

Memorandum to the Deputy Chairman

Subject: Conversation with Mr. Melgunov

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I had a long talk with Mr. Melgunov in Paris. When I met him he was in a very depressed mood and even intended not to come to Munich for the meeting of the Political Commission. He received information that the Radio Commission was going ahead at full speed and that the organization of the Political Center was being relegated into the background. I convinced him that the Staroberg decisions were being followed and while it was necessary to proceed with preparatory work for the radio station, it was still the intention to establish the Political Center first. We then discussed the plan of the Political Commission. He told me that he is violently opposed to one clause of the program, namely the one about the future status of Russia. The clause reads that the peoples of the different parts of Russia will decide by a plebiscite or by other means whether they are to remain within the Russian state or become independent. He insisted that such decisions should only be made after the fall of Bolshevism. In other words he refuses to permit a plebiscite in, let us say, Georgia as soon as Georgia is liberated. All of the territory of the Soviet Union should be liberated before any plebiscites can be arranged in any of the parts. I'm sure that this was the intent of those who drew up the plan and told Melgunov so. The wording may have to be changed to make this intent more explicit.

We then discussed the proposal of the committee of four on the future relationship between the Center and the Committee, a copy of which he sent me for my comments. I told him that several points are not acceptable to the Committee. The allocation of a lump sum to the Center for the purpose of supporting participating organizations for which the Center would give us no accounting, will probably not be accepted by the American Committee. Mr. Melgunov explained that the wording of this clause 6 is misleading. What he had in mind was that in an agreement with the American Committee certain organizations were going to receive specific sums of money. The non-accountability clause refers to those organizations. In other words, the organizations will not be obliged to show for what purpose each Deutsche Mark is used. I told Melgunov that even such arrangement may not be acceptable to us and will require further deliberation. We would object to the prohibition of conducting negotiations with other organizations as proposed in point 7. I thought some formula could be found to protect the organizations participating in the Center, as it seems that the Russians are afraid that we might create new organizations in competition with them. Point 8 also imposes restrictions

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on the American Committee which seem unacceptable. Again he pointed out that independent activities of the Committee may interfere with the work of the Center. Past experience of the Russians with the European Representative of the American Committee, according to Melgunov, made the Russians somewhat suspicious that the American Committee may conduct certain activities prejudicial to the organizations cooperating with us. I pointed out that no written document can foresee every disagreement between the Committee and the Russians and that only in common work with mutual trust can all the differences of opinion be ironed out satisfactorily. I told Mr. Melgunov that point 9 will have to be eliminated as we can make no agreement on any secret work and that the American Committee does not intend to engage in any secret activities. He explained the clause by giving an example. Suppose the Azerbaidjan group is persecuted in Turkey. In such a case Mr. Hadjibeyli may ask the American Committee to use its influence and connections to stop the persecution. I told Mr. Melgunov that I don't know if we would be able to do anything in such circumstances and it will have to be discussed with the Center when the occasion arises, but it cannot be put in writing. The other points seem to be acceptable.

All this conversation was conducted in a friendly way and I stressed the fact that it was a completely unofficial exchange of ideas. As a result of our long conversation, Mr. Melgunov felt much more optimistic about the whole setup in Munich. He agreed to attend the next conference of the Political Commission on August 2nd. He also believes, as many others do, that the biggest problem to solve will be the name of the future Center. He told me that he will not agree on any compromise which will exclude the word "Russia" from the name. He is also convinced that many of the Russian organizations will support him on this.