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## Enemies to Partners

### *The Politics of Cooperation in Western Europe 1945–1950*

The war ended in Europe in May 1945. It left the continent's infrastructure in pieces and its peoples divided by ideological conflict and nationalist resentments. Yet a mere five years later, six West European nations, including France and the newborn Federal Republic of Germany, had begun negotiations to place production of their key coal and steel industries under the control of a "High Authority" with supranational decision-making powers. Many leading intellectuals and politicians were by May 1950 even advocating the creation of a "United States of Europe" along American lines.

Why were European leaders so susceptible after 1945 to the cause of promoting European unity? One reason was obvious to anyone who just looked around. The continent had been devastated. Konrad Adenauer, a conservative opponent of the Nazis who became chancellor of Germany in 1949, gave a bleak description in his memoirs of what Cologne looked like when he returned as mayor in April 1945:

The task confronting me . . . was a huge and extraordinarily difficult one. The extent of the damage suffered by the city in air raids and from the other effects of war was enormous . . . more than half the houses and public buildings were totally destroyed . . . only 300 houses had escaped unscathed. . . . There was no gas, no water, no electric current, and no means of transport. The bridges across the Rhine had been destroyed. There were mountains of rubble in the streets. Everywhere there were gigantic areas of debris from bombed and shelled buildings. With its razed churches, many of them a thousand years old, its bombed-out cathedral . . . Cologne was a ghost city.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Adenauer nevertheless believed that in 1945 “the unification of Europe seemed far more feasible now than in the 1920s. The idea of international cooperation must succeed.”<sup>2</sup> This conviction was especially pronounced among Christian Democrats, who emerged after 1945 in France, Italy, West Germany, and several other states as the principal political party. For leaders like Adenauer, or the Italian Alcide De Gasperi, or the Frenchman Robert Schuman, there was no choice but to supersede national rivalries if Europe was ever to return to civilized life again.

In the meantime, however, it was touch and go whether Europe could survive at all. Key economic hubs such as Rotterdam and Hamburg had been blitzed into the preindustrial age. The 1945 harvest was little more than half as large as the last prewar harvest in 1938, and getting it to market was a task of surpassing difficulty since roads, bridges, and canals were blocked with the detritus of war. During the winter of 1945 to 1946, Europe’s urban areas were reduced to near-famine conditions.<sup>3</sup> Across Western Europe (in Central and Eastern Europe, conditions were even worse), millions of people survived on one thousand calories a day, or little more. Only Britain and the Nordic countries provided their citizens with the 2,400 to 2,800 calories consumed by the average sedentary man in a normal day—and as Europe rebuilt, few people were living sedentary lives.<sup>4</sup>

At first, the problem of reconstruction meant digging enough coal, growing enough crops, and rebuilding war-blasted infrastructure. It soon became clear, however, that reconstruction necessitated a common market that would guarantee economies of scale and would signal a rejection of the economic nationalism of the 1930s. The economic success of the United States provided a compelling argument for the benefits of a large domestic market. Robert Marjolin, a French economist who became secretary-general of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948 and was a French representative on the first Commission of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958, wrote in his memoirs that in the immediate postwar years, “America hypnotized us, her material success was our ideal; we had almost no other aim than to bridge the gap between European industry and American industry.”<sup>5</sup>

U.S. leaders were themselves anxious to promote economic and political integration in Western Europe as the Cold War became a fact of international life in 1946 to 1947. Without postwar American aid, Europe would have had to find the resources to defend itself against the USSR and to rebuild its industrial base entirely from the pockets of its citizens. For this reason, no Western European government could ignore the Americans’ vision for the postwar organization of the continent. This vision was postnational in scope. As Diane Kunz has remarked: “European unity continued to appeal to Americans for several reasons,

not the least of which was the conviction, tapping deep into the American psyche, that Europe's best course was to imitate the United States as closely as possible."<sup>6</sup>

The reintegration of Germany, even its western rump, was a further factor tending toward integration. The question of how to treat Germany after 1945 was a major cause of the tensions between the United States and the USSR, and it also dominated French foreign policy. France wanted the wartime allies to allow her to substitute Germany as the economic motor of Western Europe. Only when it became clear to Paris that Washington was determined to build up West Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union did France encourage the rehabilitation of a democratic Germany in the context of wider European integration. Without Franco-German rapprochement, no step toward European unity was imaginable, and it is for this reason that the French statesmen most responsible for seeking better relations with Germany, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, are regarded as the founding fathers of the European Community.

By the early 1950s, in fact, France had established itself as the key political actor in Western Europe. This position ought, logically, to have belonged to Britain. An additional factor structuring the development of Western Europe after 1945 was Britain's political ambivalence to European projects. Britain enjoyed moral authority as the nation that had led the fight against fascism and which had elected in July 1945 a government committed to far-reaching socialist reforms, but it was suspicious of schemes for European integration. Britain's politicians, Labour and Conservative alike, saw Britain as a world power, not a regional leader, and dismissed all plans that required Britain to concede any portion of its national sovereignty to common European institutions.

This condescending attitude had important consequences. Had London been more open to European integration in the late 1940s, Britain might have led a commonwealth of European nations in the 1950s, instead of failing expensively to maintain itself as a world power. Britain's economy would also have received a salutary dose of competition from cheaper competitors that might have prevented its slide in the 1950s and 1960s into relative decline. Britain's leaders had good reasons for their choices, but it is hard to acquit them of having been shortsighted in their European policy.

### **THE AMERICAN VISION FOR EUROPE: THE MARSHALL PLAN AND THE OEEC**

It was not until the end of 1947 that East–West relations broke down and the Cold War began. Yet throughout the first two years of peace,

ideological competition with communism was an ever-present factor in the calculations of European statesmen. The fact that European (and American) leaders had constantly to remember in the postwar years was that for millions of Western Europeans, Soviet Russia was a model of economic modernization, not ruthless dictatorship, and in the event of economic failure in Western Europe, the USSR might exert an attraction for millions more.

