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John R. Gillingham
gillingham@umsl.edu

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French Ruhr Policy and the Origins of
the Schuman Plan: A Reappraisal

by

John R. Gillingham

FRENCH RUHR POLICY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE SCHUMAN PLAN:

A REAPPRAISAL*

John R. Gillingham
Associate Professor of History, and
Fellow, Center for International Studies
University of Missouri-St. Louis

DRAFT: NOT FOR QUOTATION WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

*Written at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy, in December, 1985.

The political order of present-day Europe is secured by an unwritten peace treaty between France and Germany. It resulted from a process of accommodation and reconciliation set in motion by the Schuman Plan proposal and institutionalized in the European Coal and Steel Community. The real character of this settlement -- above all the simple question: Why has it worked so well? -- has not yet been satisfactorily explained and so is still largely a mystery. Even the matter of its origins remains shot through with paradox: How was it that France, supposedly the most anti-German of the three western Allied occupation powers, initiated the process of European integration to which we, at bottom, owe the peace and prosperity of the past generation?

Jean Monnet's memoirs present the standard explanation, which is this: At the beginning of 1950, in recognition of the French failure to impede German recovery -- the failure of Ruhrpolitik --, Monnet organized a select group of brilliant technocrats who, under his direction, drafted the proposal launched on 9 May 1950 as the Schuman Plan. In calling for the common administration of West European coal and steel, it offered the Germans partnership on terms of equality with France. Virtually unmodified, the proposal was expanded into the Treaty of Paris creating the Coal and Steel Community, where a new "European" spirit was born which would eclipse the nationalisms responsible for past world wars. (1)

Historians have now begun to turn a critical eye to the "Monnet Myth" and are focussing their attention on the origins of the Schuman Plan. Both Alan Milward and Raymond Poidevin have

argued in recent works that the supposed turnabout in French policy occurred well before 1950, in other words prior to Monnet's dramatic intervention, and that credit for it should be shared by Robert Schuman and the French Foreign Office. (2) Frances Lynch is the first to have suggested that the supposed turnabout never happened. In her view, France aimed at the attainment of European economic hegemony from start to finish. (3) In an attempt to add to the present discussion without, however, pretending to have the last word in it, I would like to re-examine the foundations of French policy towards Germany, retrace its development through the relevant diplomatic episodes of the postwar years, and reanalyze the Schuman Plan negotiations against the background of Allied occupation policy. This approach will by no means provide a complete explanation as to how the post World War II coal-steel settlement was worked out, or why it was a triumph. But it will describe how French Ruhr policy contributed to this result.

Our examination of French Ruhrpolitik will cast certain of its features into sharper relief and reveal previously unseen or unsuspected characteristics. The first of them that will appear is continuity. Ruhrpolitik and the Schuman Plan had the same overall purpose -- to reintegrate Germany into Europe on French terms -- and the same primary objective -- to impose an "organic control" over the Ruhr offering guarantees of a reliable coal supply. The second feature is consensus. There was a remarkable lack of disagreement among those responsible for French policy towards Germany after World War II. The events of 1914-1918 and 1940-1945 served as the crucible of a common approach, and all

French policy-makers of the first tier -- Bidault, Schuman, and Monnet -- as well as those of the second -- Chauvel, Alphand, and Couve de Murville -- were forged in it. While the nature and importance of the contribution made by each of these figures to Ruhrpolitik varied, none of them broke out of its mold until long after the Schuman Plan had been proposed and the Coal and Steel Community been set to work. The third feature is persuasiveness. This is often overlooked, particularly in the immediate postwar years. Yet in the main it was French proposals -- not American, Russian, or British that served as the basis for discussion of the Ruhr at those interminable interallied gatherings where the problem came up, provided the organizational scheme for the International Authority once it was set up, not to mention the substance for the negotiations over the Schuman Plan once it had been conjured up.

The fourth feature is courageousness. Although no one maintains that the Schuman Plan initiative lacks "boldness," the four postwar years of foreign policy under Bidault are usually depicted as having consisted of equal measures of pusillanimousness, cravenness, and confusion, his habitual refrain -- "I cannot afford to get too far ahead of French public opinion on the German question!" -- being invariably interpreted as an excuse for inaction or the application of a mild form of diplomatic blackmail. But this is not the case: both Bidault and Schuman made strenuous, prolonged efforts, at great political risk, to change French public opinion from something anti-Boche in the manner of 1919 to something which, while hardly pro-German, at least accepted the necessity of

reaching an accommodation with the powerful eastern neighbor. Doubts concerning the importance of Bidault's contribution can be cleared up by comparison to a place where an effort similar to his was not undertaken and where foreign policy was consequently not reoriented and redefined after 1945, the UK. Without the tidal shift in public opinion which occurred in these years, France could not have contributed to the construction of the new Europe.

Taken as a whole, these surprising new features reveal a different trend in French Ruhrpolitik from the ones usually perceived. It does not involve the rejection of a discredited negative policy in favor of a successful positive one, for there was only one policy and it changed in phases. Nor -- though it had a design -- is it correct to depict this merely as having been aggressive in character. Nor was it, as it sometimes seems to have been, a paradoxical headlong retreat into ultimate victory. The trend is rather towards solid achievement, arrived at step-by-step in deliberate fashion, against long odds and with consequences favorable for Europe as well as France. French Ruhrpolitik was neither the first nor the most important stepping-stone to the integration of the continent, but without it the path would have come to an early end.

