'The creation of the Monnet Plan, 1945-46: a critical re-evaluation'

Journal Item

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The *Plan de modernisation et d'équipement* (PME, Plan for Modernisation and Equipment) – better known as the Monnet Plan – was a central feature of economic statecraft in post-war France. This national economic plan was directed by Jean Monnet through the *Commissariat général du Plan* (CGP, Commissariat for the Plan), an office established in January 1946, with the first five-year plan beginning one year later. Guided by Monnet's famous maxim of 'modernisation or decadence', the PME contributed to the economic revival of post-war France known as the *Trente glorieuses*.

Given the importance of the PME in French economic history, and Monnet's central role in bringing about European integration by drafting the Schuman Plan in 1950, the Monnet Plan has long been a popular topic amongst historians. Many of the most important studies of the Monnet Plan focus on the domestic economic situation in France in the 1940s, while neglecting the specific political environment in which the PME was developed.[1] Others have taken a broader view by looking at the international economy, explaining how the development of the PME was driven by France's dependence on financial support from the United States in the early post-war years as well as by economic considerations behind France's policies towards occupied Germany.[2] This more international approach has been applied to analyse political factors as well, notably how the emerging Cold War shaped French domestic policies and convinced the United States to support the economic recovery of Western Europe.[3] In addition, biographical studies of Jean Monnet have sought to explain

[1] Two studies that situate the development of the Monnet Plan in the broader economic history of France in the twentieth century are Richard Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France. Renovation and Economic Management in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Michel Margairaz, *L'Etat, les finances et l'économie. Histoire d'une conversion, 1932-1952* (Paris: CHEFF, 1991). A more thorough study of the development of the Monnet Plan is provided in Philippe Mioche, *Le Plan Monnet. Genèse et élaboration 1941-1947* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne 1987).

[2] Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-51* (London: Routledge, 1984); Gérard Bossuat, *L'Europe occidentale à l'heure américaine, 1944-1952* (Brussels: Complexe, 1992); Frances Lynch, *France and the International Economy. From Vichy to the Treaty of Rome* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[3] Irwin Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); William Hitchcock, *France Restored. Cold War Diplomacy*

the development of the PME by analysing Monnet's own experiences, methods, and networks.[4]

Despite the divergent approaches employed in the rich literature on the Monnet Plan, there is broad consensus on three important points. The first is that attempts at developing a national economic plan – an idea with roots in the Vichy years – were abandoned by the Ministry for the National Economy in the spring of 1945 and that Monnet's proposals for the PME at the end of that year encountered little in the way of opposition or institutional rivalries – in Monnet's own words, 'I took nobody's place'.[5] The second point of consensus has to do with the position of the CGP within the French administration. In an unprecedented decision, the CGP was placed beyond the reach of any ministry and made answerable directly to the executive,[6] in what we may call a *supra-ministerial* structure. Historians have accepted Monnet's explanation that this radical arrangement was devised simply for the sake of efficiency: to facilitate the drawing up of a wide-ranging plan for the national economy, the CGP was a small, nimble office independent of the relevant ministries with what he called their 'administrative ponderousness'.[7] The third point relates to how Monnet succeeded in improbably securing broad support for the PME. Historians agree that Monnet was a gifted consensus builder, which is identified as the key to the success of his initatives. This broad support, it is held, depended on his treating 'colleagues and politicians openly and honestly and […] not conniv[ing] behind their backs'.[8] Long-time Minister for Foreign Affairs Mau-

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and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944-1954 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[4] Pascal Fontaine, *Jean Monnet l'inspirateur* (Paris: Jacques Grancher, 1988); François Duchêne, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (London and New York: Norton, 1994); Eric Roussel, *Jean Monnet* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); Sherrill Brown Wells, *Jean Monnet: Unconventional Statesman* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2011).

[5] Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 1976), 347. Translations are the author's. On economic planning under Vichy, see Richard Kuisel, 'Vichy et les origines de la planification économique (1940-1946)' in *Le mouvement social*, no. 98, January-March 1977, 77-101 and Philip Nord, *France's New Deal* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[6] Under the Provisional Government (1944-1946), the President was both Head of State and Head of Government. Under the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, approved in October 1946, these roles were separated and the CGP remained accountable to the Head of Government, namely the President of the Council (often translated as 'Prime Minister').

[7] Monnet, *Mémoires*, op.cit., 347.

[8] Wells, *Jean Monnet*, op.cit., 247.

rice Couve de Murville affirmed that Monnet 'never tried to deceive people'.[9] This gathering together of individuals and groups with divergent viewpoints to support the PME through 'collective problem solving' became known as the 'Monnet method'.

Drawing on an extensive range of French archival sources as well as Jean Monnet's papers in Lausanne, this article interrogates these three points of agreement by focusing on an overlooked aspect of the development of the PME, namely the domestic *political* context of 1945-46 during which the CGP was established. While the Monnet Plan was endorsed by all major political parties and was presented by Monnet himself as strictly apolitical, this study shows how the creation of the Commissariat for the Plan was decisively shaped by the particular political context of post-war France. This re-evaluation thus provides a more challenging understanding of the creation of the Monnet Plan and an important reappraisal of Monnet's celebrated method.

I

By the time Allied forces landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944, France's government-in-waiting had already developed a broad economic agenda for the country. The *Gouvernement provisoire de la République française* (GPRF, Provisional Government of the French Republic), created just three days before D-Day, and the *Comité français de Libération nationale* (CFLN, French Committee for National Liberation) that had preceded it, had discussed an economic agenda for a post-war French Republic from as early as 1941. Under the leadership of General de Gaulle, however, the *Parti communiste français* (PCF, French Communist Party) was excluded from such discussions until relatively late in the war. Although the PCF made overtures to develop a common programme under the CFLN banner – preferring that the French rally behind a programme 'rather than follow a single man'[10] namely de Gaulle – these were rebuffed by the CFLN as being 'clearly of demagogical inspiration'.[11] Only in March 1944 did the Communist and non-Communist Resistance groups

[9] Qtd in Duchêne, *Jean Monnet*, op.cit., 352.

[10] 'Lettre du Groupe des 27 Députés Communistes Français à Messieurs les Présidents du Comité National de la Libération Nationale', 17 August 1943, CFLN 620, Archives diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve.

