

Wirsing, Giseler
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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: March 23, 1972

SUBJECT: Prospects of German Ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties (> Eastern Treaties) (E) ✓

PARTICIPANTS: Giseler Wirsing, Editor of Deutsche Zeitung
Russell Fessenden, Deputy Assistant Secretary, EUR
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White House-Mr Sonnenfeldt

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Wirsing, the editor of Deutsche Zeitung, had two main points: (1) He was deeply concerned about the situation coming to a head in Germany regarding the treaties. (2) He felt that new elections in June of this year were a definite possibility.

Wirsing was genuinely concerned about the situation developing on the treaties in Germany. He said that he personally is opposed to the treaties, not so much to the treaties themselves but to the "Bahr paper" which he feels seals permanently the division of Germany. On the other hand, Wirsing was deeply concerned about the worldwide effects of Bundestag rejection of the treaties. He said a great deal depends on how the FDP does in the Baden-Wuerttemberg elections. However, he felt there was as of now at least an even chance that the Bundestag will turn down the treaties. Brandt only has 246 sure votes. He needs a minimum of 249. Oddly enough there are at least three CDU deputies who will vote for the Polish treaty but not the Moscow treaty. Since it comes up for a separate vote, the Polish treaty could technically be ratified and the Moscow treaty not.

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Wirsing said he was not one of those who irresponsibly say that there will be no Soviet reaction to Bundestag rejection of the treaties. He thought there probably will be a very strong Soviet reaction and that it will be directed primarily against Berlin. Wirsing said that the FRG may find itself in a position which most Germans regard as unthinkable -- as the "odd man out" of Europe, playing the role which deGaulle played during his last ten years. German rejection of the treaties will make the FRG highly unpopular not only in Eastern Europe, but in most of Western Europe as well. He thought the U.S. and probably British reactions would be less negative, but in France, Scandinavia and elsewhere there will be a very heavy negative reaction to German rejection.

Again saying that the Baden-Wuerttemberg elections will have a major influence, Wirsing thought that new elections are probably the most likely outcome. These elections would take place in late June, assuming that the negative Bundestag vote on the treaties occurs on May 3 and 4. Wirsing said he had spoken to Barzel only recently and Barzel had been negative about coming into power via a constructive vote of no-confidence. He would prefer new elections. Wirsing also thought that the Soviets would not react immediately if there were to be new elections. They would wait to see the outcome. If the CDU won the late June elections, then a very strong Soviet reaction could be expected. Wirsing said he pointed all this out even though he personally is against the treaties.

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