

Confidential note from the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the relations with the countries of Eastern Europe (24 October 1968)

Caption: On 24 October 1968, a confidential note from the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers future relations between Luxembourg and the countries of Eastern Europe following the tragic events in Czechoslovakia.

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Confidential note from the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs (24 October 1968)

Internal memo to the Minister

Subject: Relations with the countries of Eastern Europe

I think it is important that we clearly define our policy towards the countries of Eastern Europe following your address to the United Nations and to Parliament. It is a rather urgent issue for our bilateral relations, especially with the Soviet Union and Poland.

The Polish Chargé d’Affaires came to see me and asked what was our attitude towards his country following the events in Czechoslovakia. I told him that the general public, as much as the Government, disapproved of the action of some members of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia. I informed him that we regard the intervention to be a flagrant violation of people’s rights. The Luxembourg Government nevertheless hoped that it would be able to continue to seek détente between Eastern Europe and Western Europe. I told him that, at the practical level, we intended to continue the negotiations that had begun between our two countries before the events in Czechoslovakia. He repeated his Government’s desire to begin negotiations on an air transport agreement between the Grand Duchy and Poland. He handed over an official note asking the Luxembourg Government to set a date for these negotiations. I have spoken to Mr Hamer who will discuss this issue with you. It seems to me that he would prefer these negotiations to start next spring.

The Polish Government also seems to want to pursue its contacts with economic organisations in this country, especially with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and with a number of its officials. I told the Chargé d’Affaires that I felt those talks could continue as our economic organisations saw fit. I would add, in parenthesis, that our Department should be involved in talks of that kind. I shall ensure that our officials attend those meetings in the future.

With regard to our relations with the Soviet Union, Mr Wurth asked for more details about the number of people working at the Soviet Embassy and the conditions for resuming our policy of détente. I propose to tell Mr Wurth that the question of the level of staffing at the Soviet Embassy will definitely not be raised officially with the Embassy at the moment and that, at all events, the Government reserves the right to seek a gradual reduction in numbers as Soviet officials in Luxembourg reach the end of their tours of duty. Personally, I think that opinion in Parliament and elsewhere has seized on this aspect of our relations with the Soviet Union because it is the easiest to understand. The figures given were also incorrect, and it is an issue that calls for considerable tact. As far as so-called détente is concerned, I would be in favour of telling Mr Wurth that the Government’s position has not changed, since we still want to see détente between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. However, détente can only take place in a climate of confidence and good order. Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia has caused some unease among the general public in our countries. Our Government, like the general public, had believed the repeated assurances from Soviet leaders that there should be no interference in the internal affairs of other countries. This farsighted principle was established especially to define relations between the Soviet Union and its Socialist partners. Russia seems to have committed the grave error that the Chinese call, ‘superpower chauvinism’. In this situation, it has become more difficult for Western Governments to maintain a constructive dialogue based on confidence with some of the countries of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. Despite these difficulties, the Luxembourg Government intends to continue its unfailing efforts to establish better understanding between all European countries.

The points that I have set out above should be fleshed out in a letter to Mr Wurth. I should be glad to draft these instructions which will provide the guidelines for the Embassy in Moscow.

Luxembourg, 24 October 1968

C. Dumont