

Interview with Jean Monnet: the outcome of the Hague Summit (RTL, 5 December 1969)

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A second RTL exclusive, an interview with Jean Monnet, which will take us back, as I said, to one of the great events of the week: the conference in The Hague. You heard yesterday at 1 o'clock the 'yes, but ...' from Jacques Vandroux, General de-Gaulle's brother-in-law. Now we have Jean Monnet, a 'pro-US' as we say, -one of the founding fathers of the Common Market, who will give his assessment of the agreement reached in The Hague by Georges Pompidou and the Five to Robert Boulay. More precisely, the line the Six will follow when negotiating the rules for the common agricultural policy and the accession of Great Britain to the Club of Six. In fact, I think Robert Boulay, you should introduce your guest, Jean Monnet.

Well, Jean Monnet, is a man with an extraordinary story: he comes from the Charente, from a family of merchants in Cognac. He has no 'A' levels, when he was 20 he went to Canada and the United States, became an expert economist, took charge of supplies during the war, negotiated at the League of Nations, was an adviser in Poland and Romania and went to China to reorganise the railways. In 1940, in the Anglo-French War Committee, Churchill entrusted him with the notification of the proposal for joint Anglo-French citizenship to Paul Reynaud's Government. Then there was the Liberation Committee and, after the war, the famous Monnet Plan for modernisation. It was Jean Monnet who gave Robert Schuman the idea of a Coal and Steel Community. Later he worked with de Gaulle and various governments of the 4th Republic. Then there was a split. The conditions under which the 4th Republic and neighbouring countries launched the idea of Europe divided Jean Monnet and General de Gaulle. The General considered the pooling of coal and steel resources an underhand scheme and criticised supranationality, which he termed Volapük. He called Monnet an 'instigator' and saw him as a 'pro-US' who would let the nations of Europe become dependent on America. Since then, those differences have eased, as we have seen at the Hague Conference. But how did Jean Monnet himself feel about the results of this summit of the Six?

[Jean Monnet] I think that what has become very clear is the need for the six countries that form the European Economic Community to act together on every subject. They cannot solve their problems alone. They need each other and therefore they have to have an organisation. The Hague has borne witness to this feeling and to the need to unite and create a common programme.

[Robert Boulay] For you, then, the outcome is positive?

[Jean Monnet] I think the results are very positive. Mr Pompidou submitted some very important proposals. So did Mr Brandt. I think it would be difficult to imagine a conference that had better results than those of the Hague Conference.

[Robert Boulay] Do you think the British entry into the Common Market is imminent?

[Jean Monnet] It is the same for Britain as for the other European countries. It is necessity that drives us. Be they economic, monetary or political problems, none of those countries, not even Britain, can solve them on their own. So we have to get on together. Britain will have to become part of the European Community. It will happen sooner or later. It doesn't matter, it will happen!

[Robert Boulay] Mr Monnet, you were, with those whom we call, and I quote 'great Europeans' at the root of the establishment of the European Common Market. At the time, there was a notion of what was called 'federalism' or 'supranationalism'. The Europe that is taking shape seems to be different from the one you, shall we say, dreamed of.

[Jean Monnet] We dream every day, Mr Boulay. To think about the Europe that does not yet exist but is in the making, is to dream, to some extent. But let us go back to its origins. In 1950, what was it all about? It was about getting France, Germany and the other European countries to overcome their problems, problems caused by the war. Since then, the situation has not changed. The problems may be different, but the need still exists. What was at the time an idea, a simple idea, that we could not solve our problems alone but had to act together, this idea is no longer an idea but a reality. The countries of Europe are now forced to unite

and to follow the path that was shown them, 20 or 25 years ago, by the Coal and Steel Community and Mr Robert Schuman.

[Robert Boulay] You seem to be optimistic as to the future of Europe.

[Jean Monnet] I am optimistic because there is no choice and it is imperative. I do not know how Europe can hope to sort out its problems and improve the standard of living of its peoples without uniting and without creating not only a Common Market, but a European force that can not only help satisfy their material needs but help them speak with one voice. Because, tell me: how much does one country alone count against America or Russia?

[Robert Boulay] Mr Monnet, you are also Chairman of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. The United States of Europe is a distant notion. Do you think you will live to see it or that your children will?

[Jean Monnet] You must never think of how long a certain task will take, you must just do it. We have to convince ourselves that we are or are not on the right track. If we believe we are, then we must just go on. We may come up against difficulties, the outcome may be rapid or a long way off, the important point is not to change tack.