

May 28, 1962

**Memorandum by Edward Biegel, Bureau of Western
European Affairs, 'WE Answers to the Ball
Questionnaire'**

Citation:

"Memorandum by Edward Biegel, Bureau of Western European Affairs, 'WE Answers to the Ball Questionnaire'", May 28, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives, Record Group 59, Bureau of European Affairs. NATO and Atlantic Politico-Military Affairs, Records Relating to NATO, 1959-1966, box 7, Ref 12 Nuclear France 1962. Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #2.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110244>

Summary:

Edward Biegel of the Bureau of Western European Affairs answers Undersecretary Ball's questions on French nuclear ambitions and Western European collective security. He makes the arguments against nuclear sharing, and also mentions the fact that a Baltimore Sun article likely alerted the Soviets to the fact that the US deployed tactical nuclear weapons on the German front.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AND 989 733By TJ NARA Date 8/15/00

BPM/RF

D. ...

WE answers to the Ball Questionnaire

1. The real reason we do not share with the French is that we do not trust them—as we do the British. We are fearful they will trigger us into a nuclear war, since they, unlike the British, follow a foreign policy of their own making. This difference is manifested by our complaints set forth in SECTO 24. The German demands flow from their own self-interests; they are anxious not to be left alone on the front line and from this anxiety flows their interest in nuclear weapons. The Germans would be delighted if the French Army would move forward but Messmer has recently reiterated if the French have no intention of exposing their own forces further. Sharing with France would strengthen the hand of those Germans wanting their own nuclear weapons; the Germans would not automatically want them because the French receive information from us but because of the special German need.
2. The French will not go to the Germans because the Germans do not have nuclear information to give them. It is supposed they might go to the Germans for money or technicians but there is no reason to believe the French will face any financial or technical bottlenecks that will require them to seek German assistance. Is there something in German centrifuge research that would be useful to France? Maybe the ABC or Farley know the answer to this. When he spoke to Dulles in 1958 it was clear de Gaulle had no intention of bringing the Germans into the nuclear picture. Conceivably he would do so if he broadened the concept of a French weapon into a European weapon system. He is not thinking along these lines but he might if the British were to suggest it to him. This would be a basic change in British policy and is not expected to happen—our policy is to discourage such a development by the UK.
3. The British could enter both the Common Market and EURATOM without ever talking about nuclear policy with France—both parties agreeing to go their own ways. There would thus be three independent nuclear deterrents developed within NATO, ours, the British and the French.
4. If we were to advocate an independent European deterrent—advocate it, that is, to the British, to get them to cooperate with the French, there is good reason to believe the French could be persuaded—or persuade themselves—to think along those lines. This means a veto-free European deterrent which would benefit from US information, much of which the UK already has.
5. What "control" has our cooperation with the British given us regarding UK use? Our obligation to consult is unilateral, not reciprocal. The basic answer is of course that when we and the British differ, the British align themselves with us. When we and the French differ, the French go their own way.
6. It was dead in 1958.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989 733By TJ NARA Date 8/15/00

-2-

7. This is really the same question as 1, and has the same answer.
8. This is of course the key question. As Messmer said to McNamara at Athens, the French endorse the forward strategy and "there will be many hard discussions in SHAPE" on this. Since there are not likely to be other forces contributed to a forward forward strategy, the new look, the US can simply rock along for the remainder of the First Term with the German forces that are in the line along with the 7th Army. The Baltimore Sun had an interesting headline story on Saturday confirming that nuclear warheads for tactical weapons are located up front and that the Germans are mostly concerned about procedures to get them into the hands of the troops in a hurry. The Soviet Embassy undoubtedly cabled the full text to Moscow.

cc. EUR - Mr. Kohler
RPM - Mr. Fessenden
M - Mr. Owen

EUR: WE: EJ Beigel
5-28-62