Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 861
30 September 1958

General policy of Member States of the Council of Europe in the light of the present international situation

Report[1]
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
Rapporteur: Mr Pierre de FÉLICE, France

1. 1958 - 10th Session - Second part

A. Draft Recommendation presented by the Political Committee

1. The Assembly,

2. Considering that the Council of Europe, representing the Parliaments of fifteen member nations, is in duty bound to fulfil in a constructive way the consultative mission which has been entrusted to it by working out a reasoned opinion on the grave developments of the present time and by promoting greater co-ordination of the Members' policies in order to achieve an effective common European policy in the future;

3. Considering that in many fields, particularly as regards the co-ordination of foreign policies (Recommendations 132, 133 and 150), aid to less developed countries (Recommendation 158 and Resolution 145), the establishment of a common policy in the Middle East (Recommendation 132) and controlled suspension of nuclear tests (Resolution 150 and Document 823), the Assembly showed the way ahead, which has not always been followed by the Governments, but that it can draw from the lessons of the past conclusions which justify the taking up of a more clearly defined attitude;

4. Considering that the piecemeal settlement of particular disputes will not be fully efficacious unless it is the implementation, either partial or in a particular area, of an overall policy,

5. Recommends the Committee of Ministers:

6. For the solution of present conflicts:

7. As regards the problem of the Far East, dangerously made manifest by the aggression of Communist China against the islands of Quemoy and Matsu, to hold urgently a special session to try and work out the broad lines of a common policy which might contribute to the solution of this problem;

8. As regards the problem of the Middle East, to recognise the movement of the Arab peoples towards unity and political and social emancipation as legitimate; to work for the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement providing a fair return for petroleum to the producer countries and a fairer distribution among the Arab States of the profits brought by their petroleum resources; and to give them, through an international body, real help without any political conditions attached, to deal with their economic difficulties. The Assembly at the same time expresses the hope that political and social emancipation will promote real 'democracy in these countries;

9. As regards the problem of the Icelandic fisheries, to seize itself of this question in order to work out a policy which will take into account, in particular, the legitimate interests of Iceland while respecting the freedom of the high seas and the accepted principles of international law in this field;

10. As regards the Cyprus problem, to examine the recent proposals of the United Kingdom, considered as a transitional stage, and to study the conditions on which this question can be finally settled since it creates disagreement among the States of united Europe whose cohesion is particularly necessary for their mutual security;

11. For the establishment of a policy for disarmament and peace:

12. to request the Governments to take advantage of the happily positive results of the conference of atomic experts at Geneva, both to bring about the controlled suspension of nuclear tests and to extend the use of this method to other aspects of disarmament (prevention of surprise attacks, etc.);

13. to consider progress made on this limited basis as only a stage towards the final aim, which must be the banning of the manufacture and the controlled destruction of present stocks of atomic weapons, progressive and controlled disarmament in the sphere of conventional arms, so that the effort involved can be directed to channels of peaceful competition through an increase in the exchange of scientific, economic and cultural knowledge between the Powers, who each have an interest in the preservation of peace, not only to co-operate among themselves for their joint prosperity, but also to help, by means of the resources freed through general disarmament, those countries whose development has been retarded.

B. Explanatory Memorandum (Rapporteur : M. de FELICE)

1. THE TASK OF THE CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY

1. In March 1958 a report was made to your Committee on two questions: East-West relations, with special reference to the possibility of i-elaxing tension; and the overall policy of Europe towards the Arab world.

2. As your Committee did not have time to devote all the necessary attention to the second of these problems, they only submitted their conclusions on the first of them to the Consultative Assembly—East-West relations (Doc. 820). They reported the results of their deliberations on three aspects of this problem which current developments had brought to the fore: the preparation of a summit conference, the controlled suspension of nuclear tests and the prospects for atomic disarmament limited to a specific area, as envisaged in several proposals.

3. Although your Committee only invited the Consultative Assembly to express a view on these three points, the Assembly could not be persuaded to adopt a definite attitude. A number of votes were indeed taken on the separate paragraphs of the draft Recommendation on East-West relations (Doc. 823) and on the amendments, but, when asked to adopt the text as a whole on 3rd May 1958, the Assembly referred it back to the Committee for further consideration.

4. This incident—in itself trivial enough, but aggravated by subsequent developments—led to new thinking in your Committee, which is echoed in the preamble to the draft Recommendation now before the Assembly.

