

Letter from the Luxembourg Ambassador to Moscow to Pierre Grégoire (Moscow, 23 October 1968)

Caption: On 23 October 1968, the Luxembourg Ambassador to Moscow sends a letter to the Luxembourg Foreign Minister, Pierre Grégoire, in which he refers to the risks of a return to the Cold War.

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Luxembourg Embassy, Moscow

No 9. 1/18-68

Moscow, 23 October 1968

The Ambassador of Luxembourg to Moscow
to
His Excellency Mr Pierre Grégoire
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Luxembourg

Re: Possible resumption of the policy of East-West détente

I have the honour of drawing your attention to the following comments concerning the possible resumption of the policy of East-West détente:

1. At yesterday's meeting of NATO Minister Counsellors, one speaker said those Western governments that had made normalisation of relations with the Soviet Union conditional on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia should bear in mind that the two countries had recently concluded an agreement on the stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. Another Minister Counsellor replied that the decision should depend on whether it was felt that the Czech Government had willingly consented to the agreement or not. However, the majority view was that the position adopted by the Western governments would be determined by political considerations.

2. In the customary speech delivered by the new British Ambassador the day before yesterday on presenting his credentials, he said normalisation of relations between Britain and the Soviet Union would take some time. In private talks following the official ceremony, President Podgorny was sharply critical of Britain's attitude to the Czechoslovakian crisis, which he said was a bilateral issue concerning the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia only. Other countries had no right to interfere. Relations with the United Kingdom could continue as normal, provided it dropped its foolish position on Czechoslovakia. It should be noted that the Soviet press has recently been attacking Britain in rather strong terms, accusing it of intervening in the Czechoslovakian crisis on instructions from NATO. The UK Ambassador's general impression from the meeting was that the Soviet Union was fully prepared, for its part, to pursue previously excellent relations between the two countries, but that it depended on the attitude of the British. A clever way of turning the tables!

3. The Yugoslav Ambassador, Mr Vidic, believes that détente has to be pursued at all costs despite the invasion of Czechoslovakia and despite the very dangerous 'Socialist commonwealth' doctrine. A return to the Cold War must definitely be avoided. But how?

The Soviet Union will have to abandon its new doctrine, and Mr Vidic has not lost all hope that it will do so. It could be induced to change its attitude under the pressure of isolation and wide condemnation by world opinion.

But this will also require a certain amount of goodwill and effort on the part of the West:

Mr Vidic recognises NATO's need to maintain and even upgrade its defence capability, but he believes that any new arms race triggered by the West would only be detrimental.

The Cold War could break out again if the West resumed its former virulent attacks on Communist doctrine. Any attack on the foundations of the Soviet regime, which after 50 years is solidly established, would be

seen here as interference in the country's internal affairs, and could only provoke dangerous reactions.

Finally, the Yugoslav Ambassador, while noting that his country now has excellent relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, believes that the latter should pursue a policy of moderation and not give the impression of seeking to interfere in the internal affairs of the Eastern-bloc countries.