

'Freedom for the Ruhr' from Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung (27 July 1952)

Caption: On 27 July 1952, the Bulletin of the Press and Information Office of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) welcomes the signing, by the Western Powers, of an agreement providing for the revocation of the Ruhr Statute and the gradual dissolution of the International Authority for the Ruhr (IAR).

Source: Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung. Hrsg. Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. 27.07.1952, Nr. 100. Bonn: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. "Freiheit für die Ruhr", p. 100.

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Freedom for the Ruhr

After the instruments of ratification of the Schuman Plan Treaty were deposited, enabling this important Treaty to enter into force, and, in so doing, a bold and promising step was taken towards a united Europe, an agreement was signed by the representatives of the Western Powers which completes a development that began for the Federal Republic over three years ago with the Ruhr Statute and the International Authority for the Ruhr. This agreement, which provides for the repeal of the Ruhr Statute and the gradual dissolution of the International Authority for the Ruhr, is a logical consequence of the view that unilateral burdens on the Federal Republic are no longer compatible with the internal logic of the European Community rules which the European Coal and Steel Community is seeking to enforce.

The Preamble to the Ruhr Statute, which entered into force on 28 April 1949, proclaimed that the objective was for the resources of the Ruhr to be used in the interests of international security and general economic recovery. It recommended that ‘access to the coal, coke and steel of the Ruhr [...] be in the future assured on an equitable basis to the countries cooperating in the common economic good’. In accordance with the provisions of the Statute, the Federal Republic was to be specifically involved in the coordination of the economic life of the countries of Europe to be carried out by the International Authority for the Ruhr.

The two notions of international security and general economic recovery which have, to date, defined the role of the Ruhr Authority did, however, mean that, from the outset, the Federal Republic would be subject to discrimination in so far as economic common sense was often discarded on the basis of anti-German policy considerations. This contradiction in reasoning was clearly expressed in the economic provisions of the Ruhr Statute. The principle enshrined in Article 14 thereof of the division of German raw materials between exports and German consumption contradicted the principle of a genuine Community system, since only German output was allocated in this way, whereas that of other countries was not affected. The provisions of the Ruhr Statute on the constitutional bodies of the Ruhr Authority were similarly formulated in the spirit of unilateralism.

When the Federal Government nevertheless decided, in due time, to exercise the rights granted to it in the Ruhr Statute, a determining factor proved to be the knowledge that German participation in the Ruhr Authority could not constitute a contractual obligation under international law, but rather one that was imposed unilaterally under occupation law. The subsequent course of events also showed that, from a political point of view, this did not hamper the establishment of a truly European solution through the Ruhr Statute and the Ruhr Authority. Even well-founded fears did not materialise as a result of German participation, since some rights granted to the Ruhr Authority were never exercised.

Nevertheless, the Schuman Plan’s grand design first had to be put into effect so that the Ruhr Statute and the Ruhr Authority might be superseded as genuine creatures of transition by a Treaty that no longer subjects the Ruhr to a single system but treats all European extractive industries on an equal footing, and allows the Ruhr economy to take its natural place on the basis of its potential.

After the signing of the Agreement terminating the Ruhr Statute and the consequent removal of restrictions on German steel production, not only has a formal act now been completed but further progress has also been achieved, both materially and politically, which should also bring economic benefits to the Federal Republic. The *London Times*, in its editorial of 27 December 1951, seems to confirm that this view is also held abroad; in ‘Emancipating the Ruhr’, it writes: ‘[...] a statute for the international economic control of one country alone would finally have clashed with the principle of political equality. For the Germans, seeking an equal status in Europe, the way forward ought not now to be in doubt.’

The final abolition of the Ruhr Authority will understandably still take some time. Once again, and for the last time, a coal export quota will be set at the meeting of the Council of the International Authority for the Ruhr to be held on 18 August. With the establishment of the Common Market, namely six months after the appointment of the Members of the High Authority, the Ruhr Authority will, however, cease its activities in the Federal Republic altogether, and the effectiveness of the Ruhr Statute will expire. It can now already be regarded as certain that the Ruhr will then regain its freedom.