

## Excerpts from the Minutes of the joint meeting between the Council and the Assembly Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments (12 June 1958)

**Caption:** On 6 March 1958, in Rome, a joint meeting is held between the Council of Western European Union (WEU) and the Defence Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly to discuss various subjects including WEU's contribution to the armaments production of the Atlantic Alliance. Chairman Giuseppe Pella notes that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is kept informed of the activities of the Standing Armaments Committee (SAC) and of possibilities for cooperation through the presence of NATO observers at meetings. A series of questions is raised about cooperation between France, Germany and Italy in the field of armaments research, development and production. A statement by those three countries indicates that this cooperation complies with NATO principles and that other countries are free to be involved. The Council is also keen to ensure that countries are informed of bilateral and tripartite agreements, particularly within the SAC, by making information available to NATO.

**Source:** Council of the Western European Union. Minutes of the joint meeting between the Council and the Assembly Committee on defence questions and armaments, held on 6th march 1958 at Rome. 12.06.1958. C (58) 40. Copy No 64. pp. 1; 15-19. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Subjects dealt with by various WEU organs. Year: 1958, 01/06/1957-30/04/1958. File 442.00. Volume 1/4.

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# WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

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EXTRACT

12th June 1958

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING  
BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE  
QUESTIONS AND ARMAMENTS, HELD ON 6th MARCH 1958, AT ROME

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III. ARMAMENTS PRODUCTION

Western European Union's contribution to the armaments production of the Atlantic Alliance  
(doc. 76 - Rapporteur: M. Teitgen)

*M. Pella*  
The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had not put any specific questions to the Council on this subject, but he understood they wished to discuss the draft Recommendation and Report contained in Assembly document No. 76.

He recalled that the draft Recommendation had been briefly considered at the joint meeting between the Council and the Assembly Presidential Committee on 15th December 1957. The Council then stated that they had taken note of the principle mentioned in point 1, and would examine points 2 to 6 in the light of the conclusions reached on these matters by the North Atlantic Council.

The Council could not reach any positive conclusions on these matters until there had been more study of the further measures to be taken in N.A.T.O. as a result of the December meeting of the North Atlantic Council, "to promote the co-ordination of research, development and manufacture of modern weapons".

In this connection, however, the Council wished to draw attention to the fact that there were regular contacts between the W.E.U. Standing Armaments Committee and N.A.T.O. The latter was kept fully informed, in particular through the presence of N.A.T.O. observers at meetings of the Standing Armaments Committee, of the rôle and activities of the Committee and of the opportunities it could offer for co-operation in the production of armaments within the Atlantic Alliance.

M. Pella added that, as had been stated in the communiqué issued after the previous day's meeting, the Council had taken decisions which would lead to all member States being fully informed through W.E.U. channels of the progress and results of bilateral and tripartite arrangements. In addition, they would provide for even closer collaboration between the S.A.C. and N.A.T.O. He would be referring to these decisions again later.

M. LEGENDRE then put to the Chairman several questions on behalf of M. Teitgen, who was unfortunately unable to be present.

- a) He said that the Council had "taken note" of paragraph 1 of the draft Recommendation in document No. 76 and yesterday the Committee had noted that the Council had taken note. Were the Council aware that the Committee recommended that they should propose this principle to the other N.A.T.O. members and not merely that they take note of it?

/b) ...

- b) Could the Council say how paragraphs 2 to 6 of the draft Recommendation could retain any meaning if they restricted themselves to "taking note of" the principle, instead of promoting regional co-operation?

These paragraphs recommended the Council:

- " 2. to arrange immediately after this meeting a stocktaking of the armaments requirements of the countries of Western European Union, together with the scientific, industrial and power, both conventional and nuclear, resources available to meet them;
3. to draw up on the basis of this inventory an integrated production programme through the Standing Armaments Committee, taking account of the collaboration of the United States;
4. to incorporate this programme into the N.A.T.O. programme to which the other member countries could each make a specific contribution;
5. to seek a more rational division of labour among the member countries of Western European Union;
6. to ensure by those means the solidarity and interdependence of member States for the preservation of their common security."

M. Legendre put further questions.

- c) To what extent has the work of N.A.T.O. clarified this issue?
- d) On 14th November last, M. Spaak called for a European organisation for the production of armaments "which would enable us to achieve a suitable balance of partnership between the United States on the one side and an organised Europe on the other". Can the Council give its view on this proposal and the means of putting it into operation?
- e) European collaboration in the production of armaments is so obviously necessary that, failing a W.E.U. plan, the continental States have had to put forward a special plan. Can the Council explain, in these circumstances, how it was that it did not succeed in having at least this principle agreed at the Heads of Governments meeting of the North Atlantic Council, as the Committee had requested it to do?

/f) ...



- f) Can the Council say how it considers it possible to gear two or three-Power consultations and agreements into the machinery for seven-Power co-operation of the Standing Armaments Committee?

