

Reply by the WEU Council to question 143 put by a member of the Assembly on French and British nuclear tests (London, 17 September 1974)


Caption: On 17 September 1974, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates the final reply by the WEU Council to question 143 put by a member of the Assembly on nuclear tests. The text is based largely on the draft reply (C (74) 134) prepared by the French and British delegations. Given that their countries are directly concerned by the question, the two delegations offered to draw up the reply. They emphasise that neither the Brussels Treaty of 1948 nor the Paris Agreements of 1954 require the signatory countries to inform the WEU Council of nuclear weapons tests. The French and British recognise that their governments have different approaches when it comes to the type of nuclear tests they carry out, but they affirm that this does not prevent the two countries from maintaining friendly relations as allies. Furthermore, with regard to underground nuclear tests, it is not within the remit of the Council to approach the US Government; only France can decide on its intentions in this area.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Written question 143 put to the Council by a member of the Assembly. London: 17.09.1974. C (74) 144. 3 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1974, 01/06/1974-20/09/1974. File 202.415.21. Volume 1/1.

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URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/reply_by_the_weu_council_to_question_143_put_by_a_member_of_the_assembly_on_french_and_british_nuclear_tests_london_17_september_1974-en-e23613f0-2bc9-4b11-a901-bb207edee7c8.html

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WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

W.E.U. UNCLASSIFIED

C (74) 144

Original: English/French

17th September, 1974

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Written question 143 put to the Council
by a member of the Assembly

The Secretary-General circulates herewith the Council's reply to written question 143 put to the Council by M. Krieg (C (74) 113).

This reply, which has now been approved by all delegations, has been transmitted to the Assembly.

9, Grosvenor Place,
London, S.W.1.

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Text of written question 143

Were the Council informed beforehand of the British and French decisions to carry out nuclear tests in the Spring of 1974?

Do they not consider that their role should be to avoid their members opposing each other, as was the case on this occasion when the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs protested to the French Ambassador in London on 13th June, 1974?

Do they think that such a protest helped to "make our people better aware of the needs and realities of the defence of Europe", to quote Mr. Hattersley, Minister of State, speaking to the Assembly on 18th June, 1974?

Could not an approach be made to the United States Government with a view to allowing the French authorities to carry out underground tests in the same conditions as the British?

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Reply by the Council

The Brussels Treaty of 17th March, 1948 and the Protocol signed in Paris on 23rd October, 1954, do not require the signatory powers to inform the Council beforehand of any tests of nuclear weapons they intend to carry out. As on previous occasions, therefore, the Council were not informed directly in 1974 of the intentions of the French and British Governments in the matter. On 8th June, however, a communiqué issued by the Office of the President of the French Republic announced the start of a new series of nuclear tests in the Pacific and made known the French Government's intention of passing shortly to the stage of underground tests.

/The Council ...

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The Council of course seek to promote the harmonisation of member countries' views concerning defence policy. In the particular case raised in the honourable member's question, the Council are conscious of the fact that the United Kingdom Government is signatory to the Moscow Treaty of 1963 banning the testing of nuclear devices in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, and that the French Government did not subscribe to that Treaty. The Council **consider** that this different approach to the problem should not prevent the two countries from maintaining friendly relations as allies. Furthermore, this divergence will shortly disappear in practice since the French Government has publicly announced its decision of passing shortly to the stage of underground tests.

It is not for the Council to take the initiative in approaching the United States Government with a view to allowing the French authorities to carry out underground tests in the same conditions as the British. Any such approach must be made by the French Government as sole judge of its intentions.

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