

Interview with Jean François-Poncet: the French administration's attitude to European recovery (Paris, 16^oMarch 2007)

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[Jean François-Poncet] Generally speaking — the idea of creating a European common market was a new idea, quite new — and, generally speaking, administrations, where new ideas are concerned, have attitudes that range from scepticism to opposition. There was therefore no support from the administration, and one can say that in certain areas the administration, which was well acquainted with the situation of the French economy, had some concerns that, in the face of competition from Germany and Italy, the French economy might find itself in difficulties. As a result it stressed the difficulties. Then there was an arbitration process. Heading it at the time was the President of the Council, Guy Mollet. Guy Mollet was a Socialist; in fact he was President of the SFIO — the French section of the Workers' International — and he was very European, a convinced European. He had a distinguished colleague, who later spent a lot of time in Brussels and was Secretary-General of the Commission: Émile Noël. He was a graduate from the École Normale Supérieure, intelligent, also very European, and when there were difficulties, he warned Guy Mollet. Guy Mollet set up a Committee chaired by the President of French Collieries, Mr Verret. This was an Interministerial Committee which the French delegation in Brussels — led by Maurice Faure, a Radical member of parliament — consulted to receive instructions. Thus there was a process for resolving difficulties and overcoming the administration's reservations, when these existed.