

British communiqué on the Schuman Plan (3 June 1950)

Caption: On 3 June 1950, the British Government publishes a communiqué setting out its position on the Schuman Declaration on the pooling of coal and steel output in Western Europe.

Source: BULLEN, R.; PELLY, M.E. (Ed.). Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series II. Volume I: The Schuman Plan, the Council of Europe and Western European Integration May 1950 - December 1952. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986. 1023 p.

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British communiqué (3 June 1950)

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have from the outset welcomed the French initiative of 9th May and have been fully alive to its bold character and far-reaching importance for future relations between France and Germany in particular. They earnestly hope that the international discussions upon it may lead to a new era in Franco-German relations, with beneficial effects for Western Europe as a whole.

2. His Majesty's Government have been most anxious to be associated with these discussions and have made their position in this respect clear to the French Government from the outset. It is their view that these discussions should serve to clarify the practical application of the French proposal, which must necessarily be worked out on an international basis, and they strongly desire to make a helpful, constructive and practical contribution in the hope that a detailed scheme would emerge which they would be able to join.

3. The French Government, for their part, have taken the view that the first step in the execution of their plan must be an international conference of countries prepared to accept a commitment in principle to pool their coal and steel resources and to set up a new high authority whose decisions would bind the Governments concerned. In the view of the French Government, the negotiations should be aimed, in the first instance, at the preparation of a treaty embodying these principles, and establishing the high authority, to be submitted to ratification by Parliament. His Majesty's Government do not feel able to accept in advance, nor do they wish to reject in advance, the principles underlying the French proposal. They consider that a detailed discussion, which would throw light on the nature of the scheme and its full political and economic consequences, is a normal and indeed essential preliminary to the conclusion of a treaty. They feel that there is a substantial difference of approach between the two Governments as to the basis on which the negotiations should be opened. An unhappy situation would arise if, having bound themselves to certain principles without knowing how they would work out in practice, they were to find themselves, as a result of the discussion, compelled to withdraw from their undertakings. They have accordingly, to their regret, found it impossible to associate themselves with the negotiations on the terms proposed by the French Government.

4. At the same time, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom desire to make it clear that they do not wish, and have never wished, to delay discussion of the French proposals and indeed it has always been their aim that these discussions should be initiated without delay. They themselves are actively engaged in working on proposals inspired by the French initiative of 9th May, in order that they may be ready to make a constructive contribution. They appreciate the offer of the French Government to keep them informed of the progress of their negotiations.

5. His Majesty's Government have always wished, and still wish, to take an active part in the study and elaboration of the French plan and they greatly regret that in view of their responsibility to Parliament and the people the prior commitment involved in the proposals made to them has made it impossible for them to participate in the forthcoming discussion. They are none the less hopeful that it will be possible to find a basis of international agreement in this field which will give further support to the many enterprises on which the two Governments in association with other Governments are now engaged in common for the furtherance of peace, security and economic well-being.