French Ruhrpolitik and its culmination, the Schuman Plan, grew out of a searching investigation of the German problem which began under the auspices of the Provisional Government in Algiers in Summer 1943 and continued at the Foreign Ministry in Paris in the months between Liberation and VE-Day. Impelling it forward was a conviction, shared by everyone concerned, that

nothing less than national survival depended on the discovery of a solution. Thus the Quai d'Orsay's basic position paper on Germany of 21 August 1944 begins with the flat, ominous statement that "If France should have to submit to a third assault during the next generations, it is to be feared that ... it will succumb forever." (4) This obsession with the German menace did not, however, result in a return to the "hard line" pursued after World War I, but instead to the adoption of a fundamentally new approach the seeds of which eventually bore fruit in the Coal and Steel Community. (5)

A 5 August strategy paper produced by Monnet and a few of his close associates while in Algiers foreshadows the new approach. It demands a break with the past and asserts the French right to take the lead in shaping the future. The note begins with a warning that resort to methods of 1919 will encourage nationalism, and stifle economic growth, eventually leading to war, and it calls instead for the creation of a new "European entity" to open large markets and reduce the danger of competitive rearmament. France, the document concludes, was the only Ally in a position to direct such an effort, indeed held an historic mandate to do so. From the outset, the French attempt to build a "new European order" influenced the development of French policy towards the Ruhr. (6)

The Ruhr had a special significance to Frenchmen of the post-World War II years. It was more than merely a massive industrial complex; it was the symbol of German power and the source of French humiliation. In hindsight it seems obvious that contemporaries overestimated its significance: the atomic age

was dawning and coal and steel were no longer the most important indices of national power. At the same time the economic disruptions stemming from the war increased France's traditional dependence on Ruhr coal and provided constant reminders of her vulnerability. What Raymond Poidevin first stated in 1979 is indisputable: "The Ruhr question was the main issue in all French efforts to solve the German problem after 1945." (7) And one can add to this remark the observation that all other French concerns relative to the former Reich were subordinated to it in general and to the need for coal in particular.

The dilemma facing French policy-making was to break German political power while preserving, and even increasing, the Ruhr's economic importance to Europe. It must be noted at the outset that two possibilities were categorically rejected in wartime discussions of German policy. De-industrialization along the lines of the Morgenthau Plan received censure for its "... grave defects in depriving other nations of a considerable store of riches, plunging the German people into economic chaos, and creating a center of agitation in the midst of the Continent." (8) Concerning the imposition of military rule as done in 1923, its failure appeared even more certain, not least of all because it would require essentially inhumane methods. According to one study, effective occupation would require 165,000 troops and the permanent maintenance under colors of two and a half classes, which had to be accomplished in the face of labor deficits estimated by the leading statistician Sauvy at 5 million. To fill these gaps would require imposing on Germany forced-labor

drafts like those imposed on France after 1942, which were rejected as being morally unacceptable. (9)

In fact the only real option considered was to establish an "organic control" (contrôle organique) until such a time as France had become strong enough, or the Germans well-behaved enough, to render it superfluous. This was the conclusion reached in a detailed Foreign Ministry policy analysis dated 30 March 1945. This study, it should be noted in light of future official French policy, did not foresee any reduction in levels of economic activity in the Ruhr, apart of course from that due to the elimination of armaments production and the provision of eventual "restitutions" to offset the loss of goods seized by Germans during the war. Further, expropriation was rejected as being too "radical" and leading to state control (étatisation), displacement of industry to the periphery (where it could be easily supervised) dismissed as presenting overwhelming technical problems, and a ban on the manufacture of certain goods not taken seriously since it could easily be dropped once the occupation was over. As for "organic control," initially it was to include "veritable management" at firm level as well as inter-Allied efforts, presumably led by France, to break up "excessive" concentrations of industrial power in the Ruhr. This, it is clear, was to include, if necessary, the exercise of occupation power over the long-term. Thus, "No matter how just the principle of collaboration between German and foreign industrialists, the European and extra-European states must retain ultimate authority over the reorganization and supervision of the German economy in order to assure that the

habitual camouflaging methods do not result ... in the reconstitution of certain ... big concerns." (10) At the same time, this "organic control" was "... to take precise forms over time while being adapted as closely as possible to the reorganization of the postwar German and European economies."

(11) "The ultimate objective," according to the instruction of the Director of Political Affairs at the Quai, "is to integrate the productive forces of Germany into a new international order ..." (12)

There was a large gap in French Ruhr policy between ends and means. France was no longer a Great Power but a recently defeated nation of mid-sized proportions which, whether it be openly admitted or not, had to return to political respectability on its knees. (13) It faced a backlog of unsolved social and economic problems exacerbated by political divisions stemming from the Vichy period as well as material shortages increased by the heroic modernization efforts launched to overcome them. France alone was quite unable to dictate policy to Germany and could only hope to do so with American permission once she had regained full strength and before Germany had recovered. These conditions, never fulfilled, came closest to attainment in 1950, when the Schuman Plan was launched. It was in fact during the negotiations for the coal-steel pool that the French came closest to realizing the "organic control" at which they had aimed since the war.

