

Memorandum by Sir I. Kirkpatrick on the political implications of the Schuman Plan (11 May 1950)

Caption: On 11 May 1950, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, British High Commissioner in Germany, sends a memorandum to the British Foreign Office in which he outlines the political scope of the Schuman Plan.

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Memorandum by Sir I. Kirkpatrick

Secret FOREIGN OFFICE 11 May 1950

The French Plan for the Political Point of View

Some Long Term Political Considerations

1. The declared policy of the Western powers is to incorporate Germany into the Western comity of nations. This policy necessarily confronts us with a dilemma: how to reconcile the position of Germany as a prospective partner with a rigorous system of control and the maintenance of a number of onerous restrictions on German industry.

So far as any eventual rearmament of Germany is concerned the Chiefs of Staff are inclined to think that the proper method of control is not the establishment of Military Control Commissions but the integration of any forces allowed to Germany in a Western military machine which will allot to Germany her task and supervise its execution. The French proposal to some extent provides a similar machine to plan and supervise the execution of an Allied economic policy in the field of heavy industry. Such a plan would be acceptable to Germany on the long term since it places Germany on the same footing as France or any other participating country.

2. In order to achieve security against a revival of German aggression it is essential – unless we are to use force indefinitely – to induce Germany voluntarily to accept a regime which in our judgment will give us the necessary security. Our main difficulty hitherto has been to induce the French to contemplate any solution which has a chance of being acceptable to the Germans.

3. It has become apparent in recent negotiations with the French that although they pay lip service to the agreed Western policy of associating Germany with the West they find it difficult in fact to draw the logical conclusions and to acquiesce in measures designed to achieve our common purpose. The cause for this attitude may be to some extent found in the fact that French public opinion, although recognising the danger from Russia, have [*sic*] not yet lost the habit of regarding Germany as the traditional enemy and the immediate threat to French security. Measures calculated to bring to an end the traditional Franco-German hostility and to accustom French public opinion to take a realistic view of the perils confronting them will ease the task of those French Statesmen who favour a more liberal policy in Germany.

Some Short Term Political Considerations

1. If we are to take the immediate steps which our policy in Germany demands we must secure Western assent to the relaxation of a number of restrictions on German industry. The French proposal will facilitate this.

2. We have to get over one immediate hurdle, namely, the preamble to Law 75 under which the German Government is to be allowed to determine the ownership of the steel and coal industries. This Law has been approved by the High Commission by a majority vote and the French High Commissioner has appealed to his Government. There is little prospect that the French will succeed in inducing the United States and British Governments to modify their attitude and consequently the Law will enter into force after the prescribed delay of 30 days. But since the French Parliament have declared themselves irrevocably opposed to allowing the German Government power to determine this matter the promulgation of the Law is likely to cause considerable difficulties in Paris. The present French proposal would, to a large extent, mitigate the French Parliament's resentment since it could be pointed out that the ownership of the German coal and steel industries will be of little consequence if they are all to be under the control of an International Authority.

3. The circumstance that it has been difficult to find work for the International Authority for the Ruhr so

long as the High Commission and Occupation are in existence has been a matter of great concern to the French government. But they have not yet succeeded in putting up any practical proposals which would enable the Ruhr Authority to play a useful part so long as sovereign authority in Germany is vested in the High Commission. The French proposal to some extent takes care of this dilemma.

4. Publication of the French plan will help the German Chancellor to induce the Bundestag to vote for the accession of Germany to the Council of Europe. It will also mitigate the Saar controversy.

Some Reservations

The above considerations all appear to speak for the plan, purely from the point of view of its political impact on the German problem. But there are some important reservations to be made.

1. There is one aspect on which it is difficult, at this stage, to express an opinion. Is this French move to be regarded as an expression of the desire of many Frenchmen to create a third force in Europe and to that extent to build on Europe rather than on the Western Atlantic community? Dr. Adenauer seems to think it is when he expresses the hope that Europe may be a third Power. If so the proposal is inherently dangerous and objectionable since the conception of a European third force is not realistic and history teaches that powers or groups of powers which seek to maintain their neutrality or play a balancing role fall miserably between two stools unless they have the strength and coherence required for such a policy.

But it does not seem that it can be definitely said at this stage that the French move is a deliberate and conscious rejection of the conception of a Western Atlantic Community. It may be that France, with her attention excessively riveted on Germany is principally actuated by the desire to seek a means of resolving the contradiction between her own declared policy in regard to Germany and her undeclared desire to see Germany permanently held under control and indeed in subjection.

2. The French plan speaks only of France and Germany. But in his covering note the French Ambassador emphasises that it is designed to be a European plan. Yet he does not make it clear whether or not the participation of the UK is regarded as essential.

If it is not to be essential and if economic factors do not *compel* us to come in or if we could devise some form of consultative association without full participation, the prospective close association of France and Germany would be politically attractive for the reasons outlined above. And indeed it would be worth while making a substantial economic sacrifice to achieve security in Germany. But if the United Kingdom is required to join or if economic factors prevent our staying out, British participation is likely to involve us in Europe beyond the point of no return, whether the plan involves some form of immediate Federation in Europe or whether it is 'the first step in the Federation of Europe' as the French statement puts it or whether it is merely a species of European cartel.

If after further examination of the French plan, it were decided to oppose it or to refuse to participate, it would be politically more convenient to justify our attitude by urging the desirability of basing the Western system firmly on the Atlantic community, rather than to proclaim our reluctance to become excessively involved in Europe. In any event it would be damaging to take the lead at the very outset in subjecting the plan to public criticism. It has had a good reception in many quarters including governmental circles in Germany and we cannot afford to be accused of wishing to torpedo a promising move towards Franco-German rapprochement.

I. KIRKPATRICK