

April 8, 1960

Letter, Robert F. Kelley to Howland H. Sargeant

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Summary:

AMCOMLIB Deputy to the President Europe Kelley informs President Sargeant about differences with Radio Free Europe over publicity of the 1959 riots in Temirtau (Kazakhstan) and attaches a memorandum from Press and Public Relations Officer Robert Redlich.

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Mr. Howland H. Sargeant
 American Committee for Liberation
 1657 Broadway
 New York 19, N. Y.

Dear Howland:

I want to bring to your attention an outrageous incident which occurred in connection with our Press Release on the TEMIR TAU story. As you may know, both the broadcast of Radio Liberty and our Press Release on this subject were most carefully prepared in consultation with all interested people. I think that Bob Redlich did an excellent job in handling our Press Release so as to avoid to the greatest extent possible the publicizing of this matter in the German press. I do not need to tell you that our plans were coordinated with the German authorities in Bonn. However, all our efforts to keep our Press Release out of the German press were almost nullified - to what extent we do not know as yet - by the shocking interference of the Public Relations Officer of RFE. I am enclosing, for your information, a memo prepared by Bob Redlich setting forth briefly the developments in the handling of our publicity on the TEMIR TAU story.

When Bob Redlich reported to me the action of the Public Relations Officer of RFE - so incredible that I found it hard to believe - I immediately called up Mr. Grozier. I related to him what Bob Redlich had told me and asked him whether Bob's report was correct. He stated that it was and expressed the hope that his action had not caused us any embarrassment. I told him that our Press Release had been sent to RFE for its information and inquired why he had translated into German our news release and distributed it to the German press. He said that the people in RFE found our news release so interesting that they felt that as many people as possible should get it. He said that they had added some new material to our Release before distributing it. He emphasized that full credit was given to Radio Liberty. I inquired why he had taken such action without consulting with us and he stated that he tried to get in touch with Mr. Redlich but was unable to do so. (As a matter of fact, he did get in touch with Bob Redlich, but after the Press Release had been distributed). I explained to him our policy in regard to publicity in Germany and pointed out that in this particular case the German authorities were greatly concerned lest extensive publicity in the German press convince the Soviet

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authorities that the information on the TEMIR TAU events came from German returnees and, consequently, impel them to take action to stop the repatriation of any further Germans from the Soviet Union. I requested Mr. Grozier to get in touch immediately with each German paper to which he had sent our Press Release and request it to make no use of it. He stated he would see what could be done.

Subsequently, Mr. Grozier telephoned me that he had killed a second press release which was in the process of distribution and that he had got in touch with all the German papers to which he had sent the first press release and requested them to make no mention of us in the event use was made of the material. He said that nothing further could be done at this time. He expressed regret that he had caused us so much trouble and assured me that it would not happen again. I again explained our publicity policy and stated that our news releases were sent to RFE for RFE's information and not for distribution outside of RFE. I pointed out again that our handling of this matter had been coordinated with the German authorities and that the latter were much concerned with regard to the possible consequences of any extensive publicizing of the TEMIR TAU story in the German press. I said that I would appreciate his taking action to see that the misuse of our Press Releases did not occur again.

I am sure that you will agree with me that the action of Mr. Grozier in this matter not only was completely unethical in so far as the utilization of our Press Release is concerned, but, what is more important, indicated an irresponsible attitude in respect to the handling of publicity in Germany. I need hardly point out that his action might have an unfortunate effect on a certain other matter with which you are acquainted. While we can take action to see that our news releases are not misused again, there is, of course, the larger problem of activities which lie outside of our domain, but indirectly adversely affect us. I hope that you will find it possible in the very near future to bring to Mr. Alexander's attention the conduct of Mr. Grozier in respect to our news release on the TEMIR TAU uprising.

With cordial best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Robert F. Kelley

Enclosure

Deputy to the President, Europe

April 8, 1960

Press and Public Relations Officer

Resume on Temir Tau News Release

On April 1, 1960, I was alerted to the fact that the story on the uprising in Kazakhstan was about to be released for broadcast by Radio Liberty. On the basis of material available to me and on my knowledge of the case I decided to prepare a news release in English the following day with a limited circulation in Europe.

On Saturday, April 2, release was prepared in English and arrangements made to get it to the correspondents of American newspapers in Europe.

Specifically the following was done: advance phone call was made and telex sent to New York Times chief Arthur Olsen in Bonn. Special delivery letters were forwarded to the following American correspondents: Messrs. Coblenz, Freidin, Leiser, Nichol, Panitsa, Rich, Spelman, Wallenstein, Williams, and Stearns.

Great care was taken to avoid giving the story to German news media representatives. No news agency in Germany was supplied with the story and an informal understanding was reached with the UPI office in London that in turn for the supplying of the story to them ahead of time (although embargoed) they would play down the German version. The other news agencies did not receive the story at all from Munich, but New York was asked during the telephone conversation to supply the American news agencies from their end to avoid getting inquiries in Munich from German newspapers.

Courtesy copies of the release were, as has been customary in the past, sent, among others, to the American Consulate, VOA, RFE and Herr Host of the Federal Press Office.

On Monday, April 4, I contacted Herr Host by telephone who had just received the release. He expressed his interest in the story, but agreed fully with my handling of it, namely of keeping it out of the German newspapers. He felt - in view of the fact that repatriation of ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union was still under way, - it was a good idea to have kept the publicity in Germany to a minimum.

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On Sunday, April 3, we received several additional inquiries from correspondents in Europe for additional details e.g. Zorba of Manchester Guardian, Floyd of Daily Telegraph and Olsen of New York Times. These we answered by telex.

On Monday, April 4, I received a call at my home at 1900 hours from Mr. Grozier, Public Relations Director of RFE. He said that he was sorry that he called me so late, but he wanted to explain to me that they had received a copy of our release that morning, had translated it into German and other European languages and had sent it by their press wire service to several hundred European newspapers including at least 70 German papers. I told him that this was completely unheard of and that I was very unhappy about that since it was entirely opposed to our policy, apart from being unethical as far as newspaper practice was concerned. Furthermore, I outlined the various steps I had taken to avoid giving it to the German press including the fact that an embargo time was chosen when most of the German papers had already closed up their weekend editions.

The following morning I received a copy of this release which contained the story, but did, as Grozier had pointed out previously over the telephone, give us full credit by stating that these extensive reports had been issued by the "Münchener Ostsender Radio Liberty." Among many other things I particularly object to the term "Ostsender" since it is an old Nazi-term meaning simply a radio station that broadcasts to the East without telling the type of program or the political affiliation of the station.

We did not have to wait long for the results. Among the first papers the Münchener Merkur of April 6 used the RFE story on page 1, giving credit to the "Ostsender Radio Liberty." Several Bavarian provincial papers followed suit. I expect that within the next two weeks quite a few more clippings in the German papers using the RFE story will come to our attention, something entirely unnecessary and potentially damaging.

On Tuesday, April 5, I called Herr Roat again and explained what had happened. Although he was as friendly as always, he said that he was aware that mishaps of that kind had happened in RFE before and that one always has to reckon with things of that sort. The best thing to do was to hit the guilty man over the head with a Coca Cola bottle. He went on to say that he had already seen one or two stories as a result of the RFE release and had been wondering about it. He appreciated, of course, my keeping him completely informed on all this and he would let me know if anything further developed.

It is my recommendation that a strong official protest of RFE's action be made.

Robert E. Redlich

RBR/ba