

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION

(Outside System)

December 19, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt **6**

SUBJECT: The Malaise in German-US Relations and the Ehmke Visit

In my memorandum of December 16, 1970 (Log 24424 - Tab A), I commented on various aspects of the current situation and also forwarded a CIA report on Bahr's views (Tab B).

Following are additional comments which you should bear in mind in your forthcoming conversation, of which State incidentally is fully aware down to the working level. Moreover, you should be aware that Ehmke asked to see Helms and on learning that he was away asked to see Ray Cline instead. There is also some reason to believe that David Binder, New York Times correspondent in Bonn is aware of the visit. He has written an article concerning German perceptions of US attitudes which was to have appeared in today's Times but did not. It may appear in the Times on Sunday. The Chancellor's office has denied any responsibility for the article. For Bahr's and Ehmke's suggestion regarding treatment of the Binder article, should it appear, see Tab C).

COMMENTS ON THE SITUATION

1. The first question, as a starting point, is: To what extent does the CIA report reflect the personal views of Bahr himself or does he reflect the views of the Chancellor and of the government as a whole? The answer is complex. Bahr's power position is neither to be over-estimated nor under-estimated. In a word, the bitter attitudes reflected in the CIA report are in fact, albeit in somewhat exaggerated form, those of the center of the Brandt government and must be taken very seriously into account in our future relations with the German government.

2. Bahr is certainly the Chancellor's closest adviser, and the very intensity of his personality give him enhanced influence. His single-minded obsession with the Ostpolitik gives him a driving force within the German

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government. Ehmke pretty much across the board follows his lead on Ostpolitik, although there is a certain amount of jockeying between them in the effort to get close to Brandt.

3. There are, however, many factors at work within the government which tend to moderate Bahr's all-out drive on the Ostpolitik:

A. First, within the SPD itself, there is strong opposition. There are emerging two major camps. On the one side are Wehner, Ehmke, Bahr, and Eppler. On the other are many powerful figures: Schmidt, Leber, Schiller, Wienand, Arendt, and Schmitt-Vockenhausen. There is going on right now a major fight between these two groups over how to handle the bitter issue of the young socialists, which came to a head at the recent Juso Conference in Bremen. But behind the Juso issue are basic differences between the two groups on the Ostpolitik, with the second group being for a more conservative line and a slower pace. Behind the dispute over the Ostpolitik, in turn, is the even bigger issue of a personal power struggle over the future leadership of the SPD. Schmidt and his followers, I judge, are beginning to throw their weight around more aggressively in recent weeks.

B. A second important drag is the FDP and more specifically, Genscher, the real strong man of the Party. It is he who bulldozed through the Berlin Junktim for both the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. Recently Genscher went out of his way to tell one of the Embassy people "Don't let anybody in the government press you for precipitate haste or too much compromise on the Berlin negotiations." Genscher does this out of FDP political survival reasons: he wants to keep the traditional more conservative-minded FDP voters in the Party fold. He regards the FDP election successes in Hesse and Bavaria as vindication of his policy.

C. A third brake on the Ostpolitik within the government, curiously enough, is Schuetz and the Berlin SPD. He has now made it very clear that he does not want haste or softness in the Berlin negotiations. Obviously, he has the March elections in Berlin very much in mind.

D. To digress somewhat, I should point out that the internal SPD struggle over the JUSOs will be intensified by the fact that the JUSO is driving middle-class voters away from the SPD. Most dramatically, the solidly SPD election district number 39 in Frankfurt which was held by Voigt, head of the JUSOs, was lost by him to a totally unknown CDU housewife. This is the first time since 1946 that the district was not carried by the SPD in a Landtag election. Election statistics generally, in Hesse and Bavaria, reflect a drift

from the SPD to both the FDP and the CDU of middle class voters, largely because of the disaffection over the extremism of the JUSOs though also for economic reasons. In a national election this drift could well redound to the advantage of the CDU rather than the FDP. This situation adds to the pressures on the SPD to use nationalism as an offsetting appeal to middle class voters and thus adds a further driving factor to Ostpolitik. As you are aware, Ostpolitik for many SPD leaders, is not merely a policy of normalization and reconciliation but a route to achieve the moral equivalent of reunification together with increased German influence in Eastern Europe.

