

'The war pact has been signed' from the Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek (5 April 1949)

Caption: The day after the signing of the Treaty of Washington establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Luxembourg Communist daily newspaper Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek deplores the Treaty as a warmongers' pact.

Source: Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek. 05.04.1949, Nr. 78. Luxembourg: Coopérative ouvrière de presse et d'éditions. "Der Kriegspakt ist unterzeichnet", p. 1.

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The war pact has been signed

The peoples will double their efforts to save world peace threatened by the capitalist war alliance

Last night, at 9 p.m. our time, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington. The names of the 12 'Western' Ministers who apparently signed this pact in the name of their peoples, will from now on be linked to an act that seriously threatens world peace. They are Spaak (Belgium), Pearson (Canada), Rasmussen (Denmark), Schuman (France), Benediktsson (Iceland), Sforza (Italy), Bech (Luxembourg), Stikker (Holland), Lange (Norway), Da Mata (Portugal), Bevin (Great Britain) and Acheson (USA).

Of course, no efforts were spared to surround the ceremony in the Department of State with the requisite publicity. Spotlights, television screens, cameramen, microphones and telephone booths were everywhere, and the broadcasts resounded in 50 languages. In a word, and as Mr Bevin used to say, 'public opinion was manufactured'. The fact that public opinion on the North Atlantic Treaty has to be manufactured in the first place proves how difficult it is for the 12 coalition partners to convince the peoples of their countries of the peaceful nature of the North Atlantic Treaty, which, in reality, is an instrument for preparing to go to war. It contradicts the UN principles that prohibit the conclusion of apparently 'regional' alliances between the countries of two hemispheres. It is openly directed against a UN member, the Soviet Union, and therefore constitutes a flagrant violation of the Franco-Soviet and Anglo-Soviet Agreements.

The formal proceedings were opened by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in the presence of 1 300 VIPs who were protected by a large contingent of police. Acheson individually introduced the 11 Foreign Ministers on the dais who then each gave a brief address. An address by President Truman, broadcast over the radio, crowned these speeches before the Ministers stepped forward to sign the war pact document.

Among the North Atlantic Treaty Ministers, Mr Spaak, as usual, particularly stood out, while Mr Bech was almost entirely lost among the bigger partners. Mr Spaak explained that the Treaty was a defence pact. It was neither directed against nor threatened anybody because 'democracies are essentially pacific'. If the whole world were to adopt Mr Spaak's democratic principles, there would be no more war. Nor did the pact violate UN principles or the UN Charter. It was an instrument for the defence of civilisation and peace, and he was proud to be empowered to sign it.

As might have been expected, Mr Spaak did not even try to refute the arguments presented in the Soviet memorandum, he simply spouted his familiar off-the-peg clichés. If the North Atlantic Treaty is not directed against anybody, why was it then created? Mr Spaak is also unable to name a single threat targeted against one of the North Atlantic Treaty states.

The democracies, he says, are essentially pacific. He is playing with words. These are not some abstract democracies, they are countries with capitalist regimes whose history literally teems with large wars and small wars, colonial wars and brutal military interventions.

It is a strange 'democracy' that protects Franco and reinstates former fanatical Nazis in top positions in West Germany. It is a strange 'democracy' that admits the Fascist dictator Salazar into the Atlantic coalition. Mr Spaak may well declare that there would be no more war if every country adopted the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty states. The application of these principles can be seen in Vietnam, in Indonesia, in Greece and in Portugal.

Is it not, in contrast, the Soviet Union, itself threatened by the North Atlantic Treaty, that stands up, in the UN and elsewhere, for brotherly cooperation between peace-loving peoples?

As for the 'civilisation' that the North Atlantic Treaty is supposed to save, it is the very civilisation that persecutes blacks and protects Fascists like Franco and Salazar. Spaak, Bech and co. may well participate in a coalition for the defence of this 'culture' and for preparations for war against those countries that have abolished exploitation of man by man. That is their business. But it will never be the business of the citizens of Belgium and Luxembourg.