5. The reasons for our attitude are clear.

6. While the views put forward by your Committee last May on the summit talks and on the creation of a denuclearised area have merely remained topical issues, the proposals for the suspension of nuclear tests in paragraph 2 of the draft Recommendation shelved on 3rd May 1958 were adopted, exactly as made by your Committee, in declarations by the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union on 22nd August 1958. We certainly welcome this development but we may also feel that the Consultative Assembly, whose task is to give opinions—opinions which by their very nature must be made known before action is taken — has, unfortunately, deprived itself of the distinction of having shown the way in this case. Nor have events in the Middle East been geared to the pace of our deliberations...

7. Your Committee have drawn two conclusions from this experience.

8. The first is that the Assembly must now and in future, in its own interest, fulfil its advisory function constructively, not only by delivering a reasoned opinion on the most menacing events of the day but also by framing a European policy which can be made effective through greater co-ordination of the attitudes of Member States.

9. The second is that the Assembly, having now some justification for claiming to have indicated the right course, can no longer persist in an exaggeratedly timid attitude through fear of making mistakes—always possible, indeed, but less serious in view of its purely advisory function. For the very existence of the Council of Europe is at stake. Now, when an Assembly with authority—the Assembly of the Six — is exercising real powers, the Consultative Assembly of the Fifteen will be in danger of decline and oblivion if it lacks the courage to play its proper part, which is to express a European view on the policies to be carried out.

10. In taking this stronger line, the Assembly should not be accused of looking upon all questions solely in relation to Europe's interests.

11. Nor does this in any way mean that Europe ceases to feel bound to the Atlantic Alliance and wants to play a lone hand—to surrender to some brand of neutralism or set herself up as a " third force " standing above the strife while remaining in the Western camp. All she wants is to make her influence more strongly felt within the Atlantic Alliance; for her point of view, which is not necessarily the same as that of the United States—can be helpful to all in shaping a policy more consonant with the interests of the free world as a whole.

12. Europe does not intend either to have eyes only for the problems of her own continent or to treat in isolation the difficulties that arise almost everywhere. She is fully aware that a piecemeal solution of individual conflicts can only be fully effective if it is the local or partial application of a general policy. Heedful of the connection between events in the world, her aim is only to make known her particular appreciation of those events.

13. And it is precisely because your Committee wish, in this spirit, to reinforce the activity of the Consultative Assembly, without overlooking the interdependence of all the different problems, that they submit to you both proposals for settling existing disputes and views on the introduction of a policy of general disarmament and peace.

2. SETTLEMENT OF PRESENT DISPUTES

14. The gravity of a conflict must be assessed far more in terms of its repercussions than of its proximity to the observer. For this reason your Committee has examined, first, the problem of the islands of Quemoy and Matsu, which endangers peace; secondly, the problem of the Middle East, which is of the highest economic and strategic importance to the whole of Europe; and, finally, two questions which are somewhat in the nature of family matters for our continent, the Icelandic fisheries and Cyprus.

15. Your Committee have formulated their views on each of these questions, in order that the Consultative Assembly may be enabled to submit specific recommendations to the other statutory organ of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers.

The Far East

16. While condemning categorically aggression on the part of Communist China against Quemoy and Matsu, your Committee have given specific consideration to two aspects of the problem: first, the intrinsic importance of these two islands, the doubtful strategic value of which might lead to a decision to evacuate them, and, secondly, the belief that a withdrawal following the use of force would create a dangerous precedent.

17. From this distance your Committee did not feel able to give an opinion on the firm but flexible policy required to solve a problem whose difficulty is shown by the divergent views held by the United States and the United Kingdom. In view of the urgent need to find a solution, however, your Committee suggest the meeting immediately of an influential and impartial European body to find a peaceful compromise acceptable to both sides.

18. At the time of the Iraqi revolution, in July 1958, there was much talk of a special conference being called to examine this dangerous situation. The alleged difficulty of calling a special European Conference does not arise, since we have the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, whose assistance it is the responsibility of the Consultative Assembly to seek.

19. Your Committee therefore propose that an urgent request be made to the Committee of Ministers to hold a special meeting for the sole purpose of examining the situation arising from Communist Chinese aggression against the islands of Quemoy and Matsu. It is our belief that if it were to make a real effort to lay down the lines of a common European policy, the Committee of Ministers could act as an arbitrator and conciliator and so make an effective contribution towards dealing with a problem which must be solved if peace is to be preserved.

