

Discussion paper by Jean Monnet (3 May 1950)

Caption: On 3 May 1950, Jean Monnet drafts a discussion paper on the need for France to initiate cooperation between the countries of Europe.

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Whichever way we turn in today's world, we run into nothing but deadlock, whether it be in the growing acceptance of a war which is seen as unavoidable, in the problem of Germany, in the continued recovery of France, in the organisation of Europe, or in the very place of France in Europe and the world.

There is only one way out of this kind of situation: determined practical action on one limited but decisive point which brings about a fundamental change on that point and, by knock-on effect, alters the actual terms of all the problems concerned. This is the spirit in which the proposal put forward in an annex was drawn up. The thoughts set out below summarise the observations which led to it.

I

Attention is fastening onto one simple and dangerous object: the cold war.

All proposals and all actions are seen by public opinion as a contribution to the cold war.

The cold war, whose principal aim is to make the enemy give in, is the first stage of a real war.

This prospect engenders in our leaders a rigid cast of thought that is typical of those who pursue a single aim. The search for solutions to problems disappears. This rigid cast of thought and fixation on an objective, on the part of either side, inevitably leads to a clash, which follows inescapably from such a point of view. This clash will spark off a war.

In fact we are already at war.

We need to change the course of events, and, to do that, we need to change men's minds. Words cannot achieve this on their own. Only immediate action on one basic point can alter the present state of immobility. We need a thoroughgoing, genuine, immediate and dramatic action which will change things and give birth to the kind of hopes in which our peoples are on the point of no longer believing — thereby giving the peoples in the 'free' countries hope in the more distant aims which will be assigned to them, while creating in them an active determination to pursue those aims.

II

The German situation is fast becoming a cancer which will endanger peace in the near future, and indeed immediately in the case of France, if its development is not guided, in the case of the German people, towards hope and cooperation with the free peoples.

This situation cannot be resolved by German unification, because it would require a US-Soviet agreement which it is impossible to envisage for the moment.

It cannot be settled by incorporating West Germany into the West:

— because that would put the West Germans, as regards the East, in the position of having acquiesced in the separation, whereas their constant objective must be unity;

— because incorporation raises the question of arming Germany and will lead to war and to provoking the Russians;

— because of political issues to which there are no solutions.

Even so, the Americans are going to insist that West Germany be incorporated:

— because they want something to happen and they have no other idea to hand;

— because they doubt France's solidity and drive.

Some people think we should start setting up a replacement for France.

There is no point in trying to solve the German problem; it cannot be solved on the present basis. We need to change the basics by transforming them.

We need to take vigorous action which will transform the German situation and redirect the German outlook, not seek a static solution on the existing basis.

III

The continued recovery of France will come to a halt if the question of German industrial production and its competitiveness is not solved rapidly.

The basis for the superiority which French industrialists acknowledge that Germany possesses is its production of steel at a price with which France cannot compete. They conclude from this that the whole of France's productive sector is handicapped by it.

Germany is already asking to be allowed to increase its output from 11 to 14 million tonnes. We will refuse, but the Americans will insist. Eventually we will express some reservations but we will give in. At the same time French production is hitting a ceiling or even falling.

Merely setting out these facts removes the need to describe their consequences in great detail: an expanding Germany, German dumping for export — calls for protection for French industries — halting or disguising of trade liberalisation — re-establishment of pre-war cartels — possible orientation of German expansion towards the East, a prelude to political agreements — France falling back into the rut of limited, protected production.

The decisions which will bring this situation about are to be initiated, if not taken, at the London Conference, under American pressure.

The United States does not, however, want things to develop this way. It will accept another solution if it is dynamic and constructive, especially if it is put forward by France.

The solution proposed does away with the question of domination by German industry, whose existence would create a fear in Europe which would cause constant disturbances, would finally prevent the Union of Europe and would once again cause the loss of Germany itself. This solution, by contrast, would, for German, French and European industry alike, create conditions for joint expansion within a competitive setting, but one without domination.

