

## Guy Mollet, Reflections on the Eden Plan

**Caption:** In 1952, Guy Mollet, Chairman of the Socialist Intergroup in the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, welcomes the proposals set out in the Eden Plan, since he regards them as a positive development in the United Kingdom's attitude to European affairs.

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## Reflections on the Eden Plan

by Guy Mollet

When I left the scene of the Strasbourg sittings on 30 May this year, I was full of optimism and hope.

In the few days of that animated and indeed heated part-session, we noted the renewed interest that our British friends were expressing in Europe and the constructive policy that they were proposing to pursue. The representatives of the Six had also managed to overcome propaganda concerns and differences of opinion on detail and to support, more or less unanimously, a resolution that is still one of the best to be drawn up in Strasbourg. They had agreed to call for the rapid formation between the Six of a political community with limited but real powers (with other countries participating if possible), and it was agreed that the United Kingdom and the other European countries should be associated with the studies and negotiations from the beginning, with a view to establishing the status of Community 'Associated State', with limited obligations and rights, at the same time as the structure of the Political Community was determined.

This new climate was the result of the Eden Plan. Readers of *Notre Europe* have already been fully informed of the details. The British Government was proposing that organic links be established between the ministerial and parliamentary bodies (the Council of Ministers, the Common Assembly), the Restricted Communities (Schuman Plan, Defence Community) and the equivalent Council of Europe bodies (Committee of Ministers and Consultative Assembly).

According to the British memorandum, the purpose of the links was to enable certain states that, like the United Kingdom, were unable to participate in those Communities to be closely associated with their activities.

It was found that the most convenient form of association was for Member States of the Council of Europe other than the Six to be authorised to send observers to the Council of Ministers and the Common Assembly of the Restricted Communities. That made it possible to establish a regular system of consultation between the United Kingdom in particular and the Restricted Communities and to facilitate the extension of the measures that the Six had considered in the context of the Restricted Communities to the United Kingdom and other countries (for example, the programme for the allocation of coal and steel resources in the event of a shortage).

Clearly it is only feasible to grant such privileges to the United Kingdom (and other Member States of the Council of Europe) if the United Kingdom is prepared to accept equivalent obligations *vis-à-vis* each of the Restricted Communities — for instance, to provide information on its coal and steel industry on the same scale as might have been obtainable by its representatives who were following the work of the Schuman Plan's Council of Ministers as observers.

At a meeting of the Committee of Ministers in May, Mr Eden formally stated that that was indeed his Government's intention. That was confirmed to the Assembly shortly afterwards by his deputy, Mr Nutting.

I shall not dwell any longer on the details of the Eden Plan. Looking at it closely, one realises the extent to which it reflects the outlook and mode of operation of our friends across the Channel and also their pragmatic approach. I need only draw attention to the significant progress that it represents in the British attitude. The United Kingdom — as Mr Eden later told the House of Commons unequivocally — now wants to be associated with the *political activities* of the Restricted Communities. It is even expressing a willingness to be associated with the future Political Community. In order to implement that policy, it is prepared to accept certain active responsibilities towards the Communities. Understandably, the Plan was warmly received in Strasbourg.

With his initiative, Mr Eden has offered a way of overcoming the obstacles that the Council of Europe has been facing over the past two years, by proposing, with the full authority of a government initiative, a new plan for the structure of a united Europe.

What is the plan?

The six continental countries would continue developing the supranational institutions that appear essential to finding a solution to the German problem by linking West Germany permanently to Europe and taking a final decision on Germany's future. These supranational organisations would not be closed systems, a continental 'superstate' in power. We would be side by side with our British friends, and no doubt also with other European countries, who would continue to be associated with the day-to-day work of the institutions. They would not be 'full members'; this would merely be a form of 'restricted participation', sufficient to maintain the cohesion of Europe as a whole.

The Eden Plan offers a real opportunity to take account of the understandable reservations that many people have, in France and elsewhere in Europe, about the current policy of federation for continental Europe alone.

Now that the Assembly is meeting again, is the optimism that I felt in May still appropriate? I hope that we shall be completely reassured in the next few weeks.

