

'At the Congress of Europe in The Hague' from the Luxemburger Wort (5 May 1948)

Caption: Two days before the opening of the Congress of Europe in The Hague, the daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort considers the programme for and the issues involved in the event as they affect progress towards European unification.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 05.05.1948, n° 126/127; 101e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Zum Europa-Kongress im Haag", p. 1.

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At the Congress of Europe in The Hague

The International Committee of the Movements for European Unity has drawn up a report that will be presented to the Congress of Europe to be held in The Hague from 7 to 10 May. It gives a convincing account of the economic, financial and politico-democratic opportunities that a united Europe would provide. The Dutch Catholic newspaper *De Tijd* offers an in-depth analysis of the report and concludes succinctly that 'only unity can save Europe'.

Can the Congress of Europe in The Hague bring the concept of a united Europe any closer to reality?

Responsibility for organising the congress has been shared equally between Churchill's United Europe Movement, the European Union of Federalists, *Les Nouvelles Equipes Internationales* (the French committee for European union), the Independent League for European Cooperation, the European Parliamentary Union and Liberal International. All these movements are already exerting a deep influence upon public opinion. The two-day congress in The Hague should now provide real evidence that, despite minor differences, all these movements share the same major objective. It is certainly very welcome that they should have agreed to pursue a common aim and now this is conspicuously demonstrated by the staging of the Hague Congress.

In the meantime it remains an open question whether all these movements, united in their pursuit of the same goal, want to get there by the same route. Only the course of the Hague Congress will be able to clarify this point. Between 700 and 800 delegates are expected to attend from all 16 states participating in the European Recovery Program, with observers from Yugoslavian, Romanian, Polish, Czechoslovakian and Spanish emigrant and political exile circles. Out of all of these, only the stance that the British delegation will take is actually known with any degree of confidence. Robert Boothby, the Conservative MP, who called a press conference in London yesterday, announced that 27 Labour Members would be attending the Hague Congress, although their party leadership did not officially approve of this. The British delegation would, in addition, include 25 Conservative MPs, representatives of the churches, universities, the legal profession and women's organisations. Ronald Mackay, leader of the British delegation and Labour MP, would be presenting two reports to the conference. The first would call for a European Parliament and European armed forces. It would propose too that the citizens of the European Federation become nationals of the European Union without having to give up their own nationalities.

The second report, Boothby went on to explain, would deal with economic and social questions and recommend a single currency and a customs union within the European Federation. The individual states would be called on to announce right away their resolve to create a united Europe. They should encourage free trade in Western Europe as a preliminary stage towards total currency convertibility. Further measures would also be recommended for the easing of restrictions on tourism in Western Europe and for the establishment of international control over the development of industry in the Ruhr.

These are, indeed, far-reaching proposals and one cannot reasonably expect the Hague Congress to do anything more towards the realisation of their objectives than to draft a non-committal resolution. And that is something professional politicians know how to do. If, however, the Hague Congress succeeds in preparing the general public to accept such revolutionary principles — revolutionary, because they require each of the countries concerned to surrender voluntarily some of their sovereignty — then it will have fully achieved its objective, for we see the main task of each of the federalist movements, for the time being at least, to be to influence public opinion.