

'The federalists in Montreux' from Fédération (October 1947)

Caption: The Frenchman André Voisin, founder of the Fédération European movement in 1944, gives his impressions of the federalist Congress held in Montreux to his readers.

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The federalists in Montreux

Montreux, located at the far end of Lake Geneva, is a wonderfully quiet and beautiful place. Although the words that we use to express our admiration may differ, in the presence of such grandeur and serenity we cannot fail instantly to understand why the organisers of international meetings choose this location, as we discover the magnificent panorama of this part of this welcoming country, Switzerland.

However, it should be said that people from countries with a low exchange rate, such as ourselves, are tempted for a split second to demonstrate less understanding when presented with the bill; in this poor world everything has to be paid for ...

Yet Montreux, despite its prices and the value of the Swiss franc, has not been idle this summer. When we arrived here, the pilgrims of Moral Rearmament were scouring the streets for converts. The Americans attending the Congress of the Movement for World Federal Government were at the lakeside, taking a rest from the stormy debates, and activists from the Union of European Federalists (UEF) were invading the huge rooms of the palace.

Last spring, in Amsterdam, around 100 delegates had responded to the UEF's call. There were more than 200 of us in Switzerland, from 16 different nations of the old continent. In Amsterdam, the English Delegation was particularly prominent; this time, it was smaller. In contrast, there was an imposing group of Italians, led by Professor Rossi and Professor Rollier, and the Socialist MP, Mr Silone, a pleasant and skilful man. A few Germans had managed to secure the necessary authorisation from the British, French and Russian occupying authorities to attend this European meeting.

The French ranks were even fuller than they had been in the Netherlands. Among the French MPs there were Mr Bichet, the former Minister, and Mr Leenhart; two Vice-Presidents of the Federalist Group, Mr Faure and Mr Bonnefous; and their two tireless secretaries-general, Miss Trinquier and Mr Triboulet.

Among the activists were the President, Mr Larmeroux, the aggressive Claude-Marcel Hytte, the smiling Miss Rousseau, Mr Ader, Mr Gérard and Mr Bouchayer, Miss Ford, who never goes anywhere without her dog, Dr Le Henaff from Yvoire, the eloquent Philippe Serre, the taciturn Mr Tezenas, Mr Chevalme and Mr Mathot and Robert Aron, whom only those who do not know him consider to have a rather melancholy disposition ...

Mr Brugmans set out very clearly the position of the movement in relation to the empires of the East and West. He explained why, despite being fully aware of the current possibilities and impossibilities, we could not renounce our final goal: the federation of the whole of Europe.

We shall shortly return to the German question, one which has caused fierce controversy. The slogan 'a federal Germany in a federal Europe' certainly receives unanimous support. Yet it seems that, when we push further forward in order to clarify the political and economic solutions, the difficulties proliferate. It has been said that we are still too close to the terrible trauma to be able to deal properly with the organisation of Central Europe. But do we have time to wait? Tomorrow, at the rate things (and people) are going — between the Rhine and the Oder, to the west of the Rhine, and to the east of the Oder — are we not likely to need even more courage and intelligence? Shall we ever have enough?

We shall particularly remember how this conference in Montreux highlighted the prime importance of what is known here as *the federalist doctrine*.

Let us build Europe, proclaim the good apostles, and let us only build Europe. Let us bring together all those who are in favour of the idea of European unity and, above all, let us expand no further, so as not to offend or alienate anyone. Listening to them, you would think that in their atlas they really have discovered the miracle slogan. If Europe is to remain a simple expression of political geography, why do nations have to 'join'? This expression, formulated in this way, and so tightly defined, makes absolutely no sense to us.

We are fighting for a European *Federation*, because, in our view, this represents both a certain idea of society and institutions which appears to correspond with the way of life and the hopes of Western nations, and a civilisation to which we are passionately attached. Moreover, the creation of a European Federation seems to offer and facilitate profound structural reforms, for which we are fighting within the restrictively narrow framework of our archaic borders, when it is, in fact, this very narrowness that makes these reforms unworkable. The European Federation appears to endorse the establishment of a fair order, freely accepted, the rebirth of a fraternal spirit.

To the applause of the vast majority of those present, Mr Denis de Rougemont, Mr Bertrand de Jouvenel, Mr Brugmans and Mr Vergnolle vigorously emphasised — each in his own philosophical or oratorical style — the moral, intellectual and political substance of the notion of Europe.

Mr Daniel Serruys and Mr Allais sketched out the main lines of economic, financial and social integration to be successfully completed.

We must admit that we sometimes found Mr Allais's vocabulary too leftist, and his arguments too conventionally liberal. Nevertheless — and contrary to the majority — we were delighted to hear La Tour du Pin's famous chapter on usury receive contemporary exposure. Also, even more importantly, Mr Allais's report sparked enthusiasm among those attending the Congress, as it set out at long last a coordinated body of proposals and marked a sincere effort to move on from the old systems.

Is it really so easy to be critical that criticism has become commonplace? Any objective observer must recognise that the advocates of 'geographism', the opponents of decentralisation, the more or less disguised statisticians and the expert detractors have produced mediocre replies.

The European movement is 'taking shape', according to a supporter of La Fédération [French federalist group], who had enthusiastically followed the progress of the Congress.

Mr Genet and Mr Brugmans were re-elected to the posts of UEF Presidents, and Mr Silva remains as Secretary-General.

Our friend, Alexandre Marc, will continue to lead the institutional sector. With him as leader, we are sure that the federalist trend displayed in Montreux will become stronger. We can only conclude by admitting that we are delighted about this, since it is our conviction that therein lie truth and salvation.

André Voisin