessment of the RUBIN agent, and the various operational and intelligence tasks we need to have performed for us in the Baltic States. Your assessment of the RUBIN agent should take into consideration such items as how the agent managed to get permission to go to the Baltic States, and his ability to perform the projected assignment without attracting the attention of the KGB.

12. We agree that your assessment of the person concerned should play a major role in determining his or her use and reliability. Certainly part of the assessment of the individual's character and motivation is made on the basis of missions which by their nature are cut off from operational reporting. We are not asking for an elaboration of such, but do want the net result of analyzing these missions. In addition, there are certain hard facts involved in the assessment of an individual which should be reported to Headquarters. For example, the statement of a potential traveler to the Baltic area as to why he wants to, or is willing to, make the trip, his or her assessment of the dangers involved, etc., should also be reported.

13. On the subject of the relative emphasis to be placed on the development of "controlled internal assets," we wish to make perfectly clear that this task is first priority. Objective 1 of Priority 1 of the RDB relates to acquiring information on Soviet political-military strategy, intentions, and capabilities. There is not the slightest doubt that the best way to accomplish this objective is by the recruitment of controlled internal assets. In giving a traveler the mission of recruiting an internal asset, or other operational tasks, we realize that in so doing we are, in most cases, limiting the opportunity of acquiring intelligence information from the source due to time factors and limited opportunities for secure contact. Generally speaking, a given RUBIN agent cannot perform both operational and priority intelligence tasks without becoming so overwhelmed that he performs neither satisfactorily. As stated above, we feel that the decision of how a RUBIN agent is to be used should depend on the assessment of the individual's ability to perform the various tasks we need to have done in the Baltic States, and the relative priority of those tasks.

14. You have raised a very difficult question to answer in asking how such autonomy the Field should have in developmental operations, and one which cannot be answered succinctly. As far as RUBIN missions go, the Field has full freedom, consistent with the POA requirements, to contact and assess any or all potential travelers, and on the basis of this assessment, to reject those candidates who are unsuitable. Once a RUBIN agent has been tentatively selected for use your proposal as to what he is to be used for and how should be transmitted to Headquarters. It often happens that some modification or amplification of the proposed assignment is desirable and can be suggested by Headquarters based on information not generally available in the Field. This is normal procedure for all RUBIN operations.

23 September 1953

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