After a decade and a half of economic depression and war, Europe's voters wanted above all else work, welfare, and homes: the only question was which political system would provide these basic social needs. In the first postwar elections, the voters of Western Europe mostly opted for social democracy (in Britain, most dramatically) or Christian democracy (in Italy, after the ideologically charged April 1948 elections; in Germany, where Konrad Adenauer emerged as democratic Germany's most important statesman; in Belgium, where the Christelijke Volkspartij/Parti Social Chrétien took 42 percent of the vote in 1946). In France, the Christian Democratic Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP) was an important component of the coalition of centrist parties that formed governments in the immediate postwar years, and the MRP controlled the foreign ministry between 1945 and 1953.<sup>7</sup> Yet the Communists emerged as the second party in France in the 1946 elections and, in April 1948, as the dominant party of the left in Italy, too. In both countries, they commanded key government ministries until May 1947, when they were maneuvered from power.<sup>8</sup> Tightly disciplined, with a huge mass membership and a powerful role in key trade unions, Communist parties were potent political rivals to the parties of the democratic mainstream.

The provision of a higher standard of living was therefore a political imperative. But raising living standards required vast capital spending, the money for which could be raised in any or all of three ways: by diverting as much as possible of national income to investment rather than consumption; by stimulating exports to bring in money from abroad; and by receiving foreign aid or investment. France, most famously, took the first course. The French five-year postwar modernization plan sought to direct capital investment into selected industries such as coal mining, steel, cement, and transport.<sup>9</sup> Large segments of the French economy were taken into public ownership as the planners channeled national income toward the development of heavy industry. To a greater or lesser extent, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, and Italy followed suit.<sup>10</sup>

Britain was constrained by circumstances to take a different approach. The Attlee government's spending plans for health and housing, in addition to its substantial military commitments in Germany and the Far East, reduced its investment in industry. In February 1947, the Labour

government had to tell Washington that it no longer had the resources to maintain troops in Greece (where withdrawal might have led to a Communist seizure of power). This decision, which provoked the "Truman Doctrine," a commitment to defend democracy from totalitarian subversion, also persuaded U.S. policymakers that Europe was on the verge of economic collapse. The United States had given Britain hefty postwar loans (over \$4 billion) in the expectation that Britain would soon be able to act as the chief economic motor for Western Europe. This illusion was now dispelled.

By the spring of 1947, Washington feared that Western Europe's stuttering recovery was providing fertile soil for Communist flowers to bloom. A memorandum from Will Clayton, undersecretary of economic affairs in the State Department, at the end of May 1947 stated baldly that Europe was "slowly starving" and on the brink of disintegration and social revolution.<sup>11</sup> Clayton's memorandum was seemingly decisive in persuading U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall to make his famous Harvard speech on June 5, 1947, promising that America would fund a "program to put Europe on its feet economically." For only a healthy economy, Marshall sustained, could "permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist."

The British economic historian Alan Milward has convincingly shown that opinions like Clayton's were alarmist. In Milward's view, the European economies' dash for industrial growth had merely precipitated an entirely predictable balance-of-payments crisis with the United States. Europe did not have enough dollars to maintain the high levels of investment in industrialization and social services that her peoples were demanding.

Unable to buy capital goods and manufactures from Germany, the traditional producer of engineering products, and with Britain slow to fill the gap that Germany had left, the European nations had turned to the United States for the ships, airplanes, tractors, machinery, industrial plant, and raw materials they needed to maintain their ambitious investment programs. Unfortunately, they had little to sell the Americans in return. Most European exports to the United States were luxury goods. It takes a lot of olive oil, perfume, or whisky to buy a ship or an airplane. France's deficit on merchandise trade with the United States increased from \$649 million in 1946 to \$956 million in 1947. The Netherlands' deficit more than doubled from \$187 million to \$431 million. Italy's more than tripled from \$112 million in 1946 to \$350 million in 1947. Britain, like France, had a \$1 billion shortfall in 1947.<sup>12</sup> Western Europe as a whole accumulated a deficit of \$7 billion in the first two peacetime years.

European governments, in short, were living far beyond their means: "In both Britain and France policy seems to have gone ahead fatalistically based upon an unspoken, perhaps unutterable assumption that the

United States would . . . have to lend or give the necessary sums of hard currency to make their postwar economic policies feasible."<sup>13</sup>

Marshall insisted in his Harvard address that the Europeans themselves should draw up a plan for economic recovery. Britain and France responded by calling a conference of foreign ministers in Paris in July 1947. Sixteen North and West European states attended. The Soviet Union, to the relief of everybody but the satellite nations of Eastern Europe, which were compelled to follow the Soviet example, distanced herself from the Anglo-French initiative. The conference established the so-called CEEC (Committee on European Economic Cooperation) and entrusted it with the task of estimating the size of Europe's economic needs for the period from 1948 to 1952, by when, the Americans insisted, Europe should be self-sufficient. Despite intense American pressure for something other than sixteen "shopping lists," the CEEC's initial report in August 1947 requested for \$29 billion in American aid by 1952. Michael Hogan, in his magisterial history of the Marshall Plan, states that this figure "stunned the Europeans as much as the Americans."<sup>14</sup>

Secretary of State Marshall had previously been reluctant to impose conditions upon the would-be recipients of aid. However, the giant CEEC request precipitated matters. American policymakers urged the governments of Western Europe to devote more resources to reviving production, even if this meant cutting back on cherished social programs; to liberalize trade by slashing tariffs and ending exchange controls; to move to a customs union as quickly as possible; and to establish a "continuing European organization" with sovereign powers over the direction of the European reconstruction effort.<sup>15</sup>

The European reaction to these prescriptions was unenthusiastic. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin lamented the "unfortunate impression of high-handedness" left by the Americans' approach.<sup>16</sup> The Europeans refused to abandon social programs or jeopardize employment levels. Led by Britain and France, they also refused to accept that the proposed supranational economic organization should have sovereign powers. On the other hand, they were obliged to accept a reduced aid package of just over \$19 billion. Hogan comments: "Europeans . . . sought a recovery program that would limit the scope of collective action, meet their separate requirements and preserve the greatest degree of national self-sufficiency and autonomy. Americans, on the other hand, wanted to refashion Western Europe in the image of the United States."<sup>17</sup>

The Americans could not simply impose their social and political model, however. The dollar, mighty though it was, was much less influential than the Red Army. Just as negotiations in the CEEC reached their climax in September 1947, Britain defaulted on the terms of the

\$4 billion loan extended to her in 1946 by suspending convertibility of the pound sterling into dollars. France and Italy also wobbled on the verge of bankruptcy in the autumn of 1947. The fragility of Europe's economies, paradoxically, was a political strength: it heightened the conviction in Washington that U.S. aid was necessary to stave off the threat of left-wing electoral success.

