

Note on the issue of cooperation or integration (30 March 1955)

Caption: On 30 March 1955, Walter Hallstein, German Junior Foreign Minister, draws up a confidential note on the future of European integration and the need for the Federal Republic of Germany to participate in a united Europe.

Source: Note présentée par la délégation française sur les questions à soumettre aux ministres des Affaires étrangères. Dans: LAPPENKÜPER, Ulrich. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Frankreich: Dokumente 1949-1963: Hrsg. von der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und dem Institut für Zeitgeschichte. MÖLLER, Horst; HILDEBRAND, Klaus (Hrsg.). K. G. Saur Verlag. Tome 1, 1002 p., pp. 604-608. 1996/1999. ISBN 3-598-23681-6. p. 582-586.

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Response to the thoughts of the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs on the issue of cooperation or integration (30 March 1955)

*Hallstein, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, memorandum, 30.3.1955, strictly confidential
PA, BStS, Bd. 346*

I. AGREEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLES

We are, I believe, in agreement on the principles:

1. Mere cooperation cannot of itself engender organic unity.
2. What is therefore required is a driving force at political level. Primacy must go to the political aspect, and, in the uniting of peoples, the politicians must assume leadership. True integration must begin in the political domain.
3. The aim of this policy must be that each nation-state should no longer have the autocratic power to determine the political, economic and social existence of its people. The time for living independently and apart has now passed, at least where Europe is concerned. Only when this is recognised does true integration become possible.
4. Purely functional integration without any supranational, institutional support — as with the pre-1914 system — is no longer conceivable. Institutional powers must provide the necessary support.
5. On the other hand
 - supranational interventionism of any kind must be avoided,
 - comprehensive functional integration compliant with certain principles is, per se, to be preferred to forms of partial integration.

All this I can accept. I would merely make the wording of principle 4 more specific and say that, without institutional support, there can be no functional integration at all. Each function presupposes a particular framework. That also applied to the gold standard system prior to 1914. At that time, an institutional framework was provided by consistent national currency legislations and the corresponding authorities acting in harmony. The framework was an identical one, transcending individual nations. It was thus an inherently 'supranational' framework. Its weakness lay in the fact that it was not similarly supranational in the structure of its authorities, but was dependent in formal terms on the continuing, free determination of all participating nations. That was why it fell apart.

II. DIFFERING VIEWS ON MODALITIES

Perhaps our only real difference of view concerns the manner in which these principles are applied. And even here the difference is not, it seems to me, very significant.

The fundamental issue is what political conclusions are to be drawn from the real political situation as it exists today.

III. THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

I believe that we also agree on the evaluation of the current political situation:

The Federal Republic and Europe as a whole are faced with a very serious threat, one which calls for swift and decisive action:

1. The failure of the EDC was a Soviet victory with far-reaching consequences. Had the EDC, with its joint army, joint budget, joint armaments policy, etc., been accepted, the resulting impetus for full, including political, integration would have been so powerful that it would have been possible to let further development look after itself, with just a little assistance.

2. Replacement of the EDC with the NATO and WEU solution has admittedly averted the catastrophe and has for the time being secured certain military necessities; unlike the EDC, however, it has done nothing to address the fundamental issues but has merely deferred action on them.

(a) A military link to an alliance system with an integrated command does not in itself constitute integration, nor has it any inherent force for integration. NATO is, and must necessarily remain, an alliance system. That national interests do not at the present time come more starkly to the fore may be attributed to the preponderance which the USA in practice enjoys. As this preponderance diminishes — this being the very purpose of NATO — with the European nations stepping up their contributions, national interests will come more sharply into focus (this is what is already happening in the United Kingdom; see the recent White Paper).

(b) WEU is similarly bereft of any genuine driving force for integration, as the Benelux countries, with their experience of the Treaty of Brussels, had predicted and as the course of events has now confirmed. It was, in particular, poor psychology to expect anything of the inclusion of the United Kingdom on equal terms. While formal equal treatment of the United Kingdom constitutes a precondition for integration, Britain will not feel ready to make any further concessions. Only when integration has gone ahead without it will it feel the need to become involved. The British do not bow to theoretical considerations, only to facts.

3. If we are to do what needs to be done, we have only a short period of time at our disposal: maybe two years to lay the foundations, maybe five years to complete the essential tasks. If we fail to achieve integration within that timeframe, the process of disintegration will run its course.

(a) If we do not succeed in breathing new life into the European Movement at an early date, the present spirit of willingness will evaporate or may turn into bitterness and invest other ideals.

That applies particularly to young people. Throughout Europe youth has been and remains fired with enthusiasm; but enthusiasm is not some kind of herring to be salted and put away for a few years (Goethe). If young people are disappointed, they will look for other outlets for their enthusiasm. The vast majority are unlikely to turn again to nationalism. If Europe fails to offer them a supranational ideal, the Soviet doctrine will do so. That doctrine offers a reprehensible, destructive world view, but it is one which for many appears to rise above the bickering of individual nations and interest groups, thereby offering an appealing option. Just how attractive it is to young intellectuals in particular is clear from what we know of the defections of a number of atomic scientists.

(b) As national armies expand in every country, so the institutions will regress towards utter subservience to pure national interest. The military build-up will begin under the slogan 'All for NATO' but will then continue to the tune of 'We must also think of ourselves'. In the absence of a powerful counter-reaction, politics and the economy would inevitably have to follow suit, whatever their initial intentions.

(c) This process of disintegration into a national mindset will increasingly receive encouragement from outside, from the Soviet Union. By appealing to special interests, by creating specific difficulties and by uttering promises and threats, the USSR will exert its influence on individual European countries, the ultimate aim being to tear asunder the weak bonds between them. This is already starting.

