

'Germany and Europe' from Le Monde (28 March 1950)

Caption: Following the birth of the Federal Republic of Germany on 14 August 1949, the French daily newspaper Le Monde considers the issue of West Germany's accession to the Council of Europe.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. BEUVE-MÉRY, Hubert. 28.03.1950, n° 1 608; 7e année. Paris: Le Monde. "L'Allemagne et l'Europe", p. 1.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/germany_and_europe_from_le_monde_28_march_1950-en-44e30bb1-d83b-4c1b-afe6-6efd2dae65co.html



Last updated: 06/07/2016

Germany and Europe

In a statement made yesterday before the National Committee of the People's Republican Movement (MRP), Mr Robert Schuman emphasised the provisional and empirical nature of the Western Allies' policy in Germany. They had to take into account the de facto situation created by the USSR which broke the Four-Power agreement and cut off its own occupation zone, thereby forcing them to devise a policy for West Germany. The establishment of the Constitution and the Bonn Government was one of the first results.

It is clear that this policy must be followed with circumspection: we must not forget that West Germany is not all of Germany and that Germany might revive tomorrow or in a few years' time, thereby jeopardising everything that has been achieved. It would be a welcome sign if the work of the Allies and of the Bonn Republic was such that it could at any moment be adapted to meet a new situation, but not an unforeseen one.

From this point of view, the integration of Germany into Western Europe is a highly delicate matter. The pretext that nothing definitive can be done should not result in us doing nothing. West Germany will not be able to stay isolated while East Germany becomes more and more incorporated into the Soviet bloc. But how far should we go if we do not wish to transcend the boundaries fixed by prudence?

A first criterion would be the Germans' own wishes. Mr Adenauer's offers have given rise to different movements. Mr Schuman is not the only one to judge that he would like to advance quickly. He has confused his compatriots. Can the opinion of the Social Democrats, who are currently in opposition but with only slightly fewer seats than the ruling Christian Democrats, be neglected? They could be in power tomorrow. What would then happen to a foreign policy determined without them or against them? If in Britain, as in the United States, foreign policy is devised with the agreement of the two major parties, would it not be sensible for the same procedure to apply in Germany, and for all Mr Adenauer's major decisions to be approved, at least tacitly, by Mr Schumacher? It is not for us to dictate to the Germans what to do, but we should accord to their words and deeds the weight that they really possess.

The Western powers may ask West Germany to join the Council of Europe. Such a gesture would bear witness to its solidarity. It can hardly refuse to do so since the commitment involved is fairly minor. Hitherto, the Council of Europe is only a promise, which may or may not be fulfilled. But, under these conditions, any policy which tried to resolve relations with Germany solely in the context of a European solution would be deemed inadequate. It is possible that a European Organisation might be 'the main constructive element of our policy'. But that is a construction of which the foundations have only just been laid: must we wait for the roof to be on before we address the most urgent questions?

If, for example, we support economic links between France and Germany, it is not necessary to put in place immediately the total union suggested by Mr Adenauer. A more modest solution has been suggested, in the context of the regional unions which are envisaged pending the 'integration' of Europe. West Germany would become part of the power grouping which has been called Fritalux or Finebel.

Who has hitherto been opposed to the inclusion of Germany in this grouping? It is none other than France. However, the arguments put forward against a Franco-German alliance would lose a lot of their impetus if four countries, with sixty-five million inhabitants, joined France and Germany. And why should a large nation like France hesitate to be part of such a union when a small one like Luxembourg sees no objection to it?

In actual fact, while it is not appropriate to improvise or to move very quickly, as Mr Robert Schuman remarks, it is also inappropriate for the country which can and should guide Germany's European policy to lag behind all the others.