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Uniting Men

Jean Monnet



General Editor
KIREET JOSHI

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Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

Uniting Men

Jean Monnet



General Editor: KIREET JOSHI

Uday - Gopi



1920 - 1921

Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

Preface

The task of preparing teaching-learning material for value-oriented education is enormous.

There is, first, the idea that value-oriented education should be exploratory rather than prescriptive, and that the teaching-learning material should provide to the learners a growing experience of exploration.

Secondly, it is rightly contended that the proper inspiration to turn to value-orientation is provided by biographies, autobiographical accounts, personal anecdotes, epistles, short poems, stories of humour, stories of human interest, brief passages filled with pregnant meanings, reflective short essays written in well-chiselled language, plays, powerful accounts of historical events, statements of personal experiences of values in actual situations of life, and similar other statements of scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary expression.

Thirdly, we may take into account the contemporary fact that the entire world is moving rapidly towards the synthesis of the East and the West, and in that context, it seems obvious that our teaching-learning material should foster the gradual familiarisation of students with global themes of universal significance as also those that underline the importance of diversity in unity. This implies that the material should bring the students nearer to their cultural heritage, but also to the highest that is available in the cultural experiences of the world at large.

Fourthly, an attempt should be made to select from Indian and world history such examples that could illustrate the theme

of the upward progress of humankind. The selected research material could be multi-sided, and it should be presented in such a way that teachers can make use of it in the manner and in the context that they need in specific situations that might obtain or that can be created in respect of the students.

The research team at the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) has attempted the creation of the relevant teaching-learning material, and they have decided to present the same in the form of monographs. The total number of these monographs will be around eighty.

It appears that there are three major powers that uplift life to higher and higher normative levels, and the value of these powers, if well illustrated, could be effectively conveyed to the learners for their upliftment. These powers are those of illumination, heroism and harmony.

It may be useful to explore the meanings of these terms — illumination, heroism and harmony — since the aim of these monographs is to provide material for a study of what is sought to be conveyed through these three terms. We offer here exploratory statements in regard to these three terms.

Illumination is that ignition of inner light in which meaning and value of substance and life-movement are seized, understood, comprehended, held, and possessed, stimulating and inspiring guided action and application and creativity culminating in joy, delight, even ecstasy. The width, depth and height of the light and vision determine the degrees of illumination, and when they reach the splendour and glory of synthesis and harmony, illumination ripens into wisdom. Wisdom, too, has varying degrees that can uncover powers of knowledge and action, which reveal unsuspected secrets and unimagined skills of art and craft of creativity and effectiveness.

Heroism is, essentially, inspired force and self-giving and sacrifice in the operations of will that is applied to the quest, realisation and triumph of meaning and value against the resistance of limitations and obstacles by means of courage, battle and adventure. There are degrees and heights of heroism

determined by the intensity, persistence and vastness of sacrifice. Heroism attains the highest states of greatness and refinement when it is guided by the highest wisdom and inspired by the sense of service to the ends of justice and harmony, as well as when tasks are executed with consummate skill.

Harmony is a progressive state and action of synthesis and equilibrium generated by the creative force of joy and beauty and delight that combines and unites knowledge and peace and stability with will and action and growth and development. Without harmony, there is no perfection, even though there could be maximisation of one or more elements of our nature. When illumination and heroism join and engender relations of mutuality and unity, each is perfected by the other and creativity is endless.

This particular monograph pays homage to a hero of our times, a Frenchman named Jean Monnet. He is mainly known for his role in the creation of what was to become the European Union but, in reality, Jean Monnet has been much more than "the father of Europe". He has been an instrument at the service of a vision.

That vision was the future unity of mankind; it was a world that would not be divided by borders. As for the instrument, he spent his whole life trying to perfect it, to make it more supple, more efficient, more transparent. He probably never in his life used the word "yoga" and he would have been quite surprised if he had been told that some yogis spent years in front of a wall. Practical as he was he would have asked, "Tell me, did the wall collapse in the end?" As for the wall that separates men, at the darkest moments of the 20th century Jean Monnet had measured its thickness and its resistance, and having done so he could not rest until he had understood how he could open a breach into it.

The world has worshipped war heroes for a long time now. Perhaps it is time to learn that there is a heroism of another kind.

Hermann Hitzacker Elbe
 8. Nov. 1978
 Monsieur George Jean Monnet!
 Als ehemaliger Unteroffizier der
 preussischen Armee habe ich am 1. März
 Schützengraben im Angesicht der Kathedrale
 von Reims 1916 gekämpft, die War möge
 doch unsere beiden Völker versöhnen,
 damit dieser furchtbare Boden aufhört,
 die, als Blutsauger haben diese Aufgabe
 gemindert, dafür danke ich Ihnen und
 gratuliere Ihnen 90ten Geburtstag und
 wünsche Ihnen noch ein langes gesundes
 Leben, ich bin 85.
 In der Liebe
 Dankbarkeit
 in unserer Zeit
 Freundlichen Grüßen
 W. Meyer Balth. R.
 3199 Hitzacker Elbe

Reproduction of a letter from a Prussian officer sent to Jean Monnet for his 90th birthday, 1978:

Germany, Hitzacker on the Elbe
8th November 1978

Mister Europe Jean Monnet,

I was a non-commissioned officer in the Prussian Army. In 1916, in my trench, in sight of Reims cathedral, I prayed to the Lord that he reconcile our two peoples, that that awful massacre might cease. You are the political figure who has helped to accomplish that feat. I should like to congratulate you on your ninetieth birthday and wish you long life and good health (I myself am eighty-five years of age).

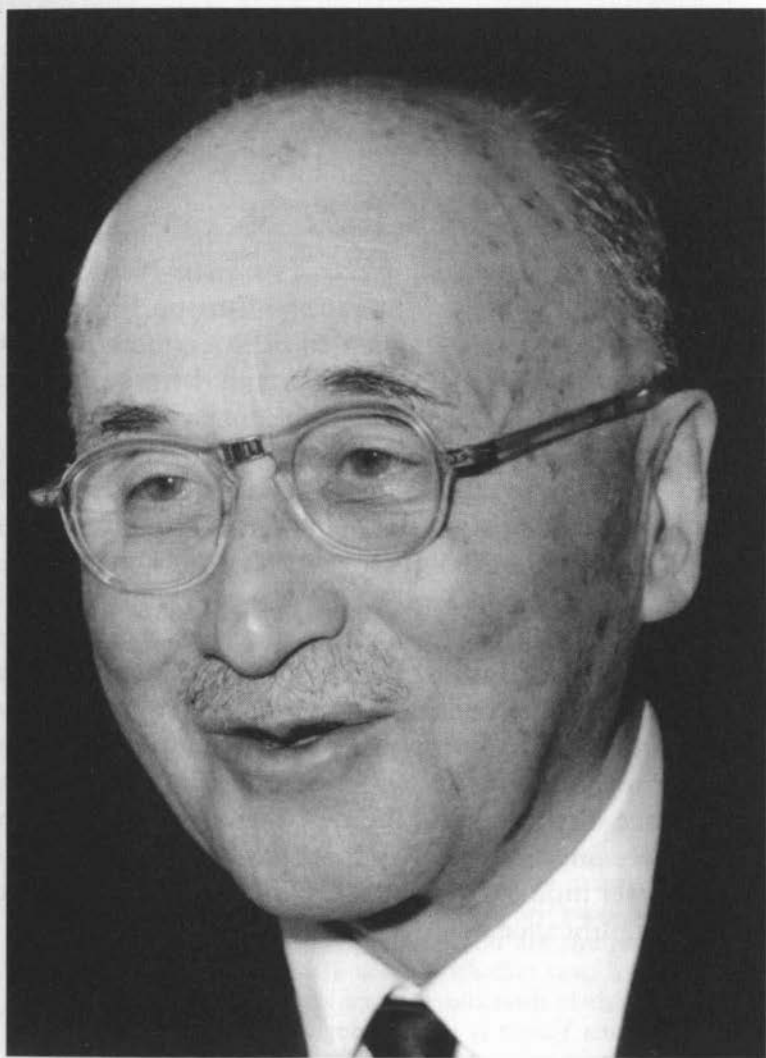
With my friendly greetings

W. Meyer
 Retired postal worker
 3139 Hitzacker on the Elbe

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I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Henri Rieben, the President of the Jean Monnet for Europe Foundation, Lausanne, who gave us permission to print extracts from two books published by the Foundation and who sent us the photo which we have reproduced on the cover.

It is not rare that institutions created in the name of a great man gradually lose the very spirit that animated that man. This is why it was deeply moving for me to enter into contact with this Foundation. Professor Henri Rieben and his collaborators Mme Claire Camperio-Tixier and Mme Françoise Nicod evidently have kept alive the intense aspiration that was at the heart of Monnet's life and work. They did not know anything about me, yet they immediately responded to my queries and went out of their way to provide us with documents. It seems somehow they knew exactly the state of fascination I had been in since the moment I opened the *Memoirs* of Jean Monnet. More importantly, they must have felt that to create a link, howsoever modest, between Jean Monnet and India could be of some significance. My deep thanks to them.



Jean Monnet, European Parliament, Strasbourg
Courtesy: Media Library Jean Monnet for Europe Foundation,
Lausanne, Switzerland

Uniting Men — Jean Monnet

Introduction

Man's finest profession is that of uniting men.
— Saint-Exupéry

France, Bordeaux: World War I, end of September 1914 — The French had been just able to stop the advance of the Germans on the river Marne. The French government had fled Paris and was functioning from Bordeaux, where confusion prevailed. A young man presented himself at the office of René Viviani, the French Prime Minister. He was just 26 of age, did not possess any diploma, and did not hold any official position. His family, it was said, ran a firm selling cognac, the famous brandy of that name. To the slightly surprised French Prime Minister he developed the following arguments: France and Great Britain are engaged in war each on its own. The equipment necessary for each army is purchased separately. It results in a great wastage of time and resources. The Allies are competing with each other to get raw materials and cargoes. There are absurd and unnecessary duplications. We need a common organization for production, supply and sea transport.

Viviani was impressed by this idea which was very simple but very novel at a time when national egos were still very powerful. He sent this unknown young man, whose name was Jean Monnet, to the Minister for War, Millerand. Millerand, in turn,

posted him to London, where he stayed till the end of the war. There, in collaboration with a remarkable Minister for Trade, Clémentel,¹ Monnet set to work. He created common purchasing services so as to avoid competition between the two countries, which had been fighting each other over goods on the Australian and Argentinean markets. Monnet was instrumental in setting up the Wheat Executive which was to be responsible for the purchasing, sharing and shipment of grain between Great Britain, France and Italy. Then the submarine blockade enforced by the Germans had a terrible effect on the Allied supplies, especially for France because part of her territory was in enemy hands so that much of her labour force was lost to the army. There were just not enough ships. Monnet tackled this problem head on. Private interests had opposed the full requisition of the merchant fleet. In consequence, armies and private ship owners were fighting over ships. Monnet and his friends proposed the creation of an Allied shipping pool, with a definition of priorities and principle of equality in front of restrictions. The British fleet was requisitioned. In 1917 the French fleet was requisitioned at last. The idea — and the practice — of common action gained ground: people started to recognize that common needs had to be examined together, and that the Allies must see together how available goods could be shared. The Allied Maritime Transport Committee was officially set up in March 1918. When the American troops had to be transported to Europe this organization proved crucial. At the end of March 1918, there were only 350,000 men in Europe. At the end of the war there were more than two million. That is to say that thanks to this joint body, from May to October, 260,000 Americans could cross the Atlantic each month. Not until the summer, did the American shipbuilding programme add to the available tonnage.

Monnet made a number of enemies. He and his energetic team actually disturbed many people's working habits as they often ignored the hierarchical channels. Monnet had insisted, for instance, to get a private and direct line with Clémentel's office

in Paris. In 1917, some people in the corridors of powers in France felt that it was time to send this annoying young man to the battle front. Monnet was summoned by Clemenceau, the redoubtable Prime Minister, also called "the Tiger". Clemenceau did not have time to waste: Explain to me what you are doing in London. Monnet explained. A week later Monnet was called back. Clemenceau handed him a piece of paper: Monnet was to return at once to his post in London. It was a decree of the Cabinet. Even Monnet's enemies had been forced to sign.

London, World War II, June 1940 — The French army was being routed and the British army isolated. The future looked totally uncertain. Monnet was in London again. The lessons of 1917 had been learnt and there was now an official Anglo-French Coordinating Committee whose chairman was Jean Monnet. But the Panzer divisions were advancing fast. The Germans crossed the river Marne and entered Paris. In the middle of this desperate situation, Monnet conceived of a revolutionary proposal, "a radical blow stricken at the heart of States' sovereignty": a total fusion between England and France — one flag, one parliament, one people. Monnet convinced Horace Wilson, who in turn persuaded Chamberlain to speak to Churchill. The British Prime Minister was startled and not really convinced. But, as he later said, "in this crisis we must not let ourselves be accused of lack of imagination". Churchill accepted to bring the proposal to the War Cabinet, whose members to his utter surprise were quite enthusiastic. The ministers would meet the following day and finalize the text. That same day General de Gaulle, the new Secretary of State for war, arrived in London. Monnet explained to him the project of union. As Churchill, de Gaulle was not convinced, but he was conscious of the grandeur of the gesture and of the effect such a declaration could have on the morale of the French people. The text was approved by the English Council of Ministers. De Gaulle called the French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud over the phone. Reynaud was in Bordeaux where the government had withdrawn. The text was read aloud. Reynaud

asked whether Churchill had approved it. Churchill grabbed the telephone and said something like "Hold on! De Gaulle is leaving now; he will bring you the text. Everything can change with this proposal. Let us meet tomorrow in Concarneau". De Gaulle left by plane. Monnet was about to get on a train when he learnt that the French Prime Minister had resigned and that the defeatists in France had won the day. Pétain had been chosen as the new Prime Minister. The London proposal then was received in Bordeaux in an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility. As Churchill said later, "rarely has so generous a proposal encountered such a hostile reception." According to Pétain, what was being proposed was nothing less than "a union with a corpse".

Exceptional endeavour proposed by exceptional people in exceptional circumstances, which "could have changed the course of the war, the future of England and of Europe." A missed opportunity, but as Monnet would discover at the end of his life: "the extreme point of an action continuously striving towards the unity of men".²

Paris, 1950 — The danger to Europe of a war with the Soviet Union was becoming more and more tangible. People spoke of unavoidable conflict. Jean Monnet felt that the cold war, which had for its essential objective to make the opponent give way, was the first phase of real war. The Americans wanted to strengthen the West and in this context it became imperative to secure a German contribution to the rebuilding of the European economy. This was viewed with suspicion by the French. France had been even trying to detach the rich region Saar from Germany. On the one hand, Germany was going to become a sovereign state and on the other hand each concession was made reluctantly. Germany was humiliated and became more and more impatient of restrictions imposed on her. France was afraid of a sovereign and free Germany. Monnet was worried: "Peace can be founded only on equality. We failed in 1919 because we introduced discrimination and a sense of superiority. Now we are beginning to

make the same mistakes again.” Fortunately, two exceptional men, the Chancellor of Germany Konrad Adenauer and, in France, the Minister for External Affairs Robert Schuman³ were in the seats of power and open to a radical change of perspective. What could be done? Monnet left Paris and set out on a trek in the Alps as he was used to. There in the concentration of his silent march, he was constantly contemplating the same question: how to deeply implant a common interest between the two countries? When he came back to the capital, he knew what had to be done. “The course of events must be altered. To do this, men’s attitudes must be changed. Words are not enough. Only immediate action on an essential point can change the present static situation. This action must be radical, real, immediate, and dramatic; it must change things and make a reality of the hopes which people are on the point of giving up.”

Monnet sent a proposal to the Prime Minister Bidault and also to Schuman. Bidault filed away the paper in a drawer. Schuman was immediately convinced. It would be known as “the Schuman plan”: a revolutionary proposal consisting in pooling together the coal and steel resources under an autonomous High Authority. What had been instrumental for making war was going to be instrumental for making peace. Schuman and Monnet then set out to work in close collaboration, outside of official diplomatic channels. They sent a message to Adenauer who rapidly made his acceptance known.⁴ On the 9th of May 1950 the proposal was made public. It was generally well received in France, except amongst the communists, the Right (because of the delegation of sovereignty) and the Gaullists (De Gaulle made fun of this “mish-mash of coal and steel”). The German response was overwhelmingly in support of the idea. At the end of May, French and Germans met in Adenauer’s office in Bonn. For the first time since the war, Adenauer would address the world without the intervention of the Allied High Commission (still responsible for the affairs of Germany in this spring of 1950). Monnet had been very particular on this point: Germany had to discuss and decide

as a sovereign nation. The two delegations came to an agreement. The Chancellor declared: "Monsieur Monnet, I regard the implementation of the French proposal as my most important task. If I succeed, I believe that my life will not have been wasted." During the dinner hosted by the French embassy, "There were two ministers with Adenauer" remembered Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, "Jean Monnet was coming towards them. The Chancellor then turned to me and said: please tell Mr Monnet that when I received his proposal, I thanked God."

A breach in the ramparts of national sovereignty had been made thanks to this man, "able to wriggle the neck of History by creating institutionally irreversible situations".

1914, 1940, 1950. Three crucial dates. Three striking instances of an action which is each time different yet proceeds always from the same intention: to unite men, to solve the problems which divide them, to bring them to a common view; to show them that beyond their differences of opinion and despite whatever frontiers divide them, they have a common interest; to persuade them to see how they can pool together their resources, combine their efforts, merge their destinies — whether in times of war or in times of peace. In times of war but for the peace. In times of peace so that the war does not come back. Rarely has a single man who was neither a statesman nor a general nor even a celebrity, had such an influence on the course of international events. He did not know Sri Aurobindo, yet his whole life was dedicated to the ideal of human unity. What interested him, and even obsessed him, was not the ideal per se, but the construction, stone after stone, of this edifice. He rarely spoke in abstract terms. He spoke little of things that were outside his domain of action. He did not like high-sounding declarations. Yet here and there, in his notes jotted in his personal diary, the vision is there, clear, vast:

The union of Europe is not an end in itself. It is a

contribution to the organization of peace in the world.

The focus of our efforts should be the development of man — not the affirmation of a motherland, whether big or small.

Why is the union of men restricted to national borders?⁵

and then, at the very end of his Memoirs, in the last page of his testament, this remark so moving in its simplicity, as if to half open a door before disappearing:

Have I said clearly enough that the Community we have created is not an end in itself? It is a process of change, continuing that same process which in an earlier period of history produced our national forms of life. Like our provinces in the past, our nations today must learn to live together under common rules and institutions freely arrived at. The sovereign nations of the past can no longer solve the problems of the present: they cannot ensure their own progress or control their own future. And the Community itself is only a stage on the way to the organized world of tomorrow.⁶

One is reminded here of the men of the French revolution. They too at certain moments could get a glimpse of the future world that was to be born out of the huge upheaval whose first jolts they had triggered. In these moments of grace their voice also could find those simple but sublime accents expressing the surprise and emotion of those who realize that they have not worked in vain.

For a united world, for a deep transformation of the relation

between men and between countries, Monnet worked tirelessly, with a total abnegation, putting aside all secondary preoccupation, all personal ambition. He viewed men without illusion but without pessimism. He was convinced that union was ineluctable and that we had only the choice "between changes towards which we will be forcibly dragged and changes which we will know how to prepare and realize". He was infinitely patient, but when the opportunity to act was given to him, he pursued the action with a total concentration, without leaving any detail to chance, and with an impressive tenacity. He owed these virtues, he said, to his native soil, Charente, a region south-west of France.

He was born in Cognac in 1888 in a place where "one did one thing at a time slowly and with concentration"... "I can wait a long time for the right moment. In Cognac, they are good at waiting. It is the only way to make good brandy." Life interested the child much more than bookish knowledge. He stopped his studies after his first baccalaureate, and asked his father to allow him to work for the firm. At 16 he went to England to learn English. Knowing the language and the culture of the clients was very necessary for his trade. He stayed in a family of wine merchants, the firm's agents, and went to the City every morning. At 18 he went to Canada to develop the firm's retail network. There he acquired a taste for long walks: "the moment, or the means, for the concentration of mind that precedes action". He visited Sweden, Russia. In 1913, after a serious illness, he was found medically unfit for military service.

Then the first World War broke out. We have recounted Monnet's extraordinary visit to the Prime Minister's office. This young man did not consider for a second that the men in power must have reflected on the problem of the lack of cooperation between the Allies. He did not find it presumptuous to point at deficiencies and to suggest a course of action to experienced statesmen. "In a difficulty, never think that responsible men are

engaged in solving it. If you find it necessary, see to it yourself." This first bold act in Bordeaux is already very typical of Monnet's way of functioning: a reflection free from the preconceptions of the past, a tremendous confidence in the power of a simple idea, a clear perception of who is the man who has the capacity and opportunity to implement it, a direct approach to contact this man, and finally a tireless work to bring everything to fruition. "I don't recall having ever thought: I want to do this or that with my life. Circumstances decided for me. In fact, I only know events. I must admit that they have never failed me. But in order to seize them, one must be well prepared."

Monnet stayed in London till the end of World War I. He recounted in his Memoirs:

Our small team was called upon to do miracles of improvisation, from day to day — whereas I never stopped insisting that only a joint overall organization could enable the German challenge to be met. But, as so often in my life, this simple idea had to go through a maze of complications — long and arduous discussions which seemed out of all proportion to what was at stake, and which might seem discouraging if I described them now. And yet to abandon a project because it meets too many obstacles is often a grave mistake: the obstacles themselves provide the friction to make movement possible. The more we went into the difficulties, the more it became clear that we must take decisions together; and I myself never doubted that all our patient pressure and all our daily progress would come to fruition at the moment of maximum danger, probably in the last stages of the war, when there was no other choice than to be bold.⁸

In London Monnet began to build up an impressive network of relations which kept on expanding during all his life and which played a crucial role in his work. For instance, during these years in London Monnet worked in close collaboration with a young civil servant in the Transport department, named Arthur Salter. It is with this Salter, who by then had become Sir Arthur Salter that Monnet wrote the draft of the proposal of Anglo-French union in 1940.

