

## 'The Ruhr and Europe' from Une semaine dans le monde (16 August 1947)

**Caption:** On 16 August 1947, the French weekly newspaper Une semaine dans le monde expresses its concern at the United States' decision to raise the level of coal and steel production in the Ruhr and fears a reorganisation of Western Europe based on German industrial production.

**Source:** Une semaine dans le monde. La vie politique, littéraire, économique et sociale. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 16.08.1947, n° 66; 2e année. Paris: Le Monde. "La Ruhr et l'Europe", auteur:Ochs, René , p. 2.

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## The Ruhr and Europe

For the last month, the French Government and the general public have been subjected to the hot and cold shower treatment: the Clay–Robertson Agreement restored the level of the German steel industry, but Mr Marshall suspended it ten days later, giving France assurances that the statements of Mr Royall soon seemed to deny. The nervous French Government was again reassured and invited to formulate its objections to German industrial recovery. This was the stimulus for the tripartite conference shortly to be held in London, and there was no cause to worry about the purely Anglo-American character of the technical conference held in Washington to deal with raising coal production in the Ruhr, which created problems within the Bizone.

However, the very terms in which the tripartite conference was announced leave no doubt as to the strictly consultative character of the role reserved for France. The extension of the programme of the coal conference that the British wanted, and perhaps the Americans wished for too, raises the concern that France may have been invited merely to sanction the decisions taken. Clearly there will be no question of internationalising the Ruhr: one can only wonder whether or not France will make its vain protest heard. It also seems that it will have to resign itself to the recovery of steel production.

The French representatives will therefore have to choose between a consultative role that is purely one of protest, holding fast to their initial hard-line position, refusing the merging of our zone with the Bizone and hanging on to the last chance presented by the conference of the Four in November, or the alternative of attempting more active participation, at the cost of abandoning their point of departure, in order to try to penetrate the Anglo-American position. Be that as it may, the raising of the level of German industrial output can henceforth be considered a *fait accompli*, one directed by the ever more clearly defined trends of the new policy of the United States.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that in the case of the Ruhr, Germany and more generally of Western Europe, the Americans have wanted to act swiftly — before the Moscow conference — taking inspiration from the suggestions of the moment. It is impossible to separate the two conferences — the one planned and the other under way — from the present situation in Western Europe viewed as a whole, and from two series of resulting negotiations: the dollar crisis in Great Britain, and the financial negotiations with the United States to which Britain has been constrained, have ensured that for an indefinite length of time it will be unable to stand up to American pressure in Germany. If the idea of a financially viable Bizone has always fitted in well with the British standpoint, it does so all the more now that only a massive rise in German exports can redress the shortfall in dollars required to pay the British contribution towards the provision of supplies to the Bizone; to want to limit this increase would appear paradoxical at a time when Great Britain has hardly enough to pay its share. It is unlikely that it has any greater chance of gaining acceptance for its nationalisation policy, closely linked as this is to the question of a mining industry that the Americans seem determined to take in hand.

As for the double series of Clayton–Murphy conversations with the American ambassadors, these give further proof of the intention of the United States to base the reorganisation of Western Europe on German production. It is somewhat difficult to understand this obstinate compulsion to speak of Germany as if it were an economic entity that cannot be dispossessed of the Ruhr at the very moment when the reorganisation of Europe should put an end to this language by abolishing economic entities. As Mr Crossman pointed out, and as some Americans admit, the constitution of the Ruhr valley under international administration in such a way that it could be integrated into purely economic structures may solve the problem. Growth in the coal production of the Ruhr is a European necessity; revival of Germany's industrial production is, perhaps, already a *fait accompli*. Even if this were so, it would be up to France to promote a solution of this type. Let us remind ourselves one last time: the German problem must be solved in accordance with Europe. Europe cannot be reorganised in accordance with Germany. The touchstone of all European unity lies there; nowhere else.

**René Ochs**