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## OVERSEAS NEWS

# Arabs delay decision on new relations with West Germany

From NORMAN CROSSLAND, Bonn, November 14

Hopes in Bonn that the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League would recommend a resumption of diplomatic relations between the Arab States and West Germany were disappointed today when the Cairo meeting agreed instead to postpone the issue for four months. The question, which was one of the main items on the

council's agenda, will now be discussed at the next ordinary session of the league's council in March.

In May, 1965, 10 Arab countries broke off relations with Bonn in retaliation against West Germany's recognition of Israel, and after it had been disclosed that the West Germans had been supplying arms to the Israelis. Since then two members of the League, Jordan and Yemen, have resumed relations with Bonn.

For years West German Middle East policy had been balanced on a tightrope. It was aimed on the one hand at fulfilling moral obligations to Israel, and on the other at not provoking Arab recognition of the East German Government.

President Nasser had always toyed with the idea of accepting the existing of two German States but had been held back by the massive aid granted him by Bonn, and by the fact that West German scientists used to work on the Egyptian rocket programme.

The agreement with the Israelis had been kept a secret, and was unearthed by President Nasser as an example of Bonn's double dealing. The agreement, signed in New York in 1960, was said to be worth more than £30 millions.

In 1965, the then Chancellor, Dr Erhard, decided to abrogate the agreement and to establish open relations with the Israelis. By that time 80 per cent of the arms deal had been fulfilled, and it was agreed that the remainder should be covered by the delivery of goods in kind.

### Influence

The policy of dissuading the Arabs from recognising the East Germans no longer applies, since several Arab countries have established full diplomatic relations with East Germany. One of Bonn's aims in wishing to put relations with the Arabs on a normal basis is to counter East German influence in the area.

But there is more to it than that. West Germany, content for years to be a loyal member of the Western alliance without getting involved in other areas, is now increasingly showing an interest in closer ties with countries of the Third World. This is in line with Herr Brandt's recent statement that the Federal Republic had come of age.

Reuter reports from Cairo—The Foreign Ministers have set up a five-nation committee — Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Tunisia — to suggest means of settling differences among Arab countries. The Ministers are trying to determine a unified strategy on the Middle East crisis before it is raised this month in the United Nations General Assembly.

A five-point report has been drawn up. This deals with the Eastern front against Israel — Jordan and Iraq — the mobilisation of resources, Palestinian resistance, and efforts to turn the battle against Israel into a pan-Arab struggle.

Egypt is anxious to avoid division within Arab ranks, especially at the Assembly. There are differences between Iraq, Syria, Algeria, and Libya on one hand, and Jordan on the other, over Palestinian resistance.