

Questions from the WEU Assembly to the Council on arms deliveries to the Middle East and efforts to establish peace in the region [no date]

Caption: As tensions run high between Israel and the Arab countries in the Middle East, the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) puts a series of questions to the WEU Council on the possibility of placing an embargo on arms deliveries to the opposing countries in the region and the role that the countries of Western Europe might be able to play in restoring peace to the Middle East.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. The Middle East. Question III, 4. Question III, 9. 2p. 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: 1970, 01/06/1970-30/10/1970. File 202.32.11. Volume 1/2.

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/questions_from_the_weu_assembly_to_the_council_on_arms_deliveries_to_the_middle_east_and_efforts_to_establish_peace_in_the_region_no_date-en-6365c879-11e5-4b7d-b8f4-f5566e53899a.html



Last updated: 25/10/2016

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The Middle East

Question III, 1

What is the Council's view of the nature and importance of Soviet influence in the Middle East?

How does it assess the strength of Soviet forces in the Mediterranean and the Middle East?

Are those forces and this influence liable to be a serious threat to the NATO countries?

Council reply

The Arab-Israeli dispute of which there is no hopeful sign of a settlement has helped the Soviet Union to penetrate several countries in the area. When the greater part of the U.A.R.'s military potential was destroyed by the war in June 1967, the Soviet Union started to rebuild Egypt's armed forces so that they could match Israel's military strength; at the same time, the Russians have thought it necessary to strengthen their presence in the United Arab Republic, particularly in the Suez Canal Zone, where SA 3 missile systems have been introduced.

The expansion of the Soviet presence in the United Arab Republic, which was accompanied by a similar but less extensive penetration of other Arab countries, such as Syria and Iraq, was followed by the reinforcement of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean, made possible by the granting of port facilities by a number of countries in the eastern Mediterranean. The Soviet Union has not so far succeeded in establishing other footholds along the North African Coast, particularly at Mers-el-Kebir and Algiers, because of the reserved attitude maintained by the Algerian and Libyan leaders and the pro-western attitude of other Maghreb countries.

Nevertheless, in so far as this expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East has been made possible by the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is all the more necessary to arrive at a political settlement.

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Question III, 4

Have the Council considered adopting a joint approach to arms deliveries to Israel and the Arab countries?

Do they consider it desirable to place an embargo on arms deliveries to some of these countries and, if so, which?

Council reply

The regular delivery of war material to the Middle Eastern countries and the attempt to restore the balance of forces after each fresh delivery to the opposing countries are setting off a dangerous arms' race. The W.E.U. countries cannot fail to be concerned at the growing danger which this involves for the maintenance of peace and must do all they can to further the talks and negotiations, and look for ways of avoiding a dangerous escalation in arms supplies.

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Question III, 8

Do the Council consider that talks between the United States and the Soviet Union on this subject can make a useful contribution to restoring peace?

Council reply

The conversations between the United States and the Soviet Union are one of the important factors for the restoration of peace.

However; insofar as they cannot achieve this result on their own, further action by the four great Powers to resolve the deadlock which has since arisen, may be essential to bring the question back before the Security Council and thus enable new directives to be given to Ambassador Jarring. It is also desirable that, in the search for a solution in this part of the world where Europe has such major interests, her role should not be reduced to that of a mere spectator of decisions taken by other countries.

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Question III, 9

Do the Council consider that the western European countries have a special role to play in helping to restore peace in the Middle East?

Council reply

The conversations limited to two countries and, even more, the presentation of the Rogers' Plan reveal the danger that Europe may be excluded from the taking of decisions which concern her closely. The countries of Europe must therefore play a more active role in working for peace in so vital an area as the Mediterranean.

The individual attempts by European governments to bring about a relaxation of tension and to persuade the countries involved in the conflict to give more realistic consideration to all aspects of the problem have undoubtedly proved of value.

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Question III, 10

Do the Council consider that, once peace has been restored, Europe will have a special role to play in consolidating it and helping to adapt the economy and population of the countries concerned?

Council reply

In addition to trying to help establish the conditions in which peace can be restored, Europe, acting impartially towards the parties involved, could also play her proper role in its maintenance. She must be prepared to play this role at the appropriate moment.

Furthermore, the countries of Europe could at once consider, in one way or another, the possibility of assisting the post-war reconstruction and economic development of the countries impoverished by the fighting.

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