

## Message from Oliver Harvey to Kenneth Younger on the Schuman Plan question (Paris, 31 May 1950)

**Caption:** On 31 May 1950, Oliver Harvey, British Ambassador to Paris, sends a telegram to Kenneth Younger, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, in which he outlines the differing views held by the French government and the British government authorities concerning the plan for a coal and steel pool.

**Source:** The National Archives of the United Kingdom, [s.l.], Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, Records created and inherited by the Foreign Office, FO. Foreign Office: Legation and Consulate, Luxembourg: General Correspondence, FO 982. Schuman plan: coal and steel; French proposals 1950, FO 982/24.

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[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/message\\_from\\_oliver\\_harvey\\_to\\_kenneth\\_younger\\_on\\_the\\_schuman\\_plan\\_question\\_paris\\_31\\_may\\_1950-en-48aaf4be-5cc0-4338-9bd5-12f467f208fa.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/message_from_oliver_harvey_to_kenneth_younger_on_the_schuman_plan_question_paris_31_may_1950-en-48aaf4be-5cc0-4338-9bd5-12f467f208fa.html)

**Publication date:** 07/09/2012

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CONFIDENTIAL

Following received from Paris telegram No. 134 of 30th May. Begins. Repeated for information to The Hague, Brussels, Luxembourg, Rome, Wahn and Washington.

Schuman Plan.

Monsieur Schuman sent for me this evening and handed me a memorandum a translation of which is contained in my immediately following telegram. Monsieur Schuman, who had just returned from the country and only just read through the memorandum himself, said that he thought that the difference between His Majesty's Government and the French Government was based on a misunderstanding of the words "engagement" and "commitment" in the French and English languages. He did not believe that His Majesty's Government in accepting the French invitation as set out in the communiqué, would be binding themselves to accept the eventual treaty. Any party negotiating would be free to sign or not sign. All that they would have agreed to was the final objective. Monsieur Schuman drew attention in particular to paragraphs 4 and 5 of the memorandum and felt that it should put at rest our doubts about acceptance.

2. After reading through the memorandum, I said that I feared that it did not meet the point of view of His Majesty's Government as I had explained to Monsieur Parodi on Saturday in his (Monsieur Schuman's) absence. His Majesty's Government would not, and could not, say here and now that they had decided in accordance with the terms of the French communiqué to put the United Kingdom resources in the pool. Their position was that they welcomed the plan and hoped it would succeed. They wished to participate fully in the discussions in which they considered they could play a useful part. But they could not say as yet, before the scheme had taken shape, whether His Majesty's Government would be a member of the pool or not. It was a question of honesty and of not encouraging false hopes. Our position was different from that of France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg for obvious reasons but that did not mean that we were in any way decided against eventual participation.

3. Monsieur Schuman had clearly not yet got this distinction in his head in spite of my efforts with Monsieur Parodi last Saturday. I said that Monsieur Massigli had been at the Foreign Office on Sunday and was now here but even he, according to Monsieur Schuman, had not apparently made the position clear to the Quai although I am not quite sure whether he had actually seen Monsieur Schuman himself.

4. Monsieur Schuman said that he was very anxious that we should take part in the discussions and he was equally anxious that we should eventually become members of the combined authority. On the other hand, the Germans as well as the Belgians, the Luxemburgers and the Italians had now committed themselves to the principle of pooling and it was clearly most undesirable to go back on that. I said that if we were to participate as we wanted to do it was indispensable to find a formula defining our attitude to the discussions. The formula would obviously have to be acceptable to the French and to the other parties concerned but if they were anxious for us to participate then it should not be impossible to find one.

5. Monsieur Schuman pressed me to say whether His Majesty's Government did not in fact hope eventually to take part in the pool even though they could not commit themselves to pooling at the outset of conversations. I said that His Majesty's Government who welcomed the scheme, were fully prepared to consider coming into it. They had a completely open mind as to participation.

6. After further discussion Monsieur Schuman said that Monsieur Massigli was returning by the first aeroplane tomorrow and he would like the Foreign Office themselves to propose a formula for inclusion in the communiqué, defining His Majesty's Government's attitude which could then be sent to him. I said that the formula must make our reserve as to pooling quite clear. Monsieur Schuman understood this and urged that we should at least put into our formula some phrase to show that His Majesty's Government were at least desirous of eventually coming into the scheme. He evidently regarded some such expression of opinion

as necessary if the position of His Majesty's Government was not to be misunderstood.

7. In conclusion, Monsieur Schuman asked me to urge that neither party should make any reference in the press to the communication of this latest French memorandum.

8. I think there is no doubt that Monsieur Schuman genuinely desires our participation in the scheme and consequently in the discussions. He does not want to lose the Germans and the others whom he has successfully hooked. He believes that a formula can be found to meet our special case but I think he will hold out for at least an expression of readiness on our part to join in the plan if its practical application can be worked out to our satisfaction.

(Foreign Office please pass to The Hague, Brussels and Washington as my telegrams nos. 2,2, and 15 respectively.

S.O.S.F.A.