

‘Building bridges’ from Die Welt (10 June 1947)

Caption: On 10 June 1947, the German daily newspaper Die Welt considers the implications and application of the future programme of reconstruction aid proposed by George Marshall, US Secretary of State.

Source: Die Welt. Überparteiliche Zeitung für die gesamte britische Zone-Veröffentlicht unter Zulassung durch die britischen Behörden. 10.06.1947, Nr. 67; 2. Jg. Hamburg: Die Welt. "Brückenschlag", p. 2.

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Building bridges

On Thursday, George C. Marshall challenged Europe to become more united economically in order to be able to recover with the help of a massive loan from the USA — reportedly around 18 billion dollars.

At the same time, President Truman criticised Hungary's domestic political methods more harshly than ever.

The connection here may be purely coincidental, but maybe not. Nevertheless, the way in which Truman and Marshall work together in political life is the subject of much lively debate at the moment. Marshall's resolve and Truman's over-simplification of the USA's political world view have thus far worked together in such a way that no significant difference between the two men is discernible.

Statements made by officials from the US Administration in the meantime should be taken with a pinch of salt. No sooner had Marshall delivered his Harvard Speech than these men were already warning of misinterpretations: emphasising that it is Europe that must take the initiative for the plan for Europe; denying the fact that the US Secretary of State's plan was ready and completed; drawing attention to the fact that Monnet, France's leading planning expert, was now travelling to the USA for talks and that there could be no doubt that — with his plan to increase productivity in France — Monnet would be an interesting contact for Marshall, who is the driving force behind the initiative for Europe. Perhaps these observers believe that the Monnet Plan, which is based on the same ideals as Marshall's, is viable as a model to help Europe help itself with the USA's support. Some people believe that if Paul-Henri Spaak decides to opt for these same measures for Belgium, and if the United Kingdom also comes round to this way of thinking, there would then be a suitable base of operations available. The *Washington Post* in particular is a great supporter of these ambitions.

However, the Reuters Diplomatic Correspondent in London raises the question of whether the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva would not be the best base from which to implement Marshall's policy, given that Russia is a member of this Commission.

The amount of attention being given to this subject shows that there is, in fact, still work to be done in order to calculate how possible, useful or dangerous Marshall's policy may be. Many people now seem anxious to get the USA's commendable initiative under way and to do the groundwork in preparation for the flow of funds to Europe from overseas. And now, concerned that Marshall's far-reaching proposals may be misunderstood and indeed defeated in some Eastern European countries, efforts are even being made in America to highlight the positive and peaceful spirit of this plan.

This is where the United Kingdom's political duties begin. So far, the Foreign Secretary, Bevin, has made bold attempts to facilitate negotiations on both sides. Even now in London, America's desire to secure world peace by combating hunger meets with great interest. Nevertheless, both the final stage of a trade treaty with Poland and the efforts to conclude a trade agreement with Russia should not be neglected. It would certainly be in the United Kingdom's best interests if aid from the USA could be granted to as many needy nations as possible, and such nations are to be found in both Eastern and Western Europe.

The United Kingdom realises that common hardship is not a basis for agreement: only common hope can peacefully unite the people. It will therefore be very interesting to see how British foreign policy receives and passes on the eager advances being made by US foreign policy as it so resiliently pushes for peace. There can be no doubt that what current British foreign policy most desires is to bridge the gap between East and West.