

Declaration by Georges Bidault (Paris, 10 July 1946)

Caption: On 10 July 1946, during the Paris Peace Conference attended by the Council of Foreign Ministers, the French representative, Georges Bidault, outlines France's position on the terms for the occupation of Germany.

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. 233-237.

Copyright: United States of America Government Printing Office

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/declaration_by_georges_bidault_paris_10_july_1946-en-a9d19c7c-e591-437e-9012-6ab135daa8ca.html

Last updated: 02/07/2015

Declaration to the Council of Foreign Ministers by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, Paris, July 10, 1946

The French Delegation is satisfied that, from the beginning, the new discussion which is opening concerning German problems has dealt with certain general questions which present themselves and has indicated by its scope that it is a question here of the main part of the peace settlement. From the beginning also, differences of opinion have appeared. They make only the more necessary the examination which we are undertaking, for it is perhaps because this examination has hitherto always been postponed that points of view have been divergent and that it appears even now that this divergence is capable of bringing into jeopardy the settlement of these questions, and in consequence the future security of the world.

As to the goal to be followed, I believe that we are in accord here concerning a definition which agrees with that given yesterday by Mr. Molotov, that is to say:

1. Total disarmament of Germany;
2. Destruction of Nazism and promotion of the democratic spirit;
3. Reparations for the countries that have suffered from the war.

I will add that these objectives all tend to make Germany incapable of doing harm, of being again a menace to peace, and, with reference to the third, I will say in that spirit that it appears even more important, in my eyes, to the extent to which it assures the industrial disarmament of Germany than to the extent to which it procures for the occupied and devastated countries the reparations which they have a right to expect, but which, they recognize, can be only partial.

The goal being defined, the means of attaining it should be determined. I have already had occasion to set forth here what the measures are which the French Government considers as being the most urgent and the most essential. I should like now, without going over those measures again in detail, to indicate what the position of the French Delegation is as to the questions raised as a whole.

In our opinion, it is logical to distinguish with respect to time, successively, in chronological order:

The decisions to be made to establish the boundaries of Germany;

The policy of the occupying powers;

The general outlines of the future status of Germany.

1. The Boundaries of the New Germany

Nothing serious can be done so long as the borders of post-war Germany are not fixed, and the occupation authorities cannot, to tell the truth, be expected to undertake a long-range policy as long as they do not know which territories will remain definitively German in the future.

The Potsdam conference made agreements with respect to eastern Germany, which were provisional in principle, but in fact were, fundamental, and with which the French Government did not take issue. It remains to settle the fate of western Germany. I do not wish to go over the French proposals concerning the Ruhr, the Rhineland and the Saar, except to indicate that we have not changed our position and that it

does not appear to us possible to postpone the examination thereof any longer.

2. Policy of the Occupying Powers

I propose the following aims:

1. To assure the total disarmament of Germany;
2. To assure the carrying out of the reparations program;
3. To destroy Nazism and to endeavor to promote a democratic spirit and democratic institutions.

The first of these points itself, the execution of which would seem to be obvious one year after the end of the war, might nevertheless raise serious difficulties. I do not see, for my part, how there could be objections to putting into full application the principles stated in June 1945, and I can give the assurance that the French Government is ready to cooperate fully in any measure or inquiry which might be proposed by any of the Allied governments.

The reparations program, which is the result of decisions made in common to fix the level of German industry, is, in our eyes, as I have said, a fundamental element of her disarmament. This shows the primary importance which we attach to it, from this point of view even more than from the point of view of the deliveries which we may expect. Here again, the cooperation of the French authorities is offered without reservation. I should like further to remind you that, in order not to interfere with the execution of the plan, we have accepted, provisionally, the idea of German economic unity, although such unity includes for the moment the western provinces, the territorial separation of which we demand.

Denazification and the restoration of a democratic spirit, like disarmament, are such obvious necessities as to require no further emphasis, except perhaps to say that they will be tasks of long duration and hence bound up with the length of the occupation. It would be illusory, in the opinion of the French Delegation, to think that we could pursue these tasks if, within the near future, we were led, at our common peril, to withdraw from Germany.

The development of democratic institutions is a function of the progress of denazification. Its reforms depend also on the ideas that one may have of the future political organization of Germany. In this respect, the French Government adopts fully the principle submitted at Potsdam of the decentralization and development of the local autonomy.

