

**IFS**

**Nils A. Røhne**

---

**Norway between Great Britain  
and Germany**

**IFS Info**

***Institutt for forsvarsstudier***

**No 3 - 1994**

## **Contents**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b> . . . . .   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>From unspoken to outspoken alliance</b> . . . . .                                      | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>A Hitlerite view of Europe?</b> . . . . .  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>The policy of bridgebuilding.</b> . . . .  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Does Norway belong to Western Europe?</b> . . . . .                                    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Nordic Union - a third alternative - UNISCAN</b> . . . . .                             | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Norway and the Schuman Plan</b> . . . . .  | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Norway's reactions as Jean Monnet invites<br/>Great Britain to join ECSC</b> . . . . . | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Conclusions</b> . . . . .  | <b>22</b> |

## Introduction

In this paper I shall try to describe how Norwegian foreign policy was shaped in the area where British and German interests converge. As an introduction I shall examine the years from 1905 until the outbreak of the Second World War.

The postwar reconstruction of Europe was of course very much in the minds of the exile governments in London. I shall try to give some insight into Norwegian planning. However, plans cannot always be carried out in the face of reality. Reality forced Norway to resort to the so-called bridgebuilding-policy. After a short account of bridgebuilding, the presentation focuses on the stress and strain on this policy by international development, and the challenges from initiatives such as the Marshall speech, thoughts of a Nordic Union and the conception of a so-called Third Alternative. Finally the study concentrates on the Schuman Plan and on how Norway's dependence on Great Britain affected her appraisements.

One may argue that a study about "Postwar Reconstruction and Readjustment: 1945 - 1951" should not take 1905 as a point of departure. Where Norway is concerned there are at least two main arguments for doing so. First, as Norway is a small country on the outer rim of the European continent, we cannot assume that her traditions and evaluations in the planning and shaping of foreign policy are well known. Secondly, and this is essential, Norway's reactions, or rather *lack of reactions* to the postwar collapse of Germany and her increased dependence on the UK market, detached from its historical context, could leave your audience just as wise as they were. To anticipate one of my main conclusions - Norway's lack of interest and reactions, although not totally absent, may be explained and understood in the light of this Atlantic nation's feeling of distance to the European continent from the first day of her independence.

\* \* \*

*Nils A. Røhne is a graduate in history from the University of Oslo. Røhne has done research into the relationship between Norway and Europe in the twentieth century.*

## From unspoken to outspoken alliance

From the day on which Norway obtained her independence from Sweden in 1905, "neutralism, non-alignment and a strong taint of isolationism", were main features of her foreign policy. This new state on the northern periphery of Europe tried in many respects to follow the words of her great national poet, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. According to Bjørnson, Norway's foreign policy should be "to have no policy whatever". And it is not carrying things too far to say that the main task, when we speak about Norway's foreign policy ambitions, was, from the beginning, to place international trade and shipping under surveillance.

And foreign trade *was* important for the Norwegian economy. About 30 per cent of her gross national product was exported - one-third of this export was income from shipping. In the first years immediately after 1905 both commodity export (and import) and the shipping industry were growing.<sup>2</sup> Norway became more and more dependent on her trade relations with other countries and interested in international free trade, where a growing demand for chartering could bring an increasing Norwegian shipping tonnage into operation. (This Norwegian interest in a free trade policy, in contrast to the Swedish wish to use trade protection measures to protect her industry, is often mentioned as an important motive behind the dissolution of the union between the two countries.)

Within a decade after independence Norway's foreign policy was put to a severe test. Her policy during the First World War was to remain non-aligned and neutral, but to continue trading with both Germany and Great Britain under the rules of contraband of war. This was no easy task for a young nation that had tried from the very start to follow the words of Jørgen Løvland (Norway's first Minister of Foreign Affairs) "Looking at external relations, it is always being said with much force: We want no foreign policy."<sup>3</sup>

Norway managed to stay out of the First World War, not so much because

---

<sup>1</sup> Olav Riste (ed.), *Western Security, The Formative Years*, "Was 1949 a Turning Point? Norway and The Western Powers 1947-1950", p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Berge Furre, *Our century (Vårt århundre)*, *Norsk Historie 1905-1990*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary Record 1905 - 1906 (Stortingsforhandlinger 1905 - 1906), pp. 45 - 46.

of her own policy, but because the belligerents on the whole, to quote Sir Mansfeldt Findlay, the British Minister in Christiania, judged that "the risks of converting Norway into an ally were greater than the benefits which could be expected from a foothold in Scandinavia."<sup>4</sup> But during the war the real extent of Norway's political, economic and strategic dependence on Great Britain was underlined. And during Norway's official neutrality we can find a sympathy for the Entente and in many respects an acceptance of its economic warfare against Germany. This anti-German feeling was fuelled by the loss Norway suffered both of human lives and merchant ships because of Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare. Apparently pro-British sentiments were stronger and pro-German sentiments weaker in Norway than in any other of the neutral European states.<sup>5</sup>

