

Letter from Jean Monnet to Robert Schuman (18 April 1948)

Caption: In April 1948, Jean Monnet is involved in negotiations in Washington concerning the distribution of material and financial aid to Europe under the Marshall Plan. In this letter written on 18 April 1948 and addressed to Robert Schuman, President of the French Council, he describes the mood of his US colleagues and ends by emphasising the need for a European federation.

Source: Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Correspondance 1947-1953. Lausanne: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Centre de recherches européennes, 1986. 188 p. (Cahiers rouges). p. 35-38.

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I. — Following your telegram, I was preparing to leave today so that I might join you on Monday. Yesterday, Mr Hoffman asked me to hold an exchange of views with him and his close colleagues towards the middle of the week because he had to go to California for a few days. I have known Mr Hoffman for a long time; most of his colleagues are old friends of mine. He said that he wanted to review with me the programme that he intends to implement. Having spoken about it with Mr Bonnet, we were convinced that you would not want me to miss this opportunity to discuss his programme with Mr Hoffman while he was still formulating his position.

Mr Bonnet is wiring to you the main points of the discussion that we had yesterday. We are dealing with a man with wide-ranging and realistic ideas, and I have no doubt that we shall be able to cooperate easily with him, as far as the difficulties currently facing him allow. I shall keep you informed by telegram or through my colleague Mr Hirsch, whom I would be grateful if you could meet. I shall then leave for Paris immediately, and I shall be with you certainly at the end of the week.

II. — Our wheat deals have gone well. For May, our allocation exceeds requirements — 126 000 tonnes of wheat and 60 000 tonnes of flour. As you were informed, we have since received a further allocation of 45 000 tonnes of wheat and 12 000 tonnes of flour, or a total for May of 171 000 tonnes of wheat and 72 000 tonnes of flour.

I hope that a decision on our June allocations will be taken in the next few days. I appealed strongly to our friends to take a decision without waiting for the overall allocations for the other countries to be approved. I think that, if you could quickly announce publicly that the continuity of supply has definitely been assured, it will have a great impact both on the public state of mind and on the collection in France during the final months.

As we agreed, I have continued my work here, and at no point have there been any negotiations that were newsworthy and which might consequently have caused concern in France. Once everything has been finalised, you will be able to speak publicly. These arrangements make slow progress because cereals allocations take place on fixed dates for all countries at the same time. An exception had to be made in our case and without attracting any attention. The American Administration agreed to that, but it did take some time.

I received a letter from Mr Jouhaux asking if it might be possible to secure an allocation of wheat larger than the quantities that we requested in order to increase the ration from 200 to 250 g starting in May or June. He tells me that he agrees with you that this measure would help resolve the salaries issue.

I do not think that we shall be able to secure these additional quantities. Nevertheless, I am trying to increase the June allocation. If I am successful, we might perhaps increase the ration to 250 g as of 1 July, but I do not want make any promises, since we have already secured more than the maximum.

III. — During my stay here I have met, on a friendly basis, many long-standing acquaintances. I shall give you the full details in Paris. I, of course, had daily contacts with Mr Bonnet, whom I informed about all the conversations that I have had. You know America well enough to know that these conversations were amicable, unofficial and based naturally on the friendly and often close links that I have had here for a long time.

I am pleased with my visit. Having been away for two years, my impressions are sharper than if I had remained in constant touch with this place. The changes seem more striking to me, but my conviction about the essential nature of American life is also strengthened. This country is still driven by a dynamic force that derives from the very nature of each individual. America is on the move, but it is neither reactionary nor imperialist. It does not 'want' war, but it will go to war if necessary. Its resolve in this respect is very strong. But it is not a blind resolve. Let me explain to you the change that has taken place over recent weeks: we have moved on from preparing for war, and we are now preparing to prevent war. The idea of possible

détente is emerging. In any event, the current state of mind amongst senior officials is — firm resolve, but with caution.

I would rather give you a verbal report on my observations and my view on this aspect of the American attitude and what we can expect it to bring.

However, we have to realise, as I mentioned above, that America is essentially inspired by a will to *take action* — action at home, and also abroad. For America, action now means preventing war and helping Western Europe to rebuild and prepare the ground for stopping Russian expansion. They will deploy considerable effort in this direction. They are fully aware that the financial burden for them is enormous. The Marshall Plan and the military aid that are only just starting involve enormous costs. There will certainly be price inflation as well as a tax hike. While it is willing to make the effort, Congress will agree to the assistance only after tough debate. Mr Hoffman will have a struggle on his hands when he goes before Congress next February to seek approval of the second year of assistance under the Marshall Plan. He is already giving it thought and making the requisite preparations.

In the opinion of everyone here, Europe's effort should equal that of America. This means primarily increased industrial production, as well as effort of another kind. They will support these efforts in all sorts of ways and with determination, but we have to realise that both leaders and the general public here expect a lot from us. We may well be sorely disappointed if we think that Marshall aid will continue long into the future if Europe fails to show increased and modernised industrial production in the very near future.

I cannot help being struck by the type of relationship which may well take shape between this big, dynamic country and the countries of Europe if they continue in their current shape and attitude. In my view, Europe cannot continue to be 'dependent' on American aid for its industries and on American strength for its defence for a very long time without negative consequences emerging here and in Europe.

All my thoughts and observations lead me to one conclusion which, for me, now constitutes a deep-seated conviction: the effort of Western European countries to meet existing challenges, the danger threatening us and the American effort must become a genuinely European effort which only the existence of a Western *Federation* will make possible. I know what such a prospect represents in terms of difficulties, but I believe that only such an effort will allow us to save ourselves, to continue to be ourselves and to make an essential contribution to the avoidance of war.

On this point, when he was in Washington, Mr Spaak told me that he had proposed me as President of the Executive Committee of the Six. I told him that I did not want the job, first, because implementing the Plan in France has now become a possibility as a result of Marshall aid and that its rapid implementation is all the more urgent for the reasons that I set out above. Also, I think that the members of the Executive Committee should be Mr Cripps, Mr Mayer and their colleagues. I added that, apart from the Plan, the only task to which I should be willing to devote myself would be taking part in the devising of a genuine Western Federation.

[signature]