Given the situation of France in 1945, her diplomats could pursue only short-term objectives. The first of these was banal, to get a seat at the conference table. This was not easy. Absent

from Yalta, excluded at Potsdam, it was thanks mainly to the good natured British Foreign Secretary that the French were "cut in" as members of the Allied Control Council and thanks mainly to the francophilia prevailing in the US Department of State that an area of Germany was found for them to occupy. (14) But no French representative was invited to attend the meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers, convoked to draft peace treaties with the defeated enemy nations, until April 1946, when one had to be included if only because it was scheduled to take place in Paris. The second objective of French policy, which can be seen behind nearly every move on the diplomatic chessboard, was to prolong the occupation. "No imaginable solution," according to a Defense Ministry statement of 8 April 1946, "can offer France stronger guarantees for her security than those which she enjoys as a participant in the present total occupation of Germany. This occupation permits France to traverse a difficult period and progressively regroup its strengths, especially its army, under the protection of the other allied armies." (15) The French were optimistic as concerns the unlikelihood of Four Power agreement on unified policy towards the former Reich. Military Governor Koenig wrote Bidault in December 1945 that "As soon as real discussion starts ... all agreements ceases. Evidence to the contrary is a mere tromp d'oeuil." (16)

The third objective was to win Allied consideration of French proposals for the Ruhr. In November 1945 Couve de Murville brought a negotiating team to Washington in the hope of discussing them seriously with experts from the State

Department. The attempt was a dismal failure, as it immediately became apparent that the Americans were unwilling even to contemplate the possible administrative separation of the Ruhr from the body of the Reich. As the final meeting broke up, one participant, Walt W. Rostow, chided the French for harboring the illusion that control of the Ruhr had any security value in an age of atomic warfare. (17) True though the remark was, it added insult to injury. The British, to whom the French brought their proposals in January 1946, were polite but no less unreceptive: they preferred a form of socialization for Ruhr heavy industry which reminded the French of the "war companies" created by Rathenau in World War I. (18) But where sweet reason had failed might obstructionism, brokerage, and extremism not work? In 1946 the French introduced the first into the meetings of the Allied Control Council, the second, somewhat half-heartedly, into the sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the third into the proposals for "Ruhr-Rhénanie".

It is easy to exaggerate the importance of the unpleasant side of French policy in the immediate postwar period. Take, first of all, obstructionism at the Allied Control Council, which John Gimbel in his pioneering study The Origins of the Marshall Plan blames in good measure for the Allied Control Council's inability to govern Germany as a single unit as agreed upon at the July 1945 Potsdam Conference. (19) The division of Germany is often traced to this failure. Undeniably, successive French Military Governors consistently blocked the attempts of US Military Governor Clay to introduce a measure of centralized administration into the economy of the former Reich. This was

done in order to prolong the occupation and to prevent any interference into the economic exploitation the French were then committing in their Zone. But as Alan Bullock has concluded most recently, the economic division of Germany was sealed at Potsdam itself, when the US, UK, and USSR agreed to adopt different policies in each Zone to settle such practical problems as reparations. (20) If both East and West continued to do lip-service to the Potsdam principle of common economic policies, this was because neither side was prepared to accept blame for the only alternative to it, the division of Europe into two hostile blocs. As for French occupation policy, although hardly commendable, it made only a negligible contribution to the division of Germany.

"Brokerage" was still less consequential and may have had some positive effects as well. Even its foremost practitioner, Foreign Minister Bidault, who detested communists and distrusted Russia, later condemned this practice as having amounted to a kind of promiscuous trafficking between East and West which led to nothing in the end. (21) But Bidault is too hard on himself. Until 5 May 1947, the French cabinet included communists wary of falling into dependence on the United States; in order to accomplish anything, they had to be appeased. France also needed the support of the USSR in order to present her views at high-level interallied gatherings. Excluded from the 1945 meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers, she was present at the sessions of a similar larger body, the "Five Nations Conference," until December, when unexpectedly ejected by the USSR. The situation gradually improved, however. France not only

secured an invitation to the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers, which met intermittently from May to July 1946, but managed to introduce discussion of her Ruhr proposals onto the agenda, even though the meetings were supposed to be devoted exclusively to working out the terms of peace treaties with the minor former enemy powers. Later, at the Moscow sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in March and April 1947, French Ruhrpolitik was a main topic of discussion.

French proposals for "Ruhr-Rhénanie", thirdly, are indeed extreme and hard to swallow. Politically they include an immobilizing radical decentralization, economically measures which would have crippled recovery: the set up of international management for mines and mills, the imposition of elaborate controls throughout the economy, and the parcellization of Germany into tiny, cellular customs areas. While such proposals may indeed have been drafted to satisfy a vaguely obscene longing for revenge, France had no intention of imposing a Nazi-like New Order on Germany, nor was it ever remotely capable of doing so. (22) The "Ruhr-Rhénanie" proposals were drafted as fodder for various Council of Foreign Ministers, and other exalted interallied gatherings, to graze upon and intended for use merely as bargaining chips. When it came to serious discussion the French were ready to forget such schemes. In August 1946 Foreign Minister Bidault let it be known "unofficially" to the Americans that "... French policy towards Germany, particularly the insistence that the Ruhr should be detached, had been a mistake," adding that only political considerations had prevented him from dropping the demand. (23)

In July 1946, the outwardly unbending Alphant stated unequivocally in an internal memorandum prepared for one of the many futile meetings held in an attempt to work out common policy with the British that France should find a formula for the Ruhr combining interallied control and German sovereignty. (24) These elements first came together in official policy only a year later. In practice immediate French material need -- particularly for coal -- always forced the more harebrained French Ruhr reorganization schemes into the policy-making background.

