

the leaders of the Western world began to cast about for a means by which the designs of the Soviet Union might be frustrated or, if war was to come again, a means by which the free nations might stand together in confidence against aggression.

The Marshall Plan - The flow of aid from the United States under the Marshall Plan, as well as other aid including substantial Canadian grants and loans, was gradually having its effect in restoring the economic stability of Western Europe. The European nations, through their mutual efforts in the Organization for European Economic Co-operation, had set their hands firmly to the task of reconstruction. In the field of economics and finance much progress had been made towards the restoration of Europe. But it was plain that more than economic assistance was necessary if Western Europe was to survive. The growing threat of Communism could be met only by the creation of a political and military barrier of adequate deterrent strength by those nations which had a will to do so.

Canada Speaks Out - As early as 1947, in the General Assembly of the United Nations, the present Prime Minister of Canada, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, put the position quite plainly before the delegates:

"Nations, in their search for peace and co-operation will not, and cannot, accept indefinitely and unaltered a Council which was set up to ensure their security, and which, so many feel, has become frozen in futility and divided by dissension. If forced, they (these nations) may seek greater safety in an association of democratic and peace-loving states willing to accept more specific international obligations in return for a greater measure of national security."

Western Union - By the spring of 1948 the process forecast by Mr. St. Laurent had reached the stage of "Western Union". On March 17 of that year Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg signed at Brussels a treaty providing for their collective self-defence. It was significant that on the very day the Brussels Treaty was announced, both President Truman, in an address to Congress, and the Prime Minister of Canada, in a statement in the House of Commons, welcomed this first concrete step towards an effective system for the defence of the West.

In the months that followed there were many signs that determined efforts at Western European combination would find a ready response in North America. In the summer of 1948 and during the autumn, the Ambassadors of the Brussels Treaty Powers and Canada met in Washington with representatives of the United States and engaged in what diplomats call "informative and exploratory talks". Other North Atlantic countries were invited into the discussions at a later stage.*

NATO Formed - These talks ended in an agreement and on April 4, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed by twelve nations. By its terms the signatory nations bound themselves together by specific obligations to provide for their collective defence and to develop the means necessary to preserve and to maintain the peace and security of the North Atlantic area.

* Those which eventually joined were Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Italy and Iceland. Sweden and Ireland were invited but declined.