

Memorandum by the French government to the British government on the Schuman Plan (Paris, 30 May 1950)

Caption: On 30 May 1950, in order to dispel any misunderstanding between France and the United Kingdom over the fundamental objectives of the Schuman Plan, the French government sends a memorandum to the British government setting out the main inspiration for the planned coal and steel pool, while emphasising the scope of the proposed bases for negotiation.

Source: The National Archives of the United Kingdom, [s.l.], Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, Records created and inherited by the Foreign Office, FO. Foreign Office: Legation and Consulate, Luxembourg: General Correspondence, FO 982. Schuman plan: coal and steel; French proposals 1950, FO 982/24.

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CONFIDENTIAL

Following received from Paris telegram No. 135 of 30th May. Begins:- repeated for information to The Hague, Brussels, Luxembourg, Rome, Wahnheide and Washington. (Foreign Office please pass as my telegrams Nos. 3, 3, 3, 7, 9 and 16 respectively).

Schuman Plan.

My immediately preceding telegram.

Following is translation of French memorandum. Begins

1. The French Government have studied with the greatest care the British memorandum of the 27th May replying to their Note of the 25th May about European coal and steel production.
2. In their message of the 25th May the British Government laid emphasis on the change which the French proposal would make to Franco-German relations: the first condition and one of the essential aims of the plan is in fact to eliminate the traditional (seculaire) opposition between France and Germany. As the British Government recognised in their memorandum of the 27th May, the agreement of other governments to participate in the negotiations on the same basis as the German Federal Government already opens a new phase by broadening the scope of the discussions, which will from the very beginning be on a European basis. Nevertheless in their note of the 27th May the British Government declare that, as regards their own participation, they must hold to the method suggested in their message of the 25th May, which only referred to direct conversations between France and Germany.
3. The special position in these negotiations which the British Government wishes to preserve is justified in their memorandum by the intention, said to be held by the French Government of asking as a prior condition for complete participation in the discussions for an undertaking to pool coal and steel resources and to set up an authority with certain sovereign powers.
4. As their representatives have informed the British representatives orally, the French Government wishes particularly to confirm once more that these are not their intentions. As has already been made clear in the French Note of the 9th May, there will be no commitment except by the signature of a Treaty between the States concerned and its parliamentary ratification.
5. In fact the aim which the French Government proposes is quite different. Knowing the practical difficulties which the discussions will have to surmount, it seems essential that they should constantly be guided by common principles. Only if the negotiations are clearly directed by agreement between participating governments on the fundamental objectives to be reached, will it be possible to work out quickly the ways and means and the supplementary arrangements necessary for giving effect to Monsieur Schuman's Plan of the 9th May. That is the meaning which should be given to the French word "engagement", in the second para. of the draft communiqué.
6. The French Government particularly wishes to recall once more the central inspiration of their proposal: it aims at substituting, on a limited but decisive point, a community of interests for the present divisions; it provides for the establishment of a high authority of a new character, it gives that authority the task of providing for a general rise in the standard of living.
7. The British Government is, of course, legitimately preoccupied with following a policy of economic expansion, of full employment, and of a rising standard of living for the workers. The proposed scheme, far from obstructing such a policy, is destined in the mind of the French Government to avoid the dangers

which may suddenly obstruct its course. For competition based on exploiting labour will be substituted a concerted rise in workers' conditions; for the restrictive practices of cartels, the development of outlets; for dumping and discrimination, the rational distribution of products. The policy of full employment only reaches its true objectives if it provides labour with the most productive occupations - and it cannot finally be carried out under pressure to the development of unemployment in other countries. The task entrusted to the high authority thus excludes the possibility of its work compromising the results achieved by this policy where it is already being carried out, and means that it will favour a general expansion, allowing rationalized production to be reconciled with the maintenance of full employment.

8. To carry out its task, the authority will act within the limits of its mandate and subject to possible appeal by governments - by virtue of a statute (charte) which will have been considered by sovereign states and ratified by parliaments. One of the objects of the negotiations will be to lay down precisely by treaty the conditions under which the authority shall act, the nature of its powers, and the machinery for appeal (organisation des voies et secours). But in order that its work may serve to develop a European community, it is essential that such an authority should be independent both of governments and of individual interests. This partial fusion of sovereignty is the contribution which the French proposal makes to the solution of European problems. Public opinion has recognised its importance and its novelty.

9. The French Government consider that the above explanations will clear up any misunderstanding about the scope of the proposed basis for negotiation. They do not think that there can be any difference of view between them and the British Government on the objectives put forward. They hope now that the British Government will consider it possible to take part in the projected negotiations on the same basis as the other governments.