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Co-ordination of the foreign policies of Member States

Report¹

1. 1958 - 10th Session - Second part



A. Draft Recommendation

1. The Assembly,
2. Considering that new momentum must be given to the European idea now that the Common Market, to be completed by the Free Trade Area, and Euratom are definitely established;
3. Considering that it is in the enlightened self-interest of the peoples of Europe to achieve political co-operation;
4. Considering that this political co-operation will assist the plans of the six-Power Community for the formation of a strong economic unit in Europe;
5. Reaffirming its determination to ensure that the voice of Europe is heard more clearly in the world and her influence strengthened;
6. Having received the report of the Special Group of Representatives which visited the Foreign Ministers of Member States in accordance with Order No. 113 to discuss with them Recommendation 150, paragraphs 1-3,
7. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers that, in order to achieve better co-ordination of the foreign policies of Member States, they should appoint, as a first step, a standing Committee of Political Experts, this standing Committee:
 - a. to be appointed in the same way as committees of social, cultural, legal, health or other Governmental experts;
 - b. to include representation of as many Member States as would be willing to take part, the others being enabled, at their own request, to remain aloof from these activities;
 - c. to be staffed by high officials of the Foreign Offices of Member States, persons of wide experience and competence in political affairs and of suitable rank;
 - d. to be responsible for the preparation of the political deliberations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the idea being that the whole Committee should have at its disposal working papers previously prepared jointly by the Political Experts and reflecting a European approach;
 - e. to be essentially a study group, collecting facts, assessing and analysing the situation and putting forward proposals, where appropriate, but not having any power to take decisions;
 - f. to report to the Committee of Ministers, though the Committee of Ministers might decide to send the reports on to the Assembly in the form of the equivalent to a " White Paper ";
 - g. to be set up initially, if necessary, on an experimental basis.

B.**1. Report of the Special Group on co-ordination of the foreign policies of Member States**

1. On 28th October 1957, the Consultative Assembly adopted Recommendation 150, which was as follows: - « The Assembly, - Considering that the peoples of the six-Power Communities have decided to unite in a closely integrated economic community; - Considering that other European countries are trying to associate with the Common Market through the formation of a free trade area; - Considering that the political integration of Europe will be assisted by the economic developments over the next twelve or fifteen years, but that other preparatory steps must be taken to strengthen Europe's position in the world; - Considering that there should be full and effective consultation on foreign policy, if possible within a broad European framework; - Recalling its Recommendation 133 of 11th January 1957, urging the Committee of Ministers to work out... 'a concrete and effective method for co-ordinating national foreign policies as a preparation for drawing up a common policy'—which has not been answered by the Committee of Ministers; - Recalling also Recommendation 139 of 4th May 1957, which requested that Member Governments 'should do everything possible to develop the habit and practice of effective prior consultation in all major matters which affect the partnership of European nations' and went on to propose that 'the Prime Ministers of Member States should meet from time to time... to try to map out a common course, - Recommends to the Committee of Ministers:

1.1. that they should give a complete and detailed reply to Recommendation 133 and Recommendation 139;

1.2. that they should develop a system of full consultation with a view to the ultimate formulation of a common European foreign policy; it being understood that if certain countries do not find it appropriate to follow this course others must proceed without delay;

1.3. that they should take into consideration the following as means to achieve this end:

- a. meetings of Prime Ministers from time to time for informal discussions on major questions of policy;
- b. regular and more frequent meetings of Foreign Ministers to discuss all major questions affecting the European partnership of nations;
- c. the setting up of a standing group of personalities and permanent officials of suitable rank and calibre, possibly attached to a European organisation, to prepare in common the work of the regular meetings of the Foreign Ministers."

2. At the same time, the Assembly took the unusual step of inviting the Political Committee to set up a Special Group from among its members, to be assisted by the Secretary-General, " to enquire into the machinery or procedure required to establish fuller and more effective consultation among Member States on foreign policy; to meet Members of the Governments, Members of Parliament and senior officials in member countries; and to make a report." (Order 113).