[11] 'Note à l'attention de M Joxe', 28 August 1943, CFLN 620, MAE. This assessment was made by René Massigli, then Commissioner for Foreign Affairs.

agree upon a set of broad economic policies, in the form of the CNR Programme.[12] This included the nationalisation – referred to euphemistically as the 'return to the State' – of key industries and some degree of economic planning for the post-war period. The latter policy was hardly new – studies had been commissioned within the London-based Resistance as early as 1941, and a number of abortive plans developed under the Vichy regime were studied by Monnet and others[13] – but the specific policy details of an economic plan were only developed after the Liberation of France. With the PCF's endorsement of the CNR Programme in March 1944, two members of the party were added to the GPRF's Cabinet: François Billoux, responsible for administering eventual liberated territories, and Fernand Grenier, named Commissioner for Aviation. While 1944 would see the inclusion of the PCF in France's governing coalition, de Gaulle ensured that the key political and economic portfolios were maintained by non-Communist deputies.

Indeed, the most significant clash within the GPRF regarding the role of economic planning emerged between two left-leaning but indisputably republican figures: the Minister for the National Economy, Pierre Mendès France, and the liberal René Pleven, then Minister for Finance. Mendès France argued that strict economic planning, involving careful control of raw materials, labour, and investment, along with a reduction of the money supply in France to fight inflation, was needed to drastically increase production following four disastrous years of occupation. Pleven and other liberal-minded members of Cabinet dismissed such controls and instead argued that market forces and international borrowing would restore France's economy. Characteristically, President de Gaulle was uninterested in such economic questions and intervened only hesitantly and belatedly. While many historians agree that Mendès France's approach made more sense economically, de Gaulle's decision was essentially political: after the hardships of defeat and occupation in the Second World War, de Gaulle scarcely wanted to impose harsh and inevitably unpopular measures while he was trying to consolidate his own power. In this goal de Gaulle was initially successful, although his choice of Pleven's approach led to the resignation of Mendès France in March

[12] The best study of the Programme of the *Conseil national de la Résistance* (CNR, National Council for the Resistance) remains Claire Andrieu, *Le programme commun de la Résistance. Des idées dans la guerre* (Paris: Editions de l'Erudit, 1984). See also Isser Woloch, 'Left, right and centre: the MRP and the post-war moment' in *French History* 21:1, 2007, 85-106.

1945 and years of rampant inflation in post-war France.[14] Following the latter's departure, a consensus emerged within the Provisional Government that strict economic controls and restrictive allocations of raw materials were to be avoided, leaving market forces a much freer hand to shape the nation's economy, yet overall production and investment were to be directed by the State.

The disagreement between Mendès France and Pleven over the degree of State involvement in economic planning did not, however, alter the agreement on where in the French administration the Plan would be based. In November 1944, de Gaulle had issued a decree conferring the responsibility of drawing up and executing a national economic plan to the Minister for the National Economy, then Mendès France. The literature on this period generally identifies Mendès France's resignation the following March as 'the end of his renewed attempt to set up… a national plan' under the Ministry for the National Economy and that when he resigned, 'the prospects of his plan went with him'.[15] Instead, a new figure emerged who would take on the responsibility of crafting an ambitious plan: Jean Monnet. From his humble origins as a cognac salesman, Monnet had risen to hold important positions as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations and later President of the Anglo-French Co-ordination Committee, responsible for coordinating the economic war effort of the Allies in the first months of the Second World War. Moving on to the United States after the Fall of France, he played a crucial role in the development of the American Victory Program and later joined the CFLN, although he initially backed de Gaulle's rival, General Giraud, as leader of the organisation. His involvement in economic planning only seems to have started at the end of August 1945, with a meeting between Monnet and de Gaulle in Washington. According to his memoirs, Monnet told de Gaulle that France needed to modernise its economy and become more productive if the country hoped to maintain its place as a great power,

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[13] For the origins of economic planning in France, see Mioche, *Le Plan Monnet*, op.cit.; Margairaz, *L'Etat, les finances et l'économie*, op.cit.; Richard Kuisel, 'Vichy et les origines de la planification économique, 1940-1946', op.cit.; and Philip Nord, *France's New Deal*, op.cit.

[14] See Hitchcock, op.cit., 25-29 and Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State*, 198.

[15] Frances Lynch, 'Resolving the Paradox of the Monnet Plan: National and International Planning in French Reconstruction', *Economic History Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, May 1984, pp. 229-243, 234 and François Duchêne, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (London and New York: Norton, 1994), 149. Similar arguments are made by Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State*, op.cit., 228; Eric Roussel, *Jean Monnet* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 434-6; and Hitchcock, *France Restored*, op.cit., 28-29.

to which de Gaulle apparently replied: 'You are certainly right. Would you care to try?'.[16] Importantly, at this stage Monnet focused on the need to attract American dollars to buttress the French economy, and his efforts were focused in this direction.[17]

The literature on the PME presents a smooth transition from Mendès France's resignation in March to Monnet's gradual involvement in economic planning from August that year. As Monnet recalls in his memoirs, 'I took nobody's place'.[18] Yet this overlooks the fact that responsibility for economic planning remained with the ministry far longer than Mendès France did. With Pleven taking over the portfolio from March 1945, he became the minister responsible for drawing up a national plan. This arrangement was maintained in July 1945, when it was agreed that a Directorate for the Plan would be established within the ministry. Gaston Cusin, the ministry's top civil servant, oversaw the reorganisation of the ministry to accommodate the new Directorate, which would constitute one of its key branches.[19] Discussions over how the plan should be constructed continued over the summer, and on 28 September René Pleven confirmed that the organisation of the Ministry for the National Economy 'must be perceptibly simplified [by] grouping [the ministry's] services into four Directorates', with the 'Directorate for the Plan' first among them. Interestingly, Jean Monnet's name was never mentioned as a possible Director.[20] By the end of September 1945, then, it seemed clear that France's market-friendly plan would be overseen by the Minister for the National Economy, not Monnet. By January 1946, however, Monnet was at the head of a Commissariat for the Plan which stood outside of any ministry, and answered directly to the President of the Republic. To understand this fundamental change involving the creation of a supra-ministerial Commissariat for the Plan headed by Monnet, it is necessary to examine the political context of early post-war France and the tensions that existed under de Gaulle's presidency of the Provisional Government.

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[16] Monnet, *Mémoires*, op.cit., 328. This episode is faithfully recounted in much of the literature; cf. Duchêne, *Jean Monnet*, op.cit., 145 and Roussel, *Jean Monnet*, op.cit., 427.
[17] Gérard Bossuat, *L'Europe occidentale à l'heure américaine, 1944-1952* (Brussels: Complexe, 1992).
[18] Monnet, *Mémoires*, op.cit., 347.
[19] 'Note pour le Colonel Vallon' by Cusin, 2 July 1945, 3 AG 4 25, Archives nationales (AN), Paris.
[20] 'Communication du Ministre de l'Economie Nationale sur la réorganisation des Services du Ministère de l'Economie Nationale', 28 September 1945, F 60 900, AN.