In April 1948, by large majorities in both chambers, Congress authorized the first \$5 billion of recovery spending for Europe. It also established the Economic Cooperation Agency (ECA), with branches in every Western European country, to oversee the distribution of Marshall aid. The first director of the ECA was a prominent businessman strongly sympathetic to the idea of European political unity, Paul Hoffman; day-to-day relations with the Europeans were entrusted to a presidential special representative based in Paris. W. Averell Harriman was appointed to this post.

In parallel to the ECA, the European countries set up the OEEC, the "continuing organization" that would plan the division of Marshall Plan aid among its member states as well as act as the forum for intra-European negotiations to liberalize trade. Essentially a ministerial council of sovereign states, the OEEC was served by a secretariat of officials, planners, and economists and by an executive committee of civil servants from the nation-states that formulated the Council's final decisions. The work of the secretariat was placed in the hands of a youthful French economist, Robert Marjolin; the executive committee was chaired by a British official, Sir Edmund Hall-Patch. Marjolin has written, "France and Britain called the tune in the OEEC."<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, every country (even small nations such as Iceland and Luxembourg) had a right of veto in the Council, and no country was obliged to implement Council decisions against its will.

Despite the intergovernmental character of the OEEC, and thus the difficulty of securing unified action, Hoffman's opening address to the Council on July 25, 1948, called upon the nation-states of Europe to devise a "master plan of action" for the rebirth of European economic and political life. He called for the OEEC nations to "face up to readjustments to satisfy the requirements of a new world." In particular, nations should avoid thinking along "the old separatist lines." Hoffman urged his listeners to think in terms of "the economic capacity and the economic strength of Europe as a whole."<sup>19</sup> What the Americans had in mind for Europe has been dubbed since "the politics of productivity"—the creation of a free trade area administered (at least in the first instance) by supranational planning bodies that would make boosting production their fundamental goal and lead to political unity in friendship with the United States.<sup>20</sup>

## A "HARMONIOUS SOCIETY": THE VISION OF THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT

The primary impulse for supranational government in Europe has always been the pressing need to stop members of the European family from slaughtering one other. Before, during, and after World War I, liberal thinkers in Britain argued that peace in Europe required the creation of an international organization that would enable the nations of the world to resolve their disputes peacefully and provide a forum for planning their economic development. Similar ideas were influential in the United States, where they provided the intellectual ballast for President Woodrow Wilson's scheme for a League of Nations, and in Italy, where the country's leading economist, the Turin professor Luigi Einaudi, was a proponent of greater political and economic integration.<sup>21</sup> In the 1920s, such developments as the Locarno Pact (1925), whereby the nations of Western Europe promised to resolve their differences through the League of Nations and to respect the borders established by the 1919 Versailles Treaty, were hailed as a major step toward greater European unity by its chief architects, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann, the foreign ministers of France and Germany. Briand, in 1931, even advanced the idea of a European Confederation of nation-states, although by that date many of the high hopes of the Locarno period had already evaporated.<sup>22</sup>

The subsequent failure of the League of Nations in the 1930s strengthened the search for internationalist solutions to the eternal problems posed by national sovereignty. The doctrine that was broke out because of the insecurity engendered by the nature of the state system and by the economic conflicts intrinsic to international capitalism continued to hold sway. A "New League" of socialist states, the radical journalist H. N. Brailsford contended in 1936, dedicated to raising the standards of living of its citizens by economic planning on a Soviet scale but via British standards of parliamentary government, would set in motion a dynamic that would entice the peoples of Italy and Germany back to the path of democracy. The institutions Brailsford envisaged for the "League"—a parliament of delegates drawn from national assemblies and a technocratic central directorate—bore a remarkable resemblance to those subsequently proposed by Jean Monnet for the European Coal and Steel Community.<sup>23</sup>

When war broke out, drafting schemes for European integration became every British intellectual's favorite pastime.<sup>24</sup> Some of these schemes today seem far-fetched. But political thinkers like Harold J. Laski, G. D. H. Cole, and E. H. Carr were making a serious point that would have to be addressed once the war was over. This point was that dictatorship had thriven in the context of the Depression and the concomitant economic nationalism of the 1930s. If Europe was to avoid a return to fascism in the future, such thinkers reasoned, its countries should make boosting pro-



duction and the welfare of their citizens the centerpiece of their postwar economic strategy. Cooperation in this endeavor, via pan-European institutions, would greatly increase the chances of success.<sup>25</sup> At a time when the Allies, including the United States, were contemplating the “pastoralization” of defeated Germany (resolving the problem of postwar security by depriving Germany of its heavy industrial capacity), this understanding of how Europe would have to be rebuilt was very farsighted.<sup>26</sup>

Similar arguments were being made by the Federal Union movement, an organization started by mostly British academics, thinkers, and churchmen at the beginning of 1939. British intellectuals associated with Federal Union produced pamphlets that enjoyed great intellectual influence and, by the standards of political texts, a very large sale. W. B. Curry’s *The Case for Federal Union* (1939) sold 100,000 copies, while Barbara Wootton’s *Socialism and Federalism* (1941) launched the powerful idea that socialism could only be carried out on a pan-European scale.<sup>27</sup>

The debate in Britain is important because it influenced a generation of continental intellectuals active in the resistance against fascism. Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, the imprisoned antifascist authors of the *Manifesto di Ventotene* (1941), one of the canonical documents of the European integration movement, took the debate in Britain as the starting point for their powerful appeal to the socialist movements of Europe to make the struggle for revolution across Europe and the establishment of a socialist federation of Europe the cardinal purpose of their political action. In the *Manifesto*, a socialist federation was represented as being a moral and historical imperative that even justified the use of dictatorial methods against advocates of a return to the traditional nation states of the pretotalitarian period. After the fall of Benito Mussolini in July 1943, one of the leading components of the partisan movement in Italy, the Partito d’Azione (Action Party), made European unity the core of its political program. Action Party intellectuals were prominent in the Movimento federalista europeo (MFE), which was founded in August 1943 and contributed to the movement’s journal, *L’unità europea*. Italian federalists successfully managed to diffuse their ideas. A pamphlet, *L’Europe de demain*, was smuggled into the rest of occupied Europe in 1944, and a conference of federalists, with delegations from resistance movements across Europe, was held by the MFE in Geneva in May 1944.<sup>28</sup>

