

'The High Authority and the Europe of Seven' from Le Monde (22 December 1954)

Caption: On 22 December 1954, the French daily newspaper Le Monde considers the role of the ECSC High Authority and outlines the British Government's cautious approach to the agreement concerning relations between the United Kingdom and the European Coal and Steel Community.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 22.12.1954, n° 3082. Paris: Le Monde. "La Haute Autorité et l'Europe à Sept", p. 1.

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The High Authority and the Europe of Seven

At the very moment when national parliaments are starting to scrutinise the Paris Agreements, which provide for the United Kingdom to join Western European Union, Great Britain is about to sign a treaty in London which will regulate its relationship with the European Coal and Steel Community. The country is thus in contact with its partners on two different levels: sometimes on an equal footing, amongst the Europe of Seven; sometimes alone, facing a supranational authority negotiating on behalf of six governments.

This duality sums up the difficulties — and the history — of European integration. However, it should not mislead one as to the future development of Europe. The Europe of Six that began in Luxembourg suffered greatly from the failure of the EDC. Created as the first step towards European integration based on the surrender of a certain degree of sovereignty, the Coal and Steel Community has — at least for the moment — abandoned the political future that its authors intended. It is now simply a technical instrument responsible for regulating trade in coal and steel on the Continent.

The European Union of Seven, without a supranational authority, is, on the other hand, riding high. Great Britain has agreed to join, and the objections of British MPs to this project are fewer than those aroused by the 'pool'. It is around this Union of Seven that attempts are now being made to build Europe.

This shift in the centre of interest is obviously very prejudicial to the Coal and Steel Community. The governments of the six countries of the 'pool' will be less keen to make concessions to the High Authority, once it is no longer the flagship of Europe. The implementation of the Common Market will now be more difficult, and the expected results of the Schuman Plan more distant.

Many people already have their doubts about the future efficacy of the High Authority. The United States seems less interested in Jean Monnet's projects. The *New York Herald Tribune* announced yesterday that the mission entrusted to David Bruce, Washington's extraordinary representative to Luxembourg, might end on 1 January. Relations with the High Authority will henceforward be entrusted to John C. Hughes, the United States' NATO representative.

Great Britain is also conscious of the difficulties arising in Luxembourg. It is surely not a mere coincidence that negotiations that have been going on for more than a year are successful just when the Community loses its political prospects. The United Kingdom hesitated about concluding an agreement, even a limited one, with an organisation that might have been the nucleus of an integrated Europe. Since the High Authority has become a mere European committee in charge of heavy industry, negotiations with it have been less strained.

Even now, the British remain careful. In the agreement signed today, they have made no concessions to the High Authority. Each party retains its freedom of action. Experts and representatives from London and Luxembourg will simply undertake exchanges of opinions on questions of mutual interest.

Some topics have even been excluded from future talks, the harmonisation of payroll charges, for example, or investment in the coal industry where salaries represent two thirds of the production costs. At all events, whether the suggestions of the 'Association Committee' are applied will depend entirely on the good will of the signatories. Will frequent contact between London and Luxembourg lead to closer cooperation in economic policy? It is to be hoped, but it is by no means certain.

'The new agreement is more political than economic', writes the 'Times' this morning very shrewdly. Great Britain is making a 'gesture towards Europe', with no immediate consequences. Her 'goodwill towards Europe' can be judged only against tangible proposals. Before the experts present any such proposals — political or economic — the situation may change many times.