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TELEGRAM

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ACTION INRD 10

INFO ES 06, RSC 01, /017 W

R 261230Z JUL 67
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2092
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN 118
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 107
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 109
AMEMBASSY LISBON 002
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ROGER CHANNEL

CORRECTED COPY

FOR KOHLER FROM AMBASSADOR

REF: STATE CIRCULAR 9862

SUBJECT: FUTURE OF RADIO FREE EUROPE

1. SINCE SHAKEDOWN OF FEW YEARS AGO RFE HAS DONE GOOD AND USEFUL JOB IN COUNTERING DISTORTIONS OF US POLICIES BY REGIME MEDIA AND

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IN FOSTERING DOMESTIC PRESSURES FOR REFORM AND POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. STRIDENCY OF REGIME ANTI-US PROPAGANDA VARIES BUT IS NOW VERY HIGH AS RESULT VIET-NAM AND MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS AND IN OUR VIEW CAN STAND SHARPER CORRECTION

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THROUGH RFE THAN VOA IS NOW ABLE AND WILLING TO PROVIDE, NOT TO MENTION DISINCLINATION OF OUR ALLIES.

2. ANOMALY OF RFE IS THAT FOREIGN AUDIENCES HAD EARLIER KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ITS SPONSORSHIP THAN US PUBLIC WHICH IS BEING SOLICITED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS. I ASSUME TERMS AND SPIRIT OF KATZENBACH REPORT RENDER THIS MAJOR OBJECTION WHICH ALTERNATIVES SUGGESTED IN PARA 2 DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR WOULD SEEK TO OVERCOME. SINCE THERE IS TALK OF FURNISHING OPEN US GOVERNMENT GRANTS TO EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER GROUPS FORMERLY ASSISTED BY CIA, SIMILAR SOLUTION MIGHT BE FEASIBLE FOR RFE WHICH COULD CONTINUE AS NOMINALLY PRIVATE ORGANIZATION. PRIVATE ASPECT COULD BE STRESSED BY GIVING ACTUAL AUTHORITY AND CONTROL TO DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS CONSTITUTING BOARD OF DIRECTORS. EXTENSIVE AND VALUABLE RESEARCH FACILITIES COULD BE RETAINED AS ADJUNCT SERVING BOTH OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. REALIZE THIS GENERAL TYPE OF APPROACH WOULD BE OPEN TO MENTIONED RISKS

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OF PUBLICITY CONNECTED WITH PASSAGE OF ENABLING LEGISLATION AND APPROPRIATIONS BUT CERTAIN KINDS OF PUBLICITY MIGHT BE SALUTARY IN REFLECTING STATE OF US FEELINGS.

3. WHATEVER TYPE OF AUSPICES IS EVENTUALLY DECIDED UPON FOR RFE, WE DO NOT ENVISAGE THEM AS MATERIALLY CHANGING PRESENT CZECH PUBLIC ATTITUDE WHICH IS RECEPTIVE. CZECHS SUFFICIENTLY SOPHISTICATED TO MAKE DISTINCTION BETWEEN RFE, WHICH IS INTRIGUING AS FORBIDDEN CIA-NURTURED FRUIT, AND VOA WHICH IS REGARDED AS MORE STAID AND PEDANTIC. DIRECT TRANSFER OF EXISTING OPERATIONS TO USIA COULD HOWEVER CREATE MAJOR ISSUE IN US-CZECH RELATIONS AS WELL AS DIFFICULTIES FOR GERMAN GOVERNMENT IN ITS CURRENT MOOD OF SEEKING CLOSER TIES WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

4. AS NOW CONSTITUTED AND FUNCTIONING? RFE IS SERIOUSLY VULNERABLE TO OFT-REPEATED CHARGES IT IS ISOLATED REMENANT OF COLD WAR ERA NO LONGER ATTUNED TO REALITIES OF MORE SOPHISTICATED WESTERN AND ESPECIALLY US POLICY LINE VIS-A-VIS EASTERN EUROPE. UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS THIS IS UNJUSTIFIED AND INACCURATE

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4. AS NOW C
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CONCEPT OF RFE'S HARD-HITTING AND LARGELY SENSIBLE SUBSTANTIVE POSITIONS. RFE IS NEVERTHELESS BECOMING AN ORGANIZATIONAL

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ANACHRONISM, AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO CLEARLY NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS. A START SHOULD PERHAPS BE MADE IN ADAPTING SOME OF THE FUNCTIONS OF RFE AND TRANSFERRING THEM TO US OFFICIAL MEDIA. VOA COULD KEEP ITS REPUTATION FOR COMPLETE OBJECTIVITY IN NEWS PRESENTATION BUT COULD BEGIN REFLECTING OUR VIEWS IN COMMENTARIES WHICH WOULD CONCENTRATE MORE ON PARTS OF SENSITIVITY TO CHECKS. DISCREETLY HANDLED SHIFT WOULD BROADEN VOA AUDIENCESHIP (WITH MINIMUM RISK OF INTERFERENCE) AND WOULD COMPENSATE FOR THE JAMMING OF RFE IN CZECHOSLOVAK CITIES. FURTHERMORE AN EASING AWAY FROM THE TONE AND PITCH OF RFE IN FAVOR OF STRENGTHENING VOA'S POLITICAL ROLE WOULD BE BALANCED BY THE ADVANTAGE OF ENABLING THE US TO SPEAK STRAIGHT FORWARDLY AND AUTHORITATIVELY.

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