Memorandum to the President of the French Council of Ministers (18 September 1950)

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1. Since the start of the talks in New York, a serious difference of opinion has emerged among the United States, France and Great Britain. Mr Dean Acheson has suggested that, for the defence of Western Europe, a force of around 50 divisions should be placed under a single command. France and Germany would raise around 20 divisions each, with the United States, Great Britain and the other NATO members supplying the remainder.

Both the French and British Governments continue to oppose German rearmament. In this situation, which will soon come to a head, three outcomes are possible. The difference of opinion could persist, and the issue would then be left unresolved; we could opt for the United States' idea of organising common defence on a national basis; or, thirdly, European defence could be organised along the lines of the supranational blueprint put forward in the Schuman Declaration.

2. Can we afford to do nothing? In other words, can NATO members continue to rearm, without any contribution from Germany?

Everyone agrees that there can be no efficient defence of Western Europe without the participation of Germany. Western Europe, in particular Great Britain and France, has taken on an immense military burden, expanded by the Korean conflict. France cannot make further sacrifices without disrupting its reconstruction that, at the current pace, will take several years to complete, and without cutting back its productive investment, which would weaken our economic potential or diminish the already low standard of living of a large sector of the population. As things now stand, rearmament could well upset monetary stability, and it will take considerable effort to keep inflation in check.

While rearmament efforts are now pushing the limits of economic and social stability, it is also clear, even making allowances for the contributions from the United States and Great Britain to the defence of the Continent, that more is needed to guarantee the security of the West. That is why we need Germany's resources to bridge the gap between the West's defence requirements and its material possibilities. In addition, it would be unthinkable for France to bear the brunt and take up arms, where necessary, to protect Germany, while the Germans looked on and, when push came to shove, remained at home.

The expedient of terminating the talks in New York, thereby shelving any decision on German participation in common defence, would not resolve a problem that would surely come back to haunt us later on. German participation is absolutely necessary. We must face up to it and draw the appropriate conclusions with regard to our policy on Europe and the Atlantic Alliance.

3. The United States proposes that Germany's contribution to common defence be organised around a traditional-style coalition, an arrangement familiar to the French, consisting of national armies coordinated by a common command. This plan would include the recreation of a German army.

France cannot go along with that. We have not survived two World Wars and taken the initiative to draft the Schuman Declaration in order to restore Germany's past and scuttle the creation of Europe, which is the only viable solution to the German question. At stake is the security of France and of free nations, as well as the preservation of peace.

We have clear memories of how, when national armies work side by side, changes in military techniques and historical situations have given rise to instability and threats. At a critical moment, immediate national concerns take precedence, and the solidarity that we sought is lost because we failed to do what was needed to achieve it. During the Battle of the Nations, the Saxon troops defected, putting paid to Napoleon's victory, followed by France's loss of Germany and the invasion of Prussia. In 1918, Ludendorff's first offensive broke through the front at the point where the French Army and the British Expeditionary Corps converged, the latter then making every effort to cover the North Sea ports. In 1940, it was the commander of the Belgian Army who had no choice but to surrender.

These events are still very alive in our memories. If the organisation of the West's defence were to turn on the inclusion of German divisions along with troops from other countries, no one, including the Germans themselves, would be entirely certain up to the last moment what attitude those German divisions would finally take.

4. It is not only in the military field that German rearmament, on a national basis, would give rise to suspicion and concern in Western Europe instead of the security sought. The arrangements for Germany's contribution to Western defence will determine future relations between Germany and Western Europe. Its contribution will also determine the success of the Schuman Plan and European integration, although the United States does not, to date, appear to be aware of that.

German rearmament would, at the same time, imply the restoration of a sovereign German state. We cannot ask the Germans to create a military force without giving them something in return. The only reasonable *quid pro quo* would be to abolish the limits still imposed by the current system and restore Germany's freedom of action. Instead of incorporating Germany into the West, as the Schuman Plan advocates, the US proposal would restore Germany's sovereignty.