II

The most significant domestic political event of the latter half of 1945 was the first general legislative elections in post-war France, which took place in October. These historic elections – the first in which French women could vote – saw the Communist Party take the largest share of the vote, winning 26.2% of the ballot and 159 seats.[21] Given the results, PCF leader Maurice Thorez demanded for his party at least one of what they perceived to be the three most important portfolios: Foreign Affairs, National Defence, and the Interior. President de Gaulle had succeeded in denying PCF members key portfolios in the GPRF, but following the party's electoral victory this would be far more difficult. Nevertheless, he flatly refused Thorez's demands when constructing a tripartite government of PCF, Socialist (SFIO) and Christian Democratic (MRP) ministers. He justified his choice in a radio address, claiming that he could not surrender to the Communists control of any of 'the three levers that control [France's] foreign policy: the diplomacy that expresses it, the army that supports it, the police that covers it'.[22] Indeed, in a number of other European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, the local Communist Party's ability to enter into a governing coalition and gain control over ministries such as the Interior – and thereby the state police – is often cited as the first step of the establishment of a Communist regime.[23] De Gaulle instead offered to the PCF portfolios that he considered of secondary importance: what he tellingly referred to in his memoirs as 'merely the "economic" ministries'.[24] In the end, the PCF was given con-

[21] Of the 586 seats in the National Assembly, 150 were won by the Christian Democrats (MRP, *Mouvement républicain populaire*) and 146 by the Socialists (SFIO, *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière*).

[22] Charles de Gaulle, 'Allocution à la radio, le 17 novembre 1945' in *Mémoires de guerre. Le salut: 1944-1946* (Paris: Plon, 1959), 517.

[23] The classic formulation of this argument describes how the Communist Party seizes control of the 'major instruments of power' such as the Ministry for the Interior and subsequently sets up a powerful secret police that allows the Party to remodel the structure of the State along the Soviet model. This was first advanced in Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1956), 296-7 and has more recently been reiterated in Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (London: Allen Lane, 2012). For a revisionist interpretation, see Molly Pucci, *Security Empire: Building the Secret Police in Communist Eastern Europe, 1944-1952*. PhD thesis (Stanford: Stanford University, 2015).

[24] De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. Le salut*, op.cit., 327.

trol of four ministries, the same number as the SFIO and the MRP.[25] In the first elected government of post-war France, Communist members were thus named as Ministers for the National Economy, Labour, Armaments Production, and Industrial Production; in addition, Maurice Thorez was named one of four Ministers of State without a portfolio, raising the total number of Communist members of government to five. The Ministry for Finance, meanwhile, remained firmly in the hands of René Pleven. With characteristic modesty, de Gaulle appointed himself Minister for Defence, while naming Christian Democrat Georges Bidault Foreign Minister and Socialist Adrien Tixier Minister for the Interior. Despite the PCF's victory in the first post-war legislative elections, de Gaulle managed to limit the fruits of this mandate by ensuring that the 'three levers that control [France's] foreign policy' remained firmly in republican rather than Communist hands.[26]

Although unsuccessful in securing the most prestigious ministries, the PCF nonetheless tried to make the most of the economic portfolios they had dismissively been given by de Gaulle. In the Ministry for Industrial Production, CFLN veteran Robert Lacoste was replaced by Marcel Paul. The outcome of the October 1945 elections initially paralysed important ministries such as this one; as the various parties wrangled to allot portfolios in the emerging coalition government, ministries were unable to make decisions without knowing whom their minister would be. Lambert Blum-Picard, who had worked with Lacoste in Algiers during the war and then served as Secretary General for Industrial Production after the Liberation, kept his position as the chief mandarin in the ministry. Nevertheless, he had to postpone even relatively mundane decisions until Lacoste's successor was named. At the end of October, for example, he received a proposal to dissolve the *Comité d'organisation du sel*, a body created by the Vichy regime and which was seen to be both unpopular and inefficient. While

[25] These three parties ruled in a tripartite coalition from 1944 until May 1947, when the Communist ministers were expelled from government, a development commonly associated with the onset of the Cold War in France. See Philippe Buton, 'L'éviction des ministres communistes' in Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza (eds), *L'Année 1947* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000).

[26] François Billoux claimed that the Armaments portfolio was 'one of the Defence ministries' and that appointing a PCF member to this amounted to 'de Gaulle back[ing] down'. In his detailed study of the PCF during this period, on the other hand, Philippe Buton confirms that the party's inability to secure one of these three portfolios amounted to a failure for the PCF. See Billoux, *Quand nous étions ministres* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1972), 66-67 and Buton, *Les lendemains qui déchantent. Le Parti communiste français à la Libération* (Paris: FNSP, 1993), 206-211.

Blum-Picard agreed that this particular committee should be dismantled, the decision was postponed 'until the general policies of the future government with regard to professional organisation have been decided upon'.[27] Expecting a change of some importance with the impending arrival of a minister with a very different political agenda, the ministry was unable to continue the route it had charted for itself following the Liberation. This state of uncertainty was dissipated on 21 November with the appointment of Marcel Paul as Lacoste's successor.[28]

That same day, François Billoux was named Minister for the National Economy. As we have seen, Billoux had been one of the first two PCF members to be included in the Provisional Government in 1944, although his responsibilities at that time had been limited to overseeing newly-liberated territories in France following D-Day. Earlier in 1945 Billoux and the only other PCF member in Cabinet, Charles Tillon, had clashed with a number of ministers regarding the scope of the post-war *épuration* of the nation's industrialists. De Gaulle was eager to avoid dividing France through comprehensive purges of collaborators below the highest levels of government, and technocrats such as Monnet recognised that the fastest way to revive French industry would be to leave the most experienced industrialists in place, regardless of wartime indiscretions. For the PCF, this approach was unacceptable, as it rewarded the employers who had supported the Vichy regime and fuelled the Nazi war economy.[29] In March 1945, Billoux demanded that 'the priority must be the confiscation of the goods of the numerous traitors among the directors of *trusts*', adding that the nationalisation of French industries had to serve 'the interests of the State [rather than] the private interests of capitalists'.[30] Given the PCF's intransigent position, the appointment of Billoux and Paul to the ministries most closely tied to the development of a national economic plan exacerbated the complexity of questions regarding the future of French industry.

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[27] 'Note. Objet: Dissolution du CO du sel', 31 October 1945, F 12 10028, AN.