By 1946, every country in Western Europe could boast a federalist movement of greater or lesser size—some countries, notably France, had more than one. In April 1947, these bodies federated themselves into the Union Européenne des fédéralistes (UEF). The new association, which had a collective membership of some 150,000 people, declared its purpose was “to work for the creation of a European federation which shall be a constitutive element of a world federation.”<sup>29</sup> As this declaration suggests, the UEF was not without its utopian aspects. Its main goal, however, was

one that inspired intellectuals all over the continent in the early months of the Cold War—the creation of a European “Third Force” that could act as a bridge between Soviet communism and the West European tradition of democratic socialism.<sup>30</sup> Intellectuals argued that a European federation offered the opportunity of building a progressive socialism that would assuage Soviet fears of capitalist aggression and would, over time, lead to totalitarian and federalist forms of socialism, converging into a single democratic model.<sup>31</sup>

Some left-wing intellectuals—the British novelist and political writer George Orwell and Altiero Spinelli being the most famous examples—were less optimistic about relations between a United States of Europe, even one that followed socialist precepts, and Soviet totalitarianism. Spinelli, breaking decisively with the two mass parties of the Italian Left (the Communists and the Socialists), was arguing by 1947 that the Soviet Union regarded Western Europe as a “vital space” that it was hoping to “exploit” economically to relieve the Soviet people’s misery.<sup>32</sup> The United States, by contrast, while it possessed “imperialist temptations and ambitions,” also possessed a “sincere desire” to see Europe emerge as an independent liberal state. Insofar as there was a risk of American hegemony, Spinelli contended on many occasions it came from the shortsighted nationalism of Europe’s leaders, who refused to admit that the day of independent nation-states was over.<sup>33</sup>

Federalist ideas might have remained isolated in an intellectual ghetto had it not been for the intervention of Winston Churchill, the internationally renowned British war leader whose Conservative Party had been defeated in the general elections of July 1945. At the University of Zurich on September 19, 1946, Churchill argued that the countries of Western Europe should “re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can . . . we must build a kind of United States of Europe.” According to Churchill, the rock upon which this new federation should be founded was not Britain—“We British have our Commonwealth of Nations . . . why should there not be a European group which could give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this turbulent and mighty continent”—but a “partnership between France and Germany.” This was the only way, Churchill thought, that France could “recover the moral leadership of Europe.”<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, in May 1947, Churchill became the founder of the United Europe Movement (UEM).<sup>35</sup> Its three thousand members included numerous MPs, especially Conservatives, and many prominent academics, journalists, and clergymen. Relations with the UEF were not easy at first. Whereas the UEF saw European federalism as an opportunity to reassure the Soviets, the UEM regarded it as a way of reinforcing Europe’s ability to resist the encroachments of the USSR. Nevertheless, together with several other influential movements such as the French Council for a United

Europe, the European Parliamentary Union, the Economic League for European Cooperation, and the Christian Democrat *Nouvelles Equipes Internationales*, the two principal associations agreed in December 1947 to form a coordinating committee that would call a “Congress of Europe” at The Hague (Netherlands).<sup>36</sup>

The Congress, which was attended by over 1,200 dignitaries—including seven hundred parliamentary deputies—from every free country in Europe, took place in May 1948 in the aftermath of the Soviet takeover of Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and the ideologically charged elections in Italy in April. In addition to Churchill, the Christian Democrat prime ministers of Italy (Alcide De Gasperi) and France (Georges Bidault) took part, as did such statesmen as Leon Blum, the Socialist prewar premier of the Popular Front government in France; Paul Reynaud, the last premier of France before the Nazi victory; and Paul Van Zeeland, a Princeton-educated economist who was a former premier of Belgium.

The Congress, after an initial address from Churchill, divided into three committees—the Political Committee, chaired by another former French prime minister, Paul Ramadier; the Economic and Social Committee, chaired by Van Zeeland; and the Cultural Committee, chaired by an exiled Spanish liberal, Salvador de Madariaga. These committees drew up three broad resolutions. The Political Committee asserted that it was the “urgent duty” of the nations of Europe to create “an economic and political union” that would “assure security and social progress.” It maintained that the “integration of Germany in a United or Federated Europe” was the only “solution to both the economic and political aspects of the German problem.” Its main practical recommendation was the convening of a “European Assembly,” composed of delegations from the national parliaments, which would act as a constituent assembly for the creation of a federal state in Western Europe. It also proposed that a Commission should draw up a Charter of Human Rights, adherence to which would be a precondition for membership in the European Federation.<sup>37</sup>

The Economic and Social Committee made pragmatic recommendations for economic policy. Trade restrictions of all kinds should be abolished “step by step”; coordinated action should be taken to “pave the way for the free convertibility of currencies”; a common program should be established to develop agriculture; Europe-wide planning was urged for the development of core industries such as coal and electricity generation; employment policy should be coordinated so as to produce full employment. The “mobility of labor” should be promoted to the “maximum possible extent.” In addition, it advised that these measures should be only the prelude to an Economic Union in which capital could move freely, currencies were unified, budgetary and credit policy were centrally coordinated, a full customs union with a common tariff was established, and social legislation was coordinated to common standards.

The greater prosperity engendered by these economic measures was held to be an essential precondition for "the development of a harmonious society in Europe."<sup>38</sup>

The Cultural Committee recommended the creation of a "European Cultural Centre," whose task would be to promote cultural exchanges, promote awareness of European unity, encourage the federation of the continent's universities, and facilitate scientific research into "the condition of twentieth-century man." A "European Institute for Childhood and Youth Questions" was also to be established: one of its tasks, since partially realized in the Erasmus and Socrates programs of the European Union, would have been to "encourage exchanges between the young people of all classes in Europe, by providing finance and accommodation for their study, apprenticeship and travel." Like the Political Committee, the Cultural Committee recommended that a Charter of Human Rights should be drawn up and a European Supreme Court, with supranational jurisdiction, should be established to ensure the Charter's implementation.<sup>39</sup>

The Congress had two main institutional outcomes. In October 1948, a unified "European Movement" was formally inaugurated in the City Hall of Brussels. The new movement's "Presidents of Honor" were Churchill, Blum, De Gasperi, and the prime minister of Belgium, Paul-Henri Spaak. In August 1948, detailed projects for unification were presented to the Permanent Commission of the Western Union.<sup>40</sup>

### **COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS: THE BRITISH VISION**

The Treaty on Western Union (the Brussels Pact) had been signed in Brussels in March 1948 between the governments of Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The treaty, as well as being a military alliance, bound its participants to develop and harmonize the economic recovery of Europe and to raise the standards of living of their populations. The Permanent Commission was supposed to be the forum for such mutual cooperation between governments in the economic field.

