

'Germany and Europe' from Le Monde (28 March 1950)

Caption: On 28 March 1950, the French daily newspaper Le Monde outlines the ways in which Western Germany might be integrated in a united Europe.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 28.03.1950, n° 1608; 7e année. Paris: Le Monde. "L'Allemagne et l'Europe", p. 1.

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Germany and Europe

In yesterday's presentation to the National Committee of the Popular Republican Movement (MRP), Robert Schuman underlined the transitional and empirical nature of the Western Allies' policy in Germany. They had to take into account the irrefutable situation created by the USSR which broke the Four-Power Agreement and isolated its own occupation area, thus forcing them to devise a policy for West Germany. The Constitution and the Bonn Government were the initial outcome.

Obviously, this policy must be pursued with caution: one must not forget that West Germany is not all of Germany, that it can re-emerge tomorrow or in a few years and challenge everything that has been done. It would be desirable if the efforts of the Allies and the Bonn Republic did what they could at all times to adapt to a situation that is new, but not unexpected.

This prospect makes Germany's integration into Western Europe extremely tricky. We cannot resign ourselves to doing nothing on the pretext that we would be doing nothing definitive. West Germany would not be able to remain cut off, since East Germany is becoming increasingly attached to the Soviet bloc. But just how far does one have to go if one does not wish to overstep the bounds of caution?

An initial criterion would be the wishes of the Germans themselves. Konrad Adenauer's offers received a mixed reception. Mr Schuman is not the only one who feels that he wants to cut corners. He threw off his fellow countrymen. Can we disregard the opinion of the Social Democrats, which currently constitutes the Opposition but is scarcely inferior to the Christian Democratic party in power? It might govern tomorrow, and then what will become of an external policy determined without or against it? If, in Great Britain and the United States, this policy is devised with the agreement of the two major parties, would it not be advisable for it to be the same in Germany and for any of Mr Adenauer's major moves to be approved, at least tacitly, by Kurt Schumacher? It is not up to us to dictate to the Germans how they should act, but we need to lend their words and actions their true weight.

The West may ask West Germany to join the Council of Europe in a demonstration of solidarity. It would be hard for them to refuse, since it does not commit them to much. The Council of Europe is still but a promise, and we do not know whether it will be fulfilled. But, in these conditions, a policy that settles relations with Germany only within the context of a European solution will be considered insufficient. The European organisation may be the 'main constructive element of our policy'. But it is a construction that is scarcely more than the foundations: do we have to wait to put the roof on before we start tackling the most pressing issues?

If we remain, for example, at the level of economic relations between France and Germany, we do not need to move on immediately to Mr Adenauer's suggestion of a full union. A simpler solution has been put forward in the context of the regional unions being considered until Europe is 'integrated'. West Germany would join the group of powers that has been referred to as Fritalux or Finebel.

To date, who has been opposed to Germany joining this group? It so happens to be France. And yet the arguments put forward against a Franco-German tête-à-tête would lose a lot of weight as soon as four countries, with 65 million inhabitants, joined France and Germany. And why would a great nation like France hesitate to be included in such a union when a small one like Luxembourg had no problems?

In truth, if it is not wise to improvise or cut corners, as Robert Schuman remarks, then the country that can and must steer Germany's European policy ought not be behind all the others either.