E. All of this is now further compounded by the events in Poland. Without going into detail and making this excessively long, it is clear that, assuming an "optimal outcome," i. e., that Gomulka and Co. or, at any rate, the Poles themselves will get things under control, the Soviets are bound to be even more cautious about letting the Germans have the dividends they expect from the treaties. Ulbricht's position in Eastern councils is bound to have been strengthened. (Other outcomes have even more far-reaching and potentially dangerous implications.) As a result, opposition to Ostpolitik in Germany is bound to rise, though with what effect on Brandt and the SPD is a complex question. One positive effect, to which we should be extremely alert, is that the SPD leaders will be driven westward despite themselves. Needless to say, this would be a development that we should welcome (as will the West Europeans) although it is one that the Germans themselves should bring about. Of course, the SPD may tear itself apart in the process and the coalition may be even less capable of governing than it already is. We must therefore also anticipate a further embitterment of German politics. (Beyond all this the Polish events may well have the beneficial effect of slowing the "race to Moscow" in Western Europe generally.

4. This is a tense time in Bonn, with knives flashing all over and a constant danger that we will be sucked into the middle. Brandt has to reconcile these conflicting forces within his own government -- to say nothing of the additional brake imposed by the CDU-CSU opposition. It might seem that the "go-slow" forces on the Ostpolitik within the government now strengthened by Polish developments would be so powerful that they would carry the day completely. But this is to underestimate the strength of Bahr and Ehmke, unless they too are disheartened or thwarted by Poland. They both sit right next to Brandt in the Chancellor's office and spend long evenings with him. Their influence is very important and will continue to be so. The fact is that unless we can improve our relations with these two men, our relations with the Brandt government as a whole are bound to be plagued with mistrust and trouble.

5. The problem we face is to overcome whole series of prejudices to which Bahr, Ehmke, and Wehner are prone. Most are all too accurately reflected in the CIA report. They include the following:

A. The US favors the CDU over the SPD through years of contact with the former. The steady stream of CDU visitors to Washington over recent months is cited as proof of this.

B. Republicans are constitutionally incapable of understanding Social Democrats.

C. There are differences within the Administration on the Ostpolitik and Berlin, with State (Secretary Rogers and Marty) being much more understanding, and with the White House, including particularly you, being much more negative. Secretary Laird and Shakespeare are also identified in their minds as enemies of the Ostpolitik and the Brandt government. (Laird was until recently singled out as being particularly unsympathetic. Schmidt, who is a conservative on Ostpolitik, complained bitterly about Laird's position on Ostpolitik at the Ottawa NPG meeting. However, Schmidt indicated subsequently that Laird was much more "understanding" at the Brussels NATO Ministerial.)

D. Another belief in the Chancellor's office is that the US is over-obsessed with the Soviet worldwide threat, reading more into this than the facts call for. It is claimed that we take a rigid position in the Berlin talks because of spill-over from our tough and pessimistic approach to Middle East, Vietnam, Cuba, etc. Bahr has obviously in his talks with Falin been taken in by the Soviet line in this respect.

EHMKE VISIT

At Tab D is a CIA report on the Ehmke visit. 

Ehmke has meanwhile told Fessenden that the German Government press office has the following contingency guidance should the Ehmke visit evoke public notice. He has asked that we wollow the same line

"Ehmke had planned to meet with Kissinger during Ehmke's visit to Washington in early October. However, this meeting couldnot take place because Kissinger had to go to the Mediterranean with the President. At the time they missed each other in October, Ehmke and Kissinger had agreed to get together in the near future. Ehmke's present trip to see Kissinger is for that purpose."

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Ehmke told Fessenden that the press would be very skeptical about this but he nevertheless hoped both governments would rigidly stick to this line.

