

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 6, 1961

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*Received
Sent to St. P. 15
July 7-9*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Berlin Planning Organization

The Secretary of State, General Taylor, and I have discussed together a plan for Berlin operations which seems to all of us to make sense and which we think would be strengthened by your formal approval and a definite announcement within the government.

The fundamental working group on Berlin would be an interdepartmental coordinating committee under the full-time direction of Foy Kohler. This committee will have sub-committees formed for specific assignments as they come from higher authority or as they are generated by Mr. Kohler and his immediate associates in the major participating departments. During Mr. Kohler's service on this committee, the other work of the European bureau will be handled by his deputy, William Tyler. It is our recommendation that the Defense Department also assign a full-time officer to this committee, and that other departments make appropriate personnel available as needed.

Mr. Kohler's committee will be responsible to a steering group chaired by the Secretary of State. Other members of this group will be the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director, CIA, the Director, USIA, General Lemnitzer, the Chairman, JCS, General Taylor and myself. The steering group will be responsible for insuring full departmental support and policy coordination, under your final direction.

Appropriate records will be maintained by both the working committee and the steering group, and Mr. Kohler's office, in particular, will be a center of information, coordination, and follow-up on decided courses of action. Full reports will be available to General Taylor and to me, and a senior member of the NSC staff will be assigned to work with Mr. Kohler's group, probably full-time.

This brings me to my last request, which I regret to say does violence to an earlier understanding between George McGhee and myself. I believe that by his experience in the last six months and by his basic qualifications Mr. Henry Owen is unusually fitted to serve as the White House staff officer in this case, and I am sure that his service in this capacity far outweighs anything which he could accomplish in an equivalent time on

U.S. Archivist (NLK-77-366)
M22 8/19/77

SECRET

- 2 -

the planning staff. If, however, he is to come with us during the next six months, Mr. McGhee cannot be expected to hold open the high position he has offered to Owen, and accordingly Owen should burn his bridges at the State Department and join us for good. Owen himself has made no move whatever in this direction, but I see no other good solution to a central problem of our own service to you.

General Taylor and I have recommended to the Secretary of State a somewhat parallel organization for Southeast Asia, but he is not yet ready to join in a recommendation on this point, and accordingly this matter is delayed for a couple of days. This raises the question whether we should make the Berlin organization known at once, at least within the government, or whether we should hold it up until we have a decision about Southeast Asia. Our inclination is in favor of going ahead on Berlin.

McG. B.