

'Franz Singer: Paris–Saarbrücken–Bonn' from the CVP-Rundschau (1 April 1950)

Caption: On 1 April 1950, Franz Singer, Minister for Economic Affairs of the Saar, publishes an article in the CVP-Rundschau, the newspaper of the Christian People's Party of the Saar, in which he analyses the implications of the agreements, signed on 3 March 1950, between France and the Saar.

Source: CVP-Rundschau : Mitteilungsblatt der Christlichen Volkspartei des Saarlandes. 01.04.1950, Nr. 4; 3. Jg. Saarbrücken: Christliche Volkspartei des Saarlandes. "Paris-Saarbrücken-Bonn", auteur:Singer, Franz , p. 1-2.

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Paris–Saarbrücken–Bonn and the Saar Conventions

By Dr Franz Singer, Minister

Everyone now knows about the Paris Conventions. It would therefore seem particularly useful to comment on and explain all that they mean for us and what their implications are. I would like to begin by making a few basic preliminary observations:

All the problems dealt with in the Conventions have, to varying degrees, been the subject of public discussion for some time and have increasingly required decisive rules to be laid down and definitive clarification to be given. It was necessary to create clear definitions, precise terms of reference, and essential conditions for the present and the future of the reciprocal economic relationship between France and the Saar.

During the weeks of negotiation in Paris in connection with the Conventions, many questions were able to be resolved which had been discussed for months or even years between the Saar and France without any settlement.

Many uncertainties and misunderstandings which existed in theory and in practice with regard to the economic integration of the Saar into France have been eliminated through precise definitions and regulation under the Conventions. It has not been possible since then to make important economic and financial arrangements for the future of the Saar, because the key questions for the Saar have remained unresolved.

What serious and far-reaching differences there were in the two sides' positions on the negotiations between the Saar and France on the key economic questions, and how difficult it must have been to resolve them and to find a common denominator, is apparent from the major, extensive differences between the original French drafts of the agreements and the current versions of the various Conventions, which are much more advantageous to us.

No wonder that the few delegation members belonging to the Saar Government who were familiar with the original text of the draft Conventions left for Paris with very mixed feelings, and were pleasantly surprised that discussions based on trust and a pleasant negotiating atmosphere enabled even awkward and delicate disputed questions to be addressed with the French delegation and recast in favour of the Saar. However, it was important to find a common denominator not only for the various interests of France and the Saar but also, as could be seen from Paris's response to the Bonn declarations after the end of the negotiations, for the wishes and demands of the other interested States, in particular the United States and Great Britain.

During the debates and negotiations, the Saar Government was repeatedly faced with many decisions vital to the existence of the Saar.

These decisions had to be taken if the negotiations were not to remain deadlocked or even collapse. On what fundamentally important matters could the Saar Government, which ultimately had to take decisions on its own behalf in Paris, give way, and on what points did it have to remain firm and unyielding? In these situations in particular, the large and influential Saar delegation consisting of representatives of Parliament and economic and trade organisations proved to be a useful aid and advisor to the Government, which, in the face of the responsibility, freely helped to shape the Conventions as they now stand in a spirit of diligent, tenacious, conscientious and informed collaboration, with the result that the important work of clarification and preparation was done in Paris in advance of the forthcoming reading and adoption of the Conventions in the Saar Parliament.

The announcement of the negotiations on the Saar had brought the 'Saar problem' into the centre of international discussion. The conclusion of the agreements triggered a storm of indignation in particular in the West German Federal Republic, which found expression in the Saar sitting of the Federal Parliament in Bonn and a 'White Paper' on the Saar. Indeed, the demand was even made for the Saar to remain subject to the stipulations of the Allied Control Council.

On the other hand, the few voices of moderation in the German press, dictated by considerations of *Realpolitik*, have not made themselves heard. However, we have every reason to be pleased that under the Saar Conventions we have been freed from the chains of the Control Council stipulations, that we have been given the opportunity, in a context of autonomous political self-determination, to organise our state system, in terms of the legislature, the administration and the judiciary, in accordance with the cultural and other characteristics of the country, and that it has been largely possible to safeguard the foundations for the existence of the Saar population in the long term.

Admittedly, in Paris we were not able to fully realise the aims which we had set ourselves.

