

~~LIMITED OFFICIAL USE~~

USIS - Mr. Ramsaur

September 23, 1965

M - Arthur R. Day

Background Briefing on Access for the Berlin Press Corps

Don Hauger brought the attached Information Division paper to ~~Do~~ with a request for POL comment. He said that USIS felt rather negative about the access backgrounder project. We are inclined to think that there would be some advantages to having an access backgrounder now when things are quiet in this field. However, we see a problem in attempting to background the entire Berlin press corps as suggested by ID. A discussion of access inevitably involves tripartite interests and while there is no restriction on our dealing with the press on access questions when this is required, any large-scale background briefing would seem to call for tripartite approval and, possibly, preparation and participation. On the basis of past experience, we doubt very much that such approval could be obtained, or that we could get agreement to the kind of briefing which we would want to have. As an example, we are now encountering difficulty with the French on the air safety briefing requested by Mr. Steltzer. Consequently, if there is going to be an access backgrounder we believe only the US press corps in Berlin should be invited.

The background briefing itself should not be difficult to prepare since it would be a presentation of the factual picture on ground and air access and would presumably avoid problem areas. In this connection, we question the desirability of having Major Mejasich and Captain Sherwood do the entire ground access briefing. Neither one is experienced in dealing with the press and they should not be placed in a position where they would have to field sensitive questions. It seems to us that this could be handled by having someone like Colonel Kanzig do an introduction and then place the "specialist" on the stand. Colonel Kanzig or someone from USBER could handle questions, referring them to Major Mejasich or Captain Sherwood where factual replies were involved. This would still give the press a chance to hear the facts from those who know them best.

If the above is taken into account, the scope of the ID project would obviously need to be changed. If you agree, you might want to talk this all over with Roy Jackson. It is obvious that ID will be disappointed about knocking out the German press representatives, since this is the category which they doubtless feel needs the backgrounder most. On the other hand we see no practical way, in present circumstances, to get around the problem which the tripartite nature of access problems presents.