

Draft declaration of the European resistance movements (20 May 1944)

Caption: On 31 March, 29 April, 20 May and 6 and 7 July 1944, militants from resistance movements of several European countries meet secretly in Geneva to discuss the problems related to the reconstruction of a democratic, federally-based Europe after the war.

Source: Europe speaks: issues on behalf of the ISK, Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (Militant Socialist International). Dir. of publ. Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (Militant Socialist International). 11.10.1944. London. "Draft declaration of the European resistance movements (20May 1944)", p. 1-4.

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Manifesto

I.

“The peoples of Europe are united in their resistance to Nazi oppression. This common struggle has created amongst them a solidarity and unity of interests and aims which demonstrate their significance and value by the fact that the representatives of European resistance movements have come together to draft this declaration expressing their hopes and aspirations regarding the future of peace and civilization.

The members of the resistance movements are well aware that their relentless struggle on the home front against the enemy’s war machine is an important positive contribution towards the war effort of the United Nations; it gives their countries the right to participate in the reconstruction of Europe side by side with the other victorious powers.

They accept the essential principles of the Atlantic Charter and maintain that the life of their peoples must be based upon respect for the individual personality, security, the planned exploitation of economic resources for the benefit of the whole community and the autonomous development of national life.

II.

These aims cannot be achieved unless the different countries are willing to give up the dogma of the absolute sovereignty of the State and unite in a single federal organisation.

The lack of unity and cohesion between the different parts of the world make it impossible to tackle immediately the task of creating a federal world organisation. At the end of this war we shall have to limit ourselves to the building up of a less ambitious world organisation — which should however permit of development in a federal direction — in the framework of which the great powers will have the task of guaranteeing collective security. It will not be, however, an effective instrument of peace unless the great powers are organised in such a way that the spirit of peace and understanding can prevail.

It is for this reason that, within the framework of this world organisation, a more radical and direct solution must be found for the European problem.

III.

European peace is the keystone in the arch of world peace. During the life time of one generation Europe has been twice the centre of a world conflict whose chief cause was the existence of thirty sovereign States in Europe. It is a most urgent task to end this international anarchy by creating a European Federal Union.

Only a Federal Union will enable the German people to join the European community without becoming a danger to other peoples.

Only a Federal Union will make it possible to solve the problem of drawing frontiers in districts with a mixed population. The minorities will thus cease to be the object of nationalistic jealousies and frontiers will be nothing but demarcation lines between administrative districts.

Only a Federal Union will be in a position to protect democratic institutions and so to prevent politically less developed countries becoming a danger to the international order.

Only a Federal Union will make possible the economic reconstruction of the Continent and the liquidation of monopolies and national self-sufficiency.

Only a Federal Union will allow a logical and natural solution of the problems of the access to the sea of those countries which are situated in the interior of the Continent, of a rational use of those rivers which flow through several States, of the control of the straits, and, generally, of most of the problems which

during recent years have disturbed international relations.

IV.

It is not possible at present to determine the geographical frontiers of a Federal Union which would guarantee peace in Europe. We must, however, state that from the outset such a Union must be strong enough to avoid the risk of either being used as a mere sphere of influence by a foreign State or of becoming the instrument of the political ambitions of one of its member States. Furthermore it must from the beginning be open to all countries which entirely or partly belong to Europe and which wish to join it and are qualified to do so.

The Federal Union must be based upon a declaration of civil, political and economic rights which would guarantee democratic institutions and the free development of the human personality, and upon a declaration of the rights of minorities to have as much autonomy as is compatible with the integrity of the national States to which they belong.

The Federal Union must not interfere with the right of each of its member States to solve its special problems in conformity with its ethnical and cultural pattern. But in view of the failure of the League of Nations, the States must irrevocably surrender to the Federation their sovereign rights in the sphere of defence, relations with powers outside the Union, international exchange and communications.

The Federal Union must possess the following essential features:

- (1) A government responsible not to the governments of the various member States but to the peoples, who must be under its direct jurisdiction in the spheres to which its powers extend.
- (2) An army at the disposal of this government, no national armies being permitted.
- (3) A Supreme Court acting as authority in interpreting the Constitution deciding cases of conflict between the member States or between the member States and the Union.

The peace which will follow this war must be based upon justice and progress and not upon vengeance and reaction. It should, however, treat the war criminals with ruthless severity; to let them escape their punishment would be an insult to all who have fallen in this war and especially to the unknown heroes of the resistance movements throughout Europe. Germany and her satellites must take part in the economic reconstruction of the regions they have devastated. But Germany must be helped and if necessary, compelled to change her political and economic structure with a view to qualifying for membership of the Federal Union. For that purpose she must be completely disarmed and temporarily subjected to a Federal control, which will have in the main the following tasks:

To entrust power to those truly democratic elements which have consistently fought against Nazism.

To build up a decentralised democratic State free from the last trace of Prussian militarism and bureaucracy.

To secure the liquidation of feudalism in the agricultural and industrial life of Germany.

To integrate German chemical and heavy industries into the European industrial organisation so as to prevent their use for German nationalistic ends.

To prevent the education of German youth in accordance with Nazi, militaristic and totalitarian doctrines.

V.

The signatory resistance movements recognise that the active participation of the United Nations is essential for the resolution of the European problem, but they demand that all measures taken between the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of peace shall be in conformity with the requirements of a Federal organisation.

They appeal to all the spiritual and political forces of the world and in particular to those of the United Nations to help them to attain the objectives indicated in this Manifesto.

They undertake to consider their respective national problems only as particular aspects of the general European problem and they intend immediately to establish a permanent bureau with the function of co-ordinating their efforts on behalf of the liberation of their countries, the organisation of a Federal Union of European peoples and the establishment of peace and justice throughout the world.”