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Policy of Member states of the Council of Europe in the light of the present international situation

Report
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
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1.

1. Last October the Consultative Assembly, at t h e end of a long debate, adopted Recommendation 150, which was in two parts : in the first part the Committee of Ministers was asked to intensify consultations between the European partnership of nations with a view to co-ordinating the foreign policies of our States and eventually reaching the stage where a common foreign policy might be mapped out. In the second part, the Assembly recommended certain specific questions as subjects for review and united action by the Committee of Ministers.

2. On 13th December 1957, the Committee of Ministers adopted the following Resolution :

" RESOLUTION (57) 26

The Committee of Ministers,

Having studied with interest Recommendation 150 adopted by the Consultative Assembly on the 27th October 1957, which it will continue to examine ;

Recalling its Resolution (56) 23 in which it recorded its conviction that the international situation makes it increasingly urgent for Member States to formulate and apply a common policy on all questions of vital concern to Europe ;

Conscious of the importance of improving the methods of exchanging views on questions of common interest ;

Convinced that, to this end, the closest possible co-operation between the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly is most desirable,

Resolves as follows :

to continue to consult together as in the past and further to develop their consultations whenever a problem arises which vitally affects the Council of Europe ;

to arrange that, whenever it is agreed to hold these consultations in accordance with Article 21 (c) of the Statute and Article 1 (b) of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of Ministers, they shall take place in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as the general framework of European policy ;

to examine ways and means whereby a detailed report might he drawn up and presented annually to the spring meeting of the Consultative Assembly, on European co-operation in the framework of the Statute of the Council of Europe ;

pending this study, to request the Secretary- General to prepare a report of this kind for the next spring session of the Assembly. This report should contain a systematic summary and an analysis of all the reports which are normally presented to the Council of Europe by the various European organisations. It should be completed by a survey drawn up by the Secretary-General himself concerning aspects of European co-operation not included in the reports mentioned above ;

to arrange that the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and also, where appropriate, other Ministers, should do their best to attend the Assembly's annual debate on this report.

to consult with the Assembly and other European organisations concerned, with a view to establishing set and consecutive periods each year for the meetings of the various European Assemblies. »

3. This Resolution is certainly a welcome improvement on the past, as it shows a willingness on the part of the Committee of Ministers to work along similar lines to the Assembly. Yet it is none too precise in the commitments undertaken, and we can only hope that this is the beginning of vigorous political activity on the part of the Committee of Ministers.

4. Your Committee feel bound to draw attention to the fact that the Governments have agreed to consult " whenever a problem arises which vitally affects the Council of Europe ". The meaning of this sentence is somewhat obscure and your Committee could not agree with an interpretation which meant that there will be consultation merely when a question arises which affects the Council of Europe as an institution. What the Assembly stands for in its overwhelming majority is a system of constant day-to-day consultations with a view to co-ordinating the policy of as many Member State, sas are willing, on all major issues affecting the European partnership of nations to which the Council of Europe as an institution is endeavouring to give expression.

5. It is true that effective machinery for such regular advance consultation at European level is not yet established. That is one of the reasons why the Assembly set up a Special Group last October which is considering the question of the necessary machinery, among others. The Special Group has begun its work. It had a series of very satisfactory meetings in Paris on 20th and 21st December 1957 with the French Foreign Minister, M. Christian Pineau, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, M. Maurice Faure, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, M. Maurice Schumann, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of the Republic, M. Marcel Plaisant, and the Secretary- General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, M. Louis Joxe. The Special Group also visited M. P.-H. Spaak, the first President of the Consultative Assembly, now Secretary-General of N. A. T. 0. Three more meetings, in Rome, Bonn and Brussels, are planned in January and February 1958. In accordance with the terms of reference, the Special Group will report to the Assembly in due course.

6. It should be observed that at its meeting on 13th/14th December 1957, the Committee of Ministers discussed the desirability of consultations on foreign policy in abstracto. One is not aware that they discussed the subjects proposed for their consideration by the Assembly in Recommendation 150, namely disarmament, the reunification of Germany, Eastern Europe and newly developing countries.