The war nourished both Norwegian scepticism against Germany and continental Europe and the feeling of an unspoken alliance with Great Britain. This gave impetus to the almost anti-European frame of mind that was an integrated part of Norway's general foreign policy from the day of independence. Facts of life had so far confirmed the words of Wedel Jarlsberg (Norwegian ambassador to Paris from 1906 until 1930) in 1905 to Prime Minister Christian Michelsen: "In my opinion there is no doubt, we have to adhere to England - we are not fitted to bear dictate and orders from Germany."<sup>6</sup>

There were also economic reasons for this unspoken alliance. In 1920 Britain stood unrivalled as Norway's most important trading partner: about one-third of Norway's trade was with Britain, while Germany, as the second most important trading partner, accounted for one-tenth of both import and export. As the table of value of imports and exports show this was going to change considerably during the interwar period.

---

<sup>4</sup> Olav Riste, *The neutral ally*, London 1965, p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Ulf Andenæs, *England or Germany (England eller Tyskland)*, Thesis in History, University of Oslo, 1976. p. 182.

<sup>6</sup> Roald Berg, "The country we expect help from" ("Det land vi venter hjælp af") *Forsvarsstudier IV*, 1985, p. 128.

*Table 1: Value of imports and exports 1931-1939*

|                 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 | 1939 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Exports:</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Great Britain   | 27,6 | 25,7 | 20,4 | 24,2 | 24,1 | 23,7 | 25,1 | 24,6 | 24,1 |
| Germany         | 11,6 | 12,3 | 12,5 | 13,6 | 13,0 | 13,1 | 13,0 | 15,4 | 14,5 |
| <b>Imports:</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Great Britain   | 20,3 | 21,5 | 22,8 | 22,8 | 17,8 | 17,7 | 18,2 | 17,2 | 17,8 |
| Germany         | 23,0 | 21,3 | 21,0 | 19,1 | 17,0 | 17,6 | 17,9 | 18,4 | 19,0 |

*All the figures are in per cent of the total export/import. From the year 1938 the figure for Germany also includes Austria. In the years before 1938 the figures for Austria have little or no significance for the total export/import picture.*

In 1939 the import figures show that 19 per cent of Norway's import came from Germany and Austria. This was 2.2 per cent more than from Britain. Regarding export Britain was still the main market for Norwegian products.<sup>7</sup>

The Norwegian answer to the international development between the two World Wars was to continue a foreign policy, in common with the other Nordic states, where preservation of their neutralist stand and the avoidance of entanglements in great power disputes were central features. Norway's reluctant entry into the League of Nations does not modify this conclusion. It was "an expression of a non-binding and harmless alignment with Western powers"<sup>8</sup>, and the later withdrawal from the League's sanctions paragraph underlined her neutralist stand. Seen against this background it is not surprising that the Norwegian reaction to Aristide Briand's project of a European federal union in 1929-30 was to show "the greatest possible reservation". Symptomatically Norway

<sup>7</sup> *Historical Statistics (Historisk statistikk)*, Central Bureau of Statistics of Norway, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Olav Riste, "Isolasjonisme og stormaktsgarantier", *Forsvarsstudier* No. 3, 1991, p. 9.

called into question the use of the concept of Europe as suitable in discussions about schemes of cooperation, and Norway's adherence to Britain surfaced as she asked if the British Empire were going to be included in Briand's union.<sup>9</sup>

The Briand discussion revealed that Norwegian interest in continental European cooperation was limited to the economic field. This, of course, reflects Norway's heavy dependence on foreign trade. And of the so-called Oslo convention between the Scandinavian and Benelux countries, initiated by the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mowinckel, Norway (and the other small states of Europe) tried to promote a free trade policy.<sup>10</sup> On the whole Churchill's motto for the British people during the First World War can be used to characterise Norwegian foreign policy after the same war: "Business carried on as usual during alterations on the map of Europe".<sup>11</sup>

But after the outbreak of the Second World War and after the German attack on Norway it was impossible to continue "business as usual". And Norway's relationship with Great Britain was changing from an unspoken to an outspoken alliance. The Norwegian scepticism to Germany and to continental Europe, in spite of important economic ties, was reaffirmed.

From the ninth of April 1940 there was no further need for "smooth manoeuvring" by Norway between the United Kingdom and Germany. The following postwar collapse of Germany and the increased dependence on the UK market did not in itself create any noticeable unrest in Norway. And as shown below, it was the introduction of the Schuman Plan, and later in the same year the Pleven Plan, that again challenged the Norwegian distance to the European continent and Germany.

---

<sup>9</sup> Nils A. Røhne, Norwegian Attitudes Towards the Briand Plan, *Forsvarsstudier No 8* - 1991.

<sup>10</sup> Ger van Roon, *Small States in years of depression, The Oslo alliance 1930 - 1940*, Van Gorcum, The Netherlands, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Churchill, *Complete Speeches (1974)*, vol. 3, Speech at the Guildhall, 9 Nov. 1914, p. 2341.

