

December 29, 1969

Nixon Approves Continuation of Radio Liberty

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Summary:

Kissinger recommends that RL funding be reinstated for Fiscal Year 1971. President Nixon approves Kissinger's recommendation.

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MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/EYES ONLY

ACTION

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE: 01-Jul-2009

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Disposition of Radio Liberty

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 12958 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs

On 22 February 1969 you approved the continuation of both Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty with CIA covert funding. This decision was recommended to you by the 303 Committee and was based on previous exhaustive studies and evaluations by governmental and nongovernmental committees affirming the considerable value of both radios in support of U.S. policy objectives.

I am informed that in a budget discussion with Mr. Mayo on 17 December you expressed your intention of terminating Radio Liberty. CIA forwarded a memorandum on 19 December requesting that you reconsider this decision for the following reasons. This memorandum is attached at Tab A.

1. Recent technical measurements reflect that with favorable propagation conditions Radio Liberty can cover 90% of the territory of the USSR. Extensive listening to the radio is confirmed by mail received and by interviews with Soviet and Western travelers. Soviet media denunciations are frequent and strong and the Soviet jamming effort costs substantially more than the operation of the radio.
2. Radio Liberty, as a free voice from abroad covering Soviet internal developments, serves as a catalyst for the growing number of Soviet dissidents striving to interpret their society, its purposes and goals.
3. The Department of State has recently restated its recognition that Soviet emigres have a special contribution to make to U.S. information programs, both overt and covert, aimed at influencing the Soviet leaders toward making their government a more constructive and responsible member of the world community.

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4. 

5. Estimates of liquidation costs are  almost the equivalent of one year of normal operations; thus termination would result in little budgetary saving in FY 1971. Once liquidated an instrumentality of this type cannot be rebuilt.

6. Unilateral termination of Radio Liberty would be a major political concession to the USSR with no quid pro quo and might result in the early demise of Radio Free Europe as well.

On 20 December the 303 Committee discussed this problem at length. The members were unanimous in their view that Radio Liberty is of considerable value in support of U.S. policy objectives vis-a-vis the USSR and should not be eliminated voluntarily at this time.

Since the principal operating bases of both Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe are located in West Germany, we agree that termination of Radio Liberty might well result in an early end to RFE because of political pressures brought to bear on the West German government in its newly developing relations with its Eastern European neighbors, against which RFE is targeted.

The 303 Committee believes that rather than unilaterally terminating Radio Liberty at this time, it would be prudent to continue it and watch developments during the next eight months or so in an effort to determine what quid pro quo might be obtainable from the USSR and/or West German governments should it then be considered desirable to terminate Radio Liberty. The State Department will make a study of the political implications involved in continuation or termination of Radio Liberty, and CIA will make a study of the administrative problems that would be involved in Radio Liberty's termination.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the continuation of Radio Liberty for FY 1971 at the budget figure of \$14,935,000 which was agreed upon between the CIA and the Bureau of the Budget.

Attachment
Tab A

APPROVE 

DISAPPROVE _____

OTHER _____

DEC 29 1970

~~SECRET/EYES ONLY~~