This is what happened at the Moscow Conference. It was set in the harshest winter in memory which, coming on top of the material exhaustion caused by the war, crippled transportation systems throughout northern Europe and brought industrial production to a halt for weeks at a time. France had three objectives at the conference: get more coal, limit German steel output, and impose international control over the Ruhr. But while all three points figured in the Moscow discussions, only the first was of real importance. At a pre-conference tête-à-tête, French President Vincent Auriol let it be known to US Secretary of State George Marshall that coal would be France's highest priority at the forthcoming meetings. In 1938, Auriol said, France had had 73 million tons at her disposal, of which some 25 million tons was from imports, adding that in 1947 the overall figure had fallen to 61 million tons which included a substantial increase in domestic production to over 50 million tons. Also noting that imports were running at a rate of only 12 million tons, over one-half of which was prohibitively expensive

American coal, he announced France's intention to press at the Moscow meeting for an immediate increase in imports from Germany to 500,000 tons per month and a further increase within a year to 1 million tons per month. (25) The alternative, he concluded, would be that French recovery, delayed by coal shortages, would fall behind German. To secure adequate access to coal over the mid-term, the French also introduced the so-called "Alphand Plan" at Moscow, recommending the displacement of 5 million tons of basic steel capacity from the Ruhr to Lorraine, which caused a tremor of fear and outrage in Germany. (26) Bidault also brought up the usual proposals for internationalization of the Ruhr, apparently in an effort to frustrate British plans to socialize the heavy industries of the basin. (27) But all of this amounted to very little. It took over a month of acrimonious discussion at Moscow before agreement was reached that the conference could achieve nothing and should be broken off. The French did not, however, leave completely empty-handed; by tacitly agreeing to drop the "Alphand Plan," they won US-UK assent to a so-called sliding scale agreement, which was concluded outside the framework of the Council of Foreign Ministers' sessions. It increased gross exports to France, but also Germany's share in consumption, as outputs rose. But as these showed no significant increase over the next few months, French recovery and modernization plans continued to be jeopardized by fuel shortages. (28)

The announcement of the Marshall Plan in June 1947 dramatically changed the context of French policy-making for the Ruhr: obstructionism, brokerage, and extremism gave way to an

attempt to achieve a degree of intimacy with the United States. No one in Paris doubted that the new program would result in American aid for German recovery, or harbored the illusion that France could, or should, try to block this. On the contrary, France seemed ready to settle the Ruhr question on the basis of a tripartite agreement. On 7 August 1948 Bidault told Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Will Clayton at lunch that "there was (not) ... very much difference between the French and US view regarding level of industry in Germany, and that they would interpose no objections to any level of industry which we and the British might agree upon provided the French people get assurance that the resources of the Ruhr would not again be employed in war on France. He believed that such assurances could be had by the creation of an international board which would allocate the Ruhr production of coal iron and steel and perhaps chemicals between Germany and other countries. After the peace treaty, such board would be composed of representatives of US, UK, France, Benelux and Germany. Prior thereto, it would be composed of the same countries minus Germany." Bidault added that "France had abandoned previous suggestions regarding detachment of Ruhr from Germany, internationalization (etc.) ... and is entirely willing to leave ownership and administration with the Germans but ... will insist that access to the products of the Ruhr should not be subject exclusively to the will of the Germans ..." (29)

But the French retreated from this position, as their hopes for closer cooperation with the "Anglo-Saxons" were soon dashed. Since 1946, France had consistently refused to merge its Zone of

Occupation with those of the Americans and British out of fears that this would be a step towards unification and the restoration of German control, put a halt to booty-collection, and eliminate what little leverage she enjoyed in international councils. In September France paid the price for non-cooperation when the Bizonal partners, themselves unable to agree as to whether to socialize Ruhr coal and steel assets or return them to private control, resolved the dispute by deciding simply to refer the matter to Germans for eventual disposition. The French learned of this decision from the newspapers. The threat of an impending restoration seemed to deal a body blow to hopes of establishing a "contrôle organique." The scene properly set by the predicted failure of the London Council of Foreign Ministers on 17 December 1947, which sealed the attempt to exercise Four Power rule and opened the way for the Western Allies to organize a West German state, the French did the inevitable: they set out to strike an accommodation with the "hereditary enemy."

Neither the magnetic Monnet, nor the saintly Schuman but the besotted, historically-discredited Bidault was the first to sound the new note in French policy towards the Germans. On 4 January 1948 he informed General Koenig that "German recovery in the cadre of Europe should take place as rapidly as possible," adding that "The first phase of the occupation is now over (and) our main concern is no longer to right past wrongs but to prepare for the future." This would rule out, he specified, both "direct administration of the Zone ... and exploitation for our own profit." (30) Bidault ordered General Koenig to cease all seizures, forced sales, and displays of conspicuous consumption

at once. He also ordered that "everything is to be done to develop useful contacts with Germans," emphasizing that Frenchmen should miss no opportunity to explain politely to them that "... we do not intend to dominate, but merely play an honorable role, in a united and cooperative Europe." (31)

Many less important figures underwent a conversion similar to Bidault's. The desire to find some basis for accommodation with Germany, which was quite contagious, soon infected many at the French Foreign Office and in influential private circles. Over the following months Roger Fabre of the Quai's Central European desk drafted numerous memoranda advocating some dramatic gesture in recognition of Germany's right to equality which, he believed, would promote a new climate for "constructive European collaboration." (32) The former "hereditary enemy" also came up for discussion at intimate gatherings such as the dinner held on 20 July 1948, where the economist, Henry Laufenberger, expressed a "personal view" that Germany, being more "malleable" than the UK, Italy, or the Benelux nations, could become France's best economic partner. Another guest, the MRP representative Pierre Pflimlin, thereupon recommended setting up an "energy complex," which would include France and the Benelux nations as well as Germany and be run by a European authority. Jean Monnet interrupted this discourse to suggest referring the matter to his friend John Foster Dulles and a man named Abelin, the fourth diner, nodded gravely in silent assent. (33)

The search for a formula reconciling accommodation with the Germans on the one hand and guarantees of security on the other

went on for many years, following an unlikely course to an eventual solution. It began with proposals first made in October 1947 for an international Ruhr Authority which were stillborn, drifted to scattershot approaches during the first months after Robert Schuman entered the Foreign Office, broke out dramatically into new territory with the 9 May 1950 announcement, and finally ground through months of negotiations which France could no longer control to ultimate fulfillment of the goal of her Ruhr policy.

