

Herter Gives the Green Light to Resolution for Convention to Explore Atlantic Unification

Selected Text, Freedom & Union, October, 1959

Removing the obstacle that has effectively blocked the Atlantic Convention resolution in Congress since 1949, Secretary Christian A. Herter gave this proposal to explore effective Atlantic unity a green light on August 25, 1959.

The letter dated that day which made this momentous reversal of the State Department's ten-year position reached Congress only on Sept. 1,-12 working days before it adjourned at dawn the 15th. Its advocates hoped nonetheless to get it approved before Mr. K's arrival in Washington that day, as the best means to thwart his strategy and prove the U.S. is determined to press on with the work of Atlantic unification.

Too many other measures, however, clogged the cumbersome wheels of Congress, and the time proved too short even for action by the two Committees to which this resolution had been referred last Spring.

Even so, the resolution did advance one important step in both Houses. On Sept. 8, at the only meeting it held in that brief period, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee considered the Department's green light and a pleas for immediate action by Senator Hubert Humphrey, chief sponsor of the resolution, and decided to hold hearings on it in January when Congress reconvenes.

The same decision was made in the House by the chairman of its Committee on Foreign Affairs, Thomas E. Morgan (D. Pa.) its chief sponsor there. He did his utmost to advance the measure further before adjournment, and means to press for House approval of it early in 1960, as do its other sponsors...

Text of Letter from the Department of State:

August 25, 1959

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for your letter of July 14, 1959, on the subject of House Concurrent Resolution 107, 108 and 146, calling for a convention of delegates from the NATO countries.

The Department has given further careful consideration to this proposal, which was discussed at the Atlantic Congress held in London from June 5-9, 1959. I am pleased to inform you that, with due account taken of the consideration below, the Department has no objection to the proposed resolution.

From the language of the first operative paragraph of these resolutions which reads in part "that the legislatures of the other democratic governments of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization shall be invited to send delegates to meet in convention..." the Department assumes that the delegates to the proposed convention will be named by the legislative branch of the government. We have also of course noted the provision of the second operative paragraph which states in part that the delegates should be "free to explore the problem fully without being officially instructed or able to commit their governments." This requirement, which in the Department's view is obviously in the interest of full and free exploration of the problem, would also appear to militate in favor of appointment of delegates by the legislative rather than the executive branch of government.

It would be difficult for the executive branch to appoint delegates to an international convention without providing for instructions to the United States delegations. It would also appear that governmental commitment would, to a certain degree, be implicit in appointment by the executive branch of delegates to a convention dealing with matters directly involving the conduct of United States foreign policy. However, as I indicated above, I believe this difficulty can be avoided if the delegates to the proposed convention are not appointed by the President.

With these considerations in mind the Department has no objection to the resolution.

The Department has been informed by the Bureau of the Budget that there is no objection to the submission of this report.

For the Secretary of State:

**William B. Macomber, Jr.
Assistant Secretary**

**Hon. Thomas E. Morgan
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives**