

20 April 1971

Mr. Hal Deneault
Thomas House-818
1330 Mass. Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Deneault,

Unhappily, I have virtually no information on the questions you posed in your letter of the 15th. I have never heard of the "Radio Liberty Committee" and cannot throw any light on its reliability or purposes.

In my many years on the staff of the World Health Organization I have acquired close familiarity with the proceedings of our Executive Board and World Health Assembly, as well as with a great wealth and variety of internal reports and correspondence. I have never encountered any references to allegations of abuses in Soviet psychiatry. In any case, the WHO consists of some one hundred and thirty Member States, and is empowered to deal only with Governments, and not with individual citizens. The Organization has always tried to avoid being drawn into political controversy and to concentrate all its efforts on the advancement of health, and the related objectives set forth in the WHO Constitution. It is always open to the delegates of Member States to raise questions related to any aspect of health, including mental health, but to the best of my knowledge no delegation has ever initiated discussion of allegations of abuses in Soviet psychiatry.

Dr. Edward L. Margetts is a Canadian medical officer attached to our Mental Health Section at WHO Headquarters in Geneva. I am not acquainted with him personally, however, and I have no knowledge of his views on this question. Should you wish to write to him, you can address him at the World Health Organization, Mental Health Section, Geneva, Switzerland.

The UN Commission on Human Rights (and its Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities) do receive and process communications (from individuals) concerning human rights, under a rather complicated series of rules and procedures, largely private in nature. The texts of communications are not available to me, nor are the records of discussion of the communications received, which average some 16,000 or more a year. Should you wish to obtain more detailed information, you might write to Mr. Marc Schreiber, Director, Human Rights Division, United Nations, New York.

Any attempt on my part to explore this question further, either with my colleagues in WHO Headquarters or with the UN Secretariat, would involve a laborious, time-consuming job of research, which I am simply not in any position to undertake. I hope that you will understand my difficulties. With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
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