[28] Paul ultimately dissolved all remaining *Comités d'organisation* and related Vichy-era industrial bodies in April 1946.

[29] On the *épuration* during this period see Jean-Paul Cointet's *Expier Vichy: l'épuration en France 1943-1958* (Paris: Perrin, 2008) and Marc Bergère, ed., *L'épuration économique en France à la Libération* (Rennes: Presses universiatires de Rennes, 2008).

[30] 'Note de MM Billoux et Tillon sur les projets de nationalisation soumis par Monsieur le Ministre de l'Economie Nationale', 3 March 1945, 3 AG 4 26, AN.

III

The very next day after the appointment of Billoux and Paul, a memorandum was issued to the Cabinet by de Gaulle's *chef de cabinet*, Gaston Palewski. It specified that 'a plan for the equipment and modernisation of the French Economy will be established' and that 'this plan, along with the means of assuring its implementation, will be examined, discussed, and presented to the Government [...] in the next six months'.[31] It seemed that any steps towards establishing such a plan would be taken in accordance with the Cabinet, notably those holding the crucial economic portfolios. Less than two weeks later, on 4 December, Jean Monnet submitted a proposal to de Gaulle for the PME. The text made the case for using the context of post-war reconstruction to effect a rapid modernisation of French industry. This would facilitate an increase of domestic consumption, but more importantly allow France to pay for its imports of raw materials – particularly coal – by increasing its exports of industrial products.[32] Given the failure of Mendès France's attempts to establish a plan earlier that year, it is worth asking how Monnet managed to convince the French Cabinet, which ran the gamut from Gaullists and Christian Democrats to Socialists and Communists, to endorse his plan. While Monnet is often credited with being a successful consensus builder, the different arguments he used to win over disparate groups with often contradictory interests in this case have not previously been examined.

Eager to secure de Gaulle's backing, Monnet framed the project in terms certain to appeal to the General, reinforcing some of the themes he had first raised with de Gaulle in August. According to Monnet, only his plan could strengthen France's economic clout, which was the precondition for France being able to play a decisive role in international power politics. He warned that if France failed to embrace such a rapid modernisation the country would 'be reduced to the rank of a second-rate power'.[33] While de Gaulle tended to treat economic questions as matters of secondary importance – evident by his choice to dismissively leave the 'mere' economic portfolios to PCF members – Monnet crafted his proposal to appeal to de Gaulle's famous obsession with France's *grandeur*. Given the series of

[31] 'Memorandum', 22 November 1945, 3 AG 4 25, AN.
[32] On the strategy behind the PME, see Frances Lynch, *France and the International Economy*, op.cit.

diplomatic defeats de Gaulle had experienced that year – from being excluded from the crucial Yalta Conference to being overruled by the Allies regarding France's German policy[34] – Monnet's plan to strengthen France's international position was well-timed.

While this strategy of modernising French industry to ensure its international position had been raised by Monnet in his meeting with de Gaulle in August, an important innovation had been added by December. While it was understood in the summer of 1945 that any national economic plan would be based in the Ministry for the National Economy, in December Monnet proposed the creation of a supra-ministerial CGP that would stand outside of any ministry. This was an unprecedented innovation in the French administration and, significantly, no hint of such an arrangement is detectable prior to the October 1945 elections. According to Gaston Palewski, this arrangement was the direct result of having appointed members of the PCF to the key economic portfolios, including the Ministry for the National Economy.[35] Indeed, by December 1945, the early actions of the Communist ministers responsible for the French economy were causing increasing alarm among the rest of the Cabinet. Palewski briefed de Gaulle on how Marcel Paul was creating myriad commissions to control different branches of French industry, with PCF representatives of the minister attending every single meeting. More troubling still, Paul insisted that any industrialist or businessperson appealing to the ministry had to 'include a CV including the political orientation' of the individual, which would influence the outcome of his or her request – a particularly troubling development given how few *patrons* were Communists.[36] This politicisation of the Ministry for Industrial Production coincided with de Gaulle's growing wariness of party politics in general. In June 1946, de Gaulle famously set out his vision of the ideal Constitution for France, in which executive power would reside in 'the Head of State, placed above political

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[33] 'Mémorandum sur le Plan de Modernisation et d'Equipement', 13 December 1945, AJ 80 1, AN. The first version of this memorandum was presented to de Gaulle on 4 December 1945.

[34] See Andrew Shennan, *De Gaulle* (London: Longman, 1993), 49-50.

[35] Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, *La France en voie de modernisation, 1944-1952* (Paris, FNSP, 1981). Palewski's comments at this conference have occasionally been noted in subsequent studies, but his claim has not been investigated. See Philippe Mioche, *Le Plan Monnet*, op.cit., 91 and, in a footnote, Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 248.

[36] 'Note pour le Général de Gaulle' by Palewski, 13 December 1945, 3 AG 4 55, AN.

parties, [who would] act in the best interest of the population'.[37] Of more direct importance was the development of France's new constitution, which was being drafted in January 1946 by a committee of parliamentarians from the three governing political parties. The emerging constitution favoured a strong parliament, and de Gaulle blamed the PCF for weakening the main powers of the President of the Republic, reducing it to 'a protocol office and practically nothing else'.[38] For de Gaulle, a weak executive would result in a loss of not only personal but national power and prestige. By mid-January 1946, Palewski was confiding to the American ambassador in Paris that 'General de Gaulle may give up his office in view of the maneuvers of Communists and others in and out of the Assembly'.[39]

It was against this backdrop that one of the most significant modifications to the Monnet Plan was made. Although it had been once again confirmed at the end of September 1945 that any national economic plan would be overseen by the Minister for the National Economy, Monnet now insisted that his plan must be independent of any single ministry and instead answer directly to the President. The appeal to de Gaulle was obvious: just as the PCF was hollowing out the powers of the President, de Gaulle could now hollow out some of the key powers from the economic ministries headed by the PCF. Beyond being mere tit-for-tat, this structure would also strengthen the authority of the President who, rather than any minister, would oversee the plan. Finally, Monnet's argument that France's *grandeur* was dependent upon the successful implementation of his economic plan elevated the CGP almost to a 'fourth lever' of foreign policy. Just as de Gaulle ensured that the first 'three levers that control [France's] foreign policy' were beyond the control of the PCF, so too did he act to shield the plan on which France's *grandeur* supposedly depended from control by a Communist minister.