The CHAIRMAN, referring to the question of regional co-operation in the Atlantic framework, said that if there were any suggestion for a caucus within N.A.T.O., the answer must be an emphatic no; but if the aim were regional co-operation to render the joint defence effort of the whole Atlantic Alliance more effective, the reply would be yes. The matter had been put succinctly at the Ministers' meeting the previous day when it had been said that their aim was to make the European defence potential more effective with the full backing of the United States.

Mr. ERLER asked the Chairman to take his questions also under this heading.

The CHAIRMAN replied to these as follows.

1. Was the Council informed of the talks between Italy, France and Germany on co-operation between these countries in the field of armaments research, development and production?

Answer: Yes.

2. Was this matter brought before the Standing Armaments Committee?

Answer: Yes.

3. Can the Council inform the Committee of the agreement reached by these three countries during their discussions?

In reply, the Chairman read the following statement which had been made by the Italian delegate on behalf of the French, Italian and German Governments in the Council in London on 12th February 1958.

"In view of the similarity of certain arms requirements, arrangements have been made for close co-operation between France, Germany and Italy for arms research, study and production, in accordance with the principles of co-ordination laid down by the conference of Heads of N.A.T.O. Governments held from 16th to 19th December 1957.

The Ministers of Defence met in Bonn on 21st January, to define the principles of such co-operation and practical methods of putting them into effect.

They decided to set up a three-Power steering Committee to select types of weapons for the armed forces of the three countries, in respect of which they are

*prepared*

prepared to undertake joint study, research and production. This committee will be assisted by ad hoc sub-committees.

The co-operation envisaged will extend to all types of armaments covered by N.A.T.O. policy and weapons systems recommended by that Organisation. Scientific research into the military use of nuclear energy is not excluded, but no decision has yet been taken in this respect. Any subsequent decision would, of course, take due account of the Paris Agreements.

The steering committee held its first meeting in Rome on 6th February.

The Armaments Committees of W.E.U. and N.A.T.O. will be informed of the types of equipment selected by the three countries, in the hope that others will participate in the relevant programme of study, research and manufacture."

4. Have steps been taken to ensure that the results of this co-operation can be placed at the disposal of the whole of the Western European Union organisation and that other member countries so wishing can take part in the work of the three countries?

The CHAIRMAN replied that the Council had, on the previous day, noted with satisfaction that other member States would be able to take part in the co-operation which was being established between the three countries.

Furthermore, the Council had studied the problem of ensuring that all the countries were also informed of the workings of the other restricted arrangements already agreed between various member States. They had decided that the Chairmen of the steering committees set up under these bilateral and tripartite agreements would meet within the framework of the S.A.C. to exchange information on progress and results and make this available to the S.A.C. They had also decided that the information thus obtained would be put at the disposal of N.A.T.O. and that, in the meantime, the latter would be informed of these intentions.

Mr. ERLER enquired whether it should now be understood that, under the new procedure, the S.A.C. would constitute the focal point for all this work and that W.E.U. would thus be kept fully informed of developments under the bilateral and tripartite arrangements and could, where necessary, make suggestions for co-operation on specific questions under these arrangements.

The CHAIRMAN confirmed that this was indeed the case.

/IV. ...

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. GOEDHART recalled that several Ministers had given their views in public on the Rapacki plan and enquired whether the Council had considered it and, if so, what their conclusion had been.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that, on the previous day, the Council had considered, in restricted session, recent developments in East-West relations. In the course of the conversations, Ministers had made known, directly or indirectly, their views on the matter, which were, as Mr. Goedhart had stated, already public in some cases. All the Governments were determined to make every effort to reach some measure of acceptable agreement on the vital problems of which the Rapacki plan was one aspect, but their attitude towards this particular proposal had been extremely cautious in the negative sense. The plan would not become a snare either for the Seven or the Fifteen. He felt he could not go further than this.

M. MATTEOTTI asked whether the Council thought it would be useful to examine the purely military effects of the Rapacki plan in central Europe.

The CHAIRMAN said that these aspects had been carefully examined elsewhere; he thought that the conclusions could only be negative.


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At the close of the meeting, the Marchese LUCIFERO spoke once more on behalf of his colleagues to stress the significance of collaboration between the Council and the Assembly. Although it was obvious that their views could not always coincide, the progress already made along the path towards fruitful partnership gave ground for reassurance. In thanking the Council, and especially Mr. von Brentano and M. Pella, under whose chairmanship the new procedure for collaboration had been instituted, the Marchese reaffirmed his conviction that their mutual trust and understanding could not but be consolidated at future meetings.

M. PELLA assured the members of the Committee that the sentiments expressed by their Chairman were also those of the Council, who were convinced that the experiment in collaboration so successfully launched would yield even more effective and concrete results in the future.

  
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