The years following the Great War provided Monnet with yet another experience. The young man had been remarked for his role in the creation and functioning of inter-allied organizations. He was then chosen as Deputy to the League of Nations' Secretary General, Sir Eric Drummond. He set out to work on finding solutions to some problems (the question of Silesia, a region disputed by Poland and Germany, a financial package for Austria, etc). Monnet remembers:

Certainly, the organization which was set up, and which without major changes went on working in Geneva until 1939, did not always have the strength of its intentions. But in 1919 I was not looking at the system's weaknesses: it went as far as was possible at that time. To me it represented considerable progress, because through it we were beginning to change the relations between peoples. In those days, undoubtedly, I saw the problem of common authority differently from the way I see it today, because in 1919 the Allies saw the restoration of national sovereignty as the keystone of peace.⁹

Monnet was a voluntary optimist. .

We developed habits of co-operation among nations which hitherto had known only relationships based

on power. We placed great hopes in the development of the League, and the difficulties we encountered acted as a stimulus. It was only later that I realized how we had underestimated them, or rather how we had failed to dig deep enough. At the root of them all was national sovereignty. In the League Council, this prevented the general interests being seen. At every meeting, people talked about the general interest, but it was always forgotten along the way: everyone was obsessed by the effect that any solution would have on him — on his country. The result was that no one really tried to solve the actual problems: their main concern was to find answers that would respect the interests of all those around the table. In this way, the whole organization fell into the routine of mere co-operation.

This was inevitable in a body subject to the unanimity rule. That rule seems natural to even the best-intentioned of men. One scene among others sticks in my memory: it was a meeting of the Council to discuss the world distribution of raw materials. The Italian representative, Marchese Imperiale, was pressing for a certain decision to be taken. As usual, the British representative, Lord Balfour, looked as if he were asleep. When his turn came, he got up and said simply: "His Majesty's Government is against." Then he returned to his doze. The question was settled.¹⁰

Monnet tried to bring some reasonableness into the question of the German reparations. He had to face the intransigence of many Frenchmen. There was not much he could do. The problem lay in the Versailles treaty" which was based on discrimination. In spite of this, the experience was extremely instructive for Monnet. He drew from it several lessons which influenced his

action till the end of his life:

— a peace based on inequality can have no good results. "From the moment I first began to be concerned with public affairs, I have always realized that equality is absolutely essential in relations between nations, as it is between people."

— a mere co-operation between countries is not adequate for solving difficult problems

— an organization in which any decision can be blocked by the veto of one of its members will always be paralyzed.

— this organization can only have some power if the member states delegate to it a part of their sovereignty.

*All those who worked with Monnet at the time were struck by his moral influence. Louis Joxe, the future treasurer of the Free French, wrote in his book *Victoires sur la Nuit*, "all swore by Jean Monnet who was their guide and conscience." Nevertheless it became more and more obvious that the League of Nations was powerless, as the governments' main concern "was not to solve the actual problems but to safeguard their own interest".*

In 1923, Monnet's family asked him to come back to Cognac as the firm was in great difficulty. He resigned from his post at the League of Nations. He modernized the enterprise, and after a few years its financial health was restored. But Cognac was too small now for this citizen of the world. He used to think in terms of international relations. Yet he did not return to public affairs. He plunged instead into finance. He had been approached by a large American investment firm which had just established a French subsidiary in Paris. So Monnet became an investment banker. This job took him to the United States, to Poland, Romania, and even China, where he lived for almost two years in the company of the woman he had chosen as his wife. In 1929 this man who seemed to be so reasonable and level-headed experienced the great romantic adventure of this life: he fell in love with a beautiful Italian, much younger than him, married to an Italian

businessman. The divorce was forbidden in Italy. So the two lovers, hunted by detectives hired by the ex-husband, had to live through some fantastic incidents. The couple was only able to legally marry in 1934 in Moscow, after devising a dangerous scheme: Silvia first took the Soviet nationality then she divorced unilaterally and then remarried. The risk of course was that Silvia would not be allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Fortunately everything went according to plan.

Monnet's first voyage to China was at the end of 1933. He was invited to make a plan of reconstruction that could attract international investments. He was helped by the fact that he had a close contact with Dr T.V. Soong, the brother-in-law of Tchang Kai-Chek, the nationalist leader, and with his famous wife May Ling. He realised that it was impossible to rebuild the economy of China without an alliance between the foreign banks and the Chinese banks. This is what he did, creating a consortium of banks called China Finance Development Corporation. It developed in a remarkable way and thanks to it several important railway lines could be financed.

In 1936 Monnet went back to the United States and settled there with his wife. Financial result: mediocre. Monnet had earned a lot of money and lost a lot. Fortunately, he had kept some shares in the cognac family business. Anyway his mind had become entirely preoccupied with the growing perils. When he heard of the anti-Jewish measures taken by Hitler, his reaction was immediate, "A man who is capable of that will start a war. There are no limits to the spirit of discrimination and domination." Monnet was extremely concerned about the weakness of the Allies in the matter of arms, especially aviation. He was convinced that there was no other solution than to take help from the United States to modernize the French aviation. The difficulties were many. Extreme discretion was necessary, the Neutrality Act being still in force. Semi-finished products coming from the States had to be built in Canada. Furthermore, the

French Foreign Minister did not want to release the funds. French industrialists protested against what they saw as an injustice done to French industry, etc. Bullit, the American ambassador in Paris, a great friend of Monnet, proposed that Monnet be sent to directly meet the American president. This would be the first meeting between Monnet and Roosevelt, a man whom he admired all his life. In spite of the openness of Roosevelt, things stagnated.

Then there was the crisis of Munich, in which the French and the British shamelessly surrendered to Hitler's demands and abandoned their ally Czechoslovakia. A few days later, Daladier, the French Prime minister and negotiator in Munich, told Monnet, "If I had been in possession of three or four thousand planes, there would have been no Munich". Monnet was requested to again travel to America and try to place an order for one thousand planes, which were to be delivered at the end of July 1939. All these negotiations were conducted in secret because the isolationist current was still very strong in America. The whole affair was only possible thanks to Roosevelt. This effort would not be sufficient, of course, but at least Monnet had started to work on inter-allied co-operation.

In 1939 Monnet went back to Paris. First of all he was asked to deal with the problem of the debt that France owed the USA since World War I. This was a difficult topic that poisoned the relation between France and America. Jean Monnet was sent back to Washington in order to negotiate. A passage of a letter from Bullit to the American President is quite revealing of Monnet's reputation, "I hope you can meet him alone at the White House this evening. You can invite him for dinner or after dinner, it does not matter as this is a man without conceit. You will find him, as usual, completely honest intellectually and entirely discreet... You can speak to him without the least hesitation... there won't be any leak." Monnet's mission, conducted outside the official channels, was a success. France obtained a respite.

Then Monnet, conscious of the fact that war was imminent, set out to organize the cooperation between Allies. During a trip to London he suggested to make an assessment of the common resources and to create joint bodies having the power to find solutions to the deficits. Monnet did not neglect anything in order to get the agreement of the British. He even discreetly suggested to Bullitt that he should ask Roosevelt to insist with the British on the need for a single Anglo-French purchasing service in America. Manipulation? For this man, whom de Gaulle was to call the *Inspirer*, nothing of what had to be done to reach the fixed goal was to be neglected. The *Inspirer*, the conspirator, the conjuror: some people tried to diminish him with these words. True, Monnet could powerfully influence many statesmen. True, he “conspired” with the many collaborators, friends and accomplices who in many countries and in many different political parties were attracted to him. But the problem is not Monnet’s action. The problem is that we cannot find a word which could be the positive equivalent of the word “conspirator”. He was conspiring indeed, but for the good of the people; he was conspiring for building a better future. This is what his conspiracy was about.

In any case, Roosevelt accepted the suggestion and his advice was communicated to the British. An Anglo-French coordinating Committee was created with Jean Monnet as its Chairman. The British had as much confidence in him as the French had. So Jean Monnet saw the beginning of World War II in London. Then on the 16th of June 1940, he made that proposal of union between England and France which we described earlier.

After June 1940, de Gaulle and Monnet parted ways. For each of them the goal was clear although it was slightly different. De Gaulle had to incarnate Free France, the one that refused the surrender to the Germans. Monnet wanted to put all his energies at the service of the Allies and their victory. The first endeavour is famous. The second is less known but momentous nonetheless.

After the French collapse, Monnet discreetly saw to it that all the contracts of armaments signed by France were reverted to England and did not fall into the hands of the Germans. Then he wrote to Churchill, "I wish you to know ... that I should be extremely happy if the British government would give me the opportunity of serving it, and by doing so, of continuing to serve the true interests of my country.

"I therefore place my services at the disposal of the British government in such capacity as they can be most useful."

Churchill sent him to the United States as member of the British Purchasing Commission (later to be called British Supply Council). Monnet then left London. His circle of friends in the US included many influential people, most of whom were Roosevelt's closest advisers, Justice Frankfurter, Stimson, the US War Secretary, his assistant John McCloy, some journalists like Walter Lippmann, etc. All these men, fervently pro-Roosevelt, met regularly and informally; the fruit of their reflections was always communicated to the President. Of course, as far as the involvement of the US in the war was concerned, Roosevelt was restricted in his action by the law of Cash and Carry, according to which any country wanting to purchase equipment had to pay cash immediately. But Monnet insisted that without losing any more time an assessment be made of the armaments necessary to defeat the Germans and that a survey be taken of the available resources. He was actually surprised at the lack of preparation of the Americans. He wrote numerous notes and memoranda. "The surveys prepared on such basis are essential in order to determine if the programme of production now under way in the USA is sufficient to face the situation." Fortunately, Roosevelt was determined and conscious of what was at stake for the free world. He decided that the United States would lend England what she needed. Monnet was still not satisfied, "The United States of America will have to supply that which will allow England to surpass the German force in 1942. In order to have suitable equipment in 1942, this effort has to be decided, planned and started now. It has to be on such a scale that the supremacy and

victory in 1942 is possible. No human will, no imagination, and even no genius will be able to change the course of production during the year of 1942: it will be the result of the decisions taken now itself." Monnet got to know Harry Hopkins, the great confidant and collaborator of Roosevelt. Hopkins immediately listened to Monnet with a lot of interest. In the spring of 1941, Monnet prepared, with John McCloy, the instructions which the War department issued in order to get a comprehensive assessment of the Anglo-American resources. That assessment, in turn, would be compared with estimates of German power. "It is important to note that the problem must be dealt with from the point of view, 'What is the equipment we should have at the end of 1942 to surpass the German material force?' and not from the point of view, 'What is the equipment England and the US should have'."

Monnet's influence on events during this period was out of proportion to his official position and many Americans testified to his role in the Victory Programme. After the war the well-known economist Keynes would say, "When the United States of America entered the war, Roosevelt was presented with an aircraft production programme which all the American experts thought would require a miracle. Jean Monnet was bold enough to find it inadequate.... The President came to agree with this point of view. He imposed on the American nation an effort which at first seemed impossible, but which later was completely fulfilled. This crucial decision may well have shortened the war by a whole year." As for Robert Sherwood, Hopkins's collaborator and Monnet's friend, he said, "Monnet was the great, single-minded apostle of all-out production, preaching the doctrine that ten thousand tanks too many are far preferable to one tank too few." Robert Nathan (member of Roosevelt's brain trust) said, "When I met Jean Monnet for the first time, we had difficulty in assessing the needs. We approximately knew what the military wanted for the war, but we did not know what precise quantities of iron and aluminum we had to have. When Jean Monnet arrived, he tackled the problem head-on. He wanted to

know everything about American production. ... He kept on pestering us. We knew since long that he was closely connected with those whose mission was to prepare the war at the highest level, and we admired his skill of organization. He was the most determined man that one could imagine. No obstacle was insurmountable for him. Ceaselessly, he kept harassing people from the British side as well as from the American side. In the end, he was right and the technicians were wrong. If calculated only on the needs of the defense and needs of Lend Lease, the objectives, if we had listened to the experts, would have been limited till Pearl Harbour."

To assess the needs, to make a balance-sheet was a very important element in Monnet's strategy. François Fontaine, a close collaborator of Monnet, spoke very eloquently of how Monnet made use of numbers and figures:

The first need was stock-taking. This stock-taking is an exercise which the civil and military powers are not able to do. They prefer to launch armies till exhaustion of material and men. The stock-taking then is made by subtracting. The genius of Jean Monnet was to wage the battle of figures, to force the resistance of the bureaucracy, to push the services to their extreme point. Then he compressed the mass of data till he could fit them on one single page. The real situation then appeared and it was telling in its simplicity. For any responsible mind, which action should follow was obvious. [...] Tomorrow a new generation of historians probably will recognize the role, equal to that of great captains, of a few men without decoration and often without a mandate who conceived and built the arsenal of democracies. Which Nazi spy paid attention to these few civilians who ceaselessly demanded figures which were provided to them

reluctantly and then worked on feverishly day and night? Which intelligence service was interested in Jean Monnet, Arthur Purvis, Bob Nathan? An Albert Speer [Hitler's advisor] did not know till the end that his gigantic plans would be beaten by a Frenchman, invisible in the shadow of civil servants, themselves hidden in the shadow of Roosevelt. He would not have given 10 dollars for a piece of squared paper where a balance-sheet looking like that of a hardware merchant showed "the gap", the difference that had to be bridged in order to save the free world. This piece of paper exists. Monnet sometimes would take it out of a safe as if it were still a great secret.¹²

One of the most amazing aspects of Monnet's activities in Washington is that the British themselves, whenever they had some problems with the Americans, would always use Monnet as a go-between, sending him to Hopkins, and... "the trick never failed", as recounted Hoyer-Millar from the British Embassy. The British were only too aware that Monnet knew better than them how this government worked. In fact it is not only the Americans who praised Monnet for his role in the Victory Program, many Britishers recognized how central he was in the war effort. Leslie Chance, secretary of the British Supply Council, wrote, "For the best part of two years, to my certain knowledge, almost every major move in the Anglo-American supply situation in Washington, that is in the realm of policy, had its genesis in this little French head. The victory programme, the raising of the sights, the famous speech of the President when he told the number of tanks, airplanes and whatnot that were going to be built, the idea of the Combined Boards — all that was Monnet."¹³ After the war Lord Halifax was to write that Monnet was "with such as Harry Hopkins, one of the real architects of our victory."

November 1942. The Allies landed in North Africa. In February 1943 Jean Monnet was sent by Roosevelt to Algiers, ostensibly to look after the rearmament of French troops in Africa, but in reality to attempt reconciliation between Giraud,¹⁴ the general supported by the Americans, and the chief of the Free French in London, de Gaulle. So here was Monnet, a French citizen at the service of Great Britain and sent on a mission by the American President. This was not a man confined to frontiers, nor to narrow loyalties. Yet Monnet was loyal to the goal he gave himself, loyal to the cause of peace.

And indeed he was perfectly loyal to his native country. Monnet first tried to negotiate between Algiers and London. The situation was extremely difficult due to the stubbornness of both sides. Nothing less than the unity of France was at stake in those days in Algiers. Finally a Committee of National Liberation was formed. Monnet hoped that its authority would make the personal quarrels disappear. But it became rapidly obvious that Giraud had no political stature. Finally, he had to hand over his power to de Gaulle. The Americans were not very happy that Monnet facilitated this handover. Monnet calmly told them that he did not have to brief them about questions of internal French politics. That settled the matter.

This man, entirely concentrated on his goal, indifferent to personal ambition, attentive to judge things free from all personal preferences and opinions, reminds us of a great yogi. A surprising yogi, indeed, in a grey suit and a felt hat, but who except a yogi could set for himself the following rule: "Never let a question take a personal form"? It might be objected that many philosophers or moralists wrote similar maxims. Yes, indeed, but only yogis put them into practice.

In this year 1943 in Algiers, Monnet already saw ahead of the Committee of National Liberation and even ahead of the end of the war. He was already preoccupied with the after-war, and was

wondering what Europe would do with its peace. During the summer of 1943, he elaborated a whole program to be realized after the war and noted it down in his personal diary:

We have to make Frenchmen aware of the idea of Europe and the World. There is no salvation but in an international solution of the problems. There is no greatness for France except in universal views. It is not a question of prestige. It is a question of contribution. Contribution to the solution of the German problem. Contribution to the reorganization of Europe.

And,

There will be no peace in Europe if the States are formed again on the basis of national sovereignty with all that it entails of politics of prestige and economic protection.

He felt that the weakened and humiliated France, if she remembered her soul, if she remembered her tradition of universality, could and must play a great role in the preservation of peace. Some people would make fun of Monnet's "supra-national theories" (actually Monnet never liked the expression "supra-national") but no one was more conscious of the specific genius of each nation than he.

Monnet spent the rest of the war in Washington, where he worked on the supply of essential commodities for France. He also tried to convince the Americans to recognize de Gaulle and the Committee of National Liberation. This would only be obtained in 1944. Monnet, who would later be called by certain critics "the great American", also insisted that the currency to be used in France after the liberation should be a French currency. In reality, nothing would be further from Monnet's approach

than to agree to a relation that would not be based on equality.

After the war, Monnet met de Gaulle in Washington. Monnet remarked on the industrial and economic backwardness of France, and the need for modernizing. De Gaulle agreed and immediately gave him the charge of a "Plan of modernization and equipment". Monnet would be answerable only to the Prime Minister. His idea was that France did not have only to be reconstructed, but it had at the same time to be modernized. His other key-idea was that all the forces of the nation must be made to participate. For drawing the Plan, he gathered economists, industrialists, trade-union leaders, scientists, farmers and made them work together. At that time one did not speak yet of interdisciplinary methods, so this way of working was surprisingly novel. It was a very intense and always renewed activity. Monnet knew how to keep the initial enthusiasm alive, and avoid mechanical ways of working. "Modernization is not a state of things; it is a state of mind." It was called the Plan, but as François Fontaine remembered, "Monnet preferred to say that it was a living reality. He planned its growth and successive steps according to a design which he considered evident only as long as a greater evidence had not appeared. The adaptability was also included in the programme so that at any given time he could say 'we are going the wrong way' or 'we under-estimated the difficulty'." Around Monnet was an exceptional team of young men, most of them met during the war. Some of these would remain at his side for a long time, first for the preparation of the Schuman plan, then at the headquarters of ECSC at Luxembourg, and in the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. François Fontaine still remembers,

Which method of persuasion could ever replace Monnet's? Its secret disappeared with him. Neither the magic of words, nor an imposing majesty, nor the power of money have yielded as much influence as the slightly muffled voice, insisting but

devoid of dramatic effects, of this man who was smaller than most of his interlocutors. He used to catch hold of them and lead them into the embrasure of a window. Sometimes his hands were in the pockets of his jacket, but more often they were placed on your arm so as to make you, too, feel prisoner of the necessity. "Believe me... Do not be mistaken. There is no other way out". These warnings which had been repeated a hundred times did not wear out. On the contrary, they had been borne out a hundred times by experience. At the Rue de Martignac [address of the building which housed the Commissariat au Plan] the argument was simple: "Modernisation or decadence". Where was the choice? It was an injunction. Jean Monnet always practised the false alternative. But before setting his mind and his will, he had ceaselessly pondered over the problem. "I reflect for a long time, I convince myself. Once I am convinced, I act." He expressed the same idea differently: "An essential rule of conduct is to know what one thinks." He never advocated a course of action unless he had duly pondered over the matter and he had been convinced in front of his own consciousness...¹⁵

In 1950 Monnet was aged 62 when the proposal made to Schuman was drafted at Rue de Martignac. This proposal, coming so soon after the end of the war, consisted, as we saw above, in pooling together the production of coal and steel of France and Germany under a common High Authority, in an organization open to the participation of other countries of Europe. It was the fruit of Monnet's continuous reflections and a striking example of his method. First, when a problem is difficult, change the context.

I had come to see that it was often useless to make a frontal attack on problems, since they have not arisen by themselves, but are the product of circumstances. Only by modifying the circumstances — “lateral thinking” — can one disperse the difficulties that they create. So, instead of wearing myself out on the hard core of resistance, I had become accustomed to seeking out and trying to change whatever element in its environment was causing the block. Sometimes it was quite a minor point, and very often a matter of psychology. The problem of Germany, vast and complex though it was, could surely be approached in this same way. It would certainly not be solved until we had changed the conditions that made the future of the Germans so uncertain and disquieting, for their neighbours as for themselves. From the German point of view, those conditions included the humiliation of being subject to indefinite Allied control; from the French point of view, there was the fear of a Germany ultimately freed from any control at all. These two elements were by no means the only ones on the world scene at that time; but they were enough to block any constructive evolution in Europe.¹⁶

The second element which was of prime importance in Monnet's approach was to use obstacles as footholds in order to progress. (Monnet had been extremely impressed by a sentence read in a book on Ibn Saud, “For me everything is a means, even obstacles.”). In fact what interested Monnet was not the coal and the steel, but the fact that coal and steel could become “a means” or a lever in order to lift circumstances, and to change the mentalities. Monnet later said in an interview that all European development was contained in the Schuman Plan and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), including a very

important point, the delegation of sovereignty.

For the first time, countries would delegate a part of their sovereignty to an external body — which had the mandate and the power to take decisions as well as financial autonomy. Actually Monnet, contrary to what a politician might have done, far from reducing the import of his proposal, saw to it that there was no ambiguity at all. “Yes,” he kept repeating, “The Schuman proposals are revolutionary or they are nothing”. The governments had to understand very clearly that they were going to abandon a part of their national sovereignty.

In June 1950, the conference of the six countries having accepted the Schuman plan, opened in Paris. Monnet spoke, listened, repeated, dispelled fears. He knew that his proposal raised a lot of questions, but he also knew that these would be solved if people learnt to “think differently”, that is to say, not as French or German or Dutch defending specific interests, but as members of a group keeping in mind the common good. Monnet did not even want that these discussions be labeled “negotiations” as this word implies a compromise between people having different interests. He asked the participants to let go of the habit of speaking of a German or French or Italian steel industry since henceforth there would only be a European steel industry.

Monnet, a good pedagogue, knew he had to teach through example. During the whole conference, he spoke only as a European preoccupied with the common future. As his team consisted of men trained by him, it was remarked at the time that the French delegation was in fact a real European delegation. Monnet kept reminding everybody that the object of the conference was to lay the foundations for a European federation. Many objections were raised of course, especially concerning the powers of the High Authority. He patiently listened to proposals which he considered unacceptable because these aimed at limiting the power of the new institutions. He was very flexible but never

yielded on the fundamental principle of the proposal. He kept repeating simple ideas, like this one, "Until you have tried, you can never tell whether a task is impossible or not."

