



European Communities
Commission
Background Report

ISEC/B9/80

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February 24, 1980

EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION (EPC)
The evolution of common attitudes

420.43

Summary

Events in Iran and Afghanistan have highlighted the efforts of the Community to speak as one in the face of unexpected crisis. On such occasions differences are pounced upon while measures of agreement are seldom appreciated. Yet since 1970, when procedures to encourage political cooperation among members were first introduced, there has been an increasing effort by Community governments to harmonize their diplomacy and to adopt common positions on foreign affairs.

Although it is within the spirit of the Treaty of Rome, EPC lies outside the Treaty Institutions. Ministers meet as a Conference of Foreign Ministers as and when required. Once a year the Chairman of the Conference (the current President of the Council of Foreign Ministers) reports to the European Parliament on what has been achieved during the year. Mr O'Kennedy's report on 24 October 1979 shows the remarkably wide field where the Community acts as an entity in foreign affairs (1).

Evolution of procedures

Pleased with the achievement of the Common Market in 1968, Heads of Government of the Six, meeting in the Hague in December 1969, instructed the Foreign Ministers 'to study the best way of achieving progress in the matter of political unification within the context of enlargement of the European Communities'. Having largely attained immediate economic goals, the statesmen felt it was time to start the even more difficult task of moving towards political union.

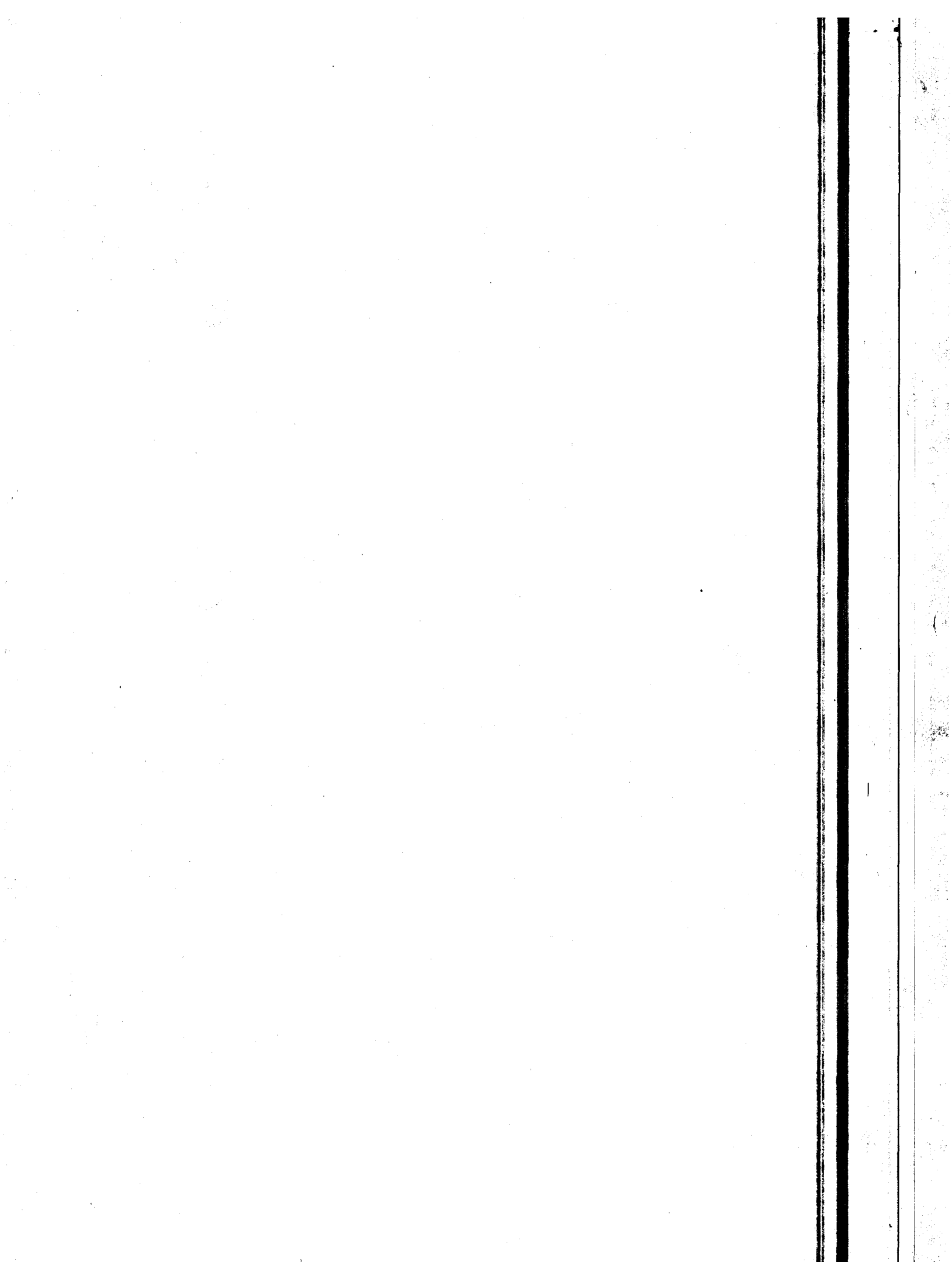
On 27 October 1970 the Council of Ministers adopted the Luxembourg Report (2) which established the aims of European political cooperation and the procedures for pursuing them. A second report (3) in 1973 modified these procedures in the light of experience and later they were extended to meet the demands of the European Parliament for better consultation on and reporting of Ministers' decisions.

