

11th October, 1967 (Ditchley Park)

NATO CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting of Rapporteurs of Sub-Groups for study
on Future Tasks of the Alliance

Present: Secretary General
Mr. U. Sahm (Germany)
Mr. J.P. Van Bellinghen (Belgium)
Count de la Barre (Belgium)
Mr. F. Kohler (US)
Mr. R. Bowie (US)
Mr. L. Sloss (US)
Dr. Patijn (Netherlands)
Mr. A. Watson (UK)
Mr. J.W. Simms
Mr. J. Sankey (UK)

Mr. Watson opened the meeting by explaining that the group had gathered essentially in order to help the Secretary General to put their work to the Special Group on the Future Tasks of the Alliance in the most useful form. He would therefore ask the Secretary General to express his views in this regard. The Secretary General replied that, before doing so, he would like to know how the discussion had developed prior to his arrival. Mr. Watson informed the Secretary General that the group had taken cognizance of a draft paper prepared by Messrs. Bowie and Van Bellinghen as a resumé of the reports of the Rapporteurs of the sub-groups. After a prolonged discussion, it had been agreed that the four reports should go forward to the Special Group as they stood. At the same time, however, the summary of the reports might be presented to the Special Group, if the Secretary General thought this would be useful. The summary would, of course, have no status and would in no way commit the Rapporteurs. The Secretary General said that he hoped to have an early meeting of the ^{Special Group at} Permanent Representative level to consider the procedure to be followed concerning the Harmel Exercise. It had been suggested by some delegations that a drafting group might be appointed to draw up the report to Ministers, while others preferred that the Secretary General be asked to draft the report on the basis of the reports submitted by the Rapporteurs of the sub-groups. The idea that a summary report might be prepared by Rapporteurs had also been discussed, but some delegations felt that such a summary might reduce the area of flexibility and force delegations who ^{objected} ~~objected~~ to details to reject the report as a whole. He had not contacted the French in this regard but was speaking only of opinions expressed by other delegations.

If all those present thought that the Bowie/Van Bellinghen paper should be sent to the Special Group, however, he was prepared to agree that it might be useful simply as a working document for whoever did the final report; nevertheless, it should not be given any status. Mr. Kohler said that, in his view, the summary might serve the purpose of focussing discussion in the Special Group. Mr. Watson pointed out that it was not meant to reflect the collective views of Rapporteurs. Mr. Bowie added that the summary might serve the additional purpose of allowing delegations to consider propositions put forward in the reports without reference to the authors of those reports. Mr. Sahm expressed the opinion that such a paper might be too early and would perhaps be more useful after the Special Group had decided to appoint a drafting committee or to ask the Secretary General to draft the report. The Secretary General pointed out that it would be awkward for him to go to a meeting of the Special Group, knowing that a document had been drafted, but under instructions not to say anything about it for the present. Mr. Van Bellinghen asked whether it was not likely that the French Representative at the meeting envisaged by the Secretary General would simply say that the French had already rejected the reports of the sub-groups and therefore could not be expected to accept a summary containing views set forth in those reports. The Secretary General observed that he had tried to persuade the French not to maintain the negative position that they had taken in the sub-groups, but to say specifically what it was in the reports to which they objected. Dr. Patijn said that he disagreed with the arguments that had been made in favour of the summary. He did not believe that it provided a different basis ^{for} ~~on which~~ the French ~~would~~ to take ^{their} ~~a~~ decision. Nor was he convinced that an element of flexibility would be introduced by watering down the reports. If a summary were to be drawn up, he thought it should be in the form of a resumé of the conclusions contained in the four reports. Mr. Watson suggested that, whether the Secretary General or a drafting committee prepared ^{the report} ~~a summary~~, ~~that~~ that document would not be fundamentally different from the present document. The Secretary General disagreed with this statement, pointing out that he or a drafting committee would know something of the reactions of national delegations to the substance of the reports of the Rapporteurs and would have to keep these in mind in drawing up the report.

