

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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STATEMENT BY
THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BALL
ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE
BEFORE THE
HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1966, AT 10:00 A.M., E.D.T.

I.

This Committee is examining proposals -- in the form of resolutions -- designed to encourage a Federal Union of the North Atlantic countries.

Certainly the Department of State favors the development of increased cooperation among these nations. We look forward to seeing this cooperation -- over time -- assume an increasingly political form. We welcome increased discussion among private citizens who seek to promote Atlantic cooperation.

But I cannot in all candor, Mr. Chairman, endorse these resolutions since they do not, in our view, accord with the political realities of this mid-Twentieth Century. It is our experience that the pursuit of unrealistic goals distracts from, rather than assists, the achievement of the useful and the possible. We do not believe a United States Government initiative on Atlantic Union would serve our interests and those of our European friends at this time.

The natural forces that tend to bind together the peoples of the North Atlantic are clear for all to see. We share a common history and a common civilization. We are legatees of the great civilization of the Greeks, the political institutions of Rome, and the unifying moral force of Christianity.

We are in a real sense children of the same history and the same spirit, as the men who founded our country well knew. The first of the great anti-colonial struggles -- our own War of Independence -- was sparked by explosive ideas that originated in Europe.

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Beyond our common heritage there is a second element that has tended to unite the Atlantic world. The nations of Western Europe and North America have, to a unique extent, been beneficiaries of the industrial revolution of the Nineteenth Century and the great scientific revolution of the Twentieth. As a result, the Atlantic nations occupy a position of unparalleled power. They share a set of unique world responsibilities that derive partly from that power and partly from the great ideas of human freedom that first flourished in the West.

Together, we Atlantic nations produce some two-thirds of the world's industrial output, while having only one-sixth of the world's population. We use advanced technology and a highly skilled labor force to feed many other parts of the world. We share an enormous reservoir of capital and trained manpower.

II.

A recitation of these facts poses the central question this Committee is considering today. Given the common heritage of the West, how can the Atlantic nations best translate their shared national interests into common policies? How can they most effectively work together to contribute to the needs of the modern world?

In principle, there are two major ways of going about combining the energies and resources of the peoples of the Atlantic area.

One way would be, as the pending resolutions suggest, to move toward some form of Atlantic federalism immediately. The second way would be to encourage the nations of Western Europe to move toward unity, while we at the same time worked at perfecting trans-Atlantic institutions to make possible an effective partnership between North America and a uniting Europe.

Of these two approaches, the realities of politics and power clearly favor the second.

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There are, it seems to me, two reasons why it is unrealistic to expect great progress toward Atlantic union at the present time.

The first derives from the great disparity in size and resources between America, on one side of the ocean, and the individual nation states of Europe on the other.

The second results from geography. The United States faces not only on the Atlantic, but also on the Pacific Ocean, while Europe does not -- and the United States also has special responsibilities within the Western Hemisphere.

The fact of disparity in size is, it seems to me, the central and inescapable impediment to serious movement toward Atlantic union at the present time. During the last twenty years we have seen a massive transformation of the power balance of the world. The nations of Western Europe, which only a quarter of a century ago controlled a great part of the population of the earth through vast colonial systems, have been reduced to their metropolitan dimensions. At the same time, with the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union, each organized on a continent-wide basis, there has been a redefinition of the scale of size essential to the role of a world power.

The individual nation states of Europe, therefore, find themselves suddenly lacking both well-defined territorial interests around the world and the vast resources which today are prerequisite for a generalized world role.

As a result, the European nations have quite naturally tended to turn their attention inward toward a concentration on their own affairs. To be sure they have cooperated with the United States in developing an Atlantic defense system. But in economic and political matters they have been concerned primarily with their own European affairs -- with building institutions looking toward economic integration and taking

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tentative steps toward political unity within Europe.