As a small country that was part of the German nation defeated in the war, we were faced — albeit as an equal negotiating partner — with a large victorious nation that was able to bring to bear its legitimate interests, which were supported by all the victorious powers, in the full range of economic activity of the Saar.

However, the fact that we were able to negotiate at all, that we were recognised as an equal negotiating partner, that France offered its best experts who sat around the conference table with us and defended the French arguments as doggedly as we fought for the interests of our Saar; these facts represent a promising start for the future of the relationship between the Saar and France.

The contribution of the CVP

We must not fail to recognise that the autonomy granted to us by France in the context of economic integration should not be regarded as a foregone conclusion. It is, rather, thanks to the contribution of the politically realistic work done by the political leaders in the Saar — in particular the Saar Christian People's Party (CVP) — that economic integration could be secured and implemented in conjunction with an autonomous state structure.

Politics and economics are closely linked. The international integration of individual national economies inherently rules out economic autonomy and autarchy on the part of individual countries. On the other hand, at a time when all private and public life is dependent on economic developments, no country can fail to assert certain co-determination rights in the economic sector, in so far as their own country is affected, with regard to the independent organisation of economic life.

Mines, railways and heavy industry determine and control the life and existence of 70 % of the entire population of the Saar.

For that reason we rejected the original French proposal on the management of the railways as not being a subject for discussion, and tenaciously defended the sovereign rights of the Saar Government over this extremely important part of our economy, with 14 000 Saarlanders working on the railways; for that reason, with regard to mines — in the light of the difficult situation of the Saar's mines, both on the capital side and on the sales side, and the conditions stemming from the legitimate French interests — we ensured that the Saar had an influence in decision-making; for that reason, with regard to insurance, we sought to find a

solution which is intended to guarantee that the Saar's capital amassed in this sector of the economy is used for the purposes of the Saar's economy.

To our German friends

To our German friends to the east I would like to say this: it is well known that the political partition of the Saar from Germany and the separation of the Saar's economic area from the German economy as a whole were regarded as 'dismantling' for Germany. Three things in particular are achieved:

1. The Saar's economy has been fully maintained without dismantling, and has been able to be profitably developed over the last two years; the livelihood of the Saar's population, in particular full employment of the working population, is ensured.
2. Because the separation of the Saar was considered as a dismantling for Germany, however, it was also made possible to maintain key German economic businesses which, without the separation of the Saar, would have been dismantled to the benefit of France; as a result, the number of those unemployed in Germany is reduced by those working in this employment sector, which is likely to include a workforce of at least 250 000 to 300 000.
3. Germany does not need to be responsible for 50 000 to 100 000 unemployed persons in the Saar, who would undoubtedly exist and would add to the already alarmingly large army of the unemployed in the West German Federal Republic if the economic integration of the Saar into France had not occurred.

I know that this view is shared by very important economic policy-makers in Germany.

If the economic integration of the Saar into France has accordingly spared the German economy considerable damage and drawbacks, there would be reason after all — even for those critics to our east — to be genuinely pleased that at least the people in the Saar were still spared the worst effects of the collapse, easing the economic and social burden on the West German Federal Republic.

At the ceremonial signing of the Conventions in the historic Clock Room at the Quai d'Orsay, the Saar's Minister-President, rightly and with general approval, pointed out that treaties are brought to life through the spirit that inhabits them, through the spirit that inspires their application, and that we Saarlanders will observe the treaties in the spirit that inspired our negotiations and our cooperation in recent years, in a spirit of friendship and cooperation between France and the Saar.

What we hope and expect

We hope and expect that this spirit remains perceptible in France, but also that all Saarlanders are prepared to work genuinely and openly with France in the same spirit, and thereby to confirm and help to guarantee the promises made on behalf of the people of the Saar by the Saar's Minister-President Johannes Hoffmann at the ceremonial signing.

As Minister for the Economy, I will do everything within the scope of my responsibility for economic policy matters in the Saar to ensure that the Conventions are applied in that spirit by industry in the Saar and by the Saar's Ministry of the Economy, as our Minister-President said.

Through the conclusion of the Paris Conventions, not only are the interests of France and the Saar safeguarded, but German economic interests should also be served if we take an honest look at the Saar

Conventions and can see the truly European spirit.