

Brief by the Foreign Office on disarmament issues (23 February 1957)

Caption: On 23 February 1957, in preparation for the forthcoming Western European Union (WEU) Ministerial Meeting, due to be held on 26–27 February in London, the Foreign Office prepares a list of briefs for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Selwyn Lloyd. The note indicates that there should be substantive discussion on Item III (Disarmament) and describes the main topics that will be on the order of business. The focus is on the negotiations held in the United Nations Disarmament Sub-Committee and the position that the United Kingdom should adopt.

Source: The National Archives of the UK (TNA). Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966. WESTERN ORGANISATIONS (WU): Western European Union - WEU (WUW). WEU ministerial meetings. 01/01/1957-31/12/1957, FO 371/131147 (Former Reference Dep: File 1078 (pp 24 to end)).

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W.E.U. Ministerial Meeting

Agenda Item III: DISARMAMENT

Report to Western European Union Council

A short Anglo-French paper describing the latest position in the Disarmament discussions has been circulated to the Council (copy attached). The French have informed us that they would prefer the Secretary of State to introduce the paper. They would then support him.

2. United States Proposals.

The paper takes a sympathetic view of the latest United States proposals. We are not able to go into detail, however, because

- (i) President Eisenhower has not yet approved the compromise formula about the date for stopping nuclear production, on which our own support depends; and
- (ii) we have consequently not yet discussed the American proposals with the French and Canadians. The French asked us to water down our references to these proposals and to tactics in the Sub-Committee for this reason.

3. European Reductions.

As regards the Soviet proposals for reducing forces in Europe it will be noted that the paper states in paragraph 3 that this is not an appropriate subject for discussion in the Disarmament Sub-Committee. They are really security questions and as such will doubtless be discussed in Four-Power Working Party on German Reunification and European Security in Washington.

4. Nuclear Test Explosions.

As regards nuclear test explosions, we are at present reviewing our own position and are then due to have further discussions with the United States Government. In these circumstances the less that is said about future policy the better.

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We can, however, probably undertake to support the Canadian-Norwegian-Japanese proposal for advance registration of tests which has been referred by the General Assembly to the Sub-Committee for study.

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5. Conclusion

The Council might be invited to give general support to the line the Western Powers intend to take in the Sub-Committee as described in the Anglo-French paper. There is not much more that the Council can usefully do at present.