

George T. Lister

June 2, 1966

Part III - Narrative Comments on Performance

A. Association with rated officer

I have known Mr. Lister and his work only since his assignment to IAS on October 1, 1965. Although on temporary duty in another part of the Department from January 1 - March 31, 1966, I kept in touch with his activities during that time.

B. Position Requirements

It is an important, free-ranging job, since the incumbent's standing instructions are to find opportunities to reduce or destroy Communist power wherever it can be identified in Latin America. Essentially, the officer seeks:

- 1) opportunities to hurt the Communists which do not come specifically within the purview of any office and which may be overlooked;
- 2) improvement of the day-to-day political warfare being waged against the Communists; and
- 3) greater correlation of our efforts in one or more countries whenever this may be helpful to our cause.

The position, a relatively new one in ARA, requires imagination, initiative, and a comprehensive knowledge of Communist behavior. The officer must combine an alert, zealous outlook with a sensitive understanding of local attitudes, in order to keep his operations productive and free from self-defeating mistakes. Because his work touches the responsibilities of so many offices inside and outside the ARA Bureau, he must clothe his efforts and policy

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recommendations with discretion and tact. In view of the numerous memoranda, instructions, and consultations involved, it is essential for him to be highly articulate in both oral and written communications.

C. Performance Summary

Mr. Lister admirably fills all the requirements of this position. One of the operations he has developed has been to meet with political leaders, journalists, teachers, students, labor leaders, etc., brought under U.S. auspices from Latin America under "educational travel" and "leader grant" programs. They usually come to the Department in groups of 15 - 20, about two per week, where Mr. Lister talks to them about our foreign policy. The discussions are usually so provocative and intense that some groups insist upon prolonging them for as many as four hours. This is a venture in effective political dialogue that depends largely on the skill of the protagonist. There is no doubt about the latter, because written testimonials from both high and humble abound. I asked Mr. Lister to keep copies of them all. Reports from our Embassies show that Latin American visitors have remembered him out of the many persons met during their travels and, therefore, must have been greatly impressed by what he told them. The Director of CU/ARA has stated that one Brazilian later remarked he had learned ten times more about our foreign policy in the four hours with Mr. Lister than he had from any previous experience. I have never seen so many spontaneous tributes to an individual in any particular field.

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A more mundane aspect of Mr. Lister's work is the ~~maintaining~~ ^{monitoring} of all traffic concerning Sino-Soviet activities in Latin America. The purpose is to find opportunities to hurt the Communists which are then translated into memoranda and/or instructions. Here, indeed, Mr. Lister has shown himself to be tireless and imaginative. His wide intramural contacts, as well as those with other agencies, have

made him extremely effective in giving and receiving help toward the major objective. Thus, although quite able to operate with a great deal of independence, he certainly does not give the impression of one who wants to keep the show to himself. Paradoxically, the success of his rather unrestricted assignment hinges upon the cooperation of all concerned. At one point the effort may be to get a limb-hanging Soviet representative ousted from a certain country. At another time, the focus may be on an invitation to certain labor leaders to visit the United States. Teamwork, therefore, is not only desirable but indispensable, and Mr. Lister has shown himself equally ready to play a major or minor role, or to do whatever else may be needed to finish the job. (Recent example: His explanation of our foreign policy objectives and policies has proved so effective that USIA recently requested him to draft a 1400 word pamphlet to counter some Latin American misconceptions regarding the United States.)

Exploiting the effects of the Tri-Continental Conference held last January in Havana was another project on which Mr. Lister and others worked hard to hurt and embarrass the Communists. His telegraphic instructions to the field were models of clarity and planning, so much so that EUR/SOV decided to use one of them as a basis for a circular to posts in other regions. Even though it might be difficult to say who first spotted each of the various Communist weak points revealed by the Conference, I am sure that Mr. Lister was one of the most persistent in devising tactical follow-ups for the benefit of field posts and bureau offices. His ample knowledge of Sino-Soviet affairs was invigorated by a political imagination that had been attuned to area sensitivities through many contacts with Latin American travel groups. The Lister technique has been to supply the optimum amount of information in highly readable form, all of it accompanied by suggestions for application that are invariably tempered with a keen awareness of feasibility.

Note regarding performance factors:

Mr. Lister has been marked IO in negotiation and NA in supervisory, executive and rater capabilities because his present duties do not include those functions. The highest position for oral communication and relations with non-Americans and official representation is based, of course, on his superlatively valuable dealings with the Latin American groups.

Mr. Lister would like his next overseas job to be in a country where there is an important Communist problem. It is also time for him to have further experience in program direction, and he should be considered for a position as DCM at his next overseas post.

D. Allowance for Position Class

No comment required.