

~~SECRET/EXDIS~~INFORMATION
June 5, 1970

Action

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt

SUBJECT: RFE Problem with Bonn is Getting More Serious

The attached message (Tab A) from Bonn indicates that the crisis over Radio Free Europe is picking up. I understand that funding and other aspects have been considered in the 40 Committee recently.

The issue is the expected one: mounting Eastern European pressure to get rid of the Radio. There now apparently is a threat from several East European countries to boycott the Munich Olympics in 1972 if RFE is still there. The Germans want to avoid a confrontation with us (they say) and have apparently been trying to get RFE to do something to its scripts to remove any basis for charges that they are inflammatory. It is far from clear, however, that even if RFE were to modify its scripts (which, according to CIA, are in fact kept under review and are available to the Germans), the East Europeans would cease their pressure. There have been suggestions that the Germans should assign someone to Munich to pass on scripts and participate in operations generally, but it is highly unlikely that the Germans would want to be that much more identified with the Radio. If present trends hold, sooner or later the Germans, whatever is in the scripts, will be confronted with the choice of keeping the Radio and avoiding a problem with us or propitiating the East for the sake of "successes" in Ostpolitik.

Bureaucratically within the US Government, CIA had wanted to send [redacted] 25:25X1
[redacted] to Bonn today to see if a modus vivendi between RFE and the Germans 25X1
could be found and also to determine whether RFE scripts are in fact
offensive. (CIA says the Poles have in the past given the FRG doctored
tapes to make RFE appear in a bad light.) State, however, has held up
[redacted] trip on the ground that whoever goes to negotiate with the Germans 25X1
should be properly instructed. State and CIA have been meeting for the
past week to consider the options. I gather they have guidance from you
to the effect that we should not permit the Germans to bargain with our
chips. However, it is not clear that there is any specific White House
direction of the current State/CIA effort to develop a course of action or
that any more basic thought is being given to the future of RFE or a possible
alternative to it.

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I take it there is a judgment in the Administration that both RFE and Radio Liberty can at some point be used by us for bargaining purposes with the East and that for this reason we should keep both operations functioning in Munich, whatever the Eastern pressures on the Germans to circumscribe or remove them. This also presupposes German unwillingness to antagonize us for the sake of relations with the East. This set of judgments may well be accurate; but if it has not already been subjected to analysis, it certainly should be.

RECOMMENDATION:

~~I presume you will wish to~~ pursue this matter further in the 40 Committee.

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Put on agenda for next meeting

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JUN 12 1970

Jessup concurs

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SUBJECT: GERMAN REACTION TO RFE; POMMERENING'S INTERVIEW WITH RFE DIRECTOR WALTER

1. IN A MOVE APPROVED BY FONMIN SCHEEL, POMMERENING AND RFE DIRECTOR RALPH WALTER MET IN BONN MAY 20 TO DISCUSS POLISH AND OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN PROTESTS AGAINST RFE. ON JUNE 2, POMMERENING GAVE THE DCM THE FOLLOWING FRANK EVALUATION OF HIS TALK WITH WALTER.

2. POMMERENING SAID THAT, SPEAKING QUITE HONESTLY, HE DID NOT FIND WALTER'S RESPONSE SATISFACTORY. HE SAID THAT A MORE COOPERATIVE RESPONSE FROM RFE WAS NECESSARY TO HEAD OFF WHAT HE FEARED COULD BECOME A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM. HE SAID THAT RFE BROADCASTS CONFINED TO FACTS PRESENT NO PROBLEM. THE DIFFICULTY IS THAT THE TONE OF RFE BROADCASTS IS AT TIMES UNFORTUNATE AND INFLAMMATORY. HE CITED ONE PARTICULAR CASE IN A BROADCAST TO POLAND IN WHICH RFE URGED VOTERS IN A LOCAL ELECTION NOT TO VOTE FOR A CERTAIN CANDIDATE, KNOWN ASA HARD-LINE STALINIST. POMMERENING MADE A SHARP DISTINCTION BETWEEN RFE AND RADIO LIBERTY, WITH WHICH THERE WAS NO PROBLEM.

