

The European Dream – The International Authority for Ruhr and the emergence of the European Coal and Steel Community

Miroslav TAȘCU-STAVRE¹,
Maria-Sofia STAICU²

¹Senior Lecturer, PhD, Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, Romania.

²Student, Bachelor's degree, IInd year, Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, Romania.

Abstract: The present essay seeks to emphasize the importance that the International Authority for Ruhr, along with the European Coal and Steel Community, had the maintenance of peace on the European continent, but also in shaping the ideal of European unity.

The International Authority for Ruhr was one of the institutions designed to ensure the disarmament and demilitarization of Germany. At the same time, albeit indirectly, the organization had a substantial role in the recovery and reconstruction of the European countries, including Democratic Germany, by promoting the cooperation of each of their economic sectors. Today's peaceful and prosperous Europe would not have been possible without the establishment of the International Authority, that made sure that the resources of the Ruhr will not be used in destructive purposes.

On the 9th of May, 1950, the Schuman-Monet Plan will provide solutions for the challenges that the International Authority of Ruhr has been confronting – in particular, for the representation of Western Germany in the organization's structure.

The remarkable French proposal to pool the French and German resources of coal and steel not only solves the democratization of the organization, but also opens the horizon of participation to other desirable countries, while allowing the gradual withdrawal of the U.S.A. from the European cooperation and construction.

Keywords: *International Authority for Ruhr; The European Coal and Steel Community; european cooperation; european integration; european security..*

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After World War II, the world seemed to look like an apocalyptic dystopia. Over 60 million deaths were recorded, once brilliant cities were reduced to mortar and dust, broken families and general chaos - this was the landscape of 1945, also known as *Year Zero*, name given due to the deplorable state of the society. Another "year zero" was considered to be the year of the Nativity of Christ, but, unlike 1945, it marked a new theological beginning, "purified" from evil, a breath of fresh air for humanity. The second half of the XXth century marked the beginning of a cleansing and recalibration process of Europe, this time, without the help of the Providence.

After a huge economic crisis and 6 long years of continuous famine, fear, armed conflict and abominable crimes against humanity, World War II ends with the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany on May 8, 1945, and the suicide of Adolf Hitler, the diabolical genius who pulled the strings of the bloodiest "theater" known in history. The German state is in pieces, Berlin is divided into two major areas of influence - the American, Eastern quarter and the Soviet, the West.

The Allies' body will disband two years later, and the European continent will remain dominated by the two great surviving powers, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The presence of the soviets in the heart of Europe was, therefore, a very grievous reality that needed to be changed immediately.

In this paper, I will try to emphasize the importance that the International Ruhr Authority and its successor, the European Coal and Steel Community had in shaping the European idea, present in the collective mentality for centuries, and how they formed the basis of the future. European Union, created with a lot of effort and a lot of will by politicians, who have marked their names in history as "the founding fathers of Europe" (n.d.).

As I mentioned earlier, the U.R.S.S.'s presence in Central Europe was an issue that needed to be addressed immediately. It has often been said that post-war Europe would not have had a chance to be mended without the determination of well-known political figures. One of the most prominent among these was, without a doubt, Winston Churchill, a genius of European diplomacy and oratory. Churchill had a slow but sure rise to the political stage of the world. He will give his first speech as Prime Minister of Great Britain on May 13, 1940, in the House of Commons, warning his allies, through an emblematic reply, about the difficult road to peace and prosperity: "blood, toil, teras and sweat", On the 14th of June, 1940, "under exceptional conditions for France", Churchill proposed the

creation of a "Franco-British Union", with common institutions for finance, foreign policy and defense, while establishing a common citizenship. Two years later, the *memorandum* addressed to Anthony Eden (the political figure that followed Churchill as Prime Minister of Great Britain between 1955 and 1957) will bring to light the concept of the *United States of Europe* (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2022, June 8). We note, therefore, the presence of this desire for political, economic, social and even cultural "union" of Europeans since the continent was on its knees, ruled by the Third Reich.

In a very short time, Winston realized that a unification between the states of Europe was not just an "alternative" to remove the danger from the East - that is, "Russian barbarism" - but the only *solution*. In his speech in Zürich from September 19, 1946, also known as the address on *The Tragedy of Europe*, he depicts a Europe as splendid and blessed with natural resources, as it was troubled by nationalist conflicts. He goes on by describing the consequences of the terrible world inferno - suffering and famished people, living among the ruins of their former homes, always expecting new dangers. Building a "family of Europe" and forgetting the horrors of the past are the key to rebuilding the continent, he said. And in order to restore peace and balance to European soil, the intervention of the United States of America was essential - without it, the "Dark Ages (...) may still return."

