Summary of discussions at the meeting of the WEU Permanent Council (London, 14 February 1969)

Caption: On 14 February 1969, the Permanent Council of Western European Union (WEU) meets in London — in the absence of France, which refuses to participate — to discuss Middle East issues. The French Foreign Ministry disagreed with the British proposal to convene a specific meeting on this topic After the WEU Council meeting on 14 February, convened by the United Kingdom but opposed by the French Government, France decides to boycott all future WEU Council meetings. It believes that the London meeting was held in breach of the statutory rules governing the WEU Council and that the British initiative is an attempt to institutionalise the holding of regular consultations between the Six and the United Kingdom on foreign policy issues.

Source: The National Archives of the UK (TNA). Foreign Office, Eastern Department and successors: Registered Files (E and NE Series). MIDDLE EAST. Discussions. Western European Union (WEU) ministerial meeting. 01/01/1969-31/12/1969, FCO 17/727 (Former Reference Dep: NE 2/29).

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/summary_of_discussions_at_the_meeting_of_the_weu_permanent_council_london_14_february_1969-en-41174c4b-057f-48e1-babc-fd8d8938d777.html

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Western European Union
Meeting of the Permanent Council
14 February, 1969.

The Middle East

Following is a summary of discussions.

1. All delegations welcomed the U.K. initiative in summoning this meeting. Speaking first the Secretary of State described the principles in accordance with which he thought action should now proceed: the Four Permanent Members of the Security Council working in the context of the United Nations, encouraging Dr. Jarring and being prepared in due course to make suggestions on substance to him. He emphasised that a settlement would have to be agreed by the parties and outlined our ideas on a message of support for Dr. Jarring.

2. The Secretary of State then put the following seven questions to the delegates and discussion proceeded on these questions:

   1. Is it agreed that Security Council Resolution No. 242 offers a sufficient basis for achieving a settlement?
   2. Is it agreed that the search for a settlement should be within a United Nations' framework on the basis of Resolution 242?
   3. In what form of international document or documents should the final settlement be embodied?
   4. Will there be a requirement once more for a United Nations' force? If so, what role is foreseen for this force?
   5. Would the members of the Western European Union be willing to contribute, among other countries, to such a force?
   6. How can the four Permanent Members best help towards a settlement and what aspects of the problem would it be most appropriate for them to discuss?
   7. What is the best way to approach a solution to the refugee question?

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3. Mr. Van Roijen (Netherlands) agreed that the United Nations was the proper forum and Resolution 242 provided a sufficient basis. A Peace Treaty or treaties would be required at the end of any negotiations. But the Four should try to reach a common interpretation of the Resolution. Mr. Clasen (Luxembourg) agreed with the Secretary of State's exposition of the way in which we should proceed. He regretted the absence of the French. Signor Perrone Capano (Italy) stressed Italy's interest, as a Mediterranean country, in a settlement. He too regretted the absence of the French. He agreed with the British proposition regarding progress through the United Nations and thought Resolution 242 offered the best chance of a just and durable peace. Dr. Jarring should be encouraged to renew his mission, more strongly supported by the Security Council. An effort should be made to clarify the respective positions of the Arabs and Israelis and to remove any stumbling block in the way of interpretation of the Resolution. The parties should be offered a 'calendar' of implementation, following a consensus of the Four on the meaning of the Resolution. The authority of the United Nations was at stake and the present opportunity might be the last for the solution of this problem. It was necessary to act before the Arab guerillas made progress by Arab Governments impossible. Some form of United Nations force would be required to supervise implementation of a settlement. Care should be taken to avoid introducing East/West tension into the area. Contingents from either Western or Eastern European countries should therefore not be invited to participate in a United Nations force. Mr. Wickert (Federal Republic of Germany) welcomed the Secretary of State's proposals and his "realistic and constructive approach". Progress should be on the basis of four power talks with a United Nations framework. An imposed settlement would not last. An urgent solution to the Palestine refugee problem was required. Without this the refugees would become a permanent source of disruption in the area.
Mr. van den Bosch (Belgium) regretted France's absence and hoped that progress would however be on an agreed Four Power basis.

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Belgium's views were practically identical with those of the United Kingdom; they agreed on the impertance of continuing progress on the basis of Resolution 242 in a United Nations context. Peace Treaties or guarantees by the Security Council (or the Four Powers) would be required to underwrite a settlement. As regards peace-keeping forces, Belgium had a tradition of participation. Some limitation should be put on arms supplies to the Middle East. Jerusalem should at least be internationalised and all religions permitted to flourish there. Refugees should be offered the right of return or compensation.

4. In subsequent discussion the following two points were emphasised:

(i) Palestinian views must be taken into account in any settlement (Luxembourg).

(ii) A Palestinian entity might re-emerge and this could help solve the refugee problem (Belgium).

5. The Secretary of State commented as follows on our discussions:

(i) There was general agreement that Security Council Resolution 242 offered a sufficient basis for a settlement and that the search for a settlement should proceed in a United Nations context, although the Four Permanent Members would have to agree on a common interpretation of the Resolution.

(ii) A calendar of parallel concessions would be required from both sides.

(iii) A treaty or treaties would be needed at the end of negotiations. Whatever they were called they must be binding. No successor government should be able to repudiate them.

(iv) Once the putting into effect of any agreed package had begun it would have to be continued to the end: there could be no stopping half way by either side.

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(v) Consideration would have to be given to the composition of any United Nations force or forces to be sent to the area. Smaller countries not involved in East/West tensions might be the most appropriate.

(vi) The Question of Jerusalem - with all its difficulties - should be left to the last: if everything else had been agreed, there would be a strong inducement on both sides to compromise on Jerusalem.

(vii) As regards refugees, Israel would wish to know that she was not accepting back potential fifth-columnists. The Arabs, would have to recognize that a just and lasting peace applied to the fedayeen just as much as to governments.

(viii) The opening of waterways would depend on peace being achieved.

(ix) A guaranteed settlement could only be one to which both sides agreed.

(x) There should be a limitation on arms supplies to the area. A settlement would be more likely to be kept if the Four Powers and others agreed not to supply arms, although arms were not of themselves a primary source of trouble.