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0521400597 - Coal, Steel, and the Rebirth of Europe, 1945-1955: The Germans and French
from Ruhr Conflict to Economic Community

John Gillingham

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Coal, steel, and the rebirth of Europe, 1945—1955

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JOHN GILLINGHAM

University of Missouri, St. Louis



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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1991

Reprinted 1995

First paperback edition 2002

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 521 40059 7 hardback

ISBN 0 521 52430 X paperback

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*To Mother,
without whom this book could never have been written*

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On 9 May 1950 the foreign minister of France, Robert Schuman, proposed that “the entire Franco-German production of coal and steel be placed under a common High Authority in an organization open to the other countries of Europe.” By pooling their heavy industry interests, he proceeded, the two powerful antagonists could end the competition that had caused armed conflict twice in the previous half-century and create the essential conditions for a new era of material growth and prosperity. On 18 April 1951, after nearly a year of negotiations, the representatives of France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux nations concluded the Treaty of Paris instituting the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and on 10 August of the following year it began operations in Luxemburg.

Europe’s “first great experiment in supranationalism” triggered an immense outpouring of scholarship. Inspired by the hope that a “new form of economic and political cooperation” had been invented, a number of leading social scientists set about meticulous and searching examination of the Schuman Plan and the ECSC, producing an impressive literature. Its overall conclusions were sadly disappointing, however. William Diebold reluctantly ended his masterful and immensely useful *Schuman Plan: A Study in Economic Cooperation* without having proven that the organization had had a measurable economic impact. Ernst Haas, whose *Uniting of Europe* presents the most thoroughly documented of the many cases argued for what might be called a dialectic of integration, felt obliged to introduce the 1968 reissue of his book with a thirty-seven-page apology for the failure of the “spillover effect” to work as predicted in the initial edition. Though unable to demonstrate that the ECSC had actually been a success, Haas, Diebold, and their contemporaries were loath to conclude that it had failed, instead maintaining a faith that – however mysterious its workings – a force called integration was transforming Europe from a continent of warring states

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into a new political entity.¹ Most others have continued to share this conviction: The ECSC has had remarkably few serious scholarly, or other, critics.² The organization itself soon lapsed into obscurity, playing only a minor role in the diplomacy leading to the Treaty of Rome concluded in 1957 and the founding a year later of the European Economic Community (EEC), into which it was incorporated. In 1968 the ECSC merged completely into the EEC and thus disappeared as a separate organization.

After nearly a generation of neglect, the coal-steel pool has emerged from the shadows. Books like Alan Milward's on reconstruction and Michael Hogan's on the Marshall Plan have generated a huge amount of recent interest in the reorganization of Europe after World War II,³ and as the target date of 1992 for economic unity approaches, historians and publics alike are paying special attention to the origins of European integration. Indeed, the once nearly forgotten heavy industry pool is now increasingly the subject of colloquiums, editorials, and pronouncements by television pundits. Yet knowledge about the European Coal and Steel Community has advanced little in the past twenty years. Though an important

¹ See William Diebold, *The Schuman Plan: A Study in Economic Cooperation, 1950-1959* (New York, 1959), and Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, 2nd ed. (Stanford CA, 1968). Among other important early works are Derek Curtis Bok, *The First Three Years of the Schuman Plan* (Princeton NJ, 1955); Henry W. Ehrmann, "The French Trade Associations and the Ratification of the Schuman Plan," *World Politics* 6/1:1953, pp. 453-481; Louis Lister, *Europe's Coal and Steel Community: An Experiment in Economic Union* (New York, 1960); J. E. Meade, H. H. Liesner, and S. J. Wells, *Case Studies in European Economic Union: The Mechanics of Integration* (Oxford, 1962); Horst Mendershausen, "First Tests of the Schuman Plan," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 35/1:1953, pp. 269-288; Harald Jürgensen, *Die Westeuropäische Montanindustrie und ihr Gemeinsamer Markt* (Göttingen, 1955); William N. Parker, "The Schuman Plan: A Preliminary Prediction," *International Organization* 5/1:1952, pp. 381-395; Hans Potthoff, *Vom Besatzungsstaat zur europäischen Gemeinschaft: Ruhrbehörde, Montanunion, Europäische Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft, Euratom* (Hannover, 1964); F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany, and the New Europe, 1945-1967* (Stanford CA, 1968); Arnold Wolfers, "The Schuman Plan and Ruhr Coal," *Political Science Quarterly*, 57/4:1952, pp. 503-520; K. W. Zawadzki, "The Economics of the Schuman Plan," *Oxford Economic Papers*, new ser. 5:1953, pp. 157-189.

