



North Atlantic Treaty

MARSHALL was greatly interested in the words Bevin had spoken to him on December 17, 1947, as to some form of future cooperation, but he wanted clarification. He asked a member of the delegation, John Hickerson, director of the Office of European Affairs, to get more details from Bevin's assistants.¹ Hickerson thus entered into the background of negotiations of the North Atlantic Treaty, in which formulation he and his chief of the Division of Western European Affairs, Theodore C. Achilles, played major roles.

At the Foreign Office, Hickerson dealt with Gladwyn Jebb. Jebb had served with the Special Operations Executive during the war and later, as a representative of the Foreign Office, helped establish the United Nations. He was now acting as a deputy to Bevin, working on plans to strengthen Western Europe against aggression. He told Hickerson that the Foreign Secretary set great store by the Treaty of Dunkirk, signed in March 1947, to protect the Western powers against German aggression. He was thinking now of a collective defense arrangement between Britain, France, and the Benelux countries (formed a few months later by the Treaty of Brussels) to which he hoped to add the United States and Canada.²

In mid-January 1948, Ambassador Inverchapel forwarded to Marshall the summary of a paper prepared by Bevin pointing out that the Soviet government had shaped a solid political and economic bloc, which made it difficult to hold the line against further Soviet nibbling and encroachment. With the aid of the United States and Canada, he wanted to form a Western democratic system that would include Britain, France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, Greece, Italy, and possibly Portugal. In time, Germany and Spain should be added.³

George Kennan was also in favor of this and suggested that the United States receive the idea as warmly as the British Foreign Secretary had welcomed the Marshall Plan proposal. Kennan felt that a political, economic, and spiritual union should precede a military one. Since Germany would ultimately have to be brought into any effective Western union, it made no sense to organize against that country. The initiative, he believed, must come from Europe, but if a union were considered, Bevin should not worry about the U.S. relationship. If the union developed and functioned well, an American relationship, even to the military guarantees, would logically flow from it.⁴

Hickerson thought Bevin's concept magnificent but felt something was still lacking in the proposal. Suggesting to Marshall that the idea of extending the Treaty of Dunkirk to other European countries was not sufficient, he urged that the United States propose a formula like that used in the Inter-American Treaty on Regional Assistance approved at Rio de Janeiro on September 1, 1947, which Secretary Marshall had signed there. For such a pact to be effective, he thought the United States must be a member. The Rio treaty had provided that an armed attack on any of the signatories would be considered an attack on all. It was understood that, under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, they could exercise their right of collective self-defense until the Security Council had taken the necessary steps to maintain international peace and security. No power would be required to use armed forces without its own consent.⁵

Concerned about the slowness with which congressional approval of Marshall Plan legislation was proceeding, and mindful of the need to put first things first, Marshall encouraged Bevin while remaining vague about the exact nature of American participation. It was a line that he and Lovett would follow in the early stage of discussions. Marshall assured Bevin that the United States applauded his initiative and would do everything it properly could to bring his project to fruition.⁶

Eagerly grasping at any sign of progress, the British Ambassador called Hickerson at the State Department the following day. Hickerson repeated what he had written to Marshall, that the Treaty of Dunkirk approach erred in strengthening the West against Germany, when what was needed was a strong defense against Soviet encroachment. There was no debate on this point, for Bevin's initial approach to Marshall was definitely aimed at halting Soviet advances in the West. The British were quite aware that only fear of Soviet expansion in Europe would prompt the United States to

enter a defensive alliance. Thinking out loud for the benefit of the British Ambassador, Hickerson said that if some of the smaller nations felt that the United States must be a member of a proposed defensive organization, the United States would be inclined to consider it, but that any such arrangement must be within the United Nations Charter and at European initiative.⁷

Although Bevin failed to get the outright guarantee he had sought from Marshall, he unveiled his plan to the House of Commons on January 22. Four days later, the British Ambassador suggested to Under Secretary of State Lovett that the United States and Britain conclude a defensive agreement between themselves that would reinforce the plan for Western Europe. He asked that the conversations be held on this proposal before mid-February, when Britain could begin talks with France. Knowing that Marshall did not wish to be hurried on the matter, Lovett reminded the Ambassador that Marshall's interest in Bevin's project did not involve a commitment. American action must await study by the National Security Council, the President, and congressional leaders, and all this could not be done by mid-February. At this time, Marshall was speaking to various interest groups across the country to rally support in Congress for the approval of the European Recovery Program, while Vandenberg was having to cope with the opposition of twenty senators from his own party who seemed bent on reviving the isolationism of the 1920s. Neither wanted at this moment to stir up additional debate about further U.S. commitments in Europe.⁸

Ambassador Inverchapel explained that his government could not on its own supply members of a defense organization with arms. He had been encouraged by Marshall's early reactions to hope they might have useful discussions. Reflecting Marshall's caution, Lovett said that he thought Europe should take the initiative and that it was unwise for the United States to intrude into the proposal before the idea had been developed in Europe.