*Italian Paolo Emilio Taviani, leader of the Christian Democracy and a participant in that conference recalls, "The determining factor in the success of the negotiation was Jean Monnet's personality. ... Like De Gasperi" and contrary to Churchill, Monnet at first sight was not very impressive. Only gradually did one come to realize that he was a genius. Different in this from the Latin people, his aim was not to seduce but to convince. And for this, his main weapon was lunch. He would invite me, always tête-à-tête, and the menu would always be the same: a soup, a sole and an ice-cream. Then ceaselessly he would develop his arguments.... This is how De Gasperi was totally convinced."*¹⁸

When one thinks of the mass of technical and psychological obstacles that had to be surmounted, the number of people that had to be convinced, one marvels that this endeavour could succeed. When a journalist asked Monnet at the end of his life how he managed to materialize his projects, he simply answered, "You underestimate the importance of an idea." Of course none had worked harder than Monnet for that idea not to remain at the stage of the idea. The same journalist insisted, "When one listens to you, one is under the impression that everything works out alright in the end." Monnet gently corrected, "It works out alright in the end if somebody takes care of it."

Later the project of a joint European army failed due to the treaty being voted down by the French parliament. Monnet had been the "inspirer" of this proposal, although he himself had felt that it was premature to put it forward. It would be extremely difficult, Monnet thought, to transform the minds on something seen as so fundamental. The army with its external signs, the uniform, the flag, etc., touches at the core of national sovereignty and is one of its most sacred symbols. Moreover, for putting in

place a common army, there should have been more progress made in the way of political union, which was not the case yet. But international events had taken over. In June 1950 at the very beginning of the conference of the Six at Paris, North Korea had invaded South Korea. The Americans insisted on a greater German participation in the defense of Europe. The idea of a German army was unacceptable to the French. Monnet felt that there was no alternative to a European joint army. This is why in spite of his other preoccupations he used his closeness with René Pleven, the new Prime Minister, to discreetly send him many letters as well as a draft for a proposal. It is this declaration prepared by Monnet which Pleven read before the French Parliament and which was transformed into a treaty in 1952. Unfortunately, this treaty got stuck for too long in the sands of international diplomacy and was tabled in the French Assembly only in 1953. Monnet by then was fully absorbed by his responsibilities as President of the High Authority at Luxembourg and could not follow the project as closely as he wanted. In 1954 after the French refusal to sign the treaty, the whole project of the European Defense Community would be abandoned. Monnet was extremely disappointed but he drew lessons from this failure, "Once again, I had to explain to my friends that the only true defeats are those that one accepts. We had underestimated the strength of the nationalist current; and perhaps it was salutary to have taken its measure at the flood. We now needed time to build more solidly." Indeed, whenever he met obstacles in a progression that he considered as ineluctable, Monnet's determination was impressive. François Fontaine recounts how on certain occasions his collaborators were filled with dismay at a particular setback. But when they asked Monnet, " 'So what is to be done now?', Monnet looked at you with the air of surprise and reproach which he had while listening to useless questions. 'Continue, of course. What else?' "19

In 1950, Monnet became the President of the High Authority of the ECSC and took up residence in Luxembourg. In his office

he hung on a wall, visible from all sides, the photo of a famous raft which had crossed the Pacific, the Kon Tiki.²⁰ The symbol was clear: once we embark, we will not be able to turn back. "There is only one solution", he used to say, "continue to move on". On the 10th of August 1952, in the name of his eight colleagues assembled around him, he had taken an oath of independence (similar more or less to the oath all the European commissioners would take later): "We shall carry out our tasks in full independence, in the general interest of the community. In fulfilling our duties, we shall neither solicit nor accept instructions from any government or any other body and we shall refrain from any action incompatible with the supra-national character of our tasks. We have noted the member States' pledge to respect this supra-national character and not try to influence us in our work." The formulation went so much against all the ancient ways of thinking that even 50 years later one is astonished that this oath could have been accepted.

Immediately after the inauguration, work began. The rhythm imposed by Monnet was unbelievable, "He did not care about our schedule," one of his secretaries remembers, "the very evening of my engagement, for instance, he had decided to distribute a document in Brussels. He absolutely wanted me to do it; he had planned everything, had gotten the train timetables, etc., so that I could not get away." There were rumours saying that one day a jurist collapsed from a heart attack in his office, and in Luxembourg the people called the headquarters of the High Authority "the mad house" because lights were always switched on at night.

In any case, Monnet saw to it that people from diverse nationalities, specially French and German, worked together, even if for this he had to make them sit together in cramped offices. He never forgot that his most important task was to defend the independence of the High Authority vis-à-vis the States. From the beginning, the High Authority was confronted

with thorny issues, which had the potentiality to bring down the whole structure — the question of prices, for instance, or the problem of taxes. These obstacles were surmounted one by one. Some important progress was made concerning social measures. But the main achievement of Monnet was to create a common state of mind and gather in Luxembourg a team of civil servants who believed in the European idea. He remembered how much the visitors were surprised when they discovered a team of nine people speaking in four languages, “Our day trippers went away with the feeling that they had seen pioneers at work, and when they returned home they helped spread the word. Their repeated and consistent travellers’ tales fed the legend that a new race of men was emerging in the Luxembourg institutions, as if in a laboratory...”²¹

But after the failure of the EDC (European Defence Community) in 1954, Monnet realised that the European project may be arrested if one did not “take care of it” and that his functions in Luxembourg did not allow him to pursue the wider project. He wanted to be entirely free to participate in the European construction on a large scale. This is why in 1954 he resigned from his post in Luxembourg. It was for him the beginning of “a struggle of another kind”. For this, he wanted to lean on the forces he saw as indispensable, those without which he could not do anything but with which he could do everything, that is to say the political parties and the trade unions. In October 1955, Monnet created the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. He would remain President of this private organisation till 1975. The aim of the Committee was to keep the idea of Europe alive and initiate or encourage actions that led to the concretization. It was understood that those who signed up for being members of this Committee did not represent only themselves but also their political group. In the Committee there were many people who had been in power in the past, who would come back to power and should be able to influence men and governments. It was a very original creation. In fact, in this Committee, there

were political parties that opposed each other in their own country but which united on the subject of Europe. Monnet travelled incessantly all over Europe to prepare with these men the text of the future resolutions of the Committee. Once a resolution was passed, all the members would actively push in their own circles for its implementation. For twenty years, thanks to his incessant travels and visits, Monnet wove a very tight fabric of collaboration and good will. Nothing was left to chance. He himself would hand over the document to the person it was addressed to, checking the movement of a letter from one person to another. Recalling the beginning of his collaboration with the young René Pleven (a future French Prime minister), Monnet remarked in his Memoirs,

It took him some time to agree to rewriting ten or twenty times a note "of secondary importance" whose text was "more or less satisfactory". In fact, nothing that has to be done to attain one's aim is "secondary". Nothing should be an approximation, accepted out of tiredness or the lateness of the hours. Pleven also had to learn that to write a letter is not enough: one has to be sure that it has been sent, and to check that it has arrived. Failing observance of these rules, which are not merely details or minor matters, people who are thought to be conscientious are surprised when the results they achieve fall short of their intentions.²²

François Fontaine says, "Nobody has ever understood how with three collaborators and a few secretaries Monnet could be more active and stir more reflections than huge parliamentary institutions... No expert has yet understood how on his own an old man could bridge the distance that separated an Italian socialist from a British conservative, a Dutch anti-revolutionary from a German social-democrat, and all these politicians on one side from trade unionists on the other side."²³ Monnet's

organisation was very flexible, and used a variety of methods to reach its aim. The commitment which was asked from Monnet's colleagues was total, but the confidence he inspired was proportional to the involvement he demanded.

One has to stress here the fact that this man who could directly approach many great leaders in the world was entirely disinterested. "The extraordinary power of Jean Monnet," said Jean Laloy, "came from his absolute disinterestedness. People knew that he never asked anything for himself." Recalling his work for the Victory Program in America, Monnet said,

I have never tried to work in fields outside my experience — although there are many which I might have been induced to enter, if I had not always followed the rule of doing only one thing at a time. It seemed natural to try to convince Churchill, Roosevelt, and Hopkins personally, in that the most direct way to get things done was to go through them — as in the case of Viviani, Millerand, and Clemenceau twenty-five years earlier... People knew that I wanted nothing for myself, and that I was not looking for a job — which enabled me to be both insistent and demanding.²⁴

This restraint did not concern only material gain, but also the demands of the ego:

Over and over in my life, I have seen joint organization and action blocked by questions of persons. I have never been able entirely to avoid such obstacles, or to overcome them. But I have always refused to regard them as preconditions, and I have dwelt on them only when I have been forced to, after exhausting every possibility of dealing first

with questions of principle and method. This rule, obviously enough, applies in the first instance to myself. Seeking no job and no favours, I have never been embarrassed to ask other people to be a little unselfish or modest — or, more simply, to be reasonable.²⁵

After the end of World War II, Monnet was tempted to enter politics to express his ideas. But he did not hesitate for long. In full agreement with his wife Silvia, he decided to remain outside politics: first, he could work only in one field and concentrate on one problem at a time, while a politician had to consider a range of problems at the same time. Secondly, he could never follow the line of a party, as he could convince other people only if he was convinced himself. Moreover, he knew he was not a good orator. But this apparent infirmity (for somebody who wanted “to change the minds of men”) was turned around by Monnet and made into a unique asset. For indeed the politician is not the ideal person to bring about changes in society, even assuming that he has any intention of doing so. He is slowed down in his effort by many considerations, and first of all by the necessity to stay in power. In fact, “if governments and civil services were always ready to change the existing order of things from one moment to the next, the result would be continual revolution and incessant disorder.” Change can only “come from outside”. Therefore Monnet would not be a politician — and since he would not be, he would be the one who makes the change happen. He would be the one who brings proposals to politicians at times of difficulties when the men in power don’t know any more what is to be done and accept with gratitude a solution that is offered to them. This position would be the most efficient one for the type of work he wanted to do:

If there was stiff competition around the centres of power, there was practically none in the area where I wanted to work — preparing the future, which by

definition is outside the glare of present publicity. Since I did not get in statesmen's way, I could count on their support. Moreover, although it takes a long time to reach the men at the top, it takes very little to explain to them how to escape from the difficulties of the present. This is something they are glad to hear when the critical moment comes. Then when ideas are lacking, they accept yours with gratitude — provided they can present them as their own. These men, after all, take the risks; they need the kudos. In my line of work, kudos has to be forgotten. I have no particular taste for secrecy, despite what some people say; but if I can best expedite matters by self-effacement, then I prefer to work behind the scenes.²⁶

Monnet's obscurity was not the darkness that protects the manipulator. It was a voluntary transparency that lets the essential be perceived.

Monnet was in search of something that was not easy to define, but which he saw as a deeper involvement for the European peoples. We find a hint of this research in his personal diary,

18th of August 1956

I worked on creating institutions, thinking that institutions brought people closer — like ECSC, like Euratom. It is true, and it must be the final goal — but this is not the method because institutions for coal and steel become institutions for coal and steel and not for men. In order to go further, one has to touch the life and the interest of the people.²⁷

Or later,

One must touch the political and human motivations, not only the technical.

At the same time, as all men entirely devoted to their mission and pushed by something greater than themselves, Monnet was obsessed with a sense of urgency. He wrote in his notebooks, "To go ahead without giving anyone the time to regain one's breath." Europe must be formed more quickly; it had to become a reality that would be more visible and closer to everybody's life. Finally, in 1957 the Treaty of Rome was signed, which instituted the Common Market. In this negotiation Monnet did not play any particular role, but his Committee had in fact prepared a good deal of the proposal, especially as far as the general objective was concerned. Then Monnet played an important role in the ratification of the treaty by the different parliaments.

In 1958 de Gaulle came back to power. That was the beginning of a difficult period for Monnet. De Gaulle had opposed not only the ECSC but also the European Defence Community and the Common Market. He claimed that he was in favour of Europe, but his conception was of a "Europe of States"; according to him that was the only Europe possible "except, of course, for myths, fictions, and pageants". This conception was quite different from Monnet's, one in which Europe would become a kind of federation. De Gaulle made fun of "certain more or less extra-national bodies". Monnet was a pragmatic man and also an optimistic man, so first he thought that many of de Gaulle's remarks were part of a public posture. He accepted very well the fact that men in power had to take certain lines with the aim of strengthening their public image. But de Gaulle insisted on taking certain actions which in Monnet's view were detrimental to the construction of Europe. For instance, in 1962 de Gaulle tried to dilute certain proposals aimed at creating a beginning of European political union. In 1963 he opposed the entry of Great Britain into Europe, on considerations which according to Monnet were "finally secondary". Monnet had worked a lot for

the integration of Great Britain into Europe. He knew her ambiguities vis-à-vis the project but, we said it already, he was an optimist, or rather, as he said himself, "I am not an optimist. I am only determined." He had observed the temperament of the English people, he knew that they were pragmatic and even flexible. He knew that they would join when they saw that the experiment was a success. He considered that his own role was precisely to see that nothing was compromised on the essential principles. But this was going to take some more time.

In 1965, a serious crisis erupted in the Common Market about agricultural policies, and the French withdrew from the meetings. This episode, known as the "politics of the empty chair", is considered the darkest period in the history of the European community. Actually, during all this period Monnet showed that he was amazingly flexible, and he did whatever he could to help arrive at a compromise (called the compromise of Luxembourg) — which brought back to Brussels the French delegation. Meanwhile, during the presidential campaign of 1965, for the first time he publicly took position against de Gaulle's views concerning Europe, terming them "out of date".

In reality those two great men had a lot of things in common. First of all, Monnet admired de Gaulle a lot, especially for his role during World War II. Both men had fought against fascism. Both of them long before other people had perceived the insatiable appetite of the Nazis. Both of them wanted to give their countries strong institutions, both of them wanted to make France a modern and well organized State. Both of them were disinterested. The views of both combined idealism and realism. The great difference between them was their idea of the nation, and the role that it would play in the future of humanity. For de Gaulle, nothing was higher than the nation. This was a fundamental and sacred notion. For Monnet the unit "nation-state" was a transitional stage in history; it was not a permanent necessity. Under the pressure of events, the idea of a purely

national power was bound to disappear. The greatness of France could not be dissociated from the greatness of a larger unit, that of Europe. Those who would cling to a notion of solitary power would get isolated and would lose their influence. They could only be influenced by other great units, or other civilizations, but they would not be able to contribute much.

So the years between 1962 and 1969 were a time when Monnet felt constricted in his action, especially in France. But in spite of these difficulties and maybe because of these difficulties — which showed that Europe was a yet fragile plant in need of a careful gardener —, Monnet used his influence and his prestige (which paradoxically had never been so great)²⁸ to work towards strengthening Europe. Things got easier for him — and for Europe — when de Gaulle quit in 1969.

Monnet was now 80 but his only concern was the future. People insisted that he should write his Memoirs. He had asked friend and historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle to help him, but he was not sure whether he really wanted to do it. Duroselle remembers, "He was so much focussed on the present and turned towards the future that he could not concentrate on his book. He even told me one day, 'Couldn't we conceive of Memoirs which would be about the future?'"²⁹ Finally the Memoirs were written after he retired, when he had more time, and after he understood that the book could be useful for the men of the future.

The 80-year-old man traveled incessantly throughout Europe to push things, unblock the situation when it was necessary, and see to it that the construction of Europe did not slow down, and became wider and deeper. His relations with the German Chancellor Willy Brandt were excellent and facilitated things in a great measure. In 1969, Monnet was happy to realize that the proposals made by the conference of La Haye dealing with economic and monetary union originated in the work of his Action Committee.

*Monnet's way of working was either to speak directly to a statesman if he was a friend, or to enter in contact with someone close to him and try to convince him. All the people who have seen Monnet at work agree: he had a very exceptional skill for perceiving who, near the seat of power, could be receptive to his ideas and could transmit them to his superiors — and not only in France (this was relatively easy) but in any country. Jean-René Bernard, a young diplomat who during the presidency of Pompidou had many conversations with Monnet, said, "I had a lot of admiration for this old man who was at the same time a kind of apostle, an apparatchik and a magician and someone who had a lot of practical sense. He was a very extraordinary man, and, in my view, there was something religious about his approach. I never knew what was Jean Monnet's philosophy but it was clear for me that his project of human unity, for which Europe after all was only a stepping stone, was quite similar to Christianity."*³⁰

Of course this way of functioning implied that Monnet at a given time could have access to the leaders in power, either directly or through their subordinates. It meant that his credit with them should never — and that is obvious — be misused for asking a personal favour, but also never used for something of secondary importance. On the contrary, when the moment had come, that person would be besieged by Monnet without mercy. This work implied too that Monnet should be well prepared in advance with clear ideas.

I have never sat down to discuss anything without having a draft before me — and I care very little whether it be the first or the only text. It is at least our contribution. If the others accept it because it seems the best, or for any other reason, so much the better. To tell the truth, our suggestions have often been accepted in the absence of any competition. Generally, people come to the table

empty-handed, out of either circumspection or sloth. In their hearts, they are pleased to find that a paper has been produced overnight. To produce it means staying up late.³¹

Monnet was called by one of his biographers, Eric Roussel, a "pragmatic visionary". And indeed this visionary did not lack common sense. For instance in 1973, he proposed a plan for political union. It was a very pragmatic plan, because Monnet had realized that it was difficult to make people agree to the idea of a merger of sovereignty. A note concerning this project reveals his down-to-earth approach. "... the commission could work in two different manners. Either describe what should be a European political authority, or describe what it can be."³² The commission chose the second way. It is easy to describe what an authority should be, but it would be a theoretical exercise, it would not be in keeping with the tradition of our Committee. The committee has always supported the organization of a united Europe by proposing concrete measures, which, step by step, would lead to a European organization."

The word "concrete" is a word often used by Monnet. Indeed it is the obstinacy of an idealist combined with the suppleness of a man tuned into the reality that makes Monnet so fascinating as a person. For Monnet, human unity was something one had to build with the help of ships and goods, with coal and steel, with francs and marks, through many drafts ceaselessly worked upon, and after a lot of effort put into discovering a common view. It was something to be built step by step, without discouragement nor illusion. It was something to build through successes and through obstacles. "I am not an optimist. I am only determined." The goal was clear but the way which would lead to it was unknown; it was impossible to predict the twists and turns or how much time it would take. Monnet used to say, "To anticipate the result blocks the spirit of invention. As we ascend we will discover the new horizons." He used images which were familiar

to him because he was used to trekking in the mountains. Sometimes he used the symbol of the Kon Tiki, a raft launched in the Pacific ocean and which could not go back. Actually while Monnet was sure about the goal to reach, he never precisely defined the exact form that Europe would take. "To envisage today the final form of the European community which we wanted as a process of change is a contradiction in terms."³³

Change was something central to Monnet's thoughts. His collaborator of many years Van Helmont remarked: "In his life and in his mind, change was inscribed as the supreme law. He wanted change and accepted the resulting disorder, although he had no inclination for upheavals."³⁴ At the same time Monnet was convinced that a true change could only be gradual. Those who spoke of a global change were doing precisely this: speaking about it. All those who worked to bring out changes had to reflect on the future consequences. They had to progress "by little steps" and consciously.

At the beginning of 1975 after an illness, the doctors advised Monnet against travelling. It also had become obvious by then that the Action Committee for the United States of Europe had fulfilled its mission for a large part. It was time for Monnet to withdraw. On the 9th of May 1975,³⁵ Monnet ceased to work as the President. The Committee itself was dissolved. Monnet withdrew to his house outside of Paris and soon afterwards started to write his Memoirs. He understood that his experience could be useful to other people. "When one has accumulated a certain experience of action, to try to hand it on to others is also a form of action and one day the time comes when the best thing one can do is teach others what seems to be right." For this work Monnet was helped by a very close collaborator, François Fontaine. Fontaine gives here the deep meaning of this masterly book,

He did not write the Memoirs out of pride or for

justifying himself, much less to entertain or astonish people, but to prolong his action, after being sure that he could do it. The publishers and their "ghost writers" wanted something else, they wanted the story of a life full of adventures and picturesque anecdotes. People knew he did not write, so he would be asked to speak and they would publish these conversations which had moved so many things and so many people. It took years to rectify this misunderstanding. He refused all offers until he was sure that the underlying unity of his life could be expressed in a coherent book, without literary artificialities. It is at that point, — he was eighty-five years old — that he discovered the thread linking all his diverse activities — that thread which held together Europe and the modernisation of France, the union of the French during the war and the Victory Program, the allied Committees of 1940 and those of 1914. He understood that he had to go further back, till Cognac with which his destiny was tied up. There he found the memory of the family dining-room and along with it he recovered the elements that were missing for the making of a painting still vague in his mind. In fact, he was not absolutely sure that his life had been lived with singleness of purpose. "I had no alternative", he used to say. That was inadequate. When he got a more complete view of the painting, and when some order was put in the chronology, he understood that he had always tried to do the same thing: unite men.

To unite them for peace, for utilizing better the resources of nature, yes, if one considers the final goal. But he hesitated a lot before using big words. He saw himself as a practitioner. He did the things

that had to be done in order to solve the crisis of the day, and for this he only needed opportunities. ... One does not spend one's whole time in uniting people! "And yet this is what we have done," said Jean Monnet with surprise when he paused to look back. "Was not our method, whatever the problem, to urge men to meet so that they could talk of the same thing and they could perceive their common good?" Only when he was convinced that this method had always been his and that it was applicable between peoples and between various social groups or individuals, did he decide to write his *Memoirs*.³⁶

In 1977 in a very unusual ceremony in his house at Houjarray, Monnet was awarded the honorary citizenship of Europe, an award which had never been given before. In 1979, Monnet, cared for by his dear Silvia, died at the age of 90. After a ceremony attended by all the main leaders of European States, he was buried in the small cemetery of Bazoches.

