

'From the Fouchet Plan to the Union of European Nations' from the Luxemburger Wort (22 December 1961)

Caption: On 22 December 1961, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort focuses on the progress of the intergovernmental negotiations devoted to a consideration of the Fouchet Plan.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. für Wahrheit und Recht. 22.12.1961, n° 356; 114e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Vom Plan Fouchet zur Union der Europäischen Völker", p. 1.

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From the Fouchet Plan to the Union of European Nations

Strasbourg, 21 December 1961.

When the former French Prime Minister, René Pleven, on the evening before last, delivered a report to the European Parliamentary Assembly on the subject of Parliament's recommendation on a draft Treaty establishing a Union of European Nations, one could not help but recall the high summer of 1954. In late August, the European Defence Community had been spectacularly voted down in the French Parliament. All hopes for a political extension of the Coal and Steel Community, that is to say a political superstructure for the Europe of the Six, had been shattered at a stroke. All preparations — as extensive and thorough as they had been — seemed to have been in vain. The prospects for Europe were really at their lowest at that point in time. The best of Europeans had every reason to give up their noble fight in despair.

But a new and convincing beginning was soon to be made again. Instead of admitting defeat, the Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers of the remaining five Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community invented the 'revival' through the economy. And this was more than just a project. The Rome Treaties turned it into a new dawn for Europe. Though lacking in supranational power, it had the definite advantage of having high political ambitions, given that the Treaty of Rome not only set out strict rules for the creation of a common market but also imposed major political objectives (in the areas of agricultural, trade and economic policy) on the governments.

It was, therefore, not very long before another serious attempt was made to create a political union. Is it not significant that it was the French Government that took this initiative? After it had become clear that France, in particular, was not prepared to entrust a supranational institution with foreign-policy and military decisions, it certainly came as a welcome gesture that President Charles de Gaulle was looking out for a different, that is to say a practicable way for the implementation of the political cooperation between the nations of the existing European Communities in a pragmatic way. At first, the other States had good reason to be sceptical. There was no definite saying whether the French President's idea consisted in seeking European unity by extending the existing Communities or by trying to replace them with political intergovernmental cooperation. After the other governments had made it clear to the French statesmen that political cooperation in this form might be considered only if it did not affect the existing Communities and effectively aimed for political union at a later stage, France revised its original concept. It was up to Ambassador Christian Fouchet to draft a plan in accordance with the French vision and for senior officials in the Commission, appointed by the governments, to analyse it and to find a common denominator for the various preferences.

It was important for the European Parliamentary Assembly to be given the opportunity to discuss the draft Treaty in the Political Committee and to formulate recommendations thereon through the Parliamentary Assembly. The Fouchet Plan, to which the Luxembourg Government has also made valuable proposals, has somewhat improved in the meantime. It is, nevertheless, important that the European Parliament could express its views for the first time on this matter. The most significant change proposed by Parliament involves the appointment of an independent Secretary-General for the political Community, who would be responsible to Parliament and empowered freely to choose his staff. Thus, from an institutional point of view, the Community would initially be composed of the Council of Ministers, the Secretary-General and the European Parliamentary Assembly. With regard to the later development of the political Community, Parliament also expressed the wish that a multitude of European partnerships should be avoided as far as possible. From what we have learnt, this seems to correspond with the wishes of the governments. We hope that the political Community will be established in the not too distant future and that the European states will act as quickly as possible as a firmly established defence unit and, also as far as foreign policy is concerned, select common standpoints in their own interests as well as the interest of world peace. It is not inconceivable that this cooperation, if continued in the right spirit, will one day lead to the institution of a European Executive, that is to say a true Union of European Nations.