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I presume you know what you want to say to Ehmke. I would merely note that, like it or not, as long as Brandt is in power Bahr and Ehmke will be powerful figures and we have no alternative to working with them. While my foregoing comments on the German situation suggest the possibility of a government crisis next year that will result in the end of SPD rule, this is wholly speculative. The CDU has yet to resolve its leadership crisis; and the Basic Law makes new elections, before 1973, an extremely difficult thing to pull off. The reasonable expectation therefore is that Brandt will stay in power for three more years.

1. Among particular points to make with Ehmke would be

-- The CDU visitors to Washington were all self-invited guests, or at any rate not invited by us.

-- Acheson's statements to Chalmers Roberts were his own (witness the things he said on matters other than Ostpolitik!); the President has made his own views known directly to Chancellor Brandt both orally and in writing and our basic philosophy was laid out in the Report to Congress last February 18.

-- The Germans would make a terrible mistake if they tried to go around the US Government to take their case on Ostpolitik to the US people via TV, the press and opposition Senators (Muskie); the American people at large are not too much interested in the subject and to the extent they are, the Germans can expect little sympathy. (Ehmke himself has been a prime user of the American press in Bonn and, as you know, put on quite an act when he was hter during the President's Mediterranean trip.)

-- Our attitude on Ostpolitik is not a matter of "opposition" or "support." Our concern has been that the implications are fully analyzed and understood and that potential adverse effects are recognized in advance and steps taken to deal with them.

2. Ehmke may well elicit your reaction to Brandt's proposal to give a "conference-like character" to the Berlin talks. You should say that

-- we are studying this carefully;

- the issue is not form but substance; if a new format could really produce progress on substance we will certainly not stand in the way;

-- we will be consulting further with the French, British and Germans on the Chancellor's suggestion;

-- the President will of course reply to the Chancellor's letter.

3. You should bear in mind these positive points: (a) Schmidt has been constructive on NATO issues, (b) relations with the Germans with respect to our military presence there have become distinctly easier since the advent of the new Government, and (c) whatever Ostpolitik has done to complicate life and may yet do to bring about disaster, the Germans have exerted much effort to strengthening the EEC and to facilitate British entry. Dahrendorf's flippant tongue aside, the Germans have not been the most difficult for us on economic issues. We are about to enter offset talks (after the USC gets up a position); all indications are that the Germans will try to be reasonable. Finally, the President's decision on European force levels provides a solid base from which to operate.

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When all is said and one, our basic goal must remain, as NSDM 91 pointed out, to anchor the FRG firmly in the Western camp. This is the goal we must keep in view always and even more now when Ostpolitik, turbulence in Eastern Europe, the obnoxiousness of the Ehmkes and Bahrs, the danger of spiraling protectionism and the recrudescence of German romanticism in the guise of the SPD all threaten to bring down what has been constructed in the way of a viable structure in Europe and between Europe and ourselves.

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Finally, we need order in our own house. I call to your attention my memorandum of December 18, Log 24418 (Tab E) seeking your approval, and if you choose to seek it, the President's for a NSSM that would address both the immediate and the longer term issues.

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INFORMATION

December 16, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Ambassador Pauls, December 17, 1970

This looks like it will be a messy affair. The following rounds up for you material (with Tabs) bearing on the situation.

1. The Germans are obviously at least confused and probably deeply troubled by their reading of our attitude on Ostpolitik. They have long been aware of differences between the White House and the State Department (and indeed people like Pauls, who have their own doubts about the Ostpolitik, have been diligent in reporting home whatever adverse comment from here they could pick up). It now seems, however, that the SPD people around Brandt are convinced that we are trying to torpedo the Ostpolitik.

-- The Germans noted Acheson's comments after the December meeting with the President and the Springer Press was quick to pick them up as being in effect White House comments which we did not want to make ourselves. (See Tab A)

-- The SPD is deeply suspicious about Strauss' two trips to the US. Strauss himself has publicly let it be known that he found Secretary Laird and the President are very critical of the consequences of Ostpolitik (Tab A).

