

'Eastern European Conference in Warsaw' from the Luxemburger Wort (25 June 1948)

Caption: On 25 June 1948, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort reports on a meeting in Warsaw between the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union and of the countries of Eastern Europe, during which decisions concerning the future of defeated Germany, taken on 1 June 1948 in London by the Western Allies, are harshly criticised.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 25.06.1948, n° 177; 101e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Ostkonzferenz in Warschau", p. 1.

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Eastern European Conference in Warsaw

The Foreign Ministers of Russia and its satellite states hold talks on the German question

Warsaw, 25 June

It was unexpectedly reported by Radio Moscow on Wednesday that a Foreign Ministers' Conference 'called by the governments of Poland and the Soviet Union' had begun in Warsaw's Wilanów Palace. The Ministers taking part in the conference were V. M. Molotov, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the USSR, Enver Hoxha, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Albania, Vasil Kolarov, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Vladimír Clementis, Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Stanoje Simic, Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Zygmunt Modzelewski, Polish Foreign Minister, Ana Pauker, Rumanian Foreign Minister, and Erik Molnár, Hungarian Foreign Minister. Radio Moscow also reported that Palmiro Togliatti and Jacques Duclos, the Communist leaders of Italy and France respectively, were in attendance.

Modzelewski, the Polish Foreign Minister, chaired Wednesday's opening session. Yesterday's session was chaired by Molotov, and the concluding session, which took place early this morning, was chaired by the Rumanian Communist leader, Ana Pauker.

The Warsaw Foreign Ministers' Conference is being seen as a continuation of the Prague talks between the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, who regarded the London Conference on Germany as a violation of the Potsdam and Yalta Agreements. These Agreements made it clear that the countries which had suffered from Nazi aggression would be consulted regarding any decisions involving Germany. Modzelewski gave the official Polish view of the German question, declaring that the recommendations of the Six Powers made in London would bring about another 'aggressive onslaught' and arguing that the West's plan for the rebuilding of Germany was contrary to the commitments given by the USA.

According to informed sources, all eight Foreign Ministers expressed similar views at the Wilanów Conference, each calling for decisive counter action. They were also seeking to continue opposition to American involvement in Europe and 'American imperialism'.

The official Communiqué

According to Radio Moscow, the salient issues dealt with in the Communiqué are as follows:

'On 7 June, a Communiqué was published at the conclusion of the London Conference on Germany, at which the USA, Britain and France were present. The Communiqué referred to the decisions made at the secret talks on the political and economic problems of Germany, including an alteration to Germany's western borders. Press reports have revealed, however, that certain decisions taken at the conference were not disclosed.

'The decisions reached in London were not aimed at reducing the potential for the renewal of German military aggression. Instead, they referred to the transformation of the eastern sector of Germany and, above all, the heavy industrial region of the Ruhr, into an arsenal for the restoration of German military power, so that West Germany may be used as a base for the military and strategic aims of the USA and Britain.

'Unilateral currency reforms have been carried out in the western zones of Germany, in spite of the obvious need for unified currency reform throughout the country, as proposed by the Soviet Government. From the economic point of view, this action creates a gulf between the western zones and the rest of Germany and will create a multitude of fresh problems, obstructing the restoration of economic order and the re-establishment of the German national economy.

‘The policies being pursued by the occupying powers in the western zones of Germany are encouraging the reappearance of revisionist elements in Germany. In particular, the German revisionist campaign is seeking to alter the course of the Oder-Neisse Line between Poland and Germany, an inviolable frontier serving as a guarantee of peace.

‘Under these circumstances, the introduction of any measures to counter revisionist activity is one of the most important prerequisites for establishing peace and security for the peoples of Europe. Control by the four nations will have to be maintained for an agreed period in order to prevent the German armaments industry and German militarism being restored.

‘The inclusion of the economies of the western zones in the Marshall Plan means splitting Europe as a whole into two camps; this is to be carried out in accordance with the Marshall Plan. The placing of the Ruhr’s heavy industry in the hands of the German people and the setting up of controls on production and supply of the region by the four nations — the Soviet Union, the USA, Britain and France — guaranteeing development of the industry of the Ruhr for exclusively peaceful ends, would be the only solution to the Ruhr question in the interests of peace and security for all the countries of Europe.’

The Communiqué then states that the governments participating at the Warsaw Conference do not recognise the agreements concluded in London together with the Benelux countries and that they also regard action concerning the following issues to be a matter of priority:

- ‘1. An agreement to be concluded between Britain, the Soviet Union, France and the USA on the implementation of measures designed to bring about the de-militarisation of Germany.
2. The implementation of four-power control over the heavy industry of the Ruhr region for an agreed period with the aim of developing peaceful production and preventing the renewal of German military power.
3. The creation of a provisional, democratic, all-German government, to consist of representatives of the democratic parties and organisations in Germany and with the express purpose of insuring against any renewal of German aggression, in accordance with the agreement concluded between the governments of Britain, the Soviet Union, France and the USA.
4. The conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, in accordance with the Potsdam decisions, in order to allow, one year after the conclusion of that agreement, the withdrawal from Germany of the troops of the four occupying powers.
5. The devising of measures to bring about the fulfilment of Germany’s obligations to pay reparations to those countries that suffered under German aggression.’

There is, therefore, no reference in the Communiqué to the possibility that the Soviet Union, supported by her Eastern European neighbours, will create a separate government in East Germany as a countermeasure to the recommendations of the Six Powers concerning specific arrangements in West Germany. However, we have learnt from a reliable source that Russia and the other Eastern European states are ready to take whatever action may be necessary in order to resolve the German question and therefore have plans ready for the setting up of an East German state.