The Middle East

20. Eighty per cent of Europe's petroleum supplies come from the Middle East, and Europe has a major strategic interest in preventing the Soviet Union from acquiring a predominant influence in this area. For these reasons, your Committee were not content with merely suggesting a procedure that might facilitate a solution, as in the case of the Far East, but decided to give their opinion on the substance of the problem in the light of the present situation.

21. They felt that it would be unproductive to debate now whether it would have been better to put a stop to the Nasser adventure right at the beginning, at the time of the Suez crisis, instead of allowing it to develop and then, at a later stage, sending troops into the Lebanon and Jordan when asked to do so by the Governments of these threatened countries; or whether the better course would have been to have shown more sympathy from the start towards the desire for emancipation in the Middle East which is shared by many other parts of the world, and, if necessary, to have gone part of the way to meeting Arab aspirations in return for certain concessions.

22. Leaving the past aside, your Committee based their discussion on two points: first, the Western world as a whole has been the loser as a result of its lack of a common policy in the Middle East; secondly, the unification of the Arab States has now made such strides that to continue to oppose it would only mean

driving those States—often perhaps against their will—to look more and more for Russian support and assistance, in spite of the Soviet Union's record of brutal oppression in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

23. From these two facts your Committee concluded that an entirely new policy is required towards the Arab States. This new policy must have three objects: to break down their hostility towards the West, to take immediate steps to create better understanding by putting relations between oil producers and consumers on a more clearly defined basis, and, lastly, through economic aid, to lay a new foundation for the friendship that used to link the Arab world and the big Western Powers.

24. As regards the first point—how to break down the hostility aroused by recent events—your Committee have taken note of the Arab States' resolution, adopted unanimously on 21st August 1958 at the Extraordinary Session of the United Nations Assembly, and they propose that the Consultative Assembly should recognise the legitimate aspirations of the Arab peoples towards unity and political and social emancipation. Your Committee, having examined the situation in the Middle East but not the special problems of North Africa, consider that a sympathetic attitude might have two results. It might stultify, among the Arab States, the unwarrantable practice of indirect aggression from outside against the established Government of a country; and it might steer them, through political and social emancipation, away from dictatorship and towards genuine democracy. Your Committee express a special wish in this sense.

25. Secondly, to reach a speedy solution of the oil question, your Committee propose an overall agreement between the producing and consuming countries, i.e., the setting up on both sides of entities capable of reaching together a general understanding on the rules to which any specific oil agreement would thereafter be subject. Your Committee suggest that one of the rules should provide for the payment of a fairer remuneration to the producing countries to be used for the benefit of their peoples rather than of their rulers. Another should ensure a fairer distribution of profits between the producing countries and those very much poorer countries through which the oil only passes in transit.

26. Thirdly, after having thus suggested how the causes of hostility may be removed, and a more friendly atmosphere created, your Committee express their support for the project which the Secretary-General of the United Nations has been asked to translate into fact, namely the setting up of an Economic Development Board for the countries concerned. But, while believing that joint action on these lines may open the way to a new type of co-operation that will profit both sides, your Committee attach considerable importance to the psychological aspect of the question, which must be given the most careful attention if this project is to succeed. Not only must the material help be distributed by an international organisation in order to avoid even the appearance of colonialism, but care must be taken that no political strings whatsoever are attached, so that there may be no grounds for looking on the plan as a renewal, under a new guise, of the old-fashioned method of tutelage. Susceptibilities must be met by tactful handling.

27. Your Committee feel that valuable advice might be given or, indeed, a leading part taken in the solution of this delicate problem by countries like the Scandinavian States, Germany and Italy, which were not directly involved in the past complications between the West and the Arab States, or by a country such as Turkey which has herself experienced similar difficulties at the time of her emancipation and as she moved further and further towards the Western forms of civilisation.

28. In proposing this policy based on sympathetic understanding, justice and economic aid, your Committee have borne two fundamental requirements constantly in mind.

29. The first concerns the State of Israel. While it is true that at a time when Europe is in process of achieving unity she cannot logically blame the Middle East for trying to do the same, neither can she tolerate the unification of the Arab States being used against Israel. The Western Powers took the responsibility of creating the State of Israel and it is their duty to ensure its territorial integrity, either through bilateral agreements or through the United Nations. Whether in the case of aggression against Israel, or of a threat against the Arab world arising from Israel's own dynamic policies, your Committee state categorically that either kind of adventure must be prevented. They are the more anxious to stress this point since it will not be long now before the troops stationed in the Lebanon and Jordan to ensure the safety of these two countries will have to be withdrawn, and it is only too likely that this will be a signal for the disclosure of intolerable ambitions.