3. The following members of the Assembly were appointed to the Special Group on 29th October 1957: M. de Menthon (Chairman, France), M. Kiesinger (Rapporteur, Federal Republic of Germany), M. Aktas (Turkey), M. Bettiol (Italy), M. Bohy (Belgium), Dame Florence Horsbrugh (United Kingdom) and M. Jakobsen (Denmark). The Secretary-General, M. Benvenuti, was requested to lend his assistance.

4. The Special Group visited in turn M. Pineau, then French Foreign Minister (in Paris), M. Pella, then Italian Foreign Minister (in Rome), Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (in London), M. Zorlu, Turkish Foreign Minister (in Strasbourg), M. Lange, Norwegian Foreign Minister (in Strasbourg), M. Leopold Figl, Austrian Foreign Minister (in Vienna), M. Unden, Swedish Foreign Minister (in Brussels) and M. Wigny, Belgian Foreign Minister (in Brussels). For reasons of time, economy and convenience, they have not been able, so far, to call on the Foreign Ministers of the other Member States, (though your Rapporteur, who is Chairman of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee, has spoken with Chancellor Adenauer and with M. von Brentano, the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany) but they hope to do so before the end of the year, on the occasion of meetings in either Paris or Strasbourg of the Joint Committee, of the Assembly itself in the autumn, or of the Committee of Ministers. Nevertheless, having been given the opportunity to explain the aims of the Assembly to eight Foreign Ministers and having benefited from their advice, the Special Group believe it possible to report back to the Assembly, through the Political Committee, already at this stage.

5. The Special Group wish to put on record that, in addition to visiting the Foreign Ministers mentioned in the preceding paragraph, they also had the privilege of being received in Paris by M. P.-H. Spaak, first President of the Consultative Assembly and now Secretary-General of N.A.T.O., by M. Maurice Schumann, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly, by M. Marcel Plaisant, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of the Republic, by M. Maurice Faure, then State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and by M. Louis Joxe, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Rome they had discussions with M. Alberto Folchi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, M. Rossi Longhi, then Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with M. Magistrati, Director of Political Affairs. They also had the opportunity of meeting a number of Italian Deputies and Senators, including M. Eduardo Martino and M. Pacciardi. In London, the Special Group saw the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. David Ormsby-Gore, and the Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Sir Anthony Rumbold. In Vienna, they also saw M. Gschnitzer, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, M. Fuchs, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and M. Haymerle, Director of Political Affairs.

6. The Special Group do not propose to re-state here all the reasons which militate in favour of closer consultations in foreign policy. These can be found in the Report submitted by M. Kiesinger to the Assembly on behalf of the Political Committee on 14th October 1957 (Doc. 718). In addition, they have been the main theme running through all the debates on the international situation in the Assembly since the events of Suez and Hungary in 1956. The purpose of this paper is solely to account to the Assembly for the activities of the Special Group and, in the light of the discussions held with Ministers and other leaders, to propose a practical course of action which may lead to effective prior consultations on all matters affecting the European partnership of nations. Such consultations might, in the Special Group's view, lead, wherever there is a possibility, to greater co-ordination and ultimately to a common foreign policy.

7. The Special Group are able to report that there is widespread recognition and sympathy among the Ministers for the need for closer consultations. The discussions were therefore largely on the method to be used. But, before coming to this aspect of the question, the Special Group must record that they felt bound to draw the attention of the Foreign Ministers to the fact that it is the recognised and well-known aim of the six Continental Powers not to stop at economic integration but to go on and achieve, in the political field (beginning with co-ordination of foreign policy) what has already been, or is being, achieved as regards coal and steel, atomic energy and the Common Market. In the draft Constitution prepared by the Ad Hoc Assembly in 1953, co-ordination of the foreign policies of Member States, in addition to coal and steel, the Common Market and defence, was specifically listed as the province of the supranational political community to be instituted. The signs are therefore that, while developing into a strongly integrated economic unit, the Six will also aim at the harmonisation of their foreign policies. The recent meeting between Chancellor Adenauer and General de Gaulle, the visits of Signor Fanfani to Paris and Bonn and the journeys of the French Foreign Minister to Rome and Bonn tend to confirm this view.

