

October 27, 1965

'The Danger from a Psychotic Germany,' Appendix to 'The Case for a Strong American Lead to Establish a Collective Nuclear System That Would Help the Western World from Repeating an Old Mistake,' attached to George W. Ball to Secretary Rusk, et al.

Citation:

"'The Danger from a Psychotic Germany,' Appendix to 'The Case for a Strong American Lead to Establish a Collective Nuclear System That Would Help the Western World from Repeating an Old Mistake,' attached to George W. Ball to Secretary Rusk, et al.", October 27, 1965, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NARA, RG 59, Executive Secretariat Briefing Books, 1958-1976, box 10, Book # 115, The Case for An American Lead to Establish a Collective Nuclear System, 1965. Contributed to NPIHP by Bill Burr.
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Summary:

Under Secretary George W. Ball signed off on a fervent expression of his apprehensions about the direction of West German policy should the West fail to establish an MLF leading Bonn to feel "rejection and discrimination." Ball saw three bad possibilities: a national nuclear program, a French-German nuclear deal, or "the real danger, a German political adventure."

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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TAB A

THE DANGERS FROM A PSYCHOTIC GERMANYA. The Danger of a German National Capability

I do not contend--as some have argued--that a Germany denied nuclear equality would be likely to build a national nuclear system on German soil in violation of its Western European Union commitment. Nor do I think it likely that it would try to build such a system in a foreign country such as Egypt, even though that would not contravene the letter of its commitment.

Any surreptitious undertaking would obviously be difficult. Maintaining secrecy would be a formidable problem and testing extremely awkward. And the fact that disclosure would bring down the wrath both of the Western powers and the Soviet Union should induce a large element of caution.

Nevertheless--although unlikely--such an effort (either open or surreptitious) cannot be ruled out if Germany becomes very unhappy with the treatment by her partners and feels isolated from the club of Western nuclear nations.

Certainly the secret development of a limited nuclear capability is technically feasible. There is some reason to suspect that the Israeli Government may be quietly moving in this direction and the same may be true of India. West Germany is better equipped for the task than either of those countries. It is one of the greatest reservoirs of technical competence. It has spent over \$800 million on nuclear research.

Moreover there is no assurance that the Western nations will--over the years--maintain the will and purpose to insist that a restive Germany be kept under special nuclear restrictions. They did not have the sustained will to prevent German rearmament in the 1930s. And already one hears in Europe (even from de Gaulle) and in the United States (even from Congressman Holifield) the resigned comment that sooner or later Germany will inevitably have a nuclear capability of its own.

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B. The Danger of a Franco-German Bomb

Another possibility frequently mentioned is that a disgruntled Germany might join with France to develop a joint nuclear capability.

Some serious German politicians and industrialists believe this. They think it possible that Germany might over time be able to buy a progressively larger share in a Franco-German nuclear weapons system and ultimately dominate such a system.

I believe this quite unrealistic. General de Gaulle has made it perfectly clear that the force de frappe is an exclusively French national system. It would lose its meaning as a symbol of French supremacy if France were to share it in any significant way with Western Germany.

But the Germans might try it. And we can be sure that if such a scheme did succeed it would be bad for us.

C. The Real Danger - A German Political Adventure

Yet the most serious danger, in my view, is something quite different--that the Germans would be led by a feeling of rejection and discrimination to embark on a romantic but destructive political adventure with the East.

The reality of this danger stems from the following analysis:

1. If we should permit a new generation of Germans to develop a sense of isolation and discrimination, the impact of de Gaulle's obsessive nationalism would

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almost certainly lead them to turn--as their fathers did--toward a revived German nationalism.

German nationalism in the 1930s expressed itself in the desire for lebensraum--or, in other words, expansion and aggression.

The new nationalism would inevitably be concentrated on the re-creation of the German nation--with the willingness to pay a very high price to attain it.

2. The most serious danger is that a compelling drive for reunification--if animated by disenchantment with the West--would lead to a deal with the Soviet Union--since the USSR is the only nation in position to confer the gift of reunification.

There is no ambiguity about this. The Germans know that at the end of the road the Russians must be dealt with. The question has always been when and on what terms.

3. Reunification need hold no terrors for us so long as Germany is

--tied closely to the West

--feels a part of the community of Western nations

--and does not feel that the Western Powers are submitting it to any special and continued discrimination.

Under those circumstances any arrangement ultimately arrived at by a Soviet Union grown gradually more tractable should be on terms acceptable to the Western nations and presumably agreed to by them.

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But a frustrated and neurotic Germany is quite capable of making a deal with the Soviet Union on terms catastrophic to the West. The Germans did it at Rapallo in 1922 and again in 1939. They can do it again.

One cannot count on ideological differences to prevent such a deal any more than they did at Rapallo. The major Ruhr industrialists have grandiose ideas about the economic opportunities in the East. There is a considerable sentiment in Ruhr industrial circles (not merely Beitz and Krupp) as well as in the German Government (including Erhard) that the key to reunification may lie in a vast undertaking by Germany to industrialize the Soviet Union.

4. Yet a deal by a Germany disenchanted with the West would be catastrophic for us. It would mean a major shift in the power balance. It would demoralize the West. It would gravely challenge our leadership. It could be the prelude to a new and greater struggle.

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