From the French point of view, such a solution puts French industry at the same starting point as German industry, eliminates the export dumping which the German steel industry would otherwise continue to practise, and gives the French steel industry a part to play in European expansion, without any fear of dumping and without any temptation to set up a cartel. Fear in the minds of industrialists, which would lead to Malthusianism, the halting of 'liberalisation' and finally a return to the same old grooves as in the past, will be eliminated. The greatest barrier to continued progress will have been swept aside.

IV

So far we have been engaged in efforts to organise the West economically, militarily and politically: the OECD, the Brussels Pact and Strasbourg.

Two years' experience, the OECD discussions on payment agreements, trade liberalisation, etc., the arms

programme put forward at the last Brussels meeting, the discussions in Strasbourg, the endeavours, so far without practical result, to set up a French-Italian customs union, all these show that we are not making any real progress towards the aim we have set ourselves, in other words, the organising of Europe, its economic development and its collective security.

Britain, however much it may want to collaborate with Europe, will not concede anything which might have the effect of loosening its ties with the Dominions or locking it into commitments with Europe which go beyond the commitments undertaken by America itself.

Germany, a vital part of Europe, cannot be involved in the organising of Europe as things now stand, for the reasons given above.

What is certain is that carrying on with the action we are already taking, carrying on down the same old paths, is leading to deadlock and, what is more, may let the time during which organising Europe would have been possible slip by.

All that the peoples of Europe are hearing, in fact, is words. Soon they will no longer believe in the ideal which their governments persist in putting before them but which never goes any further than empty speeches and pointless meetings.

Public opinion in America will not support joint action and American involvement if Europe does not show it has drive.

The creation of a dynamic Europe is vital to future peace. An association of 'free' peoples involving the USA does not preclude the creation of a Europe — quite the opposite: since such an association will be based on freedom, and therefore on diversity, Europe, if adjusted to fit the conditions of today's world, will develop its creative faculties and will thus gradually emerge as a balancing force.

We therefore need to abandon outdated models and move onto a path of transformation, both by creating basic, shared economic conditions and setting up new authorities compatible with national sovereignty.

Europe has never existed. Adding together the sovereignty of countries meeting in councils is not a way of creating an entity. Europe has to be genuinely created, revealed to itself and to public opinion in America, and it must have confidence in its own future.

Creating it, at a time when the question before us is whether to enter an association with a United States which is so strong, is essential as a way of demonstrating that the countries of Europe are not just taking the easy way out, that they are not giving in to fear, but that they believe in themselves, that they are going straight ahead to set up the first instrument in bringing a Europe into being within the new community of free, peace-loving peoples to which it will bring balance and the continuation of its creative thinking.

V

At the present time, Europe can only be born of France. Only France can talk and take action.

But if France does not speak or act now, what will happen?

There will be a rallying round the United States, but for the purpose of conducting the cold war more vigorously. The obvious reason for this is that the countries of Europe are afraid and are looking for help. Britain will move closer and closer to the United States; Germany will develop fast and we will not be able to prevent it reaching a settlement; France will fall back into its old Malthusianism, and such a development will lead inevitably to its eclipse.

VI

Since the Liberation, French people, far from being crushed by their experiences, have shown a vitality and a faith in the future, in expanding production, modernisation, a transformation of agriculture, promotion of the French Union and so on.

During these years, however, the French have forgotten Germany and the competition it represents. They believed in Peace. They are suddenly rediscovering Germany and war.

An increase in German production and the organisation of the cold war would revive their feelings of fear of the past and bring the Malthusian reflexes back to life. They would sink back into their psychology of fear at the exact moment when boldness would help them sweep aside both these dangers and would make the French spirit achieve the progress for which it is ready.

In the present state of the world, the finger of fate points at France. If it takes the initiative which will sweep fear aside, revive hope in the future and make it possible to set up a force for peace, it will have liberated Europe. And in a liberated Europe, the spirit of people born on the soil of France, living in freedom, in constantly advancing material and social circumstances, will continue to make its vital contribution.