As he (the Secretary General) envisaged the future development of the Exercise, following the meeting of Permanent Representatives of which he had already spoken, a meeting of the Special Group as such would take place; there would be a full discussion of substance so that the Secretary General or drafting committee would have the benefit of the Special Group's ideas. At a third stage, the report drawn up by the Secretary General or drafting committee would be submitted to the Special Group for its approval and eventual transmission to Ministers. Mr. Bowie asked why a meeting of the Permanent Representatives to deal with procedure only was required. The Secretary General said that his intention in calling such a meeting was simply to get procedural matters out of the way, so that as much time as possible could be devoted by the Special Group to discussion of substance. Mr. Bowie expressed the fear that procedure would be used as a device to deal with substance and thought therefore that procedure and substance should be dealt with simultaneously. The Secretary General said that, in his view, there could be no harm but only good in having a preliminary meeting on procedure. Such a meeting would, after all, ~~be~~ ^{carry out} only preparatory work. Mr. Bowie observed that the US Government was concerned lest compromises be made even before the substance of the report was discussed. He himself did not see any great problem in so far as procedure was concerned, except that some delegations might use procedural objections to mask disagreement on substance. Whatever procedure was adopted, however, some agenda of topics would be needed if an orderly discussion was to take place. He was not arguing for the particular piece of paper of which he was a co-author, but only in favour of the proposition that an attempt should be made to distill out of the four reports the substantive propositions involved. The Secretary General pointed out that two related but separate questions had been raised: (i) was some kind of a summary needed? (ii) could preliminary examination by Permanent Representatives of procedural arrangements be useful to the Special Group? Mr. Van Bellinghen added that the group was not discussing how the Special Group should proceed but rather how the Rapporteurs might best discharge the responsibilities they had accepted, whether by submitting separate reports or by a summary

outline in addition. Dr. Patijn said that he could agree to the idea of a summary, provided the quality of a summary was good. Mr. Kohler suggested that if the difficulty lay with the quality of the summary, the group attempt to improve its quality. Mr. Watson suggested that the question of procedure might be dealt with in an ordinary Wednesday meeting of the Council.

The Secretary General replied that he thought the Special Group, meeting at the Permanent Representative level, rather than the Council, should deal with the question. However, a meeting of the Special Group could take place on the afternoon of the Council meeting. Mr. Harmel was extremely anxious to have a meeting of the Special Group to discuss substantive questions at the earliest possible date. He understood, however, that there were difficulties in this regard and that, in particular, Mr. Rostow was engaged early in November. Mr. Kohler said that the only engagement he knew of which might keep Mr. Rostow away was one on 2nd November.

Mr. Van Bellinghen enquired as to what would ultimately happen to the reports of the Rapporteurs. The Secretary General answered that, in the original scheme of things, the reports were regarded only as contributions to the final report, so that strictly speaking they should disappear altogether once the final report had been drawn up. There had been some discussion about the desirability of allowing the reports of the Rapporteurs to be published, either in their original or a revised form, but this point remained to be examined. It was clear, however, that publication represented great risks. Mr. Van Bellinghen suggested that some governments might want to publish the reports, while others would undoubtedly be opposed. In that event, he wondered what would happen. The Secretary General said that, in that event, the reports would probably be published by the governments that were interested in seeing them published. Mr. Watson pointed out that, unless all governments were agreed, the reports should not be published as NATO documents. Mr. Sahm added that the reports were the property of NATO, not individual Rapporteurs.

The Secretary General expressed the view that the possibility should be kept open that there might not be a final report as early as December. It remained to be seen whether the French could be convinced to agree to something of value or would insist on maintaining a basically negative

attitude. If the French could be persuaded to give their agreement to three basic points - that detente should be under the control of the Council and that disarmament and developments in the Mediterranean were proper subjects for consideration by the Council - a great deal would already have been achieved, enough to make it worthwhile to continue the discussion. Mr. Watson added that, since the French had ^{already} agreed to stand aside in certain matters, he hoped that, in December, the French might agree that the 14 could take certain decisions without them.

Mr. Van Bellinghen said that what Mr. Harmel would like to see was a paper so reasonable that if the French were to oppose it, they would be completely isolated. Mr. Bowie noted that this was exactly the opposite of the position of the German Government. There was a risk that the report would be watered down and, in spite of that fact, the Germans would then say that if the French could not agree to it, neither could they. One of the difficulties the US Government had in dealing with the Congress was the idea prevalent in that body that French views were representative of European views. So far the Government had been able to argue successfully that such was not the case. If, however, they were to continue to be able to do so, then an effort must be made to avoid a situation in which the French position seemed to prevail to the detriment of NATO. Mr. Sahm said that his Government had not, in fact, reached a final decision. It might well be that ^{in the end} Bonn would take a position similar to that of Mr. Harmel; it was necessary first to know how everyone else felt. Mr. Watson expressed the view that every effort should be made to produce a report in December that was neither too difficult for the French to swallow nor so weak that ^{it} would undermine the Alliance. Mr. Sahm said that the Alliance would be weakened if the French were made to feel that they had been put in the corner. Mr. Bowie commented that the French were already effectively out of the Alliance. As far as the US Government was concerned, the Alliance would in no way be weakened if the French were totally out. This was not to say, however, that there was not a political problem; irrespective of the value of the French to the Alliance, it was desirable to do nothing unnecessarily that would exacerbate French feelings against the Alliance. On the other hand, there was a danger that in "watering down" the report in order to please the French, the cement that held the Alliance together

might be weakened. While the 14 should seek to convince the French that they were not trying to force them into a corner, they would be perfectly within their rights in pointing out at the same time that the French should allow them to go ahead with what everyone but the French were agreed on.