Bevin was getting much the same reaction from some smaller European countries as those reported by U.S. diplomatic representatives in Europe. Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak had said early in January that nothing would come of extending the Dunkirk formula unless the United States was involved. Bevin decided to push harder. He feared delay and dreaded even more the development of a vicious circle. Without the backing of the United States, there could be no effective union. But, apparently, without a union he could not win American support. In summoning European support for the European Recovery Program, he had been

able to march boldly on the basis of the Harvard speech. But for the collective defense idea he did not have such assurance. When Inverchapel mentioned these points to Lovett and Hickerson, the Under Secretary patiently recapitulated the danger of slowing the European Recovery Program. Bevin wanted them to pour concrete before they had the blueprints. Marshall endorsed the general idea of a Western union but insisted, as he had concerning the Marshall Plan, that initiative must come from Europe.

Meanwhile, other Western European countries suffered spasms of alarm. In mid-February, the Norwegian Defense Minister, Jens C. Hauge, anxiously watching Soviet pressure on neighboring states, asked the U.S. naval and air attachés in Oslo what aid his country could expect in case of war. Though the attachés could make no answer, they reported to their superiors that Norway was looking to the West for help, taking a different tack from the careful neutralism of Sweden. On February 19, the Benelux countries advised the British and French that an extension of the Treaty of Dunkirk was not enough. They preferred a regional organization of Western Europe under the U.N. Charter.

The French Foreign Minister assured the Belgian Ambassador that France was ready to sign such a pact, provided the United States was associated with it. Secretary Marshall welcomed the proposals of the Benelux countries but repeated that they should not ask the United States to be associated with it until it was clear what all the European countries concerned were prepared to do. He considered the Four Power Pact that he had once favored as virtually dead, but would seek some means to protect Britain, France, and the Benelux countries from German attack.⁹

Cheered by these reactions, Bevin sought to smoke out the United States by dangling signs of European initiative. He suggested a private meeting between representatives of the United States, Britain, and France on ways of preventing the encroachments of dictatorships. Bidault followed Britain's lead in calling for three-power consultation. They must prevent neighbors of the Soviet Union from suffering the fate of Czechoslovakia.¹⁰

Hickerson, the advocate of immediate action in the State Department, warned Marshall that if the United States did not show support for the Western European states, the Soviet Union might grow bolder and more smaller states be intimidated; the United States should make its position clear. He urged Marshall to consult the National Security Council and members of Congress on steps to stop Soviet expansion. They should consider the nature and cost of U.S. military commitments to Western Europe, how to make

clear that further aggression against free countries in Western Europe would be treated as a threat to American security, the possibility of American participation in a North Atlantic regional defense arrangement might be considered, and that Bevin and Bidault be told that the United States was willing to talk with them and perhaps others. Hickerson was saying that Europe's earnest desire for talks was the evidence of initiative that Marshall wanted. With this memorandum, Hickerson, supported by his subordinate Theodore Achilles, became the leading State Department proponent of what was to become the North Atlantic pact.¹¹

European pleas became more urgent in March as the Soviet government put strong pressure on Finland to make a treaty of mutual defense, which the Finns struggled desperately to avoid. The Norwegians feared they might be next in line for such a pact. In a special meeting on March 11, Norwegian Cabinet leaders cast aside possible dependence on a league of Scandinavian neutrals and said they would not accept a treaty such as the Soviets were demanding of Finland. If necessary, they were prepared to go it alone.¹²

The growing anxiety and pressure following Russia's extension of control over Czechoslovakia made it increasingly evident that the United States must speed up some form of assistance to the Western European states. As Norway proclaimed her defiance, Marshall was asking the U.S. Ambassador in Italy what could be done to strengthen that country in the face of Communist expansion. Would inclusion of Italy in a Western regional union be of help?¹³

From London came warning that quick action was necessary to "prevent the collapse of the whole Scandinavian system." Bevin had once thought that the area could be aided by adherence to the Western-union system, but he now believed that a regional Atlantic Approaches pact of mutual assistance under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which would include the United States and Canada, was essential. The Foreign Minister was now spelling out in some detail what he had said along general lines to Marshall in late December. Great urgency marked the lines of the *aide-mémoire* presented on March 11.¹⁴

Marshall acted swiftly. After the next day's Cabinet meeting, he told President Truman of the situation and got his approval for a message to Britain and France. Marshall suggested that they go ahead with conversations about the Western-union arrangement and indicate that as soon as possible they would discuss further requirements.¹⁵