Churchill did not end his plea just there. He adds the detail that will shock his entire audience and also on the basis of which the future European Coal and Steel Community will be built: according to him, "the first step to be taken in recreating the European family is to strengthen the relationship between France and Germany". The partnership between these two states was the only way for France to regain its cultural reputation in Europe, rebecome a moral example for the rest of the smaller states. France, Germany, Great Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations (between 1931 and 1949, today renamed the Commonwealth of Nations) (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2022, June 27), the United States of America and, hopefully – says Churchill –, Soviet Russia, must be friends and sponsors of the New Europe. The Prime Minister concludes his apothecotic speech: "Let Europe arise!" (Nicholas, 2022).

The whole speech received a favorable reaction. With this positive impulse and desire, a thirst for peace and a prosperous future, the European powers "mobilized" with extraordinary speed: a few months after Zurich, Winston Churchill founded the Committee for a United Europe (Churchill's Zurich Proposal 1946; Mauter, 1998). There were also federalist organizations such as the *Union Européenne des Fédéralistes*, the *Movimento*

Federalista Europeo in Italy, or the Independent League for European Cooperation in Brussels (Ștefănescu, 2007).

Regardless, matters began to unfold with the aid of the financial support provided by the Americans – that is, the Marshall Plan. The secretary of state by whom the plan was christened, George Marshall, presented on June 5, 1947 his plan for the reconstruction of post-war Europe (Lynch, 1984). The U.S.S.R. refused this plan, forcing the other states located in its sphere of influence to do the same, as expected.

On such a "fertile ground", offered by the dream of the *Old Lion* and the collective desire of European and non-European states had the premises to build a safe, prosperous and peaceful Europe, on the 9th of May, 1950 (today, Europe Day), is addressed one of the most important documents in contemporary history: the Schuman Declaration.

The Second World War left Europe in a sea of disorganization. In the early '50s, for the first time since the war, coal production began to exceed market demand. Steel was also produced in enormous quantities because of the poorly developed expansion of western states. Moreover, just a few weeks after Schuman's proposal, the Korean War also broke out. The reminiscences of the war shine lugubriously in the minds of the Europeans – therefore, the proposal of the French Foreign Minister could not fail to be taken seriously.

Schuman recalls the idea of the atypical partnership, the most delicate to achieve in terms of diplomacy between states – namely, the one between France and Germany. It was Schuman that set in motion the "engine" that powered the "machine" tickled by Jean Monnet, subsequently chairman of the Franco-British Economic Co-ordination Committee. If you have believed, until now, that Winston Churchill came up with the brilliant idea of the Franco-British partnership, you were wrong: in June 1940, it was Monnet who suggested this to the British Minister (Georges Kaeckenbeek, 1951).

Here, it is necessary to go back in time to better understand the foundations of the future European Coal and Steel Community.

Jean Monnet had come up with a plan, named after him, to rebuild and modernize France (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2022, March 12). This plan aimed, in economic terms, to demonstrate France's economic dependence on the natural resources of the Ruhr, so that former Allies could accept its – internationally recognized – control over the Ruhr Basin (Agreement for Establishment of an International Authority for the Ruhr, 1949). If this plan would have succeeded, the French steel industry would have soared, and the goods produced in France would have taken the

place of German products on the German market – it was a form of control exercised in economic terms, which, however, would not humiliate the defeated Germany.

I dare say that in the tumultuous years after the Second World War, a mania took shape around the Ruhr Basin, a "rush", perhaps, as famous as the one for Africa. It is not a surprise, given the important coal and coke deposits that are in the area. The Ruhr region lies in the North-Western part of Germany, close to the Eastern border of the Netherlands, formed along the river of the same name. The resources found there were essential for France and Germany, as well as for Belgium and Luxembourg.

The idea of controlling the Ruhr has its origins in the Versailles Conference after World War I, when France proposed the separation of the Ruhr from Germany and its control, by means of an international regime. Three years after the end of the Second World War, in the spring of 1948, the establishment of the International Authority for the Ruhr was decided by the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France and the Benelux. This act was part of a general agreement on policy in Germany, which included security measures, "the elaboration of an occupation statute, and the preparation of a federal constitution for Western Germany" (Western Allies, 1948).