Monnet's recourse to anti-Communism and to *grandeur* to secure de Gaulle's backing begs the question of why the Communist ministers, particularly François Billoux, as Minister for the National Economy, similarly endorsed Monnet's proposal to move the plan beyond

[37] 'Discours prononcé à Bayeux', 16 June 1946, in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages. Tome 2: Dans l'attente* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 10.
[38] 'Telegram from the Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State', 21 January 1946, *FRUS 1946*, volume V, 402-403. See also Serge Berstein, *Histoire du Gaullisme* (Paris: Perrin, 2001), 95-97.

their control. One crucial ingredient to Monnet's success in this respect was his pledge to grant workers an important voice in the formulation of the PME. The targets of the plan were to be determined by industry-specific Modernisation Commissions (*Commissions de modernisation*)[40] that included workers as well as employers, technicians, and government representatives.[41] Such a model fitted neatly with the PCF's stated aims at the time; at the party's congress in June 1945, PCF leader Maurice Thorez had proclaimed that 'the revival of France is not the responsibility of a single party or of a handful of statesmen, but millions of French men and women'.[42] The emphasis on national unity, on the inclusion of workers, and on the importance of 'democracy' emanating from the PCF in 1945 was certainly not lost on Monnet, who labelled the proposed Modernisation Commissions as 'bodies that are genuinely… democratic' where workers would have a strong voice.[43] The idea of bringing together workers and employers to develop industrial targets did not come from the PCF – Monnet attributed the idea to the development of Working Parties in wartime Britain, while the American Robert Nathan, who had been in charge of planning in the War Production Board, similarly advised Monnet to adopt such a structure[44] – but Monnet was nevertheless able to present it in such a way as to appeal to the PCF. Given the party's overriding goal in this period of

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[39] 'Telegram from the Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State', 18 January 1946, *FRUS 1946*, volume V, 400-401.

[40] *Commissions de modernisation* were established for each of France's key industries. Under the Monnet Plan, they were responsible for providing accurate data on each industry and for helping draw up a viable production programme under the auspices of the CGP.

[41] In his memoirs covering his time as minister, Billoux points to the creation of similarly composed *comités d'entreprise* in key sectors of the economy as a victory for the PCF. Interestingly, he makes no mention of the Monnet Plan whatsoever and instead attributes the revival of French industry to the policies of Communist ministers. See Billoux, *Quand nous étions ministres*, op.cit., 87-88.

[42] Maurice Thorez, *Renaisance, démocratie, unité. Rapport du Comité central au Xe Congrès*, V, 21 (Paris: Editions sociales, 1963), 99.

[43] 'Simplification de la réglementation économique', 24 January 1946, AMF 1 6, Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe (FJME), Lausanne.

[44] In their memoirs, both Monnet and Hirsch attribute the idea of this structure to the British model. See Monnet, *Mémoires*, op.cit., 342 and Etienne Hirsch, *Ainsi va la vie* (Lausanne: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, 1988), 89. On Nathan's influence, see Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State*, op.cit., 230 and Wells, *Jean Monnet*, op.cit., 98-101.

contributing to national governments and establishing itself as a genuine party of government, the refusal to accept such a project would have posed significant political difficulties.[45]

While Monnet's appeals to democracy and workers' representation helped convince the Communist ministers to accept his plan, the decisive factor was Monnet's promise that the CGP would be merely a temporary office. According to his December 1945 proposal, the CGP would exist for only six months, during which time it would produce the PME; at that point, the CGP would be dissolved and the administration of the plan would implicitly be returned to the Ministry for the National Economy. Billoux explicitly stated that his support for Monnet's proposals in December was determined by the 'temporary nature of the Commissariat'.[46] Monnet himself acknowledged that the ministers 'only accepted this method because they know that the Commissariat and the Commissions will disappear in six months [and] because they consider them to be temporary'.[47] Such promises reassured ministers who might otherwise have opposed the siphoning of their competences. As such, the Cabinet endorsed 'the broad lines of Monsieur Monnet's memorandum' on 14 December.[48]

Following this approval, de Gaulle formally declared the establishment of the Commissariat for the Plan on 3 January 1946. Reading the decree, it is easy to see how Monnet had couched the project in terms certain to entice de Gaulle. The CGP would operate outside the jurisdiction of any partisan minister and would act in accordance with the national interest, while answering directly to the President of the Republic. Furthermore, having just given the PCF four economic portfolios, de Gaulle must have been intrigued by Monnet's plan to co-opt the heart of their powers. The economic development of France would no longer be in the hands of a Communist minister seemingly motivated by electoral advantage and allegiance to Moscow, but would instead be run by a rational, non-partisan Commissariat doing what was best for the nation. In appealing to de Gaulle amidst the challenges presented by

[45] Philippe Buton, 'Le parti communiste français et le stalinisme au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale' in *Journal of Modern European History*, 2 (2004), 58-81; Silvio Pons, 'Stalin and the European Communists after World War Two (1943-1948)' in *Past and Present* 210 (2011), 121-138.

[46] 'Compte-rendu de la séance du vendredi 14 décembre 1945. Organisation du Commissariat au Plan', Comité Economique Interministériel, 14 December 1945, F 60 901, AN.

[47] Untitled document by Monnet beginning with 'Les raisons pour lesquelles je considère qu'il n'est pas possible de rattacher le Plan à l'Economie nationale sont les suivants' (sic), 12 February 1946, AMF 1 3, FJME.

the PCF, Monnet's supra-ministerial organisation for his plan proved irresistible to the General. Despite the implicit Gaullist and anti-Communist themes in the decree, it is striking that Monnet managed to secure the endorsement of the PCF as well. The decree similarly contained references to national unity and the involvement of workers, which echoed much of the PCF's own rhetoric at the time. The decisive factor was Monnet's assurance that the CGP would disappear within a few months, which provided sufficient reassurance to those running the economic ministries that their powers were not being co-opted irrevocably.

IV

While signing the decree creating the CGP was one of de Gaulle's most significant acts of the first weeks of 1946, his involvement by no means ended with his signature on 3 January. In a newly discovered document written by Monnet, marked 'secret' and addressed only to his two closest collaborators, Etienne Hirsch and Robert Marjolin, he informed them of the substantial work that had to be completed on an unusually pressing deadline. The document, dated Sunday 13 January, specified that the membership of the Council for the Plan would need to be finalised and prepared as an ordinance for de Gaulle to sign by 17 January, just four days later. The former was not too taxing, as Monnet had already drawn up a list of a dozen ministers who would be part of the Council, along with Monnet and his staff.[49] Far more demanding was the requirement that the first five Modernisation Commissions also had to be 'constituted, their presidents chosen and confirmed, [and] their chairmen appointed' for Saturday 19 January. 'Jean Monnet must present the constitution of these commissions to General de Gaulle for his signature on this date', with the content of the document to be announced to the Council for the Plan at its first meeting, scheduled for 21 January.[50] In his memoirs, Hirsch notes that 'the proposals we submitted to General de Gaulle became, with-

[48] 'Compte-rendu de la séance du vendredi 14 décembre 1945', F 60 901, AN.
[49] An early draft, including ten ministers, was produced by Monnet in December, while the addition of the Ministers for Transportation and for Public Works in January raised the number to 12. 'Conseil du Plan', 6 December 1945, AMF 1 2, FJME.
[50] 'Note pour MM. Marjolin-Hirsch. Agenda des choses à faire avant le Conseil du Plan', 13 January 1946, AMF 1 0, FJME. The author has been unable to find any reference to this secret document and the burst of activity it precipitated in the existing literature on the Monnet Plan.

out the slightest modification, the instructions given' to the members of the CGP.[51] The haste in which these documents were drawn up is striking, even by the standards of the GPRF in the early post-war period.

