

Franco-German meetings on the Saar question (Luxembourg, 4 June 1956)

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Franco-German talks on the Saar were held yesterday in Luxembourg between Prime Minister Guy Mollet for France and Chancellor Adenauer for Germany.

This is Wasserbillig, where Chancellor Adenauer and his entourage crossed the border into Luxembourg. The Chancellor headed for the German Embassy where the Ambassador, Count von Spreti, was waiting for him. The meeting was cordial, but short, since a particularly packed schedule had been planned for the Chancellor. Therefore, Chancellor Adenauer left immediately by car for the Transport Ministry where the meeting was due to take place.

Meanwhile, at 10 o'clock, the Armagniac aircraft carrying the French Prime Minister touched down at Findel Airport. René Mayer, President of the High Authority, was there to meet the aircraft from which, as you can see, the Prime Minister disembarked with an optimistic smile. The VIPs who were there to meet the Prime Minister — Pierre Saffrant, French Ambassador, Christian Calmes, Secretary of the Council of Ministers, and Maurice Faure spoke briefly with the Prime Minister. Journalists lay in wait in an attempt to get a statement, but, as you can clearly see, Mr Mollet had nothing to say at that time and chose instead to speak to Mr Mayer, whose hand he shook warmly. There was no spectacular ceremony, the Luxembourg meeting was to be a working conference, and that is why the cars once again left for the conference venue.

In front of the Transport Ministry, employees and civil servants took time off work to watch the arrival of the statesmen. It seemed as if every news film company had arranged to meet in Luxembourg, and an enthusiast would have had his work cut out trying to count the number of cameras. They varied in shape and cost. You can see them in action here as Mr Mollet arrived, accompanied here by Christian Pineau, his Foreign Minister. Shortly afterwards, Chancellor Adenauer arrived, greeted the Members of the Council of Ministers and, in turn, entered the conference room.

The cameras ceased filming, and a competition took place amongst the journalists to try to gain entry to the Ministry. Our cameramen were declared the clear winners, and that is how they were able to catch at the conference table Mr Mollet, with Mr Pineau and Mr Faure seated on either side — Mr Mollet smokes heavily during conferences — and Chancellor Adenauer who seemed to us to be more relaxed than in previous weeks.

As we learned on Monday, sorry, Tuesday, the conference ended with an agreement which may serve as the basis for a Franco-German treaty: the Saar will be handed back to Germany as of 1 January 1957. However, France was awarded economic compensation, particularly by the construction of the Moselle Canal and the allocation of 80 million tonnes of coal from the Warndt until 1970.

During the course of the day, the French Prime Minister, Mr Mollet, and Chancellor Adenauer, both of whom had refused to make any statements to the press, had smiled favourably upon us in the sense that they had already told us of the hopes that they pinned on this Franco-German conference, and, exclusively, you can now hear their statements.

'Prime Minister, I should like to ask you a question: could you tell me in what kind of atmosphere the meeting took place and if you believe that it will provide a solution to the outstanding problems?'

'It is easier for me to answer the first part of the question than the second. The atmosphere was truly one of mutual understanding, and I am sure that the Chancellor will agree with me if I say that, on all the major problems facing the world at the moment, we have been able to air our points of view and note that we have agreed on the fundamentals.'

'As for the outcome of the conference, I can only express my hope for its success.'

'Thank you very much, Prime Minister. I shall put the same question to Chancellor Adenauer. Young lady, if you would ask the question.'

‘Mr Chancellor, could you tell us in what kind of atmosphere the meeting took place and if you believe that it will provide a solution to the outstanding problems?’

‘The atmosphere was excellent during our discussions which were not limited simply to the Saar issue. Our discussions were characterised by mutual confidence, and I am really very satisfied with our agreement and our assessment of the general situation.

‘As for the Saar, this is a very serious problem for me. I am probably going further than you, Mr Mollet, and I would say not just “hope” but “high hopes” that we shall be able to push so far ahead with this issue that we shall bring it to a successful conclusion.’

‘Thank you very much, Chancellor. I shall ask the interpreter to translate the Chancellor’s response for our viewers.’

‘I can tell you that I have found the atmosphere in which the conference took place to be excellent and most satisfying. As regards the second question, perhaps I shall go a little further than you, Prime Minister, in saying that I not only have high hopes, but that I have great hope for success.’

‘Thank you very much Prime Minister, thank you Chancellor Adenauer. May I also thank you on behalf of Télé-Luxembourg News.’