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European defence

Report

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Mr Johannes J. FENS, Netherlands



A. Explanatory Memorandum

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1. At its Sitting on 14th May, 1951, the Assembly requested the Committee on General Affairs to continue to "examine the progress of European defence" and to submit reports thereon. For various reasons it has so far proved impossible to prepare such reports. Mr. Sandys has been obliged to resign from the Committee, in view of his duties as a Minister of Her Majesty's Government: his colleagues one and all will not forget the valuable work which he undertook on behalf of the Assembly. Early this year the Assembly concentrated its discussions on the plans for a European Defence Community on the basis of the remarkable Report prepared by our colleague M. Margue, which was adopted by the Assembly last May. In adopting this procedure the Assembly intended that its general Report on the "Progress of Defence" should deal more particularly with the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in relation to Europe.

2. The great difficulties of the task assigned to your Committee should not, in spite of this limitation, be under-estimated. First of all, the timing of the report is not ideal. It has as yet little information with regard to the progress achieved in implementing the plans adopted at Lisbon. The annual review of the general situation which the Atlantic Council is required to make had not yet been undertaken. It would be impossible for even the best informed circles to give a clear picture of actual progress made over the last year in the sphere of European defence. The statements appearing in the press, which are, moreover, sometimes contradictory, are unlikely to help the Assembly to reach a reasoned judgement as to whether the Lisbon targets for 1952 will be reached; whether it will be necessary to revise the 1953 and 1954 estimates, or to what extent such a revision would affect the Atlantic alliance as a whole, or certain of its partners.

3. An even graver difficulty, which, so long as it is not overcome, will continue to make the Assembly's work in the defence field somewhat tentative, is the virtual absence of official information on which to base its studies. No liaison has as yet been established between the Council of Europe and N. A. T. O., and the policy adopted for the publication of information on the defence effort has so far been singularly lacking in coherence. Further reference will later be made to this problem (paragraph 12). It is, of course, not a question of asking for the publication of military secrets which might be of use to a potential enemy. It is, however, a fact that the only available documents, which give an overall picture of the situation are the Lisbon Communiqué (February, 1952) and the first annual Report of the Supreme Commander in Europe (April, 1952), both of which are couched in the most general terms. Some Governments have in the course of parliamentary debate provided additional details with regard to the development in their respective countries. There is no body, however, either in N. A. T. O. or in the Council of Europe, which is responsible for co-ordinating the additional information thus obtained in a way which would enable public opinion to gain an idea of the situation at the European level. Such information reaches us only in fragmentary form or through press articles and comment. It is hardly compatible with the dignity of the Council of Europe that a report presented to it should be based on such uncertain data.

4. The Committee has therefore been led to confine its Report as such to comments on a few specific questions, which do not by any means cover the whole problem. The debate in the Assembly may evidently cover much ground, and, for instance, take as one of its main themes, the April Report by General Eisenhower, which the Committee has deemed fit to include as an Appendix to its Report, together with the Lisbon Communiqué. Those of our colleagues who are members of the National Defence Committees of their Parliaments will be able to supplement that Report with other information of their own. I am convinced that the special qualifications of the members of the Assembly will ensure that the debate will, despite the difficulties involved in preparing it, maintain the high level of previous discussions on defence.

5. I wish at the outset to recall the exceptional services to the cause of European defence of a soldier of the United States who also became one of ours—General Dwight D. Eisenhower. I know I express the feelings of all of us in paying due tribute to this man who twice in a life-time has devoted his outstanding talents and energies to the defence of Europe. We much regretted his departure, and he may rest assured of our unfailing gratitude. His successor, General Ridgway, has already earned the trust and esteem of Europe by his achievements as Commander of the United Nations forces. He need have no doubt but that the activities of the Assembly are directed towards the same ends as his own, now that he is head of S. H. A. P. E.

2. Progress and prospects of European defence

6. The year 1952 seems to have been a turning-point in the organisation of European defence. There have so far been two political events of outstanding importance : The Ninth Session of the North Atlantic Council (Lisbon Conference—20th-25th February) at which the Governments solemnly adopted a whole range of decisions which had been under consideration for many months, as for example,

- 6.1. the agreement on the size of the defence force for 1952 and longer-term targets for the following two years : decisions taken on the recommendation of the " Three Wise Men ", which constitute the first concerted effort to balance military requirements with the realities of the economic and social situation;
- 6.2. the approval of the principles on which the European Defence Community is based and agreement on the relations to be established between the E. D. C. and N. A. T. O. ;
- 6.3. the strengthening of the Atlantic alliance by the establishment of a permanent Secretariat-General (under Lord Ismay) which inter alia will have the task of continuing the work begun before Lisbon by the Bureau of the " Temporary Council Committee "—the " Three Wise Men ".