## A Hitlerite view of Europe?

In November 1941, the new Norwegian Foreign Minister, Trygve Lie, wrote an article in *The Times*, where he introduced the so-called Atlantic Policy. This policy was confirmed by the Norwegian government in May 1942 in the important document "The principal features of Norway's foreign policy":

*"After the war, Norway will be economically impoverished, and we shall need immediate supplies of food and raw materials and also capital of our means of production ... we shall have to co-operate in the first instance with other Atlantic countries. From the cultural point of view, Norway feels herself strongly attached to the democracies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean ..."*

*Until it becomes possible to create an effective and universal League of Nations, Norway will be compelled to seek security in regional arrangements. Norway therefore, desires binding and obligatory military agreements concerning the defence of the North Atlantic, and she is anxious that Sweden should be a party to these agreements. The Norwegian Government would also look with satisfaction upon the adhesion of Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France to the system. An attempt should also be made, during the war, to create the basis for economic co-operation between the western democracies, which is the primary condition of international economic co-operation. Norway is, therefore, greatly interested in international co-operation in regard to shipping ..."*

Just as clearly as the Norwegian government recommended Atlantic co-operation in "The principal features", it was negative to continental arrangements. The document paid lip-service to the proposal of a "United States of Europe" with the formulation: "... Norway will be greatly interested after the war in developing economic and cultural relations with the continent of Europe ...". But although Germany was not mentioned the comment in connection with continental alliances left no room for misunderstanding: "A continental alliance would ... lead sooner or later to the complete dependence of the small countries of Western Europe upon the strongest continental power."<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> The Labour Movement's Archives (LMA) (Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv), Oslo, Finn Moe's Archives, "The principal features of Norway's foreign policy" - 8 May -1942.



The relation to Germany was particularly mentioned later in the document: "The question for Norway, as well as for the other Allies, is to create security against any future German aggression. The first demand must be the complete and controlled disarmament of Germany. For Norway it is of special importance that Germany shall have no opportunity to possess a navy and an air force. We, like our Allies, are interested in creating economic and social stability in Germany as the basis for a future German democracy. For the rest, relations with Germany, in the period immediately following the war, will depend on the internal development in Germany herself."

The emphasis on "The principal features" is well-founded. Here we find the expression of the Norwegian attitudes stemming from 1905, the same attitudes that were going to colour the Norwegian posture towards European integration schemes after the Second World War too. The document tells us that Norway was a very lukewarm European, and the "distance" to the continent can largely be found in Norwegian judgements about Germany and German policy. Under the pressure of the war this attitude of scepticism could slide into a kind of Europhobia. As a reaction to a British Pamphlet called "Relief and reconstruction in Europe. The first steps", six of the foremost advisers to the Norwegian government in exile in London drew up a document titled "Europe should not be treated as a unit". To use the conception "Europe", without an explicit statement that the British Isles was "an integral and important part of it", was to accept a "*Hitlerite view*", according to the Norwegians.<sup>13</sup>

The postwar collapse of Germany and increased dependence on the UK market therefore coincided with Norway's foreign policy priorities and ideas about regional and universal cooperation in the postwar era.

On the eve of the Second World War Knut Getz-Wold, prominent adviser in the Norwegian Ministry of Finance, gave lectures and wrote about international aspects of Norwegian economic reconstruction. He underlined that Britain would have to play a leading role in all international relief and reconstruction, and he emphasised the fact that the economic life of Britain and Norway had "an outstanding feature in common: the prosperity and economic well-being of both countries is completely dependent on their international connections."

---

<sup>13</sup> LMA, Aake Anker Ording's Archives, Box 8, 1942.

He mentioned of course the central role of Britain as Norway's largest supplier and customer, with Germany as second on the list of Norway's most important trading partners. (The figures for Britain were: 23 per cent of total import and 28 per cent of total export in 1938. Corresponding figures for Germany in the same year were 17 and 16 per cent respectively, according to Getz-Vold.)

But it is a notable fact that he did not express any great concern for the consequences for Norwegian economy in general, given Germany's evident reduced role as a trading partner for Norway in the early postwar years. However, in two areas of primary importance for the Norwegian economy in the reconstruction period, he did sound a little uneasy. Given the development in production of *coal*, and taking into account the postwar needs in Britain herself and the export capacities of Poland and Germany, Norway "might encounter considerable difficulties in securing the necessary imports of *coal*." Besides this important question of energy Norway was very interested in "a speedy rebuilding of her fleet after the war". Considering the fact that Germany had built about 25 per cent of Norway's mercantile marine in the six years before the war, the question was where Norway was to have new ships built to replace those she had lost.<sup>14</sup>

However Norwegian reflections on postwar Europe and postwar economy did not focus particularly on the economic consequences of the German collapse. This does not suggest that Norwegian politicians did not have some understanding of the significance of Germany in the total European economic picture. A clear majority in the Norwegian decision-making bodies realized that total economic disarmament of Germany could mean a serious loss for European economy as a whole. Most of them would probably endorse the view from a conference on reconstruction in Europe (The Fabian International Bureau Conference on March 17th and 18th 1945) where among others the director in the Norwegian Office of Foreign Affairs, Aake Anker Ording, participated: "... if the needs of Europe are to be satisfied in the immediate postwar years, there is a vast potential of plant and labour in Germany which can be used to supply it. To suggest, therefore, that the people of Europe would prefer poverty to insecurity is to pose a false alternative. There is no reason why they should not have both prosperity and security, since neither is possible without the other, as was recognised in the Atlantic charter.

