

'Europe: an alternative' from Démocratie 62 (22 February 1962)

Caption: On 22 February 1962, the French periodical Démocratie 62 analyses the reasons for the deadlock in negotiations over the Fouchet Plan and focuses on the conditions for a revival of political Europe.

Source: Démocratie 62. 22.02.1962. Paris. "Europe: Une alternative", auteur:Farine, Philippe.

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Europe: an alternative

Also in the news this week was the meeting between Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer. Following the talks in Baden-Baden and the resumption of talks in the Fouchet Committee, there has been renewed talk of the establishment of a political Europe. More details from Philippe Farine.

The Fouchet Committee resumed its deliberations at the Quai d'Orsay on Monday 19 February. It consists of experts from the six European Community governments and is named after its Chairman, the career diplomat Christian Fouchet (a Gaullist and former RPF Member of the French National Assembly, who is now French Ambassador to Denmark).

It was set up seven months ago in the wake of the European Summit held in Bonn on 18 July 1961. The Six decided that a special Committee would be set up and instructed to submit 'proposals on the means which will as soon as possible enable a statutory character to be given to the union of their peoples.' In other words, it meant that a treaty should be drawn up in order to 'give shape to the will for political union already implicit in the Treaties establishing the European Communities.'

Fouchet ... at a standstill

Following 18 July, developments might have been expected to gather pace. The optimists were saying that a treaty might be signed in January or February 1962 and that it would supplement the Rome and Paris Treaties. They based this conviction on the agreement reached in Bonn which sketched out the broad outlines of the future union and which, if taken literally, was a logical continuation of the existing institutions.

The optimists were wrong! Not only is there no document capable of rallying the support of all six governments, but the way in which the Committee's meetings were conducted caused major unease amongst the Six, or rather between France, on the one hand, and the other five countries on the other.

It was because of that unease, which might spark off a real crisis of confidence, that General de Gaulle, despite his problems in Algeria, headed off to Baden-Baden on Friday 17 February to meet Adenauer. It was the latter's concern about the direction that French European policy was taking that led to this Franco-German summit. The Chancellor, who has staked everything on cooperation between Paris and Bonn on European issues, was beginning to wonder whether he had not been betrayed. He needed a clear insight into French intentions, but he also intended to reassert his own, so that there would be no misunderstanding on either side.

An outmoded style

Why this unease? Why does crisis threaten?

First of all, because of the French proposals put forward in the Fouchet Committee, known as the 'Fouchet Plan', and, above all, because of General de Gaulle's speech on 5 February.

Indeed, underlying the Fouchet Plan is a concept of a political Europe that ignores all past achievements as regards European integration. Not only was no reference made to the existing Communities (ECSC, Euratom, the Common Market), other than to make them subsidiary bodies and limit them to a mere executive and technical function, but a purely intergovernmental style dominates the envisaged European architecture. This is an old, outmoded style. There was no more talk of giving institutional shape to the 'will for political union already implicit in the Treaties establishing the European Communities' (to quote the Bonn Declaration). Instead, while couched in the same terms, it harked back to that ancient concept of a good old alliance between sovereign states.

The speech of 5 February was pored over in all the Western Foreign Ministries. Particular note was taken of the astonishing claim that the conclusion of the Treaty of Rome had 'omitted' agriculture (although an entire

chapter in the Treaty is devoted it). But what really caused concern was the guilty verdict brought against integration as spelling the end of nation states. This was felt particularly in Bonn, where West Germany's entire foreign policy is based not only on an acceptance of, but the quest for, integration into both the European and the Atlantic communities.

No common language

Has the meeting in Baden-Baden allowed us to put the goalposts back and find a common language? True to the purest diplomatic tradition, all the participants expressed their satisfaction, while leaving an equally traditional veil drawn over the conclusions of the talks.

It does not appear that the Chancellor gained the General's support for his idea of a Community any more than de Gaulle was able to convince Adenauer that Europe could be built only upon the foundation of the sovereign state. No concessions are possible, and no credence should ever be given to talk of such concessions. One of the two would have to undergo a genuine and apparently impossible 'conversion'.

So, was it a wasted effort? Not at all! One sentence in the communiqué reaffirms the decisions taken on 18 July. Moreover, it states that, 'given the dangers facing the free world, work on completing the planned organisation has to be speeded up.' It could be said, quite justifiably, that this does not amount to much. However, it could have a positive meaning. Reviving the spirit of 18 July means that no changes will be made to the existence and further development of the Communities now in place.

This is crucial, because the Communities constitute the body and tissue of the Europe that is taking shape, while the Community spirit is its soul, and to tamper with it would undermine the entire European unification 'process'. There must be no concessions made on this point. Any approach to the establishment of a political Europe that threatens the three Communities in any way at all would be no more than an illusion and a trick. It should be denounced as such and opposed by every available means.

The Community way

No miracles should be expected of the Fouchet Committee. As things now stand, nothing compelling can emerge from it. What matters most is that no road blocks should be erected along the Community route. If we cannot follow that route just now because of the ideological obstinacy of our ruling princes, the important thing is to keep the route open.

There is really only one choice. That between what is mistakenly called the Europe of Nations, and which is merely an alliance of states (an alliance that, down the centuries, has demonstrated its limitations as well as its inability to attain the unattainable) and a Community-based Europe founded on a fusion of interests and destinies and which, alone, can transform our European countries into not an ephemeral association of States but a political and economic 'single entity', the third Great Power.

Keeping the Community route open must be the realistic choice of any pro-European activist.

Philippe Farine