30. The second requirement is that the States, which are to benefit from the new policy, must give an official undertaking that they will not allow themselves to be used as a springboard for the extension of Communist influence in an area of such immense strategic importance, whether by accepting deliveries of arms or in any other way. In the opinion of your Committee, if the West adopts the generous attitude towards the Middle East suggested above, it will calm men's minds and stop the outpouring of hostile propaganda on

radio and elsewhere, while the economic aid granted under the conditions proposed will create a new atmosphere between the Arab States and the Western world so that, instead of letting themselves be used, against their real inclination, to further Soviet aims, these States will co-operate loyally with the free world.

31. Your Committee are fully aware that their proposals require courage, but they feel that a new policy, even if its results cannot be forecast with any certainty, is preferable to the policy followed hitherto, which no longer offers the least hope for the future.

Icelandic Fisheries

32. While Iceland's membership of the Council of Europe makes the Icelandic fisheries dispute a family quarrel, your Committee did not feel able to propose a definite solution to the present dispute, especially as the Icelandic member was prevented from attending the meeting on 22nd and 23rd September 1958.

33. Your Committee recognise Iceland's special interest in a certain extension of her territorial limits, but they are also conscious at once of the serious damage which would be done to fundamental principles of international law if in this case, and perhaps tomorrow in others, a unilateral decision by any State whatever was accepted, and also of the strategic importance of the Icelandic bases, especially since the feat of the Nautilus, for our common defence, to which Iceland contributes through N.A.T.O.

34. For this reason, and despite the fact that this question is now before the United Nations, your Committee ask that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe should take it up because in their view the special relationship between countries belonging to the Council of Europe and the influence of the Committee of Ministers ought to assist in reaching a friendly settlement of the dispute.

Cyprus

35. As regards the problem of Cyprus, your Committee, in the absence of any Greek members 1, decided to adopt an equally cautious attitude. They did not go beyond asking the Committee of Ministers to examine the recent proposals of the United Kingdom considered as a transitional and provisional, stage, and to study the conditions which might make a final settlement of this question possible.

36. Such prudence should not, however, be interpreted as implying any renunciation of the special part which the Assembly of the Council of Europe could play in this dispute. If your Rapporteur were to be permitted to put a personal point of view, he would willingly say that our Assembly, deriving its influence from the fact that it is above the parties to the dispute, and its impartiality from a feeling of equal friendship for all the members, would appear to be well qualified to work out the outline of a settlement prompted by the common European interest and conciliating the points of view of all concerned.

3. DISARMAMENT AND PEACE

37. If we solve these specific disputes, we shall have found remedies to immediate difficulties. There are, however, other uncertain but always latent dangers which require that we should determine certain guiding principles for action. We must try and achieve disarmament so as to prevent the political tensions existing in the world from having military consequences. We must try and organise our co-operation in the scientific, economic and cultural fields in such a way as to increase the welfare of all the peoples, whatever their ideologies may be.

38. Your Committee have once again explored these two major problems.

Disarmament

39. The draft Recommendation submitted to the Consultative Assembly in May 1958 stated the position adopted by your Committee on two questions to which it is not felt necessary to add anything at present. These two questions are the careful preparations needed for summit talks and the study of the possibility of creating a denuclearised area in Central Europe on two conditions, that the security of the West is not endangered and that counterparts can be obtained in the form of political disengagement in relation to Germany and the countries of Central Europe which were once independent.

40. On the other hand, a new development which is most encouraging has led to a wide discussion in your Committee. I refer to the acceptance, on the 22nd August 1958, by the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, of the suspension of nuclear tests as from the 31st October 1958. This follows the work of the international atomic experts at Geneva and their conclusions on the possibilities of detection of tests.

41. This decision raises three sets of questions. First, the organisation of an effective system of control to ensure that suspension is loyally carried out; second, the possible extension, by appropriate arrangements, of the same method to fields other than nuclear tests; and third, the political consequences aristing from the agreement to suspend tests in relation to non-signatory Powers who do not yet possess nuclear bombs.

42. As regards the first two questions raised, your Committee propose that the Committee of Ministers should be invited to request the Governments not only to reach agreement on the controlled suspension of tests, but to apply this new method to other aspects of disarmament, for example, the prevention of surprise attacks.

