

'Europe will be defended after all!' from the Luxemburger Wort (2 September 1954)

Caption: On 2 September 1954, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort discusses the impact on European defence of the French National Assembly's refusal to ratify the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community (EDC).

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 02.09.1954, n° 245; 107e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Europa wird doch verteidigt", auteur:M.F. , p. 1.

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Europe will be defended after all!

France has rejected the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community, just as we predicted here some months ago.

Some people are in tears, others are celebrating too soon! The realists are calm and composed, perhaps even relieved. Instead of lamenting, they draw the only proper conclusion from the failure of the EDC, which is that Europeans are not born in the way that existentialists or symbolists are, and that Europeans cannot be born until there is actually one Europe. Europe will not just suddenly appear as a result of memoranda and signatures or of people spontaneously relinquishing their rights of national sovereignty, it will come about only on the basis of the very gradual establishment of a community of interests within which, one day, the one will not be able to exist without the other. Only then will there be an end to the mistrust and fears.

If a genuine European spirit, a belief in Europe, had existed, it would have been possible to take the first step without any further ado and successfully establish a political community.

However, the nationalist way of thinking is still predominant, the memories of the splits and antagonisms of the past are still at the forefront. There is not yet a strong enough basis of mutual trust for a country like France, for example, to be willing to sign a treaty at this moment and put decisions on crucial questions into the hands of a supranational authority for a period of 50 years.

It would be wrong to read into this any suspicion that France is opposed to the European idea. Anyone who might think of falsely ascribing pure ill will to the French is failing to appreciate the honesty with which they joined the Schuman Plan, another supranational European organisation. It is precisely the out-and-out opponents of political integration in Europe who have pointed out, immediately after the rejection of the EDC Treaty, that none of the pacts or treaties concluded in the past ten years is affected in any way by this verdict of the Assemblée nationale.

The Schuman Plan is a reality. To a certain degree, it will even prove beneficial to it that the High Authority is not at this very moment being given support by a new and politically much more extensive supranational institution, support which it could use to sustain itself, even if did not offer any economic satisfaction. Admittedly, it was stated repeatedly that the Schuman Plan is intended to be an initial political step for Europe. However, this should not protect it from having first to pass its test from an economic point of view. The Schuman Community must now no longer be reliant on the projected creation of a political community in Europe, it should be much more self-reliant. If the High Authority is able to cope with this task of its own, then this will automatically promote the formation of a political community. It would have been wrong if it had seen this as a lifeline that it could have used to keep its head above water, in spite of having made incorrect or possibly inept moves. The same applies to the Coal and Steel Community as a European institution as applies to each individual person: the Community will not be strong and convincing until it knows how to stand on its own two feet.

With regard to the direct consequences of the French vote, it is too soon at the moment to form a clear opinion of the situation. In any event, it will be impossible to force any general solutions of a European dimension if the real preconditions for it do not exist. The political community will have to be put on ice for the time being. Instead, there is practical work to be done that will benefit Europe more than the preparation of new, far-reaching supranational treaties.

The military defence of Europe has not become impossible. It will now find expression in a new alliance formula. Without being over-hasty, the USA and Britain will now press for the German Federal Republic to be given back its sovereignty. It is clear that the French decision must not be allowed to be detrimental to Konrad Adenauer. Europe, from Bonn to Paris, is just as anti-Communist this week as it was last week. The French politicians are far too clever to put wind into the sails of the supporters of Kremlin tactics. Pierre Mendès France wants to have a replacement formula and a majority that are without the burden of being mortgaged to the Communists.

There will, after all, be a European army, without any surrender of national sovereignty — basically, this kind of solution requires far more community spirit and more inclination to be well disposed to it than any other. Or perhaps there will be a system of military alliances involving German rearmament, which would be inextricably woven into NATO and would secure the defence of the West for the next ten years, while not precluding the later establishment of the European Defence Community — just as set out in the treaty rejected by France.

We have even less to lose from this in that such a procedure would be less expensive and perhaps even open the doors to numerous other adjustments to the Luxembourg situation.

The pro-Europeans still form the majority in Western Europe. There are no differences of opinion about the objectives, only about the routes to be taken towards attaining them. The route of the EDC would have been the shortest. However, it proved to be the most difficult. Since the attainment of the objective is the most important aspect, it should not be difficult for us to take the routes that ultimately prove to be the only passable ones.

M. F.