The Treaty on Western Union was a far cry from the much greater degree of integration wished for by the European Movement, but its provisions, like the equally intergovernmental structure of the OEEC, accurately reflected how far Britain was prepared to move down the road toward supranational cooperation in the spring of 1948.

British hostility to a federal state in Europe might seem a foregone conclusion. Interestingly, however, Foreign Secretary Bevin himself had been, for much of 1947, intrigued by the notion of a European Customs

Union and was seemingly prepared to acquiesce to the loss of sovereignty such an institution implied. The problem with a customs union was that while greater economic integration in Western Europe would lead to a rationalization of British heavy industry and expand trade and strengthen the continent politically, it would also lead to damaging short-run competition for the iron and steel industry and would end Britain's advantageous trade relationship with the countries of the Commonwealth. A customs union seemed likely, moreover, to lead to a fully fledged economic union governed by supranational institutions. The notion of conferring sovereignty over the economy to an external body was even harder for a socialist government to accept than it would have been for the Conservatives. Labour ministers were in no mood to subordinate their socialist vision for British society to the economic priorities of foreigners.

In December 1947, however, the disastrous outcome of the London meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) placed European cooperation firmly on the agenda. The CFM was the forum through which the United States, the USSR, and Great Britain, together with France and China, should have agreed on a postwar settlement. Its meetings, however, became steadily more acrimonious as mutual perceptions of ideological enmity grew. The London meeting, which was preceded by vituperative Soviet propaganda against the Americans' plans to "enslave" Europe, left free Europe's leaders in no doubt that, as Bevin expressed the situation in a paper entitled "The First Aim of British Foreign Policy" to the Cabinet in January 1948, "We shall be hard put to it to stem further encroachments of the Soviet tide" in the absence of "some form of union in Western Europe, whether of a formal or informal character."<sup>41</sup>

The discussion in the Cabinet of this paper led to Bevin's famous "Western Union" speech to the House of Commons on January 22, 1948, which included the telling remark, "Great Britain cannot stand outside Europe and regard her problems as quite separate from those of her European neighbors." In Europe, this comment, not unreasonably, was taken as a sign that Britain was preparing to throw her prestige behind the concept of European unity. Certainly, it was the decisive impulse that led to the signature of the Brussels Pact.<sup>42</sup>

Britain regarded her promotion of the Western Union as a major development in her foreign policy, but, in fact, her attitude to European integration satisfied neither the Americans nor her European neighbors. British behavior was "a great source of irritation" to the Americans between 1947 and 1951, but there was a limit to how tough America could get with Britain.<sup>43</sup> Britain had taken the lead in the spring of 1948, even before the signature of the Treaty on Western Union, to formalize military cooperation between the United States and Western Europe in a military

alliance. In early 1949, these negotiations, which led to the signature in April 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty, were at a critical stage. American policymakers were afraid that Soviet tanks would roll across the North European plain. Their only ally of any substance was Britain. Article Five of the Treaty committed its member states to regarding an armed attack against any one of them as an attack against them all. In practice, this meant that Britain and the United States were giving a guarantee that they would risk a Third World conflict to defend the Rhine.

With their fellow Europeans, the British could be more obdurate. Britain tried to restrain all attempts to implement the resolutions agreed at the Congress of Europe. The British were reluctant to go further than the creation of a council of European governments without any form of parliamentary supervision. In January 1949, however, Bevin agreed to a compromise by which decision-making power was to be reserved for a Committee of Ministers (as it was named), but an assembly with consultative powers was to be created in tandem. Five nations who had not signed the Brussels Pact—Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden—were invited to join the new “Council of Europe.”<sup>44</sup> This invitation, together with Italy’s parallel signature of the North Atlantic Treaty, marked the end of Italy’s postwar isolation. Italy’s foreign minister, Count Carlo Sforza, immediately pressed the other nations to adopt a more “federal” conception of the Council of Europe. Italy even recommended that the new body be called the “European Union.” Bevin swatted aside Sforza’s bumptious diplomacy without difficulty.<sup>45</sup> The Treaty of St. James Palace (London, May 15, 1949) instituting the Council of Europe was rigorously intergovernmental in scope.

The Council’s purpose was to constitute a “closer unity” between the member states through joint action in economic, social, scientific, judicial, and administrative fields. Its main institutions, the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly, were both consultative in character. The Committee of Ministers, in which each country possessed one vote and in which votes required unanimity, was a forum for member states to debate measures proposed by the member states or the assembly, not an executive committee whose decisions were binding upon governments. The Committee had the power only to recommend measures to the governments of the member states. The Consultative Assembly, meanwhile, was able to propose items for debate by the Ministerial committee if they were passed by a two-thirds majority, but it had no legislative power whatever. Paul-Henri Spaak, who was elected first president of the Assembly on August 10, 1949, later said of the Ministerial committee in particular, “Of all the international bodies I have known, I have never found any more timorous or more ineffectual.”<sup>46</sup>

Yet the Assembly opened its first session in Strasbourg amid scenes of great enthusiasm for European unity. The Assembly seized the initiative by proposing a "supranational political organization" for Western Europe; Britain and the Nordic states vetoed this idea in the Committee.

Another initiative launched by the European Movement in July 1949 had more success. This was the submission of a draft European Convention on Human Rights to the Council. After just over a year's debate and redrafting, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was signed in Rome on November 4, 1950, by thirteen European states or territories: Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Saarland, Turkey, the United Kingdom (which, however, specifically refused to ratify two clauses of the treaty that were particularly invasive of national sovereignty), and West Germany. Greece and Sweden signed a few weeks later.

The Charter guaranteed the traditional liberal freedoms of person, property, and conscience: it did not include specific guarantees for social rights such as the right to work. To evaluate and adjudicate if breaches of the Convention had occurred, the document created two institutions: the Commission and the Court of Human Rights. The Commission's task was to screen would-be cases according to strict criteria; the Court then judged on the merits of the case. Article 53 of the Convention committed the signatories to the Convention to "abide by the decision of the Court," although no concrete sanctions could be applied in the event of noncompliance. European states have generally tried very hard not to be cited before the Court in the postwar years. The Court's sentences have carried an explicit moral condemnation that democracies have wished to avoid.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, by early 1950, it was evident that hopes of leaping to a federal state in a single bound had fallen at the first fence. There would be no constitutional convention to found a "European Union." To this extent, the British, with the help of the Scandinavians and the tacit acquiescence of other important states such as France, had imposed their vision of ad hoc cooperation between governments.

