

NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL
FIFTH SESSION
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1950

NATO

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Summary of Record No. 5/2

C5-R/2

16 September 1950

Summary Record of the Second Meeting, held
in New York on 15 September 1950 at 3 p.m.

Present

UNITED STATES

Dean Acheson (Chairman)

Charles M. Spofford (Deputy)

BELGIUM

Paul Van Zeeland

Fernand Van Langenhove (Deputy)

LUXEMBOURG

Joseph Bech

M. André Claßen (Deputy)

CANADA

Lester B. Pearson

L. D. Wilgress (Deputy)

NETHERLANDS

D. V. Stikker

Jonkheer A. W. L. Tjarda van
Starckenborgh-Stachouwer (Deputy)

DENMARK

Henrik de Kauffman

M. A. Vestbirk (Alternate Deputy)

NORWAY

Halvard Lange

Dag Bryn (Deputy)

FRANCE

Robert Schuman

Hervé Alphand (Deputy)

PORTUGAL

Paulo Cunha

Henrique Queiroz (Alternate
Deputy)

ICELAND

Bjarni Benediktsson

M. Gunnlaugur Petursson (Deputy) UNITED KINGDOM

Ernest Bevin

Sir Derrick Hoyer-Millar (Deputy)

ITALY

Count Carlo Sforza

Gastone Guidotti (Deputy)

Secretariat

Mr. T. A. G. Charlton (Secretary)

Mr. L. F. Morrissey (Assistant Secretary)

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I. Questions Affecting the Defence of Western Europe
(Item 4)

The Council resumed their discussion on questions affecting the defence of Western Europe.

2. There was unanimous agreement on the proposal, which had been put forward by Dr. Stikker at the previous meeting, that the defence line should be drawn as far as possible to the East, i.e., somewhere in Germany.

3. Discussion then turned on the question on what reply should be given to Dr. Adenauer on his offer to participate actively in the defence of Western Europe. The discussion showed that, whereas the majority of the Council had no objection in principle to the participation of Western Germany in the defence of the North Atlantic area in some form or another, there were divergent views on the precise form which this participation should take, the degree of risk which should be run and the timing and presentation of the decision. Various arguments for and against the use of German manpower and resources in the defence of the North Atlantic area were advanced which can be summarized as follows:

For

(1) In view of the decision to draw the defence line as far as possible to the East, it was logical that Western Germany should participate actively in the defence not only of their own territory but also of the North Atlantic area as a whole.

(2) The utilization in one form or another of German manpower would go some way towards the solution of the problem of finding a sufficient number of divisions to meet the full defence requirements of the area.

(3) From the political standpoint, there was a golden opportunity at the present time of securing the permanent allegiance of Western Germany to the North Atlantic powers. If this opportunity was not taken, it was unlikely to recur and there was a serious danger that the will to resist in Germany would progressively deteriorate.

Against

(1) The natural fear, inherent in Western Europe, of a resurgence of German militarism.

(2) The danger that a proposal to rearm Germany would not be supported by the peoples of the NAT countries, particularly those countries which had been occupied during the late war.

(3) The fact that a considerable proportion of the Western German people themselves had openly expressed their unwillingness to see the rebirth of a German army.

(4) The danger of being forced by the general pressure of events into taking a hasty decision in favour of Germany rearmament which might well in the long run have disastrous consequences.

(5) The danger that the rearmament of Germany might be regarded as a provocative act and precipitate an act of aggression.

4. COUNT SFORZA said that when the military experts decided on a withdrawal to the Rhine-Ijssel they committed the fundamental error of neglecting the human element. Thus they failed to take into consideration the danger of the immediate panic which might ensue with the consequential inflow of refugees over the borders of France and Italy. He was, therefore, strongly in favour of fixing the defence line as far to the east as possible. Such a step would have the added advantage of preventing the encirclement of Yugoslavia, which country should be encouraged to associate itself with the NAT powers. In his view the war of tomorrow would be a war of ideologies, akin to the religious wars of the middle ages. The existence of Yugoslavia as a center of a heresy which might well spread to other countries within the Soviet orbit would be of incalculable value to the North Atlantic countries.

