

were negotiated, agreement between the Four Powers would close the breach between East and West. But, the events of 1947 had shown, he added, that this breach could not be closed and that "the free nations of Western Europe must now draw closely together". He went on to express the hope that treaties to this end would now be signed with the Benelux countries. Talks followed between Britain, France and the Low Countries, which resulted in the signing of the Brussels Pact on March 17th. This agreement established in Western Europe a nucleus of five democratic, non-aggressive nations bound together more closely than ever before in time of peace. On the very day of its signature, the Brussels Treaty was officially welcomed by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada. Mr. King, our Prime Minister at that time, said in Parliament that "the peoples of all free countries may be assured that Canada will play her full part in every movement to give substance to the conception of an effective system of collective security by the development of regional pacts under the Charter of the United Nations". Mr. Truman stated, "I am sure that the determination of the free countries of Europe to protect themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to help them to do so." Then, on June 19th, the Vandenberg resolution supporting the association of the United States with collective arrangements based on self-help and mutual aid, and which would increase national security, was approved by the United States Senate. Finally, in early July, meetings on the official level between representatives of the Brussels nations and the United States and Canada were begun. These continued until September, when they were suspended for governmental consultation. They were resumed on December 10th. The final text of the Pact, first published on March 18th, was signed on April 4th by the twelve "founder members" who by this time also included Norway, Denmark, Italy, Iceland and Portugal.

I am not, I think, betraying any diplomatic secret when I say that in the discussions leading up to the Pact, which were conducted in a spirit of complete frankness and understanding, two main lines of approach to the problem of North Atlantic security became evident. On this side of the Atlantic there was a natural and inevitable reluctance to go beyond a general commitment of mutual assistance or to take any action which would appear to cut across the formal responsibility of Congress or Parliament to declare war. On the European side there was an equally natural and inevitable reluctance to accept a political commitment of mutual aid without satisfactory assurances that this commitment would be promptly and satisfactorily implemented if and when the emergency occurred. It is, I think, a tribute to the authors of the pact - but far more so to the good sense of the peoples whom they represented - that these two points of view were reconciled in the Articles of the Treaty. This could not, of course, have happened if the signatories did not feel that the spirit behind their signatures was even more important than the wording of the Articles themselves. Of course, the letter of a law - or a treaty - is important but excessive and legalistic concentration on words -- the attempt to squeeze a hidden meaning out of every comma -- is an unrewarding pursuit. An international pact is, after all, not the same thing as a contract in domestic law. As Mr. Acheson once said in a press conference discussing the Pact, there is no sheriff sitting up in the clouds who is going to come down and see that this contract is carried out. In one sense, he continued, every fulfilment of an obligation by a nation is a fulfilment of a moral obligation. A related point is made in the Report of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations when it states "the course of action envisaged in the Treaty is substantially that which the United States would follow without the Treaty". This consideration also applies to Canada and in it, I think, lies the best hope for the success and workability of the Pact. Paper agreements between sovereign states cannot create the community of interest and common aims upon which lasting cooperation depends but they should, to be effective, reflect these elements which are essential to concerted action. Fortunately, there is reason to believe that the North Atlantic Treaty does this.

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