² Among the rare critics and skeptics are Bernard Lavergne, *Le Plan Schuman: Exposé et critique de sa portée économique et politique*, 2nd rev. ed. (Paris, 1952), and Altiero Spinelli, *The Eurocrats: Conflict and Crisis in the European Community* (Baltimore, 1966).

³ Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge, 1987); Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1951* (London, 1984).

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collection of conference papers concerning the Schuman Plan negotiations appeared in 1988,⁴ there has up to now been no full-scale study of either the diplomacy leading to the creation of the ECSC or the organization itself. Though lip service is often paid to the founding of the coal–steel pool as the birth act of the new Europe, historical understanding of its origins, operations, and consequences is lacking, and basic questions remain unanswered. If, as the evidence of the social scientists suggests, the ECSC did none of the things it was designed to do, how could the pool have contributed to a Franco-German reconciliation or to European unification? And how, if at all, might these developments have otherwise occurred? Was the heavy industry community, as purported, something truly novel, or did it have important precedents? And who, or what, advanced the integration process? Was it essentially the work of great men or powerful forces, and when and where did it begin: before, during, or after World War II, in France, Germany, or possibly someplace outside of Western Europe? And how, finally, is one to assess the ECSC's overall historical impact?

This book will demonstrate that the coal–steel pool was created to solve a particular historical problem, did so by building constructively on antecedent tradition, and left a legacy that included a number of minor failures but a single huge accomplishment of overriding importance. The *problem* was of course the Ruhr, command of whose resources conveyed economic supremacy in Western Europe during the first half of the century. Conflict over this industrial heartland, often cited as the cause of the two world wars, is more accurately described as a chief source of peacetime instability, standing in the way of both Franco-German reconciliation and the restoration of a sound system of international trade and payments after each of the two world wars. The *solution* was different from what anyone expected or could have predicted. Jean Monnet, with strong American backing, devised the ECSC in an attempt to reform, and thus tame, Ruhr industry. The diplomacy that led to the formation of Europe's "first supranational institution," as well as its actual operations, resulted instead in its restoration to power. Yet the Ruhr, and the Germans, did not become a threat to the peaceful and progressive Europe beginning to emerge but became instead its mainstay and guardian. The integration that grew out of the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community should therefore be understood not as a process set in motion by some new mechanics of

⁴ Klaus Schwabe (ed.), *Die Anfänge des Schuman-Plans, 1950/51* [*The Beginnings of the Schuman Plan*] (Baden-Baden, 1988).

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economics or politics but as the successful result of a kind of cooperative diplomacy made possible by fundamental changes of attitude occurring over a generation. It continues to be successful because the most powerful West European nation is committed to making integration work, and the former great power west of the Rhine accepts the leadership of the neighbor to the east. This result is ECSC's greatest *accomplishment*. Time has proven that the new departure promised in the epochal announcement of 9 May 1950 was neither the invention of publicists nor the fantasy of scholars but the very bedrock of the new Europe.

The organization of this book is guided by the ideas outlined above. The first chapter recounts the failure of successive interwar attempts to solve the Ruhr Problem but also depicts the origins of the antecedent tradition, the institutionalized cooperation upon which the coal–steel community would eventually be built. Chapter 2 describes how the economics of warfare made the United States a power on the European scene (while also measuring its newly acquired strength against that of the main European nations), and the following chapter reveals how America, in eventual partnership with Europe, developed the constructive policies that led to the formation of the ECSC. The fourth chapter discusses the hardships of Ruhr industry in the postwar years, revealing linkages to the past but also a determination to make new beginnings. Chapter 5, in tracing the diplomacy that led to the coal–steel pool, shows how it became part of a larger settlement with Germany – a substitute peace treaty – but also demonstrates that its results were far different from those Monnet had sought. The final chapter describes the Ruhr restoration, considers the impact of external events on the integration process, and assesses the contribution of the coal–steel pool to its future development.

Grants awarded me in 1984 by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Hoover Institution made it possible to begin this project. The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft funded my research the following year as part of the larger Westintegration program supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, which Ludolf Herbst then directed at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich. A semester as Visiting Professor at the European University Institute enabled me to begin publishing from my material. A grant from the Weldon Springs Fund of the University of Missouri provided the necessary means of completing archival investigation and beginning the book itself. The

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National Endowment for Humanities, through its Fellowships for College Teachers Program, secured the release time from lecturing needed to complete the manuscript. Even with such generous and unstinting support, the book would not yet be finished were it not for the flexible scheduling and course reductions arranged at my parent institution by our Chairs Neal Primm and William Maltby in cooperation with Edwin Fedder, Director of the Center for International Studies.