8. All the Foreign Ministers visited, but especially the " non-Six ", were most concerned at the possibility of a political fissure in Europe. They dreaded the prospect of a divided free Europe. Your Special Group entirely shares these apprehensions, and it is in order to avoid the danger of division in Europe that they propose that all Member States of the Council of Europe should have the opportunity to be associated with a system of closer political consultations right from the beginning and even if this endeavour has to be restricted, in the end, to the Six.

9. So far, the pattern has been, in the case of Coal and Steel, Euratom and the Common Market, that the Six have gone ahead, the others being unwilling or unable at the time to participate in the negotiations for setting up these bodies. The desire of the United Kingdom and other European countries to become associated with the new Communities at a later stage had caused difficulties. This is certainly the case with the Common Market, and it is necessary to heed the warning and avoid the same kind of difficulty in future. At the same time there can be no question of restraining the Six in any way. The problem is how to infuse more vitality into the idea of Greater Europe in order that, side by side, with a strong six-Power Community, there should not be merely a weak association of Greater Europe but that the gap between the two, if there is to be one, should be kept narrow and solidly bridged.

10. The main doubts expressed in relation to the proposal that consultations should be held in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe were:

- a. that there were three neutral countries in the Council of Europe: Austria, Ireland and Sweden;
- b. that such consultations would mean duplication with N.A.T.O.;
- c. that there was insufficient community of purpose and lack of the necessary political will among the twelve non-neutral members of the Council of Europe.

11. As regards the three neutral countries or any other that did not feel able to attempt greater co-ordination of foreign policy, the Special Group feel that it is possible that they might still wish to benefit from consultations. While thus able to exchange views and give their advice, the neutral Members could remain outside any concerted plan of action that was eventually decided upon. But, on the other hand, if the neutral Members preferred, they should be enabled, at their own request, to absent themselves from these activities. The Special Group consider that it is, however, essential in order to avoid divisions in Europe that no country should feel excluded from the start.

12. As regards duplication with N.A.T.O., the Special Group, while determined that nothing should be done that might embarrass N.A.T.O., felt that a certain overlapping might be in some measure inevitable. Several of the Foreign Ministers visited had pointed to the need for careful handling of this matter. One of the first of those seen by the Special Group had said that nothing must be done which might imply a danger of European countries being isolated from their North American partners in N.A.T.O. Later, another Minister, while anxious to find a way of grouping together the Six and the other members of the wider European community, was not convinced that a European point of view could not be put to the Americans and Canadians in N.A.T.O.—and he feared that, in certain cases at least, discussions among Europeans, in the absence of the Americans, on summit talks, for example, would lead to an unreal appreciation of the situation. Yet another Minister, also from the non-Six, while in favour of the extension of political discussions within the Council of Europe, said there must be no wasteful duplication with N.A.T.O., warned against creating a split between members of N.A.T.O., and felt that the Council of Europe must concentrate on other questions, for example on relations between the Six and the Nine, and the political aspects of the Free Trade Area. These are indeed weighty arguments, but the Special Group felt bound to recall with some force that it is the purpose and aim of the Council of Europe to promote European political unity as such, on a permanent basis, whereas the Atlantic Alliance is a defence organisation principally concerned with meeting the Communist challenge. It is not unrealistic to enquire whether, if at some future date the Communist menace were to recede, there would be a sufficient unity of wills to keep the Atlantic Community in existence. But the European community, now inaugurated must be permanently established. There is no doubt that Europe has its own political problems to discuss, especially now that the Common Market has been set up. This is the epoch of super-States, the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., China. The Arab nation is also seeking to find its unity. Likewise, Europe has no choice and must unite.

