

'Western powers encourage the rebirth of the German threat' from the Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek (28 May 1949)

Caption: In May 1949, during the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers from the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, the Luxembourg Communist daily newspaper Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek accuses the Western forces of failing to comply with the Potsdam Agreements and of encouraging the birth of the 'Fourth Reich'.

Source: Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek. 28.05.1949, Nr. 122. Luxembourg: Coopérative ouvrière de presse et d'éditions. "Westmächte begünstigen die Wiedergeburt der deutschen Gefahr", p. 1.

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Western powers encourage the rebirth of the German threat

by rejecting Soviet proposals for the joint control and demilitarisation of Germany

Last Monday saw the beginning of a conference held in the Pink Marble Palace in Paris between the four Foreign Ministers, Andrei Vyshinsky, Dean Acheson, Ernest Bevin and Robert Schuman. It is known that the Foreign Ministers have agreed on the following agenda:

1. Germany's economic and political unity, including the question of control.
2. The Berlin question, including the currency problem.
3. Preparations for the German Peace Treaty.
4. Consideration of the Austrian Peace Treaty.

What conclusions did the Foreign Ministers draw from their first five meetings?

In the course of these meetings, the Council of the four Foreign Ministers dealt only with the first item on the agenda. From the outset, the representatives of the Western powers categorically declared that they were in no way prepared to 'go back'.

'Going back' would mean acting on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement, to the implementation of which they had solemnly committed themselves but with which only the Soviet Union faithfully complied in its occupation zone. What was the Potsdam Agreement designed for? It calls for the denazification, demilitarisation and democratisation of Germany as well as the payment of reparations to compensate the countries attacked and destroyed by Hitler. None of these points, however, were put into practice by the Western powers. On the contrary, they proceeded to rearm the industrial capacity (and therefore the military capacity) of Western Germany, to revive the Ruhr region's arsenal and to reinstate the Nazis to their former positions of power. On the day the Paris Conference began, they allowed a Fourth West German Reich to be proclaimed in Bonn which now looms threateningly near the borders of France, Belgium and Luxembourg. Our Government has light-heartedly approved all these measures which threaten the safety of our country. It entrusted Washington with Luxembourg's fate. Washington, however, does not want to neutralise Western Germany; on the contrary, it wants to rearm its military forces. It is in this spirit that Mr Acheson, echoed by Mr Bevin and Mr Schuman, defends his German doctrine in Paris.

From the outset of the Paris Conference, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr Vyshinsky, insisted that the German question should be settled with a view to securing safety and peace. He suggested the restoration of the Four-Power Control Council for Germany, in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement. He also sought Four-Power control for the Ruhr, along with the advisory representation of Germany's neighbouring countries.

The Western powers, which did not want to 'go back', rejected both of Mr Vyshinsky's proposals. Acheson did state that the Western powers had invested 'very large sums of money' in the rearmament of Western Germany and that under no circumstances were they prepared to give up their separate policy. Acheson even wanted to force the Soviet Union into accepting the unilateral German agreements signed in Washington on 8 April which endorsed the rebirth of a Fourth West German Reich.

Mr Vyshinsky replied that the Soviet Union was interested in protecting peace and not in preparing for war. He added that the Soviet Union could not accept such principles, which, moreover, contradicted the (Potsdam) Agreement which it had signed.

This is the present stage of talks between the four Foreign Ministers. The next four days will show us whether the Western powers are prepared to work towards reaching an agreement between the world powers or whether they wish to widen the schism provoked by them. Recent events have clearly revealed one thing:

the Soviet Union remains faithful to its policy, the defence of peace.

Paris — during yesterday's Foreign Ministers Conference, Mr Vyshinsky once again tabled his arguments regarding German unity, looking at certain points in detail. The next meeting will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. No meetings are scheduled for tomorrow, Sunday.