

Draft memo from Jean Monnet to the President of the Council (20 October 1950)


Caption: In this draft note to René Pleven, President of the French Council, Jean Monnet outlines the scope of the plan for a European army and defines the place of Germany in a united Europe.

Source: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, [s.l.]. Archives Jean Monnet. Fonds AMI. 4/6/5.

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URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/draft_memo_from_jean_monnet_to_the_president_of_the_council_20_october_1950-en-f29b58b4-8f40-4380-a7bf-afb39bf1e4bf.html

Last updated: 06/07/2016



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The success of the Schuman Plan, as well as the fate of Europe and of France, now depend on how the problem of German rearmament is resolved.

Indeed, German rearmament totally changes the nature of the German problem. For our neighbours, perhaps more than for France and the other nations, the Declaration of 9 May 1950 opened up possibilities that go far beyond coal and steel. Germany again had a seat at major international talks. It saw the emergence of the initial outlines of a European organisation in which, through its membership, it could attain moral rehabilitation, material prosperity and peace.

If German rearmament is accepted, in whatever form and whatever the safeguards that are used to make it palatable (restrictions, deadlines, controls), Germany, through direct dialogue with the United States and through its rekindled strength, would have won considerable prestige and scope for political manoeuvre. In a short space of time, it will occupy a position on the continent that could have been claimed by France through the Schuman Plan.

In such a context, Germany would lose any direct interest in measures that have been largely overtaken by events. At the same time, France, whose fate is bound up in that of the Western world, will be just a second-rate partner in an Atlantic entity that, having been set up for defensive purposes, will be dragged into war. It is quite clear that the only ideal that could motivate German troops and justify the sacrifices that will be asked of them is that of re-conquering lost provinces.

Even given a war situation, the contribution made by German divisions will be largely outweighed by the resulting weakness springing from the rivalries and concerns at the risks that have always been associated with German militarism.

However, it will not be possible to maintain a stance of simply refusing German rearmament point blank.

This refusal would just be ignored and would only result in the Germans perceiving France as having gone back to a policy of impotent suspicion of Germany and abandoning plans for European integration to which we have solemnly declared our commitment.

This refusal is also militarily absurd, because it is impossible to defend German territory without the active support of all its people, and French public opinion would not accept that more blood be spilt for the benefit of an indifferent Germany.

One, and only one, solution is possible — the creation of a European army integrating German contingents into large, joint units. Such an army could not be created by the simple merger of military units based on tenuous provisions that would only thinly veil just another old-style coalition. Following the example of the solution found for coal and steel, institutions and a new mind-set have to be used to achieve a genuine organic fusion of joint forces, whose purely defensive character will be a factor for peace.

If this were to happen, the Schuman Plan would retain all its importance and relevance. More than that, it should be the first stage and the pledge of creating a European community in which Germany would have a place because it would assume obligations and responsibility, just like France and the other states of continental Europe.

We could then, without any alarm, envisage the changes in Germany's status as a natural consequence of the development of European institutions. At all events, Germany will demand those changes as a quid pro quo for its participation in common defence.

France would continue to play the role on the continent to which its initiative of 9 May 1950 entitles it. A constructive and new ideal would reinforce the military benefit of having combined forces, since it would strip rearmament on the continent of any aggressive threat and remove the drawbacks associated with

rebuilding the German army.

The community of free peoples would itself emerge strengthened by a grouping that would include, alongside the United States and the Commonwealth, a unified continental Europe.

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