

Date: 8 JAN 1969

From: John J. O'Malley, Jr.

To: Initials, Date

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Remarks:

See, particularly, the marked paragraph.

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TEL 6 SYMPHONY

Files.

FILE DESIGNATION

NO.

DATE: December 16, 1968

PHONE: What is it?

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STATE 264426, 10/31/68
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Contents and Classification Approved by:

CI:ELPiret

NASA:Wood

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12/13/68

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AIRGRAM

TEL 6 SYMPHONY

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FILE DESIGNATION

1-1010

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HANDLING INDICATOR

NO.

TO : Department of State

INFO : BONN, LONDON, BRUSSELS

FROM : Amembassy PARIS

DATE: December 16, 1968

SUBJECT : Communications Satellite SYMPHONIE: What is it?

REF : (E) TEL 6 FR
A) A-1824, 3/18/66; B) STATE 150329, 4/26/68; C) PARIS 22433, 10/15/68; D) STATE 264426, 10/31/68

Introduction:

The Franco-German SYMPHONIE satellite consortium CIFAS¹, met on November 13, 1968 to review industrial arrangements for the construction of the satellite and to approve certain changes in the satellite's antenna patterns and hence the earth areas they will cover. In reporting the meeting Air et Cosmos of November 23 noted that "other modifications are also envisaged leading in fact to a certain redefinition of the satellite." These developments indicate that even the SYMPHONIE managers were still undecided as to what its functions will be and how these will be accomplished. A brief review of some of the claims made for the satellite during recent years may therefore be useful at this time.

Background:

This satellite project was first disclosed to the French public in 1965 under the name SAFRON. Subsequently, it was renamed "SAFRON II", then "SAROS I" and "SAROS II". Finally the French

¹ Consortium Industriel Franco-Allemand pour le Satellite

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FORM 10-64 DS-323

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Date:

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Drafting Date: 12/12/68

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Contents and Classification Approved by:

SCI:JHBuehler:sab

SCI:ELPiret

Clearances:

TRC:AEFrank

POL:MLitman

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project was merged with the German "OLYMPIA" satellite study. For a few days after the Franco-German agreement it was called "ATHOS", and finally emerged under its present name, "SYMPHONIE".

From its inception as a French project the intended function of this satellite was to relay communications. At first only telephony and radio broadcasting were mentioned. Later television relay was added. The geographic areas of coverage announced for the satellite also changed with these successive redefinitions so that at various times the emphasis was on communications relay with the Near East, then Africa, the French Guiana space launch base, the French Antilles and recently Quebec.

These redefinitions probably resulted from efforts of French space and telecommunications satellite officials to make the project attractive, and thereby gain approval and funds, by relating it to the French political objectives then in vogue. The initial project studies probably included enough options to allow new functions, services, and areas of coverage to be announced as convenient or opportune without requiring a complete project redefinition.

From the inception of this communications satellite project it was described as an operational system. Of course it was implicit that SYMPHONIE would be "experimental" in the sense of being the first French, or Franco-German, satellite of its type, but the present emphasis on the word "experimental" seems to date from the enunciation of the conditions under which the U.S. would be prepared to launch a foreign communications satellite (the Vallotton reply, ref. B). The Aubiniere-Mayer letter (ref. C) inquiring of NASA the application of this U.S. policy to SYMPHONIE describes the satellite as "experimental". The NASA reply (ref. D) takes proper account of the need for a mutual understanding on what SYMPHONIE is, and will be used for, should a U.S. launch be provided.

The successive redefinitions of the SYMPHONIE project, and the various French ends which the satellite could serve (space, telecommunications, technology, cultural and information exchange, military, broadcasting, propaganda) reflect a spectrum of French interests in the possibility of using such a satellite for other than purely "experimental" purposes. No attempt will be made herein to divine what the current French interpretation of the term "experimental" might be. However, the following excerpts from various sources are of interest.

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Excerpts:

On April 19, 1968, in PARIS 12883, i.e. prior to conclusion of the SYMPHONIE Accord with Germany, the Embassy reported a conversation with the member of (then) Science Minister Schumann's office responsible for space affairs. The official said France would wish to retain the right to use SYMPHONIE operationally if it were still active after its experimental period was completed.

Page 45 of the CNES annual report for mid-1967 to mid-1968, states:

"The SYMPHONIE program is a cooperative program between the Federal Republic of Germany and France which envisages placing in orbit an experimental telecommunications satellite intended to distribute radio and television programs (in particular the distribution of the Olympic Games of 1972 in Munich), to provide telephone and telegraph communications, and for data transmission."

British weekly Flight International, a magazine similar to Aviation Week, in its September 19, 1968 issue carried an article by J. L. Blonstein, reporting on a paper presented to the United Nations Space Conference of August 1968, stated:

"The paper proposed blandly that the satellite (SYMPHONIE) would be launched by ELDO. The authors could hardly say anything else, for it is understood that the Americans have already refused to launch SYMPHONIE, which the French openly and frankly admit will be an operational system with intercontinental capability."

Mr. Blonstein of course was in error in reporting the U.S. had refused to launch SYMPHONIE (he could have picked this up from several French writers).

The Paris daily Le Monde of September 13, 1968, in describing the (then) recently signed Franco-German convention for the construction of SYMPHONIE stated:

"Concerning the use of the satellites and (ground) stations, the convention provides that the program will include periods of joint testing and periods left to the exclusive use of one of the two countries. It also provides that if both flight models function well, one of the parties will be able to obtain exclusive use of one of the two (satellites)."

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Page 4.

More recently, the Paris daily Le Figaro of November 1, 1968, in an unsigned article, describing a projected Franco-Quebec satellite, stated:

"M. Gautier (Jacques Gautier, Vice President of Radio Quebec) recalled that during a visit to Paris, M. Johnson (Daniel Johnson, former Prime Minister of Quebec) requested of France the inclusion of Quebec in the coverage of the SYMPHONIE. This would be the method for involving technicians from Quebec in this new, advanced technology. SYMPHONIE will bring us (Quebec) two principal advantages: 1) It will permit us (Quebec) to receive experimental transmissions, and to transmit toward Europe and Africa, and thereby to have an outlet. 2) It will give us the possibility of involving technicians from Quebec in the construction of SYMPHONIE. Six or seven technicians will go to France beginning this autumn, as soon as the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) will have made its proposals."

Comment:

Some of the above statements will require clarification in the event the SYMPHONIE management seek a U.S. launch for SYMPHONIE.

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