

'The Bundestag adopts the Schuman Plan' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (12 January 1952)

Caption: On 12 January 1952, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung reports on the Bundestag's adoption of the Schuman Plan and outlines the positions taken by certain German MPs before the final vote.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Friedmann, Werner; Goldschagg, Edmund; Schöningh, Dr. Franz Josef; Schwingenstein, August. 12.-13.01.1952, Nr. 10; 8. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Der Bundestag nimmt den Schuman-Plan an", p. 1; 2.

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Last updated: 06/07/2016



The Bundestag adopts the Schuman Plan

Ratification of the Treaty is approved at third reading by 232 votes to 143 / the SPD remains opposed / Ollenhauer warns against giving up power over the Ruhr without a compelling reason

From our Bonn editorial office

Bonn, 11 January — During its plenary sitting on Friday afternoon, the German Bundestag adopted the law authorising ratification of the Schuman Plan at third reading by 232 votes to 143, with 3 abstentions. The SPD and KPD parliamentary groups and a few independents voted against the European Coal and Steel Community. The roll-call vote was preceded by a dramatic debate between Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the SPD Deputy Chairman, Erich Ollenhauer, during which the arguments for and against were fervently pitted against each other once more. During the debate, the Chancellor surprised the entire House by revealing details of the General Treaty; he also announced a visit to Washington scheduled for this spring. Ollenhauer protested against the Chancellor's method of acquainting them with facts directly prior to the vote which should already have been introduced and discussed at the committee stage. In response to the Chancellor's proposal that the Opposition in general reconsider its position towards the coalition and the Government, Ollenhauer pointed out that the Government had to produce proof in support of the matter and allow the Opposition to participate fairly in the preparation of a common foreign policy.

The clashes between the Federal Government and the Opposition had reached their peak on Friday morning when the Chancellor was bitterly contesting the arguments of the SPD Deputy Chairman who, standing in for Dr Kurt Schumacher, who had been taken ill, had summed up the Opposition's position rejecting the proposal. Appearing not to have been exhausted by the night sitting which had lasted until 5 a.m. but, instead, displaying a sharper edge to his manner than usual, the Chancellor reproached the Opposition for completely misjudging the situation in world politics, for not always keeping in mind the catastrophe that had befallen Germany seven years previously and for demanding haste and rapid progress where only patience and perseverance could gradually lead to success. In his view, the SPD's arguments bore an astounding similarity to those of Hugenberg a quarter of a century earlier.

In an attempt to refute the Opposition's argument that, by approving the Schuman Plan, the Government was blocking the path towards German unity, the Chancellor read aloud two sections of the General Treaty in which the Allies had expressly laid down their commitment to support German unity and create a peace treaty on the basis of a free agreement. The Chancellor commented that both the Preamble to and Article 7 of the General Treaty contained binding references of this kind. As far as the Saar question was concerned, the Chancellor affirmed that, 'as a result of our action, relations between France, the Saar and the Federal Republic will be settled satisfactorily.'

The Chancellor then emphasised that the Federal Republic relied more than any other country on international confidence and that the Opposition was largely responsible for preventing the development of such confidence. He therefore called openly on the SPD to consider changing its position towards the coalition and the Government, with a view to determining a common path towards the liberation of Germany. This party possessed 'valuable strengths' which ought not to be wasted in this fight against the Government. As the objective of the Schuman Plan was the prevention of war in Europe, explained Adenauer, the Opposition, which invested so much effort in striving for peace, could wholeheartedly give its assent to the Treaty.

The SPD Deputy Chairman, Erich Ollenhauer, strongly repudiated Adenauer's comparison of the SPD with Hugenberg. If the Government wanted to conduct the fight at this level — which had not been the SPD's intention — then it could do so. The distrust of the international community stemmed not least from thoughtless remarks made by Ministers from the coalition; this meant that it was also the coalition which had to consider to what extent it had immersed itself in the Hugenberg mentality. Likewise, Ollenhauer firmly rejected the Chancellor's suggestion that the Opposition should adopt a new stance towards the coalition. The Head of Government's lack of fairness was particularly demonstrated by the fact that he

announced at the conclusion of the third reading articles of the General Treaty which should have been kept as topics for discussion at the committee stage. Adenauer's claims that the SPD was not acting with a united front were futile.

Ollenhauer continued by objecting to the Federal Government having made references here and there to the Locarno Treaty. He felt that they were a long way from reaching the same stage as that of Locarno. As he tried to put across the idea that, in comparison with the enforced occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, France was now clearly attempting to find a 'more acceptable means of occupying the Ruhr region', Ollenhauer was interrupted by such loud outbursts that it was a good while before he was able to continue. He consequently adopted a more moderate approach in expressing this idea and warned against giving up power over the Ruhr pursuant to the ECSC Treaty without a compelling reason.

Ollenhauer predicted there would be a 'no-man's-land at the zonal frontier' in the event, for instance, of the High Authority's making use of its right to control production and determine freight tariffs. Moreover, Ollenhauer feared that the transitional provisions of the ECSC might damage trade with the Eastern zone. 'However, we find it particularly distressing that, in its negotiations, the Federal Government evidently has not regarded German unity as the main starting point. From the outset, Bonn should have presented itself as representing Germany as a whole.'

He finished by stating that, with the instruments and controls of the ECSC, an 'undemocratic and authoritarian' element was establishing itself in Europe which threatened to stifle democratic thinking and take all the attraction out of the concept of democracy for the non-democratic regions of Europe. The SPD saw not least a danger in the fact that the organisation of the Schuman Plan lacked a democratic and parliamentary structure, for the ECSC was already often being regarded as a blueprint for more far-reaching European agreements.

The Bundestag ratified the Schuman Plan in the final vote with 232 votes in favour. 143 members from the SPD, the KPD and a few right-wing radical and independent groups voted against, and three Members abstained. Furthermore, with the support of the SPD votes, a resolution put forward by the coalition parties was adopted which called upon the Federal Government to take all the measures required to create the best competitive conditions for the German coal and steel industries. To this end, the Federal Government is to ensure that the remaining responsibilities assigned to the Allies under Rule 27 are restricted to a rapid organisation of decentralisation, so that, in future, interventions in German heavy industry will no longer be possible. Furthermore, the Government must take immediate measures to offset the reduction in capacity caused by such dismantling, for example with regard to the August-Thyssen-Hütte and in the case of Watenstedt-Salzgitter, and to make up for the investment in the remainder of the coal and steel industry that had been absent in the past. In addition, the Bundestag approved a motion calling upon the Federal Chancellor 'finally to guarantee to the population of the Saar the political freedoms which, following the application of the Convention on Human Rights, are in force in every democratic state, in particular freedom of the press and freedom of opinion.'