The frantic pace at which the central institutions of the CGP were put together was determined quite clearly by a decision that de Gaulle claims in his memoirs he made on 1 January 1946: to resign as President of the Republic.[52] Between de Gaulle's decree authorising the creation of the CGP on 3 January and the secret note Monnet wrote on 13 January, the two men agreed on a very tight deadline for the essential components of the CGP to be endorsed by, and backed with ordinances from, the President. It was imperative that these be presented to de Gaulle for his signature on 19 January for a very simple reason: the following morning he resigned as President. Thus one of his very final acts as President was the approval of the establishment of the first Modernisation Commissions, which were then presented by Monnet to the Council for the Plan the day after de Gaulle's resignation. At that meeting the Modernisation Commissions were described as 'the specific and essential apparatus of the whole project', and they co-opted significant powers from the Ministry for Industrial Production as well as the Ministry for the National Economy.[53] De Gaulle's collaboration with Monnet in the final days before resigning as President thus ensured that the essential mechanisms of the Monnet Plan – the Commissariat for the Plan, the Council for the Plan, and the Modernisation Commissions – would exist outside of any ministry and would survive long after the General's resignation.

Despite the endorsement of Monnet's memorandum by the Ministers for the National Economy and for Industrial Production in December, it is worth considering to what extent Monnet subsequently consulted or even coordinated his actions with these ministries. In the weeks following his appointment on 21 November 1945, Marcel Paul made repeated requests

[51] Etienne Hirsch, *Ainsi va la vie*, op.cit., 89. In their respective memoirs, neither Hirsch nor Marjolin makes any reference to this flurry of activity between 13 and 20 January. See Hirsch, *Ainsi va la vie*, op.cit., and Robert Marjolin, *Le travail d'une vie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1986).

[52] De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. Le salut, 1944-1946*, op.cit., 334. 'Leaving the Palais Bourbon [the National Assembly] the evening of 1 January [1946], I had already made up my mind to resign. All that remained to do was to choose the date.'

[53] 'Note pour MM. Marjolin-Hirsch. Agenda des choses à faire avant le Conseil du Plan', 13 January 1946, AMF 1 0, FJME.

to meet with Monnet to discuss the development of the latter's plan – to no avail. On 4 December, two weeks after Paul's appointment, Monnet sent his proposal for the establishment of the plan to de Gaulle; by 13 December de Gaulle had responded with a draft memorandum summarising Monnet's plans, which was endorsed by Billoux and Paul the next day.[54] Following that inter-ministerial meeting, Paul requested that Blum-Picard, Secretary General for Industrial Production, arrange a meeting between the minister and Monnet. Despite continued attempts by Blum-Picard, this meeting never came about. On 10 January 1946, a week after de Gaulle had approved the creation of the CGP, details of the project including a description of the Modernisation Commissions were made public. Yet by 18 January Blum-Picard was still unable to organise any meeting between Monnet and Paul. A clearly riled Blum-Picard informed the minister that Monnet 'seem[ed] to systematically evade any meeting with' either Blum-Picard or Paul.[55] Of course we know that on 18 January Monnet was scrambling to finalise the various ordinances that de Gaulle would have to sign the following day. Interestingly, once having received the support of the PCF ministers in December, Monnet proceeded to elaborate the framework of the PME while methodically avoiding any kind of meeting with them. Marcel Paul and François Billoux were two of the 12 ministers who attended the first meeting of the Council for the Plan on 21 January, and it was only then that they were briefed on the latest developments in the Monnet Plan.

Following de Gaulle's dramatic resignation, Socialist Félix Gouin was named his successor as President of the Republic. In his very first meeting with Monnet after succeeding de Gaulle, Gouin informed Monnet that he planned to modify the statute of the CGP by attaching it to the Ministry for the National Economy. This had, after all, been the consensus the previous summer, before Communist François Billoux was given the portfolio and the subsequent supra-ministerial structure of the CGP was devised. Yet the political situation had changed somewhat following de Gaulle's departure. When forming his first government, Gouin gave the portfolio for the National Economy to fellow Socialist André Philip, who replaced Billoux on 26 January. Philip had joined de Gaulle in London in 1942 and spent much of the war studying questions of industrial organisation, making him an obvious candi-

[54] 'Mémorandum sur le Plan de Modernisation et d'Equipement', 13 December 1945, AJ 80 1, AN.
[55] Note de Blum-Picard à Marcel Paul, 18 January 1946, F 12 10028, AN.

date for overseeing the country's economic planning.[56] With the ministry in seemingly safe hands, returning the plan there, as had been the initial intention, could certainly be seen as a sensible choice. If anti-Communism had helped to convince de Gaulle to move the plan beyond the reach of a Communist Minister for the National Economy, such an argument no longer applied when the President and the Minister for the National Economy belonged to the same party.

