

## Note from Marinus van der Goes van Naters to Hendrik Oosterhuis (13 March 1950)

**Caption:** On 13 March 1950, Marinus van der Goes van Naters, Netherlands Delegate to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, forwards to Hendrik Oosterhuis, President of the Netherlands Trade Union Federation, a letter in which he analyses the most recent agreements concluded between France and the Saar region concerning the accession of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the Saar to the Council of Europe.

**Source:** Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam. NVV-J.G. van Wouwe (1945-1973). Stukken betr. diverse landen. Knipsels, documentatie en brieven betr. het Saarland. 1950-1956., 192.

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**Last updated:** 05/07/2016

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My dear friend,

As we agreed on Saturday, I am writing to you about Koos Vorrink's interesting reactions to recent events in Germany.

I think that on the Saar question we must clearly differentiate between the latest economic agreements between France and the Saar, with their political overtones, and the admission of Germany and the Saar to the Council of Europe.

The Agreements. Unfortunately, we do not yet have the exact wording of the documents here. Assurances have been given that they do not prejudice the Peace Treaty. Is this also mentioned in the documents? Vorrink does not think so. We need to obtain confirmation of this.

If France has held out for clear advantages here, the objection is not, in my view, that Germany is having to make a sacrifice, but that it is having to make this sacrifice just to France. Germany owes us all something, and German public opinion is too ready to forget this. Whether 'the agreements concluded with the Saar jeopardise political harmony and cooperation in Europe, and thus economic recovery' I cannot tell. But I do think that if this is how the Germans themselves like to put it, it cannot remotely be seen as a 'European' view of the situation.

Admission to the Council of Europe. I myself was the first to speak in the Assembly in favour of Germany's admission.

At the moment, however, Germany can only be an associate member since, although it has a fully fledged parliament, because of the conditions of surrender, it does not yet have a fully fledged government. The government is not allowed to pursue a foreign policy, and therefore no German minister is yet able to sit in the Committee of Ministers, although German members of parliament can sit in the Assembly. With a final or provisional Peace Treaty (I have called for a Provisional Peace Treaty with the power of a final one), this will of course change.

The German Government and the German Parliament have no authority or representative power with regard to the Saar. This position, adopted unilaterally after the surrender, became bilateral when the German Constitution came into being. The German Government agreed to this at Petersberg because there were important concessions involved, and the German Bundestag has given its approval. It would be regrettable, and would demonstrate anything but a European mentality, if there were already withdrawals from this first international agreement since Hitler!

A further consequence of the agreement is that Germany also cannot represent the Saar in Strasbourg. To avoid leaving a 'blank space' in the middle of Europe, the intention now is to give the Saar its own small representation. All on a temporary basis, and only as an associate member, of course.

Personally, I think that giving the Saar this representation is nonsense. It could simply have been left unrepresented. But the fact is that at the moment Adenauer and co. cannot represent it, because there are no political dealings and no political relationship between Adenauer and the Saar.

However, not just the Committee of Ministers but also the Assembly's Standing Committee and our fellow party member Van der Kieft have come out in favour of admitting the Saar!

In my view Germany would be wise to make the point itself that it is not currently allowed to have any say on the Saar, so that no decision concerning the Saar, or action taken by the Saar, could ever be used against Germany. I think it would be right if 'the others', in other words we, could establish this with the Germans in Strasbourg. Then no one could ever think that Germany's arrival in Strasbourg meant that it had renounced the Saar for ever!

If the Germans are given this assurance, it would be political blackmail if they persisted with their refusal to come to Strasbourg (particularly if they use the new agreements with France as an excuse). It is up to them whether they are angry with France or not. (They have also been angry with us.) However, it is not just France that sits in Strasbourg, but twelve European countries. When will Germany start to show something like a European mentality?

It is simply astonishing that Adenauer has withdrawn his 'offer' of full political Union as the arguments with France have gone on. You can see Europe's reactions to this from the excellent review in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* last Friday, which I enclose.

The COMISCO Committee is to discuss the Saar problem now, a decision it took some time ago. Not only will French and German socialists be present, but also socialists from the Saar. The German socialists in our international circle have drawn the obvious conclusions from the fact that they cannot represent the Saar, and they have raised no objection to admitting the Saar socialists to COMISCO as observers. I hope that we can change the SPD's mind about admission to Strasbourg itself, too. In any event we can relieve them of any fears that they will later be called to account because they have acquiesced on the question of political representation in this transitional situation.

Kind regards,

[Marinus van der Goes van Naters]