

Brief summary of the meeting of the MSEUE International Committee (The Hague, 11 October 1953)

Caption: On 16 October 1953, five days after the meeting of the International Committee of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe (MSEUE) in The Hague, the Dutch Labour Party Partij van de Arbeid drafts a brief report on the MSEUE Congress.

Source: Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam. Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) 1946-1966 (-1967). Commissie Buitenland van de PvdA (Com 13). 1950-1958, 1966. Buitenlandse Documentatie Dossier: M. van der Stoel 1950-1958; 1966 (circulaires), 1148.

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Brief summary of the meeting of the International Committee of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe held at The Hague on 11 October 1953

The meeting was essentially devoted to reports from various countries on the political situation in connection with the European Political and Defence Communities.

Bley outlined the situation in Germany following the elections. As a result of the CDU's absolute majority, its parliamentary party has now become, as it were, the Parliament, and Socialism has been driven into a political ghetto.

The loss of the SPD's majority in Hamburg, Frankfurt, the major cities in the Ruhr, and Munich was symbolic of the party's position. He blamed the SPD's defeat on its negative European policy. Moreover, as a personality, Adenauer was a more imposing figure than Ollenhauer. It was clear from the voting among refugees that the SPD had also lost influence in the Eastern zone.

In the party apparatus a certain weariness was setting in. Official policymakers were ignoring the facts and looking for 'minor errors'.

The pro-European minority in the SPD now wanted to come to the fore, something which it had not done prior to the elections. It had thereby avoided the accusation that the elections were lost on account of its actions.

There were now plans to convene a conference in Frankfurt to which some 100 prominent pro-European SPD members would be invited. Kaisen, amongst others, has been convinced, and there were also plans to attract SPD members working within the UEF.

Following a lengthy discussion of the SPD's negative European policy and its disastrous consequences in the elections, the SPD must take up the seats allocated to it in the *ad hoc* assembly. There was already dissatisfaction in the party over this matter as the position of the party executive was not understood.

In the discussions of Bley's report, Spaak urged the swift publication of a German edition of *Gauche Européenne*. Jacquet enquired as to the possibility of contact with workers' representatives in the CDU parliamentary party, to which he received the reply that the intention was first to win over the SPD. Dehousse supported the idea of taking up the vacant seats in the *ad hoc* group.

Jacquet gave a report on the situation in France. The SFIO had made a U-turn at its most recent conference, with the European resolution securing a two-thirds majority. This was contingent on a close link with Britain and the swift establishment of the Political Community. The greatest obstacle in France was that the pro-European majority was not the same as the government majority. If France wished to pursue a more pro-European policy, it would be able to do so only if the current pro-European majority took over the government. This was consistent with the idea, put forward by the SFIO, of a *front démocratique et social*, an idea similar to the breakthrough composition of the SMUSE.

As a Radical Socialist, De Felice gave a detailed explanation of the situation within that party. There was a majority in favour of the European projects which, however, would increase considerably if the treaty on the Political Community had been lodged with the Bureau of the Assembly when the European Defence Community was discussed. Daladier's anti-European influence was extremely limited. The great unknown was Herriot, who was slowly abandoning his vehemently anti-European position but whose wait-and-see approach was having an adverse impact on many Radical Socialist Members of Parliament.

Zaggari reported on Italy. He saw the reason for the failure of the Social Democrats (and all their centrist allies) at the elections in precisely the opposite of the SPD's mistake in Germany, namely an insufficient emphasis on socio-economic problems and too much attention to international politics.

The *Gauche Européenne* would soon be appearing in Italian. In Italy the plan was to start with this

publication and then build around it an organisation with room also for Liberals, Republicans and left-leaning Christian Democrats. At present, there were no plans to set up an organisation as well, because, in the Socialist Movement in particular, there were already so many groups that the SMUSE would be regarded as a new splinter group. He noted the importance of winning local councils over to the European idea and, in that regard, urged the other countries to join the *Conseil des Communes d'Europe*.

This led to a discussion on this matter with Jacquet, who pointed to the extremely right-wing nature of the French Section of that organisation which was dominated by Voisin of *La Fédération*. However, the International Committee of the *Conseil des Communes d'Europe* appeared not to be under Voisin's influence and to have decided, where necessary, to admit the anti-Voisin forces from France separately.

Zaggari did not give a definite answer as regards the specific chances of the EDC and EPC treaties being ratified. He rejected a suggestion that an effort be made to approach the leader of the Nenni party since it had been entirely infiltrated by Communists. It was further evident from the discussion of the Italian plans that the German organisation also planned to start with a publication of *Gauche Européenne* and to build up groups around it.

As regards the British situation, Bob Edwards said that the SMUSE, which had previously existed as a part of the Independent Labour Party, was virtually defunct, and efforts were now being made to set up a group within the Labour Party. Substantially greater interest in the Coal and Steel Community was noticeable, in particular on the part of the mineworkers' union.

Spaak himself gave a report on the situation in Belgium. In committee discussions, the party had voted against the EDC for opportunistic reasons, as it intended thereby to force through a constitutional amendment and early elections. Before the EDC came up for definitive discussion, an extraordinary party conference would determine the position of the BSP. Spaak trusted — touching all the wood to hand — that the pro-European forces would prevail in this regard.

Van der Goes van Naters referred to the difficulties in the Netherlands which were caused primarily by the wait-and-see approach of the Netherlands Government. The Netherlands would certainly ratify the EDC, but the Political Community stood no chance at all of ratification, unless tangible economic powers were granted to it.

In the subsequent discussion, Spaak referred to the impossible situation which would arise if six countries ratified the EDC Treaty and only five countries ratified the EPC Treaty.

In conclusion, Spaak gave a summary. He saw the SMUSE's task as:

1. Assisting the German and Italian European Socialists within their parties.
2. Drawing up a minimum formula for economic integration. This could act as a compromise solution and must meet Netherlands requirements.
3. Developing a Socialist economic policy at European level into a specific whole which must be comprehensible to ordinary people.
4. Forming a European Group within the Socialist International in which he regarded the risk posed by the British Bevanites (who placed the Russian and German threats on a par) as greater than the risk of a continuation of the SPD's negative position.

At the end, further discussions took place between party members Vos, Mozer, Gironella and Philip, on the organisation of expert work on economic integration.