

‘Cornerstone of European reconstruction’ from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (20 March 1948)

Caption: On 20 March 1948, the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung considers the impact of the statements made by the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom at the signing of the Brussels Treaty establishing Western Union on 17 March 1948.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Gottschagg, Edmund; Schwingerstein, August; Schöningh, Dr. Franz Josef; Friedmann, Werner. 20.03.1948, Nr. 23; 4. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Eckstein des europäischen Wiederaufbaus", p. 1.

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‘Cornerstone of European reconstruction’

Brussels Treaty signed / Military conference of the Western Powers arranged

Brussels (United Press) – The 50-year Treaty between the five Western European Powers was signed in the Belgian capital on Wednesday. The signatory powers agreed to work closely together in the economic, cultural and social fields, to provide mutual help in the event of an armed attack against any one of the Treaty partners and to create a permanent Consultative Council. The French denied claims that there was a secret supplementary agreement. Following the signing ceremony, the five Foreign Ministers made short speeches. The Belgian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mr *Spaak*, emphasised that the scope of the Treaty was more extensive than had ever been achieved before. It was aimed at the defence of democracy and avoided any provocation. The same restraint should be demanded of all other countries. A ‘diplomatic agreement’ was no longer sufficient. By combining all their resources, the Treaty partners could match the strength of the greatest world powers. Foreign Minister *Bidault* declared that the Treaty was the cornerstone of European reconstruction. ‘We do not want to speak of a bloc,’ he said, and added: ‘We have met today in order to restore peace and nothing but peace.’ After speeches by Foreign Ministers Joseph *Bech* (Luxembourg) and Baron van *Bötzlaer*, who agreed that their governments had given up traditional neutrality with the signing of this pact, Ernest Bevin wound up the proceedings. This Treaty pursued the objective of bringing together good neighbours, maintaining good relations and starting an organisation ‘which would not be merely of benefit to us.’ *Bevin* stressed that this Treaty was not an end but a beginning: it was a new kind of foundation that had never been attempted before. ‘I believe that it will ultimately develop into the basis of a world organisation for peace.’

Paris, 30 March: study session and field exercises

According to Associated Press, the US Police Headquarters in Frankfurt has announced that American, British and French officers will meet together in Paris on 30 March for a joint study of the use of cavalry and armoured brigades in warfare. In the words of the announcement, ‘representatives of other Western European armies’ are also to take part in the week-long discussions, which are being held under the auspices of the French army. After the opening of the discussions, *field exercises* are to be held. Of particular interest in this connection are French press reports which state that the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Viscount *Montgomery*, is to be the Inspector-General of the armies of the five Western Powers. As the politically independent Paris newspaper ‘*L’Intransigeant*’ reports, members of the delegations have agreed to create a five-power General Staff, which is to establish contact with the American Supreme Command. These reports were neither confirmed nor denied by French officials

On Thursday, the Working Party on a European Customs Union started its third session in Brussels. All European countries except Norway, Spain, Germany and the Soviet satellite states have sent delegates. Observers from Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India, Pakistan and Norway are attending the conference. The military authorities of the twin zone in Germany have also sent observers to Brussels.

Discussions about Athens and Madrid

Heated discussions have erupted in Brussels, London and Paris over the possible inclusion in the Western Union of *Greece* and *Spain*. At the Marshall Plan Conference in Paris, the Greek Foreign Minister, Mr *Tsaldaris*, declared that Greece was ready to accede to the five-power Brussels Treaty and to support all the arrangements made for security in Western Europe. The Portuguese Foreign Minister, Mr *Da Mata*, said that Spain was a country that had a significant agricultural sector, as well as other resources and, for that reason, could not remain excluded indefinitely from the economic reconstruction of Europe. The Liberal ‘Manchester Guardian’ stated that ‘it must be clearly understood from the beginning that anti-Communism of whatever degree of sharpness does not constitute the requirements for a country to qualify for membership of the Western European Union. No one wants Spain or any other country to be excluded from the economic benefits of the Marshall Plan, but free peoples cannot be bought with totalitarian tricks.’