

Paper given by Kurt Schumacher on the Schuman Plan (Bonn, 31 March 1951)

Caption: On 31 March 1951, the leader of the West German Social Democratic Party, Kurt Schumacher, harshly criticises the Schuman Plan and outlines the risks being taken by the Federal Republic of Germany.

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Make Europe strong!

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(31 March 1951)

[...]

The consequences of the Schuman Plan for Germany

In May last year, as soon as the **Schuman Plan** was announced, it was welcomed by the Federal Government and the coalition parties — and not merely in terms of principle, which would have been understandable. Clearly, if one welcomes any set of principles one also needs to examine **the reasons behind them**, and that is where matters become more complicated. Within days and as if, all of a sudden, no other course of action were feasible, the Federal Chancellor was declaring that Germany would have to sign up to this Schuman Plan, even though he had not at that stage the faintest notion of its content. This may well demonstrate an admirable degree of enthusiasm, but it is a dereliction of the duty that every government owes, as a matter of priority, to its own people.

What we have here is yet another example of the Federal Government eking out its existence on the strength of **foreign-policy illusions** conjured up for propaganda purposes without heed to the consequences. One thing we cannot afford to forget is this: **disillusionment** with a concept such as the European idea, or disillusionment with the moral value of internationalism, will inevitably produce a negative reaction; it will inevitably set the pendulum swinging in the other direction, towards dyed-in-the-wool nationalist extremism.

The Federal Government has taken out **more than enough illusory credit on the strength of its foreign policy**. It is bolstering its reputation not in any substantive way with the Allies, but with sections of the German population who are misled by propaganda, with Germans who are ignorant of the realities, delusional or out to line their pockets. An example of Germany reaching for what I term illusory political credit actually existed before the Federal Government took office — I am talking here about the Ruhr Statute. Once it was in office, the Federal Government followed the pattern, accepting the Petersberg Agreement and the Council of Europe heedless of the fact that even this form of credit implies a payback in terms of achievement. Now it is going for its **biggest gamble yet, by signing up to the Schuman Plan**. The wondrous results that were promised on each occasion, after acceptance of the Petersberg Agreement and accession to the Council of Europe, failed to materialise and agreeing to the Schuman Plan no more signifies relief on the foreign policy front than agreeing to the previous, not dissimilar instruments did. What agreeing to the Schuman Plan will signify is a readiness on the domestic political front to prolong this Government's term of office. Here lies the reason for the Federal Government stumbling from one source of illusory foreign-policy credit to another, promising that each new concession it makes in that field will herald a major improvement. The fact that our elected representatives have been naïve enough to lend credence to such promises in the past merely ensures that they will continue to be made. Yet again, all that is happening is a drive to keep the Federal Government in power on the basis of foreign-policy illusions.

A bankrupt Government

Surely it should be obvious, though no one regrets it more than I do, that **after the last 18 months the Federal Government is as bankrupt in terms of foreign policy as it is in terms of economic, financial and social policy!** That a bankrupt Government should continue to live on credit, in the form of people's confidence, is certainly a fault of that Government. Criticism should be directed first, however, at those foolish enough to extend credit to it, in the form of political confidence, without any guarantees.

Unchallenged by national governments, **the foreign press** has clearly set out three main aims in relation to the Schuman Plan. These aims are familiar to us, from the negotiations on the matter of the Saarland and the Ruhr Statute, for example.

The first is **to weaken the substance of the German economy**. In the eyes of many nations the fact that we retain significant economic potential, particularly in the Ruhr, means that they could still face tough — and embarrassing — competition from sections of the German economy.

The second aim is to establish **the right of other nations to draw on the resources of the Ruhr, Germany's central raw-materials supply pool for coal, coke and steel**. It is meaningless to argue that Germany would have the same right to draw on the resources of other areas. The lion's share of the resources is located here in the Ruhr. Yet Germany will not enjoy representation proportional to the size of its population, the size of its workforce or the volume of its output (approximately 37 % of the steel and 51 % of the coal produced in the Schuman Plan countries); it will simply be one state among several.

The third aim is to secure German agreement to **the voluntary but contractually binding incorporation of aspects of the Occupation Statute into German law for a period of 50 years**.

