

'The Paris Conference' from Pravda (13 July 1947)

Caption: On 13 July 1947, the Soviet daily newspaper Pravda publishes a critical report on the work of the Conference on European Economic Cooperation which, at France's invitation, opened the previous day in Paris in order to review the ways in which the loans granted to Europe under the Marshall Plan have been utilised.

Source: Pravda. 13.07.1947, n° 179. Moskva. "Vokrug parizhskogo soveshchaniia".

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The Paris Conference

PARIS, 12 July. (TASS). The so-called Conference of European States opened today in Paris.

But even those with fertile imaginations would have difficulty in considering this Conference as truly European, given the number of European nations that chose not to participate. The attempts by Ernest Bevin and Georges Bidault to attract, if not the whole of Europe, then at least 22 European countries of, have failed miserably. The poor turnout had a definite impact on the mood of participants. Mr Bidault felt obliged to refer to it in his opening speech, and was forced to admit that the organisers 'had made no effort whatsoever to encourage more people to attend the Conference.' All the speaker could do to console those present was to express his hopes that one day 'the empty chairs would all be filled.'

Mr Bevin was also unable to avoid mentioning the poor turnout in his speech. He assured those present that they had all accepted their invitations willingly and, to demonstrate the fact that Britain had no intention of interfering in the affairs of other countries, he referred to its role in two world wars. Mr Bevin denied that there was any political agenda to the Paris Conference, but at the same time stated that resolving the task at hand would also lead to the 'appropriate political settlement in Europe'.

The absence of many countries that chose not to accept the Anglo-French invitation meant that *Agence France Presse* had to moderate its feeling of delight and lower the tone somewhat. In its regular review AFP quickly changed its position to one of reserve and caution regarding the outcome of the Conference. The Agency found it necessary to warn its readers against unwarranted optimism about the outcome of the Conference from the very first day.

It also had to acknowledge that the absence of such a significant number of countries reduced the Conference's chances of success. They also felt obliged to point out that, in any case, the Conference would not 'perform any miracles in economic terms and the Conference decisions alone would not bring about a cure for all of Europe's ills.'

The issue of the attendance at the Conference cannot be ignored. It is no coincidence that only half of the allied countries that fought against Hitler's Germany in the Second World War were present at the Conference. Italy and Austria fought on Germany's side. During the war of democratic countries against Hitler's Germany, Turkey traded chrome and other goods with Germany and did rather well out of it, while everyone recalls the positions of Portugal and Eire. So, if we are to believe the words of Mr Bidault in his opening speech, it is now up to the countries here present to 'bring an end to the anarchy in Europe.' Furthermore, Mr Bidault stated that the countries present are entitled to speak 'on behalf of the whole of Europe.'

Mr Bevin was elected as the permanent chairman by the Conference, and, on his suggestion, the 'working committee' was also appointed which is already working on consolidating the work of the Conference.

The next meeting will take place on 13 July.