

Informal note by the chairman of the committee of experts (Paris, 11 February 1955)

Caption: On 11 February 1955, the chairman of the committee of experts of the working party on production and standardisation of armaments drafts an informal note expressing his doubts as to whether the work method of the committee will enable it to complete the task required of it. In his note, the chairman offers a series of suggestions that could improve the results of the studies carried out by the committee of experts, particularly linking the various studies to provide an interconnected summary of the question of standardisation.

Source: Western European Union. Interim Commission. Working Party on Production and Standardisation of Armaments. Committee of Experts- Informal note by the chairman. Paris: 11.02.1955. 3 p.- Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://anlux.lu/>. Western European Union Archives. Armament Bodies. CPA/SAC. Comité permanent des armements. File CPA-032. Volume 1/1.

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WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

INTERIM COMMISSION

WORKING PARTY ON PRODUCTION AND STANDARDISATION OF ARMAMENTS

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COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

Informal Note by the Chairman

So far, we have confined ourselves to arranging for notes to be written on some (but not all) of the particular points listed in our terms of reference.

2. I am not at all sure that, if we aim at no more than a series of separate notes on each of these points we shall have done the job required of us. We shall have a disjointed collection of bare bones. I think we must provide an articulated skeleton: articulation would consist in showing the connection between the separate studies. The "bones" provided so far are excellent bones, and I suggest they deserve being strung together.

3. As far as Section A is concerned, I suggest that:-

- (a) the heart of the matter lies in the first sentence and that we must produce a brief overall summary to which the separate notes under preparation would be attached as appendices;

- (b) for this purpose we must provide something rather more factual and rather more pertinent to the general problem than is likely to emerge from our collection of bare bones.

4. For example, I think we should take two or three examples of weapons or equipment which have been standardised between some or more of the NATO countries, and by tracing the history of each of these illustrative cases, show how and to what extent the "successive stages" so clearly analysed in General Bron's paper were followed in practice.

5. By taking one or two of these examples from real life, we can also show to what extent the achievement of standardisation has influenced the division of the production of the standardised item between the nations who have adopted it. This will help us to provide the bridge between Sections A and B of our terms of reference.

6. The desire has been expressed by more than one member of the Working Group that a picture be presented of the scope of the standardisation problem which has to be solved. I do not suggest that the Committee of Experts should attempt to recommend a list of things which should be standardised. That will be the task of any organisation which is set up by Western European Union as a result of the Working Group's deliberations.

7. I do, however, suggest that the Working Group will find it useful, if not essential, to have at least a broad picture of the present state of equipment of the NATO forces - i.e., how many types of medium field gun, of medium tanks, of the principal kinds of aircraft, and so on, are held. By this means, the Working Group can see whether, and, if so where, "unstandardisation" (if there is such a word) is rampant.

8. As regards Section B, I hope that the comprehensive descriptions of national procurement policies now under preparation in response to question B.1 will go a long way towards answering some of the questions in the rest of Section B. Moreover, when these essays are assembled, we shall, I hope, find in them material for the preparation of an articulated summary of the entire problem, and, in particular of the relationship between standardisation and production. At any rate, when we have assembled all the "B.1" essays, we can see which of the remaining Section B questions still require further replies.