

# Alternative to "Pre-Medieval Barbarism"

*The following dissertation on the trade-union support of the underlying idea of the Schuman Plan was written by Otto Stolz, assistant chief editor of "Welt der Arbeit" (World of Labor), journal of the German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB), in its May 11 issue and distributed by the DGB press bureau.*

**I**N THE COURSE OF HISTORY, there are situations which compel those who maintain a claim to significant participation in the direction of events to make decisions. The economic and political realities resulting from the second World War, which no one today can ignore, has led all understanding and far-thinking persons in Europe to the conclusion that the fall of the continent and the impoverishment of countless millions of persons as well as reversion to a condition of pre-medieval barbarism can be prevented only if nations which have become distant from one another and which had been hostile due partly to historical developments can be united. This demand for a united Europe acquires dramatic impressiveness in view of the prevented enslavement, prevented with many sacrifices, of the continent by Fascism and Nazism and the overshadowing threat at this time by Bolshevism.

Between this goal and its achievement, however, there is a long road whose greatest possible shortening has become vital to all those who call themselves Europeans. All previous efforts to establish this unity by political means alone have collapsed against the economic reality. Another question naturally is that politically an atmosphere must be created which is the main condition for cooperation in all fields. In other words, this means the recognition of political equality.

In any case, cooperation and unity in the economic sphere must precede the political. This compelling idea gave rise to the idea of the Schuman Plan. Because the German trade unions recognized the historic significance, in the true sense of the word, of this plan for future development, they have endorsed the basic idea and have participated in its further development. Their efforts were always directed toward providing a firm and stable foundation for this first step toward European cooperation. For they have always clearly understood that the Schuman Plan alone cannot be a solution to European economic and political problems and that it represents only a stage to further measures. It is important, precisely for this reason, that those prerequisites be created for Germany, without whose participation any European unification would be incomplete, which would do justice to the greatness of the idea as well as to the risks which are undoubtedly connected with it.

**I**T CANNOT BE IGNORED that occupation law is a serious obstacle to an all-European development in that the basic condition for European cooperation, namely, the equality of all participants, is violated. European economic cooperation can be effective only if the German economy is freed from all those restrictions imposed upon it by the Occupation Powers. Above all, this includes those in the field of steel production and the still uneffected reorganization of the iron and steel-producing industry under Allied Law No. 27 which should be carried out in the spirit expressed in the articles of the Schuman Plan. This also includes a regulation for coal marketing which is important not only for Germany but for all countries participating in the Schuman Plan, and concerning which far-reaching agreement was achieved in

Paris between German and French representatives. Those who believed it necessary to oppose this agreement on the basis of occupation law have done the Schuman Plan an ill service.

The Schuman Plan cannot and will not be more than a first step. Because this is the case, it can be judged only with a view to the main trend of future developments. Naturally, European economic unity has not been established by an agreement among six states or nations on a common economy in an important field. But after so much fruitless talk which led innumerable persons to despair of European unity ever becoming a reality, the Schuman Plan represents a practical beginning which is psychologically so very important.

There can be no doubt that the Schuman Plan in its present form has defects. All participants recognized without reservation that some important provisions could still be improved substantially at the last hour due to the participation of the German trade union representatives. The German trade unions entered into the question of the Schuman Plan with a sense of responsibility arising from their duty to safeguard peace in Europe and to raise the living standard of the working man in Germany to that level which has already been achieved often outside of Europe. For that is the serious economic background of the Schuman Plan: Even in 1900, an American worker produced in one hour as much as his European colleague. Productivity in Europe and America were then equal. Today, however, productivity in America is three to four times higher than in Europe. The consequences of two ruinous wars have thrown Europe back. More productivity, however, means a higher standard of living. Both can no longer be achieved under national economies in Europe. There can no longer be any doubt on this point after the experiences of the last decades.

**T**HE GERMAN WORKERS have correctly posed the anxious question as to whether for them the Schuman Plan might have, as an immediate consequence, unemployment and misery. Undoubtedly, risks are connected with this great economic plan. To reduce them to a minimum has been the constant effort of the German trade unions, as is expressed in the resolution of the executive council. The equally serious and important question, however, arises as to what is to happen if the effort for European economic cooperation fails. In that event, even the power of the German trade unions would be insufficient to protect employed persons in Germany from the deepest suffering.

Ratification of the Schuman Plan is the responsibility of the parliaments of the participating countries. They will have to determine whether the sacrifices which the Schuman Plan represents for all participants stand in proper relation to the prospects which it will open up in accordance with the basic idea of its creators.

Europe has reached a historic point in its development. If chaos and misery are to be prevented, it is necessary that, in all countries, prejudices be given up, that easy egotistical successes presented by the political power position be renounced, that the reconstruction of a new Europe is begun resolutely, that its bloody and tragic past is forgotten, and that all thoughts and actions are directed to the future. If it is not pervaded by this spirit, then the Schuman Plan will also be nothing more than another vain effort to prevent the evil which threatens us all.

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