

Note from the European Revival Department at the Quai d'Orsay (May 1955)

Caption: In May 1955, the French Foreign Ministry responds to the memorandum submitted on 20 May 1955 by the three Benelux countries to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Italy and France with a view to reviving European integration, particularly in the areas of transport, energy and nuclear power, and to its being used as a basis for the Messina Conference, to be held from 1 to 3 June.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères; Commission de publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume I: 1955, 1er janvier-30 juin. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1987. 849 p. p. 704-707.

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II. French observations on the Benelux memorandum

The section of the memorandum dealing with sector-by-sector integration is, on the whole, acceptable. However, it should be noted that a new body in the transport sector would duplicate an existing body, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport. Creating a new body to deal principally with all the new projects involving Europe's inland waterways might well have adverse consequences for the canalisation of the Moselle.

On the other hand, the section of the memorandum dealing with the creation of a common market raises some very serious difficulties for France. It is most unlikely that we should be able to honour any undertakings that we might be asked to give in this area. If we were to accept the Benelux proposals, our borders would be thrown wide open, not only to competition from the Five but to worldwide competition as well. The intention of the Benelux is to bring the Community's tariffs into line with its own, which are the lowest of all. In addition, the common market would raise insoluble problems affecting metropolitan France and its relations with its Overseas Territories.

However, it would be difficult to reject out of hand the principle of the common market, which was included in the Saar Agreement of 23 October. The best solution would seem to be to ask our partners to define the terms for the establishment of an economic community that would not inevitably lead to the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer. In other words, we should need to study at our leisure the conditions for the establishment of the common market.

III. The French proposals

In the light of the preceding observations, we might submit to the conference the following proposals:

1. On the subject of the common market, a study should be conducted into the issues on the terms outlined above.

2. Multilateral agreements should be reached in the following areas:

(a) Atomic energy

We propose that, instead of a *common authority*, an intergovernmental body not limited to the Six should be created. It would not have a monopoly on atomic energy: each country would be free to carry out its own purely national activities. The main task of the body would be to organise and conduct applied research for the peaceful use of atomic energy. It would also supervise the exchange of technicians and technical secrets. In return, the Member States would mutually agree to offer free access to their sources of raw materials. The Member States would contribute to the funding of the body, which could also coordinate special cooperation agreements set up between the members, one example of which could be an agreement between France, Germany and Belgium for the creation of a joint isotope separation industry.

(b) Conventional energy and electricity

We might contemplate an expansion of the ECSC's powers and responsibilities, since thermal power plants will be the leading issue in the next few years.

(c) Aeronautical engineering

A common fund could be set up to pay for research and development of prototypes, which would be commonly owned.

3. Transport

— Overland transport: the European Conference of Ministers of Transport would be allocated a capital development fund and would look into questions involving continental Europe, i.e. the Six plus Switzerland and Austria. It would also review the harmonisation of tariffs, the construction of European through routes, the coordination of investment, the standardisation and joint production of equipment, etc.

— Air transport: European airlines should be coordinated in order to avoid national rivalries and over-equipment.

4. Procedure

We could agree to a short consultation on the atomic pool. Moreover, European revival, which will be the subject of ongoing studies and projects, could be furthered by the following proposals:

The Foreign Ministers of the European countries who agree to pool their resources in certain fields should meet on a regular basis in a *Council* to review the problems raised by European unification.

The Ministers would appoint *permanent delegates* to prepare the work of the Council.

These delegates would be politicians who are already well known in Europe. They would be accountable to their Foreign Ministers, would act as their deputies and would have a certain degree of autonomy, on the basis of their personal standing.

The Committee of Permanent Delegates, which would meet every month, would act under the supervision of the Council of Foreign Ministers, which would meet as required.

The Committee of Delegates would have a secretariat staffed by civil servants.

The Committee's task would be to prepare multilateral agreements for the pooling of European resources in certain specific fields.

For that purpose, the Committee would set up:

1. study groups and;
2. working parties.