

May 10, 1951

Dear Mike:

First, let me thank you for the perfectly splendid cooperation and interest you showed in our work. With so few hours available you really produced the important people, and Griffith and I are most grateful.

I know that Griffith had a brief talk with you at Shep Stone's about some special angles in connection with the Hildebrandt affair. Since then there have been some new developments which I think you should know about in order to be forewarned in case something pops.

Little did Mr. Ford suspect when he decided that he was going to go humanitarian in Berlin that he was stepping into a hornet's nest.

One of the people I saw in Bonn was Minister Kaiser of the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs. From the remarks that Hildebrandt and Tillich dropped during our interview, I gathered that all was not well between them and Kaiser (and that all was even worse between them and the SPD). Since they displayed almost unholy glee at having some solid money which somehow or other was going to embarrass Kaiser, I felt that it would be highly advisable for me to tell Kaiser in all innocence and sincerity that the Ford Foundation had made a grant through us to the Kampfgruppe to carry on their humanitarian work in Berlin, rather than have him discover it via his grapevine in some distorted or biased form later on. This was all the more important from our standpoint since, with the turnover from HICOG to Bonn, a great deal of our work and conceivably our very existence as a private American organization may depend upon the cooperation of Kaiser.

As soon as the statement was made I discovered that the Kampfgruppe-vs.-Kaiser situation was infinitely more serious than anything we had suspected.

The underlying problem, which of course did not come out into the open, is of course Kaiser's empire-building and his profound irritation at having a private organization operating outside his control.

The thing that did come out literally in words of one syllable was that the Kampfgruppe, a private organization, was being supported by American funds which to all intents and purposes were secret funds since Tillich and Hildebrandt had flatly refused to show their books to the German Government. Furthermore, these funds were being used to make political trouble for the German Government, that they were endangering lives in the East Zone, and that their "irresponsible" activities were furnishing ammunition to the opposition party (SPD) which had reached the point of questions in the Bundestag. We assume that what he really meant was that in addition to his own strong feelings on the subject he was being put under severe pressure by Wehner, Chairman of the Bundestag Committee for his Ministry and a very influential leader who, we have heard, is the real power behind Kaiser's whole operation.

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Another interesting development in the conversation was that Kaiser had as his interpreter his personal assistant, young von Hammerstein. Since Griffith's German was better than von Hammerstein's English he did practically no interpreting but was visibly building up a head of steam during the conversation, which he suddenly blew to approximately this effect: "The Minister is being polite. The actual case is that this is a very bad situation and because we have been unable to control these people who have been receiving secret American funds we have cut off the money they had been receiving from us for humanitarian purposes." Obviously the Ford grant therefore had completely undermined whatever leverage Kaiser thought he had with Hilly and Tilly.

* Later on in the discussion when Kaiser was elaborating what he thought should be done in order to make the situation O.K. from his standpoint, it developed that they did not think that this organization should be in the hands of just two people - Hilly & Tilly - both of whom they considered emotionally unstable. If a board were to be set up consisting of representatives of the various respectable political parties to which Hilly and Tilly would be responsible, they felt that the situation would be greatly improved; and if, besides such a board, the financial reports of Hilly and Tilly were to be made available to them (Kaiser & co.) that would apparently completely satisfy them. Kaiser added that Hildebrandt and Tillich had turned this proposal down when it was presented to them at a session they had with Adenauer.

To these proposals I was quite noncommittal, but did try to make three points: First, that now that Hildebrandt and Tillich were to receive regular monthly funds for humanitarian purposes, rather than living from hand to mouth by passing the hat, they would probably become more orderly in their own methods, particularly as they would be reporting to us regularly on the use of these funds. Second, that I would look into the matter of some kind of board. Third, as an American, while admitting the special political complications of the German situation, I could not help feeling that a private German outfit, supported by a private American outfit engaging in humanitarian work, had a better aura than a quasi-government outfit doing similar work.

During all of this I tried to repeat as many times as possible the fact that we were simply the disbursing agent for the Ford Foundation and that this whole business had come about not as a result of any suggestion on our part but, which is the fact, at the request of the Ford Foundation and the result of Hildebrandt's trip to the United States in January and February of this year.

Since it is apparent that Kaiser knows about other money that Hildebrandt and Tillich are receiving, and since it may be assumed that he knows or will discover its ostensible source, you can readily see that a potential problem exists as far as we are concerned.

The last thing in my mind is either to suggest the obvious to you or interfere in any way, but I do most earnestly bespeak your consideration of our particular position, especially since I am practically certain that Hilly and Tilly see this as a glorious opportunity to play games with people who have balked them in the past. It is probably inevitable that some of their activity will not be pleasing to Kaiser; on the other hand,

* What would you think of my advising Kaiser
of the fact that we will be receiving the money?

I don't think that they should go in for unnecessary provocation.

There are two other characters in on this act, namely, Charlie Thayer and Mickey Boerner, both of whom already knew in very general terms what was afoot and both of whom I felt should know it much more specifically since they would both be on the receiving end of the initial squawks from the Bonn government because of their respective positions. I need hardly add that they both expect major squawks.

I am terribly sorry that my "goodbye and thank you" has got to contain this hot potato, but I felt I ought to tell you the whole story as soon as possible.

All the very best, and thanks again.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the initials 'CT' or similar, written in dark ink.