

NA1056

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Research
Memorandum

REU-3, January 19, 1968

THIS REPORT IS INTENDED FOR THE USE OF THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH AND HIS STAFF ONLY. IT IS NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO OTHER AGENCIES OR TO THE PRESS.

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *Thomas L. Hughes*
Subject: NATO Parliamentarians Seek Strengthened
Ties With North Atlantic Council

A LARGE COPY

The long-standing question of enhancing the powers of the North Atlantic Assembly or at least of promoting closer cooperation between it and the North Atlantic Council was again a topic of discussion at the annual meeting of the parliamentarians from NATO countries in November 1967 and at the December ministerial session of the Council. This report examines the background and current status of proposals affecting the role of the Assembly.

ABSTRACT

The North Atlantic Assembly, formerly known as the NATO Parliamentarians Conference, continues to seek internal organizational improvements and a strengthened role in relationship to NATO, but it now appears to view with less urgency than in 1966 proposals for a completely regenerated body with significantly enhanced powers.

Delegations of parliamentarians from NATO countries have met annually since 1955 as a self-constituted organization to promote the solidarity of the Alliance. While a close working relationship has developed between the parliamentary group and NATO organs, there is no official tie linking them. Proposals for formalizing the relationship and changing the status of the body of parliamentarians to that of a consultative assembly for NATO have been put forward almost from the beginning of the parliamentary conferences. The most recent of these proposals, which is still under formal consideration, was given initial approval by the parliamentarians in November 1966 in the aftermath of the

"France-NATO crisis" and was then referred to the North Atlantic Council (NAC)

This report was produced by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Aside from normal substantive exchange with other agencies at the working level, it has not been coordinated elsewhere.

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

and member governments for action. Under this plan the Assembly would be formally chartered by inter-governmental agreement and would be given the authority to require reports of the Secretary General and submit recommendations to NAC. Although Assembly recommendations are already transmitted to the Council and the parliamentarians are normally addressed annually by the NATO Secretary General and by SACEUR, most member governments have been unenthusiastic about changing the present informal Assembly-Council relationship. In Council discussions during 1967, permanent representatives have raised a number of questions concerning the juridical, security, and fiscal implications of the proposed changes. In view of differing interpretations of the proposal and the desire to ascertain more fully the attitude of the parliamentarians themselves concerning it, the Council left the matter unresolved pending further meetings between the NATO Secretary General and the officers of the Assembly. These discussions are expected to take place early in 1968.

Following these inconclusive deliberations by NAC, the Assembly in its November 1967 session went no further than to urge the Council to take action as soon as possible to establish an "improved and strengthened relationship" with the Assembly. Agreement on any fundamental, organic change in the status or functions of the parliamentary group that would require formal inter-governmental agreement or treaty amendment does not appear possible in the immediate future, even if such a measure of "institutionalization" remains for some the ultimate goal. One of the results of the year-long "Harmel exercise" was to show that there is little or no sentiment among the members for institutional restructuring of the Alliance or, a fortiori, for any move in the direction of Atlantic "federalism" by means of establishing a "parliament" of the Alliance. What now appears more likely is a recasting of the Assembly-Council relationship by means of a Council

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

- iii -

resolution which would neither bind member governments nor restrict the freedom of action of either NAC or the parliamentarians in any substantive way. This would be in keeping with the parliamentarians' apparent willingness to follow a pragmatic approach to the problem and would allow the Assembly to continue to fulfill successfully its function as a sounding board for consideration of problems facing the Atlantic community.

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

Origins of the Assembly. The long-standing debate concerning the North Atlantic Assembly's organizational framework and relationship to NATO arises from the fact that, unlike similar European parliamentary groups which have appeared since World War II, it lacks a formal juridical base. Formerly known as the NATO Parliamentarians Conference (NPC), its first session was held at NATO headquarters in Paris in 1955 as the outgrowth of a series of discussions regarding the need for a closer relationship between NATO and members of the national parliaments. This first Conference passed appropriate resolutions to continue its activities and meetings, and organized its own secretariat. The NPC thus came into being under exclusively parliamentary sponsorship, unencumbered by official, governmental responsibility or status.

The Assembly in plenary session presently numbers about 140 parliamentarians, chosen by the respective legislative bodies themselves and including opposition members. Activities are organized by committees on political, economic, scientific and technical, cultural and information, and military matters as they concern NATO and the Atlantic areas. Resolutions of the parliamentarians have consistently urged member governments to attain proposed NATO force levels, to improve standards of political consultation, and to seek further cooperation in such diverse fields as nuclear strategy, public information, and scientific research. Efforts of the NPC contributed to the initiation of NATO programs for scientific cooperation, and it has helped to organize meetings and groups such as the Atlantic Convention of 1962 and the Atlantic Institute.