Shortly before Lisbon, on 18th February, Greece and Turkey acceded to the Atlantic Treaty : the request adopted almost unanimously by Representatives in May, 1951 was thus satisfied. The economic and budgetary effects of the plans adopted at Lisbon formed the subject of debates, which did not always go very smoothly, in most of the national Parliaments during the following months. When adopting the necessary measures for financing the Lisbon programmes some of our Parliaments seized the opportunity solemnly to reaffirm their approval of the policy of collective defence within the N. A. T. O. framework.

7. The signature of the Treaty instituting the European Defence Community (27th May, 1952) and of the Bonn Treaty—the " Contractual Agreements "—(26th May) gives reason to hope for an early association of Western Germany with European defence. The Atlantic Treaty nations and more especially the United Kingdom, have given a guarantee to E. D. C. On 1st July the United States Senate approved the Bonn Treaty, and on 1st August the House of Commons did likewise. The E. D. C. is still limited to six countries, but in view of the desire of our Greek and Turkish colleagues that their countries should also be allowed to join the Community, may the Committee express the hope that special forms of liaison will shortly be established between the E. D. C. and Greece and Turkey?

8. In April General Eisenhower emphasised that the Atlantic nations had strengthened their defence arrangements in all spheres and gave an impressive survey of their achievements and of their prospects up to the end of 1952. The interpretation of his figures is not, however, an easy matter, and this may account for the scepticism with which the Lisbon plans have been received in certain quarters. The picture as a whole is, nevertheless, reassuring and fully justifies the efforts of the last two years. During the General Debate in the Assembly in May, 1952 on the European political situation, some of our colleagues made a most interesting analysis of the objects and methods of the Atlantic policy. They emphasised that the free nations had two dangers to combat :

- 8.1. a military danger : either a war of aggression or tactics of intimidation;
- 8.2. a danger of internal subversion : domestic trouble arising from unsatisfactory living conditions, the development of a " neutralist " attitude, etc.

These considerations being weighed in the balance, the re-inforcement of Europe's military power and the improvement of its economic conditions are clearly of equal importance as guarantees of its security. The Assembly might, as one of the conclusions to be drawn from debate last May, affirm its approval of the principles on which is based the policy for the collective defence of Europe, as defined at Lisbon, and the need to translate them into action during the coming years, at the same time stressing the vital importance of securing Europe's economic stability and an equitable division of the burden of rearmament among the countries and the various social classes in each country.

3. Economic and strategic objectives of Atlantic policy

9. A certain amount of light has been shed recently on the economic implications of Atlantic solidarity by the discussions concerning " off-shore " orders. The Committee does not, of course, propose to enter into the details of such a delicate question, which would require a considerable amount of technical research. In the course of previous discussions many speakers stressed the need for working out common programmes with regard both to manpower and to weapons and supplies, and for deciding upon a fair distribution of the burden among the nations concerned, in such a way as to preserve their economic stability. There would appear to

be no doubt that progress has been achieved in that direction, thanks to the work of the " Wise Men " and of the other Atlantic bodies. The discussions at the Lisbon Conference centred on the search for such a policy. So far, however, our countries are called upon only to fulfil their national programmes by their own means—plus American assistance—within the framework of the general N. A. T. O. plan. One of the chief merits of the system of " off-shore " order is that it tends to encourage the first step towards the integration of the armaments industries of our group of countries. The system of " off-shore " orders enables our countries to manufacture armaments for delivery to other partners in the alliance. Such orders, if fairly distributed, could bring about an international specialisation in arms production and the development of complementary industries in our various countries, which in turn would encourage a rationalisation of the methods of production and the standardisation of equipment. The " off-shore " programme is based on principles similar to those which gave rise to the Marshall Plan, and is evidence of the political good sense and of the generous attitude of the United States Government.

10. Such a policy of integration is necessarily a long-term prospect. It can be readily understood that, before our countries fully embark upon it, they will need guarantees extending over several years. Hence the feeling is gaining ground in the United States that the Government's programme in this connection for the immediate future should be laid down in a "declaration of intentions", thus preserving a proper respect for the constitutional prerogatives of Congress, and in accordance with procedure which proved so effective in the case of the Marshall Plan. The Committee feels that the Assembly should record its approval of the policy of integration fostered by the system of " off-shore " orders, but that it should, at the same time point out, with appropriate tact and discretion, the conditions upon which the success of such a policy depends.

