

'French plan caused psychological shock' from Het Parool (13 May 1950)

Caption: On 13 May 1950, the Dutch daily newspaper Het Parool considers the comments in France and the United Kingdom on the Schuman proposal to pool European coal and steel output and emphasises the surprise caused by the French plan.

Source: Het Parool. Vrij Onverveerd. dir. de publ. Van Norden, W. ; Réd. Chef Van Heuven Goedhart, G.J. 13.05.1950, n° 1.640; 10. Jg. Amsterdam: Het Parool. "Franse plan veroorzaakte psychologische schok", p. 3.

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Why such secretive preparations?

French plan caused psychological shock

(From our correspondent)

PARIS, 13 May — The Schuman proposal for a Franco-German government trust for iron and coal, it is said in French circles, was intended to produce a psychological shock. The idea was certainly a success. It is another question whether the shock was a pleasant one. The French press notes with a trace of dissatisfaction that the allied partners have not so far given the proposal serious study. It forgets that, on the day of the diplomatic explosion, it had itself shown cautious reserve.

In the meantime the various political circles have stated their positions. The Communists see in the proposal merely a triumph of the crafty heads of Schneider, Creusot and Krupp. One publication, *Combat*, which was already consistently opposed to America's vigorous foreign policy, concludes with satisfaction that the Schuman proposal has at least broken through and hence, toned down, the Cold War.

The Socialists have published a statement in which they support the Schuman Plan. They do lay down some conditions, however; the main ones being that private capital should not be allowed to assume the leadership of the combine, that the management should be placed under the control of the Council of Europe, and that efforts should be directed from the start to bringing Britain into the grouping. It is clear that, for them, all perils are averted if the workers' organisations are represented in the leadership of the organisation.

In the meantime, it is already apparent that the British attitude is complicated by various conflicting factors. For some industrialists in Britain an international trust is preferable to the nationalisation of their industry, and a plan is being attributed to British Labour circles to head off any intention on these lines by demanding on their account too that representatives of the trade union movement be included in the management, so that the new grouping will look as much like nationalisation in an international context as possible. Whether that will also give rise to new difficulties back in France remains to be seen.

Neither France nor America (which in the end will indirectly have to finance the new trust) is particularly enthusiastic about planned control and nationalisation at the moment.

From Monnet

It is reported that the plan emanates from Mr Monnet, to whom more than one ambitious plan is credited. Not only did he give his name to the plan to modernise the French economy, he also appears to be one of the architects of the plan, so sensational in its time, which Churchill put to France in 1940 to join with Britain in forming a single sovereign state. Thus he has several times tried to leapfrog historic and manifest obstacles by means of a grand and wide-ranging scheme.

One may wonder whether he was indeed the true author of the famous Churchill plan, the outcome of which everyone is familiar with. At all events, it is very difficult to form an opinion of the Plan at this stage, since virtually nothing is certain. Not the legal, not the political, not the economic form, let alone the relationships which will be created by the Plan in the legal, political and economic fields.

On the other hand, it is of course very difficult to take a stand against the Plan in view of the fact that it does at least represent a more or less concrete attempt to create a supranational body in practical terms. Europe has so far not cooperated much in this field, and it is understandable that the European Federalists, in particular, would seize the Schuman Plan with both hands. After all they themselves devised a plan, through Mr Paris, for the creation of European commercial bodies. Precisely because of these concrete merits, it is perhaps to be regretted that the preparation of the plan has been so secretive. The consequence now is that its publication has rather created confusion than helped to strengthen European unity.