13. The Consultative Assembly has long expressed the view that a united Europe will be a much stronger and much more reliable partner for the countries of North America. As M. Bohy once said to the Assembly, how can you expect the United States to take the views of European countries into consideration when the United States Secretary of State has to deal with a "dust-heap of European States"? In this connection we should recall that the advancement of European unity has always been an objective of the United States Administration. The statement of policy of the Economic Cooperation Act, 1948, records that it is the policy of the people of the United States "to encourage the unification of Europe" and the Mutual Security Act, 1951, states that the funds authorised for economic and military assistance to Europe are to be used in order to "further encourage the economic unification and political federation of Europe".

14. Finally, in support of the policy of increased consultations among European countries, it must be stated that there are clearly certain problems -which, besides being of great importance to the Atlantic Alliance, are of special and intimate concern to Europe, not excluding neutral countries like Austria and Sweden. Among these are the relations with newly-developing countries, disengagement plans for Central and Eastern Europe and perhaps certain specific aspects of East-West relations, as for example the problem of the satellites. The Committee of Ministers has long asserted that the Council of Europe was the general framework of European policy without doing very much about it. The time is now ripe to start giving meaning and significance to this concept.

15. It was observed, furthermore, in the Special Group that in the same way as the six Common Market countries co-ordinated their attitude in relation to the OEEC. Free Trade Area negotiations, so the European members of N.A.T.O. could endeavour to achieve a measure of co-ordination within the Council of Europe. This would in no way weaken the NATO alliance.

16. The Special Group regret that at the present time the political resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe once or twice a year, for example Resolution (57) 26 of 13th. December 1957, are not followed up by appropriate action. Resolution (57) 26 said that the Committee of Ministers would "continue to consult together as in the past and further to develop their consultations when a problem arises which vitally affects the Council of Europe." But have any consultations taken place since then and are any contemplated? None, so far as we know in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It is true that there have been on many occasions bilateral consultations and even consultations between several members of N.A.T.O. But these are not enough. Your Special Group are well aware of the difficulties which will arise so

long as national interests remain as strong as they are today. But they believe that a big improvement could be made if the spadework could be done regularly and systematically, to make consultations among Foreign Ministers interesting, worthwhile and fruitful.

17. The Special Group thus believe that the setting up of a standing group of permanent officials of suitable rank and calibre, as advocated in Recommendation 150, paragraph 3 (c), is an essential, though modest, first step. This standing group:

- a. would be appointed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in the same way as committees of social, cultural, legal, health or other Governmental experts ;
- b. would consist of high officials of the Foreign Offices of Member States, of wide experience and competence in political affairs and of suitable rank;
- c. would prepare the political discussions of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the idea being that the Ministers should have at their disposal working papers previously prepared jointly by the political experts and based on a European approach;
- d. would be essentially a study group, collecting facts, assessing and analysing the situation and putting forward proposals where appropriate, but not having any power to take decisions;
- e. would report to the Committee of Ministers, though the Committee of Ministers might decide to send the reports to the Assembly in the form of the equivalent to a " White Paper ";
- f. might be set up, initially, as an experiment.

18. The standing group would have to be different from the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe, who suffer from an organisational defect in that there is no Permanent Council in Strasbourg, only seven countries having appointed resident Permanent Representatives there. This might well be one reason why no European way of thinking has emerged at ministerial level at Strasbourg. The Ministers' Deputies now have, on the whole, mainly administrative tasks, whereas the new standing group or committee of political experts would deal essentially, as the name implies, with political questions, and they must, of necessity, be based in their respective capitals in order to be in day-to-day contact with the appropriate Departments of State (Ministry of Foreign Affairs or another). The standing group would play, in relation to the Committee of Ministers, the same role, mutatis

19. mutandis, as Committees of Government Experts in the social, legal or cultural fields.

