

## Extract from minutes of the 289th meeting of the WEU Council held at ministerial level (London, 15–16 March 1966)

**Caption:** At the 289th meeting of the Council of Western European Union (WEU), held at ministerial level on 15 and 16 March 1966 in London and chaired by British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart, the delegations discuss East–West relations. Michael Stewart notes that no progress has been made in recent months in the discussions on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, but the USSR has reactivated the Geneva Conference, which had ground to a halt. On the German question, he emphasises that the Western powers should take any available opportunity to make it clear that they do not consider the status quo in Germany as a desirable long-term solution. According to the British Government, the Western powers should maintain Western defences in full working order and avoid any provocative behaviour towards the Soviet Union.

**Source:** Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of 289th meeting of WEU Council held at ministerial level on 15th and 16th March 1966 in London. II. Political Consultation. CR (66) 6. Part I. pp. [s.p.]; 21-23. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Foundation and Expansion of WEU. Year: 1966, 01/03/1966-30/11/1970. File 132.15. Volume 2/7.

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FILE No :

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 289<sup>th</sup> MEETING

CR (66) 6 pt. I.

OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON AT MINISTERIAL

LEVEL ON 15<sup>th</sup> + 16<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1966 IN LONDON

Chairman: Mr. Michael Stewart

## II POLITICAL CONSULTATION

### 1. East-West relations

The Chairman called on the German Minister for Foreign Affairs to speak first on this point.

Mr. SCHROEDER proposed to devote his statement principally to the German question. The situation had not greatly changed since the previous Council meeting; Soviet Russia, hampered by her uneasy relationship with Peking, was proceeding with caution in her dealings with Germany in an endeavour to lull Western suspicions regarding her expansionist aims. The implications of the threat from the East were not always understood, but people who lived near the East-West line of demarcation were particularly sensitive to any fluctuations in Communist ambitions and could never forget for one single day that Germany remained divided. A number of significant events had taken place during the last few months in the Soviet-occupied zone. On 3rd December, the head of the planning department, Apel, shot himself after vainly protesting against the conclusion of a trade agreement which subjected the zonal economy to Russian interests until 1970, thus inhibiting any internal tendency towards developing an individual, or German, form of socialism. On 15th December, the Central Committee of the S.E.D. decided to strengthen the Government's hand in economic matters, to impose restrictions in the cultural-political sphere and to overhaul the entire party apparatus. On 25th December, the well-known East Berlin physicist, Professor Havemann, was dismissed from the Academy of Science for having had an article published in a West German paper (in agreement with Apel) putting forward proposals for a national adaptation of the Communist Party specially suited to West Germany. At the end of the year, a statement was put out on behalf of Ulbricht, containing a summary of all Pankow's views on Germany and the disarmament question since the Berlin crisis began in 1958. On 12th January of this year, the S.E.D. compelled the Writer's Union of the Soviet zone to undertake self-criticism and to promise to carry out all the party's future requests. At the same time, the zonal Minister for Culture, Bentzien, was dismissed for alleged inefficiency. On 14th January, the zonal Government suggested that negotiations be opened between "the two German States" on a whole series of questions. On the

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M. LUPIS had been greatly interested by Mr. Schroeder's very detailed statement on German unification and Berlin, with its special reference to the constant and growing activity of the East zone authorities who were seeking increased international status. On this point, he fully shared the view expressed by the Federal Republic of Germany that they should avoid any act or measure which might help to strengthen the Pankow regime. This was a subject which deserved the Council's full attention and should perhaps be examined at greater length in future. M. Lupis wished however to take this opportunity of confirming the Italian Government's sympathy for the position of the Federal Republic on this question, which was vital, both for Germany and for the rest of the world. Italy was convinced of the German people's right to reunification through free elections and firmly believed that history would endorse their unity as a constructive element in world peace, essential for the destiny of the Continent.

The CHAIRMAN agreed with Mr. Schroeder that the freedom of action of the Soviet Union was at the present time considerably limited by the dispute between her and China. She was faced in a number of fields, and particularly in Vietnam, with an awkward choice between, on

- : the one hand, being represented by the Chinese in the rest of the Communist world as too conciliatory and, on
- : the other, risking serious estrangement from the West.

