

Wick, Hammer, and the 'cultural' accord

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Not a few eyebrows were raised in late October, when Charles Wick, head of the U.S. Information Agency, disclosed that the United States is ready to permit the Soviet Union access to U.S. radio channels, for the purpose of beaming Soviet propaganda into American homes and workplaces.

Wick told the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other media, that the issue had arisen during a two-hour-long meeting he held with the Soviets' propaganda chief, Aleksandr Yakovlev, and Albert Belyayev, editor of *Sovetskaya Kultura*, during the Oct. 11-12 Reykjavik pre-summit.

Wick blithely admitted that, when Yakovlev complained of Moscow's inability to reach enough U.S. homes with its anti-American propaganda broadcasts, because few Americans use medium-wave radios, he suggested to Yakovlev that the Soviet Union simply purchase time on U.S. radio to broadcast its message! In exchange, the Soviets would allegedly stop jamming Voice of America broadcasts into the East bloc.

The fine hand of Armand Hammer

This incredible arrangement, which could take effect early next year, resulted from a U.S.-Soviet cultural accord agreed upon by President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov at their November 1985 summit, and which Wick has been charged with implementing.

Reliable sources report that the cultural accord was largely the handiwork of longtime Soviet agent Armand Hammer, whom Wick, together with former White House deputy chief of staff Michael Deaver, brought into the administration's inner circles, as a "back channel" to Moscow, during the 1982-83 period.

The Occidental Petroleum chairman has assiduously exploited the opening provided by Wick and Deaver, to establish himself as a key intermediary between the two superpowers. For the past two years, Hammer has been shuttling back and forth between Washington and Moscow, trying to convince President Reagan of the wisdom of striking an arms-control deal with Russia.

The Wick-Hammer-Yakovlev link raises some grave questions about the role of certain Reagan administration

officials in the Soviet-ordered operation to shut down the political operations associated with Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. Yakovlev and Belyayev have been identified as key figures orchestrating the security-stripping operations against LaRouche, which resulted in an illegal raid on the offices of LaRouche associates, carried out by the U.S. Justice Department's William Weld on Oct. 6.

Soviet leaders have made no secret of their desire to kill LaRouche, whom they regard as the intellectual author of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Twice in the weeks prior to the Leesburg raid, explicit and detailed marching orders to "get LaRouche" by directing police-state operations against the financial supporters of his associates, were issued in Belyayev's *Sovetskaya Kultura* magazine.

It is not yet known whether Yakovlev and Belyayev brought up the "LaRouche problem" in their meeting with Wick. When a journalist asked a Wick spokesman to comment on a press conference held by a LaRouche associate shortly after the Leesburg raid, to release details of the Soviet operation against LaRouche, the spokesman exclaimed: "I didn't know LaRouche had broken out again!" Another USIA official admitted that the Soviets "view LaRouche as a right-wing anti-communist," but refused to comment on whether he had been discussed at Reykjavik.

Hammer has also been identified by intelligence sources as being key in Soviet dirty tricks against LaRouche and his associates.

The Wick-Hammer link

Wick and Hammer have worked together closely for years. Both USIA and Occidental officials have confirmed that the two men consult frequently and have collaborated on many projects since Wick became USIA head in 1981.

Consulting with Hammer is tantamount to consulting with the senior echelons of the KGB—as publicly available documents in the U.S. State Department archives testify. Hammer's role as a Soviet agent is an open secret in the Western intelligence community. Recently, a European expert on Soviet intelligence informed *EIR* that Hammer's Soviet controller was "a top Soviet intelligence official" named Grigoi Haifetz, who, during the 1930s, served as Soviet vice-consul in San Francisco. "I know of NKVD [the predecessor to the KGB] officials, who, during World War II, openly bragged about NKVD control of Hammer, saying, 'Hammer's been one of ours for years,'" the expert reported.

To what extent Wick is aware of Hammer's pedigree is not clear, although it is hard to believe that someone in charge of such a key component of the U.S. intelligence apparatus as USIA could be ignorant of such facts. Perhaps the most charitable interpretation is to say that Wick, who made a killing in the entertainment and real-estate industries and struts around in \$1,200 custom-made suits, may have allowed Hammer to buy his way into the administration. For example, at the behest of Wick's wife, Mary Jane, Hammer

and his friends contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Mrs. Wick's pet charity, the Ford Theater endowment, over the last several years. In turn, Mrs. Wick is believed to have used her decades-long friendship with Nancy Reagan, to help her husband insinuate Hammer into the Reagans' good graces.