---

<sup>14</sup> Knut Getz-Vold, "International aspects of Norwegian economic reconstruction", *International Affairs*, Vol.XX, No.1, January 1944, pp. 54 - 67.

## The policy of bridgebuilding

The absence on the Norwegian agenda of discussion of the economic importance of Germany, was due in no small part to the overall foreign policy line and strategy chosen by Norway after the war. This policy was named bridgebuilding. During the latter years of the Second World War the major allied powers gave priority to the United Nations. Norway shelved her "Atlantic policy" and fell back upon a policy resembling the foreign policy from the interwar years.

The intention of avoiding involvement in international tensions and conflicts together with the widespread belief and awareness of Norway's Atlantic fall-back position were central elements in the basis of bridgebuilding-policy, as they had been in Norway's policy of neutrality in the interwar years. In this respect bridgebuilding, far from being new, was a *paraphrase of a well-known theme* in Norwegian foreign policy stemming from the day of independence in 1905.

The Norwegian researcher Nils Morten Udgaard gives the following definition of bridgebuilding in his central work "Great Power Politics and Norwegian Foreign Policy":

- \* Norway should not enter into binding political and military agreements with any particular countries.
- \* She should not burden the international system by introducing new complications.
- \* Norway should avoid action which might be interpreted as throwing doubt upon her impartiality towards, and her independence of, the Great Powers.

In addition to these negative aspects of bridgebuilding, Udgaard also manages to identify some "positive actions resulting from the Government's policy". But he underlines that no 'bridges' were built; bridgebuilding retained a declatory character, however, the Government tried to make it operational as following:

- \* Norway should *diversify her economic and cultural* relations geographically between Eastern and Western Europe.
- \* She should contribute to the development of habits and techniques of international cooperation.

- \* Norway should strengthen her own defence and support measures which strengthened the international system.
- \* At home, Norway should develop a social system, a middle way of a third force between capitalism and communism.<sup>15</sup>

Norway embarked on the postwar era with this policy of bridgebuilding, realizing that wartime cooperation between the Great Powers was bound to continue. Thus the main foreign policy aim was to *support universal co-operation between all nations in the world*, and discourage the establishment of regional groupings, especially regional groupings with a *continental European flavour*. Because as Finn Moe put it in the article "European Federation" in the governmental newspaper *Norsk Tidend*: "From a Norwegian point of view the thought of a European Federation ... (without) ... Great Britain and Russia will mean the same as to surrender Europe to the strongest power on the continent, to Germany."<sup>16</sup>

Given Germany's importance for Norwegian economy in the latter years before the Second World War, one would expect this topic to occupy a more prominent position in the Norwegian foreign policy-making process. But as we have shown above, from 1905 on Norway kept Germany and continental Europe at a distance. And the war itself and the early postwar years, with a foreign policy based on bridgebuilding, did not foster an environment where long-term economic thinking, focused on Germany, prevailed over main foreign policy preferences.

---

<sup>15</sup> Nils Morten Udgaard, *Great Power Politics and Norwegian Foreign Policy*, University Press, Oslo 1973, pp. 192 - 194.

<sup>16</sup> *Norsk Tidend*, 22/3 - 44. Finn Moe was a serious candidate for the position of Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs after the war. He was a central person in the foreign policy discussions in Norway, and one of the few decision-makers who developed a more positive attitude towards European cooperation after the war.

## Does Norway belong to Western Europe?

Does Norway belong to Western Europe? This question was asked by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, during the discussions on a permanent European economic organization, in connection with the Paris conference about the Marshall Plan.<sup>17</sup> It was the initiative from George Marshall on 5th June 1947 that compelled Norway to contrast the foreign policy of bridgebuilding with her foreign economic policy. The result of this appraisal was that Norway, to ensure both prosperity and security had to join this Western initiative, but at the same time she feared it to be the embryo of a Western bloc. That is why Norway hesitated, and hesitated for such a long time that Dalton asked his distressing question.

