

**Canonical ID:** 1976LENING01883\_b  
**Subject:** OFFICIAL LATVIAN PERCEPTIONS OF VOA LATVIAN SERVICE  
**From:** Russia Saint Petersburg  
**To:** Department of State, Germany Munich, Russia Moscow,  
Secretary of State, United States Information Agency  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** -- N/A or Blank --  
**Archive Status:** Electronic Telegrams  
**Type:** TE  
**Locator:** TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ONLINE  
**Reference(s):** 76 MOSCOW 17918  
**Executive Order (E.O.):** -- N/A or Blank --  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US  
Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006  
**Enclosure:** -- N/A or Blank --  
**Concepts:** DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MEETING REPORTS, POLICIES,  
RADIO BROADCASTING  
**TAGS:** Economic Affairs--Telecommunications and Postal Systems and Equipment [ETEL]  
Social Affairs--Public Opinion and Information [SOPN]  
Soviet Union (USSR) [UR]  
United States [US]  
Voice of America [VOA]  
**Office:** -- N/A or Blank --  
**Document Character Count:** 5124  
**Date:** 1976 November 26, 12:21 (Friday)

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 BIB-01 /025 W  
----- 021806

R 261221Z NOV 76  
FM AMCONSUL LeningRAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2809  
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USIA WASHDC  
AMCONGEN MUNICH

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SECSTATE WASHDC FOR EUR/SOV  
MOSCOW FOR P&C  
MUNICH FOR VOA  
USIA WASHDC FOR IEU, IBS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: -  
SUBJ: OFFICIAL LATVIAN PERCEPTIONS OF VOA LATVIAN SERVICE

REF: MOSCOW 17918

1. SUMMARY: IN OFFICIAL CALL ON LATVIAN SSR RADIO-TV COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN PETERIS JERANS DURING VISIT TO RIGA NOV. 15, CONGENOFF (DANIEL) TREATED TO SEVERE CRITICISM OF VOA LATVIAN SERVICE. END SUMMARY.

2. CALL, WHICH TURNED INTO NEARLY THREE-HOUR DEBATE ON WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS, STARTED OFF INNOCUOUSLY. AFTER PRELIMINARY PLEASANTRIES EXCHANGED, CONGENOFF OFFERED JERANS SAMPLE TAPES OF SEVERAL VOA ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MUSIC PROGRAMS IN HOPE OF EVENTUAL PLACEMENT ARRANGEMENT. THIS LED TO JERANS DECLARING THAT LATVIAN RADIO WOULD BE HAPPY, IN PRINCIPLE, TO BROADCAST TAPES, BUT THIS SHOULD BE DONE ON BASIS OF RECIPROCITY. CONGEN OFFICER POINTED OUT THAT USIA NOT SET UP TO PROPAGATE FOREIGN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CULTURE IN U.S. AND THAT IN ANY CASE U.S. BROADCASTERS NOT SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF PROGRAMMING, BUT SUGGESTED THAT SOVIET EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON COULD WORK ON TASK OF PLACING PROGRAMS FROM LATVIAN RADIO WITH U.S. OUTLETS.

3. THIS LED TO JERANS' COMPLAINT THAT LATVIANS AND SOVIETS IN GENERAL BROADCAST FAR MORE WESTERN MUSIC THAN WESTERN STATIONS DO OF SOVIET MUSIC. WAS THIS, HE ASKED, IN SPIRIT OF HELSINKI? WARMING UP TO THE OFFENSIVE, JERANS THEN LAUNCHED INTO A STINGING ATTACK ON VOA LATVIAN SERVICE. HE AT FIRST ASSERTED THAT MANY OF THE SERVICE'S BROADCASTERS THEMSELVES HAD HANDS QUOTE DRIPPING WITH BLOOD UNQUOTE, REFERRING TO ALLEGED MURDEROUS ACTIVITIES IN COLLARORATION WITH NAZI OCCUPYING FORCES DURING WORLD WAR II. LATER HE WAFFLED A BIT, IMPLYING THAT PERHAPS IT WAS NOT SO MUCH VOA EMPLOYEES THEMSELVES, AS EMIGRE LATVIANS CHOSEN BY THE VOA TO BE INTERVIEWED. BUT HE NEVER FULLY BACKED OFF HIS CHARGE. HE ALSO OBSCURED THE ISSUE BY BRINGING IN RADIO LIBERTY LATVIAN SERVICE. CONGENOFF SAID HE DID NOT KNOW BROADCASTERS, BUT STRONGLY DOUBTED POSSIBILITY OF SUCH PEOPLE WORKING FOR VOA BECAUSE USG SCREENING PROCEDURES WOULD INTER ALIA WORK TO PREVENT VOA FROM EMPLOYING ANY SUCH OBVIOUSLY DISCREDITED PERSONS.

