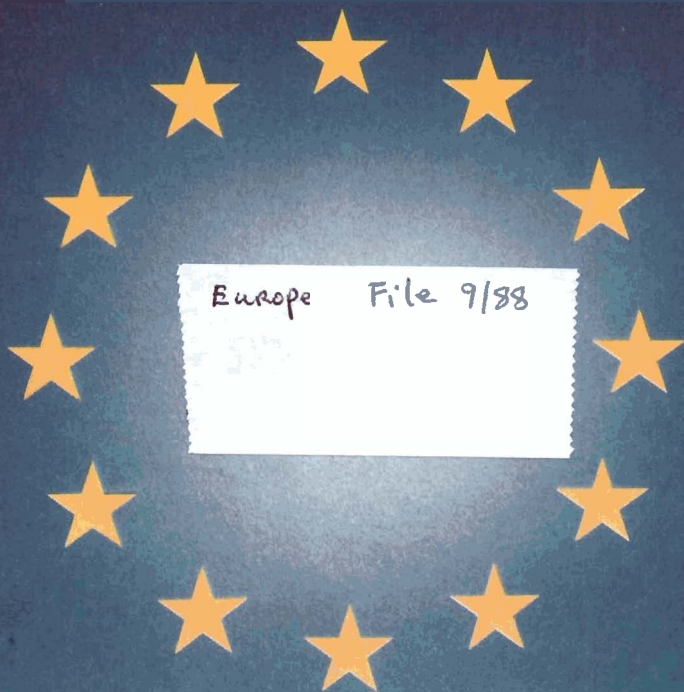


EUROPE, OUR FUTURE



**JEAN MONNET:
A MESSAGE FOR EUROPE**



The Heads of State or Government of the Community countries, meeting in the European Council, have declared 1988 'Jean Monnet Year'. Jean Monnet was a man with a method, a man whose message is now more relevant than ever, as the Community is working to establish a large internal market without frontiers and a 'People's Europe', further steps, as they are on the path to European Union.¹

A man of Europe, 1888-1979

- Cognac, France, 9 November 1888: Jean Monnet was born into a family of spirit merchants, in a town open to the world: 'Education began, of necessity, with learning our customers' languages. ... There were constant exchanges of people and ideas, and there were personal ties which had a particularly humanizing effect on trade.'

'When, at the age of 18, I went away on my first long trip, my father said to me: "Don't bring any books with you. Nobody can do your thinking for you. Look through the window, speak to people. Pay attention to whoever is beside you."'

Jean Monnet visited Canada and the United States (from New York to California), England, Sweden, Russia and Egypt, and drew his first conclusions: 'Where change was accepted, growth was assured. ... I understand that it was necessary and possible to organize change.'

- Bordeaux, September 1914: when the war started, Jean Monnet was turned down by the army for health reasons; but he very quickly understood what he had to do: 'It was clear that the Allies were going to face a major problem and were unprepared to solve it: the coordination of the war effort. ... Organizational structures without any precedent had to be invented. ... I had learned, during my travels, that economic forces were not blind forces, that they could be measured and guided, and that, in particular, wherever there was organization, there was real power.'

The French Government had left Paris and established itself in Bordeaux. Jean Monnet succeeded in meeting Viviani, the President of the Council, and gave him a concrete example: the rise in the price of oats (of great importance at the

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time for army horses). It was not the oats themselves which were costing more, but the freight. This cost had risen because the merchant fleets of France and the United Kingdom were competing with each other.

In November 1914, Jean Monnet was sent to the French supply services in London. There he played a decisive role in setting up various committees charged with coordinating and rationalizing the Allies' economic activities. Thanks to this man, appointed head of the French delegation for trade and transport at the age of 29, the French and British services stopped behaving as rivals, the concept of the national interest gave way to that of the common interest, wheat was jointly purchased, maritime transport was pooled and an effective counter-attack to the submarine war was mounted.

