

Extract from minutes of the 140th meeting of the WEU Council (9 December 1959)

Caption: At its meeting on 9 December 1959, the Council of Western European Union (WEU) addresses questions concerning the political consultations within the organisation and relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). British representative Sir Anthony Rumbold reiterates the position he adopted at the previous meeting (document CR(59)17) and confirms that, in terms of political consultations, NATO should remain the main forum for any joint action and for matters of common concern. But he admits that WEU could also have a part to play. French Ambassador Jean Chauvel notes that it is too early to predict how consultations between the Six and the Seven of WEU will develop but that the aim should be to avoid repeating the same information in three different places – NATO, the European Economic Community (EEC) and WEU – without diminishing the importance of NATO.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 140th meeting of WEU Council held on 9 December 1959. CR (59)18. pp. 3-6. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Relations with non-member countries and other international organisations. Year: 1962, 01/12/1955-30/06/1962. File 350.00. Volume 1/2.

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 140th MEETING
OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 9 Dec. 59

32- Six
420
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II. POLITICAL INFORMATION

M. ZOPPI summarised the discussion of certain of the problems which had been dealt with during the recent visit to London of M. Segni, the Italian Prime Minister, and his Foreign Minister, M. Pella.

Starting with the disarmament question, he said that both sides had agreed that the 10-Power Committee should start work as soon as possible, in any case before the Summit meeting, and that the five Western powers should meet beforehand, perhaps in January, in order to discuss problems of procedure and tactics.

Concerning aid to the less-developed countries, an Italian suggestion had been well received that the matter should be studied within O.E.E.C., in order, in particular, to make an inventory of what had already been done in this field, both on the bilateral and multilateral levels, with a view to avoiding overlapping, and to review the methods used so far, to see whether these required modification or improvement.

Middle East problems had also been considered, especially Iraq, which presented a particularly delicate situation.

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Turning to specifically European problems, more particularly that of the Six and the Seven, he pointed out that there were two Sevens - W.E.U. and the "Stockholm" group. Regarding the former, as had already been agreed during earlier ministerial conversations, this Organisation should be used for political consultations; W.E.U. ministerial meetings might immediately follow meetings of the Ministers of the Six.

: On the subject of the transfer of W.E.U., the
: Italian Government would prefer that the Headquarters
: should remain in London; this would provide a better
: guarantee of the Organisation's position as a link between
: Great Britain and Continental Europe. They would, however,
: be prepared to reconsider their attitude in this matter if
: the majority of the Council were to decide otherwise.

As regards economic problems, the creation of a Liaison Committee was envisaged by the Six to deal with any difficulties that might arise with the "Stockholm" Seven. The British and the Italian Ministers wished to avoid any such difficulties, but it must be remembered that solutions had to be found within certain limits; these were the need, on the one hand, to respect the political aims of the Six and, on the other, to conform to the rules accepted within GATT.

The Italian Government had no objection to exploratory talks taking place within the O.E.E.C. framework; this would enable countries which were not members of either the Six or the "Stockholm" Seven and, in particular, the Americans and the Canadians, to take part.

Sir Anthony RUMBOLD could add little to the comprehensive survey given by the Italian Ambassador. Concerning disarmament, both sides had agreed, and this was indeed the common Western view, that really substantial negotiations would have to take place in the 10-Power Committee; no such negotiations would be possible at a Summit meeting, from which the most that could reasonably be expected would be general directives. Sir Anthony confirmed that, as had also emerged during the Anglo-French consultations, the Italian and British Ministers had agreed that the 10-Power group should meet as early as possible and that a working party of the five Western partners should meet beforehand to prepare for this. On aid to the less-developed countries, the British Prime Minister had heard with interest the Italian suggestion that O.E.E.C. be charged with the discussions on this matter.

As to political consultations, NATO was, and must remain, the most important forum, particularly for questions on which joint action had to be taken and for matters of common concern to the Alliance. But W.E.U. could also have a part to play, and should not be overlooked.

Finally, regarding economic problems, both sides had recognised the desirability of eliminating the risk of a split in Europe. As to the possibility of negotiations on this matter within the framework of O.E.E.C., neither side could, of course, commit itself, being only one of a group.

/ Mr. von HERWARTH ...

Mr. von HERWARTH wished to say a few words about the talks between General de Gaulle and MM. Debré and Couve de Murville on the one hand and Dr. Adenauer and Mr. von Brentano on the other, but stressed that he had not been present on this occasion. These talks had been very frank. They had turned, firstly, on the problems for discussion at the Summit Conference. No final decisions had, of course, been reached, since these were to be taken during next week's discussions in Paris, but both sides had agreed that the disarmament issue was one of the central problems. The Chancellor had underlined the danger that Mr. Khrushchev might try to evade discussion thereon by referring to the disarmament proposals he had made during his visit to the United States and to the setting up of the 10-Power Committee.

Regarding co-operation on aid to the less-developed countries, both sides had expressed views as to what the Western Powers might do. In particular, they had examined the possible creation of an international finance organisation to deal with certain specialised problems such as water resources, commodity prices and the stabilisation and development of commodity markets, and a French proposal for organising campaigns against diseases.

On the Berlin question, both sides had agreed to uphold the legal status quo. The Chancellor felt that this was the most satisfactory position possible at the present time and that it was essential to stand by it, in view of the risk that any new agreement might be worse than this status quo.

Both sides had agreed on the necessity, at this critical period, of upholding and strengthening the NATO Alliance. On the French side, mention had been made of the importance of Africa to NATO.

So far as relations between the Six and the "economic" Seven were concerned, a useful exchange of views had taken place; it was recognised that the results of the forthcoming visit of Mr. Dillon must be awaited. The feeling of the German Government was that account must be taken of the North American attitude, in particular in view of the unfavourable American trade balance and the dollar situation.

M. CHAUVEL said that he could add little to what Mr. von Herwarth had said, since reports he had so far received were incomplete. He would, however, comment on three points. Firstly, on disarmament: the French Government wished to avoid there being only one subject for discussion at the Summit Conference - Berlin; they therefore hoped to press on now with the discussions on the disarmament question so that this matter could also

/ be discussed ...

be discussed at the Conference. As to political consultations between the Six and in W.E.U., the situation was still fluid. Consultations between the Six had not yet taken form; since the consultations between the Seven would be a consequence of these, it was difficult to foresee now exactly how the situation would develop. This would not, of course, mean that the same things need be repeated in three different places, nor would the importance of NATO as a forum for discussion be in any way diminished.

So far as Africa was concerned, it was true that practically the whole continent lay outside NATO territory. The French Government, however, felt unable to exclude it from their overall strategic planning, by reason of the danger that an African-based outflanking movement might be directed against the NATO front.

As a general comment, M. Chauvel emphasised that the Franco-German conversations were in the nature of a confirmation of common points of view on certain essential matters rather than an exploratory exchange.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the various speakers for the interesting information they had given to the Council. He hoped that the Ministers at their forthcoming meeting would be able to clarify the position further regarding the possibility of political consultations in W.E.U.