It was not only the threat to bridgebuilding-policy, as such, that motivated the Norwegian reluctance. This was probably the main obstacle to a whole-hearted Norwegian rally round the Marshall initiative, but the Marshall initiative and the ensuing negotiations in Paris were fraught with other important faults from a Norwegian point of view. In the later historical debates there has been a discussion about the American motives behind the Marshall initiative. What was the American long-range policy? The historian John Gimbel maintains that the Marshall Plan was almost exclusively motivated by an American wish to rebuild Germany as fast as possible.<sup>18</sup>

John L. Gaddis asserts that "the whole point of the Marshall Plan had been to restore self-confidence, so that Europe would be in a position to defend itself."<sup>19</sup> To achieve this supposed, in one way or another, that Europe could make full use of the German potential, without allowing Germany to get the upper hand in Europe. The answer to this dilemma was to further plans about European integration. Apart from the belief in the pure economic rationale of European

---

<sup>17</sup> Helge Ø. Pharo, "Bridgebuilding and Reconstruction", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 1, 1976. p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> John Gimbel, *The Origins of the Marshall Plan*, Stanford 1976, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> *Op.cit.*, note 1, p. 68.

integration, this more superior political appraisal of the situation was the background for the American insistence on a permanent European organisation to coordinate and administrate the programme of aid following the Marshall initiative. As Alan S. Millward puts it in his work "The Reconstruction of Western Europe": "The United States did not only intend to reconstruct Western Europe economically, but also politically."<sup>20</sup>

Norwegian politicians were keenly interested in the motives behind the Marshall Plan. It is symptomatic that at a meeting of the cooperation committee for Nordic social democrats at the beginning of February 1948, where the leaders from all the Nordic countries participated, Erik Brofoss (Norwegian Finance Minister) strongly disagreed when Ernst Wigfors (Sweden) argued that it was not necessary at this stage to speculate over the American motives. "I can't agree ... that we don't need to discuss the motivation behind the Marshall Plan. Our attitude to the plan is dependent on the American motives ...", said Brofoss.<sup>21</sup>

And like the historians above, the Norwegians were more or less aware of the mixed motives behind the Marshall Plan, and their unrest did not, as mentioned, originate merely from concern about the bridgebuilding-policy. The American claims and the negotiations indicated a form of European continental integration with a prominent place for Germany. There was no guarantee that the cooperation would not develop in a federal direction.

We find further traces of Norway's virtually anti-European and anti-German attitudes in her fight to give the UN-based organisation, Economic Commission for Europe, ECE, a prominent operating position in the European Recovery Program (ERP). This fight was lost in the beginning of September 1947 when Britain changed her mind.

---

<sup>20</sup> Alan S. Millward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe - 1945 - 1951*, London 1984, p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> LMA, Nordic Co-operation Committee, minutes of meetings 7 and 8 February 1948.

## **Nordic Union - a third alternative - UNISCAN**

In the wake of the Marshall Plan and during the following discussions two other conceptions aroused some interest in the Norwegian political debate. These were the proposal of a Nordic custom union and the idea of a so-called "third alternative", between American capitalism and Russian communism.

The question of a Nordic customs union had been touched on just after the end of the Second World War.<sup>22</sup> The Marshall Plan and the American attempt to promote regional European cooperation, led to the establishment of a Scandinavian study group. But the work in the study group soon revealed Norwegian scepticism. The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs voiced Norway's feelings about the project with the following words: "... the Danish government considered that this would make a good impression in the United States ..."<sup>23</sup> That the proposal of a Nordic customs union came about in order to pay lip service to a general Nordic sceptical attitude towards the American claim of European cooperation, was also confirmed by the Danish Minister of Commerce, Jens Otto Krag, in February 1948. At a meeting of Nordic social democrats he admitted that the Nordic countries, not least Norway, were sceptical to a Nordic custom union, but the work "made at least a good impression in the United States".<sup>24</sup>

The idea that is known as the "third alternative" gave rise to just as much, if not more, interest in Norway than the question of a Nordic customs union. Marshall's speech in June 1947, and especially the British Foreign Minister Bevin's famous speech in January 1948, gave impetus to this idea in Norway, particularly within the governing Labour party. The third alternative was seen in a Norwegian context to be British-dominated cooperation among the social democratic regimes in North-West Europe, in the economic, cultural and political-ideological fields. This differed from the continental, federative solutions.<sup>25</sup> The idea of a British-led confederate cooperation lying between American capitalism and Russian

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., note 16, p. 150.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., note 18, p. 145.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., note 22, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Nils A. Røhne, "Norway - a lukewarm European", *Forsvarsstudier*, No. 7-1986.

communism attracted Norway, and at the same time cooperation within this framework corresponded to a certain degree with Norwegian scepticism to continental Europe and Germany.

This conception of a "third alternative" around Great Britain was strengthened by Norway's postwar external economic links. Norwegian politicians were aware that the war had increased Norway's dependence on the outside world, particularly on the Atlantic nations. At the same time Germany became a negligible trading partner in the early postwar years. An estimation made in 1947 of countries that replaced imports from Germany gives the following list: Great Britain - 44%, USA - 28%, Belgium, France and the Netherlands - 22%, rest of the world - 6%.<sup>26</sup> If we add the following figures from e.g. the year 1948 to the above, showing Norwegian figures for import and export from countries with a share from 5% and higher - Great Britain - 18% and 16%, Sweden - 13% and 9%, USA - 13% and 8%, Be-ne-lux - 7% and 10%, Denmark - 5% and 6%, France - 4,5% and 7%<sup>27</sup> - we can conclude that Norway, in the economic field, was closely linked to countries in the Atlantic and North-West European area. And once again Norway did not feel any discomfort in this situation.