To the Norwegians he expressed the hope that they would resist added Soviet demands and, "in absolute confidence," revealed that he was talking with the British about their situation. On the same day, he was encouraged by Denmark's assurance that it would resist Soviet pressures. However, the Danish Foreign Minister added that joining a Western union would not in itself stop the Russians. That would require a prompt and clear American declaration of support. He thought that Denmark might have to seek a military alliance with the United States but hoped that this would not be necessary before the European Recovery Program went into effect, "so as to avoid the implication that ERP had military strings attached to it."¹⁶

Although the earlier proposed pact was already insufficient for Western Europe's security, the growing tension spurred approval of it. On March 17, "A Treaty of Economic, Social, and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defense" between Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg was signed in Brussels, to take effect August 26, 1948.

To bolster the confidence of the signers, President Truman gave encouraging signals to Western Europe in his message to Congress on March 17. Observing that the Brussels treaty was then in the process of being approved, he declared that it

deserves our full support. I am confident that the United States will, by appropriate means, extend to the free nations the support which the situation requires. 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 do so.¹⁷

The signers of the Brussels pact avidly searched the wording of Marshall's message and the stronger promise of Truman's speech. Showing how willing they were to engage in talks, they asked for additional details.¹⁸

Before arranging for general discussions, the United States, Britain, and Canada decided to hold secret talks at the ambassadorial level in Washington between March 22 and April 1. To bar any possible leak, the French were not included. However, since one of the British delegation was Donald MacLean, who later fled to the Soviet Union to escape arrest as a spy for Russia, Moscow must have been fully informed of the discussions.

On the morning after the meeting began, the State Department's Policy Planning Staff handed Marshall a report that was less positive than Hickerson's proposal. The staff urged that the United States not become a member of the Brussels pact although it

should offer armed support. To a degree, the report followed Bevin's initial suggestion in concluding that Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland should be added immediately, and perhaps Portugal later. They should also explore the inclusion of Eire, Switzerland, Spain, and Austria. At length, as the most powerful country in the Atlantic community, the United States might find it advisable to be an associate or a full member.¹⁹

The proposals were important because they suggested that American assurances to the Western union should involve a commitment "to consider armed attack against them to constitute armed attack against the United States, to be dealt with by the United States in accordance with Article 51 of the U.N. Charter." Assurances would also be provided to the other free nations of Europe and the Middle East if they defended themselves with every means at hand.

A concept similar to the ultimate treaty emerged at the third meeting of the delegates. The drafting committee, made up of Gladwyn Jebb, of Great Britain, Theodore Achilles, of the United States, and Lester Pearson, of Canada, suggested a security pact for the North Atlantic area and the extension of the Brussels pact to other European countries. The United States would be a member of the security arrangement.²⁰

The conference ended on April 1 with the sixth meeting. Reflecting the views of Hickerson and Achilles rather than those of Kennan and Bohlen, the recommended course of action was for the United States to contact members of the Brussels pact to discuss plans for a North Atlantic agreement. This would be followed by approaches to Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and Italy (if the elections had been held by that time).²¹

Encouraged by reports of the meeting, Bevin urged the State Department to act quickly and decisively to give confidence to Western European countries. "The construction of a North Atlantic defense system would put heart into the whole of Western Europe and would encourage them in their resistance to the infiltration tactics which they have had to face hitherto." Brusquely, Bevin declared that a presidential statement was not enough. Recalling the days when England stood alone after the fall of France, he said grimly that he did not want Britain to be left waiting a second time "in a state of uncertainty." If that happened again, he doubted that the English would be able to weather another such test. There must be a treaty involving the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Western European countries.²²

Bevin's bold statement provoked a tart draft reply from the State

Department: "We consider such a statement highly unfortunate and are confident it does not reflect his true feelings." Fortunately, the draft was reported to Marshall at Bogotá. His response was compassionate and understanding. He told the State Department drafters that their "proposed reply appears too much like a brush-off [to] a nation in evident dread of a great calamity. Can't we do a bit better and buck them up a little?"²³

The proposed reply was intended to urge patience and not to deny hope. As he notified Marshall, Under Secretary Lovett at this point was striving to pave the way for congressional backing of some form of American guarantee to the Western Europeans. Both he and Marshall were convinced that it would be hopeless to try to proceed without senatorial help. In later years, Kennan was to disapprove of the degree to which Marshall and Lovett sought this aid. Although he admitted that Senator Vandenberg's support was essential for the adoption of the European Recovery Program, he felt that the State Department assumed greater vision on Vandenberg's part than he possessed and "took the form of catering to Senatorial opinion in instances where one might better have attempted to educate the protagonists to a more enlightened and effective view."²⁴

Neither Marshall nor Lovett sought to play senatorial politics, but they were realistic about the difficulties of getting a Truman proposal through a Republican-controlled Congress without the support of the powerful Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Knowing that Marshall had found it helpful during World War II to take leaders of both parties into his confidence, Lovett, when Marshall was at conferences outside the United States, discussed every important step of the negotiations with the Senator from Michigan.