The International Authority for the Ruhr (I.A.R.) was therefore one of the institutions that were designed to "assure the disarmament and demilitarization of Germany, to further the recovery of the countries of Europe including democratic Germany, and to promote the intricate association of their economic life, which in the last analysis alone can assure a peaceful and prosperous Europe" (Western Allies, 1948). The I.A.R. had the following purposes: to maintain international security by ensuring that the resources of the Ruhr were not used for aggression in the future; to assure that countries working towards the European economic well-being had equal access to coal, coke and steel of the Ruhr; to promote a close economic link between these countries; and to facilitate trade between those countries by lowering trade barriers. The International Authority for Ruhr had its main quarters in The *Landia* of Rhine-Northen Westphalia, in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention.

The functions of the Authority, in order of importance, were: the division of coal, coke and steel from the Ruhr as between German consumption and export, ensuring that each country working for the economic welfare had equal access to them, also taking into account the essential needs of Germany; the supervision of transport, prices and trade, quotas, tariffs and other government measures or commercial arrangements

instituted or permitted by the German authorities, which affect the mentioned resources, modifying or cancelling them if they are considered discriminatory or artificial and, last but not least, the protection and safeguard of foreign interests in those natural resources.

From the structural point of view, the Authority took the form of an international organization. It has a Council, composed of representatives of the member countries (elected, for the Presidency of the Council, for periods of 6 months each), which makes the decisions; and an Executive Secretary, who is in charge of the policies and administration of the organization. He is chosen by the Council and becomes head of the Secretariate. Equality, however, is not fully preserved because France, the U.S., The United Kingdom and Germany (from the moment of its accession) each had 3 votes, while the three Benelux countries each had only one vote. The Executive Secretary shall take part in council meetings but shall not have the right to vote. Apart from the legal powers that he has as an executive and head of administration, his influence also depends on self-confidence, which was an asset extremely important for the image of any organization. The voting procedures in the Council were limited to a majority vote.

The authority's status and immunity were established in Article 28 of the Agreement of London, drawn up on the 28th of April, 1949. Thus, in Germany, the Authority enjoys “a juridical personality, immunity and inviolability, exemption from taxation or from financial controls, regulations or moratoria”.

What is worthy of attention is Germany's anomalous position in the Authority for the Ruhr. She was not one of the signatories of the Convention establishing the Authority. However, according to Article 2, Germany is a member of the Authority. However, under terms of Article 9, point C., it is made clear that the voting rights of Germany will be exercised by a joint representative elected by the authorities of the occupying States. From the time of its creation, the German Federal Government made use of Article 4, point A., according to which the German Government, once established, may appoint a delegate to attend the meetings of the Council. This German delegate would sit next to the representative elected by the other States, who exercised his right to vote.

It was just a matter of time until Germany would vocalize its grievances, especially regarding the fact that the occupying states benefited from more natural resources than the Germans themselves.

On May 9, 1950, in a “flash of genius”, the French proposed the pooling of French, German and other willing countries' coal and steel

resources. Robert Schuman's proposal of "(...) to place all Franco-German coal and steel production under the control of a common High Authority, in an organization open to (and to) other European countries", was the one that formed the grounds of the community that was to remain in history under the name of the European Coal and Steel Community, and subsequently, the basis of the European Union. The Schuman Plan was carefully separated from any activity of the International Authority for Ruhr.

The proposal was received extremely well by the rest of the French people, especially those of the Third Force (n.d.) (*La Troisième Force*), a political alliance from the time of the Fourth Republic, which had been founded, among others, by Robert Schuman himself. After Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany adhered to the objectives of the Schuman Declaration in June 1950 and the Assembly of the Council of Europe approved the Schuman plan in August 1950, on April 18, 1951, in Paris, the Treaty of Paris was signed to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (E.C.S.C.) (Manson, 1955).

This moment also represents the end of the International Authority for Ruhr. On June 25, 1952, the European powers decided to bring the Authority to an end. The I.A.R. will hold its last meeting and will also be dissolved on the 11th of February 1953.

Nevertheless, any ending means a new beginning. Behind the crimson, bloody clouds painted by the war, the dawn – initially, the three European communities – seems more palpable than ever, anticipating the Sun of truce: The European Union, the *European dream*.

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