

'Politics and the Schuman Plan' from the Luxemburger Wort (15 May 1952)

Caption: On 15 May 1952, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort reports on the implications of the ratification, the previous day, of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) by the National Chamber of Deputies.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 15.05.1952, n° 136; 105e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Die Politik und der Schumanplan", auteur:M. F. , p. 1.

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Politics and the Schuman Plan

We have now ratified the Plan. Every political party, with the inevitable exception of the Communists, voted in favour. The prologue has come to an end, and the first act begins. In other words, when the moment finally comes to make the first entrance on stage, we shall be part of it. We can no longer stay back in the wings. We have taken on a role in the play, and we have to perform it, whether the show is a resounding success or a complete flop.

As Mr Robert Schuman once told us in a firm and amiable manner, there is no way out that will allow us to return to the old ways of doing things.

But, for all that, we are not worried, for we know that the Schuman Plan treaty is inspired by the very best intentions and covers everything that is needed to pave the way for a genuine, harmonious Schuman Community, where consideration of the whole is not detrimental to or neglectful of its individual parts.

We must not be frightened by the fact that the Plan will run for 50 years. If it is a flop, despite all these initial good intentions, then it will simply fall apart and cease to be binding for any of the current members. However, if it is successful, if its aims are realised, then we have nothing against its lasting for 20 years, 50 years, or even longer.

In addition, we all want more than the Schuman Plan can offer us. We want an economic union of European nations, including a monetary community. The preliminary work for the establishment of a European army is well under way. It is very probable that, once full economic union has been achieved, the High Authority will become superfluous, however indispensable it may be as a prerequisite, as a first step towards the realisation of the economic community.

The Socialists are currently backing the Plan, for they have received guarantees that the High Authority cannot intervene arbitrarily in the wage and welfare policy of the individual countries. As a result of the democratic security agencies surrounding it, the High Authority itself now becomes a political institution. Political in the sense that it is exposed and subject to the influences of mass movements, unless it wishes to change or extend its activities pursuant to a vote in the parliament set up by the Schuman Plan. It would suffice for the trade unions to regard the interests of the workers as being compromised in some way for large-scale union action against the supranational Authority to be sparked off at international level. What would stop the same from happening if certain wage demands based on decisions made by the High Authority were rejected by heavy industry?

Indeed, it is in the interests of all of us that heavy industry in Germany and France should increasingly come under pressure from the workers to increase wages. Nevertheless, we do sense a danger that it will be virtually impossible for the High Authority to work unimpeded and with the independence necessary and that because of this, the Plan will not make it past the transitional stage.

If the High Authority were to implement the Schuman Plan as the founders intended and improve the overall standard of living of the working masses, then the trade unions would have to give the implementation of the Plan their full support. However, there is no guarantee that this is what it will do. For the author of this article, there is no doubt that the Socialists in the various countries involved in the Plan, despite approving the said Plan, have not sacrificed the realisation of their programmes governing the socialisation and transfer of the assets of their economies' current bosses into the hands of the community or the state for the next 50 years. Many of them probably see the Schuman Plan as an instrument for speeding up the realisation of Socialism throughout Europe. The Schuman Plan provides action taken by Socialist trade unions with a European dimension. Naturally, there will be strikes against the Schuman Plan High Authority, just as there have been up to now against governments. And, in reality, these strikes will not be held to protest against the High Authority but against the individual governments. Once Socialist governments come to power in the countries of the Schuman Plan, the Plan itself it will no longer be recognisable, and neither will the High Authority.

Concern about the political future forces us to consider these possibilities and highlight their dangers, just as the rapporteur, speaking on behalf of the Chamber, warned of the damaging economic implications which may arise as a result of an excessively inflexible implementation of the Plan.

Certainly, such dangers fall outside the wording of the Treaty which we have approved with a clear conscience. But were external causes not always to blame for reducing so many treaties to mere ashes?

M. F.