7. The reason was probably that the NATO meeting of Heads of Governments came a.few days later. The declaration and communique issued on 19th December 1957 have been made available to the Assembly. This communique contained the following statement :

" 16. We state our willingness to promote, preferably within the framework of the United Nations, any negotiations with the U. S. S. R. likely to lead to the implementation of the proposals recalled above.

We are also prepared to examine any proposal, from whatever source, for general or partial disarmament, and any proposal enabling agreement to be reached on the controlled reduction of armaments of all types.

17. Should the Soviet Government refuse to participate in the work of the new Disarmament Commission, we would welcome a meeting at Foreign Ministers' level to resolve the deadlock. "

8. Apart from the NATO meeting of Heads of Governments, the following are the main developments which have occurred on the international scene since your Committee submitted their last report in October 1957 :

(a) On November 6th 1957, M. Khrushchev, in his anniversary report to the Supreme Soviet, said " We would like a high-level meeting of representatives of capitalist and socialist countries to take place, so as to reach an agreement— based on the consideration of true reality and mutual understanding—about the exclusion of war as a method of settling international problems, to stop the cold war and the armaments race, and to establish relations among States on the basis of co-existence, to settle disputes of an ideological nature, not by means of war but by means of peaceful competition in the development of economy and culture and in the best

satisfaction of human requirements and needs. " He had previously said that in the first place the Soviet Union and the United States should " as States possessing the most powerful economic and military resources, initiate collaboration. "

(b) Subsequently, on 21st December 1957, the Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution backing M. Khrushchev's plea and suggesting a seven-point plan :

Russia, America and Britain to pledge themselves not to use atomic and hydrogen bombs.

The same three countries to agree to halt tests from 1st January 1958.

Agreement not to station nuclear weapons in East or West Germany, and to accept the proposal for a European zone free from nuclear weapons.

The three atomic Powers to work towards a significant reduction of their armed forces.

A non-aggression pact between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact countries.

Agreement to take no measures against the independence of Middle East countries; force to be renounced in the region.

An end to war propaganda; more trade and cultural exchanges.

M. Khrushchev, on the same day, had said " Let us recognise the status quo—that is, the situation now prevailing in the world, characterised as it is by the existence of Socialist and capitalist States ; let us refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs. "

(c) M. Rapacki, the Polish Foreign Minister, has put forward a proposal for a denuclearised zone in Central Europe comprising the territories of the Federal Republic of Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Sovietoccupied zone of Germany.

(d) The same themes were taken up in a number of letters, which were not identical, sent by M. Bulganin before the NATO meeting and on the occasion of the New Year. Letters were sent to all 82 members of the United Nations, the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland. Further messages were sent on 8th January 1958 to the Heads of nineteen Governments, including all Member States of N. A. T. 0. A note appended to the messages was sent to all members of the United Nations and certain other countries. In the message sent to President Eisenhower Marshal Bulganin proposed that a meeting should be held within the next three months of Heads of Governments of Member States of N. A. T. 0 . , the Warsaw Pact and six neutral countries (India, Afghanistan, Egypt, Yugoslavia, Sweden and Austria) a total of twenty-nine countries. The Soviet Union is prepared, however, for a more restricted meeting with three, two representatives or even one from each of the groups mentioned. Marshal Bulganin proposes a ninepoint agenda while adding t h a t he is disposed to examine any other suggestions. The nine points are :

Immediate prohibition, at least for two or three years, of atomic tests.

An undertaking not to use such weapons.

Creation of a denuclearised zone in Central Europe which would comprise, at least in the initial stages, the Federal Republic of Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

Conclusion in one form or another of a non-aggression pact between the NATO and Warsaw Pact Powers.

Reduction of foreign forces stationed in the territories of Member States of the two abovementioned groups, and, to begin with, on the territory of Germany.

Establishment of control posts to guard against a surprise attack ; and a zone for aerial photographic inspection extending 500 miles on each side of the Iron Curtain.

Measures likely to lead to an increase in world trade.

Cessation of war propaganda at present being waged in certain countries.

Exchange of views on tension in t h e Near and Middle East.

Marshal Bulganin states that a conference of Foreign Ministers would follow to prepare t h e necessary agreements on t h e basis of the decisions taken at t h e " summit " meeting.

