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Schuman's Europe : his frame of reference

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Summary

The thesis *Schuman's Europe; his frame of reference* by Margriet Krijtenburg, is about Robert Schuman, Founding Father of the European Union, and his thoughts about European unification. The thesis makes clear that it was Schuman and not Jean Monnet, as is often believed, who can be considered the principal architect of the Schuman Declaration. The study of Schuman's lifetime and thoughts is important for a proper understanding of the European unification and its *raison d'être*. His background, personality, intellectual and political circumstances are therefore studied for as far as they are relevant to the framing of the Schuman Declaration, to a proper understanding of the European unification as such and to elucidating Schuman's frame of reference for European unification.

Although Schuman was born in Luxembourg, he inherited his father's attachment and sense of belonging to Lorraine. He therefore felt his roots to be in the turbulent Franco-German border region of Lorraine, which was eagerly desired by the two archenemies France and Germany. Schuman was familiar with the hardships that living in this area brought with it, as well as with the German and French mentalities that mingled in this territory which condensed a large part of western European history.

The Catholic faith and loyalty to Rome, which characterized the people of the region, was embodied by Robert Schuman, who himself was raised a Catholic and inherited his mother's strong faith. The fact that during his studies in Germany he became a lifelong member of the Catholic Student Union *Unitas* and of the *Görres-Gesellschaft*, which wanted Catholicism to have its place in the scientific world, as well as the fact that Schuman was a member of Catholic intellectual circles, confirmed that he acknowledged the compatibility of faith and reason.

Another confirmation of his attachment to Lorraine is that Schuman decided to settle down in Metz, Lorraine, once he had finished his studies in German civil law. He soon became a highly esteemed lawyer, who went for daily Mass, was faithful to the teachings of the Church and became an expert in Thomism. He accepted his appointment as head of the Catholic youth organizations by the bishop of Metz, and was also involved in other Catholic organizations and gatherings until his death.

During the First World War Schuman was not called to the army. After that war, Lorraine became a part of France again, a fact which he applauded, but which also meant that he had to familiarize himself with French law, as he held a doctorate in German civil law.

The people of Lorraine continually re-elected Schuman from 1919 onwards as representative of their region in the French National Assembly, with the exception of the period he occupied posts as (Prime) Minister. The 'Lex Schuman', a law introduced by Schuman that aligned the interests of the Central Administration and of the region of Alsace-Lorraine right after the First World War, already reflected his reconciliatory attitude and the unique way in which he solved politically sensitive issues. It expressed the desire and ability to reconcile interests, people and even countries that originally were inimical or opposed to reconciliation. This attitude was also perfectly in line with, and could even be called an expression of, Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of political synergy.

The intellectual climate that surrounded Schuman and which also emphasized, like Schuman, the crucial role of Christianity in the re-building of Europe, was full of thoughts on reconciliation and the unification of Europe. Julien Benda, Christopher Dawson, Karl Jaspers, Romano Guardini, Pope Pius XII, T.S. Eliot and Jacques Maritain all explicitly stressed the important role of Christianity in

rebuilding Europe. They all rejected the ideology of Nazism. All of them, except for Julien Benda, as well as De Rougemont and Brugmans highlighted the pivotal role of the individual and his transcendence in all economic, political and social aspects of society for now and for the future. Both De Rougemont and Brugmans advocated a federalist approach in every area, and as soon as possible. Brugmans also spoke, like Schuman, about the need for unification between Western and Eastern Europe. He mentioned as well the need to come to a cooperation of France and Germany in the fields of coal and steel.

All of these thinkers spoke directly or indirectly about the need for a moral order, which should imbue the political, economic and social order. This moral order is based on Christianity. Dawson, Pius XII and Maritain, a neoThomist, argued explicitly that faith sheds light on reason. Maritain called for integrity and for man's need to heed his call to sanctity in the middle of the world. He emphasized the need for religious freedom and the superiority of the individual to the political community. Maritain, like Pius XII, underlined the importance of natural law common to all men, which he regarded as the source of human rights. He suggested a democratic political way of governing based on a Christian foundation that would come to what he called a Neo-Christendom. Guardini and Jacques Maritain were acquaintances of Schuman, with whom he spent time in Maria Laach where they had recollections and other Catholic gatherings. The federalists De Rougemont and Brugmans, but also Pius XII speak explicitly of the need for supra-nationality when rebuilding Europe. Schuman meditated on the thoughts of Pope Pius XII on Europe, although the Pope made clear that the Church does not mingle in temporal issues and that his thoughts must therefore not be regarded as essential guidelines.

Schuman's idea of European unification might not seem completely original, as there have been many thinkers and politicians who developed theories and suggested practical methods for uniting the European continent. But the supranational aspect, the solidarity of facts, the step-by-step method of integration, the emphasis on protection of national identities as long as these did not interfere with common European interests and the stress on the soul of Europe which was the European cultural heritage, made the Schuman Plan a unique initiative, fundamentally different from previous thoughts about a united Europe and other forms of cooperation.⁴⁴⁷

A look at Schuman's political career just before and after the Second World War helps to understand more profoundly the intent, coming into being and impact of the Schuman Declaration. Schuman was first appointed to a ministerial post by Reynauld in March 1940. He became the Under-Secretary of Refugees. It was to be only for a few months, as Reynauld's government fell and Pétain soon took over. Pétain transferred the government to Vichy as the Germans had occupied Paris. He offered Schuman the post of Director of the Secretariat of Refugees, but Schuman rejected and resigned from the Pétain government. He was called back to Vichy as a member of Parliament to sign the proposal to give full power to the Pétain government and thus stop the Germans from thinking that Alsace-Lorraine wanted to return to Germany. It turned out to be a trick. When Schuman went back to Metz to burn papers that should not fall into German hands he was the first parliamentarian to be captured by the Gestapo. After seven months in jail and several refusals to become a *Gauleiter* and thus acquire freedom, Schuman was sent to Neustadt - Pfaltz, on house arrest. He escaped a year later and hid in dozens of places in France. He gave several speeches in which he expressed his

447 Such as the Benelux, OEEC and NATO.

certainty that the Germans could never win the war. He based his opinion on secret information he had obtained in Neustadt. It was also during those days in 1942 that Schuman started to speak of the need for reconciliation and for European unification through a supranational structure.