4. BRANING FURTHER AFIELD, JERANS ASSERTED RADIO LIBERTY CONTROLLED BY CIA. CONGENOFF POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH RL HAD RECEIVED CIA SUPPORT IN PAST, THIS WAS NO LONGER TRUE, THAT IT WAS NOW FUNDED OPENLY AND ABOVE BOARD.

5. JERANS AND LATVIAN "FONMIN" OFFICER ACCOMPANYING CONGENOFF ON CALL DECLARED THAT EVEN IGNORING RL, VOA LATVIAN SERVICE TOOK

QUOTE AN INSULTING TONE UNQUOTE IN ITS TREATMENT OF INTERNAL LATVIAN AFFAIRS. THEY REPEATEDLY INSISTED THAT LATVIAN BROADCASTS WERE DIFFERENT IN TONE AND CONTENT FROM VOA ENGLISH AND EVEN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE SERVICES. THEY TOOK ISSUE WITH CONGEN OFFICER'S ASSERTIONS THAT PERHAPS THEY WERE BEING THIN-SKINNED, THAT THE SPIRIT OF HELSINKI PRESUPPOSED THE RIGHT OF ALL GROUPS TO SAY THEIR PIECE OVER THE AIR, AND THAT IT WOULD HARDLY BE FAIR TO EXPECT BROADCASTS IN LATVIAN ORIGINATING FROM ABROAD TO BE ENTIRELY INNOCUOUS FROM SOVIET VIEWPOINT.

6. DISCUSSION THEN BECAME MUCH WIDER RANGING. JERANS FAULTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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USG COMPLIANCE WITH HELSINKI OVER MATTER OF GRANTING VISAS TO SOVIET LABOR DELEGATIONS. CONGEN OFF MENTIONED AFL-CIO OPINION OF SOVIET UNIONS AS NOT REPRESENTING WORKING MEN'S INTERESTS. JERANS ASKED WHY, AT LEAST, COULD THEY NOT SIT DOWN AND TALK IT OVER.

7. PURSUING HELSINKI COMPLIANCE ISSUE FURTHER, CONGENOFF REMARKED ON HEAVY SOVIET BORDER FORTIFICATIONS AND ASKED WHY SOVIETS SO RELUCTANT TO LET PEOPLE OUT. JERANS REPLIED PEOPLE FREE TO TRAVEL BUT AS PRACTICAL MATTER, MOST "KOLEKTIVS" HARDLY IN FINANCIAL POSITION TO FUND THEIR MEMBERS' RUBBERNECKING ABROAD. FORTIFICATIONS, HE ASSERTED WITH STRAIGHT FACE, WERE TO KEEP OUT HORDES OF EMIGRE CONSPIRATORS/SABOTEURS.

8. JERANS RESUMED OFFENSIVE, QUESTIONING SECSTATE KISSINGER'S QUOTE INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ITALY UNQUOTE BY REMARKS BEFORE RECENT ELECTIONS IN THAT COUNTRY. CONGENOFF REPLIED BY ASKING JERANS HOW HE COULD EVEN PUT SUCH A QUESTION AFTER WHAT SOVIETS HD DONE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

9. JERANS PROMISED THAT ON LATER OCCASION HE WOULD SUPPLY CONGENOFF WITH NAMES OF PEOPLE HE HAD ACCUSED OF HAVING "BLOODY HANDS" AND EVEN THOUGH HE SHOWED CONGENOFF A BOOKLET--OF HIS OWN AUTHORSHIP--WHICH HE CLAIMED DETAILED THEIR "CRIMES", HE DECLINED TO GIVE COPY TO CONGENOFF ON GROUNDS HE DIDN'T KNOW IF HE HAD ANY MORE.

10. MEETING ENDED ON MORE CORDIAL NOTE, WITH BOTH SIDES ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THEY STILL SPOKE DIFFERENT LANGUAGES AND THAT WE NEEDED TO KEEP TALKING TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND AND LIVE WITH ONE ANOTHER.  
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