Vandenberg was dubious about getting congressional support for new and additional guarantees to Europe. He and others feared that the Europeans might be inclined to fold their arms and let the United States handle the task of defense, or that they might be encouraged to take provocative stands in their foreign policy. He doubted that the United States should be asked to go to war because of the action of countries abroad; the United States should not surrender the option of being able to decide when it should act.

The senator wanted an opportunity to see the proposed agreement before accepting extension to the North Atlantic region of Rio-treaty language (which he had favored at the Rio Conference). He cited problems he had faced in the Senate, where sixteen senators, many of them in his party, were agitating for a resolution "to

overhaul the U.N. veto and other passages" of the Charter. He had been able to get one such resolution withdrawn, but others were in the works. The Foreign Relations Committee was looking for ways of making the United Nations more effective in maintaining peace. While not in favor of a formal pact, Vandenberg thought it would be helpful for the President to take note of the efforts of Western European countries to strengthen their defenses.²⁵

On April 12, Bevin notified Marshall that the Brussels-pact countries had met in Paris and had agreed to establish a Consultative Council and begin military talks. He believed it imperative for the United States to begin conversations in Washington with representatives of the group. Quite apart from Bevin's initiative, and with no official status, Winston Churchill was telling the U.S. Ambassador in London that Washington should make its stand clear to the Soviet Union. As soon as the Soviets produced their atom bomb, Churchill believed there would be war. Now was the time to demand Russian withdrawal from Germany. If they interfered with rail traffic to Berlin, the Allies could hold up Soviet ship movement through the Suez and Panama canals. Ambassador Douglas disagreed with these particular measures but emphasized that the Western powers should stop the Russians by making a real show of resolution. He passed along the former Prime Minister's suggestions, not wanting or expecting Marshall to act on them, but to show that the old man was still full of fight.²⁶

While some members of the House and the Senate discussed ways of strengthening the United Nations, the State Department worked with Vandenberg on a statement to encourage the Brussels-pact countries. Though the Senator agreed to propose a Senate resolution to this effect, he did not want it named for him. He said he expected to have Democratic support but was not certain about twenty-one senators of his own party.²⁷

Mr. Lovett brought Marshall (still in Bogotá) up to date on April 26. Vandenberg's committee would report a resolution favoring regional agreements, and the President would invite the United Kingdom, Canada, France, the Scandinavian and the Benelux countries, Eire, Italy, and Portugal to conclude regional agreements in the North Atlantic area. This would be based on Article 51 and developed along the lines of the Rio declaration. There might also be a presidential statement on Greece, Turkey, or Iran, to be preceded by discussions with the Brussels-treaty signatories.²⁸

On the eve of his return to Washington, Marshall approved the procedures outlined but said he was inclined to agree with General

Matthew Ridgway, a member of the U.S. delegation to Bogotá, that no public statement should be made about the United States' engaging in military talks since this might reduce public support for the proposal and also increase the possibility of confrontation. Marshall said that he and Norman Armour, Assistant Secretary of State for Political Affairs, believed Greece, Turkey, and Iran should not be included in a statement at that time: regional arrangements were difficult to justify in their area and there was danger of dispersing American military forces too widely. The United States was already doing a great deal for Greece and Turkey, "and I see no compelling reason for being pressured into dangerous efforts, concurrently with our Atlantic discussions."²⁹

Three days after he came back from Bogotá, Marshall met with Lovett, Vandenberg, and John Foster Dulles to discuss the resolution. Vandenberg proposed amendments to the draft and warned that Kenneth Wherry, Republican political whip, and some of his supporters might try to add an amendment on Palestine. Vandenberg asked Lovett if he would talk with Senator Walter George to see if he was still against what he called a "military ERP."³⁰

Vandenberg opposed encouraging European powers to draw up a military shopping list. He also feared that they were including too many countries in Europe in a so-called regional pact. Marshall, Lovett, and Dulles agreed that the United States should not issue a general invitation but felt that the five Brussels-pact countries should ask to be put in touch with sources of supply and assistance by their association with the Western Hemisphere. Vandenberg also preferred "limited and natural" regional agreements and an understanding that United States assistance would not be automatic on the basis of action by third parties.

The Michigan Senator ended by suggesting that the State Department request a resolution by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. After that was passed, the State Department would arrange for the signers of the Brussels treaty to ask the United States for consultation. The President would then indicate that the United States "was prepared to accept an invitation to consider association on the basis of self-help and mutual aid among the European participants with such regional arrangements as affect its national security."