(e) President Eisenhower has now replied to Marshal Bulganin. Although the full text of the reply was not available to your Committee, its main contents are known. The President, without dismissing t h e prospect of an eventual meeting of Heads of Governments, makes it conditional on adequate preparation at lower levels,

initially through diplomatic channels and with the help of the Foreign Ministers, which should offer reasonable assurances of agreement at the summit. Mr. Eisenhower proposes that the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R. should renounce the use of the veto in the Security Council. He suggests a settlement of the German question in accordance with the principles agreed upon at Geneva in July 1955. " I urgently recommend, " he says, " that we should now devote our energies to achieving the reunification of Germany by means of free elections as we had agreed and as the situation urgently demands ".

He also emphasises that the U. S. S. R. has so far disregarded the Yalta Agreement which provided that the countries of Eastern Europe were to have the right to choose their own form of government, a right guaranteed by the United States, the U. S. S. R. and Great Britain.

" I propose ", he says, " we should now resume discussion of this question. Such a discussion would appear to be a vital necessity in the very interests of peace and justice ". The President goes on to make proposals for the control of outer space, which should only be used henceforth for peaceful activities. He renews the comprehensive proposals of the West for controlled disarmament. " Let us bring to an end the present unlimited production of nuclear weapons ". He proposes that existing stocks of nuclear weapons should gradually be reduced by their reconversion to peaceful uses. " Since our stocks of nuclear weapons are undoubtedly larger than yours, we should be prepared to re-convert a larger proportion of them for peaceful uses than the U. S. S. R. I shall be glad if you would tell me exactly what you consider a reasonable proportion would be ". He states that the U. S. A. is in favour of a suspension of nuclear weapons' tests, not only for two or three years, but for an indefinite period. All these proposals are, however, subject to the condition that all partners can verify that the undertakings made are respected.

(f) On 4th January 1958, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Macmillan, declared that it was Britain's intention to go on seeking for some disarmament agreement with the Soviet Union. " We could s t a r t " , he said, " by a solemn pact of non-aggression. This has been done before. It would do no harm; it might do good ". In a reference to prospects of new talks with the Soviet Union, Mr. Macmillan said that the object would be to clear away the rubble of old controversy and disagreement so as, perhaps, to get the field ready for a meeting of Heads of Governments.

The reaction to Mr. Macmillan's proposal in the United States has been that subscription to the United Nations' Charter is equivalent to a non-aggression pact, and if a country does not consider the Charter binding there is no reason to suppose that a more specific agreement would be. In Paris the proposal is viewed with some reserve, though the French Prime Minister has declared himself in favour of an East/West " summit " meeting on condition that it is sufficiently well-prepared and not simply a propaganda conference.

(g) On 19th November 1957, t h e General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a compromise resolution to enlarge the Disarmament Commission to 25 members including Czechoslovakia and Poland. The Soviet Union's proposal for a Commission including the 82 members of the United Nations was rejected. The Soviet Union subsequently threatened to boycott the new Commission on the ground that there was no parity between its " pro-Western " members and those from the Soviet bloc and uncommitted countries. The General Assembly went on to approve the Western disarmament plan presented by Britain, the United States, Canada and France during t h e disarmament negotiations in London, and asked the Disarmament Commission to resume negotiations on the basis of the Western plan.

(h) On 7th January 1958, the Soviet Union announced that it would reduce its armed forces by 300,000 men. This is in addition to cuts in 1955 and 1956. 40,000 men are due to be removed from East Germany and 17,000 from Hungary.

(i) The sputniki ushered in the fortieth anniversary of the Soviet revolution and have become the symbol of the Soviet political system. President Eisenhower reminded the Soviet Union on November 7th that the United States had solved the problem of the re-entry of rockets into the atmosphere. In December the Vanguard rocket blew up at Cape Canaveral almost before it had got its satellite off the ground. Although admitting that the United States are-probably somewhat behind the Soviets in some areas of long-range ballistic missile development, President Eisenhower has said that 38 different missiles are available or under development and this excludes projects still on the secret list.

