

WARSAW PACT

TREATY AT A GLANCE

Completed

May 14, 1955, at Warsaw, Poland

Signatories

Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia

Overview

The "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance," or Warsaw Pact, created the Warsaw Treaty Organization, a military alliance between the USSR and its Eastern European satellites as a Communist counterpart to NATO (see NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY).

Historical Background

The Korean conflict, with MacArthur's nuclear brinkmanship and Mao Zedong's Communist invasion, spooked Western Europe, especially after the United States, bogged down in a "police action" of questionable legality in what easily could have been considered a civil war, requested a sizable increase in Europe's contribution to NATO. In 1951 both the French and British governments fell over the issue, before a committee worked out a compromise distribution that spread the costs more equitably, or at least more acceptably.

The real solution was obvious, though none of the members wanted to face it: rearm West Germany. The French, traditionally nervous about Germans armed to the teeth, refused, unless the German army was merged into some kind of larger, international force. Called the European Defense Community (EDC), such a force had disturbing implications for Great Britain, especially, but also for some in France. It meant a common defense ministry, a coordinated foreign policy, a joint defense budget, maybe even a common parliament to approve the budgets and the policies. It meant, in short, a United States of Europe, whether one called it that or not. West Germany immediately ratified the EDC, but it was simply more than the British could stomach. Still clinging to visions of an empire on which the sun never set, proud now of their "special relationship" with their bastard child, the United States, the British opted out.

The French response was more nuanced. France had a strong Stalinist Communist Party, which

opposed the EDC almost by reflex, while the haughty and military-minded, mostly right-wing Gaulists shuddered at the notion of merging their crack troops with the dregs of Europe in a hodgepodge security service. The French, as was their wont, argued endlessly about the subject till Stalin had died, the Korean war had come to a whimpering close, and all sense of urgency had dissipated. Then, despite American secretary of state John Foster Dulles's threats to institute an "agonizing reappraisal" of his country's commitment to postwar Europe, the French took a pass and voted down the EDC on August 30, 1954.

Undaunted, the United States came up with an eloquently simple alternative: NATO admitted West Germany into its alliance and put Allied commanders in charge of the Bundeswehr, the German army. The unhappy Soviets responded with a military alliance of their own between the USSR and its satellites in Eastern Europe. A week after West Germany entered NATO, the Soviet Union and its satellites, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Hungary, Poland, and Romania, formed the Warsaw Treaty Organization, though the Warsaw Pact was more like an accurate description of current conditions than a bold new move in the deadly chess game of the cold war.

Terms

The pact organization was a military alliance under the unified high command of a Soviet marshal, with headquarters in Moscow. All important posts within the

satellite forces were held by Soviet-trained, if not Soviet-born, officers. Equipment was standardized according to Soviet specifications.



The Contracting Parties,

Reaffirming their desire to create a system of collective security in Europe based on the participation of all European States, irrespective of their social and political structure, whereby the said States may be enabled to combine their efforts in the interests of ensuring peace in Europe;

Taking into consideration, at the same time, the situation that has come about in Europe as a result of the ratification of the Paris Agreements, which provide for the constitution of a new military group in the form of a "West European Union", with the participation of a remilitarized West Germany and its inclusion in the North Atlantic bloc, thereby increasing the danger of a new war and creating a threat to the national security of peaceloving States;

Being convinced that in these circumstances the peace-loving States of Europe must take the necessary steps to safeguard their security and to promote the maintenance of peace in Europe;

Being guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations;

In the interests of the further strengthening and development of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance in accordance with the principles of respect for the independence and sovereignty of States and of non-intervention in their domestic affairs;

Have resolved to conclude the present Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries . . . who have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

The Contracting Parties undertake, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force and to settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security are not endangered.

ARTICLE 2

The Contracting Parties declare that they are prepared to participate, in a spirit of sincere cooperation, in all international action for ensuring international peace and security and will devote their full efforts to the realization of these aims.

In this connection, the Contracting Parties shall endeavor to secure, in agreement with other States desiring to cooperate in this matter, the adoption of effective measures for the general reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction.

ARTICLE 3

The Contracting Parties shall consult together on all important international questions involving their common interests, with a view to strengthening international peace and security.

