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Trip to Europe 1953

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May 25

Gunnar Myrdal (Exec. Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe)

- to D. H.

(2 letters + copy of G. Myrdal's statement opening the 10-th session of the Inland Transport Committee)

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Palais des Nations  
GENÈVE

REF. No:  
(à rappeler dans la réponse)

25 May, 1953

URGENT

Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General  
Palais des Nations  
Geneve

Dear Dag,

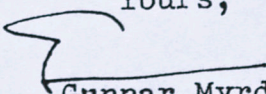
I am attaching a copy of the draft of my opening statement to the Inland Transport Committee, tomorrow, 26 May. You might want to glance through it, at least from the second page on. The matter is important. I will explain the background of my statement when we meet on Wednesday.

I suggest the following program for Wednesday afternoon: I have called the staff together for 4 PM sharp, in room D/2, on the second floor. If you come two minutes earlier to my office (room no. 362, third floor) I will take you there. Otherwise you can proceed directly to D/2. I would propose that we spend ten minutes with the general staff, ten minutes with the Directors, and that, thereafter, we go to the Transport Committee and the Coal Committee, where an appearance by you and perhaps a few words would be most highly appreciated.

All this should be over in less than an hour. I would thereafter like to close myself up with you alone for two hours, to give you a hurried report on our work. My Directors will understand that we have a short-hand technique of our own, so that it is not practical to drag them all in. Georges-Picot has kindly told me that he will join us at 4 PM, for which I thanked him. For practical reasons, however, I think the time I have to report to you on ECE after visiting the Committees is so very short that we had better not drag him in. We will find a tactful way of getting away alone.

Around 7 PM I will then be very grateful if you could follow me and make a short appearance at a cocktail party which Mr. Charguéraud, my Transport Director, is giving for the transport people. Thereafter we will finally be free for our philosophical evening. I am making arrangements for a table right at the lake, if you have no other preferences.

Yours,

  
Gunnar Myrdal  
Executive Secretary  
Economic Commission for Europe

Statement by the Executive Secretary opening the  
10th Session of the Inland Transport Committee,  
26 May, 1953.

Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to Geneva to the 10th Session of the Inland Transport Committee.

This is an assembly distinguished by the presence of the most eminent transport experts in Europe. Therefore, I need not tell you how valuable the Inland Transport Committee and its sub-organs are and can continue to be for the improvement of the European transport economy.

Your work here has never been dramatised in the press as a panacea for solving the problems of European transport integration. Yet you have been working toward <sup>the</sup> this objective of integration by your patient day-to-day realistic accomplishments in reaching international agreement on the multitude of problems of real international concern which confront your governments in this field. You who are aware of the many thorny complexities of transport know that a greater integration can only be achieved if the kind of work you have been doing here on concrete detailed problems is maintained and moved forward. Indeed, your presence here today is a sign that your governments appreciate this fact and have for this reason sent you as their representatives to help attain this practical objective.

The Inland Transport Committee can, in fact, be proud of its past and confident of its future. Through the initiatives you have taken here you have stimulated solid improvements in the European transport economy. Your Committee has its finger on the pulse of all major developments in the field of European inland transport, not only through its subsidiary bodies but also through its position as guide for the many specialised transport organisations which look to it for co-ordination and stimulation of their activities. During the past year the achievements of your Committee have been particularly impressive because of the real progress made on a number of questions of major importance. There is for consideration by your governments a draft agreement on regulations for road transport submitted by one of your sub-committees - an example of true international legislation on this subject. You have on your agenda a report of the Third Session of your Working Party on Tariffs which indicates the substantial progress made during the past year on this major question. You will consider the first scientific studies ever made on an international level of the intricate problems dealt with by your Working Parties on Transport Costs and Accountancy and on Co-ordination. Through

such projects the cardinal problems of transport integration in Europe are being tackled here.

Your attempt through this Committee to solve these basic economic policy questions of transport was reflected in the initiative taken by your out-going Chairman, Mr. Dorges, who at the Eighth Session of the Commission stressed the need to face squarely in this Committee and to intensify the work on these fundamental issues which are now becoming ripe for action. I am sure that all of you share my desire to express to Mr. Dorges our appreciation not only for the high quality of his chairmanship but also more particularly for his emphasis that the work of your Committee be especially directed toward these new horizons.