This is not to say that Germany and the German economic potential was not contemplated at all. For those who studied Norwegian import and export statistics in more detail, it was not difficult to find remnants from the important position of Germany before the war, and omens about a future comeback after the immediate reconstruction period. In 1948 the American and British zones in Germany took delivery of Norwegian *fish* amounting to 15 per cent of the Norwegian total export. This was almost the same share as that of Great Britain, and no other market approached these figures. (Here I succumb to the temptation to remind you that in the discussions now proceeding concerning Norway's membership in EEC, the significance of continental Europe as a market for Norwegian fishing products is one of the main areas of discussion.)

The commodity group with the highest share of total Norwegian export when we speak about the trade between Norway and the Anglo-American zones, was *ores and slag*. The zones stood in a class alone with a share amounting to 27

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. note 16, pp. 168 -169.

<sup>27</sup> *Statistical Yearbook 1950*, pp. 140 - 141. Central Bureau of Statistics of Norway.



per cent of the total of this commodity group. But ores and slag represented only 2 per cent of the total Norwegian export in 1948. For fuel, lubricating oils etc, (especially coal) the zones supplied Norway with 7 per cent, being number four on the list of important suppliers, after Poland, Great Britain and the United States.<sup>28</sup> Expectations of a significant German contribution to the economic revival of Europe were at the basis of such statements as the following given by the director of the Norwegian national bank, Gunnar Jahn, in winter 1948: "... that Germany again starts to produce ... is the only way the Germans can contribute their share to compensate for the devastations they brought about."<sup>29</sup>

The opinion that a recovery of the small nation's economy was a question of a European recovery, and that a European recovery again was dependent on a German recovery, led the Norwegian representative at the Paris conference on the Marshall Plan, in July 1947, to speak "in favour of an accelerated German recovery and ... wider consultations with the smaller powers about policy in Germany ...". But at the same time Norway insisted "on restrictions being maintained in those areas which competed directly with Norwegian interests, fishing, whaling, shipping and shipbuilding ...".<sup>30</sup>

But in this connection there was one big question that needed a satisfactory reply: If the Germans were allowed to develop their resources, how could one hinder the industrial and economic potential from furnishing the country with a platform from which they would dominate or try to dominate Europe ?

But in spite of these misgivings concerning Germany, Norway on the whole felt quite comfortable with her Western economical ties. In 1948 Norway even raised the question of more organized Scandinavian-British economic cooperation.<sup>31</sup> Britain pursued the idea as she tried to balance the French proposal of a continental European payment union, FINEBEL.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. note 28, pp. 138 - 141.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Petter Hermansen, *From state of war to alliance (Fra krigstilstand til allianse)*, University Press, Oslo 1980. p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945 - 1951*, London 1984, p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 306 - 318.

In the middle of December 1949 UNISCAN was established, but like her continental counterpart, FINEBEL, the committee never became a significant forum for economic cooperation.

Nevertheless the Norwegian membership in UNISCAN at the end of the 1940s was a confirmation of Norwegian policy valid through the whole decade: Norway was, economically, dependent on and closely bound up with Britain, and she was even willing to strengthen these economic ties through the establishment of regional groups for economic cooperation. It is tempting to go so far as to say that Norway had only one main claim to make in this connection: the groups should not have a continental, say German, feature.

### Norway and the Schuman Plan

Eight days before Robert Schuman read out his proposal in May 1950 "that the entire French-German production of coal and steel be placed under a High Authority, within an organisation open to the participation of other European nations"<sup>33</sup>, Finn Moe, then chairman in the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Norwegian parliament, had a comprehensive foreign policy article in the Government's mouthpiece, *Arbeiderbladet*. When he mentioned the European situation he wrote that "Norway ... is to a high degree dependent on the economic and political development in Europe ... the most important and most difficult question in Europe is beyond doubt the relationship to Germany. It is the same old question: How can Germany resume its old position in European economy and participate in the European political cooperation without being more powerful than the rest of Europe and thus be a danger for them?"<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. note 31, p. 397.

<sup>34</sup> *Arbeiderbladet*, 1.5.50.

In his memoirs the German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, gives Robert Schuman honourable mention: "In the morning I was still unaware that this day would bring the news about a decisive turning point in Europe's development."<sup>35</sup> As we know it was by no means any new idea the French foreign minister proposed on 9th May 1950. This was a variant of a well-known theme - the internationalization of the Ruhr, but this time dressed in European clothing. One of the main objectives was to create a European framework in which French security was consistent with German reconstruction.

Norway did not receive any invitation from the French government to the conference following the initiative from Robert Schuman, but Great Britain did! There are grounds for presuming that Norway did not regard with disfavour the British refusal to participate at the conference. The first Norwegian reactions also revealed, not surprisingly, that Norway was equal to Great Britain in her judgements about the Schuman Plan.

Norway was sceptical of the overnational character of the plan and stressed, like Britain, that European cooperation should be cooperation between responsible governments.<sup>36</sup> Norway disliked the idea that European cooperation should go beyond traditional international cooperation between sovereign states.

