

The united Europe of the Socialists

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The united Europe of the Socialists

After the Liberation, the Socialists updated their plans for a united Europe, which many of them had supported secretly through the Resistance during the war or even as far back as 1930 following in the footsteps of Aristide Briand and his celebrated plan for a European Federal Union. In the context of the Cold War, where tensions were increasing daily, most of them came to give active support to the Marshall Plan for aid to Western Europe in 1947.

However, the Socialists could not accept the reduction of the European idea to the restoration of a medieval Christian West. As a result, they condemned the threat of a 'Vatican Europe', described as a plot hatched by the Holy See, with the complicity of the European Christian Democratic parties, with the aim of restoring the foundations of a Christian Europe, based on the medieval Holy Roman Empire. The Socialists took the view that only Democratic Socialism offered an alternative to unbridled capitalism and totalitarian Communism and that the immense difficulties associated with economic reconstruction could be resolved by compliance with the principles of justice, law, freedom and human dignity. They believed that a united Europe offered the advantage of efficiently slowing down the expansion of Fascism and Communism, while ensuring a lasting peace by interposing a third credible international force between the USA and the USSR. On this issue, many people referred to the tutelary figure of the French radical Socialist Minister, Aristide Briand who, in May 1930, had already presented a memorandum to the Member States of the League of Nations on the organisation of a European federal union regime.

Some Socialists advocated a united Socialist Europe, as opposed to a Europe based on the interests of private capitalism under American influence. Others were more of the opinion that the various federalist and democratic movements must work together, if only to stand up to the Communists who denounced the creation of a Western bloc. The establishment of Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe finally led to many Socialists distancing themselves from doctrinaire positions and actively supporting European integration based on the Western alliance, although they remained frequently divided over the way in which this was to be achieved and the degree of sovereignty that they were ready to concede.