Plans for greater European unity were, however, soon to find a new outlet in the functional integration of economic sectors such as coal and steel. Important intellectuals such as E. H. Carr, from 1941 to 1946 the deputy editor of *The Times*, had been advocating this approach since 1942. Yet it was not merely, or even mainly, enthusiasm for greater European unity that motivated this new approach. The growing economic strength and political independence of West Germany was the decisive factor that drove the nations of Western Europe to delegate the management of heavy industry to pan-European institutions.

## THE GERMAN QUESTION AND THE SCHUMAN PLAN

No question troubled postwar statesmen more than how Germany should be governed. In 1945, Germany was divided into four zones by the Allied powers. Britain occupied the northwest part of the country, a zone that included the large cities of Cologne and Hamburg and the Ruhr industrial belt. The United States administered the center-south, including Frankfurt-am-Main and Munich. The French occupied the Black Forest region and the Rhineland, as well as the Saarland, while the Russians occupied Prussia and Saxony. Austria was similarly divided between the powers until the 1955 State Treaty. From the point of view of administration, Berlin (and Vienna) was a miniature replica of the country as a whole.

At the Potsdam conference (July–August 1945), the “big three” powers reached broad agreement on how to treat defeated Germany pending a final treaty of peace. They decided that Germany should be subjected to “denazification, demilitarization, democratization, decentralization and decartelization.”<sup>48</sup> Germany was to be regarded as a single economic entity, governed by an Allied Control Commission in which each of the three powers, plus France, would possess a veto. The Allies would establish democratically elected governments in the zones they controlled. The thorny issue of reparations—the Russians had already looted eastern Germany of much of its industrial plant and machinery by August 1945—was resolved by allowing each power to take industrial equipment from the zone it occupied. The Soviet Union would receive additional reparations from the heavily industrialized British zone and from the zone controlled by the Americans. In return, the USSR promised to divert foodstuffs from its zone to feed the large cities in the West.

This broad deal never resulted in a final peace treaty. Neither Britain and the United States nor the USSR was able to keep its word. The Soviet Union obstructed democratic competition in its zone and also reneged on its promised shipments of agricultural produce to the West. Britain and the United States responded by suspending shipments of industrial plant to the USSR in the spring of 1946. So long as the shipments continued, the western zones of Germany, particularly the densely populated industrial area controlled by the British, could not resume production at a high enough level to buy food to feed themselves and had to rely on the charity of the occupying authorities. This was costly enough for the United States, but for war-enfeebled Britain it was an impossible burden. In the winter of 1946 to 1947, British rations were cut to feed the people of Germany—hardly a popular move so soon after the end of the war. In January 1947, Britain and the United States merged their zones to create “Bizonia,” which was organized as a self-governing federal state under the supervision of the occupying authorities. To the Soviet



Union it must have looked as if the “capitalist” powers were rebuilding Germany against her.

These fears provided the background to the London Council of Foreign Ministers in November–December 1947 mentioned above. After the breakdown of the London talks, the Cold War began in earnest. The Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the signature of the Brussels Pact, and the ideologically charged April 1948 elections in Italy followed in swift succession. In this context, consolidating the West’s hold on western Germany became a strategic imperative. The United States extended Marshall Plan aid to Germany and called for the formation of a West German government (an idea that was greeted with great caution by the Germans themselves, who feared—rightly—that it would lead to the dismemberment of their nation). In June 1948, currency unification of the three western zones took place, and the Deutsche Mark (DM) was introduced. The USSR responded by cutting off road, rail, and river transport to Berlin. Only the miraculous Anglo-American airlift kept two million Berliners alive over the following winter. By the time the Soviet blockade was called off in May 1949, some 277,000 flights had been made and some 2.4 million tons of cargo delivered.<sup>49</sup>

France acquiesced in Anglo-American policy toward Germany from June 1948 onward largely because she had no choice. America had decided that European recovery and security required a strong Germany. France’s agreement nevertheless marked a drastic U-turn in her foreign policy. After Potsdam, successive French governments had argued for the independence of the Rhineland from the rest of Germany (which would have provided France with a useful buffer against the revival of a strong Germany), for the internationalization of the Ruhr, and for the diversion of German coal and steel production to the French economy. But the events of the spring of 1948 made French statesmen aware that the main military danger to France was presented by the USSR, not Germany. France therefore needed U.S. aid, and that was not guaranteed unless France cooperated with the nascent West German political authorities. As the French statesman Georges Bidault, with a copious spoonful of rhetoric to help the medicine go down, told a disgruntled French National Assembly on June 11, 1948:

We must build up Europe, and we must find some place in it for Germany. We will do all we can to create a united Europe, for this is the only way we can reconcile the countries of Europe. I wish to say that France would be wise to reconcile itself eventually with the presence of Germany in Europe and the free world, for no other reconciliation would be possible.<sup>50</sup>

The price for French acquiescence was a share in the direction of the Ruhr coalfield. Before 1939, a cartel of German producers had prevented

France from buying the coal she needed to fuel her own steel industry. After the collapse of the CFM in London, France battled hard in negotiations between the three Western Allies on the future of West Germany to ensure that “access to the coal, coke and steel of the Ruhr, which was previously subject to the exclusive control of Germany, [should] be in the future guaranteed without discrimination to the countries of Europe cooperating in the common good.”<sup>51</sup>

To this end, France urged the establishment of an “International Authority” for the Ruhr. But this solution was unpopular three times over. The French were unsatisfied with the substantive powers accorded to the Authority to manage German heavy industry directly; the Americans doubted its necessity; and the Germans resented the restriction of their national sovereignty over industrial policy.<sup>52</sup> The Authority came into being in December 1948, but it was too weak to plan or control the growth of German industrial production. West German steel production, which had been restricted to less than three million metric tons in 1947 (France produced nearly six million), surged to over nine million tons in 1949 (the same as France). In 1950, Germany produced twelve million tons; France, less than nine million.<sup>53</sup> The *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) that would return Germany to its position as the economic powerhouse of Europe had begun.

Contemporaneously, West Germany achieved provisional nationhood. The Basic Law (Constitution) was adopted in May 1949, and the first West German elections took place in August of that year, resulting in a narrow victory for the Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU) who took 139 seats in the Bundestag to the 131 of the Social Democrats (SPD). The CDU formed a coalition government with the Liberals (FDP) and the nationalist “German Party.”