The French Foreign office, first under Bidault and then under Schuman, spent the better part of 1948 in futile attempts at the tripartite sessions in London to persuade the "Anglo-Saxons" to create an organization for the Ruhr which the Allies could run for the present but which the Germans could join in the future, once the necessary reforms had been introduced in heavy industry. But the British and Americans insisted on limiting the responsibilities of the new organization to the allocation of Ruhr coal exports, even in this respect binding it to OEEC directives. Worse yet, before IRA had begun operations, the Bizonal partners published Law No. 75 appointing German trustees to devise plans for the reorganization of heavy industry. With this, the French lost all remaining interest in IRA which, though virtually lifeless, survived as an organizational shell, serving merely as an unwelcome reminder to the Germans of the continuation of occupation government. (34)

The shock of Law 75 did not send the French lurching into a German embrace. Instead Foreign Minister Schuman attempted to consolidate France's position as a prelude to a future

arrangement with Germany by striking bilateral deals with other European countries. 1949 was the year when negotiations for a Franco-Italian customs union were concluded, those for a preposterously named FRITALUX agreement, which would bring in the Low Countries, commenced, and when Jean Monnet fruitlessly negotiated with Sir Edwin Plowden in yet another of his many attempts to organize a Franco-British economic union. None of these initiatives achieved much of anything. (35) Whether they might have if pursued with a greater sense of urgency will be a matter for future researchers to determine.

During 1949 pressures mounted for some sort of French initiative on the Ruhr question. The new Federal Republic had been enjoying a boom of unexpected proportions since the currency reform of June 1948 and with the Petersberg Agreements of November 1949 had flexed its diplomatic muscle for the first time. As "normalcy" returned, business and commercial ties between Germany and its neighbors, broken since 1945, were rapidly mended and re-worked. Private arrangements such as the Vereinigte Stahlwerke's plans for massive French private capital investment in German steel were under foot, threatening to place the Ruhr question beyond the control of the French Government. Finally, the possibility had to be faced that German revival would create excess steel capacities, jeopardizing the modernization campaign undertaken by the Plan de Modernisation et d'Equippement. Yet in France policy continued to drift. In 1949 there was no shortage of plans and proposals for a European settlement anchored in coal and steel, but nearly all those presented officially or semi-officially were non-French. On the

German side, K.W. Mommsen, Carl Arnold, as well as many less prominent figures, suggested the wisdom of forming a Western European coal-steel pool. On 8 March 1950 they were joined in this respect by Chancellor Adenauer. The Westminster Conference of European federalists drafted elaborate plans for a future parliament for producers of the main industrial nations. And at the Conseil d'Europe Paul Reynaud proposed a new coal-steel agreement as a bridge between the historic Franco-German divide.

(36) It was only once it became known in early 1950 that the US, which for months had been goading France to assert its leadership in European integration, was planning to propose the elimination of the final limits on German steel production at the forthcoming London tripartite conference that the French prepared to act. The result, announced to the world on 9 May, a day before the scheduled opening of the London conference, was the Schuman Plan.

This plan, which if circumstances had been slightly different might have gone down in history as the Bidault Plan, was actually the work of Jean Monnet and bears the special imprint of his complex political personality. (37) Monnet was less the impersonal, colorless technocrat he is sometimes accused of being than a visionary kind of promotor who through a wealth of experience gained abroad had acquired a breadth of outlook and a network of powerful personal contacts which he sought to put to the service of France. Monnet had been a vendor of cognac to Eskimos in the first decade of the century, an allocator of Allied shipping space in World War I, a senior civil servant at the League of Nations in the 1920s, an

international investment banker in the early 1930s, and the director of an ill-fated industrial development scheme in Chiang Kai-Shek's China. But the most important influence on Monnet's activities after 1945 was his experience in managing the "Arsenal of Democracy." He returned home after VE-Day convinced that France's survival as a modern nation required the "Americanization" of French industry -- bigger, more rational production units, larger markets, more enlightened labor policies -- and equally certain that this could be accomplished by methods he had used to help mobilize the US war economy. These were rather basic. The first -- the directorate principle -- was to endow a dynamic individual with the powers necessary to overrule entrenched interests, bureaucracies, and if necessary the law. The second -- public relations as politics -- was to wrap all official decisions in packages of universal appeal. One can clearly detect a confluence of this purpose and method in the operations of the Plan de Modernisation et d'Equippement, named the Monnet Plan, which he and a small coterie of able and devoted followers conceived, organized and administered with the aid of semi-official boards composed of all concerned parties to provide an appearance of public representation, and in the teeth of mounting resistance from economic and bureaucratic interests.

