

COUNCIL IN MINISTERIAL SESSION

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Extract from C-R(66)68 (Meeting held on 15/12/66 at 10.30 a.m.)

9. Mr. HARMEL (Belgium) started by saying that the Council's traditional review of the state of the Alliance took on exceptional importance this year. Discussions would centre around the present status and the possible future progress of East/West relations. He would be laying stress on the convergent efforts towards a détente with the East European Communist World which had been made by Permanent Representatives, national experts and members of governments since the Brussels meeting of the Council.

10. This session was also important since it had already led, within the Defence Planning Committee, to joint conclusions concerning nuclear consultation. The adoption of the McNamara Committee recommendations appeared as an essential step forward.

11. A third area in which decisions were awaited concerned the readjustment made necessary by the French withdrawal from the military organization in peacetime. Belgium intended to make a positive contribution towards maintaining the cohesion of the Alliance.

12. However, the Council could not confine itself to these questions: the authors of the North Atlantic Treaty had set it a further task by deciding that the Treaty should be of indefinite duration but providing for stages designed to enable the Alliance to take stock of the situation. The tenth anniversary had allowed for a possible revision of the Treaty, and the twentieth anniversary would offer the possibility of leaving the Alliance. The signatories to the Atlantic Treaty had desired that member countries should be able to assess jointly the progress accomplished and to draw similar, if not common, conclusions which would enable them to lay down common objectives for the future. The Organization had already made a thorough study of the situation before the 1959 deadline was reached. The Belgian Government considered that it should undertake a further detailed examination before 1969. A number of governments had already made suggestions along these lines and the Draft Resolution which he would be submitting to the Council stemmed directly from the ideas put forward by Canada two years ago.

13. The Alliance had successfully contained Communist expansion and had maintained the status quo in a specific geographical area. In view of the balance which had thus been achieved and of the resulting trend towards peaceful co-existence, there was no longer any doubt that a fresh appraisal of relations with the East could be made and that it was possible to foresee

a settlement of the problems connected with European security and an end to the partition of Germany. There were other changes to be considered: developments within the Communist world, the problem of underdevelopment in the Third World which was a primary subject of concern, the disquiet which had arisen in Asia due to China's isolationist policy, her technological advances and the fact that an increasing number of countries were able to produce nuclear weapons. Finally, in spite of growing pains, European unity was on the move and had got over some decisive economic hurdles.

14. Rather than apply isolated solutions to these problems or to study them pragmatically within the Alliance as and when they arose, it would appear preferable to undertake here and now a joint analysis of the major events of the past twenty years in order to determine their effect on the objectives and methods of the Alliance and to decide whether it was necessary to improve consultation within the Alliance. He proposed that this task should be entrusted to the Secretary General and the Permanent Representatives who would receive the assistance of governments and could, if necessary, set up special working groups. A preliminary report would be examined at the Spring 1967 Ministerial meeting and the Ministerial Council at its meeting in December 1967 would draw the appropriate conclusions emerging from the enquiry.

15. After much reflection and as the result of numerous contacts, Belgium had therefore prepared a preliminary Draft Resolution which could be finalised by a Drafting Committee. The existing degree of balance in East/West forces afforded comparative security and provided the room for manoeuvre essential for seeking fresh initiatives within the context of the Alliance. Furthermore, it was hardly conceivable that member countries should wait until Article 13 of the Treaty became applicable to undertake the joint study which events made necessary; they must show that the Alliance was looking to the future, since this would have a favourable psychological effect. It was doubtless necessary to show prudence in asserting solidarity, but it was also necessary to show determination. He hoped that his proposal presented this dual aspect.

16. The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Harmel for his proposal, saying that it would create a focal point which would be of very great value in the ensuing discussions. He suggested an arrangement whereby the Draft Resolution might be examined and put in final form for approval by Ministers. This was agreed.

Mr HARMEL Proposal has been followed by many Ministers, in particular in paragraphs:

- (a) 26, 28, 40, 48, 55 of C-R(66)68
and,
- (b) 10, 13, 16, 20, 24, 32, 42 of C-R(66)69

At the end of C-R(66)69, the CHAIRMAN summed up the discussion and in parag. 62. . . .

62. He believed that the Belgian proposal, which was now under discussion in a special group, would be reviewed by Ministers at the following day's meeting at a suitable point, according to the development of the procedure. The French Foreign Minister had anticipated in the last point of his statement the question of technological co-operation which appeared on the next day's Agenda for discussion. It was an important proposal which would be given the careful attention it deserved the following day. He supposed that the Italian Foreign Minister would have a statement to make on the subject and that some conclusions would have to be drawn. For the moment, the Council had only to register the general acceptance by the French Government of the Italian Government's suggestion.