(j) Leading representatives of the Communist world gathered in Moscow from 14th-16th November 1957 and adopted a declaration re-affirming the conclusions of the Twentieth Party Congress that revolution can be brought about by peaceful means but that violence need not be excluded. The Yugoslavs remained aloof from this declaration.

(k) In Cairo 500 delegates claiming to represent the peoples of fifty African and Asian States—among them 70 delegates from Communist bloc countries—met at the end of December and set up an " Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Council" with permanent headquarters in Cairo. The Soviet delegate made a spectacular offer of aid without strings and encouraged the Asian and African countries to nationalise foreign " monopolies " as a source of capital.

(l) On 19th November 1957, Marshal Bulganin announced that the Soviet Union would give Egypt economic assistance to help her with her industrialisation plans amounting to 200 million dollars. This sum will be repaid after four years in annual instalments spread over 12 years. On 28th October, the U. S. S. R. and Syria signed an agreement for Soviet aid to Syria. On 4th January 1958, a State Department publication suggested that , in three years, the Soviet Union had granted or promised 1,900 million dollars to the underdeveloped areas of the world.

(m) President Eisenhower, in his message on the State of the Union on 9th January 1958, has spoken of the " massive economic offensive that has been mounted by the Communist imperialists against free nations". " What makes the Soviet threat unique in history ", he said, " is its all inclusiveness... trade, economic development, military power, arts, science, education, the whole world of ideas—all are harnessed to the same chariot of expansion ".

(n) Other events which should be mentioned include the Indonesian Governmerit's order for the wholesale expulsion by stages of Dutch nationals; the Anglo-American decision to despatch a token consignment of arms to Tunisia; the continued difficulties of the French Government in Algeria ; and the dead? lock in Cyprus which it is greatly to be hoped will soon give way to a successful compromise.

9. Your Committee do not propose to go back on the analysis of the Soviet position contained in the report submitted by the Political Committee to the Assembly last October (Doc. 718). It is their view that the analysis then made is in no way invalidated and is in fact confirmed by the subsequent events of the last three months.

10. For what do the much-trumpeted Soviet overtures really amount to? Your Committee believe that it is very important to try and assess their true significance.

11. The first point is that the Soviet leaders want to maintain the status quo in Europe, including the division of Germany and Communist rule in the satellite countries. In the meantime, and as they said in Moscow in November, they will press on with their schemes to secure communist domination over the entire world, if possible by subversion, if necessary by force.

12. In the Middle East, Asia and Africa, the Soviet leaders hope to maintain a more flexible position so as to be able to exploit the local situation and isolate the Afro-Asian countries from the Western world. To this end they are pursuing a policy of economic and technical aid on an unprecedented scale. At the recent so-called Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference, the Soviet delegate is reported to have made spectacular offers. He said " We are ready to help you as brother helps brother. Tell us what you need and we will help you and send, to the best of our capability, money in the form of loans or aid ".

13. So far, then, we need not wonder whether the proposals of the Soviet leaders are genuine. They certainly are, since, if accepted, they would bring advantage to the Soviet Union alone.

14. As regards disarmament, however, the situation may not he quite so clear. Your Committee incline to the belief that the Soviet leaders do not want a world-wide conflict, though there can be no certainty even about this. On October 7th, in an interview with the iVeiv York Times, M. Khrushchev recognised that the U. S. S. R. might be ahead in one weapon today, but the United States could have the lead in another. It is not impossible that the Russians mean business for other reasons : first, since the events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary they can no longer exploit the satellite countries, and, secondly, it is possible that even the Soviet Union itself is finding the cost of armaments too heavy a burden. An indication of the expenditure involved in the manufacture of modern weapons is given by the fact that a production cost of 2 million dollars has been placed on the American Atlas intercontinental missile without a warhead. There are signs, too, that the Soviet Union is faced with a shortage of manpower, and it is significant that the current five year plan has been extended to seven years. It is quite possible t h a t economic and financial difficulties together with growing demands for consumer goods and for an increase in the standard of living in the Soviet Union are contributing to the present Soviet attitude on disarmament. Moreover, the Soviet Union has to take into consideration the fulfilment of her commitments in China and also underdeveloped countries.

