

‘Criticism of forces cut. Censure motion at WEU Assembly’ from The Manchester Guardian (7 May 1957)

Caption: On 7 May 1957, the British daily newspaper The Manchester Guardian reports on the censure motion tabled by 12 members of the Western European Union (WEU) Assembly from France, Italy and the Benelux countries against the WEU Council for its approval of the reduction in British military forces in West Germany. This censure motion is tabled despite guarantees by British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs David Ormsby-Gore that the withdrawal of troops will not endanger Western defence.

Source: "Criticism of forces cut. Censure motion at WEU Assembly" from The Manchester Guardian. Manchester: Guardian Newspapers. 07.05.1957, p.7 .

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/criticism_of_forces_cut_censure_motion_at_weu_assembly_from_the_manchester_guardian_7_may_1957-en-f33214da-5597-44ca-9d7e-aeff10c6b3d8.html



Last updated: 25/10/2016

CRITICISM OF FORCES CUTS

Censure motion at W.E.U. Assembly

STRASBOURG, MAY 6.

Twelve parliamentarians from France, Italy, and the Benelux countries to-night tabled in the Western European Union's Assembly a motion of censure against the W.E.U. Ministerial Council for having approved Britain's cuts in her forces in Germany. It is the first censure motion in the Assembly's history.

The motion said the council had approved Britain's decision "before the studied sufficiently." It expressed "deep concern at the weakening of European security by reducing a defence which is already inadequate."

No British or West German members signed the motion. It will be considered and voted upon later in the Assembly's session, which is due to last four days.

Earlier, Mr David Ormsby-Gore, the British Minister of State, told the assembly that the withdrawal of 13,500 men from Germany did not mean a "retreat from Europe" and would not jeopardise Western defences. "The vast majority are administrative and anti-aircraft units," he said. "As a result, the overall percentage of fighting units necessary in Germany would be increased."

New weapons

Britain was at present discussing the possibilities of closer co-operation with her European allies in the development of new weapons. This represented "a new and we believe, a realistic approach to European co-operation."

Britain was giving "effective and well-trained forces" to the Western "shield," and behind her forces stood her "V" bombers equipped with nuclear weapons and the greater part of the Royal Navy's active fleet. "No other member of W.E.U. is contributing to the ultimate deterrent as we are," he added. Britain would go on doing her fair share but no more than that.

"If we had kept our forces at their present level and given them modern weapons there would be an ever-rising curve of expenditure, and no Government placed in our position could accept the intolerable level of defence expenditure to which this would give rise."

M. Spaak, the new N.A.T.O. secretary-general, told the Assembly that Western Europe must not give up its atomic defence, in spite of the Russian campaign of intimidation.

No responsible Western statesman could go before his Parliament and propose such a capitulation, much as he was anxious to achieve controlled disarmament. All N.A.T.O. countries, he added, should be equipped with atomic weapons.—Reuter and British United Press.