-- In addition, Bahr has told [REDACTED] that you broke your 'agreement' with him that we would keep the government informed of any dealings we have with the CDU (Tab B). (The German Minister telephoned me just before the last Rockefeller dinner to inquire about whether Strauss would be seeing you, and also asked about Strauss' earlier visit and his talk at that time with the President. I did not say anything beyond that I understood that Strauss might be coming to the dinner but that I knew nothing of any separate appointments.) Bahr claims that, in contrast to the US, the Poles first inquired of the Government how the recent Borzel visit should be handled and the Soviets did likewise in connection with Schroeder's forthcoming visit to the USSR. He commented that 'two can play at the game' of not keeping agreements and referred to the possible visit of Senator Muskie to Bonn. (Tab B)

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-- Bahr and other Germans are also claiming that we are dragging our feet on Berlin, asserting that Hillenbrand had consented to an agreed Western line when he was in Bonn in November (and Rogers at the NATO meeting) but we subsequently went it alone along a harder tack. According to Bahr, the deal had been firmness on aims but flexibility on tactics. (As we reported on December 11 (Tab C) Ken Rush did in fact hold to a firm line, as he was justified in doing in view of the phony concessions offered by the Soviets.)

-- Bahr and other Germans argue that we live in a fool's paradise if we think we can hold out on Berlin since time is on the side of the Soviets and the Berlin population wants a settlement. (Bahr has made the same statement to the Soviets.) It is worth recalling that it was Bahr who invented the theory that the pressure for a Berlin settlement would be on the Soviets because they would want so avidly to obtain ratification of the Moscow treaty.

-- The Soviets, needless to say, are feeding Bahr's and Brandt's (induced chiefly by Bahr) view of US footdragging. Soviet Ambassador Tsarapkin, in a talk with Brandt on December 15 (see below) charged that the US above all is responsible for the slow progress on Berlin, whereas the Soviets wanted agreement as soon as possible.

-- Bahr also claims that we in effect double-crossed the government on the matter of the recent CDU/CSU fraktion meeting in Berlin. He asserts there was agreement that it would be discouraged but that we then became passive while only the French made an effort to stop the meeting. (In fact, the Western agreement was that there would be no agreement) <sup>mtg.</sup> around the time of an Ambassadorial meeting. Since the next Ambassadorial meeting was two weeks off we did not interpose objections to the CDU/CSU meeting; the French did.) Curiously enough, in this connection, both Brandt and President Heinemann visited Berlin within a few days of the last Ambassadorial meeting.

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2. All of this puts in a somewhat peculiar light a letter to the President from Brandt which was delivered to us today. (Text and unofficial German Embassy translation are at Tab D.) (Brandt had told Rush some time ago he was sending it and Rush so reported to State. Sahm today also summarized the contents to Fessenden. The original has therefore been sent to State for translation and recommendations.)



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Brandt's letter is basically a report on his Warsaw talks but it includes his expression of gratitude for our support for the FRG's policy, especially in regard to Poland. (On the record, we have of course given such support through the voice of the Secretary of State, publicly and privately earlier this month at NATO in Brussels, in the last two NATO ministerial communiques, in his Congressional testimony of December 10 attacking Acheson and supporting Ostpolitik and in the Department's press release the following day doing likewise.) More than that, Brandt tells the President that he was able to assure the Poles that there was absolutely no difference between the Western powers as regards Berlin negotiations.

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3. At the same time, Brandt's letter asserts that the last round of talks on Berlin produced a number of "points of contact" (Anknuempfungspunkte). Consequently, Brandt proposes consideration of the idea of giving the Berlin talks a "conference-like character" in the New Year. Bahr [redacted] advanced the idea of raising the level to Hillenbrand and his friend Falin. Sahm, in summarizing the Brandt letter to Fessenden (Tab E) left open the question of level but explained that Brandt wanted an intensification so that the talks would be in "continuous session" rather than periodic one-day affairs. The reasoning, according to Sahm, apart from generally speeding up the negotiations is that if there are no intervals the GDR would be less able to work "negatively on the Soviets."

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Bahr also mentions having a more or less permanent four-power session at the higher level in Berlin with simultaneous talks there between Bahr and the East German, Kohl. The point is that the four powers would work on an umbrella agreement while the Germans would deal with the details of access, the whole to be combined in a package that would imply ultimate Soviet responsibility for access without formally derogating from GDR sovereignty. (As we pointed out on December 11, Tab C, the general format of an agreement has been agreed with the Soviets. The crucial sticking points are on the substance of the agreement.)

