

'Our salvation is in our own hands' from Action (10 December 1947)

Caption: On 10 December 1947, the French newspaper L'Action vehemently refutes the argument that the French economy needs the Marshall Plan to ensure its recovery.

Source: Action. 10.12.1947. [s.l.]. "Marshall est-il notre sauveur? Non! Le salut est entre nos mains", auteur:Claude, Henri.

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Is Marshall our saviour?

NO!

Our salvation is in our own hands

We have now completed our survey. Having sought to understand the implications and scope of the ‘suggestion’ made by General Marshall on 5 June 1947 and studied the alternatives to US assistance available to the French economy, we are now in a position to present our conclusions.

We have shown that the assistance programme for Europe is in fact a ruse by the State Department to ensure, in the current global economic context, that Western Europe will be reduced to the status of a semi-American colony and be drawn into an aggressive war against the USSR. Just as imperialism has always needed to use enslaved peoples in order to enslave others, as it did in the previous century, so American imperialism must seek its mercenaries no longer in economically underdeveloped countries but in capitalist countries in decline. They are following the example of German imperialism during the Second World War: the Nazis had their ‘European legions’.

Since the entire post-war imperialist policy of the United States is enshrined in the ‘Marshall Plan’, it will become the focal point of politics worldwide, and each European country’s domestic politics will revolve around it. The question now is to ascertain whether the European nations will passively submit to American imperialist plans or resolutely oppose them, bring about the collapse of the power of American monopolies, prevent war and open up wondrous new prospects for mankind in terms of material and social progress. People will be either for or against the ‘Marshall Plan’, just as they were for or against Munich. There is no third way.

This is eloquently demonstrated by the attitude to the Marshall Plan of the supporters of the ‘third force’. Whoever fails to undertake resolutely to combat American imperialism is, whether consciously or not, playing into their hands and, whether consciously or not, working against peace because, and this cannot be repeated often enough, the Marshall Plan means war.

That is why the efforts of the imperialist agents are aimed mainly at making people, both in Europe and the United States, believe that there is no ‘Marshall Plan’. Marshall himself claims that what he submitted in June was merely a ‘suggestion’, and then he went to the CIO Congress to win over American workers and slipped into the Harriman Commission representatives from the AFL and from the CIO amongst the representatives of the business conglomerates.

In Europe, the American supporters’ propaganda, especially the ‘Socialist’ press, portrays the Marshall Plan as merely material assistance and conceals the political dimension of the loans, while trying to portray those who oppose the imperialist plan as the adversaries of any aid from the United States in any form whatsoever. So those who refuse to be the slaves of Wall Street are made out to be hair-shirt extremists who prefer to tighten their belts to the last notch rather than accept any American goods! And they mock the policy of economic independence as outdated ‘nationalism’ because, as the Social-Democratic branch of the American supporters so arrogantly states, it is impossible, since no country can live without imports! Starting from this premise, these gentlemen conclude, with the stealth of a pickpocket, that the assistance proffered by the United States must be accepted unconditionally. This sophistry cannot conceal the fact that their brand of ‘internationalism’ is nothing other than ‘American nationalism’, just as it cannot distort the real nature of the struggle for independence.

The struggle for independence

Defending national independence does not mean refusing all imports but, on the contrary, seeking all possible import alternatives; it means developing trade with the largest possible number of countries so as not to become dependent on any single one; it means accepting all assistance, including American assistance, provided that it does not erode national sovereignty. It means replacing the unilateral dependence to which the Marshall Plan would lead with multilateral dependence; it means depending on everyone so as not to depend on anyone.

This policy runs totally counter to the policy that has been pursued since the Liberation and which has resulted in American imports increasing from 12.5 % in 1929 to 50 % in the first eight months of 1947. This is a trend that the Marshall Plan aims to sustain and, indeed, to exacerbate.

The more overtly capitalist press tries to find more convincing arguments. It claims that we have to use American raw materials and equipment, because only the United States can supply them at the moment.

The studies that we have carried out into the possibility of imports from democratic countries rebuff that claim. We have identified the benefits of developing trade with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and the USSR. We could have broadened the study to show that we could also procure goods in the British Dominions and in South America. Is it not scandalous, for instance, that we have waited so long to import cotton from Egypt, when that country had more than it knew how to handle? Pursuing an independent line would make it possible to exploit the contradictions within capitalism. Have we not seen how Australia stopped importing American cars because America does not buy enough of its wool?

In fact, it is because we have so far been unwilling to envisage a policy of importing everything that we could from other countries before turning to America. That was the only way that we could be in a position to talk as equals with Washington. It would have forced the Americans, who we mustn't forget are threatened with surplus production, to offer us goods that we could obtain through normal trade, or at least with loans that, unlike the Marshall loans, we would not one day have to pay for with our blood.

After the Liberation, France had to create a state that could mobilise all the country's resources so as to produce as much as possible, backed up in foreign policy by the countries opposed to imperialism, namely the USSR and the democracies of Eastern Europe. The state would have used the trade potential generated by domestic production capacity and that of democratic countries, and then, and only then, would it have discussed the possibilities for American assistance on a democratic and not an imperialistic basis, since it would then have been on an equal footing.

The unavoidable choice

The choice that we faced was not based on geography, as the American supporters claimed. Today, we do not have to choose between West and East any more than we had to in the past. It is a choice between dependence on financial capital and national independence, between imperialism and democracy. In the final analysis, as we have already clearly shown, our choice is between war and peace.

Of course, the policy that this choice implies raises a question of government. It can only be pursued by a Government that is based on the will of the people and that articulates the people's needs and aspirations. But such a Government is incompatible with monopolistic capitalism. Only a populist democracy, freed from the yoke of national or international financial capital, can restore national sovereignty and safeguard peace in France. And this is deeply felt by millions of workers who are struggling to improve their living conditions and who instinctively refuse to allow the future of mankind that wants to go on living to be dependent on the fate of an economic and social system that is in its death throes.

Henri Claude