

'The Ruhr Authority - "Six-Power Watchdog" ...' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (9 March 1950)

Caption: On 9 March 1950, the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung lists the reasons for the discontent of the German population regarding the Ruhr Statute and outlines the role of the International Authority for the Ruhr (IAR).

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. FRIEDMANN, Werner; GOLDSCHAGG, Edmund; SCHÖNINGH, Dr. Franz Josef; SCHWINGENSTEIN, August ; Herausgeber FRIEDMANN, Werner. 09.03.1950, n° 57; 6. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Die Ruhrbehörde - Wachhund der sechs Mächte", auteur:Hufschmid, Bernd , p. 3.

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/the_ruhr_authority_six_power_watchdog_from_the_suddeutsche_zeitung_9_march_1950-en-be69afbd-f9a0-4ba1-a586-57e90c5d9b18.html

Last updated: 06/07/2016



The Ruhr Authority — ‘Six-Power Watchdog’ ...

... but also an instrument of European cooperation / Ruhr workers without seats or votes

Düsseldorf (from our own correspondent)

Professor Kaeckenbeek has labelled ‘an international experiment’ what the Americans on the other side of the Atlantic have called rather dramatically a ‘Six-Power Watchdog’. The International Authority for the Ruhr based in Düsseldorf is, however, something about which opinions differ widely. It is still something incomplete, something one can believe in with an idealistic fervour or look upon with a knowing sceptical smile as an instrument not capable of satisfying Europe’s economic needs. It is all the more difficult to gain a clear notion of what the functions, powers and real aims of this body are, because there is a decidedly solemn, almost subdued atmosphere in the flat, modern clinker-brick building of the former Düsseldorf Finance Ministry to which it is not easy for outsiders to gain access.

An idealist with practical experience

It is principally thanks to the Secretary-General, Professor Kaeckenbeek, that the work of the Ruhr Authority has already begun despite this. He is an idealist with practical experience and knows all the tricks of both international and commercial law. He is one of those rare people who can look after the interests of both themselves and others without losing sight of what they are trying to achieve. The Belgian professor’s most valuable experience came between 1922 and 1937 when he was President of the Court of Arbitration in the industrial region of Upper Silesia. The subject of discussion in Upper Silesia then — a constitutionally sound division of heavy industry — is what most people at high levels in the Ruhr are getting worked up about now. Now, however, it is not merely a question of deciding between two sides fighting over an industrial area but also of setting the standards for producing the wisdom of Solomon on a European level, on which judgments the future of a United States of Europe to a large extent depends.

According to their Secretary-General, the Ruhr Authority and the Ruhr Statute are only the beginning. One place in Western Europe is to be the focus for making industrial cooperation a reality. From a German point of view, the first step is giving up a degree of national economic sovereignty, from the Allied point of view, managing the whole undertaking from a higher, European perspective. Professor Kaeckenbeek maintains that the management of the Ruhr can and must be the first step towards international control of all the industrial areas of Western Europe.

Whoever sits opposite the portly, rather stolid, yet spirited and warm-hearted Belgian Secretary-General of the Ruhr Authority will very quickly be convinced that a defeated country will not have to face here useless laws passed by unsympathetic and tough executive bodies. The human warmth of the Belgian professor of international law, as well as the benevolence and understanding of the chief delegates of the other countries involved in the face of the unusual and rather embarrassing position in which Germany finds itself, seem to confirm that institutions are no more than what the people in charge make them.

Ruhr workers overlooked

A close examination of the Ruhr Statute shows that a defeated Germany has been treated as an exceptional case and rather severely. The United States, Britain and France each have three votes, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg one each. Against these 12 Allied votes, Germany has three which, in some cases, do not even carry equal weight. If what is involved here is the distribution of coal, coke and steel from West Germany — and this has indeed been proclaimed to be the most important task facing the International Ruhr Authority — then Germany itself should really have an important and decisive say in the matter.

Ruhr workers have been overlooked in the Ruhr Statute. Perhaps the Ruhr Authority will eventually change this situation. The trade unions of all the countries involved stated only recently in Düsseldorf that, firstly, not only the German Ruhr workers should be given a vote in the High Committee of the Ruhr Authority (this has now happened) but also that trade unions from other countries should be represented in the Ruhr

Authority. They want their delegate in each case to be the deputy of the actual representative of each country, as is the case in Germany with the appointment of Dr Heinz Potthoff as assistant and deputy to Minister Blücher. From the outset, the first Chairman of the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (German Trades Union Congress), Dr Hans Böckler, had no doubts about the extent to which the Ruhr Statute constituted a defamation of Germany in general and German workers in particular. If he was, nevertheless, far-sighted enough to speak for a workforce numbering millions and to recommend that Germany still join the Ruhr Authority, he did so with a sense of responsibility for Europe's future.

In the long term, if you set great store by cooperation with a defeated country, it is impossible to make an example of it by subjecting it to draconian levels of economic control. The Allies and their representatives on the Ruhr Authority are aware of this. The Ruhr is, after all, the largest industrial region in all Europe. The Ruhr Statute, moreover, covers extensive parts of North Rhine-Westphalia. Places like Düsseldorf, Hagen, Krefeld, Solingen and Wuppertal, which no longer really count as part of the Ruhr as such, come just as much under the watchful eye of the Ruhr Statute as the Ruhr towns proper, such as Essen, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen and Oberhausen.

It would be a misuse of the aims of this pan-European committee if it were to be made the instrument of national rivalries. Its organisation is still a long way off completion — for example, it has not yet been agreed how many of the hundred or so representatives will be German — and the Ruhr Authority's practical work may, to date, have given much cause for criticism, especially as German goods, which it is to control at European level, are scarcely in short supply any more, but the otherwise unlikely Atlantic House in Düsseldorf, where the Ruhr Authority has located its headquarters, stands alongside the United Nations building in New York in world terms. For here, as there, the way people act, and think, will soon no longer be in terms of purely national interest.

Bernd Hufschmid