

Address given by Georges Le Brun Kéris at the Congress of Europe (The Hague, 8 May 1948)

Caption: On 8 May 1948, Georges Le Brun Kéris, a member of the Assembly of the French Union, emphasises to the members of the Political Committee at the Congress of Europe in The Hague the need to establish Europe while allowing each State with colonial responsibilities the freedom to ensure the political, social and cultural progress of the citizens living in its overseas territories.

Source: Archives du Mouvement européen international, Bruxelles. Congress of Europe (May 1948), Vol. II. Political Committee, pp. 64-65.

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I should first of all like to recall that this amendment replaces the one that has remained in the English translation: the one which was deleted and had first been presented by Mrs Lefauché, Abbé Catrice and me. Therefore, all that remains are the amendments that have been read out and that state that the Union should leave each of its members to be free to ensure political, social and cultural progress for the people in their territories, situated here or overseas, and to link them however they see fit. We have submitted this amendment, which, at first, might be just a hint of what was only in the original text and seemed to us very limited in nature and rather too strictly practical. Also, we were very concerned; less by the text of the motion itself than by some parts of the draft report. It was this version of the report that seemed to clarify it to me and certainly alarmed us.

We see that it discusses creating an overseas section in the Council that would examine the overall measures that could develop, through common action, the economic potential of overseas territories. Here we are all in full agreement; we do believe that joint action to develop this economic potential can only be beneficial and perfectly desirable. However, we do not believe, unlike what appears to be being said in support of the report, we do not believe that it can be a positive thing or a good thing to attempt to combine together, or, if you like, to attempt to determine people's political, social and cultural progress through joint pressure. This seems to me, on the contrary, to fall essentially to each one of us according to our individual genius, and it even depends on the very genius of our civilisations that we can undertake this task. This seems to me to be *par excellence* the political progress, the social progress and the cultural progress that is specific to each of our countries and it is why we have taken the liberty of proposing this amendment, particularly given that political evolution is something we are very familiar with. It is extremely difficult for us to understand each other's domestic political structures and our domestic political behaviour. But the text, as it seems to have emerged from the report, does not really seem to leave any doors open to what is specific to us in social and cultural terms, within our unions, within our countries, within our mainlands and the territories linked to them.

If it were not already extremely late I would have expounded on other considerations and I would have pointed out that it is perhaps a little awkward to see the word 'dependent' coming back, when, at least in the case of my country, this notion of dependence has been replaced by the interdependent federal notion. However, given the late hour, I would not like to prolong the meeting, but I would simply insist on asking that, while we take a very firm position on the economic need for this collaboration, social progress, cultural progress and political progress in overseas territories should always be in line with our own national situations.