

## 'Schuman Plan' from Paraat (27 April 1951)

**Caption:** On 27 April 1951, after the signing of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the weekly journal Paraat, mouthpiece of the Dutch Socialist Party, emphasises the implications of the Schuman Plan.

**Source:** Paraat. Weekblad van de Partij van de Arbeid. 27.04.1951. Amsterdam: NV De Arbeiderspers-Partij van de Arbeid. "Plan-Schuman", auteur:Ruygers, Geert.

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## Schuman Plan

The Schuman Plan, after long and often difficult negotiations, has at last been finalised in draft form and approved by the Ministers of the countries concerned. One more hurdle remains to be cleared: ratification in the various parliaments. Except in Germany, the outcome of the parliamentary debates is hardly in doubt.

We note with satisfaction that the Netherlands participated actively in bringing the plan to fruition, and that the relative strength of the Dutch delegation counted on several occasions for more than the position of a small nation or our share in the production of iron and coal might lead one to suppose. This is of all the more significance as the Dutch Government took a special place among those taking part in the discussions in Paris. Of the governments of the six Schuman countries, the Government of the Netherlands is the only one in which the Socialist element is represented, particularly in the socio-economic and financial area. In addition, with all the objections which may otherwise be raised to the conduct of affairs in our country, the fact remains that, generally speaking, there is inherent in our financial and economic policy an element of direction and planning compared to which the other countries on the European continent lag significantly behind. This had a positive effect on the discussions in Paris on more than one occasion.

Chiefly because the Socialists form part of the Government in the Netherlands, the Schuman Plan could not have come into being without any input from the Socialist movement. In view of the essential significance which the organisation of the Schuman Plan may acquire in future for the entire Western European economy, particular value may be attributed to that. It might be noted in passing that this again shows that the question of whether the Socialists should form part of the Government in these times needs to be assessed against international as much as national criteria.

The Schuman Plan represents a new and constructive step along the road to European unity. There is so much in the international situation at the moment that prompts feelings of disappointment or concern that the rare speck of light which is the Schuman Plan can be magnified into bright daylight. Thus, happily, the situation is not so hopeless and without possibilities that it is no longer possible to achieve positive results, if only there is a real will to try and try again.

In our view the economic integration of Europe constitutes the core of the whole question of European integration. In the end, it will involve the creation of a single European market. The Schuman Plan also has significance in that it points to a new route by which to reach this goal. For up to now, the only approach attempted has been that of a liberal liberalisation. The Schuman Plan, on the other hand, contains a number of specifically economic elements. Two methods thus stand here alongside and opposed to one another. And, at the moment when it is becoming increasingly clear that we will not achieve the goal by the route of liberalisation, the other route gains in significance.

Secondly, it is of particular interest that the Schuman Plan is at one and the same time functional and federalist, and in that it bridges a contradiction that threatened to paralyse development towards greater unity in Europe. It is functional because it brings about integration in a concrete area, that of iron and coal. It is federalist because it takes the first serious step towards the transfer of national sovereignty. The Schuman Plan has succeeded in moving the question of European integration out of the arena of propaganda and theory into that of practical possibilities. It is precisely this that justifies the confidence that in the not too distant future Britain will be prepared to take part in the Schuman Plan in one way or another.

Thirdly, it may be pointed out that under the Schuman Plan the weak will be helped by the strong. In concrete terms, this means that during the initial years the Netherlands and Germany will have to extend support to Belgium. For the Netherlands, that will undeniably mean a sacrifice. That is unpalatable but necessary. It is so necessary that, without this principle of the strong helping the weak, European integration as a whole will not amount to anything. It is precisely the lack of real willingness to make sacrifices in a timely manner, in order that all may gain a long-term advantage, that has so far reined back the process of European unification. In this respect too, the Schuman Plan has the merit that it indicates a new and practicable way forward.

The Schuman Plan has numerous other interesting aspects. For example, the fact that, in contrast to the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation and Benelux, under the Schuman Plan the trade union movement is involved from the start and will remain so in the future. This cannot be examined in depth within the scope of this one article. And of course, the draft Schuman Plan which has now come to fruition is in many respects a compromise, and revision will no doubt prove necessary or desirable on many points in the future. Certainly the Schuman Plan does not entirely respond to Socialist principles. The reason for this rests in the first place with the Socialist parties themselves, which tend to consider all kinds of disputes in domestic politics more important than international questions. All things considered, we have reason enough to maintain our critical faculties with regard to the Schuman Plan too. But Comrade Drees once rightly said that the face of the party need not always wear a frown. Now that the Schuman Plan has completed the first round, there is reason on our part too to express satisfaction at the result achieved. For the destiny of Europe depends on just such courageous and far-sighted projects as the Schuman Plan.

**Geert Ruygers**