In parliament the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Halvard Lange, emphasised the political importance of Schuman's initiative: "The Schuman Plan came first and foremost into existence as a result of political considerations".<sup>37</sup> In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the political considerations were expressed as follows: The aim was to eliminate the old contrasting relationship between France and Germany and lay the foundation of a political union in Western Europe.

---

<sup>35</sup> Hans Hoffmann, Opening of the public records of the European Communities historical archives, Germany 1983, p.12.

<sup>36</sup> UD (UD=Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Bind 11, Norway and the relation to the Coal and Steel Community - report dated 11 October 1954, p. 5; UD, 52.2/23, Bind 1, Report dated 19 June 1950; Stortingstidende (Parliamentary records) 7b 1950, p. 1722.

<sup>37</sup> Stortingstidende 7b, p. 1721

Even more importantly, the incorporation of the coal and steel industry of Western Germany into a European organisation would be an effective way to cement West Germany to the Atlantic powers and thereby prevent a German orientation towards the east.<sup>38</sup>

The first Norwegian reactions to the Schuman Plan were a kind of adaptation of the initiative into the pattern of cooperation Norway preferred: the economic, military and political potential of West Germany had to be utilised, not to shape a European bloc, but to strengthen Western Europe as a part of the Atlantic community. This "Atlantic" approach to the understanding of the Schuman initiative was not confirmed by the British decision not to participate in the subsequent conference. Britain was the necessary link between the continent and the Anglo-Atlantic world and the guarantee for European cooperation developed within an Atlantic frame.

But this did not trouble Norway. On the contrary, it was in the best interests of Norway, given the strong economic ties between the two countries, that Great Britain did not participate in a future coal and steel community. And the comments from Norwegian quarters probably resulted not so much from genuine interest, as an effect of foreign policy obligations - it was almost impossible to let the Schuman initiative pass uncommented. The fact that Norway followed the negotiations in Paris with very little interest lends force to my argument. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there were doubts whether the negotiations in Paris would result in anything at all.<sup>39</sup> After the agreement was reached between the six, Norway's ambassador in Paris was still sceptical about the outcome of the whole process, as he predicted problems in the ratification.<sup>40</sup>

However, on 25th July 1952 the treaty came into force. The Coal and Steel Community was a reality, and this seems to have increased Norwegian attention and interest. Now the focus in Norway was changed from broadly viewed appraisals to the more concrete economic consequences for Norway. The Coal and

---

<sup>38</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 1.

<sup>39</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 1, Report about the Schuman Plan, dated 19 June 1950.

<sup>40</sup> UD 52.2/23, Bind 4, Reports from Ambassador Rolf Andvord dated 21 March and 19 April 1951.

Steel Community would influence the Norwegian economy particularly in the following areas:

- \* Norway would be faced by a import monopoly in her iron ore export.
- \* The import of iron and steel could be made difficult because of the strong position of the Coal and Steel community as an export monopoly.
- \* Difficulties could arise regarding supplies of coal to Norway.<sup>41</sup>

One would have expected that the slight signs of unrest about the consequences in economic sectors involving coal, iron and steel should have been stronger, taking into consideration the ambitious national development projects - not least the Norwegian steel work in the north of Norway, in Mo i Rana.

This was an essential part of the governing Labour party's total industrial policy, a policy staked on industries that could replace expensive imports and earn foreign currency.<sup>42</sup> A corollary of this would be to give close attention to the development of Norway's export markets, and as shown in the table below West Germany's significance in this respect was growing.

In all there were good reasons for following the development closely, and in retrospect Norway's reactions seem very cautious. The Norwegian interest so far could, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, be defended in GATT and OEEC. But in the long view this was considered insufficient, and at the beginning of 1953 the Norwegian government appointed a permanent delegation to the ECSC, because of "the economic and political importance of the Coal and Steel Community".<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Report about the Schuman Plan dated June 1952.

<sup>42</sup> Tore Grønlie, *The main industrial policy line (Den industripolitiske hovedlinje)* in Trond Bergh (ed.), *Growth and prosperity (Vekst og Velstand)*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1981, p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Address to Government dated 19.2 1953.

*Table 2: Norway's exports and imports from 1946-1954*

|                 | 1946 | 1947 | 1948 | 1949 | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Exports:</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Great Britain   | 10,3 | 14,5 | 15,8 | 18,1 | 18,1 | 19,9 | 20,1 | 19,5 | 19,1 |
| Germany         | 5,3  | 2,7  | 5,4  | 6,4  | 11,2 | 7,6  | 8,7  | 9,1  | 10,2 |
| <b>Imports:</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Great Britain   | 19,3 | 19,3 | 18,3 | 21,3 | 22,1 | 23,0 | 20,0 | 21,0 | 20,2 |
| Germany         | 5,6  | 1,8  | 2,7  | 3,1  | 4,1  | 6,7  | 11,1 | 16,0 | 15,2 |

*The figures are per cent of the total export/import for each year. From 1949 the figures shows the export/import from West Germany.*

## **Norway's reactions as Jean Monnet invites Great Britain to join ECSC**

Three and a half years after Robert Schuman's famous speech, and a year and a half after the ECSC became operative, Norway really had to put her relationship to the ECSC on the agenda. The reason for this was the invitation from the High Authority, by its president Jean Monnet, to Britain, with the purpose of establishing a closer connection between Britain and the Coal and Steel Community. Jean Monnet's initiative brought about Norwegian reactions which underline how closely Norway was following Britain in her European policy, and indicate that Norway's dependence on Britain influenced strongly her policy also vis-à-vis the Coal and Steel Community.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 8, Report about the Coal and Steel Community, 6.4 1954, p. 3.

