

Note by R. Stinglhamber on the dismantling of the German steelworks (14 February 1949)

Caption: In this note, R. Stinglhamber, Adviser to the NATO Secretary-General's Private Office, describes the position adopted by Belgium on the dismantling of a number of steelworks in West Germany.

Source: DE VOS, Luc; ROOMS, Etienne; DELOGE, Pascal; STERKENDRIES, Jean-Michel (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques belges 1941-1960, De l'indépendance à l'interdépendance. Tome II: Défense 1941-1960. Bruxelles: Académie royale de Belgique, 1998. 582 p. ISBN 90-6569-670-9. p. 203-204.

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Note summarising the arrangements that may be established by Belgium for the dismantling of German steelworks (14 February 1949)

1. There is no question that steel production in West Germany is a perfectly viable economic activity, as long as it does not exceed a reasonable level and is located close to coal supplies, to consumers and to cost-effective methods of transport.

2. As regards steel production capacity from a purely economic perspective, it would appear that West Germany must not exceed the levels attained by the United Kingdom or by France. Those three countries have virtually the same number of inhabitants and have reached a comparable level of industrialisation. On this basis, it seems logical that West Germany's steel production should be between 12 and 15 million tonnes of ingot steel per year. From a political perspective, this capacity level has already been set at 13 million tonnes of ingot steel per year, so as to allow effective production of about 11 million tonnes per year.

3. At present, German steel capacity has reached almost 20 million tonnes of ingot steel per year, and so there is scope for reducing the current capacity to the tune of between 6 and 7 million tonnes. It is logical that such reduction will affect the least cost-effective factories or those factories where the activities were largely oriented towards the production of weapons and munitions. Belgium notes that both the Hermann Göring Werke and the Dortmund Hörde Hüttenverein factories fulfil those two criteria.

[...]

7. Conclusions

The Belgian proposal may be summarised as follows: there is scope for reducing annual steel capacity in West Germany by between 6 and 7 million tonnes.

This reduction must affect the least cost-effective factories and factories working specifically on armaments. Those factories must be allocated to countries which possess equipment similar to that of the German steelworks but which need to be modernised, balanced or supplemented and which could incorporate the dismantled equipment into their economy in a short space of time, without detriment to their national economies or to the world economy.

The allocation to Belgium of the 'rolling mills' division of the Hermann Göring factory, as well as the sheet mill plant from the Hörde factory, is entirely in keeping with the criteria set out above.

Adviser,
(sgd) R. Stinglhamber