

'The Ruhr still in waiting' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (11 May 1950)

Caption: Following the Schuman Declaration, the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung considers the repercussions of the European coal and steel pool on the control of industrial output in the Ruhr.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. FRIEDMANN, Werner; GOLDSCHAGG, Edmund; SCHÖNINGH, Dr. Franz Josef; SCHWINGENSTEIN, August ; Herausgeber FRIEDMANN, Werner. 11.05.1950, n° 108; 6. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Die Ruhr in Wartestellung", auteur:K. Sch. , p. 9.

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The Ruhr still in waiting

The reorganisation of the Ruhr coal and steel industry, which began after 1945 when it was taken over by the Allies, has seen numerous ups and downs ever since, and these have reached a new stage in the last few weeks. After a large number of German authorities had gradually included via the various organisations, Law No 75, announced in November 1948, brought some clarity as to the intentions of the American and British authorities in the Ruhr. Even so, the bodies that were to work out the plans for the reorganisation on the German side. The *Generalsekretariat für Gesetz Nr. 75 bei der Deutschen Kohlenbergbauleitung* [General Secretariat for Law No 75 in German coal mining management] and, for steel, the *Stahltreuhändervereinigung für die Eisenseite* [Steel Trustees Organisation] were not established until late 1949. These new organisations had scarcely begun their work when demands for a change in the law were made. The revision was formally set in motion with the inclusion of the French Zone in control and reorganisation by the 'Combined Steel Group'. In the last few weeks, High Commissioners have entered discussions on this matter. As has become known, no consensus was reached, because the Preamble to the new Law No 75 did not meet with the approval of all parties.

Since the Allies' first announcements on this matter, it is clear that the Ruhr's heavy industry, which was previously organised both vertically and horizontally in eight large trusts, is to be restructured. Ownership relations are not to be taken into account in these considerations. Unions and company representatives could therefore cooperate, even though the former see nationalisation and the latter reprivatization as the right way forward. The unions have, however, made their cooperation dependent on their being granted extensive powers of co-determination in the strategy and management bodies. It is proposed that, out of the eleven members of the Steel Trustees Organisation, four should come from the unions; the boards of those works in the iron industry already broken up also include employees' representatives proposed by the unions, who have equal rights. The General Secretariat for the restructuring of the coal industry also works on an equal footing at all levels with experts appointed by the unions.

This restructuring is closely linked with the question of decartelisation and deconcentration, as these are the starting points for the measures introduced. The main emphasis of the measures is crucial for the practical restructuring of the Ruhrgebiet. If the coal and iron industries are to be restructured in accordance with economic points of view, no consideration may be given to former ownership rights. If the industries are merely decartelised, it is possible that the works need only be redistributed within the old company structures. Another result of these deliberations is the desire to withdraw some individual companies completely from central regulation. The association for the protection of small shareholders and representatives of company management are more sympathetic to the idea of decartelisation, as they see it as less damaging to ownership rights. Restructuring regardless of former property structures smacks of nationalisation. The ideal scenario would be that only the Vereinigten Stahlwerke [United Steelworks] needed to be reorganised, and everything else could stay the same. However, those who think that may well have quite another think coming — the ideas for decartelisation in certain Allied circles went just as far as the liberalisation wanted by many German liberal theorists.

The Preamble to the present Law No 75 states that the final decision on ownership relations after the proposed restructuring, which would in itself need Allied approval, rests with the German Government. The French have expressed reservations about this version. They clearly regard internationalisation as a better solution. For Germany to assess this, it is important to know whether all Europe's areas of heavy industry are to be similarly internationalised in the interests of European economic restructuring, when Germany itself will have to accept some concessions in advance. The possibility of reprivatization sits more easily in the context of the overall issue of the economic restructuring of Europe and also corresponds better to American ideas, even though the US representatives had no objection to the Preamble, which leaves all options open. Even so, the tendency to accept nationalisation for the coal industry but not to extend this to the iron and steel industry is making itself felt more and more strongly. Pursuant to the old Law No 75, investments were to pass without charge to the new companies. Compensation was to be covered by the proceeds of the new companies' shares; here, too, the new version is expected to produce a more favourable ruling for the former owners.

Because of all the various rumours about the supposed new version of Law No 75, the *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* [German Trades Union Federation] once again felt obliged to impress its views on the Allied and German authorities. It is still waiting for a final decision on ownership rights, and sees nationalisation through the German Parliament as the best solution in this matter. In their view, priority should be given to the restructuring of the entire coal and iron industry, with the aim of creating competitive companies. Economic restructuring must be linked to a social and political restructuring in the spirit of co-determination for employees and their representative bodies for it really to achieve its aim. It is reported that the Conference of Foreign Ministers in London will take a final decision. The Ruhr, and with it the whole German economy, are waiting with bated breath for clarification to come at last.

K. Sch.