- London, summer of 1919: Jean Monnet was appointed to the general secretariat of the League of Nations (the forerunner of the United Nations), alongside Eric Drummond, a Briton, and the American Raymond Fosdick. Whether the question was the status of the Saar, the economic recovery of Austria or contention between Germany and Poland over Upper Silesia, he applied the same method: 'Consider the problem as a whole and in the light of the general interest'. However, he quickly noticed the limitations and scant efficacy of international cooperation.
- Cognac, Paris, Shanghai...: Jean Monnet returned for a while to Cognac to look after the family business and then devoted himself to international banking activities to restore and develop the economies of many countries in difficulty due to the war and then the recession. He was to be found in Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, San Francisco, Stockholm, Shanghai.
- Washington, 1938: Acting on behalf of the French Government, Jean Monnet negotiated the purchase of warplanes with Roosevelt. This was a historic moment because the order was the occasion for the President of the United States to set American arms production in irresistible motion in anticipation of an inevitable war. It was historic also because the great majority of those planes, which France was unable to use, served in the Battle of Britain and made a decisive contribution to the outcome of the war.
- London, June 1940: at the outbreak of war, Jean Monnet was sent to London to organize the sharing of French and British production capacity. Several months later, in the darkest hour, he took the boldest initiative of his life: he proposed the complete union of two allied countries, France and the United Kingdom. The unprecedented proposal was immediately approved by Churchill and de Gaulle. It was not merely aimed at causing a psychological shock; it had incalculable strategic, economic and political implications. Although an occupied country, France was not considered vanquished. The resources of the colonies of the two countries could have been placed at the service of their joint struggle. On 19 June, Monnet went to Bordeaux in the hope of moving the French Government to North Africa, but Petain was resigned to defeat and the will to resist was no longer there.

- Washington, 1941: determined to serve democracy by preparing for recovery, Jean Monnet went to Washington at the request of the British. He was immediately received by Roosevelt and became one of his most heeded advisers. Monnet's idea was simple: America had to become the great 'arsenal of democracies'. He played a decisive role in formulating and setting up the enormous programme of military production known as the 'Victory programme'. Keynes, the celebrated economist, was able to write that, by his action in the United States, Monnet had certainly shortened the war by a year.
- Algiers, 1943: a member of the Free French Government, Monnet worked on the arming of the French forces and prepared for peace. He wrote: 'There will be no peace in Europe if States reconstitute themselves on a basis of national sovereignty... European countries are too confined to ensure prosperity and essential social developments for their people. It follows that European States should form themselves into a federation or a "European entity" which would make them a joint economic unit.'
- Paris, December 1945: to rebuild France, Jean Monnet conceived and implemented the first plan for modernization and equipment, which established a permanent dialogue between the State, contractors and trade unions. This new method of cooperation followed a principle which he would apply unceasingly in the service of European unity: define the objectives, organize discussion, encourage convergence and, finally, give democratic institutions the task of administering the common interest.
- 1950, birth of the first European Community: in the spring of 1950, the countries of the East and the West, which had formerly been allies, confronted each other in a 'cold war' which risked degenerating into an open conflict with Germany as the stake. 'Such a war, which was in the mind, had to be fought with the weapons of the imagination', Jean Monnet would write. He conceived a simple and courageous idea: coal and steel had been the stakes for several wars between France and Germany; why not manage these resources jointly?

It was not a question of establishing a cartel, still less of starting an international organization for mere 'cooperation', incapable of taking decisions. Jean Monnet was more ambitious, both visionary and pragmatic at the same time: it would be necessary for France, Germany and the other European countries which joined up with them to yield some of their sovereignty to a common authority.

Time was pressing. The French, British and Americans were to meet on 10 May to examine Germany's industrial future. It was up to France to make proposals. Was the strategy going to be one of continued competition and rivalry? Or was there the courage to let imagination carry the day?

Robert Schuman, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, examined Jean Monnet's project over a weekend and took the fundamental decision: 'I am going ahead', he said, with one stroke moving the abstract idea into the realm of concrete policy. During a further week, the text of the 'Schuman plan' was



Meeting of the High Authority of the ECSC, surrounding Jean Monnet

finalized in the greatest secrecy. On 9 May, a special envoy was sent to Bonn to the German Government of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. In Paris, the French Government also met, but Robert Schuman was unwilling to speak as long as he had no assurance of German agreement. Finally, the German response arrived, at the very moment when the French ministers were about to break up. Robert Schuman's proposal met with no opposition. It was made public the same day, in

the Clock Salon of the Quai d'Orsay, the French Ministry of External Affairs. The following day, in London, Robert Schuman formally presented it to the tripartite conference.

After Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands responded favourably to the French offer. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established by a treaty signed in Paris in 1951. Its decisions were to have the force of law in the six member countries, because it was a democratic institution with a Parliamentary Assembly, a Council of Ministers and a Court of Justice.

None the less, long working sessions were required at first – teamwork of which the six participating countries had scant experience. Prime mover of these meetings, Jean Monnet continually repeated: 'We are here to carry out a joint undertaking, not to negotiate advantages, but to seek our benefit in the common benefit.'