The four men agreed that the Brussels-pact countries should invite Canada and Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, and, perhaps, Portugal. They added that it would be a mistake to include Italy, because that would violate the regional concept. Inclusion of Greece, Turkey, and Iran was deemed unacceptable.

George Kennan, who had serious doubts about some phases of the proposed arrangement, had been away from Washington during much of the recent conversations. He had been on a fact-finding trip to the Far East during the latter part of February, all of March, and the first half of April. Ill when he returned to the United States, he had gone directly to his farm in Pennsylvania and was unable to return to his desk until near the end of April.

Two days after coming back to work, Kennan voiced his doubts about the proposals to Marshall and Lovett. He believed that Bevin and Bidault were less worried about the American stand in case of attack than about the lack of agreement on what steps could be taken to save members of the pact "from the dual catastrophes of Russian invasion and subsequent military liberation." Statements by some U.S. military officials that the Soviets were capable of overrunning the Middle East and Western Europe had added to their fears. They wanted not so much an alliance "as realistic staff talks to see what can be done about their defense." The proposed resolution was all right, but it would be well, before going into the rest of the program, to check with other Europeans whose participation might be desired. Meanwhile, he believed that U.S. military leaders might try to convince the Europeans that the United States did not accept complete defeatism with respect to Western Europe and would be willing to consider ways of impeding a Soviet advance.³¹

Kennan soon saw that Hickerson and Achilles had made a strong impression on Marshall and Lovett and were well along with the draft wanted by Vandenberg. On May 7, Kennan forwarded the draft to Lovett and Marshall, who approved it and sent it to the President; Truman agreed with its concepts, and the text was turned over to Senator Vandenberg.

Before the draft resolution was considered, Marshall had appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to testify on proposed House resolutions on strengthening the Charter of the United Nations. His observations were highly pertinent to the discussion on regional treaties.

He recalled that, in creating the United Nations, the major powers had assumed that (1) they would work out effective settlements, (2) critical postwar problems could be quickly eliminated, and (3) the wartime cooperation of the great powers would continue after the conflict ended. The United Nations had been set up to keep the peace and not to make it; the peacemaking function had been assigned to the victors. Because the victors had not acted, the

United Nations had to proceed in a different way from what had been originally planned.³²

The hopes of the peoples of the world, Marshall felt, had been shaken by recent Soviet actions, which arose from Soviet "misconceptions" concerning world civilization and the possibilities of developing a working relationship between the Soviet Union and other nations. A basic task before the United Nations and the United States was to dispel some of these misconceptions and indicate a view of what was possible between the Soviet Union and the world at large.

The first step toward an effective United Nations was to ensure the freedom and independence of its members. This condition required a healthy economic and political life and a "genuine sense of security." The United States wanted to cooperate with European countries in self-help and mutual aid. It was trying to determine a minimum military-establishment level "to restore the balance of power relationships required for international security."

Marshall outlined specific measures that the United States had supported and would support to strengthen the structure of the United Nations. But the chief problems were not of structure but of fulfillment of commitments already made. It would not help to revise the United Nations in such a way that some nations would be unwilling to join. Such changes would literally destroy the organization. "It is not changes in the form of international intercourse which we now require. It is to changes of *substance* that we must look for an improvement of the world situation. . . ."

Hearings, mostly in executive session, began on the Vandenberg resolution nearly a week later. On May 12 and 19, Lovett was the only witness. As the Chairman of the committee that had put forth the resolution, Vandenberg assisted Lovett in explaining the background. Although there were some questions in the minds of committee members on the degree of commitment made by the resolution, and some changes were made in its language, the resolution as worked out by Vandenberg and the State Department was reported out of committee by a 13-0 vote on May 19 and approved by the Senate on June 13.³³

The close working of Marshall and Lovett, and of Hickerson and Achilles with Vandenberg and other members of the committee, had paid off. It was handled so that all members of the committee could have their say. When the session was over, those who voted for the resolution had a share in the statement and felt committed to it.

The resolution reaffirmed the policy of the United States to achieve international peace and security through the United Nations. It was the sense of the Senate that the veto should be removed from all questions involving the peaceful settlement of international disputes and the admission of new members. It particularly stressed the "association of the United States, by constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as affect the national security."

