

Letter from Robert Schuman to Konrad Adenauer (Paris, 7 May 1950)

Caption: In a letter dated 7 May 1950, the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, writes to the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and informs him of his proposal to pool European coal and steel production.

Source: L'Europe une longue marche. Lausanne: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Centre de recherches européennes, 1985. 104 p. (Cahiers rouges). p. 60-61.

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Dear Chancellor,

Just before I put a proposal before the French Government for it to take an important decision for the future of Franco-German relations, Europe and Peace, I would like to explain to you the declaration that I will be asking my Government to endorse and release on the evening of Tuesday, 9 May. I should also like to explain the spirit in which I drafted this declaration.

World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it. The contribution which an organised and living Europe can bring to civilisation is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations. In taking upon herself for more than 20 years the role of champion of a united Europe, France has always had as her essential aim the service of peace. A united Europe was not achieved and we had war.

Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built if concrete achievements first create a de facto solidarity. The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. Any action taken must in the first place concern these two countries.

In public statements and conversations that we have had together, you yourself have emphasised your full agreement with such an objective. In particular you have suggested establishing an economic union of our two countries.

The time has come for the French Government to commit itself to this process. In order to do so, it is proposing immediately to focus its action on one limited but decisive point:

It proposes that Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole be placed under a common High Authority, within the framework of an organisation open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.

The principle set forth above will be the subject of an intergovernmental agreement. The negotiations required to settle details of applications would be undertaken with the help of an arbitrator appointed by common agreement. He would be entrusted with the task of seeing that the agreements reached conform with the principles laid down, and, in the event of a deadlock, he would decide on the solution to be adopted.

The institution of the High Authority will in no way prejudge the methods of ownership of enterprises. In the exercise of its functions, the common High Authority will have to take into account the powers conferred upon the International Ruhr Authority and the obligations of all kinds imposed upon Germany, so long as these remain in force.

The above presents the broad lines of a system that would completely change the economic relations between our two countries, steering them once and for all towards peaceful cooperation. At the same time we would be laying down solid foundations for a European economic organisation that would be accessible to all countries committed to freedom and aware of their shared interests and mutual obligations.

This principle will naturally require detailed technical study and I very much hope that the German Government will find it possible to take part in such a study.

May I remind you once more that the French Government will in all probability be releasing this declaration on Tuesday evening. Until then please treat this letter as strictly personal and confidential.

Yours, etc.

Schuman