Later the French realized that they had not been very fair to the man Kennedy called a "statesman of the world", and about whom François Valéry (the famous poet Paul Valéry's son) could say, "Few men have enjoyed so little power and yet exerted so much influence, and one that was so lasting." They realized that they did not know him very well. They started to recognize his role and pay homage to the Frenchman people called "the father of Europe". In 1988 the French President proposed to transfer his mortal remains to the Pantheon, the monument where lay so many great men. Jean Monnet then would rest close to Victor Hugo, another visionary who one century earlier had prophesized,

All of us here, we say to France, to England, to Prussia, to Austria, to Spain, to Italy, to Russia, we

say to them, "A day will come when your weapons will fall from your hands, a day when war will seem absurd and be as impossible between Paris and London, St. Petersburg and Berlin, Vienna and Turin, as today it would seem impossible between Rouen and Amiens, Boston and Philadelphia."

A day will come when there will be no battlefields, but markets opening to commerce and minds opening to ideas. A day will come when the bullets and bombs are replaced by votes, by universal suffrage, by the venerable arbitration of a great supreme senate which will be to Europe what Parliament is to England, the Diet to Germany, and the Legislative Assembly to France.

A day will come when a cannon will be a museum-piece, as instruments of torture are today. And we will be amazed to think that these things once existed!

Let us measure the enormity of what Victor Hugo had dared say in 1871, just when France was reeling under the shock of a humiliating defeat at the hands of Prussia,

My revenge is my fraternity! No more frontiers!
The Rhine for everyone! Let us be the same Republic, let us be the United States of Europe, let us be the continental federation, let us be European liberty, let us be universal peace! ...

What is fascinating in Jean Monnet is the intensity of a life entirely dedicated to something greater than him. Some people would describe his life as devoured by an obsession, some others would speak of a man devoted to a noble cause. But a yogi would know that it could not be better defined than as a sadhana.³⁷ True, Monnet only discovered the underlying unity of his action at the end of his life, but while he was engaged in "many" different

actions, be it in Washington, London, Paris or Luxembourg, he worked on himself in order to become a better instrument, more transparent, more efficient, more receptive. The most striking example of his self-imposed discipline was the way he used his daily walks across the countryside. Monnet always managed to live outside the city limits and used to begin his day with a long and solitary walk. He explained,

I am alone and I let my ideas place themselves at their own level. I don't decide myself to reflect on a specific topic, it comes to me naturally because of the continuity of my preoccupations. But at the end of my promenade, the conclusion comes by itself, I don't force it.

This helps me because I find that, at least in my case, conclusions should not be influenced by any personal interest or by any personal point of view. I find that the thoughts develop better when they are not influenced by any other consideration except the need to solve the problem in which my mind is engaged.³⁸

His inner concentration was not limited to the moments when he walked. Monnet constantly examined himself and tried to get rid of the weaknesses which were an obstacle to his work. He reflected on his own nature, and tried to use this knowledge of himself in order to choose the most efficient action, the one which was the most suited to the type of instrument he was. Monnet talks to himself in his personal diary, reflecting on his nature:

Algeria, July 1943

You have a great capacity for negotiations — you have a natural ability for finding your way in the maze of fluid negotiations. This ability is so natural to you that sometimes you abandon the overall view and the objective with which you started and

you allow yourself to exercise this natural ability. This is where your weakness lies. You have to use this natural ability and your faculty of persuasion for reaching the objective that you fixed in the beginning.

Your real strength is the objective, disinterested, complete view you take of a problem, and the solution that you propose for it. This is your true contribution. It is in this domain that you are superior. But this implies a preparatory work — concentration and, at the end, a conclusion — and for this to happen you must force your nature to reach a conclusion.³⁹

1946

The moment has come when you should mobilise all your experience and concentrate for good on your objective, defining it well and excluding everything else. In order to succeed in this, you should remember that your nature can only function in an atmosphere of harmony. Remember also what the father Garrett Mc Enerney said : “I let God work my mind”. It means that you should let it be free — in a state of constant receptivity. No complexes, no secret thoughts. In the truth, always. ...

1948

Aims:

1) Put your body and your mind in a state of harmony. Release all your natural vitality. Obtain the maximum from yourself.

Remarkably, this effort was also directed at small movements in his inner being — that which people less conscious than Monnet would call unimportant details. Here is an example also

taken from his personal notebooks,

Alpe d'Huez, Isère, 1946 (after a trek in the mountain)

Notice what happened yesterday during the walk. At a certain point I lost courage and without the guide I would have turned back. The cause was purely physical, some tiredness. After eating a little bit of sugar and resting a while; what had seemed to me impossible appeared normal and easy.

This is exactly what happens in my work sometimes — apprehension of a meeting, fear to speak in public, etc.⁴⁰

And in 1953,

My life starts only now.⁴¹ Everything up till today has been trials only, attempts, education.

I now know when I make mistakes, and when my temperament leads me to repeat the same mistakes, while before I used to look at these same acts as if they were triumphs.

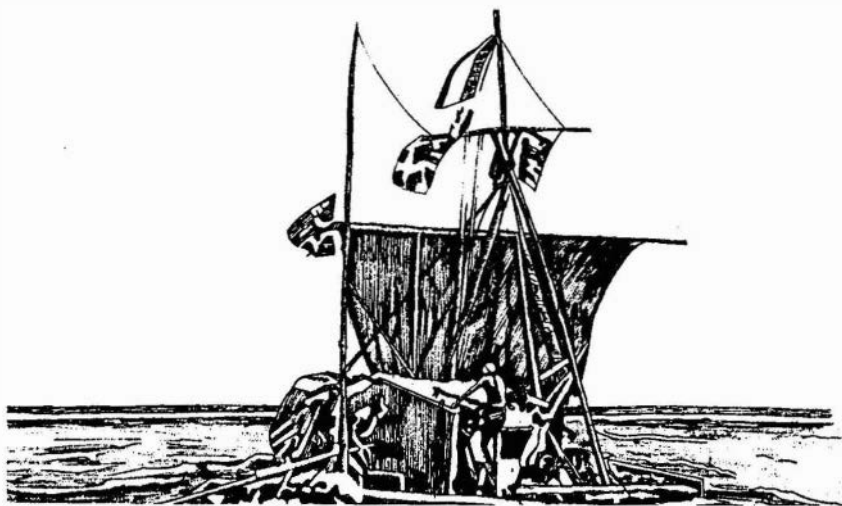
Now, you should know when you commit mistakes; moreover you must correct these mistakes. All can be corrected through a certain regularity in the discipline.⁴²

Amazing young man, whose life “starts” at the age of 65! Indeed many people have remarked that Monnet has been at his most active and most efficient during the period of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe (between 1955 and 1974).

A friend of Jean Monnet, Henri Rieben, has rightly remarked that one cannot read Jean Monnet's Memoirs or even certain books recounting his life without being seized by a deep emotion.

Why is that? Rieben suggests that this is due to the fact that his voice speaks of the future and not only of the past. Indeed, with Monnet we are at the threshold of a new era in history —, an era pregnant with huge possibilities, and it is that future, unknown yet alive, that vibrates throughout the pages of Monnet's life and makes our heart beat faster as if we were children silently setting out to explore the alleys of a new domain.

As for Monnet himself, one cannot but be overwhelmed by the ardent sincerity of somebody whose entire life, entire energy and all faculties were concentrated on one aim, which was to transform the life of men. There is a fire of tapasya⁴³ that burns throughout Monnet's life, an honesty, an intensity, in front of which ordinary questions of success and failure, right and wrong, optimism or pessimism lose their meaning. Some people wondered about his spirituality. Others called him an agnostic. Words are not important. He burnt with the desire to transform life into what he saw it would have to be. His life has not been in vain.



The Kon-Tiki

Notes and References

1. Etienne Clémentel, born in 1864. MP from his native town in Auvergne, he was instrumental in the French legislation dealing with agricultural cooperative societies. Minister of Colonies in 1905 and 1906, he tried to bring about more collaboration with the native populations. Generous and open to new ideas, he declared in a Congress in 1900, "The aim is not to draft a programme of action to transform the present social organization, but to generalize, without any specific doctrine in mind, the feeling of universal sympathy and the idea that all men are united in the unique and divine essence of humanity. When this feeling and this idea have penetrated everywhere, when they have become alive in the same way they already are in the minds of many thinkers, the social solutions preparing the Great Human Federation will arise by themselves, called by the invincible force of evolution." After the war, Clémentel would get involved in the creation of the International Chamber of Commerce and would try to make this body into an instrument of international solidarity.

2. Ten thousand kilometers away, in Pondicherry, a small French enclave in South India, the great Indian leader and sage, Sri Aurobindo, in a conversation with his disciples, noted the proposal for an Anglo-French union. He warmly supported it, and even spoke of the possibility of India joining it. "And even if the Anglo-French Union does not become permanent, they can have a very powerful federation with Holland, Belgium, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia and they can request India to join it voluntarily as an equal partner." It

is to be recalled that all other Indian leaders wanted to see their colonial masters defeated in the war. At the beginning of the century Sri Aurobindo had been the first Indian to call for complete independence from the British. Yet he was the only personality in India at the time of the Second World War to openly support the Allies because, as he said, "Hitlerism is the greatest menace that the world has ever met." (*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, recorded by A.B. Purani, third Series, Pondicherry: 1966).

3. Robert Schuman (1886-1963) was born in Luxembourg to parents from Lorraine. The Lorraine province of France had been captured by Germany after the French defeat of 1870. This is why Schuman was educated in the German education system and would always speak French with a German accent. He became a lawyer. After the First World War, Alsace and Lorraine were retaken by France. Schuman became active in French politics, was elected a member of Parliament and served in this capacity till 1940. In 1940 he was arrested by the Gestapo but escaped in 1942 and joined the French Resistance. After the war, he was briefly Prime Minister in 1947-48 and then became Foreign Minister. In 1958 Schuman would be elected president of the European Assembly in Strasbourg.

4. In his Memoirs, Adenauer remembered, "In his personal letter to me Schuman wrote that the purpose of his proposal was not economic, but eminently political. In France there was a fear that once Germany had recovered, she would attack France. He could imagine that the corresponding fears might be present in Germany. Rearmament always showed first in an increased production of coal, iron, and steel. If an organization such as he was proposing were to be set up, it would enable each country to detect the first signs of rearmament, and would have an extraordinarily calming effect in France. Schuman's plan corresponded entirely with the ideas I had been advocating for a long time concerning the integration of the key industries of Europe. I informed Robert Schuman at once that I accepted his proposal whole-heartedly."

5. Jean Monnet in : Henri Rieben, Claire Camperio-Tixier, and Françoise Nicod, *A l'Ecoute de Jean Monnet* (Lausanne: Jean Monnet for Europe Foundation, 2004) p. 82.

6. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1978) p. 524.

7. Quoted by François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in: Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet* (Lausanne: Jean Monnet for Europe Foundation, 1996), p. 104.

8. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

9. Ibid, pp. 83-84.

10. Ibid, pp. 96-97.

11. The treaty between the vanquished and the victors at the end of World War I which imposed heavy territorial, political and economical sanctions on Germany.

12. François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in : Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., pp. 136-37.

13. Quoted by François Duchêne in *Jean Monnet, The first Statesman of Interdependence* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), pp. 96-97.

14. The General Henri Giraud fought in Morocco during World War I. In 1940 at the beginning of World War II, he was made a prisoner. He escaped in 1942 and reached Algeria. There he was made "civil and military commander in chief" by people sympathizing with the regime of Vichy with the support of the Americans.

15. François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in : Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., pp. 119-21.

16. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, op. cit., pp. 291-92.

17. Alcide de Gasperi: 1881-1954. Alcide de Gasperi played an important role in the Italian political life until Mussolini came to power. Then he spent sixteen months in jail for anti-fascist activities. After World War II, he found himself in the forefront of political life as the leader of the Christian Democracy. From

1945 to 1953 he led eight successive governments. A great believer in Europe, he was instrumental in Italy joining the ECSC. Later Gasperi actively supported the project of the European Defence Community and wanted this project to be linked with the creation of a European political authority. He was the first chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECSC.

18. Quoted by Eric Roussel in *Jean Monnet* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 562.

19. François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in : Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., p. 151.

20. Kon-Tiki: in 1947 the Kon-Tiki expedition led by the Norwegian explorer and writer Thor Heyerdahl set out to prove that ancestors of Polynesians could have come by sea from South America, pushed from east to west by winds and currents, and settled on these islands in Pre-Columbian times. A primitive balsa wood raft was built by Heyerdahl as a copy of a prehistoric South American vessel. Constructed of nine logs collected from Ecuador, this raft with six men on board left Peru the 28th of April 1947, sailed across the Pacific ocean at a very great speed and landed in Polynesia after 101 days. All the men were in good condition and had found that they could live off the fruits of the ocean, as the raft attracted lots of marine life. Before the expedition, numerous experts had predicted that this crossing was absolutely impossible. A film and a book made this adventure extremely famous.

21. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 376.

22. Ibid., p. 103.

23. François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in: Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., pp. 146-47.

24. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 167.

25. Ibid., p. 198.

26. Ibid., pp. 230-31.

27. *A l'Ecoute de Jean Monnet*, op. cit., p. 105.

28. On the 3rd of January 1966, the French magazine

L'Express published Monnet's photo on its cover page under the title "Mr Europe". In October 1967, Monnet attended a debate in the Bundestag where a resolution passed by his Action Committee was discussed. After the vote, Monnet, joined in the gallery by the Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger, was given a standing ovation.

29. Quoted by Eric Roussel in *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., pp. 863-64.

30. Ibid., p. 871.

31. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, op. cit., pp. 323-24.

32. Stress is ours.

33. François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in : Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., p. 144.

34. Jacques Van Helmont, "Jean Monnet comme il était", in: Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., p. 52.

35. The 9th of May 1950 had been the day when the "Schuman plan" had been made public in Paris. To this day the 9th of May is called Europe Day.

36. François Fontaine, "Plus loin avec Jean Monnet", in: Jacques Van Helmont and François Fontaine, *Jean Monnet*, op. cit., p. 95.

37. *Sadhana*: from the Sanskrit root *sadh*: to bring to fruition, to lead to the goal. Spiritual self-training aimed at becoming a perfect instrument of the divine force.

38. *A l'Ecoule de Jean Monnet*, op. cit., pp. 239-40.

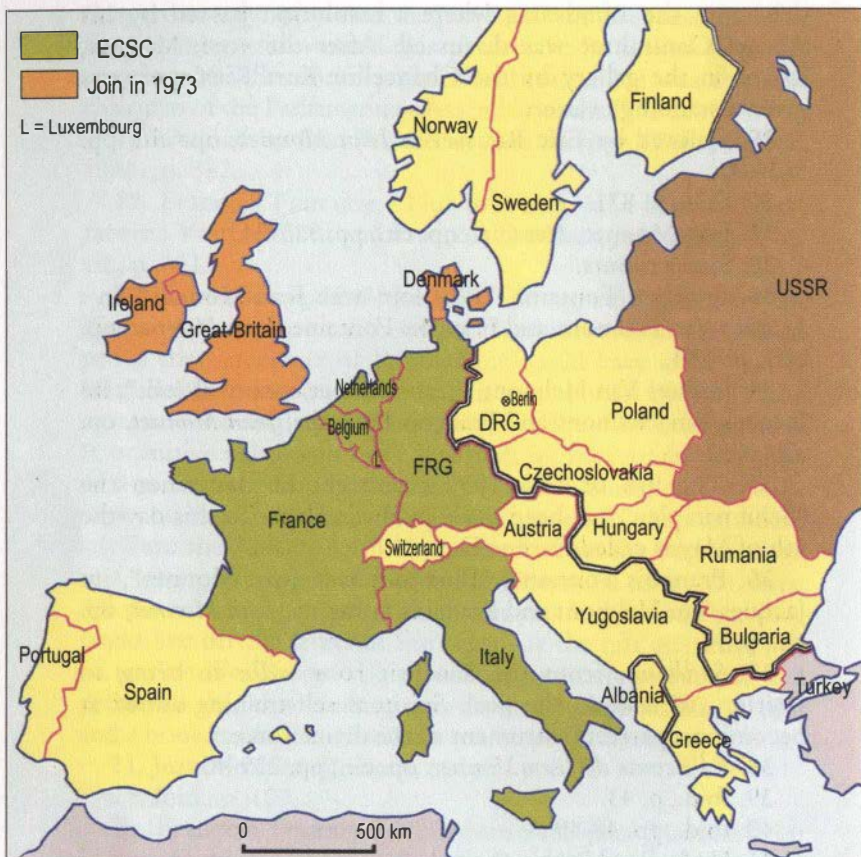
39. Ibid., p. 43.

40. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

41. Underlined in the original.

42. *A l'Ecoule de Jean Monnet*, op. cit., p. 56.

43. *Tapasya*: from the Sanskrit root: *tap*, to heat. In the yogic tradition *tapasya* describes the gathering of all faculties on a unique point — a concentration so intense and powerful that it can produce fire.



Map of Europe at the time of the Cold War. Germany is divided between the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and DRG (the Democratic Republic of Germany)

Extracts from Jean Monnet's Memoirs

related to the year 1950:
the first step towards the creation of Europe

Chapter 12 A bold, constructive act I Deadlock

I cannot explain the source of that conviction which, at important moments in my life, suddenly calls a halt to my reflections and turns them into a decision. Other people see it as a sense of timing. But I never ask myself whether it is necessary to do this or that: necessity itself forces me to do something which, once I see it clearly, is no longer a matter of choice. To see it clearly I have to concentrate — which I can do only in isolation, on long solitary walks. Since I left Cognac, I have always arranged my affairs so as to wake up each morning in the country, at a good distance from the town where I work. I get up early and walk for miles by myself. When I leave the house, I take with me all the previous day's thoughts and worries. But when I have walked for half an hour or an hour, they begin to fade away, and I gradually start to notice things around me, the flowers or the leaves on the trees. At that moment, I know that nothing can disturb me. I let my thoughts find their own level. I never force myself to

think about a given subject — subjects come to me naturally because I always follow the same line of thought, or rather, I follow only one at a time. André Horr , who with his wife Am lie looked after our house — I should say, our successive houses, in Britain, the United States, France, and Luxembourg — for more than thirty years, understood me very well.

‘It’s simple,’ he said: ‘Monsieur puts his idea in front of him, talks to it, and then decides.’

Andr  used to see me come back at about 10.00 a.m., change, and go to the office, where I faced complex problems further complicated by people’s attitudes towards them, and was able to attack them with energy renewed by contact with Nature. For me, walking has always been a form of intellectual as well as physical exercise: it helps me to reach conclusions. Afterwards, things are different: I come back to the world of action, implementation — and routine. In the spring of 1950, routine had become wearisome. Even the woods of Montfort-l’Amaury, near my home, seemed stifling. I left for the mountains.

Every year, I like if I can take long trips in the Alps. This time it was in Switzerland, at Roseland, that I arranged to meet my guide to the Huez range. How many miles we covered in two weeks, going from one overnight lodge to another, I have forgotten; but the course of my thoughts is still there before me, traced in the notes that I made every evening. I can read in them the anxiety that weighed on Europe five years after the war: the fear that if we did nothing we should soon face war again. Germany would not be its instigator this time, but its prize. So Germany must cease to be a potential prize, and instead become a link. At that moment, only France could take the initiative. What could be done to link France and Germany, and implant a common interest between them, before it was too late? That was the question I turned over and over in my mind in the silent concentration of the day’s march. When I returned to Paris at the beginning of April, I still had no perfect answer: but I did have so full an account of

the reasons for acting, and so clear an idea of the direction in which to move, that from my point of view the time of uncertainty was over. It only remained to choose the machinery and seek the opportunity.

My account of the reasons for acting covered several pages. Not many people read them at the time, because action followed very rapidly and overtook the analysis. But the analysis that guided me then is still of interest today, because it helps to explain why matters took the course they did. It shows how precarious world peace then was, and how limited was the scope for any attempt to avoid catastrophe. The very first words sound a note of alarm which has since been forgotten, now that Europe has so long been at peace. Five years after the end of World War II, however, it echoed the very real anxiety that men and women had once again come to feel:

Whichever way we turn, in the present world situation we see nothing but deadlock — whether it be the increasing acceptance of a war that is thought to be inevitable, the problem of Germany, the continuation of France's recovery, the organization of Europe, or the place of France in Europe and the world.

'A war that is thought to be inevitable'. Today, it is hard to recall the atmosphere of 1950, whose fears were not confirmed by events. But co-existence between the blocs was still precarious, and the East-West dialogue had no rules except those of force. In Berlin, the West had just won a trial of strength after nearly a year's blockade by the East: the American airlift of supplies to the city, using fantastic military resources, had led the Soviet Union to lift the blockade in May 1949. But there were certainly going to be two Germanies, each incorporated in a separate strategic zone. Adenauer's Germany was covered by the newly-formed Atlantic Alliance; and there was active concern to secure a German contribution

to the defense of the West. Russia had just acquired the atomic bomb. How far would she now go? The advice which more and more people of influence were giving seemed superficially sound: 'Leave Europe out of these confrontations'. But this neutralist doctrine never became more than an intellectual argument. I pursued it at home with Hubert Beuve-Mery, editor-in-chief of *Le Monde*. I respected his deep sincerity, and we have always remained friends: but I disagreed with him then.

'It is precisely because the countries of Western Europe play no part in the great decisions of the world,' I said, 'that we face the instability from which you're trying to shield us. And, far from backing out, it's vital that we once more play an active part in settling these problems, because they concern the West as a whole.'

No matter; men's minds were confused, and I was disquieted to see developing in Europe, to say nothing of other danger-spots in the world, the climate of the 'cold war'.

The greatest danger, in my eyes, was not so much men's ambitions or the accumulation of arms, but a very specific disorientation among governments and peoples, which itself required specific psychological remedies:

Men's minds are becoming focused on an object at once simple and dangerous — the cold war.

All proposals and all actions are interpreted by public opinion as a contribution to the cold war.

The cold war, whose essential objective is to make the opponent give way, is the first phase of real war.

This prospect creates among leaders that rigidity of mind which is characteristic of the pursuit of a single object. The search for solutions to problems ceases. Such rigidity of aims and attitudes on both sides will lead inevitably to a confrontation: the logic of this way of looking at things is inescapable.

And this confrontation will end in war.

In effect, we are at war already.

War was in men's minds, and it had to be opposed by imagination. I remembered that sentence in Roosevelt's first Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1933, which had so much struck the American nation: 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.' In 1950, fear would engender paralysis, and paralysis would lead to disaster. It was vital to break the deadlock.