Whenever any one of the Contracting Parties considers that a threat of armed attack on one or more of the States par-

ties to the Treaty has arisen, they shall consult together immediately with a view to providing for their joint defence and maintaining peace and security.

ARTICLE 4

In the event of an armed attack in Europe on one or more of the States parties to the Treaty by any State or group of States, each State party to the Treaty shall, in the exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, afford the State or States so attacked immediate assistance, individually and in agreement with the other States parties to the Treaty, by all the means it considers necessary, including the use of armed force. The States parties to the Treaty shall consult together immediately concerning the joint measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

Measures taken under this Article shall be reported to the Security Council in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. These measures shall be discontinued as soon as the Security Council takes the necessary action to restore and maintain international peace and security.

ARTICLE 5

The Contracting Parties have agreed to establish a Unified Command, to which certain elements of their armed forces shall be allocated by agreement between the parties, and which shall act in accordance with jointly established principles. The parties shall likewise take such other concerted action as may be necessary to reinforce their defensive strength, in order to defend the peaceful labor of their peoples, guarantee the inviolability of their frontiers and territories and afford protection against possible aggression.

ARTICLE 6

For the purpose of carrying out the consultations provided for in the present Treaty between the States parties thereto, and for the consideration of matters arising in connection with the application of the present Treaty, a Political Consultative Committee shall be established, in which each State party to the Treaty shall be represented by a member of the Government or by some other specially appointed representative.

The Committee may establish such auxiliary organs as may prove to be necessary.

ARTICLE 7

The Contracting Parties undertake not to participate in any coalitions or alliances, and not to conclude any agreements, the purposes of which are incompatible with the purposes of the present Treaty.

The Contracting Parties declare that their obligations under international treaties at present in force are not incompatible with the provisions of the present Treaty.

ARTICLE 8

The Contracting Parties declare that they will act in a spirit of friendship and cooperation to promote the further development and strengthening of the economic and cultural ties among them, in accordance with the principles of respect for each other's independence and sovereignty and of non-intervention in each other's domestic affairs.

ARTICLE 9

The present Treaty shall be open for accession by other States, irrespective of their social and political structure, which express their readiness by participating in the present Treaty, to help in combining the efforts of the peaceloving States to ensure the peace and security of the peoples. Such accessions shall come into effect with the consent of the States parties to the Treaty after the instruments of accession have been deposited with the Government of the Polish People's Republic.

ARTICLE 10

The present Treaty shall be subject to ratification, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Government of the Polish People's Republic.

The Treaty shall come into force on the date of deposit of the last instrument of ratification. The Government of the Polish People's Republic shall inform the other States parties to the Treaty of the deposit of each instrument of ratification.

ARTICLE 11

The present Treaty shall remain in force for twenty years. For Contracting Parties which do not, one year before the expiration of that term, give notice of termination of the Treaty to the Government of the Polish People's Republic, the Treaty shall remain in force for a further ten years.

In the event of the establishment of a system of collective security in Europe and the conclusion for that purpose of a General European Treaty concerning collective security, a goal which the Contracting Parties shall steadfastly strive to achieve, the present Treaty shall cease to have effect as from the date on which the General European Treaty comes into force.

Done at Warsaw, this fourteenth day of May 1955, in one copy, in the Russian, Polish, Czech and German languages, all the texts being equally authentic. Certified copies of the present Treaty shall be transmitted by the Government of the Polish People's Republic to all the other parties to the Treaty.



Consequences

Hungary withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in 1956 but was compelled to return after the Soviets crushed the Hungarian revolt. Likewise, in 1968 Czechoslovakia withdrew but was forced back by an invasion by Soviet-led Warsaw Pact forces. Albania withdrew the same year, having concluded an alliance with China, which had drifted away from Soviet domination.

It was the end of the cold war and the concomitant creation of democratic governments throughout much of Eastern Europe that finally undid the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Hungary withdrew in 1990, and the reunification of Germany put an end to East Germany's participation. Other former satellites agitated for withdrawal of Soviet forces from their territory, and the organization's military function officially ended on April 1, 1991. It continued to function briefly as a political entity.