

SECRET

21 July 1970
SG-70/249

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Visit to CATRIBE

1. The undersigned spent most of the week of 13 April 1970 being briefed by alias ACKERMANN and his staff on the various programs being developed at CATRIBE. [redacted] accompanied me for some of the sessions, but not for others. An interpreter was present for the first day, but dropped out when it became apparent that [redacted] understanding of the discussions was adequate for the occasion. There was every reason to feel that the discussions were completely open and above board and I detected no evasiveness in any area whatsoever. The briefings were professionally done and were highly competent in every respect. It was clear that they had taken considerable pains to prepare for them, and each of the individuals making a presentation, with only one or two exceptions, struck me as being professionally competent.

2. CATRIBE has clearly made excellent progress in developing the foundation for a comprehensive information system. Their ultimate goal is very high indeed since they aspire to computerize the flow of intelligence into Headquarters, its storage, display, manipulation, correlation, and evaluation into a single comprehensive system. However, they are proceeding step wise in an orderly fashion and clearly are learning as they move on, and developing new concepts and approaches as they proceed.

3. In addition to frequently expressed concerns over the impact on the organization of the changes in top management there was some noticeable concern, articulated mostly by ACKERMANN, but alluded to by others of his staff as well, that ACKERMANN's successor might be less effective in carrying forward the development ^{than} that he has been. Alias LEITNER struck me as being another highly competent computer professional indeed, but the total lack of professional intelligence officer's background, which ACKERMANN has, undoubtedly will warp the approach taken to CATRIBE's problems. He took part in only the last two days of discussions which served in part as a briefing for him of the shop he was taking over. For whatever it was worth I had the distinct impression that the free exchange that took place was not without its values for CATRIBE, since the delineation of our own experience in the application of various approaches to particular problems often seemed to serve as a very useful guide to them.

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2006

SECRET

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

SECRET

-2-

4. I was taken into the computer center for a demonstration of the on-line display of their travel program (AUTIROST). They have developed their own variation on a Soundex coding system which seemed to function effectively, although there was no way of seriously assessing it except by running some of our names against this algorithm to see what sort of grouping would be obtained. They are familiar with CAWHISPER 25's algorithm and regarded their own as a significant improvement. They are of course still developing it although it was in a working mode when it was demonstrated. Several variations that I would not have expected from the name used in the search query showed up on the output and seemed legitimate. They stated that they had done their own programming to drive the CRT and had not used any existing software package. While response time was fairly slow, it was not intolerable, and of course they are looking forward to a 50 and then a 65 in rapid succession. They are also, however, looking forward to proliferation of display devices throughout the compound, used for every conceivable purpose. The computer center is in a converted building and clearly would not be adequate for a significantly enlarged equipment configuration. They were planning the construction of a new computer center which would include associated processing activities as well as the equipment itself.

5. They have developed (AUTIMEL #4), a punch card system listing to whom economic reports are distributed. This is intended as a foundation for a system to control information on the distribution of all incoming documentary and intelligence materials. AUTIMEL #1 represents their conceptual thinking on a system recording the evaluation given to reports. Their ambitious proposal is that eventually this management information system can serve as a keystone for determining which operation should be discontinued, which requirements are not being met, and where operational effort should be concentrated. They have the same problems we do of producing reports in response to requirements and of being asked by higher authorities what they have produced on a given topic and of being unable to come up with an accurate answer. AUTIMEL #2 is concerned with content indexing and here, as in AUTIMEL #3, which is concerned with text indexing, they are only at the beginning stages of formulating what they will try. ACKERMANN was most anxious to get any assistance he possibly could along these lines and I believe intends to take advantage of some of the general purpose software packages that have been developed in the States for information retrieval. I am sure that we can anticipate a visit by LEITNER and some of his staff in the Spring when they begin to get more deeply into some of these problems.

6. They are also beginning to be concerned with miniaturization problems and wanted to know where we are going after WALNUT. I explained that we are exploring microfiche systems and intend to examine some new hardware which had recently come on the market which

SECRET

SECRET

-3-

appeared to offer both digital and microimage storage. They expressed great interest in being advised of any evaluations of equipment we might make, either in the microfilm field or in new input devices which are of real concern to them.

7. I had a clear impression that ACKERMANN regretted his promotion and would have preferred to remain in his field for another couple of years.

cc: CI/MRQ ✓
E/G/CIL

SECRET