

"Never has the French National Assembly been treated with such contempt ..." from Action (May 1950)

Caption: In an article in the socialist daily newspaper Action, Louis Marin, socialist Member of Parliament for Meurthe-et-Moselle, expresses his fury at the French Government's decision to leave the French National Assembly completely in the dark throughout the preparations for the Schuman Plan and is also anxious about the role assigned to Germany under the Plan.

Source: Action. 22.-28.05.1950. [s.l.].

Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, [s.l.]. Archives Jean Monnet. Fonds AMG. 1/4/16.

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An exclusive statement by Louis Marin

‘Never has the French National Assembly been treated with such contempt ...’

We asked Louis Marin, the MP for Meurthe-et-Moselle and former Minister, for his opinion of the Schuman Plan. This is what Mr Marin was kind enough to have to say to *Action*’s readers:

A project such as Robert Schuman’s was not unexpected: speeches were being made in America and Britain calling for such plans. In France, we had politicians speaking in Parliament, at lectures by famous speakers and in newspapers which were laying the groundwork for it. They were certain to be applauded by West Germany and by our allies, but no one expected a project on such a scale, covering so many issues with no clear parameters or details and so threatening for France’s future and interests. Above all, no one expected that the French Government would take the initiative.

When faced with the facts, a former President of the Council, well-known, despite his tall stature, for not seeing the approach of coming events (witness his attitude when, during his time as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hitler’s troops crossed the Rhine, and his extraordinary congratulations addressed to Hitler and Mussolini on the eve of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Second World War), easily summed up the problem, ‘France is spontaneously and quite willingly offering Germany what Germany would have imposed had it been victorious!’

In theory, we live in a Republic and a democracy. According to the Constitution, the National Assembly has more power and sovereignty than any other Chamber in France for more than 150 years: yet never has it been treated with such contempt! Not only was it not aware of the plan (which, Jean Monnet tells us, he drew up a long time ago) but nor were any of our committees. However, it will soon be clear to the army, navy, air force, trade, agriculture, labour and others that they should have been consulted.

What is worse, 12 days before the ‘bombshell’, the Foreign Affairs Committee had adopted a resolution opposing ‘pre-emptively’ the original scheme that gave rise to the Schuman Plan. The Committee voted unanimously in favour of the resolution. It is only the second time in the 42 months of the life of this Parliament that unanimity has been secured in this committee. By way of response, and without warning the Committee, its Chairman, the Bureau or any of its members, the Foreign Minister then dropped his ‘bombshell’.

To make sure that the elected representatives were faced with a *fait accompli*, he dropped it on the eve of his departure for London, where he immediately submitted it to the Conference of the Three.

We learnt that those directly concerned, neither the labour unions nor the employers, were consulted. This is totalitarian diplomacy in the true sense of the term.

They tell us that the plan is very vague (which is the case) and that it can be improved. However, the opposite is much more likely, because it is wide open to all sorts of manipulation, because the Germans are particularly devious in this sort of negotiation, and because our allies have proven to us that, ignorant as they are of our Continent, they will support Germany more than us, as they did between 1918 and 1940.

What is already clear is that Germany will be placed on an equal footing with the other States. Its Nazism, its crimes, its horrendous massacres will be amnestied; just as it is already doing, it will rearm without delay; and its reconstruction has, over the last six months, been speeded up and will be complete long before ours.

Thanks to the fact that it is starting off with no war costs and with very few welfare costs, an exceptional population, the same leaders bereft of moral principles but very experienced, a race with an avid imperialist appetite and disciplined and where the totalitarian and racist mentality dominates all the more since, while they lost the two wars through too much haste, they do not intend, this time, to lose the third. At all events, they will enter the new Europe in order to take control.

One of the most certain outcomes of such an arrangement (however skilfully we implement it) will definitely be to close a large number of our undertakings on the grounds of low productivity. The wars prevented them from modernising, they are cash-strapped, and the State is not wealthy enough to help them out. Their closure will lead to increasing unemployment.

We are being told that wages, prices, working hours and social charges will be fixed jointly, that products will be supplied at the same prices to the whole world, without discrimination or selectivity, that living standards will be improved, that peace initiatives will be supported, and a thousand other things. To achieve this, we are being asked to simply entrust ourselves to a High Authority consisting of independent individuals but we are not told what powers it will be given! It will need the powers of a Caesar! Accountable to whom? Subject to what supervision? The supervision of a United Nations' inspector who will report twice a year!

At first sight, what we have is Perrette and her milk pail in La Fontaine's fable! But Perrette was carrying only a small amount of milk on her head. Once she had lost the milk, she would have quickly learnt the dangers of such fun and games. Mr Schuman is carrying on his shoulders 'the wealth of France', as the kings of old used to say. Before travelling abroad, he really should have secured the advice and support of competent individuals and of the elected representatives. May those representatives remember this in time!