

'A return to the Monnet Plan and a rejection of the Marshall Plan' from Combat (16 June 1949)

Caption: On 16 June 1949, the French daily newspaper Combat comments on the schedule for economic and social recovery published by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT).

Source: Combat. 16.06.1949. [s.l.]. "Retour au plan Monnet et abandon du plan Marshall".

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A return to the Monnet Plan and a rejection of the Marshall Plan

insists the CGT in a programme for economic recovery

France's General Confederation of Labour (CGT), no doubt believing that the French economy is currently at a major turning point, has recently published 'a programme for economic recovery'. Its substance leads to the conclusion that this extensive document is designed to serve as a basis for the campaign for integrated union action, possibly also at a political level. As the document specifies, this would encompass 'all social elements, manual and non-manual workers, rural workers, craftsmen, honest traders, independent industrialists.'

In these ever changing times, the CGT is quick to point out that it had agreed to participate in the drafting of the Monnet Plan 'without any illusions about the planning possibilities within a capitalist regime.' However, over the past two years, the modernisation plan has gradually been abandoned 'under the weight of a foreign expansionism which went unopposed by a stagnating society.'

The consequences have been the inflation of industrial and commercial prices and profits, a slowdown in investments in the nationalised industries, competition from imported industrial products and foreign investment.

The 'crushing burden' of the Marshall Plan

The CGT proposes a programme in order to cope with these developments and to tackle the situation.

In particular, provision is made: immediately to abandon the plan to curb the electricity industry; to achieve full employment in the steel industry — but 'outside the American policy of armament and preparation for war'; to resist the pressure of British and American oil producers who promote road transport; and to encourage the production of atomic energy. However, the programme judges textile production to be at an adequate level and believes that production of agricultural machinery may be slightly reduced. This contrasts with the original, unfulfilled provisions of the Monnet Plan.

The CGT sharply criticises the foreign trade policy and feels that only preparations for war can explain the thrust of the French economy towards the structure of a major agricultural nation.

It opts, by contrast, for a prosperous and well-equipped industry, which would gradually free itself from imports from the dollar area. The priority classification of countries of origin would be as follows: 'Germany for reparations; overseas countries on the basis of an fair reciprocity; Eastern Europe; sterling area; other monetary areas; and, finally, the dollar area.'

All of which does not exclude the 'possibility of foreign competition which would be viewed against the backdrop of an international policy of genuine aid for the overseas countries under the supervision of the United Nations', or for France, but 'under the supervision of the UN Economic Commission for Europe.'

The total amount of investment required for the implementation of the programme would amount to around 5 000 000 million French francs, spread over a period of four years. For the nationalised industries, the capital would be secured by 'liberating the wholesale prices of the nationalised industries so far as to bring them into line with the general price index of the large industrialists.'

The CGT, therefore, while not suggesting any extension of current nationalisations, rejects the 'contrived dispute between liberalism and the planned economy' and denounces today's pseudo-liberalism. In short, a total transformation of the economic structure is not deemed necessary, rather 'strict supervisory measures designed to prevent deliberate sabotage by the large industrial trusts.'