Thanks to the constitutional structure of the E.C.E. which allows its technical committees to function as autonomous bodies, whose decisions are placed directly before governments for action and need no prior approval by the Commission itself, you will be able in the future, as you have in the past, to cope with the problems of European transport not only on a technical level but also on the general policy level. In this effort you can be assured that you will have the full support and help of the whole Secretariat - that is, not only of the personnel especially competent in the field of transport who make up the staff of our Transport Division, but also of our experts in general economic research and statistics, and in steel, timber, agriculture, coal, housing, finance, law and trade. Transport does encompass all of these fields and we should be able here to bring to our consideration of transport problems a wider operational perspective such as is required to solve the difficult policy questions now confronting you.

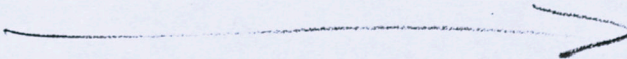
Indeed, at some future date, you may be called upon to play a special role if, for example, as a result of developments in East-West trade with which E.C.E. has been particularly concerned, it becomes necessary to deal with a problem which has so far remained in abeyance, that is, an improvement in East-West transport arrangements.

As we look forward with confidence to the future work of this committee, we must not lose sight of a limitation which should be overcome so that our efforts here will be fully effective. I refer to the need for action at a ministerial level by the European governments. Certainly our work would have been rendered easier in the past and would proceed more ~~quickly~~ rapidly in the future if ministerial action were taken more frequently. This is why I particularly welcomed the initiative taken last January by the Minister of Transport for France in convening a meeting of the Ministers of Transport of eight European countries in Paris. As you

know, I have brought to your notice or to that of your various subsidiary bodies the resolutions adopted by the Ministers at their Paris meeting, resolutions which give official recognition to the achievements of this Committee since they all refer to questions with which you have already dealt or are still working on, or which directly emerged from your work. This meeting did indeed pave the way for a new phase of your activity, whereby through technical studies and technical action in your Committee you may, building on this foundation, speed up the rational development of European transport organisation. I therefore look forward to the establishment of ever closer contact between the European Ministers of Transport and between them and our Committee. I am ready to do all in my power to help promote the valuable initiative which has been taken.

On the other hand, I cannot conceal from you my concern lest the conference on European Inland Transport now being held in Paris might result in certain harmful consequences for the future of European transport organisation. If the purpose of this conference is simply to take stock of the work being done in the international transport field and to make recommendations to this committee based on such an exchange of views then, of course, I think it could provide useful guidance to us in our work. If, however, the outcome would be to split up the work we have been doing here by moving vital questions of transport policy from the purview of your Committee and the United Nations, then as a United Nations official responsible to all governments and to the Charter I am bound to speak very frankly to you and to your governments about the consequences of such a move, even though the E.C.E. has not been invited to participate fully in the discussions at Paris.

First, I want to make it clear that I do not regard it as my duty to protect my Secretariat against reductions in staff or in the scope of a Committee's work if that should be the rational consequence of the actions of the governments which we are here to serve. I regard it as my duty as an official of the United Nations to adopt in this regard an approach which, at the 8th Session of the Commission, I formulated as follows :  
"The Commission is a technical instrument which the United Nations, at considerable financial costs, have placed at the disposal of the governments of this region. It is an instrument for intergovernmental co-operation; and only on the condition that this instrument is usefully employed for its purpose by the governments in the region can the United Nations decision to create and maintain the Commission, and defray its costs, be justified."

D This attitude may not be taken in other organisations; but in the E.C.E. I am proud to say it is a fact. 

In several cases, particularly in the field of housing and most recently in coal, for example, the Secretariat has done all in its power to convince governments that we should eliminate from our work programmes, and give to other organisations, work which we feel should be done outside our framework.

Above the interests of the E.C.E. and particularly the interests of its Secretariat, stand the interests of economic co-operation between European governments. The fact for instance that in coal and steel a High Authority with supra-national powers has been formed is not regarded by me or my Secretariat as a blow to us; on the contrary we see it as an opportunity for us to give in these fields even greater service than before to all our participating governments.

