

‘A European nuclear force “impracticable” from The Guardian (20 June 1969)

Caption: On 20 June 1969, the day after the meeting of the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) in Paris, the British daily newspaper The Guardian reports on the discussions on the possible establishment of a European nuclear force.

Source: "A European nuclear force 'impracticable'" from The Guardian. London: Guardian Newspapers. 20.06.1969, p.3.

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A European nuclear force 'impracticable'

Paris, June 19

The Assembly of the Western European Union, which groups Britain and the six Common Market countries, ended a three-day session here today with a clash over the creation of a European nuclear force.

Mr Peter Kirk, a British Conservative MP, rejected "the implication that either it cannot be done or it can be done only at a cost in money and sovereignty which Europe cannot bear." Europe was not ready for it now, but it would have to be considered in the future.

Another Conservative, Mr Norman St John-Stevas, said those who wanted a European nuclear force did so because they saw it as the only effective answer to doubts that the United States would be prepared to use its deterrent in the defence of Europe.

Mr M. van der Stoel, a Dutch Labour member, presenting a report by a WEO committee, said the question of an Anglo-French force had recently been raised. But he was certain it would be extremely difficult to realise such ideas.

It was scarcely possible to find a formula for the control of such a combined force—or for any other form of European nuclear force—unless agreement was reached on a federal system, at least in the fields of foreign affairs and defence. A European nuclear force was "impractical" at present.

A recommendation was carried by a large majority, calling on European countries to make full use of the possibilities provided by the Nuclear Planning Group and Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee to exercise influence on realistic contingency plans on the rôle of nuclear weapons in the defence of Europe.—Reuter.