

July 2, 1968

**Letter, Minister Franz J. Strauß to Federal Minister
of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Willy Brandt**

Citation:

"Letter, Minister Franz J. Strauß to Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Willy Brandt", July 2, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PA AA, B 1, Bd. 378. Contributed by Andreas Lutsch and translated by Bernd Shaefer.

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Summary:

Strauß asked the Foreign Minister to comment on a translated "note on problems" of the NPT which he claimed to have received from "French friends". The note argued that the ambiguous wording of NPT articles I and II concerning indirect transfer of control of nuclear weapons would pose problems. The Soviet Union might politically exploit it over time to "put Germany on a path towards neutrality." The document also alluded to a concern that the Soviet Union might later argue that non-nuclear weapon states' (NNWS) participation in "nuclear NATO" (such as allowing nuclear weapons deployments in their territories) violated their NPT commitments.

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

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Dr. h.c.[\[1\]](#) FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS[\[2\]](#)
Federal Minister of Finance
53 BONN
July 2, 1968

To the
Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Willy Brandt[\[3\]](#)

53 Bonn

Dear Mr. Colleague!

Attached I am sending to your deliberate attention a copy of a note on problems of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which I have received from French friends. I would be grateful if you could comment on the questions raised in the note.

With friendly greetings
[signed Strauss]

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Translation (Spr.-D. BKP)

The Non-Proliferation Treaty

1) Behind the current apparent understanding between Russia and America there does lie a deep-rooted misunderstanding. It does concern the interpretation of the words 'indirect control'. This term is used in Articles I and II of the treaty. The latter is concerned with the actions which the nuclear powers are forbidding for themselves, and what actions are forbidden to demand or accept on the side of the non-nuclear states.

The Americans are interpreting this term in a narrow sense. They understand it as something what could indirectly move a state into a situation to sovereignly possess nuclear weapons.

The Soviets however - and this is the crux - interpret this term with an additional meaning. They want to ban anything what indirectly might lead to the possession of nuclear weapons.

This is also why they are making no secret of their intention to object to any alliance between a nuclear state and a non-nuclear state. Because they are advocating for the position that in this case the non-nuclear state itself would indirectly be able to use the nuclear weapons of its ally. A strict application of this principle could even direct Germany on the path to neutrality.

For the same reason, the Soviets will consider any nuclear research for peaceful purposes as prohibited, if the results of this research could contribute to the development of nuclear explosive material. However, its is basically impossible to distinguish between research for peaceful purposes and that for military purposes. In one case as in the other the research will be basically the same.

This is why the Soviets will be able to intervene at any time to prevent even the research for peaceful purposes.

In their desire to see this treaty signed - and for internal political reasons for that matter - the Americans avoid at all costs any discussion on this misunderstanding. They are of the opinion that this might be discussed later. Since the Russians will be able to argue, and rightly so, that they now hold an instrument in hands to act in Europe in accordance with their understanding of the objective of this treaty.

Through their own interpretation of Articles I and II the Russians will be able to intervene therefore in the alliance policy of the European powers as well as in the internal scientific research of these states. They will be able to do this even easier as Article III will enable them to conduct a personal monitoring of this research under the umbrella of the Vienna IEAO^[4].

2) Because Article III has not been fundamentally changed. The Americans have in fact made a fundamental concession, since the ultimate effective control has been very well assigned to the Vienna International Atomic Energy Agency. The Russians in contrast have made only a formal concession.

3) The Russians make no secret of their intention to thoroughly exploit the opportunities of this treaty in order to separate West Germany from the Atlantic bloc and to dominate it. With this treaty, they will have a legal instrument justifying their interventions. For this reason, all of Western Europe will be in danger.

However, this is not yet all: Since in order not to leave the impression they would apply a double standard, the Russians will be forced to act the same as unrelenting towards other countries. This means that the scientific research in the eminently important area of the nuclear industry will depend in all signatory states of this treaty on the good will of Soviet Russia.

4) The countries, who are urged to sign treaty, have therefore an interest to demand before the signature that the Russians will put down in writing the definition of their interpretation of Articles I and II and in particular of the term "indirect control". The efforts have to be focused on this. Both the Russian as well as the American interpretation must be clarified.

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^[2] Franz Josef Strauß (1915-1988). West German Minister of Nuclear Issues (1955/56), Defense (1956-1962), and Finances (1966-1969).

^[3] Willy Brandt (1913-1992). Governing Mayor of West Berlin 1957-1966, West German Minister of Foreign Affairs 1966-1969 and Federal Chancellor from 1969 to 1974.

^[4] International Atomic Energy Agency.