

Telegram from David Bruce to Dean Acheson (Paris, 31 May 1950)

Caption: On 31 May 1950, David Bruce, US Ambassador to Paris, sends a telegram to Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State, in which he describes the reservations of the British with regard to the Schuman Plan and outlines the arguments developed by the two schools of political thought in France concerning the United Kingdom's participation in the future coal and steel pool.

Source: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950. Volume III: Western Europe. Washington: Department of State, 1977.

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The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET NIACT PARIS, May 31, 1950-8 p. m.

2592. Department eyes only Secretary. The French declaration on the Schuman plan will probably be issued Friday. Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy have accepted text. Dutch have indicated their intention of doing so but may try to make certain reservations. That will be decided by Dutch tomorrow.

The British official attitude to date is expressed in Bevin's note of May 27. (Text contained London's 2996 to Department.¹)

Yesterday evening, May 30, Schuman replied to the Bevin note, informal translation of which is contained in my immediately following telegram.²

It is quite evident, I think, that the British Government will not join in the declaration as now drafted. It is equally evident unless a change in official French sentiment should unexpectedly transpire, that the French will issue the declaration as now drafted and signed by whatever continental countries may join, regardless of the British attitude. It has not, however, been decided whether the French will give the British a special position in regard to later developments in the sense of keeping the UK Government currently and officially informed of the details of conversation between the adhering powers.

There is one school of political opinion in France, amongst which Socialist politicians are prominent, that would like to insist on the UK being regarded in the light of a special partner who will probably put capital into the business once the firm has been incorporated and is operating at a profit. To this end they propose that possible British objections to the terms of incorporation should be taken under consideration and compromise reached to meet the British point of view in the hope that as a result the UK would eventually participate in the enterprise.

The other school of thought believes that the British will under no circumstances now or in the near future surrender any measure of sovereignty such as is envisaged in the plan and that to invite the UK Government to join in the forthcoming deliberations on a special basis will give it an opportunity to obstruct and sabotage the plan's objectives. The opinion is also held by them that the present form of the British economy is such to be almost irreconcilable with the fundamental purposes of the proposition and that the necessary internal adjustments that would have to be made in Great Britain in order for it to become a participant would be so highly charged with politics as to make an early and favorable decision impracticable. They fear any delay at this juncture. The tide is now running strongly in their favor and they think it wise to ride its crest.

Sent Department 2592; repeated info London 722, eyes only Douglas, Frankfurt 373, eyes only McCloy, Brussels 124, eyes only Murphy, Rome 195, eyes only Dunn, The Hague 73, eyes only Chapin.

BRUCE

¹ May 30, not printed.

² Infra.