BEGINNING A NEW RELATIONSHIP

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DR. KONRAD ADENAUER, chancellor of the German Federal Republic, sat at a long table in the Bundestag chamber in Bonn at 10:25 a.m., Monday, May 26, and affixed the fourth signature to the General Agreement with the United States, United Kingdom and France. Then with the foreign ministers of the three Western powers he signed three other conventions.

When these documents, known as the Contractual Agreements, are ratified by the parliaments of the four powers, and when the European Defense Community treaty has been ratified by the six member nations, Germany will be restored to the community of nations as an equal partner in Western defense.

The ceremony of signing the Contractual Agreements took 45 minutes as Secretary of State Dean Acheson, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, and the Chancellor (who is also the German foreign minister) put their pens to the bound texts of the four conventions in three languages, as well as a series of letters.

This initial step toward ending the occupation and restoring near-sovereignty to the western part of Germany was followed the next day by the signing in Paris by six nations of the treaty which creates the European Defense Community and establishes a European Defense Force, including German contingents, as a part of the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the continent of Europe.

These two acts—interdependent parts of a single transaction—culminated a year and a half of work by representatives of the Western Allies and the German Federal Republic to liquidate the war and the occupation, to integrate Germany with the Western democratic bloc, and to create a Western defense force in the form of a European army.

The immediate decision to take this bold step in world affairs flowed directly from the Communist aggression in Korea. If the weakness of South Korea was an invitation to Soviet aggression through the satellites, weakness in Western Europe, with its vast industrial and political potential, presented a greater temptation. An effective defense system was vital and urgent. It was immediately evident that such a defense system required the participation of Germany as an equal partner of the other Western democracies.

THE POTSDAM AGREEMENT of 1945 had itself declared Allied policy to be the "eventual peaceful cooperation in international life by Germany." European statesmen themselves, the first to have reason to fear

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH — After the signing of the General Agreement, the four signers (left to right) UK Foreign Secretary Eden, French Foreign Minister Schuman, US Secretary of State Acheson and German Chancellor Adenauer pose before the bound copy on the table. All photographs with this article were taken by Claude Jacoby and Norbert Gassner, photographers of the Public Liaison Branch, Information Division, Office of Public Affairs, HICOG.