5. In his view the fate of Western Germany at present hung in the balance. While appreciating the fears of those countries which had been overrun by Germany during the war, he felt that the present offered an excellent opportunity of winning over the Western Germans to the side of the free countries. This opportunity would not present itself again and for this reason it would be fatal to adopt the suggestion made by some of his colleagues that the decision on this point should be deferred for more mature consideration. This was a historic occasion and he hoped that the Council would be equal to it.

6. MR. BEVIN underlined the fundamental delicacy of the position. It was essential to secure the support of the peoples as a whole for such a radical step. In his view the active participation of Germany in the defence of the North Atlantic area should not be put forward in isolation as an individual project, but should be submitted as a part of a general plan for a fully integrated defence of Western Europe, which is to be implemented with all possible speed. As part of the proposals for an integrated defence force the Council ought to reach an early agreement on setting up some kind of unified command. This preliminary work should precede the actual German participation. It was generally realized that no country in any future war would be able to delay its full scale preparations until war had actually broken out. All the work of building up of the Allied Forces which took place in the period 1939-1942 would have to be done in advance. The countries of Europe had however become used to the idea of being organised for purposes of defence, but if Governments took far reaching powers over the people individuals were entitled to expect in return that the Governments would operate efficiently.

7. As far as the Germans themselves were concerned, while it was true that the approach had been initiated by Dr. Adenauer, it should be made clear to Western Germans that they must accept the principle of resistance to aggression from whatever quarter it might come. There appeared to be no insuperable difficulty in working out a carefully conceived formula, which could be presented to the Western German Government.

8. In particular the North Atlantic countries must avoid putting themselves in a position of approaching the Western Germans as a suppliant. The British Government was not prepared to accept the view that, if the Germans were not associated with the North Atlantic Treaty countries these countries were incapable of defending themselves. Every possible sacrifice would have to be made rather than to make an admission of that kind. In brief the British Government was prepared to accept Dr. Adenauer's approach at its face value and take immediate steps to work out the necessary conditions in conjunction with the Western German authorities. It would, however, be necessary to give precedence to the building up of the North Atlantic Treaty forces first and then include in this integrated defence force whatever German forces were forthcoming, so as to ensure that they were used properly and effectively.

9. As a separate issue, he would like to emphasise the importance of strengthening the existing police force in Western Germany. At present the West German police were neither strong enough nor well enough organised or trained to be a really effective force. He saw no reason why immediate steps should not be taken to improve this situation and suggested that the High Commissioners should be instructed to work out appropriate plans immediately.

10. MR. ACHESON said that the discussion showed so far that there was a wide area of agreement and a considerable area of uncertainty. In an attempt to clarify some of the uncertainties it might be helpful if certain basic factors were emphasised. It was agreed the morale and the will of the population was the foundation stone of any system of security and defence. It followed from this that unless the population was convinced that the defence plans had some hope of success, the will to resist would be fatally weakened. For this reason the first line of defence must clearly be in Germany as far to the East as possible. If this is done the German will to resist became a major element in the defence of the West, as it was inconceivable that the forces of the other NAT countries would be prepared to fight surrounded by an apathetic German population. On the purely material side the effect of surrendering Germany would be most serious in terms of the loss of resources and production capacity, which such a surrender would entail.

11. At the meeting of the Council held in May, Mr. Bevin and Mr. Schuman had both made important statements affecting morale; in which they had stressed the need to forge a defence and not to plan a campaign of liberation. The United States Government had been much impressed by these statements and a careful consideration of their implications had led to a complete revolution in United States policy. The first fruits of this new policy were contained in the recent announcement by President Truman of the decision substantially to increase the number of United States forces stationed in Europe and the agreement to raise, identify and commit further reinforcements, which would be sent to the European theatre as and when necessary. The effect of this decision was that if an act of aggression took place in Europe the United States Government would be immediately involved on the same footing as the European North Atlantic Treaty powers. This action by the United States Government, however, did not solve the problem, and the Council must look to the next step. In the view of the United States Government it was necessary to adopt a bolder solution, namely the formation of a large integrated force consisting of identified units contributed by the individual Governments. These forces would be increased as additional manpower and equipment became available. Clearly the United States Government did not wish to make a contribution to a hopelessly small total force, but to a force which was adequate for the task which it had to perform. It seemed logical that this integrated force must be controlled by some central military organisation which would take the form of a central military staff and would administer, train and control the forces. This staff would have to have some individual in charge of it whatever his title or nationality might be. Under this concept, therefore, there would be one integrated staff, directing one integrated force, under the command of one commander.