The course of events must be altered. To do this, men's attitudes must be changed. Words are not enough. Only immediate action on an essential point can change the present static situation. This action must be radical, real, immediate, and dramatic; it must change things and make a reality of the hopes which people are on the point of giving up.

In Europe, the danger was still Germany — not, this time, because she might initiate something, but because other countries were treating her as the stake in their power games. The Americans, I thought, would try to integrate the new Federal Republic in the Western political and military system. The Russians would oppose that by every means at their command; and at the same time French neuroses would be made worse. It was on the subject of Germany that we needed a salutary shock:

The German situation is rapidly turning into a cancer that will be dangerous to peace in the near future, and immediately to France, unless its development is directed towards hope for the Germans and collaboration with free peoples. . . .

We must not try to solve the German problem in its present context. We must change the context by transforming the basic facts.

It was at that time, undoubtedly, and on that precise problem, that I realized the full possibilities of an approach which had long been familiar to me, and which I had applied empirically in trying to overcome difficulties of all kinds. I had come to see that it was often useless to make a frontal attack on problems, since they have not arisen by themselves, but are the product of circumstances. Only by modifying the circumstances — ‘lateral thinking’ — can one disperse the difficulties that they create. So, instead of wearing myself out on the hard core of resistance, I had become accustomed to seeking out and trying to change whatever element in its environment was causing the block. Sometimes it was quite a minor point, and very often a matter of psychology. The problem of Germany, vast and complex though it was, could surely be approached in this same way. It would certainly not be solved until we had changed the conditions that made the future of the Germans so uncertain and disquieting, for their neighbours as for themselves. From the German point of view, those conditions included the humiliation of being subject to indefinite Allied control; from the French point of view, there was the fear of a Germany ultimately freed from any control at all. These two elements were by no means the only ones on the world scene at that time; but they were enough to block any constructive evolution in Europe.

The situation was tangled. What we had to do was find a thread to pull so as to unravel some of the knots and gradually sort everything out. But where was that thread to be found? In the confused state of Franco-German relations, the neurosis of the vanquished seemed to be shifting to the victor: France was beginning to feel inferior again as she realized that attempts to limit Germany’s dynamism were bound to fail.

France’s continued recovery will come to a halt unless we rapidly solve the problem of German industrial production and its competitive capacity. The basis of the superiority which French industri-

alists traditionally recognize in Germany is her ability to produce steel at a price that France cannot match. From this they conclude that the whole of French production is similarly handicapped.

Already, Germany is seeking to increase her production from eleven to fourteen million metric tons. We shall refuse, but the Americans will insist. Finally, we shall state our reservations, but we shall give in. At the same time, French production is levelling off or even falling.

Merely to state these facts makes it unnecessary to describe what the results will be: Germany expanding; German dumping on export markets; a call for the protection of French industry; an end to trade liberalization; the re-establishment of prewar cartels; perhaps, Eastward outlets for German expansion, a prelude to political agreements; and France back in the old rut of limited, protected production.

From my vantage-point at the Planning Commissariat, I could clearly detect the first signs of such a retreat on the part of France. The international timetable was increasingly crowded. On May 10, 1950, Robert Schuman* was due in London, to meet his colleagues Ernest Bevin and Dean Acheson in order to discuss the future of Germany and the raising of her production quotas. Schuman had no constructive proposals to take with him, although he had pondered deeply and consulted many people. Myself, I was beginning to see more clearly. Action would have to be taken, I realized, where misunderstandings were most tangible, and where past errors were most likely to be repeated. If only the French could lose their fear of German industrial domination, then the greatest obstacle to a united Europe would be removed. A solution which would put French industry on the same footing as German

* French Foreign minister.

industry, while freeing the latter from the discrimination born of defeat — that would restore the economic and political preconditions for the mutual understanding so vital to Europe as a whole. It could, in fact, become the germ of European unity.

Quite naturally, the plans I had discussed in 1943 with Etienne Hirsch and René Mayer now came back to my mind. At the time, they had been intellectual blueprints, traced over wartime maps whose frontiers were due to be redrawn. Now, I rediscovered them — or rather, reinvented them in response to the needs of the hour. To apply them to the new peacetime map of political Europe was another matter. German sovereignty had just been re-established. Could it now be called in question again, even partially? Quite early on, the Allies had renounced the idea of dismembering occupied Germany into a number of small States: then, they had decided to annex no territory, including the Saar; now, finally, they were even preparing to give up internationalizing the resources of the Ruhr. All successive attempts to keep Germany in check, mainly at French instigation, had come to nothing, because they had been based on the rights of conquest and temporary superiority — notions from the past which happily were no longer taken for granted. But if the problem of sovereignty were approached with no desire to dominate or take revenge — if on the contrary the victors and the vanquished agreed to exercise joint sovereignty over part of their joint resources — then, a solid link would be forged between them, the way would be wide open for further collective action, and a great example would be given to the other nations of Europe.

The joint resources of France and Germany lay essentially in their coal and steel, distributed unevenly but in complementary fashion over a triangular area artificially divided by historical frontiers. With the industrial revolution, which had coincided with the rise of doctrinal nationalism, these frontiers had become barriers to trade and then lines of confrontation. Neither country now felt secure unless it commanded all the resources — i.e., all the area. Their rival claims were decided

by war, which solved the problem only for a time — the time to prepare for revenge. Coal and steel were at once the key to economic power and the raw materials for forging weapons of war. This double role gave them immense symbolic significance, now largely forgotten, but comparable at the time to that of nuclear energy today. To pool them across frontiers would reduce their malign prestige and turn them instead into a guarantee of peace.

By now I was sufficiently convinced to be sure of convincing others. But whom, and when? On the question of timing, the May 10 meeting in London seemed to me the opportunity to seize. But a meeting of that sort would not be the right place to make the proposal I had in mind, which itself would obviate the need for such talks among the three occupying powers. To achieve that result, a totally new situation must be created: the Franco-German problem must become a European problem. I wrote:

At the present moment, Europe can be brought to birth only by France. Only France is in a position to speak and act.

To my mind, this was a simple statement of fact, not the proclamation of an historic privilege.

But if France fails to speak and act now, what will happen ?

A group will form around the United States, but in order to wage the cold war with greater zeal. The obvious reason is that the countries of Europe are afraid and are seeking help. Britain will draw ever closer to the United States; Germany will develop rapidly, and we shall not be able to prevent her being armed. France will be trapped once more in her old Malthusianism, and this will inevitably lead to her eclipse.

I was not yet trying to decide who should speak in the name of France, or on what occasion. What mattered was to know beforehand exactly what should be said. Proposing to place several countries' coal and steel under a joint sovereign authority was no more than an idea. It had to be given concrete form; and there I had no experience to fall back on — except the negative experience of international co-operation, whose institutions were incapable of decision-making. Their ineffectiveness told me what to avoid. But what form should be given to a decision-making authority common to Germany and France? History offered no precedent; as yet, I was groping, and I needed advice. Yet at the same time I wanted to keep the idea as secret as possible. At that point, as luck would have it, there came to my office at N° 18 rue de Martignac a young professor of law, Paul Reuter, whom I had not previously met. I think we were seeking his opinion on French anti-trust legislation, which to my mind needed tightening up. Reuter was a man from Eastern France, solid and unexcitable; he used his brilliant powers of reasoning to master concrete problems in politics and law. He taught law at the University of Aix-la-Chapelle, but came regularly to Paris to deal with practical problems at the Quai d'Orsay in his capacity as legal adviser to the French Foreign Office. I saw at once that he was both professionally and personally concerned about Franco-German relations. Could international law abolish the conflicts whose most constant victims had been frontier-dwellers like Reuter himself?

I expounded some of my ideas to him; and he reacted with such intelligence and enthusiasm that I asked him to come back again on the following Saturday, April 15. That day, I explained the essentials of my plan for a coal-steel pool, and I asked him to reflect overnight about the form of institution required to administer these joint resources. Next day, Reuter, Hirsch, and I met at my country home. It was there, on that Sunday, that we drafted the first version of what was to become the French Declaration of May 9, 1950. At a distance of more

than twenty-five years, I can no longer distinguish which of us contributed what to the text we dictated to my faithful secretary Mme Miguez. I can only say that, without Hirsch and Reuter, it would not so quickly have assumed the final form that made it the European Community's true founding document. I had a clear view of our goal: they supplied the means of attaining it through the interplay of economics and institutions, for which in a very short time they invented new structures on a European scale.

World peace can be safeguarded only by creative efforts which match the dangers that threaten it.

The contribution that an organized and living Europe can make to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peace.

This introduction survived through all the successive versions of the text. For the rest, the days that followed produced many variations, between the lines of which it would be possible to follow the way our thoughts progressed. But it was all there in embryo already:

Europe must be organized on a federal basis. A Franco-German union is an essential element in it, and the French Government has decided to act to this end.... Obstacles accumulated from the past make it impossible to achieve immediately the close association which the French Government has taken as its aim. But already the establishment of common bases for economic development must be the first stage in building Franco-German union. *The French Government proposes to place the whole of Franco-German coal and steel production under an international Authority open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.*

The aims and methods of the European Community were now set. Later improvements concerned only the style and the machinery. What strikes me, re-reading this text, is the clarity of its design, which became somewhat less sharp in the final version. In this one, Franco-German union was the central concern. If it could not be achieved at once, this was because of 'accumulated obstacles'. A start must be made by 'the establishment of common bases for economic development', first in coal and steel, then in other fields. For a time, undoubtedly, I thought that the first step towards a European federation would be union between these two countries only, and that the others would join later. Finally, that evening, I wrote in on this first version that the Authority would be 'open to the participation of the other countries of Europe'. That morning, this had not been the decisive point; and one always has to go back to the beginning of things to understand their meaning. On the powers of the new Authority, the main guidelines had been drawn up, and they were to prove durable. Thanks to Hirsch, the foundations were solid. To place the production and distribution of coal and steel on a common basis, to ensure that they were sold on identical terms, to level up social conditions, and continually to improve production —

these aims call for complex institutions and measures of broad scope. Competitive conditions of production in the two countries must be equalized — taxation, transport, social security and other labour costs.... Production quotas will have to be fixed, and financial machinery set up to compensate for price differences, together with a retraining and re-employment fund.

The main headings of the European Treaties were already there in outline. Paul Reuter sketched the institutional machinery:

The above principles and essential commitments will be the subject of a Treaty to be signed by the two countries. The Authority which is to administer the whole enterprise will be based on equal Franco-German representation, and its President will be chosen by agreement between the two parties.

Although not yet fully explicit, this was the first juridical statement of the principle of equality between France and Germany, which was to be the decisive step towards a more hopeful future. And the text ended with a few lines which summarized its overall aim:

This proposal has an essential political objective: to make a breach in the ramparts of national sovereignty which will be narrow enough to secure consent, but deep enough to open the way towards the unity that is essential to peace.

Why this sentence is missing from subsequent versions, and why others later appeared, only to be replaced by those that today are found in the history-books — this is a matter of balance between form and content in a series of texts worked out over several days. Between Sunday April 16 and Saturday May 6 there were nine different versions. Whether this is few or many I cannot judge: in these matters I have only one rule, which is to work as long as is necessary, starting again a hundred times, if a hundred attempts are needed for a satisfactory result, or only nine times, as in the present case. Those who have worked with me over the years will say that the average is more like fifteen; and they themselves would often have been content with fewer. The proof, they argue, is that we often come back to the first version, which then turns out to be the best. But what is the point of this arithmetic of effort ? How can one be sure that the first version is the best, except by

comparing it with what one believes to be better still? How easy everything would be if intuition or luck led straight to the exact formulation of a thought that presented itself fully formed. At the very least, intuition and luck need to be tested — and the test is to re-read them after a good night's sleep, or subject them to fresh scrutiny by someone else.

It was Pierre Uri who looked at the text with fresh eyes on the following morning, Monday April 17. I had decided to ask him, and him alone, to work over our initial draft. His imagination and his crisp style proved invaluable. He read the text with that astonishing capacity for concentration that wrinkles his whole face; then he said simply:

‘This puts many problems in perspective.’

That was the point. It was less a question of solving problems, which are mostly in the nature of things, than of putting them in a more rational and human perspective, and making use of them to serve the cause of international peace. In this, Uri played an outstanding part. With his help, the draft became more orderly, and the institutional system stronger: the ‘international Authority’ became the High Authority. In the fourth version, the High Authority was described as ‘supranational’; but I disliked the word, and always have. What mattered was the task it implied, which was much better described by the following sentence in the next version of the text:

The High Authority’s decisions shall be immediately binding in France, Germany and the other member countries.

Such power required safeguards, and the idea of a means of appeal was introduced, without further details. Having made his contribution, Paul Reuter returned to Aix and his professorial chair. We kept in touch by telephone, and I hoped that

he might come back to work out the Treaty with us. He never did, and I do not know why. But in any case Paul Reuter was one of the inventors of the High Authority, and of the name as well as the institution itself.

Uri, for his part, lent coherence to the economic aspects of the plan, and gradually brought into focus the notion of a 'common market', an area without customs barriers and without national discrimination, but with rules to preserve the common interest. He also introduced the idea of transitional measures. The whole project gave an impression of strong organization combined with liberal principles. In this there was no contradiction:

Gradually, conditions will emerge which will of themselves ensure the most rational distribution of production at the highest level of productivity.

We could go no further in our technical proposals, because no experts were to be let into the secret; and in any case we were short of time. The essential elements were all in the 104 lines of text we now had, to which further days' work brought only minor modifications. In fact, it was all summed up in the following sentence:

By the pooling of basic production and the establishment of a new High Authority whose decisions will be binding on France, Germany, and the countries that join them, this proposal will lay the first concrete foundations of the European Federation which is indispensable to the maintenance of peace.

I asked for this passage in our text to be underlined, because it described at one and the same time the method, the means, and the objective, which henceforth were indissolubly linked. The last word was the most important: peace.

II Solution

'The French Government proposes. . . .' But the Government still had to see the proposal and adopt it as its own. I had to find someone who had the power, and the courage to use it to trigger off so great a change. Robert Schuman seemed to me the ideal man to do so; but owing to a misunderstanding I did not approach him first. What happened was this. I had had a long conversation with Bernard Clappier on the day before Reuter had first come to see me. I had spoken in general terms about my ideas, which had interested him greatly.

'M. Schuman,' he said, 'is looking for an initiative that he can propose in London on May 10. I have the feeling that this has been his one great preoccupation since the Big Three met in New York last September. I was there when Acheson said, with Bevin's agreement: "We fully concur in entrusting our French colleague with formulating our common policy on Germany." The deadline's approaching, and no one seems able to advise him on what to do.'

'Well,' I said: 'I have some ideas.'

I thought that Clappier was going to call me back after having spoken to his Minister. But a combination of circumstances gave him no time to do so; and on Friday, April 28, thinking that Schuman was not interested, I decided to send the plan to Georges Bidault, the Prime Minister, under whose aegis the Planning Commissariat worked.

That very same day, only a few moments after I had had the dossier taken round to Pierre-Louis Falaize, Bidault's directeur de cabinet, Clappier got in touch with me again, apologizing for his long silence.

'Here's the proposal,' I said. 'I've just sent it to Bidault.'

Clappier read the text, and quickly made up for lost time.

'It's excellent,' he said. 'May I show it to M. Schuman?'

I gave him a copy, and he took it straight to the Gare de

l'Est, where Schuman was about to take the train for Metz, to spend the weekend as usual in the solitude of his country house at Scy-Chazelles. Clappier found him already sitting in his compartment.

'Could you read this paper of Monnet's ?' he asked. 'It's important.'

On Monday morning, Clappier was back at the Gare de l'Est to meet the incoming train. No sooner had Schuman got off than he said:

'I've read the proposal. I'll use it.'

Those few words were enough. The idea had entered the political arena: it had become the business of the authorities, and their dangerous responsibility. It is the privilege of statesmen to decide what is in the general interest. Since I could not exercise that privilege in my own right, I naturally had to help those who could.

Schuman and Clappier, then, joined the conspiracy. Bidault and Falaize did not, and for good reason: they had not taken the time to read the letter in which I had suggested that we meet next day to discuss 'the enclosed proposal, designed to transform the general situation, which is growing worse every day.' The meeting did not take place — although I read in *Le Monde* of Tuesday May 2 that I had been received by the Prime Minister. The comedy of errors was not over: on Wednesday, after the Cabinet meeting at which Schuman made a veiled allusion to a forthcoming French initiative, I was summoned to the Prime Minister's office at the Matignon palace, where Bidault received me in a furious rage. He had a copy of the proposal in his hand.

'Schuman's just shown me this paper,' he said. 'It appears that you're the author. I should have appreciated your telling me first.'

'I did,' I said, 'I wrote to you on Friday.'

He looked for the letter: it was on his desk. Had he read it? In his memoirs he affirms that he had, and I believe him. Probably the plan clashed with his own concern at that time,

which was to set up an Atlantic High Council. What might have happened to the project if Bidault had taken it over, and what might have happened to Europe, are questions that others have tried to answer. Myself, I have never wondered what consequences might have followed something which has not occurred: that seems to me an utterly barren speculation. The fact is that there was no Bidault Plan, but a Schuman Plan.

Clappier helped us put the finishing touches to the text, which on Saturday May 6 assumed its final shape with the addition of some further sentences:

By making herself for more than twenty years the champion of a united Europe, France has had as her essential objective the maintenance of peace. Europe was not built, and we had war.

This was a homage to Aristide Briand, but also a farewell to rhetoric.

Europe will not be built all at once, or as a single whole: it will be built by concrete achievements which first create *de facto* solidarity.

This was the fundamental choice of a method for continual material and psychological integration. It seems slow and unspectacular; yet it has worked without a break for more than 25 years, and no one has been able to suggest any other way of making the Community progress.

'Now we must stop,' I said; and I wrote 'Definitive text, Saturday 3.00 p.m.' From that moment on, it was all a matter of tactics. Soon afterwards, I went into Schuman's office with René Mayer, now the Minister of Justice. He at once became an enthusiastic champion of the proposal, in which he saw the traces of our wartime talks in Algiers about the need to build a peaceful Europe. It was at Mayer's request that we added a sentence which at the time was thought to be purely formal,

but which later revealed its full implications:

Europe will be able, with increased resources, to pursue the realization of one of her essential tasks, the development of the African continent.

Meanwhile, I had the documents taken to René Pleven, Minister of Overseas Affairs. He was their only other recipient. In all, only nine people were in the know.

How and when to disclose the secret we discussed on Sunday. Pleven, now fully informed and committed, advised us on how to proceed. At the end of the morning I met Schuman and Clappier again. They had thought it advisable to bring in Alexandre Parodi, who was now Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thereby, the Ministry was officially informed, but also pledged to silence. We were determined, in fact, to mount the whole operation outside diplomatic channels, and not to use ambassadors. In particular, the personal contact with Adenauer that Schuman wanted to establish was to be made by a member of his personal cabinet, who was to go to Bonn at the very moment when the decision was due to be taken. It remained to be decided when that should be. There was no longer much choice, since a decision of this importance required the consent of the whole Government. Yet we could not wait until Wednesday, the normal day for French Cabinet meetings, for this was when the Conference was due to start in London, and Schuman had to go there with a plan for Germany in his hands. Pleven and Mayer arranged for the Cabinet to meet on Tuesday morning instead of Wednesday. Until then, there had to be total secrecy. There was — but with one exception.

This was the result of a curious coincidence. Dean Acheson, the US Secretary of State, had decided not to go to London direct, but to come via Paris in order to confer quietly with Schuman, whom he greatly respected. It would have been inconceivable to let the two men talk intimately about everything

except the one subject which in two days' time was to be all-important. Courtesy and honesty obliged us to take Acheson into our confidence, and we never regretted having done so. The description in his memoirs of that Sunday, May 7, in Paris is characteristically lively, witty, and amiable. He admits that he failed to realize the significance of the Schuman Plan when it was first described to him through an interpreter. He suspected it of being a sort of huge coal and steel cartel, the nostalgic dream of European industrialists and a capital sin for Americans, who respected the laws of competition and free trade. The lawyer and the politician in Acheson instinctively recoiled, and I had to come and calm his fears.

I knew Acheson well. He had often come to our house in Washington and greatly appreciated Amélie's French cooking. Every morning, he could be seen walking to the office with Felix Frankfurter. With their two bowler hats, the two friends were the incarnation of Law and the Constitution. They were both good company, quizzical and full of warmth. Acheson could be urbane and even flippant; but his powerful intelligence was anchored in firm principles. I have described the part he played in the birth of the Marshall Plan; and I had no doubt that he would realize the political importance of the Schuman Plan. With David Bruce in attendance, he very quickly did; and from then on we had two chance accomplices who were also very powerful allies. However, the fleeting contretemps set me thinking: I saw that the nature of the plan for a coal and steel pool might be misunderstood. So I at once asked Uri to prepare an answer to the objection; and he drafted a note to be distributed at the same time as the proposal itself. He wrote:

The proposed organization is in every respect the very opposite of a cartel — in its aims, its methods, and its leadership.

The full proof was convincing; but there would have to be

great vigilance, and strict legal rules — a real European anti-trust law — not only to disarm suspicion but also to prevent the formation of cartel.

Monday May 8 was the eve of battle, but to all appearances it was a normal day at the French Foreign Office and at No 18 rue de Martignac,* where we deliberately carried on as if nothing were in the air. That evening, Clappier told me that, as planned, a friend of Robert Schuman's, a magistrate from Lorraine by the name of Michlich, had left for Bonn, where he was to be met by Herbert Blankenhorn, head of the Federal Chancellor's private staff. How he reached the Chancellery on Tuesday morning, unbeknown to any French official and even to the French High Commissioner in Germany, André François-Poncet, only that discreet diplomat could describe. All I know is what I have read in Adenauer's memoirs:

That morning I was still unaware that the day would bring about a decisive change in the development of Europe.

While the Federal Cabinet was in session, news came that an envoy from French Foreign Minister Schuman had an important message for me. Ministerial direktor Blankenhorn received the gentleman, who gave him two letters from Schuman to myself. Their content, he said, was exceptionally urgent: they must be put before me right away. The French gentleman, whose name I do not know, told Blankenhorn that the French Cabinet was at that very moment meeting to discuss the content of the letters... Blankenhorn brought the letters to me in the Cabinet meeting. One of them was a personal, handwritten message from Robert Schuman.