At Bevin's request, the British Ambassador saw Marshall the day after the vote, to urge discussions of further action by Britain, France, the United States, and Canada. Marshall asked for a short delay to see if the House of Representatives would act on a proposed resolution similar to that passed by the Senate. If they adjourned without acting, he was willing to proceed on the basis of the Vandenberg resolution alone. Thinking of current developments in Germany, he emphasized the timing as all-important. Several developments were building pressure, he said, listing the resolution, the ERP, the recent Air Force appropriations increase, and recent speeches directed at the Soviet Union. For the moment, conversations should be exploratory.³⁴

On June 23, after the House had adjourned without voting on the resolution, Marshall alerted the governments of Britain, France, Canada, Belgium, and the Netherlands that the United States was ready to begin exploratory talks along the lines of the Vandenberg resolution. Nothing final was to be taken up, and he did not consider it necessary to have special military representatives or Foreign Office representatives.³⁵

Before the talks took place, the National Security Council outlined the U.S. position on the Western union, proposing that procedures used in drawing up the European Recovery Program be followed and that the European countries concerned should determine what they were able to do for themselves and then ask for supplementary aid. The United States should be willing to consider association with the Brussels-treaty countries and, if possible, Canada. But no commitment would be made without full bipartisan support, and nothing would be done requiring permission of Congress before that body reconvened in January 1949.³⁶

Mr. Lovett took the chair as the discussions opened July 6 in Washington. The draft outlined over the following days was close to the final text presented to the Senate.³⁷ He realized that as they were talking the presidential campaign was gaining momentum. At the start of the negotiations, Dewey had been nominated by the

Republicans, and Vandenberg was his firm advocate. There were strong assumptions that the terms of a proposed North Atlantic treaty would have to be put through a Republican Congress, which the anticipated Dewey sweep would make even more Republican.

Lovett worked cautiously, for he knew Marshall would have not tried to go beyond what he believed Congress would approve. He opened the first meeting with the warning to the Europeans that nothing would be gained by pushing the administration and Congress too fast.

At the second meeting, Lovett asked that the delegates examine the factors making for a feeling of international insecurity, the nature of the threat, and what they considered to be the present attitude of the Soviet Union. Sir Oliver Franks, who had succeeded Lord Inverchapel on June 3 as British Ambassador in Washington, saw an immediate threat of Soviet expansion on the eastern side of the Atlantic. But he believed that determination on the part of the North Atlantic community "would minimize the risk of overt aggression." Lovett seconded the need for firmness, explaining that in recent years the United States had sought peace through meekness but that "after many heartbreaks it has reversed its policy and was seeking to deter aggression by proof of determination. The only question was how its determination should be implemented." He saw the need to strengthen the powers against ideological as well as military threats and the need to help Western-union countries resist internal as well as external pressure.³⁸

At the third meeting, Lovett extolled the Rio agreement as a model to be followed. There must be staff planning, they must consider methods for making the military load supportable in Europe and in the United States, and they must counter the Russian use of fear as a weapon. Though the association of the United States and Canada with the North Atlantic powers would act as a deterrent, these countries could not go to war automatically because of an incident in Europe.³⁹

Since some of the cautionary statements reflected the views not only of Vandenberg but also of Kennan and Bohlen, the two State Department representatives were asked for statements. Kennan believed that the Soviets were unlikely to launch an attack at that time. At a later meeting (the fifth), Kennan said that he and Bohlen did not mean to say there was no danger of war. Their views that there was no deliberate program of aggression did not imply that aggression might not follow a situation from which it was impossible for the Soviets to withdraw. Russia was still devastated by the war and her people were weary of conflict. If the Soviets felt their

position was weakened in Eastern Europe, there was a danger of military action. The question was how to encourage the Western Europeans while discouraging the Russians from aggression and, at the same time, preparing to act if necessary. Bohlen mentioned the Russian tactic of producing fear with threats to use their armed forces. He warned the Western powers against being so victimized by this fear as to embark on excessive military expenditures, which would delay the economic recovery of Europe. Lovett agreed, noting that a number of American plants now manufactured products for European recovery. Sudden shift to wartime production would damage economic plans.⁴⁰

By the time the fifth meeting had been held, on July 9, a working group was instructed to bring together the thinking of the ambassadorial group and develop papers on (1) the general security needs of the West, (2) the geographical limits of the security arrangement, and (3) the individual needs of the countries concerned. Fifteen meetings were held by this International Working Group between July 12 and September 9.⁴¹

As the working group neared the end of its labors, Lovett invited the ambassadors to his house. He explained that there would be no formal minutes, although he had kept informal notes and invited completely candid comments. The Belgian Ambassador asked specifically for an American statement as to what the United States considered desirable and practical. Lovett insisted that he stood firmly on the Vandenberg resolution and emphasized that any arrangement entered must contribute to American security. He doubted if adherence to the Brussels pact would serve that purpose.