Jean Monnet's invitation to Britain opened up new possibilities for British membership in the ECSC. This, combined with an inquiry from the British to the Norwegian government on what Norway's position would be if Britain joined the ECSC, induced Norway to appoint a committee with the task of investigating economic and commercial problems in the event of Norwegian cooperation with the ECSC.<sup>45</sup> Simultaneously the Norwegian ambassador to OEEC in Paris approached the High Authority in the ECSC to clarify whether Norway could enter into negotiations along the same lines mapped out by president Monnet in the case of Great Britain. The answer from the High Authority was negative.<sup>46</sup>

This opened a very undesirable scenario for Norway. If the negotiations between Great Britain and the ECSC, succeeded Norway would be faced by a British-Continental common market for coal and steel. In a discussion with the British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden his Norwegian counterpart, Halvard Lange, mentioned the Norwegian unrest in this matter. Eden's answer reassured the Norwegians suitably: Primarily - "Her Majesty's Government has not yet reached a conclusion on the reply to be made to Monsieur Monnet's approach". Secondly - "... there could be no question of the United Kingdom giving up part of its sovereignty". And concerning the anxiety of the Norwegian Government whether "an agreement might have an effect on ... Norway's position as an importer of steel" Eden commented: "... Her Majesty's Government would certainly not enter into any undertakings which would reduce healthy competition ... it would be their purpose to continue to have full regard to the needs of the United Kingdom's traditional customers."<sup>47</sup>

The negotiations between Great Britain and ECSC came to nothing. But the appointed committee on the Norwegian side continued its work and on 11th October 1954 it concluded: At present Norway should not take any steps to achieve a closer association with the ECSC. If other countries, especially Great Britain, should seek a closer association with the ECSC, Norway's relationship to

---

<sup>45</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 8, "Questions concerning a closer association to the ECSC", 2.3 1954; UD, 52.2/23, Bind 8, "Norway's relation to ECSC", 15/3 1954; UD, 52.2/23, Bind 11, "Norway's relation to the ECSC", 11.10 1954.

<sup>46</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 8, Report from Arne Skaug dated 19.3 1954.

<sup>47</sup> UD, 52.2/23 Bind 8, Account from a discussion between Lange and Eden - dated 19.3 1954.

the ECSC had to be brought forward once more.<sup>48</sup>

On the whole the disadvantages were esteemed greater than the advantages for Norway, and general political considerations did not prompt closer cooperation with continental Europe. But during the discussions about Norway's relationship to the ECSC we also find a growing awareness about the significance of the coming continental cooperation.

It is therefore appropriate to end this section about the European Coal and Steel Community by underlining that Norway also on this occasion, in the early fifties, *confirmed her Atlantic profile and her strong economical and political dependence on Great Britain*. And as we have shown above this really influenced Norway's choices when the Schuman Plan was announced. But the statement from Arne Skaug, Norway's OEEC ambassador, that "the continental cooperation is potentially of the greatest interest for Norway's commercial and industrial life"<sup>49</sup>, foretells problems of adjustment as the Norwegian feeling of distance to the continent would have to coexist with growing economic dependence on the same continent. We are struggling with those problems in the Norwegian arena of politics today.

## Conclusions

Until the middle of our century Norway was a very lukewarm European; occasionally Norwegian attitudes can be classified as even anti-European. The roots of this Norwegian "distance" to the European continent can largely be found in Norwegian opinions about Germany and German policy. Even at the times when Germany was of vital importance for the Norwegian economy, Norway, when all is said and done, adhered to Britain.

Not only was Britain Norway's principal trading partner, the unspoken and outspoken alliance was also based on solid military, political and ideological ties. Bearing this in mind we can ascertain that the more or less smooth manoeuvring

---

<sup>48</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 11, "Norway's relation to the ECSC - Report from inter-departmental committee", dated 11.10 1954.

<sup>49</sup> UD, 52.2/23, Bind 10, Report from Arne Skaug, dated 7.7 1954.



between Britain and Germany, from 1905 until 1940, was not resumed after the Second World War. Soon the Atlantic states and particularly Britain became Norway's first choice when we speak about alliance alternatives. Germany and the continent were respectively renounced as a partner and as a geographic frame of cooperation. And even if some voices were heard extolling the continental cooperation exemplified by the European Coal and Steel Community, the basic sceptical attitude survived and is still very much alive in many quarters in Norway at the present time.