12. An integrated force on the lines set out above would, of course, require considerable quantities of modern equipment in a very short time. Military production in the United States was being expanded to its limit, but the United States Government were willing to proceed a stage further by participating, if the other countries so desired, in a complete reorganisation of the Military Production and Supply Board, so that instead of having a mere planning organisation for production there would exist an executive body which would be of the greatest assistance and help to the various Governments in utilizing every possible element of European production, and in ensuring that the products go immediately to a useful destination.

13. On the financial side an agreement had been reached on measures to be taken to implement the High Priority Production Programme, but more permanent measures would be required if the long term production programme were to be implemented. The United States Government hoped that practical and immediate steps would permit the immediate implementation of large scale production

programmes and would be prepared to make every effort to reduce the formalities to the minimum. The basic approach would be that the United States would co-operate in assisting countries to take action, which they would be precluded from taking by the lack of internal or external financial resources.

14. The problem of German participation should be considered in the light of the above general concept. It was a matter of major importance that the Council should arrive at a positive decision on whether or not they wished to take advantage of Dr. Adenauer's offer to participate in the defence of Western Europe both with German manpower and German resources. The precise conditions under which this participation would take place were at this stage of secondary importance. The Council was faced with the straight issue whether or not their plan for the defence of the North Atlantic area did or did not necessitate the participation of Germany. The United States Government was in favour of bringing about German participation in a proper way and at a proper time.

15. It might be of some assistance to the Council to indicate in more detail precisely what the United States Government's intentions were as regards to the participation of Germany. They were not in favour of the formation of a German national army directed by a German general staff and equipped in all respects from German resources. Such a concept would be highly dangerous. The United States Government envisaged that, at the proper time, German units would be raised by the German Government who would be responsible for their pay and uniform. These units, when raised, would be incorporated in the integrated force, planned for the defence of Western Europe. The units should be kept small and incorporated into larger units provided by other countries. War-like equipment would be supplied from outside sources and should be of such a nature that it would be of little use outside the combined force. In brief, a situation was envisaged under which German units would become a part of the integrated force in their own right and not as mercenaries. They would have their own unit officers and there would be no bar against German officers of exceptional ability being posted to the proposed command organisation. With regard to timing, the United States Government felt that it would take anything up to two years before any effective German combat forces could be placed in the field. Apart from the need to train recruits, machinery would have to be set up to secure these recruits and to administer them. He had not been impressed by the argument put forward that such German units, if raised, could only be equipped at the expense of other countries. If, as was hoped, military production available for the North Atlantic Treaty countries was to be increased to a great extent, sufficient equipment would become available for issue to the German units by the time they had been trained.

16. The United States Government did not dissent from the view that the form of presentation was of the utmost importance if the the full support of the democratic peoples was to be assured. On the other hand, they did not believe that decision to permit the participation of German units would be regarded by the Russians as a provocative act which might invite them to commit an immediate act of aggression. The provocative act in Russian eyes was the strengthening of the defence forces of the North Atlantic Treaty area, irrespective of whether or not, they came from Germany.

17. He undertook to circulate as soon as possible a memorandum consolidating United States Government's proposals which he had outlined above.

II. Publicity

18. THE CHAIRMAN emphasized that the problems discussed in the Council should not be mentioned outside the various delegations, since publicity on these matters would have serious repercussions. He suggested that the press be informed that the Council had reviewed their accomplishments and plans in the light of events since their last meeting, and had received the report of their deputies.

III Date of Next Meeting

19. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Council would take place on 16th September at 10:30 a.m.

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