

Telegram from Robert Schuman to René Massigli (5 July 1950)

Caption: In this telegram, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman tries to reassure his Ambassador in London, René Massigli, of the consequences of British withdrawal from the Schuman Plan negotiations.

Source: BOSSUAT, Gérard. D'Alger à Rome (1943-1957), Histoire de la construction européenne, choix de documents. Louvain-la-Neuve: Ciaco, 1989. 240 p. ISBN 2-87085-186-3. (Histoire de la construction européenne. Études, instruments et documents de travail). p. 133-136.

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Foreign Affairs
Outgoing telegram
Encrypted

Paris, 5 July 1950, 19.15
Ambafrance London No 5795/99

I have read with the greatest attention your despatches regarding the changes in attitude in Great Britain. There can no longer be any doubt about the basic divergences, now and from the outset, between our views and those of Britain's leaders. It was necessary to opt for one or the other; one cannot persist in attempting to reconcile contradictory positions.

France cannot be expected to take the blame for this state of affairs, which it neither sought nor instigated, but has had to register. As the views on both sides have become increasingly clear, our disagreement has simply been confirmed. Ought we to have given up our idea and abandoned the project? We did not think we could bow to the British *non possumus*, however much we regretted this disagreement. Only the failure of the talks currently under way might convince us that we were mistaken.

It would be both pointless and unfair to blame Britain's disappointment and the impossibility of reconciling our respective views on either the Franco-British controversy over the communiqué, or a possible mistake in the presentation of the plan, or indeed the time we took to clarify our position. The difficulties are not exclusively due to formal circumstances, they are inherent in our doctrinal differences.

We can accept any criticism, any contradictory view regarding the practical solutions we recommend. We are prepared to discuss them with whoever may wish to do so. We shall try to make allowance for such views when we choose the means of application, providing nothing is done to alter the essential characteristics of the Independent Authority without which our project would lose its *raison d'être*.

It is possible to find practical solutions that will enable us to achieve our goals while allaying the apprehensions that the British are not alone in harbouring and which will be taken into consideration. What we will not do, because it is unworkable, is to seek a solution in keeping with traditional bad habits. In other words we will not accept, as an inviolable principle, the notion that supranational economic cooperation must be dependent on a prior and permanent agreement between Governments, any decision which commits States and associated companies being conditional on such agreement.

The disappointing experience with the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), even just recently, should serve as a reminder of how powerless such a system is. Furthermore, all that is at issue at present is establishing a few general rules: restrictions on the rules for export quotas, means of intra-European payments, etc.

Joint management of the mining industry is unthinkable on this sort of basis. For management to succeed it must be organised in such a way as to disregard political methods and national or ideological concerns.

Management of this kind must take the form of a supranational body, with its own goals, and not a sort of conference in which conflicting interests compete and sort things out as best they can.

A separate issue is the legitimate concern we all share not to set up an arbitrary, dictatorial authority. In the political arena a constitutional regime stands between absolutism and anarchic individualism. Why should one state as a matter of principle that an independent authority is necessarily wrong and contrary to national interests? Why, as a matter of principle, should one reject a common discipline, if it is clearly defined and demarcated, if precautions are taken to guard against errors and failures, the risk of which no one is attempting to deny?

We still hope to convince the sceptics but to do so both sides must give up their sterile recriminations and rigid dogmatic positions. In our view there is not and there should not be any other principle than that of opening up a new route to lead us out of an old impasse.

I know that I can count on your full support in continuing to explain and defend our true intentions. I take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of our remaining in constant contact and I would consequently like you to come to Paris as often as possible so that we may exchange views on how the talks are unfolding.

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