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Policy of the Council of Europe in the light of recent developments in the international situation and, in particular, a common European policy towards the East

Report[1]
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
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1. 1956 - 8th Session - Second part

A. Draft Recommendation[2]

The Assembly,

At the conclusion of t h e debates h e l d in a c c o r d a n c e w i t h t h e p r a c t i c e i n s t i t u t ed in 1953, a t its April and October sessions, on t h e policy of t h e Council of E u r o p e i n t h e light of recent developments in the i n t e r n a t i o n al s i t u a t i o n and, in p a r t i c u l a r , a common Europe a n policy t o w a r d s t h e E a s t;

I n reply to Resolution (55) 35 in w h i c h t h e Committee of Ministers r e q u e s t edi t " t o p u r s u e its efforts to ensure t h a t East-West problems are considered and discussed f r om a common E u r o p e a n point in v i e w ";

Convinced t h a t t h e i n t e r n a t i o n a l situati o n makes it increasingly necessary for Member States to achieve u n i t y of action, w i t h o u t which t h e v i t a l i n t e r e s t s of Europe c a n n o t be safeguarded;

Considering t h a t t h e Assembly's discussions on general policy cannot be really effective unless the Committee of Ministers ensures t h e a p p l i c a t i o n of t h e g u i d i n g principles t h a t emerge from t h e s e d e b a t e s,

R e c o m m e n d s to the Committee of Ministers :

1. t h a t it should, first of all, by more s u s t a i n e d action and b y using more a d e q u a tem a c h i n e r y , c o - o r d i n a t e n a t i o n a l foreign policies a n d , in t h e second place, f o r m u l a t e and carry out a common policy on questions of vital i m p o r t a n c e t o E u r o p e;

2. t h a t it should, in the present circums t a n c e s , h a v e in mind t h e following principles on which t h i s common E u r o p e a n policy should be based.

A. East-West Relations

1. The Assembly regrets to note that no progress has been made since the 1955 Geneva Conferences towards the settlement of outstanding European problems, in particular that of the reunification of Germany. It recalls the quadripartite decision adopted in Geneva in July 1955 to the effect that " the reunification of Germany by means of free elections shall be carried out in conformity with the national interests of the German people and the interests of European security ". It asks the Governments of Member States to take all the necessary steps to reach an agreement with the U. S. S. R. on this basis and on terms which, while enabling Germany to contribute to collective security, would not affect the balance of power in Europe. The Soviet Government should realise that all the peoples of Western Europe regard German unity as a fundamental condition for the restoration of normal relations between East and West.

2. The Assembly welcomes the brave demonstrations of the unmistakeable popular desire for independence and freedom in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The economic and social structure of these countries is a matter for their own choice; but the Western Powers have the right to ask that freedom of decision by the people, guaranteed by free elections, should be restored there. The Assembly is of the opinion that full self-determination for these nations can alone ensure a lasting peace in Central and Eastern Europe, and that it is therefore desirable for the Governments of Member States to uphold firmly this principle and to raise it at the meetings of the United Nations. The Assembly asks the peoples of Europe to affirm their desire to develop their traditional relations in all fields with the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. The Assembly recalls Resolution 27 of 1954 in which the Committee of Ministers associated itself with the Assembly in reaffirming its faith in the unity of the whole of Europe.

3. The Assembly cannot regard unilateral cuts in armed forces and armaments as being a substitute for an international agreement, which alone can ensure mutual trust. It emphasises the need to reach such an agreement, which should cover both nuclear and conventional weapons, establish an effective system of control and be linked up with the elimination of the causes of political tension. The Assembly invites Member Governments to seek an immediate agreement on the control, limitation, and, finally, the prohibition of experimental thermo-nuclear explosions, the effects of which are causing anxiety to the whole of humanity. This might make it easier to reach a final agreement on disarmament.

B. Relations with " non-committed " countries

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2. Unanimously adopted by the Committee.

The Assembly considers t h a t certain c o u n t r i e s which h a v e decided t o k e e p out of alliances should, nevertheless, recognise t h at t h e y share a common i n t e r e s t w i t h t h e West in p r e s e r v i n g t h e i r freedom and in upholding in i n t e r n a t i o n a l life t h e principle of t h e inviola b i l i t y of t r e a t i e s.