3. POMMERENING THEN SAID THAT PROTESTS FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE BEGINNING TO MOUNT. THEY HAVE NOW HAD PROTESTS IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER FROM POLAND, HUNGARY, BULGARIA AND ROMANIA. RECENTLY THEY HAVE RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL PROTEST FROM THE HUNGARIANS. FURTHERMORE, THE HUNGARIANS HAVE LET THE FRG KNOW THAT RFE MIGHT POSE A THREAT TO THE OLYMPIC GAMES. THERE COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, DEVELOP A COMMON EASTERN BLOC POSITION BOYCOTTING THE 1972 OLYMPICS IN MUNICH UNLESS RFE WAS REMOVED FROM GERMANY. POMMERENING

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SAID HE FELT THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT COULD LEAD TO VERY UNFORTUNATE PRESSURES IN THE FRG AND ESPECIALLY IN THE MUNICH AREA, WITH IRRESISTIBLE PUBLIC CLAMOR TO REMOVE RFE SO AS NOT TO JEOPARDIZE THE 1972 OLYMPICS. POMMERENING SAID THE FRG WANTED AT ALL COSTS TO AVOID THIS KIND OF SITUATION.

4. HE ADDED THAT THE SITUATION WAS MADE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT BY THE FACT THAT THE POLES OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS, BASED ON THE FRG'S ANALYSIS, HAVE CONSPICUOUSLY TONED DOWN THEIR PROPAGANDA ATTACKS ON THE FRG. THIS MAKES IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE FRG TO COUNTER POLISH PROTESTS BY SAYING THAT THEY AFTER ALL ARE DOING THE SAME THING.

5. POMMERENING SAID THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD PREPARED A PAPER FOR THE MINISTER STRESSING THE GRAVITY OF THE RFE PROBLEM, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF US-GERMAN RELATIONS. THE PAPER POINTED OUT THAT RFE WAS SUPPORTED BY PRIVATE AMERICANS, MANY OF WHOM ARE VERY INFLUENTIAL AND PLAY KEY BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IN THE US GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE IF THESE PEOPLE, MANY OF WHOM ARE ALSO STRONG FRIENDS OF THE FRG, WERE ANTAGONIZED AND GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT THE FRG WAS "SELLING OUT" TO THE COMMUNIST BLOC. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PAPER POINTS OUT, MOUNTING BLOC PROTESTS AGAINST RFE CAN, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF THE OLYMPICS, LEAD TO IRRESISTIBLE PRESSURES TO REMOVE RFE FROM GERMANY, WITH "VOA LEFT TO DO THE JOB" AS HE PUT IT. THE ARGUMENT WILL BE MADE THAT RFE IS AFTER ALL A PRIVATE COMPANY WITH A QUESTIONABLE STATUS WHICH WAS ACQUIRED BACK IN THE OCCUPATION DAYS. THE PAPER THEREFORE URGES STRONGLY THAT, TO AVOID A SERIOUS SITUATION IN US-FRG RELATIONS, RFE BE URGED TO BE COOPERATIVE IN MODIFYING ITS BROADCASTING TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE.

6. COMMENT: WE CONSIDER THE RFE SITUATION TO BE SERIOUS. THE PAPER POMMERENING REFERRED TO IS UNDOUBTEDLY GOING TO BRANDT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE ALSO KNOW FROM HIS STAFF THAT MINISTER EHMKE IS DIRECTLY INTERESTED. THE RFE PROBLEM IS THEREFORE LIKELY TO COME TO A HEAD AT THE TOP LEVELS OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IT IS URGENT, IN OUR VIEW, THAT ACTION BE TAKEN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ON OUR SIDE. IF THE GERMANS ARE FORCED INTO A POSITION WHERE THEY FEEL THEY MUST DEMAND THE REMOVAL OF RFE (WHICH IS THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW GOING), THE RESULT CAN BE A CONFRONTATION WITH RESULTANT STRAINS ON US-GERMAN RELATIONS.

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WE STRONGLY HOPE THIS CAN BE AVOIDED AND THAT RFE CAN CONTINUE TO OPERATE ON GERMAN SOIL.

7. TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM, WE BELIEVE THAT AN APPROPRIATE HIGH-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO COME TO BONN FROM THE US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SUCH A REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD BE EMPOWERED TO GIVE THE GERMANS SUFFICIENT ASSURANCES OF MODIFICATIONS IN RFE'S APPROACH TO ENABLE THEM TO COUNTER EASTERN EUROPEAN PRESSURES. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THERE ARE FORCES ON THE GERMAN SIDE (LIKE POMMERENING HIMSELF) WHO WANT TO RETAIN RFE; OUR JOB IS TO GIVE THESE FORCES THE NECESSARY AMMUNITION.

8. DEPARTMENT REQUESTED TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO OTHER APPROPRIATE POSTS INCLUDING MUNICH FOR DOHERTY AND TO MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE US, INCLUDING DURKEE IN NEW YORK.
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