The fact that these aims have been formulated has an inescapable political consequence for anyone who is serious about his nation and about the international ideal. No political or economic argument could justify or even excuse acceptance of these three aims. A feature of the Schuman Plan is the establishment of control by the international coal trade over the forces of production and the people involved in production. For us, the question that arises is: **who**, from the standpoint of the coal trade and with the resources of the coal trade, **will finance** this production apparatus, which will be run by the coal trade; and who thereby will manage not only to finance production but also, **by dint of financing it, to privatise it and exclude any possibility of its being nationalised?**

Only now is the content of the Schuman Plan being disclosed officially. We have known about it, however, throughout every phase of the process. We received ongoing reports on the state of the negotiations and on what was being committed to paper. On that point I have no intention here of explaining again in detail how the other side determined solutions on a number of matters that were never the subject of negotiation. That is merely a further legacy of the Franco-German relationship, or at least the Federal Government's conception of it. (Amusement.) However, not one of the numerous draft agreements was communicated in full, as it ought to have been, to the German people and the major organs of the press. In Germany all this information was obscured behind a veil of discretion, even though it was possible to follow in the foreign press every detail of the negotiations and every substantive proposal. On the German side **the Opposition was never officially informed** of the political essence of the agreement. The Federal Chancellor drafted his fateful **letter** a week before Easter, offering, in the absence of any consultation with us, to **abolish the joint coal marketing system in its entirety**. To date, he has not breathed a word about the fact that — other things being equal — he will travel to Paris on 12 April to sign the document. Obviously he will be signing something without any assurance that it will become law in Germany and signing something which, for all I know, may also be regarded by certain foreign interest groups as a straitjacket from which to escape if at all possible.

The Schuman Plan spells profit for international capital

From the German side, the Paris negotiations appeared — to all unbiased observers concerned to understand the issues — to be utterly unsatisfactory. The only area in which we achieved anything like a smooth solution was social policy, because no one wanted to antagonise the trade unions. Obviously the German trade-union representative also put in a lot of effort. In every other respect it was other nations and other social classes, **not the people of Germany**, who came out successfully, and the big winners were that particularly loveable species, the international coal barons. (Amusement.) One of the German representatives was an ex-director of the Petschek group: that raised a smile from the international experts, who came up with the expression 'a Petschek manoeuvre' in relation to the European coal and steel industry. I will leave to your imagination the moral, political and economic value judgments which underlie that comment.

Displaying a lack of vision and consideration comparable only to their propaganda approach in relation to a German military contribution, **the Americans have been sticking their noses in at every stage**: during the

technical negotiations, with the German authorities, with the German political parties and at the Paris talks. All I can say is that **the Americans have taken on a responsibility here** that they cannot begin to appreciate. This Schuman Plan — even if it comes to fruition — is highly questionable and will remain so. We intend to address the questions it raises objectively in the interests of our nation as a whole. There is so much about the Schuman Plan that is destructive and anti-European that the Americans will come to dread the responsibility they have taken on.

Yet how could the Schuman Plan have turned out otherwise? The most dangerous aspect of the whole thing was not actually the dubious constitutional status of the type of people negotiating officially on the Government's behalf. Worst of all was the fact that **those with the real say on the German side were not Germans: they were the US and French High Commissioners!** In response to a range of problems that had begun to be discussed in expert circles here in Germany, those conducting the negotiations on Germany's behalf merely shrugged their shoulders and commented that the High Commissioners had 'long since decided' what the solution should be. An agreement reflecting the mindset and political intentions of two High Commissioners cannot be approved by the German parliament unless German democracy is bent on self destruction.

I have already referred to the inexcusable document that the Federal Chancellor sent a week before Easter to Mr François-Poncet, then Chairman of the High Commission. The Federal Chancellor claims in that letter that the dissolution of the joint coal marketing system has already been provided for in Law No 27. That is undoubtedly an original interpretation but it is woefully at variance with the facts. The zeal displayed in disposing of the core problem of joint coal marketing raises the suspicion that the content of the Chancellor's letter was dictated by the interested parties. In terms of German readiness to be accommodating, the substance of that letter goes well beyond what Mr McCloy reported to Comrade Ollenhauer as the content of his — Mr McCloy's — agreements with Mr Monnet, the French General Commissioner for economic planning. It is interesting too that a High Commissioner should make agreements with a party to the treaty other than the German side. There is also a third respect in which the Federal Chancellor went too far in his text: he simply abandoned the opportunities available to Germany under Section 12 of the Schuman Plan transitional provisions.

As recently as the beginning of this year the Government parties still had major reservations. The Free Democrats' party chairman said at that time that there could be no question of FDP agreement unless the International Authority for the Ruhr, the Military Security Board and the powers of control over the steel industry were all dissolved. Today he takes a different view, although the specific provisions he objected to have not been repealed. The reality is that the High Authority created under the Schuman Plan will be a fully fledged replacement for the Ruhr Authority and will dictate everything. However, the plan is not yet signed and sealed. It is our duty to our people and to the imperative of a healthy Europe that we invest all the political effort we can muster in combating this initiative, which is destructive for Europe and places Germany's national assets in the hands of international capital to be disposed of arbitrarily.

The High Commissioners have praised the Federal Chancellor!