The desire of the Soviet Government seemed to be that neither of these choices should be presented too sharply to her and that the position should remain as indeterminate as possible. This impression had been confirmed by the Prime Minister when he had visited the Soviet

- : Union recently. On that occasion the Soviet Government
- : had shown no inclination to change their classic positions on disarmament, on European security and on the twin problems of getting a non-proliferation treaty on the one hand and nuclear arrangements inside NATO on the other. The Prime Minister had tried to get the Russian Government away from their fixation over the position of Germany every time the question of the proliferation of nuclear weapons was discussed.

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Despite the real danger that faced the world of a number of nations becoming nuclear powers before long, it still remained difficult to get the Russians to discuss this world-wide problem in any terms other than their insistence that the Federal Republic should have no access whatever to nuclear weapons. A Soviet hostility to NATO as a whole appeared to lie behind this attitude and any arrangement which would promote closer understanding and greater cohesion between the members of NATO would be an undesirable arrangement for the Soviet Union. The natural desire, shared by all Western countries, to get a treaty on non-proliferation was being used to try to drive a wedge between them. It could be said, that the Russian price for a non-proliferation treaty was a decision by NATO not to make any arrangements which might be disagreeable to the Soviet Union. It was not certain if that attitude would persist, particularly if the members of NATO were to reach a solution of this problem satisfactory to themselves, whilst taking into account, of course, the wisdom of not doing anything unnecessarily provocative, and keeping their eye simply on the needs of NATO and the desirability of a non-proliferation treaty if this could be obtained on reasonable terms.

At the present time, no progress had been made with the Russians on non-proliferation or on disarmament, but it would be remembered that a year ago the proceedings at Geneva had been in complete suspense and the Soviet Union had decided during last year to reactivate the work at Geneva. This was a further illustration of the balancing act which they found it necessary to carry out in so many fields of policy and Mr. Stewart agreed with M. de Broglie that the Russian interest at the moment might well be simply the preservation of things as they were, taking the view that Europe would gradually get used to the continuation of the present state of affairs and recognition of East Germany as a State might not be so far away. It was probably hoped that the world would become accustomed to the division of Germany, which would be accepted as something that ought to exist as of right as well as a fact, simply because it had gone on for so long. If this was a correct interpretation, it was essential that the West and those powers which had a special interest in the status of West Berlin should take all appropriate opportunities to make it clear that they did not regard this as a possible or desirable permanent solution.

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It was, however, certainly true that the Soviet Government wished, perhaps for other reasons than merely maintaining things as they were in Europe, to keep its dialogue with the West open. There was, for instance, the Soviet anxiety to intensify their bilateral relations with several Western countries and the encouragement given to the satellite countries to do the same thing, to which M. de Broglie had referred.

The negotiations for a cultural agreement with the United States and the Soviet initiative at Tashkent were further examples of these bilateral activities, although it was clear that the initiative at Tashkent was taken with regard solely to Soviet interests. It was nonetheless of importance that in this case the Soviet Union and the West had had a common interest - the maintenance of peace between the different parts of the Indian sub-continent.

However, some disquieting symptoms of a return towards a more illiberal kind of regime in the Soviet Union itself, such as the attitude towards certain Soviet writers, suggested that the influence of the K.G.B. might again be increasing, although there was not yet enough evidence to reach a firm conclusion.

: In conclusion, Mr. Stewart said the British  
: Government believed that the correct policy to pursue  
: was: firstly, there should be no provocation; secondly,  
: the Western defences should be maintained in full vigour;  
: and thirdly, it must be made clear that the West was not  
: going to accept the proposition that because an unjust  
: settlement in Europe had existed for a long time, it  
: ought to be regarded as right.

M. LUPIS had been greatly interested by Mr. Stewart's lucid survey of the recent visit by the British Prime Minister to Moscow. Although the Soviet position on the question of nuclear non-proliferation had been known for some time, account must be taken of the atmosphere which had prevailed at these exchanges of view and of the impression that the leaders in the Kremlin had wished to give their Western visitors. M. Lupis was

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