

Background note from the Permanent Commission on Western Union (London, 21 December 1948)

Caption: Background note from the Permanent Commission, dated 21 December 1948, on the general organisation of Western Union.

Source: National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>, Records of international organizations, DG. Copies of records of the Brussels Treaty Organisation and Western European Union. Brussels Treaty Organisations and Western European Union: Microfilm copies of files, DG 1.

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BRUSSELS TREATY PARLIAMENT COMMISSION

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BACKGROUND FOR THE PRESS: TREATY OF BRUSSELS.

21.12.48

The Treaty which was signed in Brussels on 17th March, 1948, by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, provided for co-operation between the Five countries to strengthen the economic, social and cultural ties by which they are already united. Furthermore, they pledged themselves to afford assistance to each other in accordance with the Charter of U.N.O., in maintaining international peace and security and in resisting any renewal of a policy of aggression. For the purpose of consulting together on all the questions dealt with in the Treaty, the latter provided for the creation of a Consultative Council.

Resulting from these principles of the Treaty the present Organisation is as follows:-

1. The Consultative Council. is the supreme authority in the Brussels Treaty Organisation. It is composed of the Foreign Ministers of the Five powers, meets whenever it is necessary, at least once in every three months, successively in the Five capitals. The Council receives the reports from the different organizations of the Brussels Treaty which are presented to it by the Permanent Commission and gives these organizations directions for the realization of the objectives of the Treaty. The Council proceeds to consultations on any question which its members wish to raise.

The first meeting of the Council was held in Paris on 17th April, 1948. It was in the course of this meeting that the Council decided on the creation of the Permanent Commission and the Military Committee. On this occasion, the Council also decided upon the principle of periodic meetings of Ministers or of experts in the economic, social and cultural fields.

At its second meeting at The Hague on 25th July, 1948, the Council reviewed the work accomplished up to that date by the Permanent Commission and the Military Committee. After examination of the report of the Five Finance Ministers on their meeting at Brussels in April, 1948, the Council decided that a new meeting of the Finance and Economic Ministers should take place (see para. II). The Council also decided upon the creation of Committees of Experts in the Cultural and Social Fields (see para. III).

In the course of its meeting in Paris in October, 1948, the Consultative Council examined the results of the preliminary conversations which were held in Washington in the course of the summer on the subject of the problem of North Atlantic Security. The Council accepted the principle of a defensive Atlantic Pact and charged the Permanent Commission, which had already examined the question, with further study of this problem. The result of this work, after it had been considered by the Five governments, was communicated to their representatives in Washington where conversations have been going on between the representatives of the Five and those of the American and Canadian Governments which, at the time of the drafting of this paper, are making satisfactory progress.

At the same meeting the Consultative Council decided to establish a Committee for the study of European unity. This Committee which is meeting at the moment in Paris under the Presidency of M. Herriot, has as its aim the examination and proposal to the Governments of the measures to be taken with a view to realising a larger unity of European States.

To this end the Committee was instructed to take into consideration all suggestions, including the Franco-Belgian suggestion for a "Consultative Assembly" and Mr. Bevin's suggestion for a "European Council" composed of Ministers of the different states concerned, as well as all other suggestions which might be presented by the Governments or by private organizations, and to report to the Consultative Council at its fourth meeting in London on 26th January, 1948.

2. The Brussels Treaty Permanent Commission which met for the first time on 24th April, 1948, represents the Consultative Council during the intervals when it is not sitting. The Commission is in London and is composed of the Heads of the four diplomatic missions in London and a British Representative with the rank of Ambassador.

The Commission meets at least once a week, assisted by a Secretariat-General organized on an international basis, which Secretariat also serves the Consultative Council.

The Presidency is held by each of the representatives in turn for a period of three months.

The Permanent Commission coordinates and directs the activities of all the organizations constituted by the application of the Brussels Treaty, namely: the Military organization, the Economic and Financial Committee, the Cultural and Social Committees, as well as various sub-committees collaborating between the Five, all of whom report to the Commission.

The Commission prepares the agenda for the meetings of the Consultative Council and supervises the organisation of meetings of other Ministers of the Five.

The Permanent Commission constitutes the Permanent organ for political consultations between the Five. The Consultative Council can entrust the Commission with more precise tasks for instance, as indicated above, the study of a North Atlantic Pact.

The Permanent Commission also organised regular consultations on the questions on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

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I. ORGANISATION OF DEFENCE.

By virtue of the Brussels Treaty, France, United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg have agreed to collaborate in the political, economic and cultural fields and in defence.

The Defence Organisation of the Brussels Treaty began in April, 1948. At the end of the year, sufficient progress had been made and the organisation had shaped sufficiently for these facts to be of interest to the public.

This organisation is in two parts :

The higher direction organisation,

The command organisation.

1. HIGHER DIRECTION

This organisation is composed as follows:-

(a) Defence Committee of the Brussels Treaty

The Five Defence Ministers meeting together form this Committee. The Committee ensures the higher direction and control of the whole organisation in the name of the heads of the Five governments. It meets about every three months in one of the capitals of the Five Brussels Treaty powers.

(b) The Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Brussels Treaty.

The Chiefs of Staff of the Five Powers meeting together form this Committee. It is an advisory body to the Defence Committee on all military matters. It meets about every month, normally in London. The senior U.S. Representative and the Canadian Representative on this Military Committee have sat with the Chiefs of Staff Committee by invitation. The Committee is served by the equivalent of a permanent staff.