At present the system works through the Conference of Foreign Ministers, serviced by a Political Committee composed of top foreign ministry officials. The Conference meets almost every month, with additional meetings at the European Council or when member countries are attending the UN, or international conferences. Working parties deal ad hoc or long-term with special areas of policy. Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives are kept in close touch with proceedings, and there is a constant exchange of information between the foreign ministries of the Nine. The Commission attends political cooperation meetings as a 'guest', and is invited to take part in some working party discussions. While it may give its views it does not participate in decisions. The Council Secretariat is never present. Conference decisions are published in the Bulletin of the European Communities and not in the Official Journal.

(1) Bulletin of the European Communities 10/79 p. 129

(2) EC Bulletin 11/70

(3) EC Bulletin 12/74, Section 1104. See also Cmnd. 5432/73 HMSO



The original report allowed for four 'colloquies' a year between the Foreign Ministers and the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliament so that the latter could be informed of what was going on. Since then relationships with the Parliament have been extended to include an oral report to the Parliament by the Chairman of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, followed by debate, and agreement that the President of the Council (the Chairman under another hat) should at any time be prepared to answer written or oral questions from European MPs.

An EP Committee report (1) found the present system unsatisfactory and complained that nothing was revealed in the private colloquies that was not already in the press, and that Parliament was continually faced with a fait accompli with no opportunity to influence decisions. The report called for the establishment of a Political Cooperation Office responsible to the Secretary-General of the Council and with staff drawn from Community institutions as well as foreign ministries. It would work closely with the Commission and so avoid the present situation where, because of its tolerated position, the Commission feels it must be 'discreet' in the use of the information gained at political cooperation meetings. So far the Parliament's proposal has not been taken up.

The record

Mr O'Kennedy emphasised that political cooperation must operate pragmatically and by consensus; limitations must be recognised, and it was unrealistic to believe that there could be common agreement on every issue. Nevertheless, he said, the Nine had now developed between themselves a habit of consultation and coordination that had become almost reflex, resulting increasingly in common attitudes and common action.

