

'The Hague Congress' from Le Monde (9-10 May 1948)

Caption: In its edition of 9–10 May 1948, the French daily newspaper Le Monde describes the significance of and the issues involved in the debates held during the Congress of Europe held in The Hague.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 09.-10.05.1948, n° 1 021. Paris: Le Monde. "Le Congrès de La Haye", p. 1.

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The Hague Congress

Living in a nightmare on a daily basis increases our desire to escape and to drift off into beautiful dreams. The darker the present, the stronger our faith in a brighter future.

It is this powerful feeling of nations that has given rise, since the war, to so many European federalist movements and has prompted the holding of the Hague Congress. It is indeed fortunate that Mr Winston Churchill, whose eminent personality dominates our entire era, will once again support and sponsor the age-old and noble idea of a United States of Europe. We could not find a better advocate for a nobler cause.

His inaugural address continues the thrust of his speeches in Fulton and Zurich, where the ex-Prime Minister invited Europe to unite against the Russian peril and later urged France to bring Germany back into the European fold. Yesterday, he was more cautious and less categorical, as much towards the USSR as towards France. He abandoned his usual crusade against Communism. Instead of encouraging Franco-German reconciliation, he spoke of the need for the victorious nations to 'take Germany by the hand' and work towards restoring its economy.

Mr Churchill's suggestion is very bold indeed. He has taken a stand in favour of the creation of a European assembly that could, as of now, make Europe's voice heard. He evoked the concept of a future 'world government' that would be protected by 'three armies of peace': the Council of Europe with Great Britain and the Commonwealth, the Western hemisphere and the immense Soviet Union. But he did not let himself get carried away. In the short term, his proposals were firmly based in reality.

The Hague Congress is not meant to hamper the efforts of statesmen who work, with difficulty, towards a closer cooperation between Western nations: instead, the Congress must support those efforts. It paid tribute to the work that has already been accomplished by the Five-Power Pact and the Committee of Sixteen. The Congress was also quite cautious when referring to the restrictions on sovereignty that the States will inevitably have to accept in a future federation, even in one temporarily limited to Western Europe. And yet, were not the observations made at the Congress implicitly critical of the reservations recently expressed by Mr Bevin? Let us not forget that it responded to the attempts by members of the Labour Party to boycott the Congress, and entice other European Socialists into joining their cause, by declaring that everyone must work together for a united Europe and that political parties should only rival each other in their enthusiasm for the common cause.

Mr Ramadier also expressed the voice of caution when he asked the Congress, as had Mr Churchill, to support the governments rather than encourage a sort of 'federalist revolution'. Still, it cannot be denied that their sensible words to some extent irritated the idealistic federalists, 'hard-liners' such as Count Coudenhove-Calergi and Dr Brugmans.

In this way, the Congress delegates seem to split into two groups: one supporting Churchill's call for the consolidation of Europe before its federation, the other upholding the call for an immediate and total federation suggested by the Dutchman, Dr Brugmans. It is also worth noting that the impassioned speech made by the latter in favour of a European superstate that would overthrow all national sovereignty was as vigorously applauded as that of Mr Churchill. These internal divisions within the four movements meeting in The Hague will hardly facilitate the commissions' work or the adoption of the resolutions to be taken in the political, economic and cultural sectors.

We must, however, hope that reconciliation will be possible between those men who have exercised power in their respective countries and the more doctrinaire intellectuals who are inclined to take little account of reality. Received wisdom seems to suggest a step-by-step approach and to build brick by brick what can in fact be built in those areas of the continent where the Soviet veto has no effect.

Appeals were made yesterday to the USSR and to the people's democracies. It goes without saying that their leaders will reject those appeals without even consulting their citizens. Since yesterday, Soviet propaganda has been vehemently criticising what it calls a 'reactionary' plan for a united Europe, claiming that the plan

aims at creating a military bloc against the USSR and the new Eastern European democracies. This is nothing more than the repetition of that well-known mantra against the Marshall Plan.