20. It is necessary to give the views of the Foreign Ministers in some detail on the setting up of this new Committee of Political Experts. One Minister warned that the proliferation of bodies and papers was gradually clogging the channels of government and that it was rapidly becoming a physical impossibility for a Foreign Secretary to keep the machine going. He pointed out that the minds of Governments were increasingly meeting in the Permanent Council of NATO. After having heard the views of the Special Group, however, he added that he was not inclined to shirk new experiments, and, while his approval must be conditioned by his unwillingness to duplicate with N.A.T.O., and the need to confer with his officials, he was prepared to support the establishment of the standing group, on an experimental basis-and provided suitable persons of the right calibre could be found and made available. As far as his country was concerned, a constructive beginning might be made with the Permanent Representative at Strasbourg sitting on the standing group. Two other Foreign Ministers expressed the same view on this last point.

21. One Foreign Minister had given his agreement to the setting up of the standing group of permanent officials so long as they had no power to commit Governments. One had agreed unreservedly, while another wondered whether a practical alternative would not be to intensify the work of the Ministers' Deputies. A small country like his own, he said, had difficulty in finding enough top-ranking experts for the various international committees in existence. Moreover, he was convinced that questions of world policy had to be left to N.A.T.O. whereas the Council of Europe should concern itself with questions of purely European interest, and, first and foremost, with the relations between the Six and the Nine. In answer to a question, the Special Group had made it clear that the standing group was not expected to solve crises but might help in preventing them.

22. The Special Group wish to emphasize, in this connection, that the success of the standing group will depend on whether Member Governments really have a common will to achieve results of political consequence and whether permanent officials of suitable calibre and authority can be found and spared to perform the task envisaged by the Assembly.

23. The Special Group are convinced that European schemes, if they are to be successful, must use the Messina approach. At Messina, in 1955, the Governments concerned first decided to create the Common Market and then asked experts to work out the manner in which this political decision could be implemented. Furthermore, in order to make sure that the experts did not founder in a morass of difficulties, they appointed M. Spaak, then Foreign Minister of Belgium, to be their Chairman and give the necessary political impulse to their work. In the Council of Europe this procedure has been modestly but successfully copied in the case of the simplification of frontier formalities. At the Assembly's insistence, M. Pinton, who was the Assembly Rapporteur and was then made Minister of Transport in the French Government, was appointed to preside over the work of a Committee of senior officials, once the basic decision to simplify frontier formalities in several respects had been taken by the Committee of Ministers. The Messina approach or method should, it is felt, be used again to bring about closer consultations on foreign policy, but before the political experts meet, clear decisions and undertakings are required from Member Governments.

24. The task of ensuring greater co-ordination in foreign policy will undoubtedly mean very hard work. M. Spaak had referred to the considerable amount of work, discussions, contacts, studies and gathering of information which had to be done to achieve the consultations now going on in N.A.T.O. It is clear, in the view of your Special Group, that the political figure appointed to leading the standing group will have to have round him a small staff of highly competent and efficient officials. The Secretariat-General, in accordance with its statutory obligations, will be called upon to assist the experts. For this purpose, it would appear to be very desirable to strengthen the organisational structure of Secretariat in order to enable it to prepare studies and research of a political nature.

25. Having had these discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Member States, the Special Group are convinced that there is sufficient ministerial support for the proposal set out in Recommendation 150 to be implemented and they wish to express the hope that the matter will now be dealt with expeditiously by the Committee of Ministers. The setting up of a standing group of political experts will undoubtedly fill a gap in the machinery of the Council of Europe and if the Governments are determined to use it, it will give new life to the Committee of Ministers at a time when the concept of the wider European Community is in urgent need of reinvigoration. It will also ensure that the political activities of the Assembly are matched by corresponding endeavours at ministerial level. The Special Group appeal to the Committee of Ministers to seize this opportunity to give new life to the Council of Europe and to ensure that the voice of Europe is heard in the counsels of the world through a European organisation.

26. This report was considered by the Special Group on 9th October 1958 at Strasbourg. It was agreed unanimously.