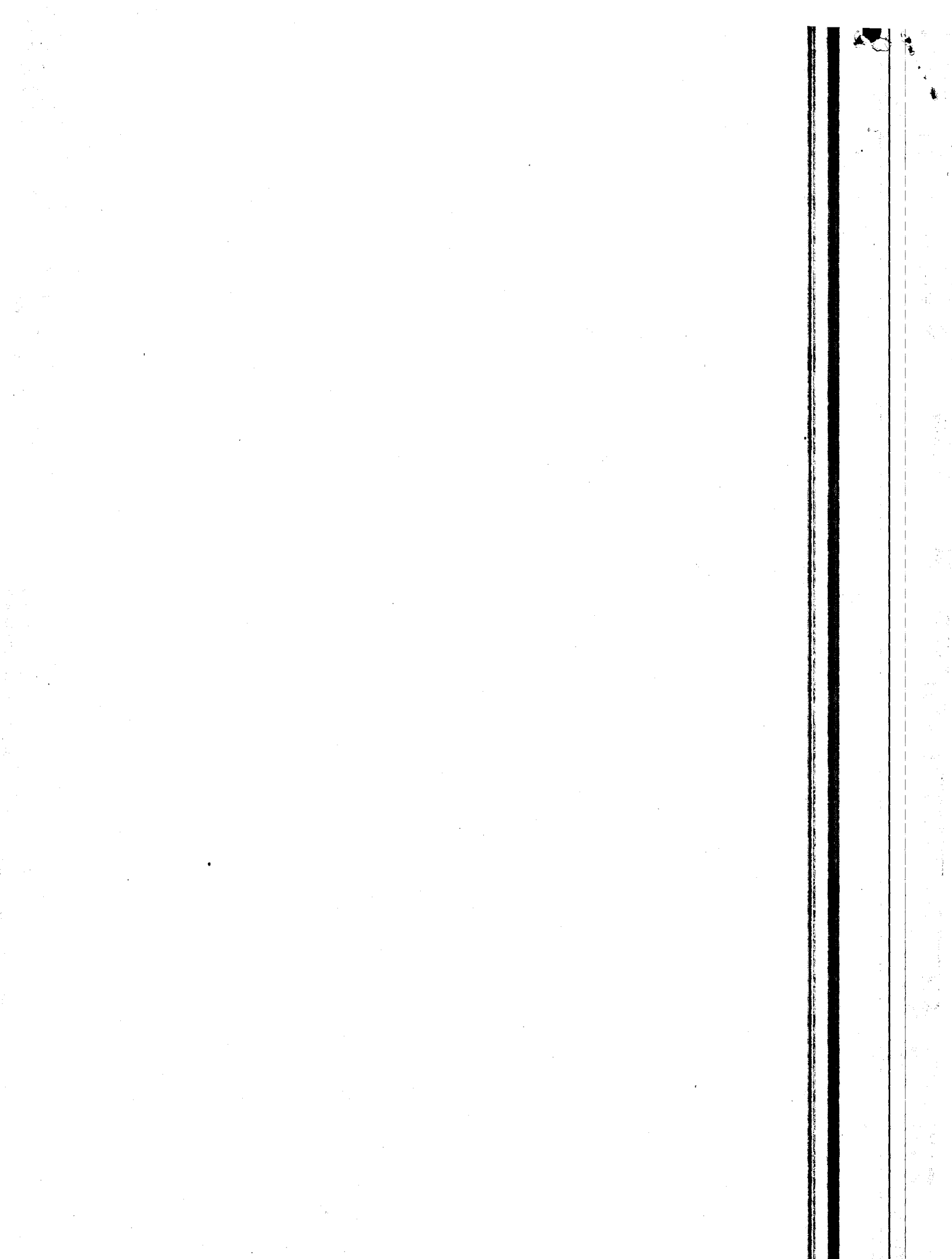
This united front is obvious at the UN, where the President of the Council of Foreign Ministers speaks for the Nine on most occasions, and at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The Nine have adopted common positions on independence in Zimbabwe and Namibia, and in calling on South Africa to abandon its policies of apartheid. In the latter case they have adopted a Code of Conduct, which nationals engaged in business in South Africa are expected to apply to their black workforce.

In the Middle East the Community has spoken as one in support of a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Arab/Israeli conflict, and in June 1979 expressed opposition to Israeli nationals settling on the West Bank. It has also engaged in a Euro-Arab dialogue aimed at strengthening links between the Nine and the Arab world.

The Nine were united in seeking to alleviate the plight of Indo-Chinese refugees, in coordinating relief to the people of Cambodia, and in seeking to improve political relations with ASEAN (Association of South Eastern Asian Nations). They also agreed on 4 December 1979 to implement the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism.

It can be fairly said that many of these issues are not controversial or do not impinge directly on vital national interests, and that when crises arise, as the Arab oil embargo in 1973 or in Afghanistan today, the Nine have difficulty in agreeing on common positions. This is perfectly true. As Mr O'Kennedy pointed out, political cooperation in the Community is a developing process and still has a long way to go.