15. It should be observed that in his messages of last December Marshal Bulganin said that the realisation of the seven points contained in the resolution of the Supreme Soviet would " create favourable premises for settling other important problems such as considerable reduction of the armed forces, the complete banning

of atomic and hydrogen weapons and their manufacture, and destruction of accumulated stocks... ". Of course it might be said that if the Soviet leaders really meant this they would not have abruptly rejected the Western disarmament plan last August, which centred on the cessation of production of nuclear materials for military purposes.

16. The Rapacki Plan for a denuclearised area covering the Federal Republic of Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany should be given careful consideration both from the military and the political points of view. Militarily the plan appears at first sight t o be disadvantageous to the West in that bases for intermediate range ballistic missiles could not be installed in Germany, whereas the Soviet Union is probably relying on intercontinental missiles which can be launched from bases within the Soviet Union. Moreover, the plan is not clear in several respects : what, for instance, would be the position of existing atomic weapons with which the American army in Western Germany is equipped? Politically, the plan does not seem likely to advance the cause of German reunification or that of the freedom of the satellites, for M. Khrushchev wants the status quo. Thus it is difficult to see at first sight the practical benefits to the West of the plan, and your Committee would warn against an emotional attitude towards it. The proper course is to give it serious detailed consideration both in its military implications and as a disarmament problem. The military implications are now being examined in N. A. T. 0. by Government Experts who are due to submit a report in March. Your Committee consider that , in addition, the Western European Union Assembly should be asked to express an opinion on the military implications for the security of the West of the Rapacki Plan and the policy of the disengagement of central Europe.

17. To sum up :

(a) The West cannot accept recognition of the status quo in Europe which would mean the continued partition of Germany. At the Geneva Conference of Heads of Governments in July 1955, the Soviet leaders undertook a solemn commitment 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. " There can be no lasting settlement with the Soviet Union so long as this problem remains unsolved.

(b) Nor can the West recognise the status quo in countries like Hungary where an overwhelming majority of the population have shown that they reject communist rule.

(c) As regards disarmament, the burden of proof must be put on the Soviet leaders, and if we cannot guess their true intentions we can at least probe their position. The Western Powers have put forward a detailed and comprehensive plan for controlled and effective disarmament. The United Nations General Assembly has asked that the Disarmament Commission should resume work on the basis of this plan, which it has approved. The Soviet leaders now say that they want parity between the Western States, on the one hand, and the Soviet bloc and uncommitted countries, on the other.

(d) It is vitally important to bring the Western countries and the underdeveloped countries of the world closer together on the basis of mutual help, trust and respect. The Western Powers must be prepared to make a much greater effort to raise the standard of living of these countries.

(e) Given the fact that the basic policy of the Communist leaders appears to be unchanged, the chances of an overall settlement at a " summit " meeting immediately are slight. Moreover, the failure of such talks would be very dangerous. The proper course appears to be to get the disarmament discussions going again. The Soviet position should be sounded through diplomatic channels. As stated in the NATO Conference communique, the Western Powers are prepared to have a meeting of Foreign Ministers to resolve the deadlock which has arisen. Depending on its progress, such a meeting might pave the way for a " summit " meeting later on.

(f) The Western countries must continue to concert their attitude very closely. The recommendations made by the Consultative Assembly to this end are particularly topical. The fact that the Soviet leaders, in making their overtures, propose bilateral talks with the United States, shows that it is by uniting and pursuing a closely co-ordinated foreign policy that Europe (without in any way constituting a so-called " third force ") will make itself heard in the world today. In this connection the setting up, as a first step, of a standing group of senior officials to consult and make proposals for co-ordinating the foreign policy of as many European States as are willing appears more necessary and urgent than ever.

18. Your Political Committee considered this report at a meeting on 13th J a n u a r y 1958. They agreed t h a t the Rapporteur should present it to the Assembly at the opening of the debate on the policy of the Council of Europe in the light of recent developments in the international situation. Your Committee propose that the

Assembly, at the conclusion of its debate, should refer the report back to the Committee, which will then consider the possibility of submitting a draft recommendation—on which the Assembly may desire to vote before the end of the January session.