Little by little, the first European institution determinedly took shape: 'There can be a community only between people who involve themselves without limiting their time and without expecting a return.'

It was a natural development that Jean Monnet should be asked to preside over the executive High Authority of the ECSC, established in Luxembourg in August 1952. He was thus able, as promised in Robert Schuman's declaration, to implement 'concrete achievements creating first of all a real solidarity'. This is how French-German reconciliation was soldered together.

From 1953 onwards, coal and steel circulated freely between the six ECSC countries, to the advantage of consumers and producers alike.

By choosing a limited yet crucial field, Jean Monnet had hoped to lay 'the first concrete foundation for a European Federation essential to the preservation of peace'.

- New objectives for Europe: peace, however, is never guaranteed, neither in Europe nor in the world. Already in 1950, in Korea, a dramatic alarm had sounded. Were we on the brink of a third world war? In the face of such a prospect, the Americans and British considered the possibility of Germany again having a national army, an idea which worried the other European countries and was, in any case, rejected by Chancellor Adenauer himself.

Rather than a German army, Jean Monnet suggested to René Pleven, France's President of the Council, the establishment of 'a European army with unified structures of command, organization, equipment and finance, and under the command of a single supranational authority', in the same spirit and according to the same method applied to coal and steel. The European Defence Community was the subject of a treaty signed in 1951 by the six ECSC countries. Although ratified by five of these countries, the treaty was, however, rejected by the French Parliament on 30 August 1954 and never saw the light of day.

This was a major crisis for Europe and one from which Jean Monnet soon drew the consequences. He resigned from the High Authority of the ECSC 'to participate with complete freedom of word and action in the realization of European unity, which must be concrete and real' and immediately founded the 'Action Committee for the United States of Europe'.

Such was the character of Jean Monnet: making his own a maxim of Ibn Saud, he said: 'For me everything, even the obstacle, is a means.' However, he was also able to assess men's worth, to surround himself with advisers of keen intelligence, patiently to seek out the most reliable support and to find the most influential personalities in each country.

The Action Committee for the United States of Europe brought together political and trade-union forces in the six countries. Jean Monnet worked in close collaboration with senior civil servants and ministers eager to give a new impetus to the construction of a community.

For more than 20 years, the Action Committee for Europe provided simple, concrete ideas to politicians. These ideas made possible the creation of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (the EEC, also called the 'Common Market'). However, to put forward ideas was not enough. It was also necessary to go from capital to capital to convince government partners, political parties, trade unions, employers, etc.

As the Community took shape, new problems arose. On each occasion, the Action Committee submitted its analysis and became actively involved. To enlarge the European Community and bring in the United Kingdom, it was necessary to smooth out many misunderstandings. Jean Monnet again took up his pilgrim's staff and worked, successfully, to prepare the way for an accession which everybody wanted without daring to make the first steps.

Already in 1973, Jean Monnet observed: 'I believe that what is singularly lacking in European affairs, is authority. Discussion has been organized, but not decision-making.' He therefore proposed at the highest level the creation of a provisional European government. From that idea emerged, in December 1974, the European Council – which regularly gathers together the Heads of State or Government of the Community member countries.

On 2 April 1976, the European Council conferred on Jean Monnet the title of 'Honorary citizen of Europe'. In retirement at Houjarray, south of Paris, he wrote his 'memoirs' and died on 16 March 1979. Until his very last days, he continued to emphasize to his numerous visitors: 'Keep going, keep going, there is no future for the people of Europe except in union.'

The Monnet method in international relations

- The primacy of law over force:* 'In our national life, the principles of liberty, equality and democracy were accepted and implemented because, after centuries

of fighting, man organized himself to give those principles concrete institutional forms: elections, parliaments, tribunals, general education, freedom of speech and of information.'

'Within national boundaries, man has long found and developed civilized means for dealing with conflicts of interest: man has no longer to defend himself by force. Rules and institutions have established equality of status. The poor and the weak have organized themselves to wield greater influence. The strong and the disadvantaged have recognized their common interest. It was not man's nature which changed, but rather his behaviour which was changed by common institutions ensuring at least a minimum of material well-being essential for all societies.'