(c) The Military Committee of the Brussels Treaty

Sitting permanently in London, each power is represented by a Head of Delegation assisted by a small number of officers.

Under the direct control of the Committee are a number of inter-service bodies and Advisory Committees whose members are responsible for giving shape to the suggestions submitted by the Military Committee to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and ultimately to the Ministers as well as for direct liaison with the Service Departments of the individual Chiefs of Staff. Representatives of the U.S. and Canadian Chiefs of Staff have participated in the work of the Military Committee on a non-membership basis.

/Parallel to.....

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Parallel to the Chiefs of Staff Committee are the following:-

(d) The Military Supply Board of the Brussels Treaty.

This committee is the Defence Committee's organ for all matters affecting the provision of military equipment. It makes recommendations of the proposed way of meeting the requirements of the Five Powers. The senior U.S. Representative with the Military Committee has sat with the Military Supply Board by invitation. A Canadian Representative from the Staff of the High Commissioner for Canada in the United Kingdom has participated in the work of the Military Supply Board on a non-membership basis.

In the same way as the Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Supply Board is assisted by a permanent working body:-

(e) The Supply Executive Committee

which sits permanently side by side with the Military Committee and functions in close liaison with the latter. A U.S. Representative (and a Canadian Representative) with the Military Committee have sat with the Supply Executive Committee by invitation.

(f) The Secretariat General.

The work of the five above Committees is co-ordinated by a Secretariat General, composed of officers and personnel of the Five Powers.

2. COMMAND ORGANISATION

This consists of the Commanders-in-Chief Committee whose composition was published at the time of its formation early in October, 1948.

This Committee consists of:-

A Chairman	Field Marshal Montgomery
The Commander-in-Chief Western Europe Land Forces	General de Lattre de Tassigny
The Commander-in-Chief Western Europe Air Forces.	Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb.
Flag Officer Western Europe	Vice Admiral Jaujard.

No member of this Committee exercises executive command in peace-time; however, all steps are being taken to ensure that the Committee will be able to exercise command in Western Europe immediately at the outbreak of a conflict in the best possible conditions.

The Commanders-in-Chief Committee receives its orders and directives from the Defence Committee at governmental level through the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

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The permanent headquarters of this organisation has been established at Fontainebleau.

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II. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ORGANISATION

In the course of the session of the Consultative Council at The Hague in July, 1948, the Council decided that the Ministers for Finance and Economic Affairs in the Five Countries should meet to examine the action to be taken with a view to harmonizing the long-term policies of their respective Governments.

At their meeting in Paris on October 17th, 1948, the Finance Ministers studied the results of the economic and financial co-operation between the Five powers since the signing of the Brussels Treaty.

They arrived at the conclusion that the signing by 19 countries within the frame-work of the O.E.E.C., of the agreement on European payments demonstrates in a satisfactory way the effectiveness of the initiative taken in this respect by the Five Finance Ministers at their first meeting in Brussels in April, 1948, and relating towards the organization of consultations in financial matters.

On the other hand, the Ministers were agreed to wait until the plans of the O.E.E.C. were developed before the Five powers took a decision on a common long-term policy.

They decided to recommend to the Consultative Council the setting up of a Committee of Economic and Financial Experts charged with the study of the economic and financial problems which arise between the Five countries, especially from the point of view of defence. This recommendation was approved by the Consultative Council at its meeting in Paris. The Committee sits in London and works in close touch with the Military Supply Board and with the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

In the economic and financial field, the Five are anxious to avoid any duplication with already existing organizations, especially within the frame-work of Benelux, the O.E.E.C., or the United Nations.

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III. CULTURAL.....

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III. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The Committee of Cultural Experts, established at the time of the meeting of the Consultative Council at The Hague, has as its task the examination of the whole picture of cultural relations between the Five countries and the deciding of what action can usefully be undertaken either within the frame-work of the Five or on a bilateral basis with a view to promoting in the cultural field, the realization of Western Union. This Committee sat in London in August and in Paris in October.

This Committee has studied the means of encouraging the circulation of persons and "Cultural Objects" between the Five, especially by organizing vocational courses, the distribution of information on the possibilities of travel, reception, accommodation offered in each country to school children and students, visits of educational inspectors in each of the Five countries, the organization of probationary courses in industry etc.. Working parties in each country are examining the means of suppressing the obstacles to cultural exchanges between the Five.

The next meeting of the Experts Committee will take place in The Hague at the beginning of February, 1949.

In the social field, the following Committees . . . were set up by the Consultative Council at the time of its meeting in The Hague:

The Committee of Social Experts was constituted with a view to studying the application of international labour conventions and the harmonization of the social legislation of the Five, especially in the sphere of social security. It has met twice.

The Committee of Experts on Public Health has met twice, in London in September and in Paris in October, with a view to organizing between the Five the exchange of medical personnel and the putting into application of conventions and recommendations proposed by the W.H.O.

A Committee of Experts on War Pensions proposes to harmonize the pensions regulations in the Five countries. One meeting was held in October last, another will be held in January.

Finally, a sub-committee on migration will meet in Paris at the beginning of January with a view to studying the application of the recommendations of the International Labour Conference held in Rome in January 1948 on the distribution of national labour, the increasing of the national level of employment, the increasing of the accommodation for workers.