

## Walter Hallstein, Germany and the Schuman Plan (1952)


**Caption:** In 1952, Walter Hallstein, Junior Minister in the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), publishes an article in the French magazine Notre Europe on the repercussions of the Schuman Plan in Germany.

**Source:** Notre Europe. Revue européenne. 1952; 3e année, n° 11-12. Strasbourg: Société européenne d'éditions et de publications. "Allemagne", auteur:Hallstein, Walter , p. 86-89.

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## Germany and the Schuman Plan

by Professor Walter Hallstein

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On the spiritual, cultural and religious level, Europe has been united for over a thousand years. Since the end of the Second World War in particular, the nations of Europe have felt a deep longing for political and economic unity, and European statesmen and parliamentarians have been striving to achieve that.

Initiatives like the Marshall Plan and the Council of Europe have not led to lasting successes, but they have helped create a political climate conducive to long-term achievements. What needs to be done is finally to break down the nationalist barriers and borders of all kinds that separate nations. Even if unification cannot be achieved straight away in every area, it is possible to start achieving it in specific sectors. As essential industries, *coal and steel* offer the best opportunities in that respect. When the International Authority for the Ruhr was set up, German politicians of all parties were already calling for the international management of coal and steel to be extended to all sectors of European industry. Since the coal and steel industries are closely interlinked with other national industrial sectors in the general development of Europe, when coal and steel are 'Europeanised', other sectors of the economy will necessarily be involved. The establishment of a political structure will be the natural consequence of progressive unification of the various aspects of European life, starting with coal and steel and gradually extending to such areas as defence and transport.

But, apart from these political considerations, relations between European countries also need to be reformed on economic grounds. In an era when the world economy is structured around large territories, Europe cannot, after the terrible upheaval of two world wars, afford the luxury of tiny national economies making life difficult for each other with all kinds of customs frontiers and independent economic policies. The rational division of labour and a fundamental organisation of and increase in production are possible only with a wider internal market. Such rationalisation and extension of production are, moreover, essential in raising the standard of living and increasing exports so as to ensure that we can import what we need from other world markets.

In assessing the Schuman Plan, which is intended as a response to the various European problems referred to above, Germany's particular situation has to be taken into account. Will the anticipated benefits from the pooling of the coal and steel industries be allocated to Germany, too; will we be able to participate in the resulting economic growth? Is there not a possibility that the Schuman Plan will jeopardise the achievement of our national political aims and Germany's political interests?

Over the past few years, the German coal and steel industries have been subject to the law of the occupying powers. The Ruhr was dominated by the status of the Ruhr regulations, the restrictions on steel production, the control bodies, the security authority and decartelisation. Reconstruction and economic reform were crippled by all kinds of restrictions. That was the 'law' to which German industry was to be subject for an indefinite period.

That is coming to an end with the entry into force of the Schuman Plan. Germany no longer has exemption rights for coal and steel. 'The state of war' is ending in the Ruhr. From now on, German industry will be subject to the same law as the French and Belgian industries. The Schuman Plan prohibits any 'discrimination' between Member States.

It is often objected that we do not have the same 'starting conditions' as the other countries. Whereas, in France, the steel industry has been transformed by loans under the Marshall and Monnet Plans, in Germany, dismantling and restrictions have prolonged the destruction caused by the war. That is certainly true. But would the situation be any different without the Schuman Plan, if only the law of the occupying powers remained in force? The war that the Germans started and Germany completely lost cannot simply be erased from the history books. Furthermore, the many deaths, the loss of territories in the East, the costs of the occupation and the social restructuring and requirements of reconstruction are all consequences of the war that make it difficult for us to start afresh economically. The only question facing us Germans at the moment is, therefore, how we can overcome our economic problems as quickly as possible. In that respect the

Schuman Plan offers us a *unique opportunity* to share in the common expansion of Europe's economy. Under the Schuman Plan, moreover, businesses that are in a suitable position to organise cheap and rational production will be given incentives and support in the form of loans. The metal working industry in the Ruhr is undoubtedly in one of those particularly viable production sectors. There is no provision in the Plan standing in the way of a rational investment policy. Lastly, it is significant that the French and the Belgians express the same concerns as the Germans about their own countries. They fear that, under the Schuman Plan, Germany's industry will become so dominant that it will be a threat to their national industries. The truth lies between those two extremes: any firm that operates efficiently and cheaply will be able to stand up to the competition on the common market.

Politically, the Schuman Plan guarantees all Member States unlimited equal rights. That principle is one of the foundations of the European Coal and Steel Community that is being set up. For that very reason, it therefore applies to Germany. Otherwise the Treaty would never even have come about, because, after all the past experiences with attempts at European unification, with one country or another in control, there is unanimous agreement that no power should dominate the others. It would, therefore, be absurd to try and share out the votes of Member States as is done in cartels, in other words according to their respective shares of the joint production. That would be jeopardising, for economic reasons, all the political efforts towards equal rights and unity.

Germany is in also a special situation because parts of its territory, such as the Saar and the Soviet zone, are governed by different rules. The Schuman Plan does not aim to resolve problems that can be tackled only on a worldwide basis. But the German Government is anxious not to undermine any of the Federal Republic's moral and legal claims to those territories by ratifying the Schuman Plan. That is why the pact provisions were drawn up in such a way that it will not be difficult or impossible to reunite all parts of Germany. The Schuman Plan establishes a European basis for a free and democratic community of nations that can no longer revert to their former narrow views and nationalistic opposition. If the Plan can be criticised for any faults or imperfections, the desire of the peoples of Europe for unity will allow the situation to be reviewed at any time. That will be another step forward, towards a better Europe.

We cannot make history if we hesitate. Only a courageous approach ensures success.