It is difficult to be precise in defining Monnet's relationship to foreign policy. Although as Commissar of the Plan he lacked an official mandate for making this, he was at various times deputized, sent on mission, and consulted. He often intervened behind the scenes as well, particularly

concerning matters touching on the two "pillars" upon which the success of the Plan supposedly rested, US dollars and Ruhr coal. There can be no doubt of Monnet's influence on policy towards the United States. In negotiating the Blum loan in May 1946, he committed France irretrievably to following American policies of trade liberalization, the usual US "string" attached to bestowal of largesse. (38) This is something that Monnet and Monnet alone was able to do. The demand for the opening of markets encountered no less intense resistance in France than elsewhere. Thanks, however, to the inability of any other Frenchman to extract more money from Washington and to his success in preserving discretionary authority over expenditure, Monnet managed to circumvent this. As head of the Plan, he was also able to reassure the Americans that France's commitment would be more than nominal -- that she would modernize and trade liberalization would then follow. Where Monnet's money-raising skills had made him indispensable to France his ability to "deliver the goods" on trade liberalization had him equally indispensable to Washington: Monnet was in an almost impregnable position.

Monnet did not exercise comparable influence over Ruhr policy. His views in the matter are distinguishable from those of the Foreign Ministry only in evincing a greater concern with problems of production than politics. He actually took only one independent initiative, that of September and October 1945 when, in frustration at the failure of deliveries to rise above a mere one-quarter of the levels promised by President Truman he proposed the appointment of a "Coal Czar" to his American

friends, Secretary of War John J. McCloy and Undersecretary of State Will Clayton. For this he, or rather a stand-in named Kaplan, received a sharp rebuke from a Ministry of Foreign Affairs resentful of encroachment into its domain, which included all "matters touching on the administrative centralization of Germany." (39) On the American side, General Eisenhower was not at all enthusiastic about Monnet's proposal: he thought it would undermine the authority of the Military Governors and suggested the appointment of a tripartite consultative committee in the hopes of burying the idea. (40)

After this ill-fated foray, Monnet acted only in concert with the cabinet. Although he appears never to have endorsed the Quai's "Ruhr-Rhénanie" proposals, Monnet spearheaded the unremitting campaign conducted in 1946 to gain US recognition of the severity of France's coal shortages and was evidently unwilling to do anything that might detract from this purpose such as repudiating them. Monnet's organization did not develop the "Alphand Plan" for the displacement of basic steel production from the Ruhr to Lorraine, which was introduced at the March-April 1947 Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers, but he expressed no reservations regarding it. His own position, spelled out in a memorandum written on the eve of the conference, was securely within the mainstream of contemporary policy. Monnet called for international control of mines and mills to limit steel production, maximize coal output, and assure fuel allocation in accordance with European requirements, and it stressed the need for a new juridical arrangement which, perhaps in the form of a requisition, would place management

responsibility with an international board while not violating the sanctity of private property. (41) Monnet's reactions to the Marshall Plan were also in tune with official policy. On 28 July 1947 he wrote Bidault to the effect that France should not be overly concerned that the new aid program would stimulate German revival. Monnet detected various positive trends at work: the division of Germany was a fact, the occupation could be prolonged more or less indefinitely, and an American military guarantee of French security would likely be forthcoming. As Monnet perceived it, the real danger facing France would stem from a lagging growth rate relative to Germany. Monnet concluded his note by suggesting that once the USSR had walked out of the London Council of Foreign Ministers planned for December 1947 France should encourage the US and UK to set up an international authority for the Ruhr. (42) As for the organization itself, although Monnet believed as of summer 1948 that three-power plans could be imposed through IRA to regulate German economic growth, he, like others, was disillusioned with the outcome of the London negotiations and had no hope that it could develop into an effective instrument of French policy. (43)

The 9 May 1950 proposal known as the Schuman Plan was unlike any predecessor for three main reasons. First of all, it was a public relations coup of historic proportions: this was not, according to the Monnet-prepared text which the Foreign Minister dutifully read over the radio in his squeaky voice, a mere matter of coal and steel but of preventing future wars by building Europe. The power of the message impressed skeptics at the time and has made it difficult since to separate the Schuman

Plan from the myth surrounding it. It was different, secondly, because Monnet could count on powerful American backing. This, which had protected his terrain de manoeuvre in France, gave him an extra weapon to employ against Germany, and enabled him to conduct negotiations on the French side virtually without interference. Thirdly, the Schuman Plan was different in that it did not propose the set up of a standing conference, international parliament, or steering committee but a directorate, which Monnet intended to head. This was the much-criticized dirigisme. But the strength of the proposal also derived from the fact that by 9 May 1950 much of what it contained had become commonplace.

In the Quai d'Orsay plans for a more far-reaching accommodation than the one foreseen by Monnet had long been brewing. A position paper written by the chief of the European desk shortly after the conclusion of the London accords on Germany provides an insight into an alternative approach which, if adopted, might have resulted in a more rapid and thorough integration process. The paper takes an interesting tack, beginning with initial criticisms of previous policy for dropping demands for internationalization of the Ruhr without having attempted to make it a genuine first step towards a western union and moving further to criticize the recent failure to act on the suggestion made by the US at London to extend the functions of the proposed international authority for the Ruhr to heavy industry basins of France and the Low Countries. France, the author warns, cannot fool itself: European integration without Germany is a myth. But with Germany, he

reassuringly adds, its prospects are unlimited. He recommends encouragement of private commercial arrangements between the industrial regions as a step towards statutory integration at a higher level, which should be pursued through the Marshall Plan organization. In addition, German and French political parties should link up to promote "direct association" between the industries of the two countries. This should take the form of mixed Franco-German companies to exploit the enlarged market. He emphasizes that it is only in this sense that any "restraint" is to be imposed on German industry, noting that such joint ventures are also indispensable as preparations for both a customs union and the economic specialization resulting from its operation. The paper insists, finally, that the time has come to act: it is farcical for French socialists and christian democrats to pretend that they have no partners across the Rhein -- and European integration requires close cooperation with them. The recommended course is clear: the parties should draft common platforms, devise concrete plans for political, economic, and cultural programs, create coordinating mechanisms, and organize cultural exchanges. For the rest, the French government should encourage producers to reach understandings with German partners, form joint ventures, and prepare the way for cooperation on a larger scale. (44)