....

* The place where Jean Monnet and his team had been working since 1945 on the French Plan for modernization and equipment.

In his personal letter to me, Schuman wrote that the aim of his proposal was not economic but highly political. There was still a fear in France that when Germany had recovered she would attack France. It could also be imagined that in Germany, on the other hand, there was a corresponding desire for greater security. Rearmament would have to begin by increasing coal, iron, and steel production. If an organization such as Schuman envisaged were set up, enabling both countries to discern the first signs of any such rearmament, this new possibility would bring great relief to France....

I immediately informed Robert Schuman that I agreed to his proposal with all my heart.

The French Cabinet was indeed meeting, in the Elysée Palace, and Clappier still remembers his long wait in a nearby office. He was in touch with us at N° 18 rue de Martignac via the interministerial telephone. Midday came and went, and the Cabinet had reached the end of its agenda; but still Schuman had not spoken. He could not make a move until he had Adenauer's full agreement, which he had no reason to doubt but still had to receive. The long silence was agony to us: was everything going to hinge on a matter of minutes? At last, just as the Cabinet meeting ended, Michlich's call came through to Clappier, and everyone sat down again. Exactly what Schuman said to his colleagues is a Cabinet secret, but I have reason to believe that it was even more elliptical and less audible than usual. No one cast doubt on the desirability of the proposal he was taking to London, which was strongly supported by Pleven and Mayer, even if most members of the Cabinet learned its precise terms only from the next day's press. When the Cabinet meeting was over, Clappier called me. "That's it," he said. 'We can go ahead.'

To 'go ahead', as we saw it, meant to make public that evening, in spectacular fashion, the project so discreetly unveiled

that morning. At once, French and foreign newspapermen were asked to come to the Foreign Office at the Quai d'Orsay at 6.00 p.m.; and the Salon de l'Horloge there was turned into a press room. In our haste, we forgot to invite the photographers and radio reporters — with the result that Schuman had to go through a reconstruction of the scene some months later to record it for posterity. The afternoon before the press conference was taken up with receiving the ambassadors of European countries and briefing them on the proposal which their Governments were going to read on the agency wires even before the ambassadorial telegrams were ready to send. When Schuman came into the Salon de l'Horloge, more than two hundred newspapermen were waiting. I was there too, with Silvia, Hirsch, Uri, and my young assistant François Fontaine. I am not at all sure that Schuman's dull, hesitant voice immediately convinced them that they were witnessing a profound transformation of international politics, even though the tone of the preamble left no room for doubt:

It is no longer a time for vain words, but for a bold, constructive act.

France has acted, and the consequences of her action may be immense. We hope they will.

She has acted essentially in the cause of peace. For peace to have a real chance, there first must be a Europe.

In fact, this was a conclusion rather than a preamble; and I at once set about persuading the men from the leading newspapers that it was right. They were still uncertain about the significance of the proposal, whose technical aspects at first sight masked its political meaning. I knew that they would write about it as an industrial arrangement, a coal and steel pool — which was true enough. But it was also about Europe and peace. Roger Massip of *Le Figaro*, Charles Ronsac of *Franc-Tireur*, Jacques Gascuel of *France-Soir*, and Harold

Callender of the *New York Times*, among others, had no doubts: their articles hailed the event for what it was. In Germany, meanwhile, Adenauer in his turn was waiting for the announcement of the French proposal in order to tell the newspapermen gathered in Bonn that Germany accepted it:

The proposal that France has just made to us is a generous move. It is a decisive step forward in Franco-German relations. It is not a matter of vague generalizations, but of concrete suggestions based on equal rights.

With his habitual realism, the Federal Chancellor saw the immediate advantage:

Since the production of the Saar will be pooled, one cause of tension between France and Germany will be removed.

It had all been settled in a matter of hours, in public, by two men who by themselves had dared to commit their countries' future. But at that moment, pleased as I was, I knew that the essential task remained to be completed; and I was impatient for only one thing — institutions to give shape to an agreement based on goodwill. Nothing is possible without men: nothing is lasting without institutions.

Robert Schuman, who was in a hurry to catch his train for London, so skilfully evaded the newspapermen's detailed questions about the future of the plan that one of them exclaimed: 'In other words, it's a leap in the dark?'

'That's right,' said Schuman soberly: 'a leap in the dark.'

Few people realized how true the metaphor was. They tended to think that the technical aspects of the plan had been meticulously prepared — why otherwise should it have originated at N° 18 rue de Martignac, as people were beginning to realize that it had? That seemed sheer common sense, but it

led to many misunderstandings — beginning in London, where on their arrival Schuman and Clappier were bombarded with questions about the powers of the High Authority, the fate of a particular coalfield, or how prices were to be fixed. Unable to answer, they asked me to help them, and I decided to join them on May 14. Meanwhile, they were busy with the Three-power Conference, whose opening was overshadowed by Bevin's resentment against Acheson and Schuman, whom he suspected of having hatched an anti-British plot. Acheson has good-humouredly described the difficult moment when, while he was lunching with Bevin at the Foreign Office on May 9, the French Ambassador Rene Massigli asked to be received. Bevin 'wondered what was up'. Acheson, pledged to secrecy, said nothing; but he very soon paid for his silence.

Massigli had come to communicate the French Government's decision, which at that time had still not been officially announced. He had hardly had time to assess it himself, and I think he never assessed its true importance. Bevin made no immediate official response, but he told Massigli in private: 'I think that something has changed between our two countries.' Bevin was a politician of instinct and impulse, aggravated by the disease from which he was soon to die. It so happened that he was alone in London when the shock came: the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, were both on holiday at different places in France. In the confusion, the young Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Kenneth Younger, was inclined to recommend that Britain accept the French offer. Anthony Eden, then in opposition as Conservative spokesman on foreign affairs, made a speech strongly urging the Government to join, and so did Lord Layton on behalf of the Liberal Party. But already *The Times* recoiled at the word 'federation', and the *Daily Express* wrote: 'It would be the end of Britain's independence.' Attlee, now back in London, spoke in the House of Commons on May 11. He welcomed Franco-German reconciliation, but wished to make a full study of the economic

implications. Any further decision was to await my own visit to London.

Acheson, for his part, had lost no time before making a positive declaration, in agreement with President Truman: 'We recognize with sympathy and approval the significant and far-reaching intent of the French initiative.' Count Carlo Sforza, the Italian Foreign Minister, welcomed it warmly on behalf of his own Government. The three Benelux Governments wanted more technical details, but public opinion impelled them towards rapid acceptance. And in London the three Powers were at last able to agree about Germany. Charles Ronsac cabled:

Everything is changed. Instead of a negative, cold-war conference, we are going to have a positive conference, an attempt to forge European unity.

The echoes of 'the Schuman bombshell' continued in the world press and caused a sensation in diplomatic circles. But everything now seemed to hinge on the attitude in London, where decisions about Europe had so long been determined. I knew that it would be a hard fight, and I hoped to win it; but in my heart I knew that the essential prize had already been won, irrevocably. Europe was on the move. Whatever the British decided would be their own affair.

As soon as I arrived in London, together with Hirsch and Uri, I as usual got in touch with my old friends. Not all of them were people in the public eye; but like those in New York whom I have already mentioned, many of them were businessmen, lawyers, and newspapermen — people whose work required and enabled them to get to the bottom of things, and whose success depended on their good sense. They included Lord Brand, Lord Kindersley, Arthur Salter, and the editor of *The Economist*, Geoffrey Crowther. Between them, they knew what I needed to know, and a talk with them was enough — afterwards, I could face my political contacts. Crowther was in

favour of Britain's joining in the Schuman Plan, and was going to argue the case in his newspaper: but he made no secret of what a battle it would be. Britain had not been conquered or invaded: she felt no need to exorcize history. Her imperial role was not yet at an end, and her experience of general well-being had only just begun. Churchill declared: 'We must be with France.' But he added: 'We must be careful that it does not carry with it a lowering of British wages and standards of life and labour.' Attlee could say no less. Plowden, who was my official interlocutor, asked me more: how would the High Authority be composed, how would it intervene, what safeguards would there be to prevent its acting arbitrarily, would it have the right to close down firms, how would it ensure full employment ?

It was clear that the British did not want to commit themselves to principles, or to a negotiating method, without knowing in advance all the practical consequences — which in our view were what we should be negotiating about. Certainly, Hirsch, Uri, and I could give some answers and collect some suggestions. But the British Government would not feel at ease unless it received 'a piece of paper'. I promised Plowden that we would write to him as soon as we returned to Paris, which we did. To have to do so was useful: it made us clarify some of our ideas, in particular about parliamentary supervision of the High Authority. But it soon became clear that this approach was not enough: we should not be able to avoid the basic issues that Attlee raised in the House of Commons on June 13:

It became perfectly clear in the course of informal discussions between M. Monnet, Chief Planning Officer of the French Government, and British officials, that while the French Government had not worked out how their proposal would be applied in practice, their views on the procedure for negotiations were definite.

In this respect, indeed, we were more pragmatic than the British, since we were proposing a basis and a method for future discussion. Plowden had the idea of inviting the Permanent Under-Secretaries of the relevant Ministries to dine with us. At the end of the evening, one of them sighed:

‘Blessed were our fathers, for they knew what to do in all circumstances.’

It was typically British nostalgia. When I met Schuman and Massigli after the dinner, I said:

‘The British will not find their future role by themselves. Only outside pressure will induce them to accept change.’

It was better to speak plainly. Sir Stafford Cripps asked me to come to his office before leaving London.

‘Would you go ahead with Germany and without us ?’ he inquired.

‘My dear friend,’ I answered, ‘you know how I have felt about Britain for more than thirty years: there is no question about that. I hope with all my heart that you will join in this from the start. But if you don’t, we shall go ahead without you. And I’m sure that, because you are realists, you will adjust to the facts when you see that we have succeeded.’

At the same time, Schuman was talking at a luncheon given by the Anglo-French press.

‘How many countries are needed to make the plan work ?’ someone asked.

‘If necessary,’ he said, ‘we shall go ahead with only two.’ The British would have been left in no doubt about his determination if he had not added:

‘As regards Great Britain, if there is not 100% participation, there can be association compatible with her structure and her economic ideas.’

This overture was unwise, for experience has taught me that it is not a good thing for the British to obtain special conditions and an exceptional position in their relationships with

others, or even for them to cherish such hopes. On the other hand, they are at their best if you firmly offer to work with them on an equal footing. If you stick to your principles, there is every likelihood that the British will sooner or later adapt to the situation and become partners in the full sense of the word.

I realized, then, that haggling would lead nowhere, and that we must simply press ahead. So as soon as I had returned from London I went to see Chancellor Adenauer in Bonn. With me, to act as a link with Schuman, was Bernard Clappier, who was equally devoted to our plan and to his Minister. 'Clappier is solid gold,' Schuman used to say. He had long watched the young man's progress as a civil servant; and when Clappier had been his *directeur de cabinet* at the Finance Ministry for about six months, Schuman invited him to lunch at a small restaurant and took him fully into his confidence. From then on, Clappier was one of the rare people to whom Schuman divulged his innermost thoughts. I, too, found him not only discreet and efficient, but also a man of great intellectual honesty, and totally disinterested. We soon became friends. Arriving in Bonn, I went to see another friend, Jack McCloy, who this time was to be my opposite number in a delicate negotiation where his steady political vision and diplomatic skill were to prove very valuable. At that time he was US High Commissioner in Germany, and Chairman of the Council of the Allied High commission, where his colleagues were André François-Poncet and the British General Sir Brian Robertson. This Council still had extensive supervisory powers, especially over the foreign relations of the new Federal Republic. It was an unusual situation: I had to ask McCloy's permission to start talks with Adenauer, and those talks presupposed that France and Germany would henceforth act as equals. The Council's decision, therefore, was more than a formality: it was its last act of diplomatic tutelage.

Nor was there anything automatic about that decision. I had to make a long exposé to persuade my hearers. True, McCloy was already in favour of our aims; but he had to take account of the reservations expressed by his British colleague.

Robertson declared:

‘Germany is under Allied tutelage. Her coal and steel are requisitioned. So the High Commission must be represented at the negotiations.’

That would have run counter to the spirit of the French proposal; and Armand Bérard, assistant to François-Poncet — who was away that day — answered in accordance with the instructions that Clappier had brought to Bonn:

‘From the moment we authorize the Federal German Government to negotiate, it must do so as a sovereign power.’

On this, the discussion began to get bogged down; so I said:

‘Given the scope of the commitments Germany will be undertaking in the Schuman Plan Treaty, it is vital that no one in future should be able to claim that they were not freely accepted.’

The members of the Council saw that we were making a political point, and they soon relented. I was authorized to begin talks with Adenauer.

That afternoon, we were shown into the Chancellor’s office at the Schaumburg palace. I was accompanied by Clappier and Bérard, who this time came in his personal capacity. Adenauer had Blankenhorn with him. I already had some idea of how Adenauer looked, with his rigid figure and impassive face: but now I realized at once that I did not know him. The man before me was not self-assured, but anxious to know what I was going to say, and unable completely to conceal a degree of mistrust. Clearly, he could not believe that we were really proposing full equality; and his attitude was still marked by long years of hard negotiation and wounded pride. Our conversation lasted for an hour and a half. As it progressed, I saw the old man gradually relax and reveal the emotion that he had been holding back.

‘We want to put Franco-German relations on an entirely new footing,’ I said. ‘We want to turn what divided France from Germany — that is, the industries of war — into a com-

mon asset, which will also be European. In this way, Europe will rediscover the leading role which she used to play in the world and which she lost because she was divided. Europe's unity will not put an end to her diversity — quite the reverse. That rich diversity will benefit civilization and influence the evolution of powers like America itself.

'The aim of the French proposal, therefore, is essentially political. It even has an aspect which might be called moral. Fundamentally, it has one simple objective, which our Government will try to attain without worrying, in this first phase, about any technical difficulties that may arise.'

I stressed this point because it now seemed to me essential to turn from the problems to the method, and to agree on a certain conception of our common task. My visit to London had convinced me that the French proposal, so clear and simple in its form and spirit, might be totally distorted by an approach that was too scrupulously or too insidiously technical. I saw a similar risk, though for different reasons, in dealing with the Germans, and especially with their industrialists and diplomats.

'The Schuman proposal,' I added, 'has had a profound effect on public opinion. People are no longer prepared to see their hopes disappointed. We must turn as soon as possible from words to deeds. The negotiations must produce a general Treaty setting up the High Authority: then the technicians can get to work. I know from experience that practical problems are never insoluble once they're approached from the starting-point of a great idea.'

Adenauer listened attentively and answered with warmth:

'I too am not a technician, nor entirely a politician either. For me, like you, this project is of the highest importance: it is a matter of morality. We have a moral and not just a technical responsibility to our people, and that makes it incumbent upon us to fulfil this great hope. The German people have enthusiastically welcomed the plan, and we shall not let ourselves be caught up in details. I have waited twenty-five years for a move

like this. In accepting it, my Government and my country have no secret hankerings after hegemony. History since 1933 has taught us the folly of such ideas. Germany knows that its fate is bound up with that of Western Europe as a whole.'

We then discussed what should be done next. When Clappier announced that the French Government had decided to put me in charge of negotiating the Treaty, the Chancellor said that he would have to look for what he called 'a German M. Monnet'. He mentioned the names of several businessmen. None of them meant very much to me.

'It would be a mistake,' I said, 'to worry too much about expertise. What counts is a sense of the general interest. In this respect, M. Schuman fully intends to keep a close eye on matters himself; and, if you will allow me to say so, I should advise you to choose a delegate who is directly responsible to you. The last word is always political.'

When we had finished, Adenauer rose to his feet.

'Monsieur Monnet,' he said, 'I regard the implementation of the French proposal as my most important task. If I succeed, I believe that my life will not have been wasted.'

We took our leave. I can say of Adenauer what he said in his memoirs about me: 'After that, we were friends for life.'

....

[The British on their side were not willing to sit at the negotiations table except to question the very principle of the High Authority. That was judged unacceptable. Then they made counter-proposals...]

... Macmillan sent me his proposal with a friendly covering-note. This gave me the opportunity to react against so profound a misunderstanding, which I knew would delay British membership, necessary as that was. In a long letter in English, which went the rounds in Strasbourg, I wrote:

The Schuman proposals are revolutionary or they are nothing.... Cooperation between nations, while

essential, cannot alone meet our problem. What must be sought is a fusion of the interests of the European peoples and not merely another effort to maintain an equilibrium of those interests through additional machinery for negotiation....

The Schuman proposals provide a basis for the building of a new Europe through the concrete achievement of a supranational regime within a limited but controlling area of economic effort....

The indispensable first principle of these proposals is the abnegation of sovereignty in a limited but decisive field and ..., in my view, any plan which does not involve this indispensable first principle can make no useful contribution to the solution of the grave problems that face us.

Later, Macmillan came round to this point of view. In the meantime, I wanted him not to create too much confusion. I added:

I know the British people well enough to be confident that they will never oppose a progressive measure for the benefit of all Europe even though their special problems may for the moment prevent their joining fully in its achievement.

In reality, these 'special problems', real or imaginary, present or past — the problems of the Commonwealth, sterling, or the Socialist experiment — did not wholly explain the attitude of the British.

I had in fact sensed a deeper and less articulate worry on their part, of which I had confirmation in a letter that Felix Gaillard wrote me from Strasbourg while the Council of Europe was in session:

Members of the Labour Party are opposed to the

Schuman Plan because they are defeatist about continental Europe, which they have deliberately written off in case of war — something they regard as inevitable and very near at hand....

The Conservatives are more or less of the same opinion.

It is important to realize what the atmosphere was like in that summer of 1950. As we shall see, it was pervaded by fear — the cold war in the heart of Europe, the Korean War in Asia. And the same fear led to contrasting reactions: unity on the continent, isolationism in Britain. In some notes I made at the time, I wrote:

Britain has no confidence that France and the other countries of Europe have the ability or even the will effectively to resist a possible Russian invasion....

Britain believes that in this conflict continental Europe will be occupied but that she herself, with America, will be able to resist and finally conquer. She therefore does not wish to let her domestic life or the development of her resources be influenced by any views other than her own, and certainly not by continental views.

If this, as I suspected, was really what the British felt in their heart of hearts, we had no hope of convincing them for a long time to come. Besides, we ourselves had already plunged into action.

Chapter 13
THE SCHUMAN PLAN CONFERENCE (1950)
I
Invention

The six countries that had accepted the Schuman Plan were to open their conference in Paris on June 20, 1950. The public expected great things of it, but some people approached it with disquiet. Not unnaturally, interest groups in the various countries felt particularly threatened: in their eyes, the plan was bound to work to the advantage of their neighbours, not themselves. It was our task to point out that these mutually contradictory fears cancelled each other out. Most alarmed of all were the steelmakers, whose corporate bodies, accustomed as they were to secret agreements, campaigned against this new High Authority, which would deal with problems in the light of day. Privately, however, they were less unequivocal. Hirsch, who knew them well, had not gone ahead without taking some soundings; and even before May 9 he had on his own initiative been in touch with one of the wise leading lights of the French steel industry, with whom he was on terms of trust.

‘There’s no choice,’ he had been told: ‘for us, it’s either that or extinction.’

Obviously, we could not quote this remark, or the assurances which we had had in private from members of the French National Coal Board; we had to let the industrialists claim that we had taken decisions over their heads. The truth was that we were not prepared to negotiate with private interest groups about a venture of such great public importance. As it was, the Governments were bombarded with complaints, but public opinion gave them the will and the strength to resist.

The attitude of the trade unions, in particular, was impeccable. Although the CGT at once denounced the plan as

'infringing national sovereignty', Force Ouvrière, led by Léon Jouhaux, and the CFTC, under Gaston Teissier, approved it in principle. At its conference in Dusseldorf on May 23, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions gave the plan its support and expressed its desire to take part. These positive reactions contrasted with the prudence of the Socialist political parties. In France, under the leadership of Guy Mollet, the gap between them and the unions was gradually narrowed; but in Germany it widened, owing to the Socialist leader Kurt Schumacher, whose hostility to Adenauer pushed him to extremes.

'The Germans,' he said, 'are in the process of accepting Occupation for another fifty years.'

He made much of the alarmist slogan of 'the four Ks' – *Kapitalismus, Klerikalismus, Konservatismus, Kartell*. The Chancellor riposted just as vigorously:

'Anyone who sabotages or vilifies the Schuman Plan is a bad German.'

But a young Socialist deputy from Berlin was already looking to the future:

'We have long been calling for a true Europeanization of heavy industry,' he declared, 'and we warmly welcome something that brings us closer to that goal. We must do justice to the French proposal.'

The author of these words was beginning to make his name. It was Willy Brandt.

I followed closely the anxieties expressed by the old Belgian coal industry, the young Italian steel industry, and the ambitious Dutch planners. None of their particular problems seemed to me insoluble. On the contrary, I was certain that they would all be carried forward by the new European impetus; but I knew how hard it would be to convince them of that fact. The Netherlands Government, in particular, had written to stipulate that it could always withdraw from the negotiation. This went without saying, but the need to say it suggested that the Dutch would be difficult partners. All the agitation, however, made me

optimistic. If so many misgivings had not prevented Governments from taking the first step, it was because that step was political, and because a large majority everywhere was in favour. To ensure that there was no misunderstanding and that the conference took the right course from the start, Adenauer told the German Bundestag on June 13:

Let me make a point of declaring in so many words and in full agreement, not only with the French Government but also with M. Jean Monnet, that the importance of this project is above all political and not economic.

With this in mind, the Chancellor was still concerned about the choice of his own negotiator. He wrote several letters asking my advice, and he actually sent a first candidate to see me — a capable businessman, but no more. I said as much to Adenauer, who agreed. Then he told me:

‘I’ve heard about a professor from the University of Frankfurt who has the qualities we need.’

It was Walter Hallstein. When I met him shortly afterwards, I took to him at once, and we trusted each other from the first. His cultivated mind and breadth of vision equipped him admirably to understand other people’s problems. He was a man of action as well as a scholar, and a great European — as the future was to show. But less obvious in this very private man are his inner qualities, the loyalty and sincerity that struck me at our first meeting. He invests them in what he does rather than in his personal friendships, which are rare. Everyone respects his authority, and the care with which he maintains it. The proof of his ability lies in the success of what he has achieved. His modesty and kindness are less well known; but I have had continual proof of them from that day to this.