Determined to maintain the recently won supra-ministerial character of the CGP, Monnet took a different approach to convince Gouin. He unequivocally told the new President that attaching the CGP to the ministry would be 'a mistake that would compromise the success of the whole undertaking'. He justified his position on the grounds that 'it is always bad to modify the conditions in which a project operates once it is already underway'.[57] Such an argument was rather shaky, as barely a month had elapsed since the decree first establishing the CGP, but it is indicative of Monnet's approach. Indeed, Monnet went so far as to write a letter of resignation to Gouin to dissuade the President from placing the CGP under the authority of the Ministry for the National Economy. Faced with this ultimatum, Gouin backed down and, in June of that year, was succeeded as President by Georges Bidault of the MRP. Just as Gouin had done, Bidault swiftly appointed one of his own party colleagues, in this case François de Menthon, as Minister for the National Economy. The fact that the first six months of the year saw this portfolio change hands from a Communist to a Socialist to a Christian Democrat does indeed give weight to Monnet's insistence on 'placing the CGP above these [partisan] polemics'.[58] Besides the justification of the Commissariat's structure, this episode demonstrates Monnet's strategy in creating the CGP, namely rushing the plans so that they could be signed into law by de Gaulle just before his resignation, then defending the *status quo* against reforms by his successor. It proved to be successful and ensured the survival of Monnet's preferred structure for the PME.[59]

Monnet's response to Gouin's proposal marks the first sign that Monnet was already looking to renegue on the promise that had ensured the successful creation of the supra-

[56] See, for example, 'Etudes d'A. Philip sur les Comités mixtes de production', F 60 895, AN.
[57] 'Lettre de Monnet au Président', dated 7 February 1946, AMF 1 3, FJME.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Luc-André Brunet, *Forging Europe: Industrial Organisation in France, 1940-1952* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

ministerial CGP in the first place: that it would disappear within six months and would then be succeeded by the Ministry for the National Economy. Just five days after writing to Gouin, Monnet acknowledged that the Cabinet 'only accepted [Monnet's proposals] because they consider them [the CGP and the Modernisation Commissions] to be temporary… and, once again, that this does not affect the future shape of the administration'.[60] By April, however, Monnet insisted that 'it is necessary to maintain the Council for the Plan and the Modernisation Commissions and to give them permanent status'.[61] To achieve this goal Monnet threatened to resign yet again – this time in January 1947 to then premier Léon Blum. Blum acquiesced and on 16 January 1947 decreed the permanent institutionalisation of the CGP, despite the protests of André Philip and the Ministry for the National Economy. As with de Gaulle's decree twelve months earlier, the decision was not debated in the National Assembly but was instead authorised by decree. Interestingly, both decrees barely preceded the respective leaders' resignations: Blum himself resigned later the same day just hours after signing the decree. This high turnover of governments and ministers contrasts markedly with the relative stability of the CGP where Monnet remained firmly in charge.

It is worth considering Monnet's own motivations for defending and entrenching the CGP's supra-ministerial position. According to Monnet's own account in his memoirs, he proposed this structure because he genuinely believed that France needed its industry to be overseen by a benevolent and thoroughly non-partisan group of experts, rather than by a ministry whose fundamental direction could change according to the caprice of the electorate.[62] A less generous interpretation would be that he was motivated by the simple desire to secure the widest possible jurisdiction over French industry for himself.[63] In either case, Monnet

[60] Untitled document by Monnet beginning with 'Les raisons pour lesquelles je considère qu'il n'est pas possible de rattacher le Plan à l'Economie nationale sont les suivants', 12 February 1946, AMF 1 3, FJME.

[61] 'Note sur l'élaboration et l'exécution du Plan, ainsi que sur les questions qui doivent y concourir', 23 April 1946, AMF 5 2, FJME.

[62] This is the explanation advanced by Monnet in his *Mémoires*, op.cit., 347. Frances Lynch calls this 'the official "myth" of the plan […which is] a distortion of reality'. See Lynch, 'Resolving the Paradox of the Monnet Plan', op.cit., 235.

[63] The tendency of technocrats to seemingly use their specialist knowledge as a form of legitimacy in order to 'claim the greatest possible share of power' at the expense of elected officials is discussed in Jacques Lagroye, 'Introduction' in *La Question technocratique*, op.cit., 16.

was clearly preoccupied with having the plan under his own control, beyond the supervision of any minister and answerable only to the Head of the Government. He was certainly openly critical of the Ministry for the National Economy's failure to put together a plan by the end of 1945, and argued that his nimble CGP, with a staff of only a few dozen, would be more effective than the cumbersome economic ministries. Indeed, the flurry of activity accomplished by Monnet and his closest associates the week prior to de Gaulle's resignation – at a pace that a large ministry likely could not have rivalled – demonstrates the advantage of the CGP's structure. While Monnet seems to have used anti-Communism as a factor to sway de Gaulle, it does not in itself explain Monnet's attachment to the CGP's supra-ministerial structure, as his refusal to allow non-Communist ministers to take over the plan demonstrates.

The international context and particularly his dealings with the United State undoubtedly influenced Monnet's thinking in this direction as well. In early March 1946 Monnet was sent to Washington to negotiate a major loan from the United States, funds which were necessary to bankroll Monnet's ambitious plan to re-equip and modernise French industry. By this time, he had developed a draft PME which helped convince the Americans that the French government was serious about modernising its economy and that the loan would be well spent. In May 1946, Monnet managed to secure a loan for $650 million, known as the Blum-Byrnes agreement, 'to facilitate the restoration, the reconstruction, and the modernisation of the French Economy'.[64] It must be remembered that Monnet's first conversation about economic planning with de Gaulle in August 1945 had focused chiefly on how to secure American dollars to revive the French economy. The Blum-Byrnes agreement marked a crucial step in realising this goal, and one that had been facilitated by the supra-ministerial architecture developed by Monnet under de Gaulle.[65]

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[64] 'Textes des accords signés à Washington', 28 May 1946, AMF 4 4, FJME.
[65] While Léon Blum led the delegation, Monnet was chiefly responsible for the negotiations. See Michel Margairaz, 'Autour des Accord Blum-Byrnes : Jean Monnet entre le consensus national et le consensus atlantique' in *Histoire, Economie et Société*, 3 (1982), 439-470 and Gérard Bossuat, *La France, l'aide américaine et l'unité de l'Europe* (Paris: CHEFF, 1992).

This analysis of the creation of the Monnet Plan allows us to reassess several key arguments which pervade the historiography. First, the Ministry for the National Economy's involvement in developing a plan for the French economy did not end with the resignation of Pierre Mendès France, as it is widely held. Rather, drawing up such a plan remained part of the ministry's responsibilities, and the ministry was reorganised after Mendès France's departure to facilitate such a task. The fact that these arrangements were confirmed on the eve of the legislative elections in October 1945, and that no mention of a supra-ministerial office responsible for planning was made prior to these elections, reveal that the impetus for creating a CGP independent of any ministry was indeed the result of those elections. Only once the Ministry for the National Economy as well as the other economic portfolios were given to members of the PCF did the notion of a supra-ministerial planning office surface.