Henri Bonnet, the French Ambassador, did not find this statement satisfactory. His government was in a spell of great indecision because plans were being discussed in Europe for establishing a West German government, representatives of the Western governments were considering military plans to resist aggression, and there were suggestions of eventual German participation. All these facts seemed to invite Soviet aggression and left-wing pressure in Paris. The Ambassador insisted on immediate military aid to France. Because his country did not regard the presence of American troops in Europe as a guarantee of Europe's defense, France therefore required increased arms and equipment.⁴²

Lovett regarded this prickly cavil as an attempt to gain priority for French rearmament over that of other countries, and the other representatives agreed. The Belgian and Dutch members told him they were trying to reorient Bonnet but doubted that his govern-

ment had given much thought to the basic approach, "being much more fully occupied with the immediate rearmament problem in view of the nervousness which they felt arising from the tension in Europe."

During this period, Marshall discussed with Pentagon officials efforts to organize military forces in Europe. After talking with Secretaries Forrestal and Royall, and with Generals Bradley and Alfred Gruenther, he asked Truman on August 23 to approve agreed-on points before the meeting of military representatives of Western-union countries the next day in London, to select a supreme commander and staff for Western-union forces. If there were hostilities, American troops in Europe would come under his command.⁴³

Marshall and his advisers at first believed that no American should be on this staff, but a place might be reserved for an American-deputy. The British wanted an American supreme commander, but Marshall suggested instead that the British support a proposal that the supreme commander be chosen from among Field Marshal Lord Montgomery, Field Marshal Lord Alexander, and General Alphonse Juin. Although Marshall had not been impressed by Montgomery's ability to get along with other commanders in World War II, he thought that in the early stages of organization "a man of the forcible character of Montgomery would probably be preferable." Truman promptly approved Marshall's recommendation but warned, "We must be very careful not to allow a foreign commander to use up our men before he goes into action in toto."

Divergencies continued to develop between Hickerson and Kennan. Although Kennan modified his early opposition to a treaty, he still did not agree with Hickerson's position. At the end of August, he suggested that Lovett would have to decide between their proposals. Kennan now favored a North Atlantic agreement but wanted it confined to that geographic area. From his earlier concept of the trans-Atlantic areas as each end of a dumbbell, he had come to see them as two anchors, one in the United States and Canada and the second in Europe containing the Brussels-pact members. He was also willing to consider association with the stepping stones—Iceland, Portugal, and Denmark. Hickerson wanted more, arguing vigorously for the inclusion of Italy and possibly Greece and Turkey. For the moment, the decision was postponed.⁴⁴

On September 10, the working group presented its recommendations to the Exploratory Group. The members proposed to submit to their governments the background of the discussions, the

guidelines for such an agreement, and provisions that should be included. Hume Wrong, Canadian representative, spoke for his associates when he said that if such a pact as they had been considering had been in effect in the 1930s, there probably would have been no war, and the same thing might have been true if there had been a pact of this kind before World War I. To his mind, the greatest potential of the North Atlantic pact was the certainty it would provide about the American long-term commitment to international security.⁴⁵

Much had been done by the interested governments to outline an acceptable agreement, but action had to wait on the reconvening of Congress. Meanwhile, something could be done to sound out possible members not yet involved. Marshall, in Paris since September 20 for the U.N. meeting, had kept in touch with these developments in Washington while watching the situation in Germany. In October, he talked with representatives of Norway and Sweden. The Norwegian Minister pointed out the problem his country would have in joining a Western pact while Sweden remained neutral. A few days later, Marshall explored that point with the Swedish Foreign Minister, Osten Unden. After Unden had impressively traced the long history of Swedish neutrality, Marshall asked where Europe would be if Wilson and Roosevelt had followed such a course in World Wars I and II. To Unden's reply that, after all, the United States was a great power, Marshall agreed and said that for that reason we could have afforded to stand alone.⁴⁶

In one of his sharpest attacks on the Soviet Union, Marshall said that the Western powers were confronted by a state that "appeared to be utterly ruthless and devoid of all the basic decencies of modern civilization." With the Berlin situation and the Czechoslovakian coup strongly in his mind, he declared: "If this ruthless force were not opposed, it seemed to us that we were confronted by the possibility of a gradual establishment over the world of police states, and that this was abhorrent to us. . . ." Casting aside his habitual caution in an effort to convince the Swedish Minister, he said that the United States had decided that such a force "must be met by a unity of such states as were willing to accept the challenge." This unity had been a major element in the European Recovery Program. The United States had demanded that the recipients get together. For that reason it was fantastic for the Soviets to suggest that "this program was initiated by the United States for imperialistic purposes. At the time the program was started, we had not realized that military assistance might also be essential but that now we did." He

outlined current measures for rearmament and his hope they could also re-create a sound economic system in "a unified western Europe."