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4. Brandt has sent similar letters to Heath and Pompidou and has also written more briefly to Kosygin. In delivering the letter to Kosygin to Soviet Ambassador Tsarapkin, Brandt said he had never made a juridical link between the Berlin talks and the treaty ratification but had emphasized the "importance" of a positive Berlin settlement for ratification. Brandt

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also expressed the conviction that Berlin would be settled early next year and ratification would then follow quickly (Tab F).

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 Bahr spoke of the possibility of visiting the US again, of Brandt's coming here and of either one of them doing a Face the Nation program. We had previously sent you a memo on a tentative Brandt visit to Indianapolis in connection with CCMS in May (Tab G). You approved a telegram instructing Embassy Bonn to welcome such a visit and holding out hope for a meeting with the President. This has been conveyed to the Germans, who expressed satisfaction.

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Perhaps after your talk with Pauls we could have another brief chat to see where we go from here internally within the Government. In view of past experience a new NSSM seems fruitless. At the very least, State should be called upon to provide the President with an assessment of the Berlin talks and with proposed ways, with pros and cons, of proceeding. NSDM 91, November 6, page 3, para 5 provides the basis for this (Tab H).

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SUBJECT: Comments of State Secretary Bahr Concerning the Quadripartite Talks and FRG-US Relations

SOURCE :

[REDACTED] It is judged that Bahr intended the substance of his comments to reach the U.S. government. [REDACTED]

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1. Chancellery State Secretary Egon Bahr stated that during the week of 14 December Chancellor Willy Brandt plans to write letters to President Nixon, President Pompidou, Prime Minister Heath, and Chairman Kosygin. To the Western leaders Brandt plans to report on his recent talks in Poland. In addition, at least in his letter to President Nixon, Brandt is thinking of voicing his concern over the progress of the Berlin quadripartite talks. According to Bahr, Brandt has not firmed up his views on the latter topic: currently, he is considering a variety of ways of getting his views on Ostpolitik across to the U.S. government. The alternatives he is considering include the sending of another FRG emissary to the President and Henry Kissinger or, possibly, the proposal of a personal meeting with the President in the late spring or early summer of 1971.

2. Bahr expressed his concern, which he said was shared by Chancellor Brandt, over the manner in which the Four-Power talks are being conducted. Bahr said that at the 17-18 November consultations with Assistant Secretary Hillenbrand and at the NATO ministerial meeting complete agreement had been achieved on the line to be taken by the Western Allies in the Berlin talks. Brandt and Bahr understood that the Western Powers would be firm concerning the aims they wished to reach but flexible as far as negotiation tactics were concerned. However, both Brandt and Bahr had the impression that, at the 10 December ambassadors meeting in Berlin the Americans had done the opposite; they had been tough with respect to tactics but had done nothing to move the negotiations toward agreed aims. In light of this, Brandt and Bahr have concluded that the Americans have decided to break with the line laid down during the 17-18 November consultations and at the NATO ministerial meeting.

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3. Bahr stated that Brandt and he believe that a significant part of the U.S. leadership fails to understand the western position in Berlin. "Some people in Washington" accuse the FRG of being too soft in its stand on Berlin in the mistaken belief that the West still has a strong position there; in fact, its position is very weak. It is not American soldiers, Bahr commented, who operate the green and red lights on the Berlin autobahn. The Berlin problem, Bahr added, is like a paper boat on a large international ocean. If you weigh this boat down with too many demands, it is bound to sink. Furthermore, the Berlin population is tired of the constant harassment on the autobahn and wants a definitive agreement on access. The Soviets are therefore convinced that time is on their side. The longer they wait, the less they will have to pay and the more demands they will be able to make in return for an access agreement. The present delaying tactics of the Allies are being executed at the expense of the West Germans and West Berliners.