5. The outcome of such a move can already be foreseen. The Germans, securing the immediate advantages that they expected from the Schuman Plan, but without being definitively bound by it, would regard the Declaration as only a temporary requirement placed on them, to benefit French and Belgian coalfields. Germany would then not feel the need to weigh up the increased outlets and long-term financing facilities offered to it by the Schuman Plan, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the need for the European countries to create a supranational community in which Germany's population and production would be joined with those of the other countries so that a normal existence might be resumed. The Schuman Plan would then founder, and the current negotiations would end in an intractable disagreement or a purely technical deal reduced to coal and steel. In either event, the Schuman Plan would come to a sudden halt and would no longer constitute the first stage in the establishment of a federal Europe, as all of us who accepted the 9 May proposal would like.

6. In response to that eventuality, the Western countries would continue their isolated existence, without any hope of overcoming their weaknesses and the factors that divide them and of building a community able to provide a solution to the German question. They would live in fear of another historic calamity of the sort that sparked off two World Wars.

Once Germany recovers its freedom of action and rearms, and owing to its strategically important geographical location, its powerful industry and its large, disciplined population, it would be tempted to return to its old ways. If Germany had its own armed forces, bygone sentiments might be reawakened, while, at the same time, the millions of refugees, whose numbers are increasing, would serve to remind Germany of its lost provinces and its currently divided territory. Without any attachments to the West, Germany would pursue its own ends and would add to the factors that today threaten peace the risks inherent in its instability and its initiatives.

7. France cannot, therefore, accept the necessary contribution from Germany unless it is part of an arrangement that provides a solution to the German question rather than aggravating it. That arrangement is found in the Schuman Plan. German units must be merged with those from other countries in such a way that the German units cannot be detached and utilised for ends other than the security of Western Europe and the Atlantic Alliance.

In order to bring Germany into the Western camp, the first aim of the Schuman Plan is the creation of a supranational High Authority, as in the case of coal and steel. The supranational High Authority would have the task of setting up and pooling military resources on the Continent. We could not, however, conceive of Great Britain joining the High Authority, given the failure to secure its support for the 9 May proposal. Given the importance of Great Britain's role in Western defence, however, the necessary association between Great Britain and the High Authority for purposes of defence would be achieved via the Atlantic Alliance.

The powers and responsibilities of the High Authority would cover personnel and equipment. More particularly, the High Authority would handle the training and organisation of personnel, the preparation and implementation of armaments programmes and would take part, on behalf of Western Europe, in the drawing up of NATO strategy.

This proposal would answer the concerns expressed in paragraph 4 of the agenda published in a communiqué on the evening of 15 September following the initial talks held in New York. By common agreement of the three governments, this expanded Schuman Plan would be drawn up by France, with the assistance of Great Britain and the United States.

Since a German contribution to Western defence is indispensable and German rearmament unacceptable, France has no choice but to table this proposal. By seizing the initiative, we would be making a vital contribution to NATO and building a strong and reliable Europe, instead of a loose, weak association. Not only will the final aim be attained, but, in addition, it will not be delayed or compromised by worries and suspicions brought about by the rearmament of Germany.

8. At the same time that the expansion of the Schuman Plan would be reconciling the technical requirements of Western defence and those of European unity via the creation of a continental community bringing together Germany and its neighbours, it would also be providing NATO with greater cohesion, thereby making the Organisation's current bodies more effective.

This increased cohesion will reaffirm the historical and geographical diversity of NATO's members and the specific ties between some of them. It will then be readily understood that the Atlantic Alliance comprises:

(a) the United States;

(b) the United Kingdom and its Dominions, and;

(c) the countries of Western Europe.

Since this structure reflects the world as it is, it should be replicated in the bodies of the Atlantic Alliance so that they may work on a solid foundation.

It would, therefore, be necessary to clarify the consequences with the United States and Great Britain and take decisions on the following points:

(a) the defence and other bodies of the Atlantic Alliance should be organised around the aforementioned basis and revised as far as necessary;

(b) the French proposals on the organisation of defence, financing and the distribution of raw materials will have to be examined on the same basis;

(c) the Western European countries will continue their efforts within the Atlantic Alliance to create a continent-wide community, in keeping with the principles of the Schuman Plan and on the initiative of France.