

Western Christendom. On a map the Stettin-Trieste line of the Iron Curtain roughly defines its present eastern limits, and the Canadian and American Pacific coasts its western boundaries. But there are areas outside these limits that are closely tied to or in some respects form part of this area of community interest. The former include the colonial dependencies of Western Europe, the latter such countries as Australia and New Zealand and some parts of Latin America.

It is clearly the present desire, purpose and policy of the peoples of the North Atlantic area to organize and develop this sense of community; but of the forms and directions of this development there has not yet emerged any clear view. One of the confusing elements at present is the number, complexity and variety of groupings that have sprung up like mushrooms during the past five years: NATO, OEEC, EPU, EDC, the Brussels Treaty Powers, the Council of Europe, Benelux, the Nordic Group, - all these, and more, are composed of as few as three and as many as eighteen members. Twenty countries in all are members of one or more of these organizations. Some of these groupings are clear-cut groups organized for a specifically-defined purpose; others appear to be groping toward some end that is seen only in a glass darkly. The very proliferation of these groupings indicates both the vitality of the idea of closer integration and the present confused state of thinking about it. At the same time many of the countries that comprise the North Atlantic community are members of much wider groups that extend far beyond the North Atlantic area, e.g., the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Pan-American Union, or the Colombo Plan.

With nations, as with individuals, the idea of community is neither exclusive nor singular. It is consistent with many concentric and overlapping circles, each commanding its own degree of loyalty or carrying its own quality of emphasis. Efforts to build, strengthen and enlarge the North Atlantic community should not sever or weaken our links with other larger or smaller groups. A developing sense of community in the North Atlantic may cause some of these other associations to wither away; it may greatly strengthen and enrich others. It is not necessary (indeed, it may do harm) to envisage the North Atlantic community as moving toward a full political union - a new super-state, with the rigidities and exclusiveness that that implies. What we seek is rather an area of closer common understanding in which the habit of practical co-operation grows and flourishes, and thus provides an assurance of strength and security, of expanding freedom and a good life.

A community in the North Atlantic area has existed for a very long time. Why have we so suddenly become conscious, or at least articulate about it? The answer, I think, is fear. For the first time in 600 or 1000 years - since the threatened invasions of the Moors or Tartars - Western Christendom is seriously threatened from without. Until quite recently, "the world" for us consisted of the nations grouped around the circle of the North Atlantic. Until quite recently, the great powers of this area held a virtual monopoly of both military and economic power. History, as most of us learned it, was the story of the struggle for advantage, the jockeying for position among these powers.