Quite frankly, I find little evidence of any strong interest among Europeans for any immediate move toward greater political unity with the United States. We Atlantic nations are of different size and the Europeans are sensitive to this disparity. They fear the overwhelming weight of United States power and influence in our common councils. They fear the superior resources of United States industry in their economic life. They are concerned that, in their relations with the United States, they may tend to lose their own identities and to become simply passive ancillaries to American policy.

These are the hard facts, as I see them. Anyone who has attempted to perfect techniques and arrangements for effective consultation with European governments cannot help but be sensitive to these realities.

III.

Along with the feeling of European peoples that they have not yet organized themselves on a basis that enables them to work closely with the United States without danger of being overwhelmed is the fear that Atlantic union under existing circumstances would force them to pursue American policies not immediately relevant to their own interests.

This feeling is particularly apparent with regard to our policies in the Far East. Here our differences derive in considerable part from a differing sense of our responsibilities. They flow to some extent from the fact that the United States is a Pacific power and the European nations are not.

I do not mean to suggest by these comments that there cannot, and should not be, a progressive drawing together between the peoples of the United States and those of Western Europe. Indeed, consistent with their efforts to build a unified Europe, most Europeans continue to favor cooperation across the Atlantic. I think that the difference between the Department of State and the proponents of the pending resolution is

a difference in sequence and timing and in the assessment of political realities.

We believe that so long as Europe remains merely a continent of medium and small-sized states there are definite limits to the degree of political unity we can achieve across the ocean. We believe, however, that if Europeans get on with the pressing business of constructing political unity in Europe, a coalescence in the relations of Europe and the United States can take place at a much more rapid pace.

IV.

Today, our prime objective in Western Europe should be to encourage unity. Western Europe lies between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is still the center of power and it is no accident that the two great wars of modern history have sprung from Europe.

Over the past three centuries the world has already paid too dearly for the rivalry among European nation states. It is essential that that rivalry be ended if we are to have any assurance of peace in the world.

Fortunately, within the last twenty years, men of great vision have led Europe by peaceful means to a degree of united action unprecedented in its history. They are now completing the steps that are creating a vast mass market embracing six countries. Sooner or later this economic community will almost certainly be joined by Great Britain and perhaps by other European states.

In the political sector they have unfortunately made less progress. Nonetheless the internal logic of the situation creates a very strong pressure toward unity. Europeans have come to recognize that they can play a significant role in the world and make the contribution which their resources and talents justify only by organizing their political affairs on a scale of size commensurate with the requirements of the modern age.

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It is with these considerations in mind that the United States throughout all postwar administrations has worked toward a constructive partnership of equals with a uniting Europe. We wish to build unity on a sound basis, and experience has taught that nothing can be more useless--and in fact diversionary--than creating a formalistic set of institutions without organic vitality or political validity.

It is imperative, therefore, that Europe get on with its own special task of unity if we are finally to deal on a basis of true equality across the Atlantic. For equality between Europe and the United States is not something that we Americans can grant by an act of grace or create by unilateral fiat. Equality springs from political facts. Americans can act through a single set of institutions and thus can apply the full resources of our continent to a single purpose. Europeans as yet cannot do this. And until they are organized to speak with one voice and act with one will, there can be no real equality.

VI.

Efforts to build the basis of Atlantic Partnership cannot, of course, await the full achievement of a united Europe--and they need not. There is much that we can and should do. For some years in NATO and the OECD we Atlantic nations have been seeking to perfect instruments for common action for defense, and common policies in our economic relationships. These are necessary tasks but they are a far cry from the achievement of a Federal Atlantic Union. They are undertaken within the four walls of the possible. They take us, in Churchill's phrase, "from the tossing sea of Cause and Theory to the firm ground of Result and Fact."

As the process of integration in Europe proceeds it is not possible to prejudge what more thorough forms of trans-Atlantic collaboration may develop. I do not rule out the possibility that one day--when Americans

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and Europeans can address each other as true equals--both may choose some more binding form of Atlantic association. But to press such association at the present time on an unwilling and unequal Europe could well postpone the future dawn of a more perfect unity.

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