What did Monnet offer the Germans? Neither the prospect of re-establishing traditional business relationships, nor a kind of fraternal re-grouping in the name of common political ideas, -- not in fact equal treatment at all but rather the promise of it at a future date after French conditions had been met. In the

meantime occupation rule in the Ruhr was to continue, or rather to be intensified: with the publication of Law 27 on 20 May 1950, which gave her a seat on the control boards, France was able for the first time to exercise the contrôle organique sought since the war. The ultimate uses to which Monnet might have put these powers had an altogether unexpected event not occurred must be left to speculation. The outbreak of the Korean war on 25 June 1950 transformed the diplomatic scene instantaneously: German rearmament became not a future probability but an almost immediate certainty. And when, in September, the US declared its intention to rearm the people which so few years earlier had backed Hitler, Monnet had little choice but take a very hard line: thus it was precisely during the Schuman plan negotiations that he, with the backing of the United States, made the most determined of all postwar attempts to break up the concentration of industrial power known in familiar American usage simply as "The Ruhr."

The Schuman Plan negotiations did not develop as Monnet intended. As his memoirs explain, these were to be carried on using a new approach. Instead of the "argle-bargle" that could be expected to result from an effort to strike compromises between different national viewpoints -- a state of affairs endemic at the League of Nations -- discussion was to take place "within the framework of the Schuman Plan idea," in other words with the other delegations taking cues from concert-master Monnet. (45) Beginning on 20 June at a summit of European diplomatic accomplishment, the Paris negotiations followed a long, slow, meandering downhill path to swamps of bureaucratic

maneuvering in the national self-interest. In agreeing to cede sovereign powers as conditio sine qua non for admission to the Paris meetings, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg took steps from which there could be no public retreats, whatever the practical failures. Of these there would be many. Although no one in Paris objected to setting up the High Authority called for in the French proposal, it soon became evident at the summertime technical discussion of price and cartel policy, of the power and organization of regional groups, of interest group representation within the High Authority, of its relationship to other organs of the community and to governments, of financial contributions, subsidies, and adaption provisions -- it became obvious from this vast exchange of words that the working papers drafted by the Monnet team were muddled as well as unrealistic and provided no satisfactory basis for discussion. The Auswärtiges Amt representative on the German negotiating committee reported to Bonn on 8 August 1950 that "... the French document de travail has become outmoded in every single point as a result of the recent negotiations and remains only of historical value." (46) This happened because the French, obsessed with Ruhrpolitik, failed to take into account the special concerns of the Italians, Dutch, Belgians and Luxembourgers. Although none of them had come prepared with a plan of action comparable to the French document de travail, eventually they would combine with the Germans against Monnet in order to make the coal-steel pool work.

But for France the Schuman Plan negotiations soon took second place. On 12 September 1950 Secretary of State Dean

Acheson mentioned casually to Schuman at a meeting of the foreign ministers in New York that the United States intended to arm ten West German divisions. This was surely the worst transatlantic shock yet, a potentially colossal blunder. Is this where the European initiative named after the French Foreign Minister was to lead? To a new Wehrmacht stationed on France's eastern border? To save the Schuman Plan from certain ruin Monnet immediately threw the deconcentration machinery into high gear. From this point on the fate of the Paris negotiations hinged on French success in executing Law 27. (47)

It took over six months for Monnet to shove deconcentration down Adenauer's throat, a time during which the Schuman Plan negotiations degenerated into arid scholastic debate between the French and the other delegations over the anticartel provisions of the proposed treaty while the real battle was waged in Bonn between US High Commissioner Mc Cloy and the Federal Government. Mc Cloy did more than back the French position one-hundred per cent; he actually conducted negotiations over Law 27 as Monnet's surrogate. The evidence for this is indisputable: Monnet quite literally dictated policy over the telephone to Mc Cloy's deputies, Bowie and Willner. (48) This is astonishing. Until summer 1950 the United States representatives had been the most "pro-German" member of the control groups responsible for enforcing deconcentration policy. In addition, the US High Commissioner was virtually shoving the Germans into rearmament. Why would he pursue policies that hurt Ruhr industry? The usual explanation, that it had to be "reformed" in order to "qualify" for entrance into Europe, rings hollow. One must fall back on Mc

Cloy's close personal friendship with Monnet for an answer. (49) In any case, proconsular intervention was decisive: Adenauer capitulated in order to save the Schuman Plan negotiations. On 14 March the Federal Government agreed as precondition for entering the heavy industry pool to dismantle the Ruhr coal syndicate (which, ironically, the British had set up earlier as a Military Government agency), cut the coal-steel tie by limiting mills to ownership of mines producing no more than three-quarters of consumption requirements, and decrease the average size of steel producing units by splitting the existing twelve firms into twenty-four. It was also agreed that the Coal and Steel Community was to have the power to enforce this settlement. (50) Two days later, on 16 March, the Schuman Plan negotiations were officially concluded. Monnet, it seemed, had finally achieved the "organic control" sought since 1945.

