

## 'European awareness' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (5 May 1949)

**Caption:** On 5 May 1949, the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung focuses on the diplomatic negotiations that seek to establish political cooperation between the democratic states of Western Europe and to establish a Council of Europe.

**Source:** Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. FRIEDMANN, Werner; GOLDSCHAGG, Edmund; SCHÖNINGH, Dr. Franz Joseph; SCHWINGENSTEIN, August ; Herausgeber DAHLMANN, Alfred; KREYSSIG, Gerhard. 05.05.1949, n° 52; 5. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Europäisches Bewusstsein", auteur:Holldack, Heinz , p. 1.

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## European awareness

by *Heinz Holldack*

‘In a world dominated by political and economic entities of continental dimensions, the European nations cannot hope to survive on a basis of political or economic independence.’ This sentence appears at the top of the list of recommendations drawn up by the Brussels Congress of the European Movement in February of this year. It describes perfectly the situation in which the peoples of our continent find themselves in the aftermath of the Second World War. Even so, it would seem that the need for European unity has not yet been recognised. We are still a long way off the establishment of an effective pan-European organisation. On the other hand, there is no cause for exaggerated pessimism. Both of these observations may be deduced from the negotiations currently taking place in London between the Ministers of ten European countries on the Statute of the Council of Europe.

The Second World War, what preceded it, the way in which it was conducted and its aftermath, clearly showed that European nations would have to quit the world political stage if they did not unite to form a greater common interest group and also showed that the project for what was referred to as the ‘United States of Europe’ was in the air. Since 1945, no less than seven organisations had emerged, all of which had set themselves the target of establishing either a European union or a federation. The formation of an alliance and the establishment of a ‘Coordinating Committee of Movements for European Unity’ in December 1947 was already a giant step forward. Individually, these associations ran the risk of breaking up the main idea and of making it the object of theoretical discussions. Together, they were able to draft a programme and to leave the confines of private discussions and head in the direction of a practical policy.

This happened at the Congress held by the Coordinating Committee in May 1948 in The Hague. It was recognised that the greatest ideas and well-formulated resolutions were of no use without a realistic approach. However, that approach could come only from the governments themselves. Anyone familiar with the history of the previous century’s national unity movements knows that ambitious plans for greater unity always fail because of the true reality of powers who ought to unite when they are incapable of achieving their aims alone. Fully aware of this, the Hague Congress stated: ‘The decision will be left to the governments who, possessing authority, are the only ones in a position to unite.’ The Hague Congress thought that it would be able to unite the citizens of Europe on a parliamentary basis. It therefore proposed the convening of a Council of Europe made up of Members of the individual national parliaments. A committee chaired by the former French Prime Minister, Paul Ramadier, was instructed to draft proposals for a European Assembly in a Memorandum to be submitted to the governments concerned. On 17 August, Ramadier submitted the Memorandum. It made provisions for a European Assembly with neither legislative nor executive powers, simply the power to advise governments. With this very cautious, and in no way utopian, policy, Ramadier hoped to establish a European Union step by step.

If we now look at how the project was perceived by the participating governments, particularly the French and British, we see both extremes: the high altitudes of ideologies and the jungle of superpower diplomacy and party politics. Initially, the French Government enthusiastically welcomed the pan-European idea. By 18 August it had decided to adopt Ramadier’s Memorandum. There were various reasons for so doing. The new Cabinet, formed on 26 July, included Robert Schuman, Paul Reynaud and Léon Blum, the champions of the pan-European idea in France; Ramadier, the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, was now Deputy Prime Minister. In Paris, the European Movement was therefore involved in government. Owing to the difficulties it was experiencing in home affairs, this government needed some success in foreign affairs, and it hoped to include West Germany in the European system, without granting it sovereignty.

However, as the French Government’s desire for action increased, the more reticent the British Labour Government became. Attlee and Bevin showed little enthusiasm for the establishment of close ties with an unstable Europe threatened by Communism. They were also reluctant to give up areas of their own sovereignty to benefit Europe and did not wish to weaken links with the Dominions. The Labour Ministers were also disapproving of the fact that, of all people, Churchill, the leader of the Conservative Opposition, was and is the standard-bearer of the European idea in England. Although the Commonwealth Conference,

held in October in London, banished some of their misgivings, Bevin abandoned his resistance extremely unwillingly and only because of pressure from America. He objected to the creation of another 'talking shop' and called for gradual and specific steps. Eventually, however, the British Government made counter-proposals. They made plans for a European Council of Ministers which would convene at regular intervals and include other European states as well as the five members of the Brussels Pact.

At the meeting held in January of this year by the Consultative Council of the five Brussels Pact governments, a compromise was reached on the French and the British plans. Negotiations on the powers and responsibilities to be granted to the Council are currently being held in London by representatives of the Five, i.e. Belgium, France, Great Britain, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, as well as the three Scandinavian countries and, last but not least, Italy and Ireland. A further topic of debate concerns the addition of new members.

It is fairly clear that the Council of Europe will soon become a reality. The extent of its practical significance is still a moot point. Close cooperation already exists between the democratic Western European countries, whose core comprises the five countries of the Brussels Pact. This cooperation will be ensured by the European Recovery Programme (ERP) and the Atlantic Pact. In addition to that, there are still sufficient tasks for the Council of Europe to occupy itself with. However, these tasks may initially be restricted to gradually making the inherited concepts of sovereignty more flexible and mitigating the conflict of interests of its members in an all-embracing European awareness.