Hallstein was not a politician, but he had political vision. Adenauer was a leader and man of affairs, a strong man for whom the analysis of facts was secondary, because what mattered to

him was the objective, and then the decision that was needed to attain it. He went straight to conclusions; and in 1950 his conclusion was the same as mine: the need to organize the West. How, by what means — that was not his main concern, but ours; and it was great good fortune that he placed his trust in Hallstein, who was as eager as we were to push ahead and transform the situation by means of the Schuman Plan. Agreement between France and Germany was a political necessity; but in this case necessity was greatly aided by the choice of men. From now on, we could move fast. On June 16, Adenauer wrote to me:

I entirely share your opinion that we should expedite the negotiations as rapidly as possible and, if we can, draw up the Treaty before the summer parliamentary recess. Only in that way can we be certain of making this great idea a reality.

The date of June 20 was the earliest that we could arrange for the opening of a conference that we hoped to conclude by August, in order to profit from the general psychological momentum. Public opinion was counting on the rapid success of a project whose political importance it had perceived from the start. The European press was on our side, and although nationalists and conservatives everywhere were hostile to the plan, it was easy for us to turn this to our advantage by arguing that we embodied the desire for change that our peoples shared. Yet at the same time we had to outpace the opposition, which was mustering powerful resources against the plan. That was why, like Adenauer and Schuman, I believed that the agreement setting up the High Authority must be very rapidly signed and ratified. Once that institution was in place, the breakthrough would have been made, and it would be time for the experts and the inevitable difficulties: the political step would have been taken.

Many people argued that this was a gamble, and one that

we should lose. But I have never thought in terms of gambles. When anyone has settled on the objective to be attained, he must act without forming hypotheses about the risks of failure. Until you have tried, you can never tell whether a task is impossible or not. The method we had in mind then was right; and while I cannot claim that it would be the best in any circumstances, I can say that at the time I was convinced that progress towards a united Europe would be easier if we could exclude from the new Treaty the legal and technical formalities that normally burden such agreements. For the Schuman Plan, things did not work out that way; but in the end we made a virtue of our disappointment. We used the long, painstaking negotiations to draw up an entirely novel Treaty, in which future generations will no doubt look for models of how to pool resources and bring nations together. We should waste no time in regretting what never happened, but profit instead from the unexpected circumstances that fate put in our way.

The two weeks preceding the conference saw a remarkable development in people's ideas. To me, that was the proof that, in a creative political venture like the Schuman Plan, what really matters can be achieved at a stroke, even if many months are needed to turn it into a joint achievement. By June 12, we were able to submit to the French Interministerial Council a draft paper describing the role of the independent High Authority and the means of appeal against its decisions. Already there had emerged the notion of an arbiter, and of the Executive's being politically answerable to a parliamentary body. The idea of a motion of censure was quite explicit.

'Thus,' I told the Interministerial Council, 'we shall lay the concrete foundations of a Federation of Europe.'

The Council asked me to go ahead. A week later, this first draft had developed considerably; and by the time the Schuman Plan conference opened, I had on my desk a draft Treaty forty articles long containing in rough but recognizable form the basic structure for the organization of Europe. This text, which enlarged on the Schuman Declaration of May 9 and

made it operational, was also the work of the same few people. Their contribution did not stop there: but, important as it was to be later, there is no doubt that this was an exceptionally creative phase. Such a phase in the history of ideas is always brief, and is often hard to distinguish from the later, practical phase which involves great changes for people and things. As we saw it — and as we had said in the Schuman Declaration itself — once the Treaty was signed, this second phase should be handled by the High Authority and the Governments, with the help of the arbiter. But this did not happen, for reasons that will soon emerge.

Monsieur Schuman opened the conference of the Six at 4.00 p.m. on June 20, 1950, in the Salon de l'Horloge at the French Foreign Office. The national delegations were large — larger than I could have wished, overloaded with experts: I had scarcely had time to meet the men who led them. Schuman declared:

We believe that we cannot afford to fail, to give up without reaching a conclusion. But never before have States undertaken or even envisaged the joint delegation of part of their national sovereignty to an independent supranational body.

He recalled the procedure and method of work we had in mind:

We shall have to think about the technical details that will be the subject of conventions to be concluded later, but without writing them into the Treaty now. We shall work as a team, and not as a negotiating conference with rigid, pedantic rules.

Announcing the names of the French delegation, which included Clappier, Alphand, Hirsch, Uri, and Desrousseaux, the Director of Mines and Steel, the French Foreign Office

spokesman added that a certain number of people who would not take part in the talks would nevertheless be consulted. These would include the chairmen of the major Parliamentary Committees; the President of the Economic Council, Léon Jouhaux of Force Ouvrière; Georges Villiers, President of the French Employers' Organization; the leaders of the coal and steel industries; and the trade unionists Robert Bothereau, also of Force Ouvrière, and Gaston Teissier of the Catholic Workers' Confederation, the CFTC. Hervé Alphand was to maintain liaison between the conference and the British Government. The other national delegations were made up on similar lines. I quickly split them up into working groups, and kept with me only the leading figures. But, first of all, everyone had to be made to realize that this was not just another of those economic conferences in which they were professional and in some cases virtuoso performers. That, I knew, would be the hardest part of my task.

I set about it next day, tirelessly repeating the lesson, irrespective of how impatient my audience became. Experience has taught me that people who think they have understood it right away are no more likely to act accordingly than anyone else, because negotiation is second nature to them: it seems to be an end in itself.

'We are here,' I said, 'to undertake a common task — not to negotiate for our own national advantage, but to seek it in the advantage of all.' The sixty delegates present were not to know that for more than ten months they would go on hearing me repeat this same lesson, which men trained to defend and advance purely national interests find one of the hardest to learn.

'Only if we eliminate from our debates any particularist feelings shall we reach a solution. In so far as we, gathered here, can change our methods, the attitude of all Europeans will likewise gradually change.' I therefore asked that the word 'negotiations' should not be used to describe our meetings. Instead, for ourselves as for the public, they should be known

as 'the Schuman Plan Conference'. It was on that same day, I think, that I first used the term 'European Community' to describe our objective.

For more than two hours I expounded the French drafts but without distributing the text, so as not to cramp the discussion. I intended to incorporate any important points made by the other delegations:

'All difficulties and all suggestions will be pooled, so that the draft, although originally French, will become a joint work.'

In fact, our working document, drawn up by Hirsch and Uri, was the only text of any substance. The other delegations had come more to ask questions than to make proposals. At this stage, it was normal that the initiative should come from us; but that, in my view, was not a mere matter of chance. I have never sat down to discuss anything without having a draft before me — and I care very little whether it be the first or the only text. It is at least our contribution. If the others accept it because it seems the best, or for any other reason, so much the better. To tell the truth, our suggestions have often been accepted in the absence of any competition. Generally, people come to the table empty-handed, out of either circumspection or sloth. In their hearts, they are pleased to find that a paper has been produced overnight. To produce it means staying up late.

In the course of what I said on June 21, I also went into a new aspect of the High Authority's independence. It should, I argued, have its own revenue, drawn from a levy on coal and steel production, and not depend on government subsidies to finance its administration and its operational work. Its moral and financial credit would make it the best-placed borrower in Europe. By making loans, it could encourage investments that served the general interest, but without wielding coercive power. Other ideas that emerged that day were the Consultative Committee and the name of the parliamentary body, the Common Assembly. Little by little, the whole structure was

taking shape. To complete it, two important elements were still to come: the Council of Ministers, on which the small countries were to insist, and the Court of Justice, which we had so far only touched upon. At the same time, our idea of an arbiter and of a two-stage procedure were soon to disappear under pressure from the same small countries, which from the following day onward began to hedge the political plan with a thousand technical precautions.

That next day's meeting, on June 22, began the series of restricted sessions in which the heads of delegation, with one or two advisers, were to steer the conference and deal by themselves with the institutional problems. Here, everyone could speak freely, unchecked by his technical experts and unconstrained by official minutes. My colleagues from the other five countries were men of goodwill, picked from among their countries' most experienced negotiators. Of all of them, Hallstein was certainly the least well known — he had been seen only at a few UNESCO conferences. The others were habitués of international meetings where national representatives bargained with each other. The Belgian, Maximilien Suetens, was an affable and conciliatory senior official. Dirk Spierenburg was the living incarnation of Dutch stubbornness, and a very tough debater. Albert Wehrer, a skilful Luxembourg diplomat, knew very well the interests he had to defend. All three had had experience of a limited customs union, Benelux. The only political figure was Emilio Taviani, a young deputy from the Italian Christian Democrat Party. Except for Hallstein, I had not been consulted on the appointment of my colleagues. Over the months, I came to know them; but what mattered now was to bring them rapidly to look at the problem from the same point of view and tackle it as a common task — an approach that came less than naturally to officials trained to obey their Governments' instructions. I relied on the pressure of hard work, in the enclosed atmosphere of N° 18 rue de Martignac, to create a team spirit, not only among the six of us, but also among the experts on the various committees, who

were subject to the same regime.

I encouraged them to express their fears in the form of questions. Concerted or not, these all pointed in the same direction, showing the natural bias of men accustomed to negotiating agreements between States or between producers — more or less secret agreements restricting free competition. They found it hard to adjust to the idea that this regulatory role could be entrusted to the High Authority, acting openly and with sovereign power. One by one, the Benelux and Italian delegates asked whether all these important technical questions could not be settled by intergovernmental agreement before the High Authority was set up. This was the very opposite of the spirit and procedure of the Schuman Plan. But it was clear that most of the participants were not yet prepared to give up the guarantees they now enjoyed, even if the High Authority were hedged about with the most elaborate democratic safeguards. For my part, I would certainly not agree to its being tied down or limited in advance; but it was obvious that we should have to write into the Treaty some of the points that would otherwise have figured in the subsequent implementing conventions we had originally planned. My colleagues wanted these technical clauses settled beforehand: I should have liked to deal with them afterwards. In the event, they were to be drawn up simultaneously with the Treaty itself.

In the course of the discussion it became evident that Spierenburg would be the toughest negotiator, and that his Benelux colleagues were relying on him and on his stubborn temperament to limit the power of the new institutions. Two of the objections that he raised that day were to be among the most serious obstacles the conference faced; and while we were able in the end to eliminate one of them, reason and necessity persuaded me to incorporate the other in the Community's basic structure. The first question was: 'What relationship will there be between the Common Assembly of the Schuman Plan and the Consultative Assembly of the Council

of Europe ? Will it not involve needless reduplication?' I saw the trap, I guessed what was behind it, and I saw where it might lead; but I wasted no time on it then. More urgent and substantial was the second objection: 'The French plan as at present described will revolutionize many things. How will governments react? If we are to carry them with us, they must be given a role in the system and wider powers, even if they are to give up some of their sovereignty.' I took note of this argument, although at the time I was not quite clear as to what it might imply. Originally, I had decided against including any intergovernmental body in the Community's institutions, and I pointed this out. Hallstein, who had so far said little, strongly agreed. The days that followed were taken up with useful debates about economic problems. Then came the time to bring out our working document, which was to act as a basis for consideration by Governments. A summary of the text was given to the press, and the delegates departed for their respective capitals, to report back and receive further instructions. I was actually hoping that they would do rather more, and tell their Governments all they had seen and heard during these few dramatic days in Paris when Europe had begun to take shape. There was no doubt that the delegates had already been coaxed beyond their official mandates and beyond their own personal positions: they had quickly begun to work together enthusiastically, as a team. As the meeting broke up, I said:

It's true that the venture we are engaged on raises very many questions. But most of them would arise in any case, and would find their own solutions, in disorder and to everyone's disadvantage. If we do nothing, fate will deal with our present difficulties, in spite of ourselves. The Schuman Plan has not created these problems: it has merely exposed them to the light of day.

I could say no more: I could only hope that my five colleagues were convinced, and that they in their turn would be convincing. We decided to meet again on July 3. In the text that was given to the press, I was careful to include the following stipulation:

The withdrawal of a State which has committed itself to the Community should be possible only if all the others agree to such withdrawal and to the conditions in which it takes place. This rule in itself sums up the fundamental transformation which the French proposal seeks to achieve. Over and above coal and steel, it is laying the foundations of a European federation. In a federation, no State can secede by its own unilateral decision. Similarly, there can be no Community except among nations which commit themselves to it with no limit in time and no looking back.

After that, no one could any longer doubt our ambition and our determination.

II Construction

When the conference resumed a week later, national positions had hardened, and I realized that the task would be difficult, because the men around me were now equipped with new instructions. Yet for the most part these instructions were defensive: they accepted the principle of having the High Authority. How independent it would be — that was the question, and that was where conflict might arise. Suetens fired the first shot.

‘My Government,’ he said, ‘is not prepared to give the High Authority excessive powers. That would make it an object of

fear; and besides, no such powers are needed to achieve our aims. These can be attained more simply, by prior agreement among the States concerned. Furthermore, we do not agree that the supervisory body should be a Parliament recruited from among the national Parliaments, since only they have the political responsibility. On the contrary, the supervisory body should be the Ministers, who effectively exercise power.'

Wehrer, the Luxembourger, seemed more concerned to establish a means of appeal based on the notion of a country's 'vital interests' — a notion open to all sorts of interpretations, as the future was to show. Spierenburg took up the same argument.

'Why,' he asked, 'should these means of appeal not consist of a majority decision — perhaps a two-thirds majority — taken by a committee of Ministers from the countries concerned? This would give the Governments back their proper role. They, after all, are responsible for their countries' general policies.'

Spierenburg always spoke with passion, in excellent French, and his words came in a rush at moments of tension, which he himself created.

'Besides,' he said, 'let me make myself quite clear: this is a point on which I see no possibility of compromise.'

Hirsch then asked him a question.

'In the system you propose,' he inquired, 'would the two-thirds vote of the committee of Ministers be to validate or to invalidate decisions by the High Authority?'

'To validate them,' Spierenburg answered. The Benelux countries were clearly thinking in terms of a blocking minority.

It was now Hallstein's turn to speak.

'The German Government,' he declared, 'reaffirms that the importance of the Schuman Plan is above all political. In this context, economic problems, substantial as they may be, are secondary: solutions to them will always be found. That is why the German delegation appeals urgently to all members of this conference to subordinate their economic interests to

this great political goal. The war that has just broken out in Korea gives Europe yet another reason for uniting, for the peace of the world is under threat. This said, we do not underestimate the economic problems, and I shall return to them in greater detail later on. But the safeguards you seek will depend on the quality of the men who are chosen to run the Community, and on respect for the principles to be laid down in the preamble and articles of the Treaty — including in particular the principle of equality. The Assembly and the Court will see to that.'

This firm and dignified statement confirmed that France and Germany still saw eye to eye. That was the crux of the matter, and I was able to continue my work of persuasion. My first target, I remember, was Taviani. When he asked for the Italian steel industry to be put on a par with those of other countries before the High Authority started work, I answered:

'I agree that competitive conditions should be made equal. But let us get out of the habit of talking about the Italian steel industry, the French steel industry, and so on, because soon there will be only a European steel industry. That is the whole purpose of the Schuman Plan.'

There was a constant risk that this would be forgotten. Turning to Spierenburg, I reminded him that intergovernmental co-operation had never led anywhere:

'I realize,' I said, 'that there may be serious concern about the radical change which the French proposal represents. But remember that we are here to build a European Community. The supranational Authority is not merely the best means for solving economic problems: it is also the first move towards a federation.'

Our starting-points were different: there was no disguising the fact. But it seemed to me undesirable to make them public before we had worked to bring them together. Spierenburg disagreed. I realized that I had to play for time, and get my colleagues used to discussing problems of national sovereignty without flinching from the thought. It seemed better to fall

back on a practical approach: so we set up five technical working groups. The group dealing with the economic problems of establishing a 'common market' for coal and steel set to work at once. Its task was the most extensive, and it made good progress. I have to say that Hirsch, who was its Chairman, found himself in his element. The methods of the French Planning Commissariat were readily adaptable both to European problems and to the Europeans involved. Overnight, the six countries' experts, industrialists, trade union leaders, and civil servants became integrated into a team. For reasons both practical and symbolic, it had its headquarters at N° 18 rue de Martignac, which in its day had been chosen and arranged for the purpose of continual consultation. Now, the same process began again — a small group, using the experience of those best qualified and most directly concerned with the field it was exploring. That was how we had drawn up the Modernization Plan for France. But the exchange of experience had not been limited to the first, creative phase: it had continued into day-to-day action and become in a sense institutionalized. Now we had to work out a new method, transposing into the organization of Europe the principle underlying the Modernization Commissions, and running a complex entity with a small team very precisely aware of what existed and what was needed in every field. I knew from experience the working habits of many peoples here and there in the world: I had worked with men of several different nationalities. But I had seldom had contact with the Germans and the Dutch; and I had a lot to learn about their style of thinking and their legal approach. The problem, however, was not to adapt to their psychology or to ask them to think like me: it was to induce them to put the common interest above purely national concerns. For that, I had to rely on the intelligence and goodwill that exist in every man worth his salt, and which reveal themselves as soon as one has established trust.

To establish trust is more straightforward than is often thought: straightforwardness, indeed, is the secret of how it is

done. If some delegates had arrived full of suspicion, they gradually found that we had nothing to hide. We demonstrated to them, day after day, that all our intentions were set out in the Declaration of May 9, and that all one needed was to read that. Our working document, in fact, was a faithful reflection of the Schuman Declaration, and no arbitrary or dictatorial intent could be read into the notion of the High Authority. If Hallstein sometimes warned us against dirigisme, this was mainly to appease Ludwig Erhard, the German Minister of Economic Affairs, a dogmatic 'liberal' economist, who kept a close watch on our work. Hallstein had understood, as had several others, that we were not planning to substitute the High Authority for private enterprise, but seeking to make possible real competition throughout a vast market, from which producers, workers, and consumers would all gain. It was not unrealistic to hope that a proper balance of interests would often be reached automatically; but it would not have been wise to imagine that it would last without intervention by an independent High Authority. The problem was to limit such intervention to what was strictly necessary, to codify it, and to make it publicly accountable.

We tried to reassure everyone by showing that this open approach was itself the most effective safeguard. One of the essential features of the High Authority's work would be the information which it would have the right to collect and the duty to publish. In this way, in contrast to the traditional practice of industries jealous of their secrets, all concerned would be able to take their decisions in full awareness of the facts, and purchasers in particular would know how prices were arrived at. Publicity of this kind, together with the public debates of the Consultative Committee and the Common Assembly, as well as the verdicts of the Court, would make the new institutions as open to scrutiny as a house of glass. But too much light undoubtedly blinded men who had been brought up in the shadowy corridors of power. Their innermost security lay in their power to say No, which is the privilege of national

sovereignty: No to change, No to the uncertainty of unprecedented innovations. I saw that it would take time to achieve among us the atmosphere that the Community ought to have, and I completely abandoned the idea of settling matters all at once. What counted was to prevent the constitutional debate getting bogged down, and to get to the heart of things before the summer recess.

I spent a whole week convincing Suetens and Spierenburg that, while Franco-German reconciliation was the means to the Schuman Plan's goal, which was peace, this would not be achieved at the expense of the smaller nations. Schuman, through other channels, persuaded the Governments that their negotiators in Paris were not in the desperate position of being the sole defenders of national independence. No one was threatened. Despite all my arguments, I think I failed to alter the basic convictions of my two colleagues; but it was enough if they came to see that my own views were both sincere and unequivocally straightforward. This greatly affected the way they behaved. To expect more of people is unwise: the art of persuasion has its limits. In this respect, I have often been credited with more power than I possess. Montagu Norman apparently said of me: 'He's not a banker — he's a conjuror', which suggests someone almost magically adroit. About banking, he certainly knew more than I did, and more than anyone; but what he failed to understand was the power of simple ideas expressed plainly and unvaryingly, over and over again. That at least disarms suspicion, which is the main source of misunderstandings.

Mutual understanding is always difficult; but once suspicion has been eliminated, a major obstacle is removed. Between men of different nations and different upbringing this is the first step to take: but one must commit oneself wholeheartedly, or else it would be only a recipe or trick. I am not proposing recipes: I have none to offer. People act or fail to act, naturally, according to whether they are all of a piece or a medley of conflicting elements. I am sure to disappoint anyone who is looking

for more elaborate lessons in the art of persuasion. I will only add that, when I have failed, it was less often because people were naturally narrow-minded than because their minds were deliberately closed. This was the case with many senior civil servants, handicapped by loyalty to their national system. I first encountered the phenomenon in London in 1916. I had wanted to see Grimpre, the Director of Merchant Marine in Paris, who was opposed to our plan for an Allied shipping pool.

‘Come and see us,’ I said; ‘then I can explain.’

‘I do not intend to come,’ was the reply: ‘I do not wish to be influenced.’

Thirty-five years later, I heard the Director of European Affairs at the French Foreign Office, François Seydoux, say very sadly:

‘Don’t try to persuade me: you know that my job is to defend national sovereignty.’

His frankness was that of a sensitive and intelligent man, but it nevertheless revealed the insurmountable barrier dividing my own wish to persuade from the conservative reflex of so many people set in their old patterns of thought.

There was more than one such person at the Schuman Plan conference; but they were all assembled to put into practice the Declaration of May 9 — that is, to provide for the delegation of sovereignty. This was no longer the subject of dispute: it was now the point of departure. In this situation, which the British had refused to share, the Benelux representatives felt ill at ease; but since we were all shut in together, there was nothing for it but to agree. It was obvious that those who were hesitant had the furthest distance to make up; so, as far as possible, I forestalled their anxieties, at the risk of sometimes disquieting Hallstein, who vigorously championed the supranational cause. On July 12, the Heads of Delegation met together once more.

‘I have to admit,’ I said, ‘that there was a gap in our original draft, which Spierenburg and Suetens have suggested ways of

filling. We can now distinguish two types of problem: those which the Treaty, by a collective decision of our national Parliaments, will expressly entrust to the High Authority; and those which spill over into the responsibility of Governments, and in which Governments should be empowered to intervene, provided that they act collectively. In such circumstances, well defined in advance, the High Authority and the Governments could hold joint meetings. We have just made a great step forward.'

We had: the Council of Ministers of the European Community had just been born.