This raises questions about Monnet's explanation, upheld in the literature on the Monnet Plan, that this unprecedented creation of a supra-ministerial office to oversee the development of a national economic plan came about simply for the sake of efficiency. Rather, as has been shown, this arrangement was only proposed after the economic ministries had been taken up by Communists. For de Gaulle, support for such a supra-ministerial structure had little to do with economic considerations or questions of institutional efficiency. Just as the General had sided with Pleven over Mendès France in early 1945 for political rather than economic reasons, his support for Monnet's proposals was determined by their political utility. The prospect advanced by Monnet of having a powerful, non-partisan Commissariat acting with only the national interest in mind to organise French industry could hardly have been more appealling to the anti-Communist de Gaulle, particularly once Monnet added that only by reviving the national economy could France secure and sustain its international standing as a great power. Furthermore, the prospect of co-opting important responsibilities from PCF ministers – at the very time that de Gaulle perceived their party to be trying to weaken his office – made Monnet's proposals more alluring still. While Monnet himself was not vocally anti-Communist, he clearly had no reservations with using this line of argument to convince de Gaulle to endorse a supra-ministerial CGP. And his strategy worked. As Monnet later recalled, 'General de Gaulle followed my recommendations entirely [from] the

structure of the Plan [to] the place it would occupy in the political and administrative life of the country'.[66]

While this demonstrates Monnet's shrewd skills of persuasion, his proposals were only endorsed by Cabinet because of his equally dexterous recourse to a different set of arguments. While he made use of anti-Communist feelings to convince de Gaulle, he managed to sway the Communist ministers holding the economic portfolios by emphasising the democratic nature of the CGP's Modernisation Commissions and the extent of worker involvement in the drafting of the PME. This ability to tailor his argument to align with the ideological preoccupations of different actors lies at the heart of Monnet's astonishing success at achieving wide-ranging consensus in favour of a supra-ministerial CGP charged with producing the PME. While Monnet's abilities as a consensus builder are widely acknowledged in the literature, he is nearly always celebrated as 'open[...] and honest'.[67] Yet it has been shown here that the endorsement of the CGP by the Minister for the National Economy and his colleagues in the PCF was only secured with a good measure of duplicity. Monnet promised the ministers that the CGP would be merely a temporary creation, charged with speedily putting together a wide-ranging plan with input from all interested parties, notably workers. This assurance that the CGP would then disappear within six months of its creation, with responsibilities for the PME then reverting to the relevant economic ministries, was explicitly identified by both Billoux and Monnet as the condition upon which the PCF ministers approved the creation of the CGP. Yet from the moment the CGP was authorised by de Gaulle's decree in January 1946, Monnet sought to defend its existence tooth-and-nail. While his threat to Gouin in February against transferring the CGP to the Ministry for the National Economy is understandable, given that this would have reduced the supra-ministerial arrangement to only one month instead of six, it is clear that Monnet sought to entrench the supposedly transitory structure well beyond its intended shelf-life. Barely three months after the creation of the CGP and the first Modernisation Commissions, Monnet began to insist that these offices must be made permanent. Thanks to his powers of persuasion, bolstered by repeated threats to resign, Monnet managed to have the lifespan of the CGP extended and ultimately institutionalised permanently in January 1947. While Monnet's motivations seem to have been noble throughout this period – he genuinely believed that a supra-ministerial CGP was far more

[66] Monnet, *Mémoires*, op.cit., 347.

efficient than the Ministry for the National Economy, regardless of the political stripe of the minister – his method of building a consensus on promises which he subsequently broke reveals a more nuanced picture of Monnet, at odds with his established image as an open and honest broker.

Two months after Blum's decree rendering the CGP permanent, recurrent minister Albert Gazier described the state of 'relations between the CGP and the ministries' as 'not very good […] indeed, downright bad'.[68] He surmised that the situation could only be improved by the 'constitution of a veritable Ministry for the National Economy' with control over the CGP, but that because of 'the personalities involved this solution is not possible for now'.[69] Indeed, as long as Monnet remained at the head of the CGP, this option proved impossible. Following Monnet's departure from the CGP in August 1952 and his replacement by his close colleague Etienne Hirsch, however, the supra-ministerial position of the CGP came under threat. In June 1954, a new government was formed by Pierre Mendès France. Just as Mendès France had argued a decade earlier for the necessity of a strong economics ministry responsible for planning, his views remained unchanged upon taking office. Barely one month after being named as Head of Government, Mendès France extended the responsibilities of the economics portfolio, appointing Edgar Faure as Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs, and the Plan. Henceforth Hirsch worked under the tutelage of this economics ministry, a fate Monnet had adamantly and successfully avoided.[70] Economic planning thus returned to the Ministry for the National Economy, as it had been until the pivotal legislative elections of October 1945.

Monnet's departure from the CGP was prompted by a project even more audacious than the PME. In May 1950, Monnet and then Foreign Minister Robert Schuman launched the Schuman Plan which sought to pool the French and German coal and steel industries. This resulted, in 1952, in the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the first supra-national institution in Europe and the forerunner to the European Union. Jean

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[67] See Wells, *Jean Monnet*, op.cit., 247.

[68] Procès-verbal de la séance de la Commission des Affaires Economiques, Assemblée Nationale, séance du 4 mars 1947, C/15329, AN.

[69] Ibid.

[70] According to Hirsch, Mendès France had never forgiven Monnet for successfully implementing a national economic plan, as this had been Mendès France's ambition. See François Fourquet, *Les Comptes de la puissance* (Paris: Recherches, 1980), 223-6.

Monnet was unanimously chosen as President of the ECSC's executive, the High Authority, prompting his resignation from the CGP. The above re-evaluation of the Monnet Plan also reveals important similarities with the establishment of the ECSC. The appeal of the CGP had been to place vital components of the economy in the hands of a purportedly apolitical office staffed with experts and responsible to the executive rather than to any minister. This arrangement was justified on the grounds that Monnet and the CGP would act in the national interest, remaining above any partisan wrangling between ministers. Monnet adopted a similar approach when developing the architecture of the the ECSC: at the European level, Monnet insisted upon a *supra-national* High Authority that was meant to pursue the interests of the Community as a whole, above any potentially obstructionist national leader.[71] Monnet again employed his remarkable skills of persuasion among politicians and stakeholders from the six founding members of the ECSC to institute the forerunner to today's European Union.[72] While the supra-ministerial design of the CGP did not survive for long after Monnet's departure, it informed the supra-national structure of the European institutions which has been maintained ever since.

[71] Interestingly, the national leader who would obstruct Community affairs most during Monnet's lifetime was Charles de Gaulle as President of the Fifth Republic, most dramatically during the Empty Chair Crisis of 1965-66.

[72] On Monnet's tactics during the negotiations for the creation of the ECSC, particularly his strategy of sidelining French steel industrialists from the process, see Luc-André Brunet, *Forging Europe: Industrial Organisation in France, 1940-1952* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).