

'Europe open or closed?' from Le Monde (24 January 1963)

Caption: On 24 January 1963, the French daily newspaper Le Monde appears cautious vis-à-vis the scope of the Franco-German Treaty, signed at the l'Élysée Palace two days previously.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 24.01.1963, n° 5605. Paris: Le Monde. "Europe fermée, Europe ouverte ?", p. 1.

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Europe open or closed?

So France and the Federal Republic are now linked by a cooperation treaty. The term does not really reflect the spirit of the document signed by the Chancellor and the General, which imposes no specific obligations other than a commitment to frequent meetings between all those responsible, in various capacities and at various levels, for policy orientation in the two countries. It creates no new institutions, unless the joint expert committees to be set up on various topics can be so described.

There was, in fact, no real need for an agreement of this kind to take the form of a treaty. The French, whose initiative it was, had suggested a simple protocol. At the last minute, concerned to give the agreement a more solemn character and thus make it more binding on his successors, Chancellor Adenauer requested the conclusion of a treaty. That treaty will now be submitted to the Bundestag for ratification and approved by France according to a procedure yet to be determined.

Will frequent meetings and ongoing technical cooperation in defence, information and youth issues suffice for the two countries gradually to arrive at a genuine common policy? Only time will tell. Experience of international organisations and, more recently, of Franco–German cooperation shows that the outcome of daily contact between people should not be underestimated. But that is still a far cry from seeing the document signed on Tuesday as the beginning of a new era, a conclusive break with a history of rivalry. Its scope and impact are certainly less than those, for example, of the President’s visit to the Federal Republic last September.

The development of cooperation between the two partners will depend less on the method adopted than on whether they are able to harmonise their basic policy options.

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