- *Uniting people:* 'It seemed to me that I had always followed the same course in different circumstances, with a single preoccupation: to unite people, to solve the problems which divide them, to lead them to recognize their common interest. I did not have such an intention before doing it and I drew conclusions from it only after having done it for a long time. It was only when I was invited by my friends, or by journalists, to explain the sense of my work that I became aware I had always been impelled towards union, towards collective action. I was not able to explain why, unless nature had made me that way.'
- *Delegation of sovereignty:* 'The method chosen consists of delegating to common institutions the sovereign power of each of these six nations. To this end, a treaty was negotiated between the six nations, signed by their governments and submitted to the six parliaments for ratification.'

Here one can put one's finger on the fundamental principle behind the creation of Europe: the transfer of sovereign power, carried out in complete freedom, by nations whose existence has hitherto been based on their national sovereignty and who now delegate part of that sovereignty to common institutions which will exercise it on their behalf.

I particularly emphasize this point, because the form of this democratic and peaceful revolution which Europe is now undergoing will lead, we are convinced, to the creation of the United States of Europe.

The sovereign powers delegated to common institutions are exercised by a set of bodies which are the first European federal structures. There is a system of balance and control which ensures democratic control of all decisions.'

- *The power of institutions:* 'Nothing is possible without men, nothing will last without institutions.'

'Each man's experience starts again at the beginning. Institutions alone become wiser: they accumulate collective experience and, out of that experience and that wisdom, men subject to the same rules see, not a change in their own nature, but a gradual transformation of their behaviour.' (Amiel, Swiss writer and philosopher, 1821-81, quoted by Jean Monnet.)

- *Equal rights:* 'The Treaty of Versailles itself was flawed: it was based on discrimination.

From the day I got involved in public affairs, I understood that equality was absolutely essential in relations between peoples, just as in dealings between individuals. An unequal peace could do no good. I none the less hoped that the flaw could be remedied through good will, rather than by leaving all to chance.

...

I understood then that majority rule was the surest way to encourage unanimous agreement, because it led to decisions and such a prospect made the minority see sense. For the majority too, however, good sense lay in not using its power to impose its point of view, or, at the least, to let it prevail only after a full discussion.'

The Monnet method in action

- *The power of simple ideas:* 'Affairs of State have no need of secret machinery, of the multitudinous emissaries and intrigues with which they are surrounded in reality and even more so in legend. The most important things are generally simple: they are so if one wishes them to be.'
- *Clarity in overall assessments:* 'When I reiterated how this applied to all my private or public activities: "First make an overall assessment" perhaps I inculcated a summary rule of action. I also know by experience that I initiated a process which was extremely complex and awkward for everybody. However, it is because simple ideas are awkward that one disregards them. The evaluation of requirements and resources, which should be a golden rule for all management, is the last thing administrations decide to do.'
- *Perseverance in action:* 'Nothing which has to be done in order to reach a fixed objective is of minor importance. Nothing should be approximate, or decided out of weariness or because of time pressure.'

If these rules, which are not incidental or minor, are disregarded, well-known, conscientious men express surprise that the results they arrive at are not equal to their intentions.'

- *The positive use of crises:* 'The resistance of men and things is a function of the size of the change being sought. It is even the surest signal that one is on the path to change.'

...

I have always thought that it was in crises that Europe would be made, and that it would be the sum of the solutions to these crises. It was necessary all the same to propose the solutions and get them implemented.'

- *The necessity for change:* 'The history of European unification shows that when men are convinced that change is occurring, thereby creating a new situation, they review their point of view and take action even before such a situation is fully realized.

...

By changing existing conditions in Europe, the Six created a "ferment of change" for the West. As we can see in the American and British reaction to the Common Market, one change leads to another. The chain reaction has only begun. We are starting a process of continuous change which can shape the world of tomorrow in a more lasting way than the principles of revolution so current outside the West.'

- *Influence through politicians:* 'If there was lively competition in the political sphere, there was practically none in the area where I wished to operate – that of preparing the future, which, by definition, is not illuminated by the blaze of current events. I could therefore count on the support of politicians because I was not inconveniencing them. Furthermore, although much time is required to attain power, only a small amount is required to explain to those who have it the way to solve actual difficulties: this is a language to which they willingly listen at a critical time. At such a time when ideas are lacking, they accept yours with gratitude, on condition that you allow them to claim paternity. Because they run the risks, they have need of laurels. In my work, it is necessary to forget about laurels; I have no taste for the shadows, no matter what anyone says, but if it is at a cost of self-effacement that I can best accomplish an objective, then I choose the shadows.'
- *Create confidence:* 'Confidence is naturally established between people who take a common view of the problem to be resolved. When the problem becomes the same for everybody, and everyone has the same interest in its solution, differences and suspicions slip away, and often then friendship moves in.' ■

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