

‘How is the Schuman Plan coming?’ from Die Zeit (27 July 1950)

Caption: On 27 July 1950, in an article published by the German daily newspaper Die Zeit, Günter Henle, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) MP in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and Chairman of the Schuman Plan Steel Committee, gives a progress report on the negotiations on the establishment of a European coal and steel pool.

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How is the Schuman Plan coming along?

By **Günter Henle**

It appears, thank goodness, that the optimists are triumphing over the sceptics: the Schuman Plan is taking tangible form. We have asked Dr Günter Henle, Member of the German Parliament and Chairman of the Schuman Plan Steel Committee, to report on the latest state of play of the negotiations.

It is thanks to the purposeful momentum of the French, but also to an equally strong willingness on the part of West Germany and of the other parties, that, during the Paris talks, the Schuman Plan has already moved further from concept towards reality than the sceptics, who were predicting interminably lengthy preliminary studies, thought possible. The Schuman Plan is now more than just a rough sketch, so to speak, for the outline features of the emerging picture are already starting to be drawn, with specific issues regarding implementation already having been discussed. This is being done in Paris, whilst many members of the reluctant general public are still anxiously pointing out the risks that implementation of the Plan might entail; as a result, an atmosphere of hesitancy and doubt continues to prevail. This is the situation both at home and abroad. *The Times*, for example, is endorsing the concerns of a British economic expert who is, once again, raising the spectre of the future German domination of the Continent, a vision which is hardly relevant in the light of the current world situation. *The Times* therefore warns against turning the Schuman Plan into an 'exclusive club'. In continental Europe, however, suspicions arise time and again about either the possibility of a supranational High Authority for Coal and Steel ending competition and eliminating freedom of production, or the likelihood of the European Coal and Steel Community entailing serious socio-political repercussions. In short, the Schuman Plan is feared like a leap in the dark.

All those who are beset by such worries are forgetting that the planned European Coal and Steel Community will certainly not be exclusive as far as British interests are concerned; Great Britain, to whose subsequent appropriate affiliation all the countries involved attach the greatest importance, will most certainly not be excluded, and neither will the United States, on whose continued assistance Europe depends far too heavily for it to seek emancipation. As far as the proposed supranational High Authority for Coal and Steel is concerned, it is certain that its tasks have to involve a certain degree of guidance and planning; however, the idea of killing off any freedom of production or entrepreneurial spirit clearly should not and cannot be entertained, for it is these aspects which, quite simply, distinguish the economy of the West from the collective economy of Eastern Europe. Particularly careful consideration naturally also needs to be given to the socio-political implications. It is also self-evident that provision needs to be made to ensure that the objective of raising living standards in the countries of the European Coal and Steel Community is attained without there being any critical transitory effects. In Germany, these general concerns require special considerations related to the unsettled state of the structure of our basic industries and the manifold restrictions imposed upon us.

During the Paris negotiations on the High Authority for Coal and Steel — a venture about which the general public are probably most concerned — it became clear that this organisation must be strong enough to ensure that pan-European interests prevail over the selfish individual interests of each separate country; at the same time, however, it may not escape any national or public scrutiny, since a purely authoritarian institution is incompatible with the democratic principles of the West. A parliamentary monitoring body, one that allows the governments of the participating countries a certain degree of intervention, should be an appropriate safeguard, but it is essential that efforts be made in this connection to avoid introducing structural defects, such as those associated with the United Nations or the Council of Europe, in whose area of activity the arbitrary *veto* of a single member may prevent any progress from being made. Nor is the High Authority for Coal and Steel under any circumstances to be established as an all-powerful entity, as it were, one which reigns omnipotently over individual enterprises (to do so, it would require huge resources), but the need will probably arise for regional associations to be set up, which would act as intermediate links; the greater the extent to which these are established as self-governing bodies, the more effective they will be.

Even thornier than these issues concerning the structure of the High Authority, however, are those substantive issues that inevitably need to be resolved: questions of subsidy, credit, price and tariff policy, as

well as the extremely delicate issue of compensation funds, and many more besides. The experts will have to be consulted on all these issues, so that they can work together to overcome the difficulties. It is to be hoped that such difficulties will not be exacerbated by the tendency, for instance, to prejudge individual issues not covered by the Paris talks, as happened recently following the decision taken by the Ruhr Authority concerning the dual coal price. With regard to the overall aim of the Paris discussions, however, it could be said that nothing could be further from the truth than to believe that the Schuman Plan is all about attaining political objectives at the expense of the economy. The Schuman Plan can achieve politically what the whole of Western Europe is expecting of it only if it also achieves total economic success. There is no conflict here between politics and economics; you simply cannot have one without the other!