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To the Consultative Assembly on the occasion of its Third Ordinary Session

Communication

Committee of Ministers

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1. The Consultative Assembly will already be aware, from the Reports which it has received, of the activities of the Council of Europe during recent months. The Assembly will thus be able to assess the work accomplished, the efforts made by Member Governments to take action in conformity with its recommendations and the obstacles which have been met on the way.

2. The tasks and responsibilities of the Governments have in recent years greatly increased. There is therefore a clear need for simplification of the structure of international co-operation. The Assembly will therefore understand that the Committee has not so far been able to take action on all the recommendations submitted to it, which have been very numerous and deal with a wide variety of subjects.

3. An important task has been undertaken by the Committee of Ministers, that of revising the Statute of the Council. It appears from the preliminary examination which one of the principal Committees of the Assembly has given to them that the results have not come up to its expectations. While appreciating the criticisms and disappointment which have been expressed, we consider that regard must be had to the number and nature of the proposals put before the Committee, and to the fact that even in the Assembly itself agreement does not seem to have been unanimous on all of them. Regard must also be had to the supreme importance of maintaining the unity and solidarity of the members of the Council. In the light of these considerations we believe that what has been done is a far from negligible achievement, which fully deserves the closest attention. Though we have not decided on fundamental changes in the Statute, that is perhaps too much to expect when it is remembered that it is only two years ago, to the day, that the Statute was signed, and, it must not be forgotten, approved by all our national Parliaments. Nevertheless, the changes which are now proposed represent a step forward on the road which leads to the achievement of our hopes.

4. It is in this spirit that the Committee of Ministers, basing itself on the suggestion made by your representatives on the Joint Committee, has now taken the following decisions; first, to transmit for your approval certain draft amendments which, according to the simplified procedure laid down in the Statute, could be brought into force at once; secondly, it has adopted a certain number of Resolutions which will bring about a marked improvement in the practices hitherto in force; thirdly, as a temporary and exceptional departure from the normal procedure for the revision of the Statute, it proposes to adopt for its future guidance a number of principles which it considers are of particular importance and should, in its view, find a place in due course in the revised Statute.

5. The Committee of Ministers believes that the Council of Europe will thus be in possession of an instrument that will enable it in future to devote its energies more completely to the concrete problems at present facing Europe.

6. There is no need for us to draw particular attention to the text relating to the Joint Committee; like us, you will certainly appreciate its importance. The texts dealing with the creation of Specialised Authorities, which we would have preferred to insert in the Statute forthwith, are, in our opinion, in conformity with the



objectives which you recommended to the Council of Europe last year. At a time when there was a general feeling that it would be inadvisable, if we wished to preserve solidarity amongst the free countries of Europe, to pursue plans which were considered too ambitious by some, the Council of Europe and the Governments, with the two-fold object of safeguarding the unity of the Council and avoiding the dangers of passivity, visualised the creation of partial agreements, the principle of which has just been accepted by the Committee of Ministers. At the same time they took a decision in favour of the creation of Specialised Authorities. The co-ordination of these different authorities may some day result in the Europe to which we aspire. Without waiting for final decisions, certain Governments have taken the initiative of working together to establish between themselves and for specific purposes close and permanent relationships. Mention should also be made of the proposals for the organisation of agricultural marketing and for the unification of transport.

7. We should like particularly to cite the recent signature of the Treaty on Coal and Steel whose political significance goes beyond the immediate object for which it was created, important as that is; it is encouraging to observe that in a Protocol which forms an integral part of this Treaty relations are foreseen between the Council of Europe and the European Coal and Steel Community which take full account of your recommendations and mark the anxiety of the signatory Governments to develop their co-operation in the closest contact with the Council of Europe. The Ministers of these Governments proclaimed in a joint declaration on 18th April that other similar initiatives would follow " which should quickly take their place in the framework of a common political organisation, the idea of which is being worked out by the Council of Europe. "

8. The Council of Europe has established its place among other international Organisations. Relations have been established with the O. E. E. C. and are about to be established with the International Labour Organisation, the International Refugee Organisation, and U. N. E. S. C. O. It is a tribute to the attitude of those in authority in the first-named Organisation that, at this Session, the President of the Committee of Ministers will be in a position to present to you the Report which the O. E. E. C. has specially prepared for this purpose. The Committee of Ministers is convinced that the Assembly will pay particular attention to the questions discussed in this document, having regard to the urgent character of the economic problems facing Member States. This will enlarge the field in which the Assembly can exercise its consultative function.

9. In this connection the Committee of Ministers wishes to inform you that it is studying with the greatest care the proposals which have been presented to it on the subject of the development of this consultative rôle; it hopes shortly to be in a position to inform you of its conclusions.

