

French Memorandum presented to the Council of Foreign Ministers (Paris, 25 April 1946)

Caption: On 25 April 1946, at the Paris Peace Conference on Germany, the French delegation submits to the Council of Foreign Ministers a memorandum on the separation and reorganisation of control of the territories of the Rhineland, the Ruhr and the Saar.

Source: The Department of State. Occupation of Germany, Policy and Progress 1945-46. 1 éd. European Series 23. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1947. 241 p. (The Department of State-United States of America Publications 2783). p. 229-232.

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Memorandum Presented to the Council of Foreign Ministers by the French Delegation, Paris, April 25, 1946

During the first session of the Conference of Foreign Ministers which was held at London, the French Delegation presented, on September 14, 1945, a memorandum setting forth its views as to measures relating to the control and administration of Germany.

At the meeting of September 28, it was decided that the French Government would state the details of its proposals through diplomatic channels, and that, following these preliminary conversations, the question would then be submitted for the examination of the Council.

The French position was stated, successively, from October to December 1945, to the British, American, and Soviet Governments, and *aide-mémoires* which summarized that position were sent to the three capitals. Those documents were also communicated to the Governments of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia.

The French Delegation considers that the moment has now come for the Council of Foreign Ministers to begin the study of the questions thus presented, with a view to the decisions to be made.

The French projects are predominantly concerned with security.

Germany must be definitively deprived of the war potential which is represented by industry and the reserves of raw material of the Rhine-Westphalian region and that region must no longer constitute a zone of passage, an arsenal, and a base for departure.

In order to allay this concern, the French Government proposes not to have recourse to territorial annexation, but to separate the Ruhr, the Rhineland, and the Saar definitively from Germany by establishing there a regime fitted to carry out the purposes indicated above.

These territories do not constitute, as a whole, an entity on either the political or the economic plane. Different administrations have therefore been proposed for each of the regions which compose them.

1. Ruhr

The territory of the Ruhr consists of coal mines and the factories connected with them. It comprises a population of about five million inhabitants.

In order to guarantee that the natural and industrial wealth of this zone will no longer be exploited for military purposes but in conformity with the general interest of humanity, the Ruhr must be treated as a political entity independent of Germany and subject to a political and economic system of internationalization.

All the countries concerned should have a part in the organization of this regime, a particularly important role falling naturally to the powers most immediately concerned.

The local administration should be appointed as far as possible by the population, which could also obtain, in due time, a part in the functions of the government. An international force would be stationed in this territory, the integrity of which should be guaranteed by all the powers concerned.

The most important mines and industrial enterprises would be expropriated in the international interest and their operation entrusted to enterprises of international public utility.

It is essential that the Ruhr cease to be an integral part of Germany, for if a German government remains responsible for the administration of the Ruhr, if it is in a position to give orders to officials there and to exercise rights of sovereignty, the system of control which the Allies might establish would be fatally

ineffective and of short duration.

Furthermore, the mere internationalization of mines and industries would not be sufficient to guarantee the control of the supplying of Germany with raw materials and products capable of being used for armament: a customs control cordon must be established between the Ruhr and Germany.

Nevertheless, a part of the surplus after the balancing of accounts of the Ruhr could be used for a certain period for partial payment of minimum supplies for Germany.

2. Rhineland

In the German territories situated on the left bank of the Rhine sufficient military forces should be permanently stationed.

In so far as this stationing is to constitute direct protection for France, that is to say, as far as Cologne, it would be incumbent upon France to provide for it, with the possibility of participation by Belgium and Luxembourg.

Farther to the north, it would, instead, be incumbent upon Belgium and the Netherlands, and, if it deemed fit, upon the United Kingdom, to provide for military occupation.

The Rhineland should be politically and economically separated from the rest of Germany. It might be a question, dependent upon the evolution of local conditions, either of one state subject to inter-Allied military occupation, or of two or three states, each of them being occupied by the troops of one of the Allied powers.

Subject to such occupation and to permanent demilitarization, the government of the state (or the governments of the states) to be created in the Rhineland would be free to manage their own affairs. They would be represented abroad by their own diplomatic services and would have their own monetary and customs systems.

3. The Saar

French demands concerning the Saar were presented in the note which the French Government sent on February 18 last to London, Moscow, and Washington on the following bases:

The mines of the Saar, the ownership of which had been given to France by the Treaty of Versailles, should become again the property of the French State and that territory would be included in the French customs and monetary system, the two economies being, furthermore, almost entirely complementary.

The Saar would henceforth be outside the competence of the Berlin Control Council. France would exercise permanent control of the administration of the territory and would take all measures necessary to sever completely the public services of the Saar from those of the Reich.

A French military force sufficient to guarantee domestic tranquillity and supervision of the frontier would be permanently stationed in the Saar. The definitive political status and the nationality of the inhabitants would be fixed later. Henceforth, France would assure the protection abroad of the nationals and interests of the Saar.

Such being the proposals of the French Government with regard to the organization of security west of Germany, it is necessary to complete this statement by the indication of French views as to the general orientation which it would be necessary to give to the organization of Germany herself.

In its memorandum of September 14 last, the French Delegation fully agreed to the provisions of the Potsdam agreements entered into between the American, British, and Soviet Governments, which provide for the decentralization of the political structure of Germany. At the same time it stressed the fact that it

would consider as premature the creation of central administrative departments which run the risk of reviving German unitarian tendencies and favoring a return to the formula of a centralized German state.

The French Delegation is, in fact, convinced not only that the time has not yet come to establish a central German government, but that it is a matter of urgency to begin by recreating and developing the regional entities which should constitute the basis of the future Germany.

In each of the zones of occupation, direct administration by the Allies, which could prevail during the early days of the occupation, has already given place and will in the future give more place to control by the local German administrations. Governments have been established in a certain number of German states which are assisted by German advisory organizations. Elections have already been held in the American zone and local constitutions are in course of preparation there. The French Government has also decided to hold elections beginning on the first of September in its zone, and to have constitutions drawn up in each of the states which compose it.

It is on the basis of these states or *Länder*, that it considers that the political structure of Germany must be built in the future, so as to avoid the reestablishment of a centralized state, where the influence of a demilitarized Prussia would continue to predominate in spite of everything.