

AIR

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OELA-23663

74-6-66/3

Chief, WE
Attn: Chief, SR

26 March 1958

REDWOOD/REDECOX, []
SMOTH Baltic Operations

REFERENCE: ODLW-14530

1. I talked to [] on this subject on 24 March, asking him about the results of his Baltic operations investigation. [] said that he had in fact been able to put far less time on this job than he had previously anticipated and the investigation had somewhat petered out. It had petered out in the sense that SMOTH did not have access to sufficient ex-agents to bring the investigation to the conclusion that they had hoped and that therefore many of their speculations, which they still consider pretty sound, remain unproven. [] said that he could have gone into considerably more detail than he was actually permitted as SMOTH actually pulled him off the job for more pressing current operations. You will recall that in OELA-16695 I reported that SMOTH did not yet know whether all agents had come under witting RIS control, although at that time they suspected this would prove to be the case. In the case of Vitolds BERKIS, who has recently received his US immigration visa as reported under OELA-23531 of 18 March, they did determine to their satisfaction that BERKIS never had been under witting control. As I understood [] BERKIS was the last man to return and was the one that they had "persuaded" the RIS to return. Their own analysis of BERKIS is that he was a man of such naivete that the Soviets were able to work their will with him just as effectively on an unwitting basis as they ever could have done wittingly. Their method of persuading this man to return was through the use of another agent previously exfiltrated by the Russians in such a manner as to make it appear that he was merely obeying his SMOTH radio instructions. On his return to the UK and after some two months pretty hard work, SMOTH managed to break him and when they sent him back they did so with instructions for BERKIS also to exfiltrate. As the Russians were still using BERKIS unwittingly, they complied.

2. [] expanded somewhat on SMOTH's current experience with their Soviet operations which, as you know, are primarily based on the UK and are almost exclusively of the legal traveler variety. SMOTH feels that the illegal type operations which they and we experimented with in the past were an essential

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OBIA-23663

Page 2

part of their Soviet operational experience and that these techniques had to be tried and proved out one way or another. Experience has shown that their present method of operation results in a far higher caliber of intelligence and much more of it. I do not believe it would be worth going into any additional detail on this, as I believe the arguments and techniques on this are at least as familiar to Headquarters.

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3 - WB

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