But Spierenburg wanted to press home his advantage. 'The Ministers ought to be able to give the High Authority political directives,' he said.

As always, his tone was quick and sharp, very like his appearance. Hallstein's calm firmness was in marked contrast. In his quiet, pleasant voice, he broke in to stem Spierenburg's offensive:

'In the eyes of my Government,' he declared, 'the High Authority is the keystone of the European Community.'

The atmosphere was tense: one could not help feeling that a single word might halt the building of Europe. Everything had still to be decided, and the solid structure that exists today was then still dependent on the shifting lines of force that linked or divided six very different men. The fear of failure and the need for union were pulling in opposite directions. I had no doubt that anxiety to agree would prove the more powerful; but I know that nothing in this world can be taken for granted, even by the most strong-willed — and there is no doubt that at that time the smallest distraction, the slightest weakness, would permanently have changed the nature of the European Community. We had to halt the debate about principles and set before everyone a structure in which he would find his own ideas given practical shape. To inaugurate this new phase, which would be that of the lawyers, I had asked Schuman to come and sum up the conclusions of our work.

He slipped almost unnoticed into the room, to join the conference whose chairman he had been since the very first day, after which he had not reappeared. Sitting down at the head of the table, he apologized for being 'an intruder'. Then he quietly expressed his firm conviction that the High Authority must be independent.

'But independence has never meant irresponsibility,' he said; 'and in your work you have achieved a balance between national and Community power which to my mind is a remarkable system of democratic safeguards. That system now exists: it no longer has to be invented.'

From that moment on, indeed, the system had acquired its definitive form: a supranational authority, a council of national Ministers, parliamentary and judicial control. But it took further meetings to prevent the definition of powers from limiting the High Authority's scope.

I was neither surprised nor displeased to see these obstacles accumulating: they proved that we were approaching the heart of the problem. The progress of change can be measured by the vehemence with which it is resisted; and what many people still did not realize was the ineluctable nature of the process in which they were now engaged. We were coming to a time when the complexity of the problems, the multiplicity of the suggestions made, and even the strength of the criticisms we faced, could only advance matters further — so long as we kept our objective in view. That objective remained so clear in my eyes that I was in no danger of being upset by arguments between the experts we set to work. I had asked Paul Reuter to come back to Paris, and he kept a committee of legal experts in session to sort out the points of agreement and turn them into a memorandum of understanding. This enabled us to consolidate what we had agreed on, without making it depend on other questions that were still undecided, as traditional negotiators might well have done. What we had already settled, as it appeared in a memorandum dated August 5, 1950, was the institutional structure of the future European Coal and Steel

Community: the High Authority, the Common Assembly, the Special Council of Ministers, and the Court of Justice. The terminology itself was now fixed. In this way, by writing down in black and white what was beginning to be lost in verbal confusion, we astonished everyone with a coherent structure which discouraged quibbles. Not only had the High Authority emerged unscathed from the ordeal, but the very constraints which had sought to limit its independence only emphasized the federal nature of the institutional system which it headed. One last offensive soon petered out.

‘We do not accept the expression “merger of sovereignty”,’ said the Belgian representative. ‘“A certain delegation of sovereignty” would be enough.’

‘That argument’s over,’ I said. ‘“Merger” is the word.’ The method that had proved its worth on institutional questions gave fresh impetus to the economic debate which had so laboriously begun. Hirsch and Uri drew up a balance-sheet of the progress so far made: it was considerable, and in their hands it emerged as an integrated whole. The ‘common market’ had become a well-defined concept, and the only questions remaining were the means and timetable whereby it was to be set up.

It was still less than two months since the opening of the conference, and already the essentials of the new structure had been worked out. But what struck me most forcibly was the rapid change in the attitude of my colleagues. Day after day I could see the cohesive effect of the Community idea, which was working on men’s minds long before it assumed practical form. Although all the delegates retained their well-marked national characteristics, they were now working together on the same quest. So much had their viewpoints converged during the past few weeks that they now and then asked one of their number to speak on behalf of the whole group. These weeks, it was true, had been intensive, cooped up at N° 18 rue de Martignac, which was ill-adapted for international conferences — it had no interpretation facilities — but which was

very well suited to informal meetings and talks. I have already described the advantages of our tiny dining-room, reached by an awkward flight of stairs. There, we were sure of not being disturbed, and it was there that friendship grew up among the heads of delegation, who soon formed a united group, resolved to interpret their national instructions in ways that would assist the common effort. Material surroundings have an effect on people's attitudes. When people from other countries came to see me to find out how to produce a national plan, I often said to them: 'Above all, have a dining-room.' In the dining-room at N° 18 rue de Martignac, many problems were very simply solved.

The delegates dispersed for the summer vacation carrying with them the memorandum which the French delegation had prepared. This, like a searchlight in the mist, revealed a structural whole where most people had hitherto seen only vague shapes. Yet we had avoided special pleading, and we had distorted nothing that had been said. Confusion might persist in men's minds, but there was order now in reality. It only had to be clearly described; and in this respect both Reuter and Uri knew their business. I was about to leave Paris when I heard about Macmillan's Strasbourg proposal, which I described in the previous chapter. On August 15, 1950, I wrote to Robert Schuman:

Some telephone calls from Strasbourg have confirmed my belief that the utmost confusion reigns there, and that we risk seeing the Consultative Assembly pass a Resolution which will interfere with, and perhaps endanger, the success of all our efforts. The British are waging a skilful campaign to sabotage our plan.

What disturbed me most was the uncertainty I observed in many European statesmen who were perplexed by these British moves. 'Can we afford to let slip this last chance of

enlisting Great Britain ?' they asked each other. One of them was the French Socialist leader, Guy Mollet, whom I found greatly unnerved. 'We are heading for a European schism,' he kept saying. In reality, he was thinking mainly of the split between the British Labour Party and his own SFIO, as well as of those within the SFIO itself. He had been on the alert since the end of July, when a foreign policy debate in the French National Assembly had revealed a hostile movement within his own party, led by Daniel Mayer and Paul Ramadier. I realized that the British phantom must be exorcized once and for all, and I set about it by giving the maximum publicity to my letter to Harold Macmillan. In Strasbourg, that debate came to an end.



Monnet's hat, walking stick and trenchcoat as they remain in his house of Houjarray.

Extract from the last chapter of the *Memoirs*

When I returned to my country home at Houjarray on the evening of May 9, 1975, freed from all outside responsibilities for the first time for many years, there lying on my table was the first sketch-plan of this book, a new and exacting task for which I was very little prepared. Now that it is nearly ended, dare I say without causing amusement, after so many pages written in the first person, that I dislike talking about myself? If I have told of my experience, it is because that is what I know best, and because it may be useful to others. I might have written a series of practical maxims; but I distrust general ideas, and I never let them lead me far away from practical things. I have described the dramatic events I have lived through and the lessons I have learned from them, in the hope of preventing their happening again. My purpose is very practical. Some may call it a philosophy, if they prefer: but the essential point is to make it useful beyond the experience of one individual; and because the most effective way was to tell that individual's story, I have bowed to the rules, which were new to me, and told the story from my own point of view.

A very wise man whom I knew in the United States, Dwight Morrow, used to say: 'There are two kinds of people — those who want to *be someone*, and those who want to *do something*.' I have seen the truth of that saying verified over and over again. The main concern of many very remarkable people is to cut a figure and play a role. They are useful to society, where images are very important and the affirmation of character is essential to the administration of affairs. But, in general, it is the other kind of people who get things moving — those who spend their time looking for places and opportunities to influence the course of events. The places are not always the most obvious ones, nor do the opportunities occur when many people expect them. Anyone who wants to find them has to forsake the limelight.

My friend Dwight Morrow put me in this second category of people — and it is true that I never remember saying to myself: 'I'm going to be someone.' But nor do I remember thinking: 'I'm going to do something.' What I have done, or helped to do, and what I have described in this book, has always been the product of circumstances as they arose. There has been no lack of such opportunities, and I have always been ready to seize them. It is perhaps this faculty, or this availability, that is the most important for action. Life is prodigal of opportunities to act, but one has to be prepared, by long reflection, to recognize them and exploit them when they occur. Life is made up of nothing but events: what matters is to use them for a given purpose. Mine was collective action. And the aim of this book is to show the way and the means to younger people who want to make their own lives useful to others.

As I write these pages, Silvia is finishing a picture in the large living-room where she has put up her easel. She likes the light in this room, which looks out on the garden. But the flowers she paints are not from Houjarray, but from all the gardens we have had in various parts of the world. In this picture they are tall white flowers that recall China and our house in Shanghai. Tomorrow, I know, she is going to work on a landscape from the Ile de Ré, which I had thought was finished. In fact, there was something missing. What, I could not say, but now she sees it clearly. Nothing is ever really completed; it takes talent to know at what point further effort will spoil the result. Silvia asks me my opinion of her picture; then I read her a few pages of this book to see what she thinks. We each take account of what the other says; but in the last resort the choice of when to stop is a matter of instinct. How many times my colleagues, inured to ceaseless changes in a text, have heard me say suddenly: 'That's it: we're there. Don't let's go any further, or we'll spoil the whole thing.' To decide is difficult: one must seize the moment. Yesterday, I wanted Silvia to add a touch to her portrait of a young woman we had met in China forty years ago. I was wrong: incompleteness is part of

nature, and it needs great art, or great wisdom, to know when to lay down the brush, or bring to an end any form of action. We should always avoid perfectionism.

A year has gone by now since I came back to this house, with its thatched roof and blue shutters, and its large garden stretching out toward the rolling countryside of the Ile de France. I seldom leave it: those who want to see me have to come here. They talk to me about their worries. I understand their concern; but they have to realize that the building of Europe is a great transformation, which will take a very long time. They are naturally impatient for the success of what they have to do; but nothing would be more dangerous than to regard difficulties as failures. Perhaps they think that in my country retreat I am losing touch with current events and becoming too detached. They remember my former calls for urgent action. True enough, action is always urgent, and I am glad that those responsible for it are aware of the fact. But they must also be aware of the essential virtue of perseverance, which is the only way to overcome obstacles.

The obstacles will undoubtedly grow in number as we draw closer to our goal. In the building of Europe, as in all great ventures, men push the obstacles before them, and leave them to their successors. I am not troubled by the fact that there are still so many obstacles on the road ahead. We have overcome many others that were just as great. In this respect, nothing has changed; nor will it. The only difference is that something has begun, something which can no longer be stopped. Twenty-five years ago, the urge to have done with our violent past left us no choice but to advance towards a common goal. What was decided on then is still just as vital; and now it is part of the everyday reality of our lives.

I walk in the garden with my visitors. I go down towards the cottage at the foot of the meadow, where Marianne and my son-in-law Gerard Lieberherr spend their weekends. Their children — Jean-Gabriel, Catherine, Jean-Marc, and Marie — run on ahead. Now I have time to be with them, and get to

know them individually as they grow up. I press on into the paths round Bazoches, where I meet my neighbour Pierre Viansson-Ponté. 'Good morning, Monsieur Monnet,' he says; and under that title I find in the *Monde* some echoes of our conversation, filtered by his delicate art. The seasons go by: I had never noticed their passing before — I was too much distracted by activities in town. Spring comes round once more. Someone says to me: 'There will be no Spring for Europe in this year of grace 1976.' Perhaps; but we should look beyond the calendar, for stages, not time-limits: we should keep on course, and not worry too much, now, about deadlines. There is nothing talismanic about this or that month in 1976 or 1978; about dates, I make no wagers. But I am certain that the passing seasons will lead us inevitably towards greater unity; and if we fail to organize it for ourselves, democratically, it will be thrust upon us by blind force. There is no place any more for separate action by our ancient sovereign nations. We have long since passed the crossroads where we had choice of ways ahead. Since 1950, we have been engaged in the process of unification by our own free will, and no one has been willing or able to reverse it. If there are arguments, they are about means, not ends; and arguments are essential to progress.

I have known this garden for thirty years, and have come back to it almost every night — except when I was in Luxembourg, where I had another garden, at Bricherhof. For me, it has no bounds: the world belongs to walkers. In the morning, as I have said, I make for the nearby woods, where I know every faintest path. Some of them are endless. It is essential for the spirit to start the day in the open air. In London, I had St James's Park outside my door. In Washington, the houses on Foxhall Road were in the woods, and there were no fences between the yards. I can claim no specialized knowledge of trees or birds: they are simply the background to my thoughts, my form of poetry. André Horré used to explain the things of Nature to me. He had started life in the mines of the north, and had then become a butler to follow his wife Amélie, who

was a fine cook. When we settled in our Houjarray house, which I bought in 1945, he became a gardener. In London and Washington he had worked only indoors; there had been neither room nor need to grow vegetables. In France, at the end of the war, it became a duty, and he accepted it. The spirit of his ancestors revived his love of the soil. While Amélie, with masterly intelligence, looked after the house, Andre let his imagination roam as he laboured in the kitchen garden or among the flowers. They were a noble and devoted couple. They went with us to Luxembourg, and helped us settle in; then, they retired to the north. Their only son, a gifted boy, joined the staff of the High Authority. When he died in an accident in 1953, his parents' silent and dignified grief was heartbreaking.

In the course of their lives with us in various countries, André and Amélie had met many well-known people, who paid close attention to their simple good sense. I can still see André in his kitchen garden, talking with Walter Lippmann in 1948, shortly before the US Presidential election.

'Who do you think will win, Dewey or Truman ?' asked Lippmann. Like most observers, he was sure it would be Dewey. André went on digging, and said:

'Well, obviously, Truman.'

'Why?' asked Lippmann in surprise. André straightened up and said: 'Look — it's as simple as my trees. Roosevelt was elected three times. Three times the Democrats have won: that gives them deep roots. They won't be pulled up in one go.'

The roots of the Community are strong now, and deep in the soil of Europe. They have survived some hard seasons, and can survive more. On the surface, appearances change. In a quarter-century, naturally, new generations arise, with new ambitions; images of the past disappear; the balance of the world is altered. Yet amid this changing scenery the European idea goes on; and no one seeing it, and seeing how stable the

Community institutions are, can doubt that this is a deep and powerful movement on an historic scale. Can it really be suggested that the wellsprings of that movement are exhausted, or that other rival forces are taking their place? I see no sign of any such rival forces. On the contrary, I see the same necessity acting on our countries — sometimes bringing them together for their mutual benefit, sometimes dividing them to the detriment of all. The moral is clear, and it cannot be gainsaid. It has taken root in our peoples' consciousness, but it is slow to act on their will: it has to overcome the inertia that hinders movement and the habits that resist change. We have to reckon with time.

Where this necessity will lead, and toward what kind of Europe, I cannot say. It is impossible to foresee today the decisions that could be taken in a new context tomorrow. The essential thing is to hold fast to the few fixed principles that have guided us since the beginning: gradually to create among Europeans the broadest common interest, served by common democratic institutions to which the necessary sovereignty has been delegated. This is the dynamic that has never ceased to operate, removing prejudice, doing away with frontiers, enlarging to continental scale, within a few years, the process that took centuries to form our ancient nations. I have never doubted that one day this process will lead us to the United States of Europe; but I see no point in trying to imagine today what political form it will take. The words about which people argue — federation or confederation — are inadequate and imprecise. What we are preparing, through the work of the Community, is probably without precedent. The Community itself is founded on institutions, and they need strengthening; but the true political authority which the democracies of Europe will one day establish still has to be conceived and built.

Some people refuse to undertake anything if they have no guarantee that things will work out as they planned. Such people condemn themselves to immobility. Today, no one can say what form Europe will assume tomorrow, for the changes

born of change are unpredictable. 'Tomorrow is another day,' my father used to say, with a zest which my mother, in her wisdom, did her best to calm. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' she would reply. They were both right. Day-to-day effort is needed to make one's way forward: but what matters is to have an objective clear enough always to be kept in sight. People who came to see me in Luxembourg were intrigued to see on my desk the photograph of a strange raft. It was the Kon-Tiki, whose adventure had thrilled the whole world, and which for me was a symbol of our own.

'Those young men,' I explained to my visitors, 'chose their course, and then they set out. They knew that they could not turn back. Whatever the difficulties, they had only one option — to go on. We too are heading for our objective, the United States of Europe; and for us too there is no going back.'

But time is passing, and Europe is moving only slowly on the course to which she is so deeply committed. . . . We cannot stop, when the whole world around us is on the move. Have I said clearly enough that the Community we have created is not an end in itself? It is a process of change, continuing that same process which in an earlier period of history produced our national forms of life. Like our provinces in the past, our nations today must learn to live together under common rules and institutions freely arrived at. The sovereign nations of the past can no longer solve the problems of the present: they cannot ensure their own progress or control their own future. And the Community itself is only a stage on the way to the organized world of tomorrow.

Taken from Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*,
translation by Richard Mayne,
(Doubleday, New York:1978)

Chronology

August 1914 — Outbreak of World War I.

September 2, 1914 — The German army has reached as far as 30 miles from the French capital. The French government abandons Paris and withdraws to Bordeaux.

September 6 to 9, 1914 — Battle of the Marne. The German army is stopped by the French.

November 11, 1918 — Armistice ending World War I.

June 28, 1919 — The Versailles Peace treaty imposes heavy territorial, military and economic sanctions on the defeated nations. Germany has to pay large sums (\$32 billion) to the European victors. As these victors themselves owe big amounts to the USA, they are dependent on these reparations.

1921 — First session of the League of Nations in Geneva.

1925 — Chiang Kai-Shek succeeds Sun Yat-Sen to the leadership of the Kuomintang and leads the Nationalist government in Nanjing.

1929 — Chiang Kai-Shek terminates the treaties granting extraterritoriality to Western nations. Railroad construction is undertaken.

October 23, 1929 — Collapse of the American stock market.

November 9, 1932 — Roosevelt elected president of the



1961. Berlin: All the windows on the Western side of Berlin are bricked up. "As for the wall that separates men, Jean Monnet had measured its thickness and its resistance, and having done so he could not rest until he had understood how he could open a breach into it."

- United States. Beginning of the New Deal.
- January 30, 1933 — The National Socialists come to power in Germany. The first measures against the Jews are taken shortly after.
- September 29, 1938 — The French and British Prime Ministers, Daladier and Chamberlain meet Hitler in Munich and avert war by abandoning Czechoslovakia to its fate.
- March 15, 1939 — German troops enter Czechoslovakia.
- September 1, 1939 — Invasion of Poland.
- September 3, 1939 — England and France declare war on Germany. Beginning of World War II.
- May 10, 1940 — Hitler launches its attack on the Allies. Netherlands, Belgium and France collapse.
- June 18, 1940 — From London, de Gaulle speaks to his countrymen and adjures them to rally round him.
- June 22, 1940 — Surrender of the French.
- March 11, 1941 — Lend-Lease Act: this famous law gives President Franklin Roosevelt the authority to aid Great Britain with ships and other war materials in its war with Nazi Germany.
- December 7, 1941 — Japanese attack on the American forces in Pearl Harbor.
- November 8, 1942 — Allies' landing in North Africa.
- May 30, 1943 — De Gaulle's arrival in Algiers.
- June 6, 1944 — Allies' landing in Normandy.
- May 8, 1945 — Victory day in Europe.
- August 15, 1945 — End of World War II.
- January 1946 — De Gaulle resigns as President of the Provisional Government.
- March 5, 1946 — In a speech, Churchill speaks for the first time of an "iron curtain".
- June 5, 1947 — George Marshall proposes a plan "to assist in the return of normal economic health" of Europe. USSR refuses to be included in it.
- June 24, 1948 — Stalin imposes a blockade on the western sectors of Berlin. The Western powers supply West Berlin

through air.

May 8, 1949 — A West German parliamentary council adopts a constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany with Konrad Adenauer as its first chancellor.

May 9, 1950 — The “Schuman plan” is made public in Paris.

June 25, 1950 — North Korean forces cross the 38th parallel to “liberate” South Korea.

April 18, 1951 — Signature of the treaty creating the European Community of Steel and Coal.

1954 — Refusal by the French parliament to ratify the treaty on the European Defence Community.

25 March, 1957 — Treaty of Rome creating Euratom and the European economic community.

1958 — De Gaulle, President of France.

1961-1962 — Presentation and failure of projects of treaty on European political cooperation.

1973 — Denmark, Great Britain and Ireland join Europe.

1979 — First election of the European parliament by direct universal franchise.

1981 — Greece joins Europe.

1992 — Signature of the Maastricht Treaty which led to the creation of the European Union. It was the result of separate negotiations on monetary union and political union.

1995 — Austria, Finland and Sweden join Europe

2002 — The Euro becomes the currency for 11 countries of the European Union.

2004, May 1st — Ten new countries join the European Union (The Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia).

2004, October 29 — The text of a Constitution for Europe is signed.

2005 — Through a referendum, the French and then the Dutch refuse to ratify the text of the Constitution for Europe.

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Addendum

Extracts from Sri Aurobindo's message on August 15, 1947

(On the day Indian became independent, Sri Aurobindo described the five dreams he had for the future of humanity.)

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand forever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

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Printed at Auroville Press
Auroville
2005

This particular monograph pays homage to a hero of our times, a Frenchman named Jean Monnet. He is mainly known for his role in the creation of what was to become the European Union but, in reality, Jean Monnet has been much more than "the father of Europe".

He has been an instrument at the service of a vision.

That vision was the future unity of mankind; it was a world that would not be divided by borders. As for the instrument, he spent his whole life trying to perfect it, to make it more supple, more efficient, more transparent. He probably never in his life used the word "yoga" and he would have been quite surprised if he had been told that some yogis spent years in front of a wall. Practical as he was he would have asked, "Tell me, did the wall collapse in the end?" As for the wall that separates men, at the darkest moments of the 20th century Jean Monnet had measured its thickness and its resistance, and having done so he could not rest until he had understood how he could open a breach into it.

He did not know Sri Aurobindo, yet his whole life was dedicated to the ideal of human unity. What interested him, and even obsessed him, was not the ideal per se, but the construction, stone after stone, of this edifice.

For a deep transformation of the relation between men and between countries, Monnet worked tirelessly, putting aside all personal ambitions. He viewed men without illusion but without pessimism. He was convinced that union was ineluctable and that we only had the choice "between changes towards which we will be forcibly dragged and changes which we will know how to prepare and realize".

The world has worshipped war heroes for a long time now. Perhaps it is time to learn that there is a heroism of another kind.

