

Interview with Konrad Adenauer on the Saar question (Paris, 25 July 1952)

Caption: On 25 July 1952, the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, in a radio interview, analyses the significance of the results obtained in Paris at the conclusion of the Conference of European Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the status of the Saar.

Source: Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung. Hrsg. Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. 29.07.1952, Nr. 100. Bonn: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. "Die Saarfrage, Europa und der EVG-Vertrag", p. 973-974.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview_with_konrad_adenauer_on_the_saar_question_paris_25_july_1952-en-137350a3-fb82-400b-8e1f-b724d8fcfc44.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



Interview with Konrad Adenauer (Paris, 25 July 1952)

The Saar question, Europe and the EEC Treaty

Hans Wendt:

The two-day conference of Foreign Ministers that ended this morning has left a somewhat confused impression, even when viewed at close quarters here in Paris. May I ask you, Chancellor, what you see as the main outcome of these rather arduous discussions? In particular, did they achieve what was surely their main objective of activating the Schuman Plan following its ratification by all six participating countries?

Dr Adenauer:

This main objective of the conference has indeed been achieved. I freely admit that the work of the conference, the transactions that took place here, could not fail to leave a rather confused impression. That, however, is due in no small measure to the fact that a host of details remained to be settled, details that were not, in fact, closely interconnected but which nevertheless profoundly affected the national interests of individual countries in some cases. The objective — the main objective of the conference — of activating the Schuman Plan has been achieved.

Hans Wendt:

And what are the prospects, in your assessment, for the functioning of this plan when it takes off in August and September with its supreme authorities?

Dr Adenauer:

When the Schuman Plan is now placed in the hands of those who sit and work at the production end, I hope that it will very soon yield results.

Hans Wendt:

The question of the choice of a capital city for the Schuman Plan, as we all know, caused considerable difficulties, something which was presumably due in part to a widespread desire to use the issue at the same time to move towards the fulfilment of British wishes for a link between the Council of Europe and the organisation established by the Schuman Plan. The Saarbrücken proposal complicated matters by introducing the Saar question. How long, Chancellor, do you believe that the provisional arrangement which has now been made for the seat of the supreme institutions will last? Will such a temporary solution — which, like the entire dispute, seems unlikely to meet with very much public comprehension — be detrimental to the working of the Schuman Plan?

Dr Adenauer:

Allow me to begin with the last question. I should find it regrettable if the provisional arrangement upon which we have now agreed did not meet with public comprehension. It does have to be clearly understood that such an apparatus must first be created on a technical level, and to that end it is necessary to designate a city, at least on a provisional basis. You asked about the Saar question. The proposal that has been made by France's Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, on behalf of the French Government, to the effect that Strasbourg and, in the event of an understanding being reached between France, Germany and the Saarland, a Europeanised Saar area should be designated came as a complete surprise to me. It came as a complete surprise not only to me but to everyone who attended the conference. Particularly in view of the interest that this proposal will arouse in Germany, I should like to say a little more about it.

The proposal was initially couched in very general terms, but it was clearly perceptible that the French Government was resolved to make a very serious attempt to reach an understanding with us on the whole question of the Saar. The French Government, which had reached its decision at a cabinet meeting that very morning, was in no doubt whatsoever that the Saar question weighed heavily on Franco-German relations and was slowly but steadily increasing the strain on those relations. All the Foreign Ministers who were present agreed that the clarification and settlement of the Saar question was a matter that primarily affected Franco-German relations, of course, but — since good partnership between Germany and France is the prerequisite for the creation of a new Europe — that it was also a European issue with huge implications. All

the Foreign Ministers expressed the fervent wish that an agreement be reached on this whole matter. The British wishes were naturally mentioned too, but they did not play such a crucial role, because the Saar question and the prospect of the Saarland or, to be more specific, Saarbrücken possibly becoming the seat of the institutions overshadowed all other considerations regarding the seat.

Hans Wendt:

Yesterday, Chancellor, at your meeting with the French Prime Minister, Mr Pinay, and with Mr Schuman and Mr Pleven, you presumably talked a little about the Saar question. On the basis of these deliberations, is there anything to be said about the envisaged Franco-German discussions on the Saar question?

Dr Adenauer:

At lunch yesterday, I earnestly explained the importance of the Saar question from a German point of view to Prime Minister Antoine Pinay and the other two Ministers, Mr Pleven and Mr Schuman. I believe that the French side appreciated the significance of the Saar question to us Germans. We did not go on to make specific proposals or engage in detailed discussions. These discussions, however, are to begin this afternoon. Before they do, it will be necessary to brief German authorities on the whole problem and discuss with them the best way to pursue these negotiations.

Hans Wendt:

You mentioned, Chancellor, that the discussions are to begin as early as this afternoon. Can one therefore assume that they will continue at this rapid pace thereafter, in spite of the parliamentary and governmental summer recess?

Dr Adenauer:

It was said at the Foreign Ministers' conference that it ought to be possible to complete these negotiations within a period of six weeks.

Hans Wendt:

May I ask you another question, Chancellor? As you know, many people hoped that this latest conference would expedite and concert the efforts to unite Europe rather than create new difficulties. Did the conference discuss the prospects and conditions for the establishment of a supreme political authority and the drafting of a European constitution?

Dr Adenauer:

We certainly discussed these things and did so at the instigation of the Italian Prime Minister, Mr De Gasperi. I believe these efforts will be pursued further.

Hans Wendt:

Will that happen in Strasbourg, or will the governments discuss these matters too?

Dr Adenauer:

The discussions will most probably be intergovernmental. Such things must be very well prepared. And then a new advance will be made, I hope, at another conference of Foreign Ministers in a few weeks' time.

Hans Wendt:

Particularly in view of these prospects, I do not wish to focus too sharply on the difficulties that may have arisen at this conference. However, on leaving the Palais in the early morning hours, Chancellor, you said yourself that some things could perhaps be pushed along a little faster. May I ask where you see scope for more rapid progress towards European integration?

Dr Adenauer:

Whenever such a major project is tackled, the initial difficulties are naturally the greatest. But once it has gathered momentum, it may be assumed that progress will come faster. This morning, incidentally, I met a group from the Federation of European Youth from Lower Saxony. I would estimate that there were 60 to 90 youngsters of both sexes. I can only say that I was deeply impressed by these German Europeans, and we

have reason to hope that young people will speed up the pace of progress in all countries.

Hans Wendt:

May I ask you one final question, Chancellor? Do you believe that the discussions in Paris will have any consequences for the efforts to create a European Defence Community? Did the Ministers discuss the prospects of the EDC Treaty being ratified in the participating countries?

Dr Adenauer:

Yes, this question was touched upon, and everyone seemed to believe that ratification would take place everywhere this autumn.