In the light of these facts it is understandable that on 14 March, at the first banquet given by the foreign press here in Bonn, Mr François-Poncet delivered a eulogy to the Schuman Plan, to the Federal Chancellor's zeal in the cause of the Schuman Plan and to the immortal services that the Federal Chancellor had rendered. A few of you may recall some previous remarks by the French High Commissioner when he took quite a different tone; but let us not interpret these things too literally. (Amusement.) On 14 March the French High Commissioner exercised the greatest delicacy in giving us Germans a lesson in the meaning of German patriotism, and I quote from his assessment of the Federal Chancellor:

'He has managed, in less than two years, to bring about a significant easing of tension in a semi-subordinate regime, which might well have taken much longer. No one is more keenly aware than my colleagues and I that he achieved this **without ever demeaning his country**, without ever compromising his dignity as head of government and without the least disavowal of **his patriotic pride** or, if I might so express it, **his patriotic resilience.**'

And there was more:

‘I can also say with certainty that **no one else** could have achieved more in his position. A threatening stance or systematic **opposition** would have had the reverse effect, wrecking everything.’

The French High Commissioner did not say **from whose perspective** everything would have been wrecked. (Amusement. — Interjection: ‘Those two know each other of old!’) All the same, his last comment was clearly intended as a respectful nod to German social democracy, and we hereby accept the compliment. **I have to wonder, however, just how the Federal Chancellor will ever recover politically from that particular dose of praise, from that individual, in that context.** (Amusement.) The French High Commissioner’s attitude to genuine German democrats is best revealed, though, in an article which carried his by-line in the Munich *Neue Zeitung* on 3 February. He wrote that it was incumbent on foreign observers not merely to take a critical view of Friedrich Ebert but to ‘pass judgment’ on him. The article concludes as follows, and I quote:

‘We are entitled to accuse him [Ebert] **of having assisted the recovery and return to power of those nationalist elements** who had brought about the downfall of the Reich and were to torpedo the Weimar Republic.’

There we have it: an article by the French High Commissioner. I would not like you to think that I had been quoting from some Communist tract or other. That was merely an expression of shrewd and tactful reserve among equals. (Amusement.)

This is not the place to examine in detail the structure of the **Schuman Plan as an institution**. That will, in due course, be the subject of an objective explanatory process and of special consultation. There is only one point that needs to be made now, **namely that the High Authority will be an example of economic omnipotence on this continent**. It is still unclear whether it is to have five, eight or nine members; at best there will be **one** German member, and you can be sure that it will not be a German trade unionist. The **parliamentary body**, the so-called ‘Assembly’, the composition of which will not be fixed until the conclusion of the final protocol, is likely to comprise 18 French members, 18 German members, 18 Italian members, 7 Dutch members, 7 Belgian members and 4 members from Luxembourg; in other words, four times 18. However, because the assembly will meet only once a year and because a two-thirds majority will be required to overturn a decision of the High Authority, you need be under no illusion about the powerful position that Germany — led by the Federal Government — will occupy in this parliamentary body! In fact it will not be the assembly that effectively supervises the High Authority; power to influence what the authority does will rest with **the foreign ministers, and that will mean five against one!** As to the intentions of that one and the scope he will have ... what can I say?

How the Schuman Plan destroys the European ideal

If our representation were in proportion to our production capacity — 37 % of steel output in the Schuman member countries and 51 % of coal output — then we would have a say purely on the basis of our strength in the assembly. As it is, however, we shall be forced into the position of either being outvoted in any dispute or sharing the blame for wrong decisions. Yet why should we have to share the blame? We are prepared to fight on every issue and to go on fighting. That is precisely why **we cannot give our consent to the destruction of the European ideal through projects like the Pleven Plan and the Schuman Plan. We must appeal to the European consciousness and self-awareness of our nation and our working people and call on them to fight back!**

Because the labour movement in the other five countries carries no great weight, the German labour movement, including the German trade unions, will be virtually isolated in facing up to an international capitalist coalition.

The German public will be seriously misled if various negotiators, senior officials and dilettante foreign-policy specialists in the Government parties now create the impression that **the burden of the Schuman Plan** is being fairly shared among the countries involved. **The Germans are by far the major contributors to the equalisation fund.** We are footing the bill for the closure of the Belgian pits, for the closure of marginal pits in central and possibly northern France and for the winding up of the Italian steel industry. We shall also be footing the bill for the redeployment in other sectors of Belgian and French industry of all workers who find themselves jobless as a result.

The German negotiators have let themselves be pushed into **sweeping** dissolution of the integrated economy. If we can be reminded about observance of the transitional provisions, it will not be long before we are confronted by the rigid orthodoxy of the Schuman Plan proper. Moreover, only some of the major steel firms will be subject to the 75 % coal clause: it will not apply to all the other steel producers. Integration is being determinedly eliminated on far too wide a scale. The creation of 26 companies here may fatally impair Germany's ability to compete against the mammoth organisations in this sector, particularly in the USA.