In any event, Hammer's influence has been clearly felt at USIA under Wick's tenure. Although Wick has long cultivated a tough-guy anti-communist image, it is no secret that, under his reign, USIA has become one of the primary sources within the administration for the delusion that the Soviet Union is a "crumbling empire," torn apart from within by a faltering economy, as well as the profusion of ethnic tensions and anti-regime religious sentiments. Promoters of the "crumbling empire" thesis argue that these internal forces will soon topple the Bolshevik leadership. Thus, rather than "waste" resources on shoring up American military capabilities, U.S. policymakers should focus on promoting these sources of internal dissension, while simultaneously negotiating arms agreements with the Soviet leadership.

Key posts within USIA are held by devotees of this Soviet disinformation, including Lucille Obolensky Flam, widow of Trust agent Prince Obolensky, who works at the Soviet desk of the USIA's Voice of America, and Herbert Rommstein, a former member of the Young Communist League, who is closely linked to the Soviet-Mossad networks which controlled accused spy Jonathan Pollard.

Hammer's biggest "contribution" to USIA has been the U.S.-Soviet cultural agreement. Several USIA officials credit Hammer with paving the way for the accord through his contacts in the Kremlin bureaucracy. Hammer reportedly was particularly helpful in opening doors to Wick, when the USIA director traveled to Moscow last January to work out the details of the cultural agreement. Nine days of meetings with top Soviet officials of the cultural and foreign ministries, was all Wick apparently needed to drop his anti-communist tough talk in favor of idiocies about the great future of U.S.-Soviet relations.

In a press conference in Moscow at the end of his visit, Wick gushed that the new cultural exchange agreement would be the "magic key" that will "promote the sort of understanding that will instill in people a greater mutual trust . . . which will build the foundation for arms control." Upon returning to Washington, he told reporters that "Moscow was a fascinating winter wonderland. . . . Our meetings were in the true spirit of Geneva. I could not be more pleased. . . . I could not be more optimistic." Then, in an interview on ABC-TV's "Nightline": "I never dreamed that I would be there in such a friendly atmosphere. It is a testimonial to the enlightened wisdom of President Reagan and to destiny providing the Soviet Union with a leader like Mr. Gorbachov, who can understand President Reagan."

According to the Kremlin's "America-handler," Georgi Arbatov, writing in the Sept. 13, 1986 issue of *Pravda*, Wick

also agreed, during his visit, that it was "dangerous" that President Reagan "based his ideas about the U.S.S.R. on several endlessly repeated false quotations" ascribed to Soviet leaders.

Wick's trip to Moscow resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of "cultural" contacts between USIA and other American officials and their Soviet counterparts, as well as exchanges between private U.S. groups and the Soviet Union.

This past August, a top-level Soviet delegation, led by Yuri Kashlev (a KGB official who was tossed out of London for spying in the early 1970s), met with Wick and his U.S.-Soviet exchange coordinator Steven Rhinesmith, to set up an even greater level of such exchanges.

Two curious coincidences occurred almost immediately thereafter: Voice of America, the USIA division charged with beaming American broadcasts into the East bloc, began shutting down its operations; and the Soviet press, notably Belyayev's *Sovetskaya Kultura*, published a series of attacks on LaRouche.

Aside from the overtly political operations being run under its cover, the cultural accord in its own right hardly serves U.S. interests. One of the more important agreements reached during Kashlev's August visit to Washington was to send U.S. Surgeon-General C. Everett Koop and Centers for Disease Control head Dr. James Mason, to the Soviet Union this October. According to Hal Thompson, a U.S. official who accompanied Koop and Mason, AIDS was discussed at nearly every meeting the U.S. delegation held with their Soviet counterparts. Thompson said that the Soviet health authorities insisted that the AIDS virus "is spread only through sexual contact, dirty needles, and blood products"—a line first circulated by the Soviet-dominated World Health Organization.

Shortly after his return, Koop issued a report on AIDS which lied that sexual abstinence or the use of condoms would be adequate to prevent its spread. At the press conference presenting the report, Koop said he was "absolutely opposed" to Proposition 64, the LaRouche-endorsed referendum that would permit California authorities to apply public health measures, including universal testing for AIDS carriers. According to congressional sources, the report was extensively revised after Koop's trip to the U.S.S.R. A previous version had been more alarmist (and accurate) in warning of the dangers of the virus to the general population.

Another example of the fruits of Wick's "cultural agreement" is the Soviet-sponsored exhibition of 19th-century Russian art which opened in October at the Smithsonian's Renwick gallery in Washington. The exhibition extolls the "blood and soil" fanaticism that lies at the root of Soviet antipathy to Western values; but it may not be far from Wick's concept of culture. As a film producer during the 1950s and 1960s, Wick is best known for his opus "Snow White and the Three Stooges." Perhaps that's why he's chosen to become a stooge for Armand Hammer and his Soviet pals.