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8 October 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Robert Edward Webster, Project ⁰¹ [LONGSTRIDE]

1. The attached cable from Embassy Moscow is self explanatory. It was brought to my attention this morning by Mr. Robert Crowley of Contact Division/OO.

2. Mr. Webster was employed by Rand Corporation last spring to accompany Mr. Rand to Moscow for the opening of the Sokolniki Fair and for the pursuit of Rand's interest as agents for several American exhibitors who wanted to dispose of their displays at the end of the fair. Webster is in his early thirties, is believed to have a business management background, but several attempts to obtain biographic data about him from our files have drawn a blank. It appears that he was assigned as temporary office manager of the Moscow office and charged primarily with the responsibility to sell Rand services to American exhibitors as agents to liquidate their displays at the end of the fair.

03 3. About 21 September Mr. Crowley of OOCB informed me that [redacted] Chief East West Contacts OO had received word from Mr. Merrill, East West Contacts State Department, that inquiry was being made by Rand Corporation of State Department to determine the whereabouts of Mr. Webster who had departed his office without notice to the parent company. It seems that Rand Corporation also made direct inquiry through the Soviet Embassy Washington for information about Mr. Webster. At this point I relayed this information to Major Carels, USAF/ACSI, who phoned me a day later to say that the Soviet Embassy had informed Rand Corporation that Mr. Webster was on a two weeks tour arranged by Intourist. Since Webster was about to conclude his assignment for Rand in Moscow and return home this information was considered quite satisfactory.

4. During our conversation on 28 September with General Dougher and other ATIC representatives, a question as to Mr. Webster's situation and whereabouts was answered with the information that he had been on a vacation trip and was believed to be enroute to the U. S. It was also stated that he was a temporary employee and was not intended to be the Moscow office manager.

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5. Upon learning of Embassy cable number 1082, I phoned Major Carels to bring it to his attention, he said that he had just learned of it himself because of a query from ATIC Cleveland which had apparently been alerted because of a phone call from State Department Washington to Rand Corporation about it. ATIC Cleveland wanted to know whether any possibility existed that Webster might be carrying out a clandestine task upon requirements of CIA which had not been coordinated with them. Major Carels was assured positively that such was not the case, and to the best of our knowledge Mr. Webster had not been briefed by and was unknown to either DDP or OO offices.

6. A check was made with [Mr. Thomas Mills] as to whether he had personally encountered Mr. Webster during the course of the Sokolniki Fair.⁰⁶ [Mr. Mills] had met Mr. Webster on a few social occasions and on one or two occasions when Mr. Webster was soliciting Chrysler Corporation commissions for Rand to act as Chrysler's agent in liquidating Chrysler displays.⁰⁶ [Mr. Mills] said that Chrysler rejected Rand's services. It is [Mr. Mills]'s impression that Mr. Webster was extremely frustrated in his attempts to deal with Soviet representatives in sales transactions and was an outspoken critic of living conditions and relationships within Moscow. Webster struck [Mr. Mills] as most unlikely to defect to the Soviets, but qualified this view with the thought that Webster was an unhappy and maladjusted personality whose lack of success in his assigned mission and whose personal problems were evident. To develop our picture of Mr. Webster more fully, [Mr. Mills]⁰⁶ will consult with Mr. [redacted] and Mr. Rayles to produce, perhaps, a more informed and composite picture of Mr. Webster. According to Mr. Crowley OO, and Major Carels, each from his own sources, Mr. Webster has been laboring under marital and financial difficulties and is reported to have had a past record of employment instability.

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