

July 26, 1968
**US Embassy Bonn Telegram 14922 to State
Department, 'Eppler on NPT'**

Citation:

"US Embassy Bonn Telegram 14922 to State Department, 'Eppler on NPT'", July 26, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files 1967-1969, DEF 18-6. Contributed to NPIHP by Bill Burr.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/177809>

Summary:

Erhard Eppler, a Social Democratic member of the Bundestag, gave embassy staffers his perspective on the political status of the NPT. Highly critical of Kiesinger for his "hold-back tactics" on signing and ratification, Eppler believed that the longer the delay the more likely that the treaty "would become entangled in election campaign politics."

Credits:

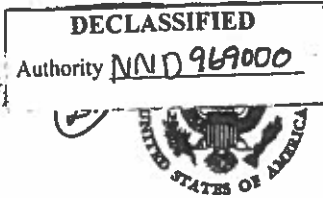
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ACTION ACDA 16

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7/26/68
14922
Bonn

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NW 30431
By DM/AL, NARA, Date 8/14/13

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 FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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STATE DEPT. DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW
 Retain class'n Change/classify to _____
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 after _____

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 14922

EO 12958, 25X (1)
 FPC/HDR by EDC Date: 2/14/96
 Withdrawal No. DEF 18 Box 35-4

SUBJ: EPPLER ON NPT

REPRODUCED BY NSA

1. DURING TALKS WITH EMB OFFS JULY 24 SPD BUNDESTAG DEPUTY EPPLER SHARPLY CRITICIZED CHANCELLOR KIESINGER'S TACTICS ON NPT. EPPLER SAID IT IMCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT KIESINGER SHOULD SEE ANY ADVANTAGE FOR HIM AS CHANCELLOR OR FOR CDU IN HIS CURRENT HOLD-BACK TACTIC ON RATIFICATION. THESE TACTICS WOULD ONLY MAKE IT HARDER FOR HIM IN THE LONG RUN. EPPLER ASSERTED DISARMAMENT COMMISSIONER SCHNIPPENKOETTER HAD IN THE PAST FED ADVERSE ARGUMENTS ON THE TREATY TO POLITICAL AND PRESS SOURCES. EVEN THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE MORE INTERESTED IN STIRRING UP INTERNAL GERMAN ARGUMENTS OVER THE TREATY THAN IN FURTHERING GERMAN AGREEMENT IN SUPPORT OF RATIFICATION.

2. IN EPPLER'S VIEW, THE LONGER THE DELAY ON RATIFICATION, THE MORE LIKELY IT WAS THAT THE ISSUE WOULD BECOME ENTANGLED IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN POLITICS, WITH THE INEVITABLE RESULT THAT PUBLIC INTEREST WOULD BE STIRRED TO A MUCH GREATER EXTENT THAN HITHERTO. AN INCREASE IN SENTIMENT AGAINST THE TREATY, FOLLOWING THE STANDARD OPPOSITIONAL ARGUMENTS CITING NATIONAL INTEREST, WOULD HAVE TO BE EXPECTED; INDEED, STRAUSS AND THE CDU RIGHT WING APPEARED TO BE MOTIVATED IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO

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NPT LARGELY BY THE DESIRE TO OUTMANEUVER THE NPD IN COMPETITION FOR RIGHT-WING VOTES. EPPLER WAS ESPECIALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE LINE STRAUSS IS NOW TAKING REGARDING GERMAN ACTION ON THE NPT, THAT THE GERMANS SHOULD DO NOTHING BECAUSE THE NEXT US ADMINISTRATION MIGHT WELL REVERSE ITS POSITION ON NPT. EPPLER SAID THIS ARGUMENT WAS HAVING CONSIDERABLE IMPACT AND THAT HE HAD NOTHING TO COUNTER IT WITH. WE REPLIED THAT IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE WAS IMPOSSIBLE IN LIGHT OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PROCESS BUT THAT WE BELIEVED, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT BIPARTISAN SUPPORT IN SENATE HEARINGS, THAT NEXT ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTINUE PRESENT POLICY.

3. EPPLER SAID THAT AS THE RESULT OF KIESINGER'S HANGING BACK TACTIC WITH THE TREATY, THE SPD HAD BEEN LEFT ALONE TO CARRY ON WITH THE BURDEN OF TRYING TO BRING FRG POLICY ON NPT ONTO A RATIONAL COURSE, WHERE GERMANY WOULD GRACEFULLY ACCEPT THE UNAVOIDABLE AND PERHAPS GAIN SOME GOOD WILL RATHER THAN BEING SLOWLY DRAGGED INTO ACCEPTANCE, LENDING SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO SUSPECT THE WEST GERMANS OF STALLING BECAUSE THEY WANT TO HAVE ATOMIC WEAPONS. BY SIGNING THE NPT, SAID EPPLER, THE FRG WOULD BE MAKING AN IMPORTANT ADVANCE TOWARD ITS OBJECTIVES IN EASTERN EUROPE; SUCCESS IN THIS EFFORT WOULD REPRESENT STRONGEST ACTION THAT THE WEST GERMANS COULD NOW TAKE AGAINST SOVIET EXPLOITATION OF ANTI-GERMAN FEELING. IF GERMANY DELAYED IN SIGNING AND THE WHOLE ISSUE DRAGGED ON, THE FRG'S "SECOND CLASS" STATUS COULD BECOME EVEN MORE APPARENT SINCE OTHER NUCLEAR-CAPABLE COUNTRIES MIGHT PROCEED TO DEVELOP WEAPONS.

4. EPPLER URGED US TO BE AS HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE IN CONNECTION WITH THE EURATOM-IAEA NEGOTIATIONS. HE BELIEVED IT WAS THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE TO SETTLE THIS ISSUE WITHIN A PERIOD OF MONTHS, SO THE TREATY COULD BE RATIFIED BY THE PRESENT BUNDESTAG AND WOULD NOT BECOME AN ISSUE IN THE 1969 FEDERAL ELECTIONS. HE THOUGHT THAT OTHERWISE TREATY OPPONENTS, ESPECIALLY STRAUSS, WOULD CAMPAIGN ON THE BASIS OF THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE TREATY.

5. THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE OFFICIAL SPD WEEKLY "VORWAERTS" (JULY 25) CARRIES A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE BY EPPLER MAKING MANY OF THE SAME POINTS. HE ASSERTS INTER ALIA THAT THE USSR OBVIOUSLY HOPES FOR A FRG SIGNATURE ON NPT TO COME AS LATE AND AS RELUCTANTLY AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT THE "HOBGOBLIN OF REVANCHISM" WHICH REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO THE COHESIVENESS OF THE

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EASTERN BLOC, SHOULD SUFFER NO DAMAGE. HE ARGUES FURTHER THAT THE FRG HAS NOTHING TO LOSE IN THE SPHERE OF MILITARY POWER OR IN TERMS OF NATIONAL PRESTIGE FROM PUTTING ITS SIGNATURE TO THE TREATY, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND WOULD BENEFIT EVENTUALLY AS A POTENTIAL SUPPLIER TO THE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD OF POWER FROM NUCLEAR ENERGY SOURCES. LODGE

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