

'Benelux and the German problem' from the Luxemburger Wort (26 February 1948)

Caption: During the Anglo–Franco–US Conference held in London from 23 February to 6 March 1948, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort considers the position of the three Benelux countries with regard to the problem of the political and economic reconstruction of Germany.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 26.02.1948, n° 57; 101e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Benelux und deutsches Problem", p. 1.

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Benelux and the German problem

The stance adopted by the Benelux countries — Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg — regarding the German problem has been defined differently by the three countries' governments over the past two years. It would, however, be useful, at a time when they are preparing to reiterate their position at the Three-Power Conference in London, to recall the most important points set out in the joint statement which was simultaneously published in Brussels, The Hague and Luxembourg on the eve of another London Conference, the one held in November 1947.

According to this joint statement — which, as will be recalled, we published almost verbatim — the three Benelux countries regard Germany's economic unification as a sine qua non for its return to a normal way of life. On the other hand, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg do demand that the requisite control measures are taken to prevent the recurrence of the German threat. It is on these considerations that the Benelux countries base their joint recommendations:

- (1) The gradual rebuilding of autonomy and political responsibility in Germany within the guidelines of a federal constitution.
- (2) Monitoring of the German economy, in order to ensure that Germany's demilitarisation complies with the plan established by the former American Foreign Minister, James F. Byrnes.
- (3) Specific monitoring of the Ruhr region so as to align the development of its industrial centre with that of the rest of Europe. All three governments of the Benelux countries claim the right to participate in this monitoring process.
- (4) In the case of the abolition of the currently existing Allied military governments in Germany and the military occupation of the whole of Germany, the Benelux states call for the military occupation of certain regions to be maintained in order to ensure the effective control of the country. This entails the occupation of ports, airports, traffic centres and other important areas.

Furthermore, in their memorandum, the governments of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg emphasised that it would be unacceptable for the German economy to receive financial aid which would give it an advantage over the economies of the Allied nations.

The dramatic events at the previous Foreign Ministers Conference in London, to which the memorandum drafted by the Benelux countries was addressed, prevented it from being discussed. This time, developments in international politics have meant that the Benelux position is a lot stronger. The Three-Power Conference in London will, therefore, not be able to avoid a thorough acknowledgement of the stance taken by Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg regarding the German problem.