

‘Western European cooperation’ from the Luxemburger Wort (13 March 1948)

Caption: During the negotiations on the Brussels Treaty, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort considers the importance of the new organisation for European unification.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 13.03.1948, n° 73/74; 101e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Westeuropäische Zusammenarbeit", p. 1.

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Western European cooperation

In Brussels, representatives of five Western European countries – Great Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg – have agreed on the broad outlines of a pact under the terms of which they will coordinate existing economic and political cooperation more closely and so guarantee mutual security in all areas. At present, precise details are not yet known about the pact, which, moreover, the Foreign Ministers of the countries attending have still to sign and which then has to be ratified by the individual parliaments. That is why it would, for the moment, be a waste of time to try to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the outcome of the Brussels Conference. There will be time enough for that once the details are known. At all events, it will not take long.

But there is already one pressing question for us to answer today. Will the aim of peace be well served by the conclusion of the Brussels Pact? The answer is undoubtedly ‘Yes’. At least, insofar as we understand the term ‘peace’ to mean a state of calm and order, in which the identity of every nation may develop as freely as that of every individual person. It is, then, calm and order, and a balance of freedoms both within the state and between states. Representatives of the five countries met in Brussels to strengthen these three aspects and to establish the requisite feeling of economic and political security as an essential foundation. To that extent, they have succeeded. They have rendered outstanding service to the cause of peace, and not only in Western Europe.

That does not necessarily mean that we can assume that, without the Brussels Pact approved by the five nations, the world might by now have slid straight into a war. Only yesterday, in this column, we stressed that anyone who sees things straight cannot believe that another war is imminent, for war is something, we added, that neither side wants or needs. The Belgian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister P. H. Spaak was of the same opinion yesterday evening when, in the address which he gave in the Great Hall of Brussels University, he asked: ‘So are we in a hopeless situation, and is war really imminent?’ and straightaway replied with a clear ‘No’, because he is convinced that world peace can be maintained if the world can succeed in organising peace.

Above all, the UN has wanted to serve the cause of world peace. In its two years of proper existence, it can boast a number of positive results. However, the great hopes vested in the world security organisation have not come to fruition. Not yet, anyway. The UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, frankly admitted as much a week ago in a speech in New York. But that does not mean that the principles and the organisation of the United Nations should be abandoned. The five Western European countries are simply making use of the right, set out in the San Francisco Charter, to conclude regional pacts and are seeking to achieve on a smaller scale what the global security organisation has not yet been able to turn into reality.

For Europe is gradually recognising that it has no time to lose. The general feeling of nervousness is already setting off some alarm signals. Thus, for example, there were rumours yesterday of a Russian offer to Norway for the conclusion of a mutual friendship pact. First Finland, now Norway. People were getting worked up until, in the evening, came the official denial from Oslo: the Norwegian Government knew nothing about it. More examples can be quoted of that kind of intense nervousness, of a sickness in today’s Europe caused by a feeling of insecurity. Just look at the situation in France and Italy where, every week this spring, they expected a rerun of the November riots.

The Pact signed by the Five in Brussels is designed to combat this general feeling of economic and political insecurity. At least, this is what the representatives of the three Benelux countries have thought. They appear to have pushed through their opinion and have given a more tangible form to the originally somewhat nebulous plan of the British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin. In addition, voices calling for the development of even closer cooperation are even now being heard. 73 Members of the British House of Commons, belonging to five different political parties, yesterday proposed that consideration be given to the formation of a Confederation of Western European states and to establish it by means of a long-term policy. The aim of these long-term efforts is the establishment of a democratic Confederation of European states, with a constitution based on the concepts of common citizenship and political freedom. The Confederation would have a representative government with clearly defined powers and responsibilities in the fields of foreign

policy, defence, finance, customs, production planning, trade, direction of the labour force and transport. As a first step towards the realisation of this plan, calls have been made for the formation of a constituent assembly of all Western European states.

That proposal is actually quite surprising in its boldness, because its aims go far beyond all previous efforts to achieve closer ties between the states of Western Europe. All the same, it shows just how strong the European community spirit and feeling of responsibility have become and also how great are the efforts being made to drag Europe out of the chaos in which it finds itself by using the continent's own strengths.