

however, a mistake to brood over the past. It is better to draw the necessary conclusion from this experience so that it will not recur.

Effective Consultation Needed

An obvious lesson is that there needs to be much more effective consultation in NATO on foreign policies in advance of national decisions regarding those policies. I am not suggesting that more effective consultation of this kind will rule out all possibility of divergent policies, any more than it rules out the necessity of a government acting on its own quickly and effectively in a genuine emergency. There will always be some difference of national approach to particular problems in a democratic coalition such as ours, and there will always be domestic considerations impinging on the requirements for consultation with allies. But if we are to preserve NATO, we cannot afford to let such differences of approach or our pre-occupations with domestic considerations lead to deep division of policy on important matters.

North Atlantic consultation and co-operation, however, leading to the maximum unity of policy - if I may venture to quote again from the Report of the Committee of Three "will not be brought about in a day or by a declaration, but by creating over the years and through a whole series of national acts and policies, the habits and traditions and precedents for such co-operation and unity. The process will be a slow and gradual one at best; slower than we might wish. We can be satisfied if it is steady and sure. This will not be the case, however, unless the member governments - especially the more powerful ones - are willing to work, to a much greater extent than hitherto, with and through NATO for more than purposes of collective military defence".

It is easy, of course, to profess devotion to the principle of political consultation in NATO. It is difficult, almost impossible, if the necessary conviction is lacking, to convert the profession into practice. Consultation within an alliance means more than exchange of information, though that is necessary. It means more than letting the NATO Council know about national decisions that have already been taken; or trying to enlist support for those decisions. It means the discussion of problems collectively, in the early stages of policy formation, and before national positions become fixed. At best, this will result in collective decisions on matters of common interest affecting the Alliance. At the least, and this minimum is essential if a coalition is to be maintained, it will ensure that no action is taken by one member without a knowledge of the views of the others. We must keep pressing for the maximum, but I confess there have been occasions recently when I would have been glad to settle for the minimum!

Another lesson we might profitably draw from the Middle East crisis is that events outside the strict geographical area of the North Atlantic Treaty can be of very vital