

September 5, 1968

**Wilhelm Grewe, 'Consequences of a potential
German non-signing of the NP Treaty'**

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Summary:

Chancellor Kiesinger asked the Foreign Office after the 'Czech crisis' of late August 1968 to examine the "political consequences" of a "hypothetical case of a German non-signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty." The request was forwarded by Director-General Hans Ruethe to Wilhelm Grewe, Helmut Allardt, Ambassador to the Soviet Union, and Schnippenkötter who attended the UN Conference of Non-Nuclear Weapon States in Geneva.

In Grewe's judgment, it would be a "benefit" for the NATO alliance, "likely even a condition of her future viability," if the NPT were to fail. And "if it was the missing German signature which brought the NPT down," that would lead to "a severe stress test." But as a NATO member state Germany could "get through" it if the government was determined to "operate with effective arguments" and showed "strength"

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S e c r e t

RE: Consequences of a potential German non-signing of the NP Treaty

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1. Regarding the comments requested by an instruction, I am operating on the assumption that it is in first place the task of the bilateral embassies to assess the consequences of a German non-signing of the NP Treaty on the policy of those governments they are accredited with. Therefore I restrain myself to analyze the consequences of a German non-signing on the [NATO] alliance as such. Impacts on the policy of member states and their governments I can only include in assessments as far as the former is part of discussions within the NATO Council.

2. There is hardly another political issue of relevance that would have caused such deep division within the Council as the one of the NP Treaty: two nuclear member states[2] are advocating it constantly and relentlessly and pushed all considerations to national interests of individual alliance partners and to the future cohesion of the alliance aside. The erosion of the alliance with this project got accepted, as Foster had already openly expressed two years ago in his essay in "Foreign Affairs"[3]. The third nuclear alliance partner, France, not only refused to sign, but rejected the treaty in general as discriminatory, hypocritical, and irrelevant for peace and disarmament. At the same time France took care not to support those reluctant to sign.

Some of the smaller alliance partners incapable of becoming civilian or military nuclear powers refrained from participating in the discussion. With the exception of Portugal, which is rejecting the treaty because of resentments against the United Nations, they will sign the treaty - some with less enthusiasm (Turkey, Greece), some with more (Scandinavians, Benelux[4], Canada).

The primarily as 'emerging powers' concerned alliance partners of Germany and Italy were the only ones that were for a longer period reluctant vis-a-vis the treaty and stalled; then they aimed at modifications until they finally accepted the pressure exerted upon them.

As long as the Italian and German resistance had continued, it was supported by the [NATO] General Secretary[5] who does consider the treaty as damaging to the alliance.

The solidarity of Euratom[6] partners turned out to be insufficient to achieve a joint political position of the six[7] (or also just the five[8]) members.

3. Given these circumstances, the protracted negotiation of the treaty was a process that greatly strained political solidarity within the alliance. Consultations were suspended at decisive turning points of the negotiations (especially in December of 1966) and were substituted by Soviet-American fait accomplis. On critical issues the United States placed more importance to Soviet desires than to the concerns of their allies.

The idea that it would be desirable and important to bind Germany beyond its 1954 renunciation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons through a comprehensive international treaty, gained over time among many alliance partners more and more weight (especially noticeable, for instance, in case of the Netherlands).

4. The assessment of the damage that has already occurred does not answer the question about the future consequences of a German non-signing. It does constitute a factor, however, that cannot be disregarded in answering this question.

5. When assessing the consequences of a potential non-signing, two different options of developments have to be considered:

- It is possible that the German non-signing will doom the treaty. The Soviet Union has clearly indicated multiple times that it is only interested in a NP Treaty signed by Germany. Non-nuclear emerging powers (as e.g. Sweden) have also stated that the German signature is essential to their own position. The German non-signing could thus lead to many of those signing not to ratify in the end.

-It is also possible, however, that the German non-signing will not stop the process of ratification and the treaty will become legally binding for a large majority of today's states.