10. Among the Recommendations of the Assembly, that relating to refugees necessarily commanded the attention of the Committee by reason of its humanitarian aspect and the gravity of the problem to which it relates. Anxious to be able to take a decision in full knowledge of the facts, it has invited Member Governments to send representatives to a meeting of experts which will be instructed, with the assistance of representatives of the I. L. O., O. E. E. C., and the U. N. High Commission for Refugees, to undertake in particular the definition of the problem to be solved.

11. Furthermore, and equally with the intention of undertaking practical tasks within the framework of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers has referred to the Governments other proposals intended to settle by means of separate multilateral agreements a number of problems of private international law.

12. In any case, one fact emerges : during the months under review the European idea has penetrated further into the consciousness of the people whom we represent.

13. The Governments, Members of the Council of Europe, are not all in the same position in regard to membership of other European and international Organisations; nor are their interests and preoccupations co-extensive. It is not to be expected, therefore, that any uniform pattern of action should exist, either within the Council of Europe or outside. All Member Governments, however, in different ways and in the various international Organisations or groups of nations to which they belong, are contributing to the broad purpose of building up the institutions of the West. Substantial advance has been made in the past year, and the voice of Europe, which had sounded so uncertain and feeble after the disastrous struggle of the World War, has made itself heard with increasing strength and clarity.

14. The economic life of the European countries had made a remarkable recovery; it was by way of achieving, with American aid and through the agency of the O. E. E. C., a sound and healthy basis, and at the moment when they were faced with the challenge of rearmament, with all its economic repercussions, they had to a large extent mastered the problem of the European balance of payments which loomed so large and dangerously on the horizon in the previous years. The European Payments Union, which has been in operation since the 1st July, 1950, provided a means of setting off the surpluses and deficits of Member

countries with one another and has eliminated currency restrictions on payments between Member countries. A code of trade principles has been adopted, prohibiting discrimination in commerce except in certain definite circumstances. Liberalisation of trade has been advanced substantially, and quantitative restrictions reduced.

15. In the political field there have been a series of important meetings between the representatives of Member countries, by which mutual problems have been resolved, and closer relations of confidence consolidated. The visits to the United States of certain statesmen have been able to emphasise the identity of view of the European peoples on matters of world concern. To reinforce these trends the Committee would welcome any initiative of the Assembly designed to establish links with the Canadian Parliament and the United States Congress.

16. The foreign relations of the Federal Republic of Germany have been the subject of continuous development, which has resulted in the welcome accession of the Federal Republic to the Council of Europe as a full Member.

17. In the cultural and social fields progress has been achieved by means of bilateral and multilateral agreements, concluded in a number of cases under the auspices of the Brussels Treaty, which have resulted in assimilating social services and granting to signatory States the reciprocal benefits of their cultural traditions; in this way the exchange of ideas, of books and of works of art has been intensified as well as travel facilities and the exchange of students. As a result the nations of Europe are coming to appreciate ever more their spiritual unity and the identity of their aims in a free world.

18. In matters outside the scope of the Council of Europe very significant steps in integration and co-operative action have been carried out by certain Member Governments in association with other Western Powers. These developments have their bearing on the evolution of new methods of co-operation between nations and are a significant part of the process of creating common institutions and pooling experience amongst European and other Western nations. It would be difficult to assess in this connection what part the Council of Europe has played.

19. Mankind is going through a period of great anxiety, and we know to what extent liberty of action and thought is being suppressed in large areas of the world in defiance of the sacred rights of humanity ? those rights that were given formal expression in the Convention signed at Rome, which, we hope, will very shortly be completed by a Protocol. The nations have now come to understand that their solidarity is more than ever important.

20. Within other precincts the vital problem of defence is a subject of study, consultation and decisions; the Governments of the great countries on the other side of the Atlantic are playing a part, of which you are fully aware, in the negotiations that are now being undertaken. If it appears useless to deal outside the context of these negotiations with questions of such world-wide importance and whose technical aspects require for their proper examination conditions which do not exist here, it is clear that the problem of peace and security is uppermost in the minds of all. If the Committee of Ministers cannot but reaffirm the declaration adopted at its Sixth Session, it does not underestimate the passage in the Preamble of the Statute in which the members of the Council affirm that the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilisation.

21. The tension which has continued to increase since last summer forces the Governments to devote to the preparation of their defence an important part of their time and national resources which would otherwise serve for the execution of long-term plans of a peaceful nature. Once more it is necessary to ask the peoples of the western world to shoulder heavy sacrifices for purposes which are in themselves unproductive. The economic and financial recovery of Europe is thereby inevitably retarded.

22. If Europe is only the more determined to unite, her desire for unity is not a selfish reaction, but, on the contrary, an expression of her vitality and of her determination to play, in a world of power politics, a part worthy of her past and on which depends her future. Peace can only be based on unity. Conscious of our solidarity and of the gravity of the hour, we shall lose no opportunity to work more closely together and make our common action more effective.