C. Assistance to the under-developed areas

The W e s t e r n countries should declare t h e i r r e a d i n e s s , w h e t h e r funds can be released b y d i s a r m a m e n t or n o t , t o c o n t r i b u t e t o a largescale programme of financial and technical a s s i s t a n c e for t h e development of t h e underdeveloped c o u n t r i e s . This a s s i s t a n c e , a t o k e n of d e v o t i o n t o t h e cause of m a n k i n d , m u s t b e given, w i t h o u t r e g a r d t o economic a n d p o l i t i c a l r i v a l ry or i n t e r e s t , in such a w a y as t o cause no i n t e r ference w i t h t h e i n t e r n a l and e x t e r n a l freedom of t h e beneficiaries. The l a t t e r in t u r n should assume such elementary responsibilities as h o n o u r i n g signed a g r e e m e n t s and p u t t i n g such funds to p r o p e r use. Assistance is r e q u i r e d in t h r e e fields : u n d e r - d e v e l o p e d areas within E u r o p e , overseas countries in w h i c h E u r o p e an S t a t e s have special r e s p o n s i b i l i t i e s , and indep e n d e n t countries.

The Assembly believes, moreover, t h at a special s t u d y should be m a d e of t h e p r o b l em as a whole.

B. Draft Resolution[3]

The Assembly :

Notes that the attitude adopted by the Egyptian Government in the nationalisation of the Universal Suez Canal Company is incompatible with the spirit of international co-operation, and undermines the confidence essential to good relations between nations ; it condemns this unilateral and arbitrary act, which was bound to lead to a serious international crisis. Any changes in the conditions governing the operation of the Suez Canal are of particular concern to the Western countries, which are strictly within their rights in demanding that Egypt should provide guarantees with regard to freedom of navigation through the Canal equivalent to those provided under the 1888 Convention and the Concession Contracts of the Universal Company;

Considers that the proposals adopted by the eighteen Powers at the London Conference constitute a just and practical basis for arriving at a peaceful settlement of the dispute;

Approves both of the Franco-British Resolution of 14th October 1956—the first part of which was adopted unanimously and the second by all members of the Security Council except for the two Communist Powers.

The system established in accordance with the principles adopted by the Security Council should include an international body compatible with the territorial sovereignty of the Egyptian State — and having the necessary powers to ensure the proper administration of the Canal and the respect of freedom of navigation without discrimination.

3. Adopted in Committee by 12 votes against 0, with 3 abstentions.

C. Draft Resolution[4]

The Assembly :

Notes that the dispute concerning the island of Cyprus constitutes a serious danger to the unity of action of the member countries of the Council, particularly in the Mediterranean area;

Urges the member countries concerned to make every effort to consult together and to arrive as quickly as possible at an agreement;

Places itself at the disposal of the Governments to assist in securing an agreement, if this is considered possible;

Requests the Bureau to bring the present offer to the notice of Member Governments.

4. Adopted in Committee by 10 votes against 3 with 2 abstentions.

D. Draft Resolution[5]

The Assembly considers it indispensa b l e and a m a t t e r of u r g e n c y to s t r e n g t h en A t l a n t i c s o l i d a r i t y w i t h i n t h e framework of t he NATO T r e a t y , t h e basic a im of which is t he defence of t h e W e s t e r n c o u n t r i e s . N. A. T. 0. s h o u l d be in a p o s i t i o n to ensure p e r m a n e nt c o - o r d i n a t i o n between the foreign policies of t h e member countries on all problems of common concern a r i s i n g w i t h i n a n d o u t s i d e t he a r e a of a p p l i c a t i o n of t h e T r e a t y . N. A. T. 0. m u s t also e n s u r e t h a t Article 2 of t h e T r e a t y is effectively applied. In t h e psychological field, e v e r y effort must be made t o ensure t h a t the people of t h e member countries of N. A. T. 0 . u n d e r s t a n d one a n o t h e r ' s views.

5. Adopted in Committee by 11 votes against 0, with 4 abstentions.

E. Draft Order[6]

The Assembly proposes t h a t a second " S t r a s b o u r g Conference " be held i n t h e near f u t u r e , t o which should be i n v i t e d a delegation f r om t h e U n i t e d States Congress a n d a delega t i o n from t h e C a n a d i a n P a r l i a m e n t.

6. Adopted by the Committee unanimously.

F. Explanatory Note

1.

The Committee on General Affairs h e r e w i t h submits to t h e Assembly a draft R e c o m m e n d a t i o n on t h e general aspects of " t h e p o l i c y of t h e Council of E u r o p e in t h e l i g h t of r e c e n t d e v e l o p m e n t s in t h e i n t e r n a t i o n al s i t u a t i o n and, i n p a r t i c u l a r , a common Europ e a n policy t o w a r d s t h e E a s t " . There follow t h r e e draft R e s o l u t i o n s a n d o n e d r a f t Order on c e r t a i n d e t a i l e d aspects of Council of Europe policy. These d e t a i l e d aspects were examined as far as t h e y affect t h i s policy.