

## Herbert Blankenhorn, Insights and understandings

**Caption:** In his diary, Herbert Blankenhorn, diplomatic adviser to Konrad Adenauer in the German Foreign Ministry and NATO Ambassador for the Federal Republic of Germany from 1955 to 1959, gives his impressions on the signing of the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship on 22 January 1963.

**Source:** BLANKENHORN, Herbert. *Verständnis und Verständigung, Blätter eines politischen Tagebuchs 1949 bis 1979*. Frankfurt/Main; Berlin; Wien: Propyläen Verlag, 1980. ISBN 3-549-07396-8. p. 438-439.

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



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[...]

*Tuesday, 22 January 1963*

In the afternoon, the Franco-German Treaty was signed in the Élysée Palace's Murat Room. Both delegations were fully represented. The Treaties were signed by General de Gaulle, the Federal Chancellor, and the Foreign Ministers Couve de Murville and Gerhard Schröder. General de Gaulle stood up and embraced the Chancellor. Then he turned to Mr Schröder and said: 'I have not embraced you, but the feelings are the same.'

Today's events in Paris are something that I can view only with mixed feelings. Certainly nothing could be closer to my heart than genuinely close, cooperative relations between the two governments and the two peoples. Since 1949, under the Chancellor's leadership, I have worked for the understanding and cooperation which are at the heart of this undertaking. If what has been achieved today has failed to attract total support from all sides, this is because it sets us apart somewhat from our European partners and also from Great Britain and the United States. All the declarations and professions of faith in the world can do nothing to change that. Nothing much is left today of the European concept as it looked in the 1950s, of the community in which Schuman, De Gasperi, Monnet, Spaak and not least of all the Chancellor himself believed, a community founded on the notion of equal rights and equal obligations for all parties and embedded in the broader Atlantic community. Was everything that we thought and planned for at that time really so unrealistic? A substantial period of positive, practical cooperation will surely be needed in order to overcome the feelings of resentment and mistrust? I have often asked myself why the Chancellor chose to go down this path. I believe that the Chancellor of the 1960s, at the advanced age of 86, was suffering increasingly from a sense of isolation. The close friends with whom he had begun to build the new Europe, such as Schuman, De Gasperi and Foster Dulles, were no longer amongst the living or, like Spaak and Monnet, no longer had any influence.

On the other hand, the Soviet threat was, in the Chancellor's eyes, undiminished, and the domestic situation in many European countries seemed to him more uncertain than ever. He therefore hoped that, by establishing a close Treaty link with France, he would safeguard the Federal Republic. A close Treaty bond of this kind seemed to him to represent the only means of warding off an understanding between France and the Soviet Union over Germany's head. This is not something that he said publicly. But how often he spoke to me about this, his 'coalition nightmare'!

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