

Note from Roger Makins to Ernest Bevin (19 May 1950)

Caption: On 19 May 1950, the English diplomat, Sir Roger Makins, sends a note to Ernest Bevin in which he advises the British Foreign Secretary to adopt a wait-and-see approach to the Schuman Plan.

Source: BULLEN, R.; PELLY, M.E. (Ed.). Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series II. Volume I: The Schuman Plan, the Council of Europe and Western European Integration May 1950 - December 1952. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986. 1023 p.

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Note for the Secretary of State Franco-German coal and steel authority

There has been no formal approach from the French.

The purpose of the scheme was Franco-German rapprochement, but the French have tried to negotiate with us before approaching the Germans.

They have not thought out how their scheme will work and we could not accept it in principle as we do not know what it would involve.

The French say they are prepared to go ahead with the Germans, but they have not done so, neither have they worked out their proposals any further than the communiqué.

We shall have to do what we can to get them out of the mess into which they have landed themselves.

I therefore think that M. Schuman should be informed on the following lines:

His Majesty's Government have already welcomed the initiative taken by the French Government.

There have since been some informal contacts with M. Monnet from which it has emerged that the proposals are not sufficiently developed to enable us to take a decision in principle to accept them, especially having regard to the special geographical and Commonwealth considerations which we have in mind.

We understood that a main motive was to make a fresh approach to the German problem, and that this desire has been reciprocated in Germany.

We had expected that the next step would therefore be to arrange for negotiations to be opened with the German Government after any discussion which might be necessary with the Allied High Commission. For our part our High Commissioner would be instructed to help in every possible way.

We are anxious that this initiative of the French Government shall succeed. We should therefore wish to be associated with the discussions in the hope that we can join or be associated in some way with the proposed authority.

If the French suggest that this should be an international study group, our reply might be that we think this would cause the project to lose momentum, and the psychological gains which have already been made, would also be lost.

Roger Makins

19th May, 1950