

## 'The chances of the Schuman Plan succeeding' from La Gazette de Lausanne (1 September 1950)

**Caption:** On 1 September 1950, during the Paris negotiations on the Schuman Plan, La Gazette de Lausanne speculates on the future coal and steel pool's chances of success and alludes to the delicate issue of rationalising the industrial sectors concerned and the risk of eliminating unprofitable factories.

**Source:** La Gazette de Lausanne. et Journal suisse. 01.09.1950, n° 207; 153e année. Lausanne. "Les chances du plan Schuman", auteur:Masmejan, J.-P. , p. 1.

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## The chances of the Schuman Plan succeeding

### When the High Authority takes up its duties is when the greatest difficulties are likely to arise

‘Carrying out the Schuman Plan means venturing into uncharted waters,’ said Dr Ulrich, the former German Ambassador who now runs Germany’s General Secretariat for Planning. This gives an idea of the scale of the task the negotiators in Paris have taken on. Mr Ulrich, with his lengthy experience, is well-placed to know: ‘We spent three years,’ he said, ‘after the First World War, negotiating the trade treaty with Austria. We stayed in Rome from the beginning of December 1924 to 31 October 1926 to negotiate a similar treaty with Italy. So we need to be extremely cautious about prophesying a date for carrying out the Schuman Plan. Don’t forget this,’ he added: ‘when it comes to concluding bilateral agreements, there are precedents and procedures we can follow. Multilateral conventions are quite a different matter. But the Schuman Plan is unknown territory. There is no precedent for the High Authority; no one has ever seen a European Council of Ministers like the one planned for the pool, not to mention the very close merging of our heavy industries, for which there is no pre-established template or model.’

And yet, if we believe the rumours trickling out of the meeting rooms, the ‘pool’ is making solid progress. Agreement has reportedly been reached on a large number of issues. The principle of the High Authority, a supranational body, is unanimously accepted, and the institutions to back it up have already been planned: an Assembly, with members elected by the national parliaments and with power to force the High Authority to resign by passing a motion of censure; a Council of Ministers which would issue directives for harmonising the various economic policies; and a Court, before which actions could be taken for redress against decisions by the High Authority.

Solutions, it is said, are also being found to technical problems: price equalisation, wage equalisation and so on. The delegates are working quickly; let us hope they are working well. The international situation has certainly helped step up the rate of work. The Korean war was the alarm bell. Faced with danger, we realise more readily that Europe must be strong, and if it is to be strong its countries need to work together. Other voices have been raised, of course. ‘There is no need for the Schuman Plan any more,’ they say. ‘It was designed to deal with the threat of overproduction. With rearmament, that threat has gone away.’ These are just isolated voices; for the general public as a whole, the danger we face has made it all the more obvious that we need to work together.

But when it comes to the real difficulties, the very large ones, it is not the negotiators in Paris who will be facing them, it is the High Authority itself, as soon as it takes up its duties. One might say that the difficulties will be in proportion to the powers it is given, because, if the High Authority wants to achieve the aim set for it in the Schuman Plan, which is to produce more and, above all, more cheaply, that involves rationalising production, and rationalisation also means eliminating unprofitable factories. As we know, these kinds of measures can have distressing effects for some.

It does not look as if this matters too much to the steelworks. Some decentralised factories operate well at lower yields, but generally speaking these are the more or less specialised factories or ones which meet the particular needs of a region.

They have a reason for existing and would be difficult to replace. French steel producers themselves have told Pierre Drouin of *Le Monde* that there would only be a few special cases which would need to be sorted out, involving plants producing ordinary steel in the Centre-Midi region in particular. These necessary adjustments, confirmed one of the steel producers, would be better handled by the Schuman Plan than by leaving it to competition.

But what about coal? Everyone knows that the most productive French mines are a long way behind the Ruhr coal mines in terms of profitability. Does that mean they are doomed to be closed as soon as there is any threat of overproduction? There is some realisation of the complications this would cause. Thousands of miners would have to be steered towards other work and very probably moved from one region to another, or perhaps from one country to another, and people attached to their own patch of land and their habits

would be forced to remake their lives somewhere else.

The High Authority will probably content itself with deciding on the special cases; it will eliminate the less profitable undertakings which would probably be wiped out by free competition in any case. Even so, in each case such a decision will be a tragedy. Special care will have to be taken to avoid nationalist bitterness intruding and poisoning the wound. Sacrifices of this kind, in the interests of the Community, will have to be shared out fairly among the Member States of the 'pool'.

J.-P. Masméjan