I have to say that, despite the support and general interest when the Schuman Plan entered into force, I fear that at the moment European policy is facing a dual threat from the hardening attitude of its declared opponents and the lack of understanding of some of its supporters.

There is very little to be said about the opponents. We know them from the controversy surrounding the European projects. Some represent an outdated nationalism, indeed chauvinism; others defend the interests of certain hidebound employers concerned about the possibilities of social change inherent in European union. It is no secret that the French iron and steel industry is opposed to the Schuman Plan or that it has devoted considerable resources to stiffening public and parliamentary opinion against the French Government initiative. These opponents have not been deterred by repeated failures in parliament; they will undoubtedly try to return to the fray by 'infiltrating' the European Coal and Steel Community. One of the tasks of the Pool's Assembly will be to remain vigilant. The anti-trust provisions of the Treaty must be implemented in every country, without weakening.

It is not the attacks by the employers that worry me the most. Dealing with those is the main task of a militant and a socialist representative. What I am really concerned about is that they find fertile ground in a resurgence of nationalism. That night of madness in July, when all night long our six Foreign Ministers shifted the seat of the European Coal and Steel Community from Turin to Mondorf les Bains, is an illustration. The Saar, the Franco-German equivalent of Trieste, is another indication of the lack of decisiveness. Those in power have accepted the idea of giving up control of their army, their coal and their steel for Europe, but they cannot make the few reciprocal concessions that would bring about a *modus vivendi* in the Saar. And it is not from lack of goodwill or statesmanship on the part of the leaders, it is because they are afraid of repudiation by the public, who are better informed on this minor issue than about the major decisions on European union. The Saar issue remains unresolved. It almost wrecked the coal and steel pool, and for over a year now it has been standing in the way of any governmental activity by the Council of Europe. In the future it will be yet another obstacle for the European Defence Community.

I nevertheless remain convinced that in the next few months we can still take the decisive steps needed to change the face of Europe. We have to act quickly. Time is no longer on our side. A few more disappointments and the opponents, who, as I said, are powerful, might win the day. So is it too much to ask all sensible Europeans to put aside their propaganda slogans for a while and agree to make a wholehearted joint effort to achieve the objective agreed unanimously by the European Assembly? The aim is, starting with the Six, to create a limited Political Community that will be supranational on the one hand and, on the other hand, will have an organic association with the United Kingdom and the other Member States of the Council of Europe. Or are we such individualists that, although we can agree on the fundamentals, we are unable to overcome our differences on the details?

I myself have always been in favour of union, and the party that I have the honour to represent in the

European Assemblies has also adopted that stance and has backed it decisively in certain votes crucial to European union. But it cannot be upheld when the major decisions have to be taken unless it is *actually* put into effect by all those who support it and they accept *both terms of the equation* as inseparable and equally important: the supranational nature of the Community that has been approved and its actual association with the United Kingdom. Otherwise the situation is totally equivocal, and it would be better to establish clearly the issues on which we disagree and openly consider whether they stem from economic and even philosophical points of view that are incompatible.

It is true that one of the first steps taken by the High Authority, which I welcome, was to act on the British suggestion that a permanent delegation should be sent to Luxembourg to represent the United Kingdom in the High Authority. That is an important step. It is still not enough, and the British Government itself is aware of that. As Mr Nutting said in Strasbourg, it is merely a diplomatic link of the kind that might exist between two friendly countries.

What do Mr Eden and virtually the whole of the Strasbourg Assembly want? They want to extend that association to the political activities of the Communities and to their parliamentary and ministerial institutions. To date, very little has been done to achieve that. We have had all too many statements of principle. When our countries are about to enter into commitments that will affect their future, it is essential for the intentions of their governments and parliaments to be embodied in clear decisions as incontrovertible evidence of the policy that they intend to pursue.

Otherwise, it need hardly be said that a *fait accompli* policy that would cut off the little Europe of the Six from the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries would be unlikely to receive the backing of our parliaments and that it would in any event have to expect strong opposition from European socialists.

All these issues will be debated at length in Strasbourg. We have the right to expect important decisions from the assemblies that meet there. The architects of Europe will not shrink from that task.