6. If the treaty fails, it would be a win for the alliance, probably even the precondition for its future viability. NATO and NP Treaty are incompatible in the long run. This argument is supported by everything what for many years (1960-1965) was said from the American side about the need for a "nuclear sharing", and what was then suddenly hushed with astonishing consequence and uniformity. An agreement negotiated with the potential adversary of the [NATO] alliance, which is directed against your own alliance partners (as the Soviets themselves say in all openness that this is about a treaty targeting Germany), has to lead to the political and moral undermining of the alliance.

The nuclear crippling of the alliance, which is, despite all assurances to the contrary, an inevitable result of the NP Treaty, will sooner or later also ruin its military power of deterrence.

On the day when a nuclear anti-missile system will become for the European NATO partners technologically feasible and financially bearable, the NP Treaty will show itself to be an intolerable shackle.

7. If it will be the missing German signature that is dooming the NP Treaty, we obviously subject ourselves to a severe stress test. If, however, a tactically favorable moment is chosen - the disillusionment after the Prague events is offering itself as such -, and when one does operate with effective arguments, we will survive this stress test within the confines of the alliance.

The following effective arguments for NATO are especially relevant: [German] nuclear weapons renunciation was already stated in 1954; criticism of the NP Treaty is thus not related to a strive for national nuclear weapons; the treaty is creating Soviet pretexts for interference in internal German affairs (enhanced by the Soviet interpretation of Articles 53 and 107 of the UN Charta) regarding questions of the European unification and nuclear issues internal to the alliance; insufficient guarantees against Soviet threats and blackmail, as there was no success to synchronize the duration of the NP Treaty and North Atlantic Treaty.

Not much can be changed anyhow with regard to the intensity of communist propaganda, with or without a German signature. Our policy of detente has not slowed the anti-German campaign but accelerated it.

8. If there will be, despite a missing German signature, ratification by a sufficient number of signature states and the treaty becomes binding for them, the consequences are even harder to foresee.

I do not have to examine the consequences for the acquisition of nuclear fuel. For the alliance it is decisive that the United States will in this case pursue its nuclear policy within the framework of the treaty, and many detrimental results to the nuclear organization of the alliance will occur (in part they have already occurred since the signature states have already anticipated in their policies the conclusion of the NP Treaty).

Our abstinence in terms of possessing nuclear weapons is in this case completely guaranteed (what does improve our psychological situation); our waiving of production does complement the American renunciation of proliferation.

It would have to be examined to what degree it would be possible and useful in this case to voluntarily accept combined controls by IAEA^[9] and Euratom outside of the NP Treaty.

9. If the NP Treaty will come into force, the pressure on us to sign will be persistent for years. Then it will show whether we can withstand this pressure or whether the price for non-signing will become too high. Here internal German developments (NPD^[10] problem) might play a role.

A reassessment of our position is still possible then.

10. In any case, there is no compelling reason to sign now or in the very near future. The Prague events are providing us with a new reflection period. Though the presidential elections in America do not offer us an argument to be used in public in order to postpone the signing, the situation could, however, change with a Republican victory. One can only hope (maybe one can also contribute towards it) that the Republican senators will not predetermine the liberty to decide of their own presidential candidate by ratifying [the NP Treaty] soon.

[signed] Grewe^[11]

^[1] Permanent Delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the North Atlantic Council (NATO).

^[2] U.S. and Great Britain.

^[3] William C. Foster, Risks of Nuclear Proliferation: New Directions in Arms Control and Disarmament, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 43, No. 4 (July 1965), pp. 587-601. William C. Foster (1897-1984), 1961-1969 Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense 1951-1953.

^[4] Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg.

^[5] Manlio Brosio (1897-1980), Italian diplomat, Secretary General of NATO between 1964 and 1971.

^[6] European Atomic Energy Community established on 25 March 1957.

^[7] Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands.

^[8] Without France.

^[9] International Atomic Energy Agency.

^[10] National-Democratic Party of Germany, an openly neo-nationalistic/neo-Nazi party polling around 5 percent with chances to win parliamentary seats in upcoming 1969 West German federal elections.

^[11] Wilhelm Georg Grewe (1911-2000) was a German diplomat. West German Ambassador to the United States (1958-1962) and Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council (NATO) in Paris and Brussels (1962-1971).