While the Assembly as yet has no official relationship with NAC, it nevertheless has been able to count on the assistance of NATO officials, and it addresses recommendations to the Council as well as to member governments. Annual meetings have normally been held at NATO headquarters and are addressed by the NATO Secretary General and by SACEUR. Informal contacts and exchanges between the president of the parliamentarians and the Secretary General take place from time to time.

Proposals For Reform. A number of the more active participants in the NPC have long advocated its transformation into a formal assembly with a consultative relationship to the NAC, thus enhancing its status, giving it a more substantive role in Atlantic affairs, and assuring the organization a more adequate budget and secretariat as well. Proposals for such an "Atlantic Assembly" were most enthusiastically backed by those favoring eventual Atlantic political federation or integration, who viewed the creation of an Assembly as a first step toward an institutionalized Atlantic Community.

One early proposal was formalized by the Atlantic Convention, a gathering of prominent citizens active in Atlantic affairs which the NPC helped organize and which met in Paris in January 1962. The Convention recommended that "the NATO Parliamentarians' Conference be developed into a consultative Atlantic Assembly" which would have the power to receive reports, raise questions, debate and review "the work of all Atlantic institutions, and make recommendations to other Atlantic bodies and governments on questions of concern to the Atlantic Community." The "Atlantic bodies" referred to were NATO and the OECD.

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

- 2 -

Subsequent efforts to create such a multi-purpose assembly floundered because of the impossibility of providing for membership of non-NATO members of the OECD in an assembly which would also be concerned with NATO's military affairs.

The NPC then focussed its attention on the conversion of that organization into a consultative assembly for NATO only, with an official relationship to the NAC. At its October 1965 meeting, Sir Geoffrey de Freitas, leader of the British delegation and one of the founders of the NPC, proposed that the Conference's Political Committee be instructed to prepare a report regarding this possibility. The proposal was adopted unanimously, and Sir Geoffrey was placed in charge of the study.

The De Freitas Proposal. The De Freitas report, submitted to the 12th NPC in November 1966, called for the conversion of the Conference into an Atlantic Assembly which would be empowered to make recommendations to NAC, receive regular reports from the Secretary General, submit questions to him and receive formal answers or refusal to answer, and invite representatives of the Secretary General or the NAC to appear before it. The Assembly's new authority would be established by a charter to be approved by NATO governments, a draft of which was submitted with the report.

Meeting at a time when supporters of the Alliance were most anxious to strengthen its institutions following the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure, the Conference approved this report and forwarded it and the proposed charter to the North Atlantic Council, recommending that member governments agree to the establishment of such an Assembly. At this same session the parliamentarians, as a first step toward this conversion, changed the title of the NATO Parliamentarians Conference to the North Atlantic Assembly and sought also to institute much-needed improvements in its secretariat.

While this far-reaching proposal was accepted by the Conference, the impression was left with many observers that the parliamentarians were not fully agreed among themselves about what they had done and, as a result, there remained some confusion about what the NATO governments, individually or collectively, were expected to do. At the December 1966 NATO Ministerial meeting, Secretary Rusk stated that the US would welcome a stronger role for the parliamentarians in the work of NATO, a sentiment which was echoed by Dutch Foreign Minister Luns. However, no other ministers mentioned the NPC proposals in this forum, and considerable hesitancy on the part of most NATO members concerning the idea of making any change in the informal Council-Assembly relationship soon became apparent.

NAC Consideration of the Proposal. Preliminary discussions of the parliamentarians' proposal by the North Atlantic Council in the spring of 1967 were generally inconclusive, and the question was referred to NAC's Political Committee for further consideration. Only when it appeared that the Council might be placed in an embarrassing position by its lack of agreement on a response to the Assembly initiative did a majority of Council members seriously engage in efforts to find a positive-sounding reply to the parliamentarians. Even then the British indicated that the proposal was not yet ripe for a decision by the Council, and the Germans expressed doubt about its practicality. The

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

- 3 -

Portuguese remained unenthusiastic about encouraging the parliamentarians to take a more active role in NATO deliberations, declaring that they might complicate the work of the Council. And the French opposed the idea, declaring that the exercise of similar functions by the Assembly of the Western European Union, established by treaty amendments, had caused only difficulties.

One of the principal problems which arose in the discussions concerned constitutional or juridical questions. All were agreed that any action which would require amendment to the North Atlantic Treaty was out of the question. Nor was there enthusiasm for the establishment of a new Atlantic Assembly by inter-governmental agreement, as envisioned by the De Freitas draft charter. Some expressed concern that such a requirement for action by national parliaments might provoke distracting debate over broader issues of European and Atlantic policy not germane to the question of the parliamentarians' organization. It was suggested in the Council that a more appropriate method would be to determine the official ties of the parliamentarians to the NAC by a resolution of the Council, under the terms of which the NAC would invite the parliamentarians to enter into a new and official relationship with NATO and would set out the Assembly's responsibilities and authority.

