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Historical Collections Division  
Date: 06-05-2013

17 March 1969

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Bonn's Views on Efforts to Improve Berlin Access

1. There has been growing speculation in both the US and in Europe about the possibility of US-Soviet talks on a wide range of issues including West Berlin access arrangements. If, indeed, negotiations over Berlin are in prospect, it is perhaps useful to take a look at how West Germany would react. A good indication of Bonn's probable attitude can be gleaned from its recent behavior regarding the presidential election in West Berlin. West Germany's attempt to bargain its way out of holding the election in West Berlin spotlighted a basic concern on the part of the top leadership regarding the wisdom of staging such political activities on Berlin's behalf. From the time the decision was made last fall, there was little enthusiasm for going to Berlin, notwithstanding the well-established precedent for doing so. The tensions and difficulties which resulted from holding the election in the city undoubtedly have intensified misgivings.

2. A good many West Germans are now convinced that these efforts to highlight the city's political links to West Germany are, in fact, counter-productive in terms of Berlin's practical interests and German-Soviet relations. Many believe that the time has come for a major effort to improve the city's situation, especially to reduce the vulnerability to harassment of civilian access. The increasing frequency of East German interception of truck cargoes alleged to contain illegal military goods lends a sense of urgency to the matter.

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3. For some time now, both Foreign Minister Brandt and Chancellor Kiesinger have made known their willingness to make concessions on political aspects of West Germany's ties to West Berlin if, in return, the Communists recognize that Bonn has legitimate economic relations with the city and access conditions are improved. Precisely what Bonn would be willing to "give up" has not been spelled out, but presumably, it would include the more conspicuous political manifestations such as national party conventions, formal Bundestag plenary sessions and work weeks and, possibly, parliamentary committee meetings as well. Also, visits by the federal president could be made less frequently and less conspicuously and, conceivably, even some federal agencies lacking any particular Berlin connection could be removed to West Germany.

4. A scaling down of political activities of this type in return for clearcut material benefits for the city would very likely be acceptable to a broad majority of both West Berliners and West Germans. During the abortive talks on the presidential election site, there was general support in favor of changing the venue --provided, of course, there were adequate concessions from the other side.

5. It is unlikely, however, that Bonn would be able to go much beyond the type of concessions noted above. The essential elements of political--as well as economic--"association" with West Germany (common laws, citizenship, institutions, currency, etc.) would have to be maintained. Even if Brandt and the Socialists were to be tempted to go further, they would probably be restrained by opposition from conservatives in the CDU/CSU such as Finance Minister Strauss, and the national and Berlin-minded segments of the press. These elements would follow negotiations with a wary eye and would not hesitate to oppose any move which they felt would undermine the city's viability or security.

6. No recent information is available regarding specific West German views regarding how access might be improved. In the past, West Germans have themselves proposed, or have endorsed others' suggestions for establishing some form of international commission or all-German authority (acting within a 4-power framework) to regulate access. The West German leadership would welcome establishment of new access arrangements which

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preserved the essentials of existing Allied prerogatives and provided definite improvements and specific guarantees for civilian traffic. Bonn would insist on continued stationing of Allied troops in the city (especially US) as guarantors of a new arrangement and in fact, the West Germans strongly believe that the US military presence must be continued until the problem of Germany's division is ultimately resolved.

7. East Germany would logically have to be included in a new access authority or commission, since it already exercises direct control over all civilian traffic--a situation which is not likely to be altered. An arrangement involving West and East German participation would, presumably, require some form of de facto recognition of the East German regime by Bonn. This could stir up considerable trouble in conservative circles. On the other hand, the Socialists, Free Democrats and the public at large would have little difficulty accepting the need of working with East Germany in order to improve Berlin's situation. There is even a fairly good chance they would--in this context--be able to carry the day over the traditionalists who still oppose any form of recognition.

8. An important consideration to the West Germans would be the need for full consultations regarding the specific proposals and the progress of any Soviet-American talks, and assurances that their views and interests would be respected. Given this fundamental assurance, serious friction over US-Soviet talks on Berlin would not be likely to develop. In this connection, it is useful to note that West German confidence in American leadership is probably greater today than at any time since the late 1950's.

9. Finally, there are indications that the West Germans themselves are interested in following up the exchanges over the presidential election with a dialogue with the Soviets (and probably the East Germans as well) concerning a "new approach" on Berlin. German officials believe that the relative restraint on the part of the Soviets in responding to the presidential election provides a basis for hope that the way is open for further development of their Eastern contacts. They apparently believe that certain pressures on the Soviets --especially their explosive quarrel with Chinese and a desire for strategic arms limitation talks with the

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US--make the chances for real progress on Berlin much greater than in the past. Foreign Minister Brandt reportedly has authorized two close colleagues to resume informal soundings--begun in January--with Soviet embassy officers at the earliest opportunity. While the Allies have traditionally been somewhat wary of Bonn getting into the act as far as Berlin's basic status is concerned, they would probably not object to Bonn's taking its own soundings. They would, however, expect full, prior consultation and coordination of West German probes in this area and would admonish the West Germans to take utmost care not to prejudice Allied rights in Berlin.

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
TO: <i>0/OCI</i>		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
REMARKS: <i>Return</i>		
<p>The White House shows signs of wanting to add Berlin to the agenda of Soviet-US negotiations. This is a first cut at how Bonn would look at it. It is for info only; we plan to expand the scope to cover USSR and E Germany, then publish.</p> <p><i>I look forward to the full package. This is an interesting beginning -</i></p>		
FROM: <i>j w</i>		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241 1 FEB 55 241 REPLACES FORM 36-8 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)

MEMORANDUM FOR:	<i>G. Linn</i>
	<i>See Oves' note</i>
	<i>Hold for</i>
	(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 1 AUG 54 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)