Similarly in the field of transport, if a supra-national authority with real executive powers were established, I should be the first to applaud such an accomplishment. If, however, the time should not yet be ripe for such a truly revolutionary step, an approach to a closer co-ordination of government policies on the highest level could nevertheless be attempted.

I have already said that I welcome the initiative taken in the convening of the conference of Ministers of Transport. I think it would be a good thing and not in any way a duplication of our work if such meetings took place regularly to review the progress which is being made here and to see whether our work could be speeded up and improved.

But, if the outcome of the Paris discussions were to develop an organisation which would de facto duplicate or take over work done here, I should point out that, by destroying the coherent programme which has gradually been built up in this Committee by your efforts and those of the Secretariat in the past six years, a step backward rather than forward would have been taken in the integration of European transport. I feel it my duty to express concern over any step which I sincerely and firmly believe to be dangerous, even if it were taken in the laudable name of integration.

In my opening statement to the Eighth Session of the Commission I pointed out that when an E.C.E. committee failed to reach certain standards of practical accomplishment I had always taken the view that no meeting was better than a bad meeting and that no Committee was better than an ineffective Committee. The governments represented at the Commission have endorsed this principle and therefore I have every reason to believe that even in the case of the Transport Committee, which is now perhaps our most important technical organ, we cannot afford to compromise with the high standards we have set for our work.

I have spoken to you plainly and frankly and I hope objectively on a subject which is very near to my heart and I know to your hearts. This is a time seething with new ideas, <sup>and aspirations</sup> and anxieties concerning the future of transport in Europe, and you may find it useful to consider sympathetically the remarks of your Executive Secretary who, though not a transport expert has closely followed the work of this remarkable Committee. When you come to discuss - at this or at a later session if you do not now have sufficient information - the subject listed under item 14 of your Agenda "Reorganisation of Transport in Europe", I hope you will find my remarks of some value. You can be assured that I am always at your disposal to give you such help as may be needed to achieve the objectives set forth in the terms of reference of your Committee as approved by your governments.

I wish you the greatest success in your work.

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25 May, 1953

Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General  
Palais des Nations  
Genève

Dear Dag,

As usual, I have used the time after the Commission session for a general up-lift of the morale in the Secretariat. In this connection we have reviewed carefully our rules of operation in the ECE. You might be interested in glancing through the first and perhaps the last documents in the attached set of memoranda.

In addition to the six types of meetings which constitute the floor of routines upon which we operate, we have about once every month what we call an "ECE Club Luncheon" attended by our permanent delegates and our senior officials. The next one will take place on Friday, 29 May, at 1 PM, at the Palais Restaurant. If by any chance you would be free to participate, it would be a great honour and give us much pleasure. I include a note on the luncheon.

Yours,

Gunnar Myrdal  
Executive Secretary  
Economic Commission for Europe

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

To: ~~Mr. Myrdal~~ Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld  
From: V. Kostelecky  
Date: 22 May 1953  
Subject: ECE Club Luncheon

The next informal luncheon of the "ECE Club" will take place on Friday, 29th May, at 1.00 p.m. in the Restaurant on the 6th Floor of the Palais des Nations.

Mr. Myrdal will introduce a discussion on the current work of the Commission.

I would be most grateful if you would kindly let me have your reply by noon on Thursday, 28th May, at the latest.

RSVP  
3.10.00  
Ext.2681

ME/275/53

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

To: All Members of the ECE Staff  
From: V. Kostelecky  
Date: 22 May 1953  
Subject: Secretary General's Visit to the ECE

The Secretary General, Mr. Hammarskjöld, has reserved Wednesday afternoon, the 27th May, for acquainting himself with the work of the ECE.

There will be a General Staff Meeting on Wednesday, 27th May, at 4.00 p.m. sharp in room D.2, at which Mr. Hammarskjöld will be present.\* Mr. Myrdal requests that all members of the staff attend this meeting unless the urgency of their work prevents them from doing so.

After the General Staff Meeting, which is expected to last about half an hour, a Directors' Meeting will take place in Mr. Myrdal's office, to discuss with the Secretary-General the work of the Divisions.

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\*This meeting does not substitute for the meeting of the staff of the European Office scheduled for 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 26th May, at which all ECE staff should also be present.