

## CHAPTER I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Committee on Non-Military Co-operation, set up by the North Atlantic Council at its session of May, 1956, was requested: "to advise the Council on ways and means to improve and extend NATO co-operation in non-military fields and to develop greater unity within the Atlantic Community".

2. The Committee has interpreted these terms of reference as requiring it (1) to examine and re-define the objectives and needs of the Alliance, especially in the light of current international developments; and (2) to make recommendations for strengthening its internal solidarity, cohesion and unity.

3. The Committee hopes that the report and recommendations which it now submits will make NATO's purely defensive and constructive purposes better understood in non-NATO countries; thereby facilitating and encouraging steps to lessen international tension. The events of the last few months have increased this tension and reduced hopes which had been raised since Stalin's death, of finding a secure and honourable basis for competitive and ultimately for cooperative coexistence with the communist world. The effort to this end, however, must go on.

4. Interallied relations have also undergone severe strains. The substance of this report was prepared by the Committee of Three in the course of its meetings and intergovernmental consultations last September. Subsequent events have reinforced the Committee's conviction that the Atlantic Community can develop greater unity only by working constantly to achieve common policies by full and timely consultation on issues of common concern. Unless this is done, the very framework of cooperation in NATO, which has contributed so greatly to the cause of freedom, and which is so vital to its advancement in the future, will be endangered.

5. The foundation of NATO, on which alone a strong super-structure can be built, is the political obligation that its members have taken for collective defence: to consider that an attack on one is an attack on all, which will be met by the collective action of all. There is a tendency at times to overlook the far-reaching importance of this commitment; especially during those periods when the danger of having to invoke it may seem to recede.

6. With this political commitment for collective defence as the cornerstone of the foreign and defence policies of its members, NATO has a solid basis for existence. It is true, of course, that the ways and means by which the obligation is to be discharged may alter as political or strategic conditions alter; as the threat to peace changes its character or its direction. However, any variations in plans and strategic policies which may be required need not weaken NATO or the confidence of its members in NATO and in each other; providing, and the proviso is decisive, that each member retains its will and its capacity to play its full part in discharging the political commitment for collective action against aggression which it undertook when it signed the Pact; providing also - and recent events have shown that this is equally important - that any changes in national strategy or policy which affect the coalition are made only after collective consideration.