On the other hand foreign countries increasingly see the Community as an entity in its relations with the rest of the world. The willingness of the White House to open its doors to Mr Roy Jenkins, the President of the Commission, for high level talks in January, was an indication of the importance the American Administration attaches to Community views as well as those of the individual members.



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CONNEXION AVEC ORDINATEUR.

BRUXELLES LE 15/02/80 17H 04M 30S

NO.REF.: 18628/GIE

NOTE BIO (80)64 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
C.C.AUX MEMBRES DU GROUPE, A M. BURGHARDT, DG I,
ET A M. LECOMTE, DG VIII

RENDEZ-VOUS DE MIDI DU 15 FEVRIER 1980 (KLAUS VAN DER PAS)

SUJETS TRAITES

CONSEIL AGRICOLE (VOIR NOTE BIO (80) 66)

AUDITION PUBLIQUE DE LA COMMISSION DU DEVELOPPEMENT DU PARLE-
MENT EUROPEEN SUR LA FAIM DANS LE MONDE (VOIR CALENDRIER)

PRECISIONS CONCERNANT LA LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS :

M. TANCO : PRESIDENT DU CONSEIL MONDIAL DE L'ALIMENTATION

M. BRANDT : ANCIEN CHANCELIER DE LA REPUBLIQUE FEDERALE

M. LINOWITZ PRESIDENT DE LA COMMISSION PRESIDENTIELLE DES
ETATS-UNIS SUR LA FAIM DANS LE MONDE

M. DIOUF : MINISTRE DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE ET TECHNIQUE
DU SENEGAL

M. HUDA : MINISTRE GBLFINANCES DU BANGLADEH

M. CHONCHOL : ANCIEN MINISTRE DE L'AGRICULTUR DU CHILI

M. CHEYSSON : MEMBRE DE LA COMMISSION DES CE

COOPERATION POLITIQUE : A LA REUNION MINISTERIELLE QUI SE
TIENDRA A ROME LE 19 FEVRIER, LA COMMISSION SERA REPRESENTEE
PAR MM. JENKINS ET HAFERKAMP. LA PLUPART DES DISCUSSIONS SERONT
CONSACREES AUX RELATIONS EST-OUEST APRES L'INTERVENTION SOVIETI-
QUE EN AFGHANISTAN. UNE DECLARATION SERA PROBABLEMENT PUBLIEE
A L'ISSUE DE LA REUNION. DIS. IL SEMBLE CEPENDANT PEU PROBABLE
QU'IL Y AIT UNE PRISE DE POSITION COMMUNE SUR LES JEUX OLYMPI-
QUES. FIN DIS. ON EVOQUERA PROBABLEMENT AUSSI LE DIALOGUE
EURO-ARABE ET LES RELATIONS AVEC LA TURQUIE DANS LE CADRE DE LA
COOPERATION POLITIQUE

VISITE DE M ASKEW (M VASEY)

LES 18 ET 19 FEVRIER M REUBIN ASKEW, US TRADE REPRESENTATIVE,
RENDRA VISITE A LA COMMISSION OU IL S'ENTRETIENDRA AVEC LES
VICE-PRESIDENTS HAFERKAMP ET GUNDELACH ET AVEC M DAVIGNON. ON
PEUT RELLVER L'OPPORTUNITE DE CETTE VISITE A DEUX

EGARDS :

D'UNE PART, ELLE PERMETTRA DE RENOUVELER L'HABITUDE DE CON-
SULTATIONS REGULIERES QUE LA COMMISSION AVAIT ETABLIE AVEC SON
PREDECESSEUR, M STRAUSS, PENDANT LES NCM ET QUI RESTE AUSSI
NECESSAIRE DANS LA PHASE APRES-NCM, D'AUTRE PART, ELLE FOURNIRA
L'OCCASION DE FAIRE LE POINT D'UNE SERIE DE DOSSIERS DIFFICILES
(FIBRES SYNTHETIQUES, ACIER, CHAUSSURES, VOLAILLE, JAMBONS EN
BOITE, ETC.). IL CONVIENT DE PRECISER QUE L'OBJECTIF DE CES

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TR.	HVM
I.S.	✓
FIN.	✓
AGR.	✓
ENE.	✓
R.D.	✓
ADM.	
S.A.	✓

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