

Kopie an Herrn Botschafter Stiner, Den Haag, zu seiner persönlichen
und streng vertraulichen
Kenntnisnahme.

Berne, 15 MAI 1968

Herrn Bundespräsident W. Spühler, z. K.

Wahre Integration

Mr.
Dear Minister,

The lively and stimulating discussion we had in Berne ten days ago on European integration prompts me to send you for your personal and strictly confidential information the text of the statement I made at the closed meeting of EFTA Ministers in London on Thursday. I endeavoured to take account of our conversation, in particular your idea that interim arrangements would be more palatable and the danger of a negative prejudice for the future more clearly excluded if they could be worked out between the two groups rather than individually.

You will also note that I expressed the opinion that such arrangements should not be limited to the commercial field but provide for consultations and co-operation in economic and technological matters of common interest.

These thoughts were generally well received by my colleagues. The British Ministers, although firm in their well-known attitude, did not entirely deny the strength of the argument that a formal link with membership, although desirable for them, might perhaps not be indispensable since the GATT rules would anyhow require a continuation of the process and since this process might be further helped by the close contacts and negotiations connected with the elaboration of such arrangements.

As you note from the enclosed communiqué, EFTA as a group has given a positive response to the idea of interim arrangements, which would, however, be no substitute for

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wider integration. EFTA is now formally and unanimously committed to the idea that such arrangements might be helpful to reduce the ill effects of the division of Europe and that, by their very nature, they could only be successful if all interested EFTA countries could participate from the start in eventual negotiations. This point as you know is of greatest importance to us since we feel that the present split is bad enough and that the creation of yet another division would make matters worse not only from an economic but also from a political point of view.

I still believe that the idea we discussed in Berne of setting up an informal contact group to study jointly the feasibility and possible contents of interim arrangements is a sound one. The mood in London was, however, not bold enough to give public expression in the communiqué to such a "revolutionary" idea.

Let me assure you in closing that I considered our frank and direct exchange of views in Berne most helpful and that I attach the greatest importance that no misunderstandings should arise between our two countries, whose economic and trade policies and whose position with respect to powerful neighbours are so much alike!

Hoping to have soon the pleasure of meeting you again, believe me to be, dear Mr. Minister,

Schaffner

Sincerely Yours

sig. Schaffner