Mr. Van Bellinghen asked whether the French could be forced to accept a report in which their own views would be set forth separately from those of the other Allies. In reply, the Secretary General said that alongside the principle of unanimity, the principle of flexibility in such matters had arisen, although the former was applied more often than the latter. The French had been saying that if they were put in a corner, they might well drop out of the Harmel study altogether; in such a case, the role of flexibility would automatically prevail. Mr. Sankey suggested that the French might take different positions not on different subjects but rather on the part of the report dealing with the assessment of the situation, in contrast to that part dealing with the procedure to be followed. Mr. Van Bellinghen commented that the Belgian assessment of the French position was that the report would either be accepted in toto or rejected in toto. Dr. Patijn expressed the view that, while nothing should be done unnecessarily to provoke General de Gaulle, there was also nothing that could be done to appease him. At this point the meeting broke up for lunch.

When the meeting was resumed, Dr. Patijn explained that his objection to the summary drawn up by Messrs. Bowie and Van Bellinghen was that it watered down ^{the} ideas of the authors of the four reports. He was prepared to admit, however, that such a result was perhaps inherent in the nature of the operation and would therefore prefer simply to have a report summarising the conclusions reached by the four Rapporteurs. Mr. Bowie said that Mr. Van Bellinghen and he had made an effort to give as fair and balanced a summary as possible in fifteen pages, which they deemed the maximum length such a paper should have if it was, in fact, to be a summary. They had had no intention of watering down the ideas of the Rapporteurs. A lengthy discussion followed, led by Dr. Patijn, in which various criticisms were made of the Bowie/Van Bellinghen document. The Secretary General suggested that the best way to proceed might be for each

Rapporteur to express his opinion as to the parts of the summary purporting to reflect his own views. The burden of Dr. Patijn's complaint seemed to be that, in making an effort to conform to a given outline, Messrs. Bowie and Van Bellinghen had "violated" the substance of the reports. Nevertheless, he was prepared to admit that the outline was good. Mr. Kohler asked if Dr. Patijn thought that he might be able to re-write the summary of his report in such a way that it could be fitted into the outline. Dr. Patijn expressed himself optimistically in this regard, although he said he could not say definitely until he had tried. Mr. Bowie explained his objections to Dr. Patijn's suggestion that the report contain conclusions only: the conclusions were of three different kinds - some of general orientation, some looking to the obligations of members of the Alliance, and some proposing specific machinery; it was impossible to summarise these three different kinds of conclusions without some explanation of the context within which the group was operating.

Mr. Watson asked the Secretary General for his opinion as to what kind of report would ultimately go from the Special Group to the Ministers. The Secretary General answered that he thought it too early to say in the absence of reactions of the several governments. An answer to Mr. Watson's question depended on the discussion that would take place and the inter-relationship between the positions of the several governments. If agreement could be reached at 15, the report would ^{necessarily} reflect the lowest common denominator. If the report were the report of 14 only, then most of the ideas contained in the Rapporteurs' reports could probably be included. In any case, the report to go to the Ministers would have to be both short and comprehensive.

Mr. Watson suggested that the Bowie/Van Bellinghen report might serve as a point of departure, recognising that the final report, while of the same general length and nature, was likely to embody certain different ideas. Mr. Bowie added that, while the summary had an inconclusive quality, so did the reports themselves. It was up to the Ministers to decide where they wanted to put the emphasis. Mr. Watson thought the only question was whether the Secretary General felt that the Bowie/Van Bellinghen paper would be helpful to the Special Group in their discussions. The Secretary General replied that he thought it would be helpful, but the paper would have to be ready for the meeting he envisaged for the following week.

Any major revision would take a great deal of time. Perhaps the best way to proceed therefore would be for each Rapporteur to modify those parts dealing with his own report. The Rapporteurs agreed to the Secretary General's suggestion, and the meeting broke up for approximately 1½ hours while each Rapporteur modified the part of the report dealing with his own work.

In the discussion which took place following the break, Mr. Van Bellingh en suggested the addition of two points to the draft covering note for the report which had been submitted to the Secretary General earlier in the day. These two points were that: (i) Rapporteurs were committed only by their own reports, and (ii) that in case of divergence ^{between the summary and the report}, the report should be regarded as authoritative. It was finally agreed that these points would not be added to the covering note, but that the Secretary General would make them orally to Permanent Representatives.

Mr. Watson pointed out that it had not yet been decided which parts of the reports, if any, should be made public.

Mr. Kohler expressed the view that a decision in this regard was the responsibility of the Special Group, and in this view he was joined by all the others present.

In conclusion, the Secretary General noted that the Rapporteur phase of the Harmel study was now closed. He congratulated the Rapporteurs on their success. The political phase was about to begin, and it remained to be seen how successfully it might be brought to a conclusion.