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## **SAMUEL HALPER FILES, 1974-76**

### **Collection Type**

White House Office Files

### **Extent**

1.2 linear feet (ca. 2,400 pages)

### **Record Type**

Textual

### **Access**

Open. Some items are temporarily restricted under terms of the donor's deed of gift, a copy of which is available on request, or under National Archives and Records Administration general restrictions (36 CFR 1256).

## **Copyright**

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## **Processed by**

Paul Conway, November 1981

## **Biography**

Samuel Halper

August 18, 1916 - Born in New York, New York

1933-37 - Student, University of Kansas

1937-38 - Instructor, Kansas State Teachers College

1938-39, 1941-42, and 1955-56 - Student, Columbia University

1939-47 - Research writer, New York Post

1947-50 - Writer, Newsweek magazine

1950-75 - Reporter, foreign correspondent, editor Time magazine

1967-68 - Consultant to Governor of Puerto Rico, Roberto Sanchez Vilella

1975-76 - Consultant on Puerto Rico, Domestic Council

### **Scope and Content Note**

Samuel Halper, a journalist with lengthy ties to Puerto Rico, served as a consultant to the Domestic Council from May 1975 to April 1976, responsible for reviewing the proposed Compact of Permanent Union between Puerto Rico and the United States and making recommendations to the President. The Halper files consist of a small number of documents he accumulated as well as a working file inherited from Domestic Council staffers Norm Ross and James Falk in their capacities as President Ford's representatives to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Puerto Rico. The advisory group drafted the Compact.

The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Puerto Rico was established on September 27, 1973, with members appointed by the President and the Governor of Puerto Rico; an executive staff; and one representative of the President. Actually the second such group resulting from a 1967 plebiscite on Puerto Rican status, its purpose was to "inquire into the extent to which the statutory laws and administrative regulations of the United States should apply in Puerto Rico." [1] In October 1975 the Ad Hoc Group submitted its report to President Ford, including a proposed Compact of Permanent Union. If approved by Congress, the Compact would have fundamentally revised legislation in force since 1952 governing US-Puerto Rican relations, granting most of the privileges of statehood with few of the responsibilities. By law the President had one year to study the report and suggest a course of action to the Congress. President Ford asked his Cabinet to review the proposal and the Domestic Council to prepare a decision package. Puerto Rican Resident Commissioner Jaime Benitez overstepped this process, however, when he submitted the proposed Compact to Congress for ratification. Hearings were held in the Senate in December 1975 and in the House in 1976. As one of his last acts as President, Ford decided to reject the Ad Hoc Group's recommendations and

propose instead statehood for Puerto Rico. Ultimately no action was taken on the Compact.

The Domestic Council was instrumental in establishing and funding the second Ad Hoc Group; the President's representative on the Group was a Domestic Council staff member. Richard Fairbanks, the first representative, served during the Nixon administration. In April 1974 Norm Ross succeeded him; he in turn passed responsibility to James Falk in June 1975. Falk served until the Group's work was completed and then turned his files over to Halper.

As the President's representative to the Ad Hoc Group, Ross and Falk reported to the Domestic Council, and hence to the President, on the Group's deliberations, corresponded with Puerto Rican and US officials, and conveyed the President's position on matters pertinent to the Group's work. Halper, who for 28 years had covered Puerto Rican politics for Newsweek and Time magazines, was retained on a part time basis by the Domestic Council to advise the Council on the Group's progress in final deliberations; and then to review the proposed Compact, pull together Cabinet recommendations, and prepare a decision package for the President. He left the Domestic Council in April 1976. Domestic Council staffers Richard Parsons and Dean Overman continued review of Puerto Rican issues within the White House until the end of the Ford administration.

The Halper files are essentially working files of background information, correspondence, memoranda, reports and near print items compiled by Norm Ross, augmented by James Falk, and turned over to Halper in December 1975, when Falk completed his duties with the Ad Hoc Group. Much of the Ross material now included in the file was retrieved from the White House Central Files, where it had been retired in bulk. Halper added few materials to this file, apparently sending much of the product of his labor directly to James Cannon for information, transmittal, or other appropriate action.

These files largely document the final deliberations of the Ad Hoc Group in 1975, when it worked to prepare its report to the President; the report itself; and initial White House circulation for comment of the report to the Cabinet in 1975 and early 1976, prior to President Ford's consideration. Also included are correspondence, reports and other materials on the Puerto Rican economy and politics only

marginally related to the Ad Hoc Group and its report. The Halper files do not document administration reevaluation of the report in 1976, the preparation of options papers, nor the President's subsequent decision to recommend statehood for Puerto Rico.

#### Related Materials (November 1981)

A number of Domestic Council staff members had substantive responsibility for Puerto Rican issues during the Ford administration. The files of James Cannon, Executive Director of the Domestic Council, contain reports, correspondence and other materials from Ross, Falk, Halper and others. Domestic Council staffer Richard Parsons assumed responsibility in 1976 for compiling a decision package for the President. He was assisted by Dawn Bennett-Alexander. Near the end of the Ford administration responsibilities in this area passed to Dean Overman, who retained Parson's files and added some items to them.

White House Central Files category FG 367 contains pertinent correspondence, memoranda and reports retired individually for filing. Cross-references also indicate materials located in other areas of the Central Files.

The permanent files of the Ad Hoc Group on Puerto Rico (ca. 3 linear feet) are part of National Archives Record Group 220 currently in Washington D.C. Finding aids for these records are available upon request.

#### **Last Modified Date**

2025-03-07

#### **Puerto Rico Subject File, 1974-76.**

(Boxes 1-3, 1.2 linear feet)

Memoranda, correspondence, reports, clippings, and miscellaneous background information on the final deliberations of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Puerto Rico; its final report to the President; and Ford administration review of the Group's proposed Compact of Permanent Union. The materials, essentially working files, were compiled by succeeding representatives to the Ad Hoc Group from the Domestic Council, then passed to the Council's consultant on Puerto Rico following the Group's termination.

Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.

**Box 1 - Puerto Rico Subject File**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Title</b>
OPEN	Ad Hoc Advisory Group - Background Information
OPEN	Ad Hoc Advisory Group - Clippings (1)-(3)
OPEN	Ad Hoc Advisory Group - Correspondence
OPEN	Ad Hoc Advisory Group - Meetings (1)-(2)
OPEN	Ad Hoc Advisory Group - Report to the President (1)-(3)

**Box 2 - Puerto Rico Subject File**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Title</b>
OPEN	Ad Hoc Advisory Group - Statements by Puerto Rican Officials
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Draft and Supporting Material (1)-(2)
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Executive Agency Comments (1)-(3)
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Minimum Wage Standards: Section 17 (1)

**Box 3 - Puerto Rico Subject File**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Title</b>
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Minimum Wage Standards: Section 17 (2)-(3)
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Proposals of the Puerto Rican Members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group (1)-(2)
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Provisions
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Puerto Rican Printing
OPEN	Compact of Permanent Union - Testimony Before House Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs
OPEN	Puerto Rico - Budget and Finance
OPEN	Puerto Rico - General (1)-(5)
OPEN	State of the Commonwealth Address - Governor Rafael Hernandez Colon