

June 13, 1953
Cable 5321, from Ambassador Reber in Bonn to US State, Washington

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Summary:

Cable from Samuel Reber to U.S. Department of State Outlining U.S. Perspectives on Four-Power Talks

Original Language:

English

Contents:

- English Transcription

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department on State

ACTION COPY

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Rec'd: June 13, 1953

5:08 p.m.

From: Bonn

To: Secretary of State

No: 5321, June 13, 5 p.m. (SECTION 1 of 2)

SENT DEPARTMENT 5321 REPEATED INFORMATION LONDON 917 PARIS 1279 MOSCOW UNNUMBERED.

Churchill's speech, reports of impending Bermuda conference, Semenov [Semyonov] appointment, indications of truce in Korea and recent events in Soviet Zone have given powerful impetus in Federal Republic to speculation and controversy over four-power talks. As we see it, subject has three main aspects in Western Germany at present: (A) Potential effect of talks or prospect of talks on general election campaign, (B) Divergencies in estimating Soviet readiness at this time to make real concessions on German unity; and (C) as contrasted with election pronouncements on subject, question of what type of settlement would actually be acceptable to various political groups.

(A) SPD, which was privately pessimistic about its election prospects up to two months ago, hopes to find long-sought campaign issue in subject of four-power conferences, presenting itself as only party in Federal Republic which is really working for German unity. Not (repeat not) at all essential to SPD that conference actually commences, as long as possibility exists and SPD can build appeal to voters around it, maintaining that only SPD is really in favor conference, only SPD has concrete ideas for conference, and SPD best qualified party represent German interests if conference held. As appears from our telegram reporting Ollenhauer-Conant conference (pouched unnumbered Department, London, Paris, Moscow, 6 June 1953) and from later Wehner interview with press, SPD apparently prepared go irresponsible extremes in advocating talks, even to extent of accepting further reparations for Soviets and principles of Potsdam as framework for talks. While disclaiming neutralism, party appears prepared to consider system of guarantees and non-aggression pacts for unified Germany to be underwritten by U.N. through U.N. membership for united Germany, which would not (repeat not) be permitted to make other alliances. Ollenhauer and other SPD leaders have also frequently mentioned international position of Sweden as possibility for united Germany. It is true that Chancellor outmaneuvered SPD in 10 June Bundestag foreign policy debate by placing party in position where it could not (repeat not) refuse to vote for Bundestag resolution containing declaration that united Germany must have freedom to ally itself with whatever country it pleases. We do not (repeat not) believe, however, that this limitation on SPD utilization of unity theme would be maintained for long if SPD saw good election reason ignore its own vote. Difficult at this time predict public impact current party line if SPD decides to push it as explicitly in campaign as it now does in private. Given present atmosphere in Federal Republic, no (repeat no) political party can afford public opposition to principle of four-power meeting which would treat unity problem, regardless of what they think of prospects for success. Even Chancellor and CDU are shifting to half-hearted public support for talks. Privately, Chancellor and coalition leaders remain categorically opposed to talks prior to Federal Republic elections because they fear that SPD's exploitation of unity issue during talks would greatly reduce popular appreciation for Chancellor's foreign policy achievements, create confused emotional atmosphere in Federal Republic, and tempt coalition politicians to try to outdo SPD in pushing for unity at any cost. Given domestic political situation and apparent popular support for talks in France and Britain, Chancellor

hopes to get U.S. support in his aim of delaying talks.

Reber