Once the war was over, the people of Lorraine elected Schuman to be their representative in French government again. The authorities of Lorraine, however, first required De Gaulle to refute Schuman's supposed collaboration with the Germans, because Schuman had signed for Pétain's government, in order to permit Schuman to enter politics again. De Gaulle refuted the accusation and Schuman could return to politics. These would be restless years in which governments continuously came and went and never lasted more than eight months.

Schuman's reconciliation policy was vehemently opposed by both Gaullists and Communists. Next to their continual opposition, Schuman, as Minister of Finance, had to face a time of severe economic crisis and a severe Communist strike. He was able to handle the situation and bring France back on its feet, a fact that proved his skills as a Minister and helped to explain why he became Prime Minister soon after. He asked for Pope Pius XII's blessing, as it would be a hard task to fulfil. Despite the official refutation of the accusations, the Communists and Gaullists kept on accusing Schuman of having collaborated with the Germans as a German officer during the First World War, which he never did, and of having given full powers to the Vichy regime of Pétain.

As Prime Minister Schuman welcomed the Marshall Plan offered by the United States of America, announced in 1947 and put into effect in April 1948. The plan aimed to give economic and financial support to assure a stable European economy and political

order and to prevent Europe from falling into communist hands. Schuman deeply regretted Molotov's, and thus the Soviet, rejection of the Marshall Plan and the consequent start of the Cold War.

Schuman encouraged the organization of the Congress of The Hague in May 1948 and sent representatives of his government to contribute to its aim of unifying Europe. He applauded the results that came during the following years, such as the Council of Europe and the College of Bruges. By then, Schuman's government had fallen on the removal of the ban on funding of religious schools, which Schuman had proposed. Schuman was then appointed the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post that he would hold for five years in seven different governments. It was a time in which the effects of the Cold War were felt and the 'German question' urgently needed to be solved. Schuman signed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for France in April 1949, which was fervently opposed by the Communists, who did not want to cooperate with the United States.

The urgency of the 'German question' led Schuman to look for ways to put his reconciliation plan into effect. He met up with Adenauer, who a month later would become the Chancellor of West-Germany, and discussed with him the possibility to come to an agreement regarding the agitated regions of the Saar and Ruhr, greatly desired, like Alsace-Lorraine, for their riches in coal and steel, the raw materials essential for the arms industry. Economically and financially these regions were under French command but they were politically independent and recognized German regions. Schuman also got in touch with the Italian Prime-Minister, De Gasperi, in order to try and solve the German problem through a broader European unification made possible by the cooperation of Italy, which also had significant interests in coal and steel. The similarities of Schuman, Adenauer and De Gasperi, all three men of contested border regions, of a strong

Catholic faith, who spoke German as their native language, and all three protagonists of Democratic parties, facilitated the unification process considerably.

Jean Monnet, Director of the French Planning Commission who searched eagerly for a European solution of the German problem as well, came to Schuman with a proposal, but not after having heard Schuman's associates Paul Reuter and Bernard Clappier, who delivered the key ideas to this project which were Schuman's as has come to light more than thirty years later through the Schuman Archives. The credit that is often given to Monnet as the principal architect of the Schuman Declaration should for this reason and for the study on Schuman and his thoughts about European unification as such shift to Schuman.

The supranational structure, about which Schuman was already thinking in 1942, was finally put in place. After a few days of intensive work, political diplomacy within the government and Adenauer's consent, the Schuman Declaration, the birth of what later would become the European Union, was launched in Paris on 9 May 1950. The 'German question' was thus solved in a European way.

The Schuman Plan was a 'saut dans l'inconnu', a 'leap in the dark', and a revolutionary move in European history. It was also called the 'Schuman bomb' because of the considerable impact it made worldwide. Effective solidarity, solidarity through specific deeds, was its *adagium*, the European cultural heritage was its soul or *raison d'être*. The functionalist step-by-step integration with respect for national identities and interests as long as they did not go in detriment of common European interests was its method, and unity in diversity its outcome. Through effective solidarity in the economic field among democratic countries that shared a common European, that is, Greco-Roman and Jewish-Christian, heritage, a political union

could be achieved consistent with Christian morals. European citizenship and national citizenship would mingle as a region mingles and adapts itself where needed to the state it belongs to. Six countries committed themselves to the Plan, which led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community on 18 April 1951. These countries were France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Europe would no longer be a collection of independent states, but become an ever more integrated entity characterized by unity in diversity. The Schuman Plan was a revolutionary plan that became the cornerstone of the Europe to be.

Schuman's biography, including the geographical, cultural, spiritual, intellectual and political context, shows his preparatory work for European unification and crucial input in the Declaration called after his name. Schuman thus turned out to be the pre-eminent candidate to work towards European unification and the principal architect of the Schuman Declaration. His frame of reference for European unification consists of supranationality (with respect for national identities and interests as long as these do not go against common European interests), effective solidarity and a step-by-step method of integration. According to Schuman, all three need to be consistent with a moral order based on Christianity, which shows that the European unification was based on a philosophy of life. This frame of reference provides timeless guidelines for European cooperation in the interest of the citizen and could inspire all those who are working towards further European integration.