

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

Caption: During a visit to the United States in April 1948, Jean Monnet sends a letter to Robert Schuman in which he confirms the United States' desire to help with the reconstruction of Western Europe in order to curb Soviet expansion.

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. 36-37.

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[...]

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.

[...]

Jean Monnet