The chancellor of the new German state was Adenauer, who had emerged as the leader of the CDU. A veteran politician from the Rhineland (he was almost seventy-four when he took office), Adenauer was convinced of the need for a Franco-German rapprochement: indeed, he had supported the creation of a customs union between the two countries as long ago as 1925. In two interviews with an American journalist in March 1950, Adenauer openly proposed a Franco-German economic union, with a legislature drawn from the two countries’ parliaments and an executive “organ” responsible to the legislature. Europe, Adenauer argued, should remember how the 1834 Zollverein customs union had been the prelude to German unification.<sup>54</sup>

The Americans were also pressing for improved Franco-German relations. American efforts to assist Europe intensified in the wake of the Berlin crisis. Marshall Plan aid for April 1949 to June 1950 was over \$5 billion; in September 1949, Congress approved the Military Assistance Act

and doled out a further \$1 billion in military aid to Europe. The quid pro quo for this largesse was the reintegration of Germany into Western Europe. In the fall of 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson urged France to normalize relations with West Germany by the spring of 1950.<sup>55</sup> Improving relations with Germany became an "obsession" for French foreign minister Robert Schuman, who, as a native of Lorraine, an area of France occupied by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, had only become a French citizen in 1919 at the age of thirty-two.<sup>56</sup>

Schuman gave his name to an initiative at the beginning of May 1950 that has been called "one of the key moments of the century": the plan for the creation of a coal and steel community between France and Germany.<sup>57</sup> This plan was the brainchild of Jean Monnet, an administrator from a brandy-making family in the southern town of Cognac who had been an important figure in the League of Nations and possessed a long list of influential American friends as a result of his wartime service in Washington. Monnet became an influential adviser to President Roosevelt and consequently knew everybody worth knowing in the Truman administration. In 1946, Monnet, as the quintessential planner, was placed in charge of the French five-year modernization and reconstruction effort. The idea of the coal and steel community bore his trademark preference for the technocratic and supranational resolution of complex political issues. Monnet approached Schuman in April 1950 proposing that the French and German coal and steel industries should be subjected to a supranational "High Authority" with sovereign powers to plan and develop economic activity. Schuman agreed, and Monnet and his advisers drew up the text of the declaration, announcing the plan in conditions of great secrecy.<sup>58</sup> Adenauer and the German government were told only on the eve of the plan's announcement through a personal letter from Schuman to the German chancellor, hand-delivered by a senior French foreign ministry official, that made explicit reference to Adenauer's March interviews.<sup>59</sup> The Americans were informed only on May 7, 1950, when Acheson visited Paris. The American secretary of state recorded his reactions in one of his memoirs:

After a few words of greeting . . . Schuman began to expound what later became known as the "Schuman plan," so breath-taking a step towards the unification of Europe that at first I did not grasp it. . . . Schuman implored us to treat what he was about to tell us in the greatest of confidence, not to speak to any of our colleagues about it, not to send cables, or to have memoranda transcribed. For he had discussed the proposal only with the Premier (Bidault) and one or two members of the Cabinet. The next step would be to consult the whole Cabinet, and, if it approved, then to make some public statement . . . after that, France's neighbors would be approached.<sup>60</sup>

Secrecy was necessary. French politics was unsettled, and untimely disclosure might have set off a damaging political crisis. Even more important, Schuman and Monnet were determined that the British would not sabotage the supranational dimension of the scheme. Only countries that acknowledged the principle of supranational government would be allowed to participate in the detailed negotiations. Their insistence on this point soothed the Americans' disappointment at being excluded from the plan's formulation. John Foster Dulles, a committed supporter of European unity who would become secretary of state during the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, described Schuman's initiative as "brilliantly creative"; President Truman himself lauded the plan as an "act of constructive statesmanship."<sup>61</sup> This was despite the fact that many American industrialists were worried that the putative community might be a protectionist steel cartel under another name.

On May 9, 1950, Schuman made his famous declaration. In addition to its historic proposal to "place the whole of Franco-German coal and steel production . . . under a common 'High Authority' within the framework of an organization open to participation by the other countries of Europe," Schuman's speech implied a breach with the federalist approach. In his view, Europe should advance step-by-step through economic integration: "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single, general plan. It will be built through concrete achievements, which first create a *de facto* solidarity." A "wider and deeper community" would emerge once economies were more fully integrated: action on the "limited but decisive point" of coal and steel production was the best starting point since "the pooling of coal and steel production" would ensure that "any war between France and Germany" was "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible."<sup>62</sup>

Beneath the high moral tone of the declaration, French national interest was alive and well. Among other things, the declaration insisted that "the task" of the High Authority would be to secure "the supply of coal and steel on identical terms to the French and German markets, as well as the markets of the other member countries." Monnet argued that the Americans were intent on building up Germany as an ally in the Cold War. Sooner or later German industrial competition would present France with the grim choice of protecting its steel industry or accepting German superiority in this field. Monnet favored making a deal with West Germany while she was still weak and using the proposed High Authority to ensure that there was a balanced industrial relationship between the two countries.<sup>63</sup>

According to Adenauer's most comprehensive biographer, the chancellor was initially suspicious of French motives. Monnet was the personification of international cooperation against Germany in the two wars. Might not the Schuman Plan be a subtle plot to retard German economic growth, rather than a mutually beneficial opportunity?<sup>64</sup> Once the two

men had met each other on May 23, suspicion disappeared. In their talks, Adenauer approved Monnet's insistence that nations should adhere to the plan on the basis of what Schuman had called "a leap in the dark" during questioning on May 9. That is to say, to have a place at the negotiating table, all would-be members of the proposed community would have to accept the role of the High Authority in advance.

It was precisely this point, as Monnet had foreseen, that was the sticking point for the British. The Schuman Plan placed before Britain a tricky dilemma. In 1950, Britain was still the largest producer of both coal and steel in Western Europe. If Britain stayed out of the Community, her coal and steel would inevitably be excluded from the markets of Western Europe. On the other hand, if she entered the Community, her coal and steel industries would feel the full brunt of low-wage competition from the continent. The mere fact of her joining, moreover, would signal to the world that Britain was a diminished force; that she was no longer an imperial power, but merely first among equals in Western Europe.