11. The solidarity of the Western nations must be demonstrated in the field of strategy even more than in the economic sphere, and it has not escaped the notice of the Committee that not only has this matter never been completely clarified, but that public opinion in some of our countries has still certain reasons for anxiety. It is common knowledge that this question became a burning topic of interest in certain countries only a few weeks ago, as the result of an article by Drew Middleton in the New York Times (International Edition) of 17th August, apparently based on reliable information. This article dealt with a strategical plan, allegedly advocated by several great Atlantic nations and entailing " the surrender (in the event of aggression) of most of the northern Netherlands, including most of the industrialised section of the country, and of north-western Germany, to the aggressor ". Contradictory statements made, in the course of the last few days by certain eminent military commanders of the Atlantic Organisation, are hardly likely to clear up confusion. The Assembly will recall that our Danish colleague, M. Federspiel, raised the same question in May, 1951, when he asked : " Are we defending a European strategic plan, in the event of attack, involving possibly the sacrifice of a very large glacis, or are we building up a policy which means that every inch of European territory will be defended?"¹ Our German colleagues have been constantly preoccupied with the same question. The Committee does not doubt that satisfactory decisions will eventually be reached at forthcoming discussions held by N. A. T. O., but would it not be a gesture of solidarity worthy of this Assembly if the latter, *were*, forthwith, to make its attitude to this question unmistakably clear by declaring that there are no " second zone " countries situated outside the main defence zone or designated as a mere glacis for a few delaying actions to cover the retreat of more favoured partners; that all our countries, which are making every sacrifice in the cause of defence—and the small countries are not lagging behind in this respect—have one and all likewise an equal right to be defended? By acting thus, the Assembly would be remaining within its own political province, while at the same time giving the responsible Governments an accurate idea of our people's anxieties, and helping the latter to retain their faith in the aims of a defence organisation for which they are called upon to bear such heavy burdens.

4. The Atlantic Organisation and public information

12. The inadequacy of the defence organisation in the field of public information has several times been emphasized in this Memorandum. One could also mention its inconsistencies... Time and time again facts kept scrupulously secret by the Atlantic organisations and our Governments—withheld even from their Parliamentary committees—have been divulged in American press conferences or in the official reports of " testimonies " given across the Atlantic. These conflicting measures to ensure secrecy, and impromptu revelations, have, needless to say, a disastrous effect on public opinion and undermine the confidence placed in its leaders. Time and time again the public is provided with over-condensed information lending itself to the most fantastic and contradictory interpretations. It would be better if none were issued at all. You will recall the case of the " fifty divisions " mentioned at Lisbon. This figure, which was given out without further explanation, predisposed a large section of European public opinion not to take the results of the Atlantic Conference

1. See Third Session, 1951 : Official Report, page 359.

seriously. It gave rise to the most varied conjectures about the " apportionment " of these divisions among the Allies, all of which claimed to be derived from " usually well-informed sources ". It even happened that such reports apparently conflicted with the programmes actually submitted to the Parliament of one of the countries concerned. This sort of thing is disturbing to the public and impairs its goodwill by giving reason to doubt the reality of the objectives which have been announced. I have referred to the economic and strategic objectives of the Atlantic Alliance. In that case, too, it is surely essential to state quite clearly the broad lines of the policy which N. A. T. O. intends to follow? Surely there must not exist the slightest ambiguity concerning the aims of an alliance for which such great sacrifices have already been agreed.

13. It is the duty of our Governments and of N. A. T. O. to take the necessary steps in this matter. Nevertheless, the Committee feels that the Council of Europe is also in a position to make an extremely useful contribution. Could the Council not become a means of enabling N. A. T. O. to provide the spokesmen of the European Parliaments with an opportunity for joint examination from time to time of Atlantic problems and for a comparison of their national problems? Such discussions would be of real value and influence only if they were based on thoroughly reliable information. Our Governments have already realised the need for this in connection with economic problems : every economic debate we hold in the Assembly now opens with a Progress Report by O. E. E. C, which is personally presented by a Minister, as spokesman for the Council of O. E. E. C. The Assembly is thereby kept fully informed, and Governments run no risk of the leakage of secret information, since they have a check on the contents of the document which is published on their behalf for the Assembly. Relations between the Council of Europe and N. A. T. O. could probably not lead to such close links as those existing today between O. E. E. C. and the Council of Europe, since the Council has no military responsibilities at governmental level. It is only necessary to recall the absence of certain States, which are members of N. A. T. O. but not of the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, now that the right of the Assembly to discuss the political aspects of defence problems is, apparently, fully recognised, is there any reason why the Assembly should not be given the opportunity of holding such debates in the best possible conditions?