(d) On the other hand, the scope for resisting such a development by means of a massive military build-up will diminish. For the time being, both the threat of a Soviet military attack and the danger of subversion of a more or less violent nature may be held in check simply by America's nuclear superiority. According to some predictions, however, much of that superiority will have been lost in just a few years. When that happens, Europe will basically have to look after itself.

Rapid political integration is thus vitally necessary.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The need for political integration having been established, the only question that remains is what means should be chosen to achieve that end. Only here, as it seems to me, could views differ.

In making this choice, we should not set our standards too high. The idea is not to come up with an absolutely sure means or even the best means that theory can offer. The idea is rather to come up with the best available means that is currently politically feasible.

If we look at it in this way, there are hardly any options:

1. The idea of introducing political integration by means of a 'European Constitution' is not an option. This has been tried — in exemplary form and with the support of eminent parliamentarians. This idea did not come to anything because the EDC — the real-life integration which would have given it depth and substance — failed. It can only be taken up again when some replacement has been found for the substance lost in this way. Failing this, the assignment of purely formal powers to a Political Community would produce an academic construct, something that no one is prepared to accept. Such an approach would not, in particular, secure a majority in France.

2. The idea that such political integration might be allowed to emerge from the Council of Europe is most definitely not an option.

3. But even the notion that political unification of Europe could emerge from a form of 'functional' integration supported by secondary institutional organs of a purely consultative nature is not a feasible option in practice:

(a) Even over a lengthy period of time, the prospects would be poor. The leap from economic consultation to political unification is too great. Even the OEEC, which has in its own way worked well, has failed to generate any real political impetus; it has not even transformed the national economic structures into a European structure.

(b) And a comfortable timescale is not in any case available. The essential events must take place soon. There will be no chance of that, however, if we go down such a road.

(c) There would, on the contrary, be a real risk, in the event of the economy running into trouble, that the understanding arrived at merely through consultation would quickly be shorn of any meaning. Active economic policies to combat unemployment would then be inevitable. If the uniformity of these active economic policies were not institutionally secured, it would not come about through mere consultation. As has been seen time and time again, each individual country would pursue purely national *sauf qui peut* policies.

(d) The other countries are, admittedly, prepared to a greater or lesser extent to engage in such consultation, but none is prepared, as far as is known, to view such consultation as a path leading to political integration.

4. This only leaves, as it seems to me, the continuation and extension of integration along the lines of the European Coal and Steel Community.

(a) This is the only option which currently offers any prospect of rapid progress.

(b) Given the constant buck-passing of recent years, which threatens to kill off the European idea altogether, this is the solution likely to attract the least resistance. This is the option most likely to secure the general parliamentary support which is not at the present time available for, say, immediate political integration.

(c) This is the path suggested by experience to date. For the ECSC form of integration was chosen precisely — and this is now generally overlooked — because by 1950 the alternative paths (Council of Europe, OEEC) had already proved unsatisfactory.

5. The economic objections to this approach should not be overstated:

(a) The fact that a fully common market cannot be achieved while exchange rates are fixed artificially does not make whatever progress is nevertheless achieved any less real. Liberalisation, for example, is not put on hold until there is full convertibility. Besides, as integration gains pace, the pressure to remove currency anomalies will also grow.

(b) The fact that, with partial integration, economic policy is determined in part nationally, in part supranationally, is somewhat contradictory. But national economic policy will initially be protected in all essential respects by the ‘troubles fondamentaux’ (serious difficulties) clause. Moreover, as integration progresses, uniformity of policy will tend to extend beyond material aspects to general principles. Consideration might also be given to an injection of greater elasticity into the existing structure by more extensive inclusion of federal elements.

6. Extending integration to encompass transport, energy and atomic energy would, moreover, be consistent with economic realities.

This is particularly clear in the case of atomic energy. America has earmarked two billion dollars in its budget for nuclear research. What European country could spend anything approaching that? At the same time, the research and industrial demands are such that spending of this order of magnitude is necessary. Only Europe as a whole can manage that.

But if, on the one hand, coal and, on the other hand, atomic energy are to become subject to Community control, the power industry must also be included in the coordinated arrangements.

The requirements are equally clear in the field of transport.

7. Above all, however, this approach, as the only practical one available, offers a means of reviving European unification as a political process.

European unification cannot be achieved by experts. It must be borne forward by the unity of the European peoples themselves. This is why the emergence and development of an institution for the representation of the peoples of Europe, one vested with real powers, a European parliamentary system, has to be seen as the truly decisive step. In the Council of Europe, the parliamentarians have no voice; in the OEEC and similar bodies, they are not even present. Only in the ECSC do they have genuine powers, albeit in restricted areas and to a limited extent. Here is the first and only European parliament. And so it is here that the further political development must begin.

8. The tactical foreign policy situation is a further reason why we Germans must not fail at this point.

— The Benelux States have decided to go down this path.

— Italy is also ready to do so.

— France is preparing to submit corresponding proposals, as already announced by Prime Minister Faure in the National Assembly.

If the Federal Republic were to falter and cause the project to fail, it would bear a responsibility on two counts, a responsibility that it is not in a position to bear:

(a) We would, as a part of Europe, close off the only route to unification that is currently feasible and acceptable to the other countries concerned.

(b) We would, as a nation, stand accused, at the bar of world opinion, that, no sooner had we recovered our national independence, we had turned away de facto from the Europe policy that we had proclaimed to date and had thrown ourselves into the arms of a new nationalism.

[Hallstein]