

Extract from the summary record of the 10th Joint Meeting of the WEU Council and the Committee on Defence Questions (Brussels, 27 September 1962)


Caption: On 27 September 1962, in Brussels, the 10th joint meeting is held between the Council of Western European Union (WEU) and the Assembly Committee on Defence Questions. The questions focus on the debate concerning the possibility and legitimacy of establishing a future political union. On the matter of the future reorganisation of Western defence, this depends on the type of political union that might be created. The chairman also notes that the Council is not able to form an opinion on this question since it is under constant development.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 10th joint meeting with Assembly defence Committee. Brussels: 27.09.1962. JM/19. pp. 3-6. 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: 1962, 01/05/1962-30/05/1970. File 202.413.70. Volume 1/1.

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URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/extract_from_the_summary_record_of_the_10th_joint_meeting_of_the_weu_council_and_the_committee_on_defence_questions_brussels_27_september_1962-en-d857c30b-80e8-46d0-8d19-cb9b4b6ao8of.html

Last updated: 25/10/2016



Extract of Summary Record of 202.413.7.
10th Joint Meeting with Assembly Defence Office. 202.31
Brussels, 27 Sept. 1962.
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Question No. I: The Future organisation of Western Defence*

"1. Executive level

Will the Council be prepared to give its views on Recommendation 77, adopted by the Assembly on the report submitted by Mr. Goedhart (Document 231), and discuss with the Committee the proposals put forward concerning the Executive Level in the Explanatory Memorandum and in the Recommendation?

Is the Council prepared to recommend their implementation as they stand, or with modifications, and if so which?

Will the Council further discuss with the Committee the defence arrangements envisaged in the negotiations for a European Political Community?

3. Parliamentary control

(i) Will the Council give its views on paragraph 4 of Recommendation 77 and on the Explanatory Memorandum by General Cadorna in Document 231 and discuss arrangements for parliamentary control of international defence organisations?"

*As a reply common to questions I, 1 and 3 (i) is to be given, these two questions are reproduced here out of order.

[M. Fayat, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Belgium]

The Chairman replied as follows:

The Council have noted with interest Recommendation 77 on the future organisation of western defence, which they propose to transmit to NATO as requested by the Assembly.

In questions I, 1 and 3 (i), the Committee asks whether the Council are prepared to discuss with it the suggestions in this Recommendation concerning the executive and parliamentary levels.

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The Council wish to observe that, as the Recommendation itself points out, the suggested reorganisation depends on "the framework of such political union as may be agreed" and at present forms the subject of discussions, the outcome of which cannot be foreseen. The Council consider that it would be unwise to anticipate future events by expressing any opinion on the Assembly's proposals at the present stage.

The Council fully share the view expressed in the following terms by General Cadorna in his report, forming part of document 231: "Until we see clearly how these developments take shape, it is important not to abandon or weaken what already exists for what we hope will exist but which at the present time consists of proposals. We also have to be careful not to change from present reality until we see that the alternative is clearly a preferable one". (Paragraph 8 of the report).

These remarks apply to both questions I, 1 and 3(i).

Mr. GOEDHART spoke in Dutch, and subsequently in English. He regretted the absence of facilities for interpretation from the Dutch language. He was disappointed at the brevity of the replies. Admittedly the question of a European Political Union was under active discussion, and therefore firm attitudes would be premature. In his report, however, he had made two interesting proposals which were not contingent upon a European Political Union coming into being: that the seat of W.E.U. and of NATO should be in the same city; and that the Council of W.E.U. should be composed of the permanent representatives of the seven member countries to the North Atlantic Council. These suggestions could be implemented forthwith if the political will existed.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking in a personal capacity, said he would be happy to arrange for Dutch interpretation facilities if Dutch were an official language of W.E.U. He was informed that the official languages were only English and French.

Mr. GOEDHART pointed out that the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly provided for interpretation facilities from Dutch.

Mr. KLIESING pointed out that the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly differed no doubt from those of the Council.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that for future meetings the Secretary-General and the Clerk should make mutually satisfactory language arrangements.

THIS WAS AGREED.

/The CHAIRMAN ...

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The CHAIRMAN, turning to the substance of the question, stressed that the whole matter of political union was at present in a state of flux and that it was therefore not possible for the Council to formulate an opinion.

Mr. KLIESING recalled that at the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe the previous week W.E.U. had been proposed as a possible basis of a Political Union. What were the views of the Council on this proposal?

The CHAIRMAN said that although the seven Governments represented on the Council were themselves concerned with the question of a Political Union, the subject was not before the Council itself. The Assembly could usefully retain the subject on its own agenda.

Mr. GOEDHART reiterated his two proposals, which were not contingent upon the Common Market negotiations - that the seat of the Council should be moved to Paris and the Council be composed of the representatives to NATO.

The CHAIRMAN could only reply that, under present circumstances, the Council did not wish to change the practical arrangements now in force.

Mr. KLIESING recalled the Assembly's recommendation in this connection.

General CADORNA asked for the views of the United Kingdom representative on this project.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that under the agreed procedure it was up to the Chairman of the Council to speak on behalf of that body.

Mr. DUYNSTEE observed that the concept underlying Document 231 had been discussed between the six countries of the European Community, and asked what progress had been made.

The CHAIRMAN repeated that the Council of W.E.U. as such had not discussed the matter; however, the Governments of the six countries at present Members of the Community were necessarily aware of the Assembly recommendations concerned.

Mr. GORDON WALKER asked why, if only the Chairman could answer questions, the distinguished representatives of other countries were present at the meeting. He observed that the Chairman had already on one occasion claimed to speak in his personal capacity, and asked why, therefore, the other six countries should be deprived of the right to put their views. He understood that in the joint

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[* See attached extracts].

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meeting held in Luxembourg in 1961 under the chairmanship of Mr. Schaus, the United Kingdom representative had explained at length the position of his Government concerning the level of United Kingdom forces in Germany. The custom was therefore clearly established for representatives of particular countries to speak in a national capacity when appropriate.

The CHAIRMAN said that the intervention referred to by Mr. Gordon Walker was a perfectly admissible exception to a rule - there should always be reasonable exceptions to rules - and it was up to any member of the Council who so wished to make an exception when appropriate, [with the agreement of the Chair.] (x)

Mr. GORDON WALKER observed that six of the member countries were in a different position from the United Kingdom on the subject under discussion, and asked therefore if the United Kingdom representative would make known his views.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Joint Meeting with the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments could not suitably deal with a subject not directly related to defence, and which might more properly be discussed with another Assembly Committee. Furthermore, the replies of the Council were always given with the full agreement of all member Governments.

Mr. GOEDHART considered that, while the Chairman might be right from a formal point of view, politically his reply was unsatisfactory - as members of parliament they were in need of information, and the Council should not consider them as their enemies. Only if the Council co-operated with the Committee by giving it frank information, could the Committee and the Assembly fulfil the role expected of them by their national parliaments.

The CHAIRMAN stressed that the Council was unanimous in agreeing with the view put forward by General Cadorna in Document 231 that institutions already existing should not be weakened in anticipation of future unknown bodies.

Mr. KLIESING thought the subject under discussion was closely related to defence - the Fouchet Committee had discussed the implications of defence at length in the context of a future Political Union. Mr. Heath had referred to it in his statement to the W.E.U. Council on 10th April.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the fact was that the Governments had discussed the matter at length within another framework, and that the W.E.U. Council had not been selected for this purpose.

/Question No. I, 2 ...

x Insertion proposed by the Chairman of the Council,
not yet accepted by the Committee.

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