As so often, purely contingent factors played a role. Bevin and the treasury minister, Sir Stafford Cripps—the key ministers, and the two most considerable figures in the government—were both critically ill (both died within a few months of the Schuman announcement), but Clement Attlee, the premier, was reluctant to substitute them. Negotiations with Monnet were thus carried on throughout May 1950 by senior civil servants, at least one of whom, Roger Makins, has since been anachronistically described as a "rabid Euro-sceptic."<sup>65</sup> Monnet himself found the British officials to be viscerally anti-European. In his memoirs, he noted that the British seemed to have no confidence in the ability of the continental countries to resist communism. Certainly, they were not prepared to make the "leap in the dark" required of them.<sup>66</sup>

Two leading civil servants, Sir Edward Bridges (permanent secretary to the Treasury) and Sir William Strang (permanent secretary at the Foreign Office) eventually reported to Attlee that agreement was impossible on Monnet's terms, and on June 3, 1950, the Cabinet, presided over by the deputy prime minister, Herbert Morrison, concurred. Morrison's own contribution to the debate over the Schuman Plan was notoriously to say: "It's no good. We can't do it. The Durham miners would never wear it."<sup>67</sup>

In the subsequent Commons debate on June 26–27, 1950, Attlee stated that the British government could not accept the principle that the most vital economic forces of the country should be transferred to "an irresponsible body that is appointed by no-one and responsible to no-one."<sup>68</sup> Few MPs dissented from the government's view that staying out was the wisest course of action. A rare exception was a Conservative making his maiden speech—Edward Heath, the man who would eventually take Britain into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973.

Attlee's comment was in fact a reasonable objection to the Schuman Plan as it was originally formulated. If, however, Britain had yielded on the issue of the High Authority, she might have inserted safeguards into the treaty, as well as obtaining a measure of protection for her coal and steel industries. This is exactly what the Dutch and Italian governments did, and Britain, who would have been offering to open her massive coal and steel industry to competition, would have been in a far stronger position to get its own way than either country.

Edmund Dell, a former Labour minister turned historian, regards Britain's refusal to join the negotiations as a disastrous misjudgment—"the British abdication of leadership in Europe." In Dell's opinion, negotiations with Monnet were handled astonishingly badly: "Unprepared officials led unprepared ministers."<sup>69</sup> In his view—and after reading his closely researched account, it is difficult to disagree—the top civil servants convinced themselves that the plan was unacceptable both on grounds of national principle and of feasibility, and they briefed an exhausted government to that effect. Yet even without the historian's privileged vantage point, it ought to have been obvious that there were powerful forces tending to the scheme's success. The plan removed the main cause of friction between Germany and France, had won the immediate and enthusiastic support of the Americans, enlarged the domestic market for the Benelux countries, and was Germany and Italy's return ticket to the society of civilized nations.

But the problem was not just abstract issues of sovereignty, or the plan's likelihood of economic success. Britain's politicians, as Morrison's remark hints, had to take public opinion into account. *The Daily Express*, then Britain's most influential mass circulation newspaper, argued on May 11, 1950, that the Schuman Plan was "a deliberate and concerted attempt to oblige us to accept the United States of Europe"—rhetoric that has a familiar ring to anybody who has lived through the heart searching provoked in Britain by the Treaty on European Union.

But even without a hostile press baying against any concession to the Europeans, it seems unlikely that a Labour government would have surrendered even partial control over the recently nationalized coal and steel industries to a High Authority nominated by largely Christian Democratic governments. Labour believed it was in politics to abolish capitalism, not to make capitalism work better. With what *The Economist* called the Labour Party's "almost phenomenal gift for bad timing"—if bad timing it was—the Labour Party published, in mid-June 1950, its official statement of policy on the European question, a pamphlet called *European Unity*.<sup>70</sup> This document unambiguously asserted that Britain would only cooperate in schemes of European unification with countries that had adopted the key socialist policies of public ownership, full employment, and

economic planning. Socialism came first in the order of values; Europe a poor second. Besides, the pamphlet added:

In every respect except distance we in Britain are closer to our kinsmen in Australia and New Zealand on the far side of the world than we are to Europe. We are closer in language and origins, in social habits and institutions, in political outlook and economic interest. The economies of the Commonwealth countries are complementary to that of Britain to a degree which those of Western Europe could never equal.<sup>71</sup>

Robert Marjolin—who had an excellent vantage point—insisted in his memoirs that the Europeans would have gone “much further in the direction wanted by the Americans had it not been for the stubborn resistance of the British to the idea of committing themselves irrevocably to the Continent.”<sup>72</sup> At the very least, a customs union would have been formed. Given the wide agreement on economic issues reached at the Congress of Europe and the enthusiasm generated by the Schuman Plan, this assessment seems plausible. But though Britain had the power to obstruct the path of European integration, she was too much in debt to the United States to insist on having a free hand in Western Europe. Had Britain emerged from the war with a booming economy and her overseas investments intact, Britain would have taken the leadership of Europe by default. The other European countries would have looked to her for loans and export markets. But by 1950 Britain was not strong enough to overcome the profound belief of both the European political class and the Washington elite that—in Schuman’s words—*le morcellement de l’Europe est devenu un absurde anachronisme*.<sup>73</sup>

This weakness became crucial in May 1950. The Schuman Plan exposed the limitations of British power. Unlike the Council of Europe, it was a concrete initiative that made sound economic and political sense. The national interests of the United States, France, and West Germany, and the supranationalist instincts of their chief policymakers coincided. The Labour Party’s determination not to compromise its socialist program, the ingrained mentalities of upper officialdom, deep fear of economic competition, and a misplaced sense of grandeur prevented Britain from seeing this critical fact. As Diane Kunz argues, Britain’s leaders “persisted in seeing Britain lodged within three interlocking circles: with the Continent, with the Empire and Commonwealth, and with the United States. To join a European union would be to favor one relationship to the detriment of others.”<sup>74</sup>

The result of this understanding of Britain’s place in the world was to ensure that British national influence declined. The experienced American policymaker George W. Ball, a close friend and collaborator of Jean Monnet, was surely right when he said, “Had Britain embraced

the original Schuman proposal, it could have dominated the evolution not merely of the Coal and Steel Community, but also of the European Economic Community.”<sup>75</sup> In the following two decades, France and West Germany, putting aside their secular rivalry, emerged as Britain’s equals, or even superiors. Britain, after her refusal to make the “leap in the dark,” carped from the sidelines and was forced to watch as her increasingly cooperative neighbors superseded her in economic performance and matched her in international prestige.

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