43. While the acceptance of the principle of control is important, it is necessary for this control to be very carefully organised. The atomic experts at Geneva have proposed the setting up of 180 control stations throughout the world, but decisions have still to be taken on their site, on the staff which is to man them and on the international organisation which is to have responsibility of supervision. It is important that the Consultative Assembly, which has always had the question of control uppermost in its mind, should be enabled to follow the strict application of the controlled suspension of nuclear tests.

44. Insistence on this is quite natural as the progress achieved in this field must be considered as a first attempt at limited disarmament, which in a short time may be tried again. The application of the procedure which has been followed—first, a meeting of experts of different nationalities for the purpose of examining the technical aspects of control; then a decision on the substance of the question; and, finally, joint action on methods of detection— must be so successful that it can become a precedent enabling us, by successive and specific leaps, to achieve general disarmament in a practical and effective way. We cannot overstress the benefits for the present and for the future of this new departure.

45. Despite the unquestionable benefits of the controlled suspension of nuclear tests, your Committee have nevertheless considered the insecurity and, to a certain extent, the impression of subordination, which can be felt, now that agreement has been reached, by the Powers which have not yet carried out nuclear tests and would find themselves finally deprived of the most modern weapons for their defence and, in this way, irrevocably in a state of inferiority compared with the Powers in possession of nuclear bombs.

46. The suspension of nuclear tests does not affect existing stocks, which cannot be detected from a distance and must be controlled on the spot, nor the possibility of manufacturing bombs according to older processes which no longer need to be tested by new experiments. It follows that the suspension of nuclear tests, which is in itself a most desirable development, is much too fragmentary a solution to the problem of security. For genuine security implies the destruction of existing stocks or their conversion to peaceful uses, the absolute prohibition of the manufacture of bombs and also an agreement on conventional weapons if the overwhelming superiority, in this field, of the Soviet Union over the free world is not to be left intact. In a word, genuine security can only be the result of disarmament affecting all kinds of weapons and it must be strictly controlled.

47. It is quite clear that the effect of the suspension of tests is to prevent all those nations which have not yet produced nuclear bombs from doing so in future, i.e. to forbid them forever entry into the " Atomic Club " where the world strategy of the West may be decided among the Powers possessing atomic bombs. In other words, while looking like a highly humanitarian gesture, the suspension of atomic tests could conceivably lead to the creation of a kind of monopoly in the formulation of policy for the Powers already possessing nuclear bombs.

48. Your Committee have considered the position adopted in this matter by France, which is anxious to manufacture her own bomb and to carry out tests not subject to prohibition in her case, and also the position of Switzerland and Sweden, which countries wonder whether they will be able, without nuclear bombs, to continue to maintain a policy of effective neutrality. Your Committee are fully aware of the danger of an increase in the number of nations possessing nuclear bombs and they discussed whether a European solution could not be found to this question under the guarantee either of the six-Power Community or of Western European Union. The difficulties raised by this question were so great, however, that your Committee did not feel able to come to any conclusion.

49. The Statute clearly states that military questions are outside the competence of the Council of Europe, but it has been recognised for a long time that the Assembly is entitled to study the political aspects of defence. It was for that reason that your Committee felt able to discuss the matters dealt with in the previous paragraphs, without, however, coming to any conclusion. It may be that the Assembly itself will wish to discuss them.

Peace

50. By a unanimous vote, your Committee have once again underlined that schemes for limited disarmament ought to be considered only as a gradual advance towards general controlled disarmament. Your Committee ask in addition that the efforts of all nations should be directed towards peaceful competition through an extension of scientific and cultural exchanges. The recent meeting of scientists for the study of the peaceful uses of atomic energy is fully in line with their own thinking. In a general way, your Committee consider that exchanges in all fields can only work to the detriment of dictatorship and to the benefit of free regimes.

51. Your Committee also wanted to link the two problems—disarmament and co-operation— by asking that the economies achieved through a decrease in military expenditure should be used to help those countries whose development has been retarded through circumstances.

52. Such are the considerations which explain and justify the draft Recommendation submitted to the Assembly.

53. The present times no longer permit the silence which we have observed on certain previous occasions. Your Committee hope that the Consultative Assembly will, after a wide debate, vote affirmatively on the questions submitted to it, so that, instead of reacting after the events which have taken place, it should now act to the best of its ability in time to meet them.