

'Charlemagne and coke' from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (5 January 1952)

Caption: On 5 January 1952, the German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung publishes an article by Professor Hans von Hentig which strongly criticises the megalomania of the Schuman Plan.

Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. Baumgarten, Hans ; Dombrowski, Erich ; Korn, Karl ; Sehte, Paul ; Welter, Erich. 05.01.1952, Nr. 4. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Karl der Grosse und Koks", auteur:Hentig, Hans von , p. 2.

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Charlemagne and coke

Writing in the Minnesota *Sonntagspost*, Professor Hans von Hentig of Bonn expresses some sceptical views concerning the Schuman Plan.

‘Charlemagne’s empire is to be resurrected as the continental Third Power under Frankish leadership. Though it occupies only a small part of Europe, that is the name it has chosen, arousing as it does delusions of grandeur and inspiring awe in American voters unversed in geography. It is, however, worthwhile examining how realistic this dream is.

Charlemagne’s empire came into being in a world of religious unity. With the exception of remote countries in the East, there were no other powers in the known world. Machines had not yet been invented. Raw materials were not yet the basic prerequisites of war or peace. The volcanic force of nationalism had not yet taken hold of its peoples. The social revolution and its ideologies were still a long way off.

Today, two world powers exist in the western hemisphere and in Asia. One is essentially protestant, the other orthodox or anti-religious. Nature has provided these two groups with the majority of those fuels, above all oil, without which modern warfare cannot be prosecuted. In contrast, Charlemagne’s prospective empire would enjoy hardly any crude oil resources on European territory. Both Italy and France suffer from coal shortages. “For 50 years, France has always had to import a good third of the coal it needed,” the Prime Minister, René Pleven, exclaimed in his defence of the Schuman Plan. “Of all the securities for which it has fought so hard, this one alone is lacking.” “If coal and steel are pooled,” argued the Minister of Finance, René Mayer, “Germany will lose the advantage that comes from its command of both coal and steel.” He even went so far as to say: “If the Schuman Plan fails to come about, Germany will become the arbiter of Europe’s destiny, for whoever owns the coke, controls the steel.”

Caution, which can be maintained in diplomatic discussion, was set aside in the heat of parliamentary debate. The assurance of equal advantages died a sudden death; the Europe that was to have been built with loving, selfless hands was nowhere to be seen. Even after taking over the Saarland, France needs more coal. People say Europe but what they really mean is coal. “Our policy”, as Schuman went on to say, “is not based on sentiment. It is firm and far-sighted.” That’s what Charlemagne’s idyllic empire looks like.’