It is within the framework of the states [*pays*], or *Länder*, that Germany should find again a political life. There can be no question, for the moment, of considering a centralized German government. As to the central administrations which have been so much spoken of, the French Government, as it has always said, is ready to discuss them as soon as the framework of Germany has been fixed. It believes only that it will be necessary to be very careful in this matter, and that technical considerations, valid for the moment, must never prevail over political necessities which are permanently valid.

The central German government may come later, but only when the different states have found a solid base, and we consider that it should be rather the government of a confederated state than of a federal state.

If this combination of military, economic, and political activities constitutes the task of the occupation authorities, it is clear that it is immense, that its accomplishment is barely sketched, and that a very long time will be needed in order to carry it out.

We are aware of the burdens which such an effort implies and of which the shortage of food supplies in the occupation zones represents only a small and even a very small part. But it is a question there of a sacrifice

for the peace of the world, a sacrifice which will be amply compensated if we succeed in carrying out our program. In any case, the French Government is convinced that a prolonged occupation is the imperative condition for the success of the enterprise. It is happy to note that the sentiments of the other governments are, if it has rightly understood them, identical.

3. The Future Status of Germany

It is only when the occupation ends that the definitive status of Germany will be confirmed. I wish to stress, however, that, in my opinion, it is during the occupation and thanks to the occupation that conditions will be created which will permit the attributing of the epithet of definitive to such status. This status would be characterized in the various categories by total disarmament, the establishment of a new level of German industry, the creation of democratic institutions and of a certain number of states on firm bases, capable of making the new Germany lose its Prussian, centralist, and militaristic character.

The draft treaty proposed by the United States Government to guarantee the disarmament and demilitarization of Germany could constitute, if I may say so, the crown of the edifice. I do not understand how it can interfere with either the reparations program, denazification, or any of the essential and urgent tasks of the occupation authorities. It would not in any way render purposeless the proposals made on the part of the French concerning the status of western Germany. Lastly, it should certainly not mean that the occupation is to end soon.

On all these points, the terms which Mr. Byrnes used seemed to me explicit. Moreover, his plan would have the immense advantage of concretizing the solidarity of the Allies with respect to the ever-possible danger of a military revival of Germany. It would guarantee security in Europe permanently with the indispensable participation of the United States of America.

It is in this spirit that we received the proposals of the American Government and that we are ready to begin studying them at once.

In the same way, we are ready, and anxious, to study with the three other governments all the problems relating to Germany, with regard to which I have explained our general views, the most urgent problems being in our eyes the status of the Ruhr, the Rhineland, and the Saar. Any procedure which will bring about general agreement will be considered by us acceptable. In particular, we are willing to take as a basis of discussion the proposal made by Mr. Byrnes to create a Commission of Special Deputies.

The Problem of Coal

It is indeed a question of a vital point, it is a question of coal.

It is indispensable that we have the assurance that the considerable amounts of coal which could be obtained from German mines will be placed at the disposal of the Allied powers and will not be made exclusively and chiefly available for the reconstruction of German industrial power.

It is not a question here of completing long-term measures which we shall include in a treaty, but of making arrangements at once, in order that the control authorities may take into first consideration the restoration needs of the countries bordering on Germany, and particularly of France.

The French representatives have, for several months, been insisting upon this in the Berlin Control Council, but their efforts have not, up to the present time, been crowned with success.

Coal production in Germany is still only at a very low level. We shall certainly be in agreement in considering that it is necessary by every means in our power to increase coal production in order to hasten the improvement of the present economic situation in Germany. I do not hesitate to say this, and also to assure the satisfying of the essential needs of European countries, whose shortage of coal is today so great that it is retarding their economic recovery and constituting a danger for their equilibrium and even for their

security.

I feel, consequently, that we must ask qualified experts to proceed without delay to study the possibility of an increase in production and agree among ourselves upon the general principles according to which German production must be distributed, account being taken of the coal requirement of liberated Europe.

I ask, therefore, that the immediate study of this problem be entrusted to qualified experts in order that they may give us a report on the conclusions at which they have arrived, so that we may define the methods according to which the coal shall be distributed, until the minimum quantities which are to be exported are fixed by treaty. Considering that that is a question of determining a policy and general directives, I feel that it is to the Council of Foreign Ministers and not to the Berlin Control Council, an executive agency, that such a report should be addressed.