Allegedly in the interests of rescuing the stunted remains of the integrated economy, **Germany's joint coal marketing system has been completely abandoned.** The German system of joint coal marketing was not a monopoly, because it was not the mines that determined the prices: since the days of the Weimar Republic, the state had set the prices. What the joint coal marketing system did, however, was to **enable pits** with high extraction costs and poorer quality coal **to be profitable.** The washing and mixing plants made it possible to achieve an average price and average quality. If Germany's joint coal marketing system is abandoned, then the pits with richer, more easily accessible coal will find themselves working overtime even in periods of economic downturn, while the pits with poorer coal that is more costly to mine will be on short time even when the economy is booming. This means that **many pits in the Ruhr will come to a standstill**, and we should be under no illusions about the implications of unemployment in the Ruhr. It is a crucially important reality, albeit one little discussed, that the reconstruction of Germany has been possible only through the maintenance of more or less full employment in the Ruhr and Lower Rhine areas over a number of years. If we wreak this social havoc in the Ruhr, then inevitably we shall also have to **bear the political consequences of social havoc in the Ruhr, and that implies an ongoing threat to democracy in what are extremely tense times, and a permanent situation of crisis for our state.**

The Schuman Plan as a threat to democracy!

I have had occasion to make the observation privately to certain Americans that 'the Schuman Plan is a charter for a new Communist Party by any other name, and the Americans are the ones issuing that charter.'

In theory, the ruthless wheeler-dealers of the international coal trade, including certain American interests and the ideologues of the Antitrust Office, have smashed a monopoly. In theory only! In fact there never was a monopoly: there was simply a national economic necessity based on profitability and full employment. **In practice, what has been introduced now, in the shape of the High Authority, is a super-monopoly, a single overarching authority that will direct everything** and whose senior managers, virtually unsupervised, will deploy robust commercial practices to Germany's detriment.

This also has a further implication for democracy in Europe. If you study the so-called Monnet Plan over the five years of its existence you will realise that the principles of that plan have lent themselves to development in a specific direction, to adjustment and, in some cases, to substitution by quite opposing principles. Yet the French Parliament has never had a conclusive debate on the principles of the Monnet Plan. Do you realise what that means? It means that decisions about the direction of the economy were taken largely outside the parliamentary forum. The French Parliament had the eminent, if not sacrosanct, task of

approving funding for implementation of the Monnet Plan, yet it could not manage the related task of scrutinising, critically analysing and thoroughly understanding the plan's principles. The cliques and individuals who successfully placed themselves in this position *vis-à-vis* their own parliament are the self-same cliques and individuals who brokered and will direct the Schuman Plan. **Technocratic totalitarianism is repressing the practice of national democracy through parliament.** Even if no other principles were at stake, it is an obvious and inescapable duty of the working class to **fight for democracy and the state**, which takes precedence over the economy. A working class which shirked that duty would be hounded from the political stage. We did not require that argument to justify our rejection of the Schuman Plan, yet it is such a self-evident truth that, of itself, it would **have supplied all the justification we needed.**

The High Authority will have virtually complete control over investments. The policy of mechanisation underground and modernisation above ground will call into question the supply of power for workers' housing complexes and for the development of new plants already begun. Surely you do not expect the Allied majority on the High Authority to direct the flow of international capital towards Germany, when there will be an Allied majority in the supervising Assembly and in the Council of Ministers? No indeed: these aspects, which are the most important aspects for the German economy, are being gradually but firmly sidelined. The people who have funds at their disposal and who will stand surety for funding are, quite understandably, no friends of Germany; their interest is in the health of their own national economies. So you can see that everything currently going on — here in Bonn, over in Paris and under the influence of the Americans — is quite remarkably short-sighted and ill considered. Dressing it up in high-sounding language will not conceal the hard facts of what is happening. As far as I am concerned, our Federal Government propagandists are welcome to claim Charlemagne as the original CDU man: in practice we are about to discover that he was actually the world's first MRP man. Whatever he was, we do not want either the CDU **or the MRP, or both of them, to dictate to German workers. We do not want the principles of Charlemagne's empire to constitute the foundations of the Europe we build in the 20th century.**

So our struggle against the dilution of the German economy and the exploitation of the Ruhr is **also a struggle against the Federal Government, which is promoting a German consensus to water down basic German principles.** To that extent our struggle against the Federal Government is informed by a new moral, political and economic imperative. In such times as this, speeches like that recently delivered by our comrade the President of the Bremen Senate contribute very little indeed to world history. (Quite right!) That is not, however, a matter that I intend to address in any detail. The party executive decided today that the proper response to such public posturing should be a public reprimand and a press release to that effect has already been issued.

[...]