14. To this it might be objected that we should run the risk of usurping the functions of the E. D. C. Assembly, whose Statute will provide for debates on European defence policy, but it is quite plain that the rôle of the E. D. C. Assembly will be very different from that which we in this Assembly could play. The fundamental task of the E. D. C. Assembly will be to supervise the Board of Commissioners of E. D. C, and to perform, in relation to that embryo " Government " of a Continental Europe the rôle which our national Parliaments play vis-à-vis their Governments. The Assembly of the Council of Europe, which includes representatives of all European member countries of N. A. T. O. (except Portugal) as well as representatives of Germany, which will soon be associated with N. A. T. O., is, on the other hand, qualified to express a general opinion on the European policy of N. A. T. O. and the way in which Atlantic policy is applied to Europe. The Committee suggests, therefore, that the Committee of Ministers be requested to seek arrangements with N. A. T. O. for suitable information to be supplied by that Organisation to the Secretariat-General. This would then be passed to the appropriate Committee, which would then be in a position each year to draw up a sufficiently authoritative Report to be discussed by the Assembly in plenary Session.

5. Discussions in committee

5.1. Draft Resolution on European Defence

One Representative stated that because of the well-known attitude of his friends and himself on the question of the competence of the Council of Europe in defence matters, he was voting against the draft Resolution.

Two Representatives stated that, on account of the foreign policy pursued by their countries, they were abstaining from voting on the draft Resolution.

One other Representative also stated that he would abstain from voting on it.

The draft Resolution as a whole was adopted by 19 votes to 1, with three abstentions.

It should be said that paragraph 2 of the draft was unanimously adopted, as was the first paragraph of the Preamble, Section C. The second paragraph of the Preamble, Section C, together with paragraph 4 of the Resolution, were also adopted by 21 votes to 0, with 2 abstentions.

One Representative explicitly stated that Section B of the draft Resolution must be interpreted in the light of the considerations contained in § 11 of the Explanatory Memorandum.

5.2. Draft Recommendation on the relations between the Coancil of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

The same explanations of their vote were given by certain Representatives as in the case of the preceding draft Resolution.

The draft Resolution as a whole was adopted by 21 votes to 1, with three abstentions.

B. Draft Resolution

1. The Assembly, Taking note of the First Annual Report of the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers in Europe (April, 1952) and of the Communiqué of the Ninth Session of the North Atlantic Council (Lisbon Conference); Noting with satisfaction that the Report of the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers in Europe, discloses that considerable progress has been achieved in European defence ;
2. Stresses the need to ensure the collective defence of Europe, while maintaining European economic stability, and fair distribution of the burden of rearmament among the countries and social classes concerned;
3. Reaffirms the defensive nature of this policy and the peaceful intentions of the free peoples of Europe; Believing that the object of strengthening the military power of Europe is to provide a joint guarantee of the security of all the participating nations, which, in accepting the necessary sacrifices, have an equal right to the defence of their territory;
4. Requests that this principle be reflected in the decisions taken by N. A. T. O., both in the political and military fields; Believing that the improvement of the social and economic position of Europe is a pre-requisite for strengthening its military power; Being of the opinion that this improvement would be greatly facilitated by a policy of genuine integration of European armament industries, as fostered by the system of " off-shore " orders;
5. Stresses the advantage of establishing long-term plans under the system of "off shore " orders, with a view to ensuring such integration.

C. Draft Recommendation

1. The Assembly, Considering that the sincere support and active co-operation of the free peoples of Europe will be encouraged by the provision of effective and reliable information of public opinion on the measures necessary to ensure defence and on the results achieved; Emphasising the part which could be played in this field by the Assembly of the Council of Europe ; Recommends the Committee of Ministers should request to N. A. T. O. to provide the information necessary for a Report on the general problems of European defence, to be drawn up regularly each year by the competent Committee of the Council of Europe, with a view to its discussion in the Assembly.