I cannot cite by name everyone whose assistance was required to research this book or make personal mention of all those whose acts of kindness made doing the job a pleasure. A mere enumeration of archives visited is a paltry acknowledgment of appreciation to the many sympathetic and highly professional colleagues who went to unusual lengths to see this project to completion; I can only hint at the full measure of services graciously rendered. One must, however, make beginnings by thanking the entire staff of the archives of the Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, who tirelessly integrated me into the life of the Ferme de Dorigny, aroused what threatens to become a lifelong fascination with Jean Monnet, and Xeroxed tirelessly on my behalf, saving me months of research. Mme. Bonazzi and Irogouin at the Section Contemporaine of the Archives Nationales de France helped me locate two of the most valuable sources used in this study, the Bidault Papers and the French Plan's files concerning the ECSC. Without the competent assistance of Frau Kossol, chief archivist at Kloeckner A.G., a large part of this book would be missing; the Guenter Henle Papers are surely the richest single available nonpublic source of material concerning Westintegration.

To thank any single individual on the staff of the Bundesarchiv for the assistance offered over what has now been nearly two decades would be absurd; credit can only be granted collectively to what is the best-financed, most competently organized and soundly managed national documents repository in Europe. The frequency of citations in this book from the U.S. National Archives as well as the Government Records Center in Suitland, Maryland, is disproportionate to the limited amount of time I was able to spend in these places; this is a testimony not only to the high quality of the material and to the efficiency of the classification system but to the great physical strength of John Butler, who provided me with a constant flow of documents cartons during my relatively short stay. For patience, devotion to duty, and great personal concern I would like to thank above all the staff of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte. It was

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reassuring to know that the paper-snagging copier would always soon be restored to working order, expense reimbursements promptly forthcoming, and 1 DM worth of food stamps from the Bavarian Ministry of Agriculture issued without fail at the end of every month for each day worked.

The staff of the Truman Library was unfailingly helpful, as ever, and the same was true of the archivists and technicians at the Institut für Weltwirtschaft in Kiel who guided me through the relevant files of their extensive collection of newspaper clippings. I would also like to mention the courteous and efficient assistance provided by several institutions where I worked only briefly, the Public Record Office in Kew, the library and archives at the League of Nations in Geneva, the staffs of the Deutsches Museum and the Bayerisches Bibliothek in Munich as well as of the library at the European University Institute in Fiesole.

Several persons deserve special thanks. Werner Bühner, a colleague in the "Herbst Project," unselfishly permitted me to photocopy extensively from the Salewski Papers, which he discovered while researching *Ruhrstahl und Europa*. Catherine André, a doctoral student at the European University Institute, offered access to the material from the archives of the European Community that she had gathered for a forthcoming dissertation on the canalization of the Moselle River. Dr. Hans von der Groeben invited me to his home for an interview and loaned the portion of his papers bearing on the ECSC. Dr. Axel Plagemann, chief of public relations at the Wirtschaftsvereinigung der Eisen- und Stahlindustrien enabled me to become the first scholar to examine the as then unclassified records of the association's board meetings. Jean Martin left the papers of her late husband, James Martin, in my custody for a period of several years. Hans-Günther Sohl furnished his privately published autobiography, *Notizen*. Reinhard Kuls and Boris Ruge provided copies of their masters' dissertations, as did Isabel Warner the galley of an unpublished article concerning decartelization and Regine Perron a chapter from her forthcoming dissertation concerning the European coal problem after World War II. Others who have helped me prefer to remain anonymous.

A book of this scope cannot be based entirely on archival research but must rest in part on the work of others. In order to prevent the manuscript from becoming too long, I forswore annotating footnotes and can only hope that the citations indicate some measure of my immense scholarly gratitude. I would like particularly to thank

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Alan Milward, who inspired this book, and Ludolf Herbst, who encouraged me to complete it. Donna Palmer and Mary Hines helped type the manuscript, partly from nearly illegible handwritten notes, and for discharging this laborious task have earned a greater reward than any I can bestow. My tireless editors at Cambridge, Barbara Palmer and Janis Bolster, may also merit canonization. Anne Blanchard and France Pelletier eliminated numerous mistakes in French from the manuscript, as did Peter Helmberger in German. Ambassador William C. Vanden Heuvel found time in his crowded schedule to read the book in draft, and he too has helped spare me the embarrassment of errors and omissions. All remaining shortcomings of fact and interpretation are my own fault: The buck, as we say in Missouri, stops here. The acknowledgments cannot, however: During the several years needed to research and write this book, the author has been half-husband to a loving wife, half-father to three dear children. May they be as happy as he is that the job has now been completed.

Clayton, MO
October 1990