

## 'Europe, an open society' from Fédération (February 1947)

**Caption:** In February 1947, the Dutch militant federalist, Henri Brugmans, publishes an article in the French journal *Fédération* in which he emphasises the importance of European reconstruction based on the federal model.

**Source:** *Fédération*. Revue de l'ordre vivant. dir. de publ. Richard, Max. Février 1947, n° 25. Paris: Imprimerie de la Seine. "L'Europe, société ouverte", auteur:Brugmans, Henri , p. 5.

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## Europe, an open society

by **Henri Brugmans**

**Former Minister of Information of the Netherlands**

We are perhaps entering a period in which new connections will have to be made. Philosophy is trying to grasp the concept of the 'person', the 'whole' that we represent, despite the many changes that we embody, despite our differences. And, in public life, a new doctrine is gaining ground, one that is both vigorous and flexible: Federalism.

Federalism is continuing the history of the past century and correcting it. It hails the liberation movements to which we have referred, and even accomplishes their goals. But, at the same time, it seeks to restore a bit of order amid the chaos of the forces that have been released, while guaranteeing them maximum autonomy and freedom to develop. It endeavours to revive the various forms of collective awareness, dormant or embryonic, while at the same time restoring sound, organic hierarchies. Once and for all, it has broken with the old liberal doctrines of 'laissez-faire' and 'survival of the fittest', with the outdated optimism that believed in the 'natural and spontaneous harmony' of social forces. Federalism is, on the one hand, a collective perception of the common interest and, on the other, concern for 'higher' authorities. It is a respect for freedoms and an instrument for their realisation. It is, in fact, the doctrine of balanced autonomies.

That said, I shall move on to European Federalism.

We, the peoples of this continent, have discovered that, together, we lost the war. We see our cities in ruins, our wealth destroyed or threatened, our morale shaken. We see the problems of Europe from close up and yet we realise we are powerless to solve them. We are the poor relations of this world and the real 'Powers' make their decisions over our heads: decisions taken 'about us, here, without us'.

That is the collective perception. Ashamed of our weakness, frightened by the enormity of our misfortunes, we find solidarity in our 'proletarian' condition as Europeans. And we sense, if we are not to disappear, that we ought to know that 'the emancipation of Europeans will be the work of the Europeans themselves.'

Our active sympathy is solicited from all sides. We are urged to enlist as mercenaries on a 'front' that is neither that of civilisation, nor that of 'progress', nor again that of peace. And if we are minded to rebuild our economies, we are refused funds, or else they are granted on condition ... that we marvel at lots of American films, for example, or that we do not vote for the Left. This we know ... and our response is a militant, practical European 'patriotism'.

And I use the term 'patriotism' advisedly. For occupation and resistance taught us that patriotism is an essentially supranational sentiment. At least, it can be, for it is human, universal, rooted in solidarity.

During those grim years, when the deeds of patriots from Greece, Norway, Belgium and so many other countries were recounted, did you not feel these were your own people fighting for the common cause? While a certain form of nationalism is the enemy of the peoples, pitting them one against the other, so authentic patriotism brings them closer together. Throughout the Europe of oppression and resistance, a European patriotism was being forged. That patriotism countered the notion of a 'Fortress Europe' with the ideal of a continent freely federated. Despite present-day lassitude, these hopes have not perished.

All tangible problems call for a special framework in which to be resolved, one that is appropriate and structured. There are national problems or local problems, just as there are national problems or universal problems (I am thinking here of the world food problem or atomic energy). There are also problems situated at European level.

This is what we affirm, nothing more, nothing less. We believe it is a mistake to want to build the UN on the basis of the two 'Super-Powers' and their potential vassals. We believe in the utility of the regional

federations of China, Indonesia, Latin America, the Arab World and, so recently British, India. Similarly, we affirm the necessity of Europe. But whoever wishes to make Europe a universal remedy or some kind of idol will find us on the other side of the barricades. For, once again, the concern for 'higher' authorities (discussed above) continues to drive us onward.

Our material reconstruction is a European problem, one that is insoluble without real cooperation. Germany is an issue that must concern us all, and it is a fact that the great powers outside Europe will never find the right solutions to this problem. Only a genuine collective grasp of what is to be done will help us overcome the moral decay afflicting our continent. This is 'our business', to quote an expression dear to the 'Anglo-Saxon' world.

And it is the federalist spirit alone that can save our movement of liberation from a descent into chauvinism. Only federalism will give us Europe, an open society.

Henri Brugmans