A more general criticism arose from the difficulty of envisaging just how the Council, which represents the member governments, could be made more responsive in practical terms to the actions of the Assembly. Basic reservations in general about augmenting opportunities for parliamentary interference in the work of the Council appeared to underlie the comments of many European representatives on the Council, which were reinforced by concern in particular for the security of NATO's military information. Such opportunities, it was pointed out, would facilitate challenges of official government positions by opposition back-benchers, and it was not inconceivable that Communist deputies from member parliaments might some day be named to the Assembly delegations.

The proposal was also criticized on the grounds that it would be a step toward an unwanted proliferation of international bodies, although, in fact, a reorganized Assembly would merely replace an already-existing group. Certain members, especially the UK, also were concerned about the financial implications of supporting a more active Assembly with an augmented secretariat. The US delegation, however, has long contended that improvements in the secretariat, implying some increased financial support, were indispensable for the continuation of the organization in whatever form it might take.

Current Status of the Proposal. The final result of the NAC discussions prior to the December 1967 NATO ministerial meeting was a decision to seek additional guidance from the parliamentarians themselves. Secretary General Brosio was authorized to meet with the president and possibly one or two other members of the Assembly for the purpose of discussing informally the question of its proper relationship with the Council, letting the parliamentarians outline precisely what measures they would prefer, with a view to presenting subsequently more concrete proposals to NAC. In his address to the parliamentarians' annual session in November 1967, Brosio admitted that, while all NATO delegations to the Council wished to achieve an improvement in the "practical relations" between NATO and the Assembly, they were unable to make any appreciable advance

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

- 4 -

in the direction of "institutionalization" of the relationship. Brosio therefore announced his intention to meet with the newly-elected officers of the parliamentarians without delay to clarify the problems, so as to achieve a better working arrangement between the Assembly and the Council. He stated: "The practice of our Alliance is essentially pragmatic; in harmony with its nature it will be possible to find, I am convinced, a relationship consistent with the realities of NATO's position and worthy of the Parliaments who have appointed you to this important body."

In keeping with this pragmatic approach to the evolution of the NATO parliamentarians, the Assembly's final resolution "urges" the Council "to take appropriate action to establish an improved and strengthened relationship with this Assembly as soon as possible" and "instructs the Political Committee to prepare a plan for better organization of this Assembly."

This latest initiative by the Assembly for closer ties with the Council was noted during the December 1967 NATO ministerial meeting by Secretary Rusk, who suggested that the Council's Permanent Representatives consult further on the matter. This proposal was strongly supported by Dutch Foreign Minister Luns, at whose suggestion the ministerial communique included an appropriate reference to the search for "closer cooperation" between the parliamentarians and the Council. The communique also stated that the Secretary General was authorized to study the matter further and submit suggestions to the Council.

Prospects. The effect of the action taken during the Assembly's November 1967 session is to postpone for another year the question of changing the Assembly's relationship with NAC, giving the parliamentarians that additional time as well to plan organizational improvements for the Assembly.

In spite of arguments to the effect that the informal relationship which presently exists gives the parliamentarians freedom of action, it seems likely that some change in the status of the Assembly will be eventually agreed upon by both the Assembly and the Council. The fact that the NATO ministers agreed to a reference in their December 1967 communique to proposals for "closer cooperation" between the parliamentarians and the Council would seem to indicate a greater willingness on the part of governments to find some practical arrangement to achieve this objective. If handled skillfully and in a forthcoming manner, a mutually satisfactory new relationship can probably be worked out in practice without introducing any of the dire institutional consequences which some predict would result from an more fundamental or organic transformation of the parliamentarians' group. Any immediate revision in the terms of NAC relations with the Assembly will probably be handled in a low key, and, under the likely terms of such a revision, Assembly responsibilities would continue to be advisory. The group would not become a subordinate or constituent body of NATO, but would remain a separate, though related, organization, created by parallel parliamentary authorizations of participating governments and controlling its own procedures, with its relationship to NATO defined by a resolution of the North Atlantic Council.

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

- 5 -

The year-long "Harmel exercise" showed, among other things, that the members of the Alliance have not found it either necessary or useful at this time to envisage drastic institutional restructuring, and certainly there has been no tendency to move toward the kind of Atlantic "federalism" which some supporters of a stronger Assembly conceive to be the ultimate object of their efforts. But those who still look forward to an eventual formal "institutionalization" of the North Atlantic Assembly would probably consider that the achievement of this long-range goal would be facilitated by the less formal changes presently contemplated both in the internal organization of the Assembly and in its relations with the North Atlantic Council. In the meantime, the Assembly, once these changes are made, would be able to continue to function successfully as a forum which encourages discussion of and interest in the problems of the Atlantic area both within parliamentary circles and in a wider context as well.

CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM