

INTERVIEW WITH M. JEAN MONNET,  
PRESIDENT OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE FOR THE  
UNITED STATES OF EUROPE

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Question: M. Monnet, public opinion throughout the world recognizes you as one of the Founding Fathers of the movement for a united Europe. You were behind ECSC, the European army, Euratom, the Common Market, the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, in a word all, or almost all, the initiatives which have enabled the ideal of a more closely united Europe to assert itself. The breakdown of negotiations on British accession to the Common Market has caused a crisis in Europe. What is your opinion on it?

Answer: I think that this crisis is a crisis of confidence: confidence has been shaken in the power to overcome together the difficulties in the way towards the common objective - a united Europe.

Since 1950 the six countries of the European Communities have undertaken to approach their economic problems as common European problems and not, as they did in the past, from the purely national angle. To solve these problems they have adopted a new method of community action; they accept the same rules and have established common institutions: the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Court of Justice.

This is the beginning of the future federation of Europe.

The common rules and institutions make for the elimination of that attitude of superiority and domination which almost led the European countries to their downfall.

After more than ten years of hesitation and sometimes of opposition, Britain asked to share in the European Community on an equal footing and accepted the Rome Treaty.

Negotiations began and took their course. This was an historic moment in the transformation of the world. And then, suddenly, the negotiations between the Six and Britain were suspended.

This brought a crisis in Europe. Confidence in common action is shaken, for such confidence requires common discussion; a unilateral decision without discussion between the Six brings back an old and forgotten atmosphere, an atmosphere of doubt and suspicion.

Can the problems now continue to be discussed and dealt with as problems common to the Six? That is the question which many people are asking in the Community and throughout the world. That is the doubt which has crept into people's minds and which is creating this crisis of confidence.

Question: How do you explain, M. Monnet, that the concerted European action which you described as being the method for organizing Europe should have broken down on such an important question?

Answer: This common European method did not break down for the good reason that it was not applied in the negotiations with Great Britain.

This method, which has grown up since 1950, has become a permanent dialogue between a European body responsible for proposing solutions to common problems and the national Governments which express national points of view.

The European Commission's proposals lead to Community decisions in the Council of Ministers according to the rules and the spirit of the Treaty of Rome.

The European method would have enabled the institution to apply to the settlement with Britain the overall view which makes it possible to solve problems between the Six. But the negotiations were conducted on the old inter-governmental lines with the result we have seen.

Question: Do you think that despite this faulty procedure the negotiations could have succeeded?

Answer: Certainly they could have succeeded. The Common Market Commission's report to the European Parliament on the state of negotiations with the United Kingdom brings out the fact that the agreements reached between the Six and Great Britain implied a far-reaching change in the traditional British attitude. Great Britain had in fact agreed that in future all economic decisions should no longer be a matter for herself alone but should be Community decisions, and that they would be taken by majority with a weighting of votes which placed Great Britain on an equal footing with Germany, France and Italy.

There were certain points outstanding, but they were mainly connected with matters on which the Six had not yet agreed among themselves, and which are still unresolved today.

Question: For your part are you sure that Great Britain is ripe, as they say, for entry into Europe?

Answer: Let me ask you who is ripe for exclusively Community action? If we look around us we see that all the nations of the European Community, France, Germany, Italy, Benelux are simultaneously pursuing national policies and European policies. Nevertheless the European field is gradually widening because these countries realize that concerted action is in their interest and consequently all accept the same rules and the same institutions.

By asking to join the Common Market, England shows that she is prepared to do now what we began doing twelve years ago.

When European integration began in 1950 the Six were far from desiring or agreeing to all that has been done since.

I have no doubt that if Great Britain had come into the Community on the same terms as the other member countries, subject to the same rules, participating in the same institutions and sharing the same common interests, her economic and political "europeanization", like our own moreover, would not only have continued but would have been consolidated.

Question: How, then, are we to break this deadlock caused by lack of confidence?

Answer: Our countries must jointly deal with their economic problems by the European methods they have evolved since 1950.

We must also remember that Europe has grown bigger and that we cannot handle our affairs as if the Six were alone in the world.

We must continue to carry out all the decisions taken in the Common Market; the institutions must go on functioning, the association of the Common Market with Africa must be renewed. European economic integration must be pressed forward by working out common policies in a number of fields, including agriculture and monetary matters, and at the same time we must go ahead with negotiations with the United States concerning the Trade Expansion Act.

If all this is done in such a way as to facilitate a resumption of negotiations with Great Britain, it will alter the present situation. Confidence will return and it will again be possible to discuss our problems as problems common to the Six, in accordance with common rules and in the common institutions. Economic talks with the United States will make us realize that Europe has grown bigger and is not wrapped up in itself.

Question: What do you think of the present talks on common defense?

Answer: It is difficult to see how the peoples of Europe can embark on a common economic future without at the same time embarking on a common political future - which necessarily means common defense. Britain is part of Europe and it goes without saying that she must take part in the common defense needed to maintain the balance and the peace of the world.

But, to have European defense, we need the participation of the United States. If that indispensable participation is to rest on a firm foundation Europe and the United States must become equal partners.

Europe and the United States are inevitably bound together, because we have a common civilization and the purpose of defense is to preserve that civilization.

I would recall what the Action Committee for the United States of Europe said in its declaration of June 26, 1962: "The partnership between America and a united Europe must be a relationship of two separate but equally powerful entities, each bearing its share of common responsibilities in the world. This partnership is natural and inevitable because the peoples of Europe and America share the same civilization based on freedom, and conduct their public life in accordance with common democratic principles."

This equal partnership must also apply to the responsibilities of common defense. It requires, among other things, the organization of a European atomic force including Britain and in partnership with the United States.

Question: In order to accomplish this objective political union must be brought about in Europe. How can this be done?

Answer: As the common interest broadens, political unity will tend to develop, and we can be quite certain that as soon as all the Community countries and Great Britain see their interests in the same light, they will speak with the same voice in political matters. This is necessarily a slow process. But the circumstances are pressing and we must quickly begin and go ahead with European political integration if we are to achieve it at all.

The pace and the methods need not be the same as for economic integration, but if political integration is to be a reality it must provide, among other things, for majority decisions taken in the common interest.

The democratic unification of Europe has suffered a set-back by the interruption of the negotiations with Great Britain. But I think that we have now reached a stage where things can no longer be left entirely to the Governments. The peoples must have a direct share in the building of Europe.

Question: You have always maintained that there could be no lasting peace between the West and the USSR unless western Europe was firmly united and linked in equal partnership with the United States. I should like you to explain this to our readers.

Answer: This broad association of the Free World must be based on a united Europe including Britain on the one hand and the United States on the other. I think that western unity, founded upon an equal partnership between Europe and the United States, will lead to peace.

I am convinced that the USSR is just as anxious to avoid war as is the West. But we should remove the temptation and the danger on both sides. To that end we need an agreement, an agreement leading to disarmament. There will be no such agreement until the Russians are convinced that the union of the West is irrevocable. So long as the West gives the impression that it can be divided, the USSR, which still believes that it can upset the world equilibrium, will not be inclined to conclude agreements.

For that reason I believe that there is no more serious or more dangerous threat to world peace than the division of the West over its vital aims: the unity of Europe and the establishment of an equal partnership with the United States.