

'One market for 150 million people' from Die Welt (21 June 1950)

Caption: On 21 June 1950, the German daily newspaper Die Welt highlights the issues being discussed at the negotiations under way in Paris on the Schuman Plan involving the Benelux countries, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), France and Italy.

Source: Die Welt. Unabhängige Tageszeitung. Hrsg. Schulte, Heinrich ; Herausgeber Bourdin, Paul. 21.06.1950, Nr. 142; 5.Jg. Hamburg: Die Welt. "Ein Markt für 150 Millionen Menschen", auteur:Kurz, Robert Ernst , p. 2.

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One market for 150 million people

First objective in Paris: framework treaty for steel union

By our special correspondent

The first major European conference to be held without the attendance of a British delegate was opened yesterday by the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, in the Clock Room at the Quai d'Orsay. Following Britain's decision not to join the initiative, a decision which is not being taken as final, France has, in moving to set up a European Coal and Steel Community, turned the Franco-German tête-à-tête into a reality and has thus assumed, albeit without any special enthusiasm, a continental leading role. Germany, with the continent's largest heavy industry, is an equal partner at the negotiating table. Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Luxembourg are the other players in this European core, destined to become, with 150 million inhabitants and for two of its main basic products, a single market comparable only to that of the United States of America and, if only for that reason, full of promise.

Innovative methods

Exactly a year after the four Foreign Ministers failed to reach agreement at the Paris Conference, France has taken on the task, using innovative methods, of drawing that part of Germany that does not fall within Russia's sphere of influence into the European Community. Rather than stressing again the basic political idea behind his proposal, namely rapprochement between France and Germany, the French Foreign Minister used his opening address to emphasise the difficulty of the task that lay before the six delegations.

It is only during the plenary sessions that the French delegation is led by Robert Schuman in person. Its permanent head is Jean Monnet.

The German delegation under Professor Hallstein has taken up residence at the Palais d'Orsay, a few hundred metres upstream of the French Foreign Ministry. Its composition seems to confirm that Paris and Bonn see eye to eye on how to proceed, so much so that the discussions are to begin with a framework treaty of which the French delegation has already prepared a detailed draft.

A political foundation

This framework treaty is meant to form the legal foundation for the supranational High Authority, to define the principles to which it will work and to clarify how and under what jurisdiction the participating governments can contest its decisions. Although the advice of industry experts will certainly be needed in this matter, the discussion is to be held primarily at political and legal level.

According to the French, and probably also the German view, technical details should be left out as much as possible from the framework treaty discussions, so that the negotiations can be kept firmly on track. They see the priority at this stage as being to lay the foundations, and attention should not be diverted from this task by points of detail. It certainly very much depends on goodwill and trust on the part of delegations and governments as to whether this legal foundation can already be laid in the course of a few weeks.

The Benelux standpoint

The strongest resistance against such a course of action is currently expected from the Benelux delegations, representing, on the one hand, the interests of Belgian and Luxembourg heavy industry — Europe's most export-intensive — and, on the other hand, the London-leaning Dutch standpoint, which it is thought will wish to clarify a certain number of details prior to the final discussions on the framework treaty.

Even the initial negotiations on the framework treaty will, however, inevitably give rise to doctrinal differences, turning on 'pooling' of a planned, liberal or mixed variety. Rather than resolving these questions in principle in the framework treaty, the Quai d'Orsay would prefer, as far as possible without doctrinal

preconceptions, to look, during a second negotiation period following ratification of the framework treaty by the various parliaments, for solutions based on practical experiences. Robert Schuman has suggested on a number of occasions what such solutions might look like, and it is already clear that they would have to be provisional in the sense that, although at first price adjustment funds and compensation requests would be accepted to limit the damage caused by suddenly unleashed free competition, they would be intended only as a transition towards genuine competition and more complete international division of labour.

What the French author Jean Monnet has in mind, therefore, are certain transitional command economy features and, ultimately, liberal objectives. The French do, however, want to avoid having to focus at this stage on these undoubtedly complex issues, which will primarily have to be addressed by technical experts. It can nevertheless be assumed that the experts will soon be getting to work in a series of sub-committees so that, on completion and ratification of the framework treaty, the details will have been clarified sufficiently for the various floors of the edifice to be erected without delay.

Robert Ernst Kurz