Five days later, Marshall approved a suggestion of Lovett's favoring American acceptance of an invitation to participate in a Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee. He believed the decision to take part should be based mainly on military considerations. Politically, the State Department desired to strengthen the morale of the Brussels-pact countries and stimulate their efforts to coordinate and enlarge their defenses.⁴⁷

Near the end of October, the ambassadors of the Brussels-pact countries declared that their governments had agreed in Paris to negotiate a North Atlantic treaty with the United States and Canada. They proposed that negotiations be held in Washington at a date to be set by the United States.⁴⁸

In October, the Western Union countries confirmed the appointment of Field Marshal Montgomery as Permanent Military Chairman of the Commanders-in-Chief Committee, with General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny of France as Land Force Commander and British Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb as air commander. Left for later was the naval command. A beginning had been made, but, as the State Department's Office of Intelligence Research commented shortly afterward, the outcome of the issue rested on "the relation of the United States to the Western European Alliance."⁴⁹

The path toward clarifying the American relationship was made simpler after Mr. Truman's surprising re-election on November 2 and the return of Congress to Democratic control. For weeks, the President had waged a grueling battle across the country, attacking the do-nothing Congress and reaching out for various issues with which to capture the American imagination. But he had managed to keep bipartisanship on foreign policy alive. On November 6, he approved the general principles concerning a North Atlantic pact that had been agreed on by the conference in Washington on September 9.

In parts of Europe, some concern was voiced about the new events and their effect on the Soviet Union, so the Secretary of State set about calming the voiced fears of Norwegian Foreign Minister Halvard Lange. Marshall thought the critical point would come when American supplies began to flow to Western Union countries. He doubted if incidents arising from the Berlin crisis or anything except a planned incident would lead to Soviet aggression. He believed that any action would be based on a deliberate decision

by the Soviet government and that such a decision might possibly have been made already. He thought that the main deterrent up until the present had been American possession of the atomic bomb. Until recently,

I thought that the Soviet leaders probably had felt that the American people never would permit the use of the bomb but that in the light of developments of recent months, including Berlin, and of developments here [at the General Assembly meeting in Paris] I felt the Soviet leaders must now realize that the use of this instrument would be possible and hence that the deterrent influence now was perhaps greater than heretofore⁵⁰

As the time approached for setting a date for the talks on a North Atlantic agreement, the State Department Policy Planning Staff set forth for the Secretary of State what it thought should be considered. Apparently Marshall gave oral approval of their agenda. Although Kennan had shifted somewhat, he still proposed a cautious approach. The conclusion of such a pact, he believed, would not answer the main problem of Soviet efforts to dominate Europe and probably would not force the U.S.S.R. to modify its position. The problem was not military but political, and the political war—now in progress—would be decisive. The danger was that preoccupation with military affairs would delay economic recovery.⁵¹

Kennan was thus ready to assist the Western Union countries, though he did not want to bring in countries outside the North Atlantic area. He warned that including most of the European Recovery Plan members in the pact “would amount to a final militarization of the present dividing-line through Europe.” United States policy, he believed, was still aimed toward “the eventual peaceful withdrawal of both the United States and the U.S.S.R. from the heart of Europe, and accordingly toward the encouragement of the growth of a third force which can absorb and take over the territory between the two.” Unless the United States proposed to give up a peaceful solution, it should not do things that tended to fix and make unchangeable by peaceful means the existing East-West division. These were the views that Marshall had hoped to see realized as he had patiently sought agreement in the settling of German problems.

Marshall would not be on hand to discuss the next step after the Paris meeting closed: he was in the hospital in Washington when North Atlantic treaty negotiations were resumed on December 10. The representatives pledged to work for a treaty by February of the

following year. At Ambassador Franks's request for a draft to show his government before Christmas, the working group plowed ahead, announcing on Christmas Eve that they had agreed on "practically all the articles of a possible pact." They could not agree, however, on whether French North Africa should be included in the guarantees given to France, whether Italy should be invited to join, and whether assurances should be given to Greece, Turkey, and probably Iran. These issues remained for the new year and the new Secretary of State, Dean Acheson. As Escott Reid put it later, Acheson was present only for the last day of creation, "but that was a particularly busy day."⁵²

The story of Acheson, Hickerson, and Achilles, working with Vandenberg and Connally with the special cooperation of Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member Francis O. Wilcox, has been well told by Acheson, Escott Reid, Timothy Ireland, Allen Henrikson, and others. It was Acheson who signed for the United States in March 1949. He has made clear the great contributions of his predecessors in their work in 1948. In a gracious compliment to their bipartisan efforts, which reflected the nonpartisan stand Marshall had maintained during his term as Secretary of State, Acheson wrote, "Senator Vandenberg, the Vandenberg-Marshall-Lovett collaboration, and its product, the Vandenberg resolution, made possible the North Atlantic Treaty."⁵³