4. Bahr said that he and Brandt had given much thought as to how the impasse in the Berlin talks might be resolved. In their view, it might be easier to reach agreement if the talks were moved from the ambassadorial to the under-secretary level. Bahr and Brandt are thinking in terms of having continuous negotiations conducted by U.S. Assistant Secretary Hillenbrand, Soviet Diplomat V. M. Falin, Chief of the Third European Directorate of the Foreign Ministry, and their British and French counterparts. This procedure could eliminate some of the difficulties which Ambassador Abrasimov is creating in the discussions, since Abrasimov is under the influence of Ulbricht. In addition, Falin, whose influence is considerable, would insure that positions reached by the Four Powers in these talks would be accepted by the Soviet leadership. Parallel to the quadripartite talks, Bahr and GDR State Secretary Michael Kohl could conduct negotiations under the aegis of the Four Powers. In this way, all of the responsible representatives would be together in one city, meeting simultaneously, and a Berlin settlement could be reached expeditiously.

5. Bahr stated that he had talked with Falin during the latter's visit to East Berlin in connection with the 2 December Warsaw Pact conference. (Bahr added that this meeting was known only to the three Western ambassadors, Brandt, Foreign Minister Scheel, Minister Horst Ehmke, and Foreign Office State Secretary Paul Frank.) Bahr said that, at this meeting, Falin had pointed out to Bahr that the USSR believed there were differences in the attitudes of the three Western Allies on negotiation, with the Americans clearly presenting the hardest line. Falin added that the USSR was trying to decide on the best way to signal to the Americans that the USSR was willing to bring the

Berlin talks to a successful conclusion. Falin added that there was a definite limit to the concessions the Soviets were willing to make. The USSR had considered extending the harassment tactics on the autobahn beyond the period of the CDU/CSU Fraktion meeting in Berlin -- an approach which was strongly applauded by Ulbricht. However, in the end the Soviets decided not to exacerbate the friction with the Americans over Berlin.

6. Bahr said that Brandt and he were concerned about the nature of U.S. relations with the CDU/CSU leadership. In this connection, Bahr cited the discussions preceding the holding of the CDU/CSU Fraktion meeting in Berlin. Bahr stated that in these discussions Fraktion Chairman Barzel had told Brandt that through his "very close contacts to the American Embassy" he had learned that the latter had no objection to the CDU/CSU Berlin meeting. Bahr added that this situation made it impossible for Brandt to persuade Barzel to cancel the meeting, even though it was Brandt's understanding that the Western Allies did not favor the holding of such a meeting at the present time; this had been made particularly clear by the French Embassy. Bahr said that it appeared that the U.S. had deviated from the previously agreed position and had encouraged Barzel to hold the Fraktion meeting.

7. Bahr said that Brandt also had been irritated by the visit of CSU Chairman Strauss to the U.S. "to confer with Kissinger." Bahr stated that the FRG had not been informed of the nature of these talks, which was contrary to the "agreement" made by Kissinger with Bahr to the effect that he would keep the FRG government informed of his discussions with Opposition leaders. Bahr commented that "two can play at this game," adding that Senator Muskie recently had approached the Brandt government and had indicated he wished information concerning the FRG Ostpolitik as background to discussing this topic with the leadership of the Democratic Party. Bahr added that the FRG had not yet responded to the Senator's request. Bahr went on to contrast the U.S. attitude with that shown by Poland and the Soviet Union; in the case of Barzel's trip to Warsaw, the Polish government had asked the FRG how it wished to have the visit handled, while the Soviet government had made a similar inquiry in the case of CDU/CSU Deputy Chairman Gerhard Schroeder's forthcoming visit to the USSR.

8. Bahr commented that he had learned that Brandt would be Time magazine's Man of the Year for 1970, and said that there had been some discussion as to whether Brandt might use this honor as an excuse for a visit to the United States. It was also being considered whether Brandt or Bahr might appear on the U.S. "Face the Nation" television program.

9. Bahr stated that Brandt planned to spend Christmas in Berlin with his family, then leave for a vacation in Kenya until 16 January. Minister Ehmke would also be on vacation from 13 December to 10 January. Bahr added that, during this period, he and Vice-Chancellor Scheel would be "in charge" of the government of the FRG.