

30th May, 1950.

No. 52

CONFIDENTIAL.

Monsieur le Ministre,

I have the honour, on the instructions of my government, to inform Your Excellency that, as you have no doubt already learnt from the press, the British Ambassador in Paris delivered a message to the French Government from Mr. Bevin on the 26th May setting out my government's views on the French plan for the international control of coal, iron and steel industries.

2. The message delivered by Sir Oliver Harvey was dated the 25th May and was on the following lines. Mr. Bevin had now been able to give some thought to the organisation of further discussions on Monsieur Schuman's proposal for a Franco-German Coal and Steel Authority in which other European countries might participate. Mr. Bevin thought that the important thing was to get something started soon. The welcome given to Monsieur Schuman's proposal and the effect that it had had on Franco-German relations had led Mr. Bevin to think that no time should be lost in following it up. It seemed to Mr. Bevin that a full scale international conference, which no country could attend without a good deal of preparation and some degree of commitment, would be an inappropriate way of handling the affair at this stage. In Mr. Bevin's view the best step would be to institute direct conversations between France and Germany at the earliest possible moment. His Majesty's Government would like to participate in these conversations from the outset in the hope that on obtaining a clearer picture of how the proposal would work in detail, they would be able to join in the scheme.

3. My government realise that the message delivered to the French Government on the 26th May was already to some extent out of date since the French Government had by then come to the conclusion that the next step should be a conference to which the Benelux and the Italian Governments would be invited. I am, nevertheless, to inform Your Excellency of the terms of the message since it still represents the manner in which my government would wish to participate in any conversations on this subject. They would not, for example, be able to subscribe to the communiqué which the French Government propose to issue this week or to accept in advance the principles and commitments arising out of the communiqué. If the communiqué is issued as proposed, my government would probably issue a communiqué of their own setting out their attitude.

4. I hope shortly to address Your Excellency further on this subject and to give you the text of my government's latest communication to the French Government.

I avail myself of this opportunity, Monsieur le Ministre, to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

A. T. Sandale

For His Britannic Majesty's Minister.

30th May, 1950.

No. 53

CONFIDENTIAL.

Monsieur le Ministre,

With reference to my note No. 52 of the 30th May regarding the French plan for the control of coal and steel, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that Mr. Bevin instructed His Majesty's Ambassador in Paris on the 26th May to make a communication to the French Government on the following lines.

2. "His Majesty's Government have received the French Government's memorandum of the 25th May about integration of European coal and steel production and the communiqué enclosed with it which the French Government propose to issue next week. The French Government will, in the meantime, have received my message of the 25th May and will understand that it would not be possible for His Majesty's Government to subscribe to the communiqué which it is intended to issue, or accept in advance the essential principles and commitments contained in the French communiqué."

3. "But His Majesty's Government wish to reiterate their desire to participate in any discussions which take place in the manner suggested in my message and generally to adopt a positive attitude towards the French proposals. It should, however, be realised that, if the French Government intend to insist on a commitment to pool resources and set up an authority with certain sovereign powers as a prior condition to joining in the talks, His Majesty's Government would reluctantly be unable to accept such a condition. His Majesty's Government would greatly regret such an outcome."

4. "His Majesty's Government appreciates that it would not now be possible to confine conversations to a purely Franco-German basis if some of the governments which have been approached wished to participate on the same basis as the German Federal Government, and further that it might be necessary to consult such governments before agreeing to participation in the discussions of other governments on a different basis."

5. "As regards the procedure when the communiqué which the French Government have proposed is issued, His Majesty's Government will issue a communiqué setting out their attitude. Alternatively, the French Government may consider that it would be preferable for a single communiqué to be issued in which the attitude of the respective governments would be made clear."

I avail myself of this opportunity, Monsieur le Ministre, to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

H. T. Laidlaw

For His Britannic Majesty's Minister.

Son Excellence
Monsieur J. Bech,
etc., etc., etc.