

'France will ignore British call to Middle East talks' from The Guardian (13 February 1969)

Caption: On 13 February 1969, the British daily newspaper The Guardian reports on France's decision not to take part in the forthcoming meeting of the Council of Western European Union (WEU) in London, where, following a British proposal, the representatives are to discuss the Middle East. The article outlines the reasons for this snub by French diplomatic circles, a decision that signals the beginning of WEU's 'empty chair crisis'.

Source: Roberts, Nest. "France will ignore British call to Middle East talks" from The Guardian. London: Guardian Newspapers. 13.02.1969; p.3.

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France will ignore British call to Middle East talks

From NESTA ROBERTS, Paris, February 12

M. de Lipkowski, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, told the Council of Ministers meeting today at the Elysée that France would not reply to Mr Stewart's invitation to the permanent representatives at Western European Union to visit London to discuss the British position on the Middle East

M. de Lipkowski thought that the British Foreign Secretary's initiative "curious" and outside the normal procedure of WEU. The question had been on the agenda for the Luxembourg meetings of WEU on February 6 and 7 and the French delegation had then declared its willingness to outline its country's plan and to receive the views of its partners. He could not see why such a discussion should have been deferred and called in London and some were not interested in the procedure at the level suggested.

M. de Lipkowski's reaction was in tune with France's permanent policy of national independence, meaning pre-eminently French

independence, which was being underlined at the moment. Later today the Foreign Minister, M. Debré, told the press that the subject of national independence was "fresher than ever."

Agreements and disagreements between the super Powers, said M Debré, lessened the liberty of action of the nations of Europe but they did not condemn France to hand over to others the responsibility for her destiny.

"It is not while looking at the past that General de Gaulle says that France should be a 'nation with free hands,'" said the Foreign Minister. "On the contrary, it is in looking at the future which, we know, will have no mercy on nations which give up."

MiG shot down

Tel-Aviv, February 12

Israeli jets shot down a Syrian MiG-21 in a dogfight over the Golan heights today. Israeli sources said the MiG, one of two which crossed the Israeli lines in the far north-east of the country, was apparently on a reconnaissance mission.—Reuter.