But appearances in this case were deceptive. First, there were long delays before the deconcentration plans could be put into effect. This was due largely to coal rather than steel problems, and the French were themselves partly to blame. Unable to decide whether the cartel should be broken up or centralized and put under close supervision, they were unable to agree on a deconcentration plan until October 1951. The Germans then predictably refusing to accept it, there followed long months of heavy Franco-American brow-beating alternating with determined German boot-dragging until at long last, on the very eve of the commencement of High Authority operations in Luxembourg, Adenauer once again caved in and agreed to accept a new Allied-designed distribution organization known as GEORG to replace the

cartel as well as an additional stipulation that it be in place and functioning before the common market in coal opened in February 1953. (51) Second, there was no effective means of preventing re-concentration. This was due basically to US High Commissioner Mc Cloy's decision not to dispossess holders of Ruhr industrial assets. Of course, the Allied control boards managed to devise ingenious schemes for the replacement of shareholdings with new restricted issues, the compulsory transfer of holdings from one company to another, the forced conversion of equity to debt titles and the like in order to frustrate the re-grouping of traditional industrial interests. But only a thin paper wall hindered the exchange of these titles. The job of preventing its penetration fell to the High Authority, as did that of frustrating the "organized" sale of coal as well as upholding the remainder of the "deconcentration" policy. For this task it proved to be woefully ill-equipped, and the Ruhr restoration, which the French had sought to avoid, would occur over the next five years.

Monnet's Ruhrpolitik, which may have delayed this restoration, also made it more permanent and durable than otherwise might have been the case. The coal-steel settlement resulted in both a new West European acceptance of the Federal Republic and a new solidarity within it, each of which stemmed from common opposition to Monnet's methods. Without intending to do so, he thus fulfilled the ultimate aim of Ruhrpolitik with a vengeance. Monnet not only reintegrated Germany back into Europe but reorganized Europe around Germany. And with this, the integration process entered a new phase.

In 1951 common West German opposition to Law 27 had two important results. The first was the solidification of the social partnership. The unions, which had supported deconcentration as conducted by the British under Law 75, opposed it under Law 27, thereby effectively endorsing a Ruhr restoration. (52) The payoff for this was the extension of co-determination to the coal industry, a measure which the mine owners, after initial resistance, soon came to applaud for its effects on worker morale. The second was the extraordinary measure known as the investment aid law (Investitionshilfegesetz) by which the rest of industry agreed to tax itself voluntarily in order to finance investment in coal and steel. (53) Monnet may not have founded Germany Inc., but he made an important indirect contribution to its success.

On the European level, first of all, the common threat of dirigisme encouraged coal and steel producers to organize new "cooperative" supranational institutions, which had about them the musty odor of old cartels. The occupation of Germany after 1945 had frustrated numerous attempts to restore these prewar organizations. In December 1950 Monnet's baton-wielding, resented equally in French and German heavy industry circles, elicited a joint protest of the two national employers' groups, the Conseil National du Patronat Français (CNPF) and the Bundesverband der deutschen Industrie (BDI). In 1951 international selling syndicates for specialized steel products reappeared. 1952 witnessed a collective effort of producers to work out proposals for the organizational structure of the High Authority then being planned. 1953 brought the formation of the

International Export Cartel and, more significantly, an organization known merely as "The Club." Under its auspices representatives of the producing nations worked out pricing problems in preparation for the planned opening of the common market in steel. Was this evidence of that forbidden thing, a cartel? Not quite -- merely the exercise of price leadership as practiced in the United States. There was, however, one important difference: in Europe Germany was the price leader.

(54)

There was also a new coalescence at the ministerial level, and from it would emerge an approach to advancing European integration quite different from Monnet's. It too originated in resentments dating from the Paris negotiations. At the end of 1951, once the French Assembly had ratified the Paris Treaty, it became possible for the bureaucrats to act. This was done under the auspices of the so-called Interim Committee, organized upon German initiative, which met during the first half of 1952 in order to plan the organization of the High Authority in such a way that the danger of dirigisme would be banished. It, not Monnet, is the true father of the Luxembourg Eurocracy. The work of the Interim Committee also had a sequel: certain of its members would soon re-gather to embark on the talks ultimately leading to the European Economic Community. These, however, would feature no single dominant figure, follow no one's blueprint, and above all exclude all discussion of issues arising from World War II. (55)

The Schuman Plan did not originate in 1950 but in 1945 when, in rejecting World War I approaches, the French decided to

seek a future accommodation with the Germans. Nothing could be more misleading than to assume that this decision presumed trust. It presumed strength, more specifically, an increase in French power relative to German. Historians will certainly continue to disagree in judging what France really had in mind here: an attempt to lame German recovery, partnership contingent on the attainment of approximate equality, or a cooperative relationship contingent on effective US guarantees against German domination. But however petty and vindictive French policy towards the Ruhr was after the war, it became bolder and more generous once recovery took place. This shift does not betoken any changing of the guard. Although Schuman remains an elusive figure for historians -- and the precise nature of his role in the events at hand still mainly the object of speculation -- Monnet and Bidault had an intimate, continuous, and harmonious professional relationship for the entire postwar period. There was never any significant difference between them regarding Ruhrpolitik. But the parts were not interchangeable. No one but Monnet could have set the process of European integration in motion. Both Schuman and Bidault had tried and failed to make progress towards this goal. Success required a coup d'imagination and this is what the 9 May 1950 Schuman Plan proposal provided. Except in Britain, its appeal was irresistible, and once negotiations had begun in Paris no party to them, or the United States who stood behind them, was prepared to allow them to fail. Yet Monnet did not succeed in guiding coal-steel developments. Decartelization failed, the High Authority never became a directorate, and the Federal

Republic in the end turned the tables on France. Yet Ruhrpolitik was a success: in bringing Germany back into Europe it achieved its ultimate purpose. French policy was not solely, even mainly, responsible for this fact. Beyond the Rhein, changes already well under way, were turning Weimar into Bonn.

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