

## 'Towards the Federation of Europe by means of the integrated army' from Le Monde (17 February 1951)

**Caption:** On 17 February 1951, the French newspaper Le Monde describes the first stages of the Paris Conference on the European Army.

**Source:** Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 17.02.1951, n° 1 887; 8e année. Paris: Le Monde. "Vers la fédération de l'Europe par l'armée intégrée", auteur:Henry, Noel , p. 1; 3.

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## Towards the Federation of Europe by means of the integrated army

by Noël Henry

Invitations to the Conference that has just opened in Paris have been sent by the French Government to the European members of the Atlantic Organisation, as well as to West Germany, which is not a member. The American members have been invited to send observers.

With the exception of Iceland, all the governments that have been approached have accepted the invitation; Canada and the United States are represented by observers; West Germany, Belgium, France, Italy and Luxembourg by delegates. For the purposes of the Conference, West Germany has been invited as an equal. Other European states have expressed their reservations by sending only observers. Among these are, not surprisingly, Great Britain, which has shown great reluctance from the outset, as well as Norway and Denmark, which to a great extent tend to follow Britain. Portugal, another observer, is displaying growing solidarity with Spain. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has declared that it will not decide on whether to take part as an observer or as an active member until specific proposals have been submitted to the Conference.

The Conference on the European army does not, therefore, open entirely auspiciously. And yet the international platform that is the Strasbourg Assembly had declared itself by a very large majority in favour of this idea. What is more, voices are being raised on all sides calling for Europe to unite. Of course, it would have been preferable to tackle this problem head on rather than indirectly by first combining the Western European states in a homogeneous bloc and then, gradually, introducing the military component. However, the delegates will have to face the situation as it is and endeavour to arrive at some tangible solutions.

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The Pleven Plan requires, first of all, the military integration of Europe: a much-used expression these days. In reality, more than just the incorporation into a whole, this means a fusion of the constituent elements, a fusion that will be more or less complete according to the degree of integration.

A multinational army is structured either into national formations, or contingents, or into tactical formations, or units, which are in themselves multinational or national. The first form, representing coalitions of the old type, has nowadays been abandoned. The second, amalgamated, form is used, for instance, in the French or Spanish foreign legions. It is not considered feasible where conscription is practised. What remains is a structuring into national units.

When such units are established, two conflicting considerations appear: any risk of desertion has to be avoided while, at the same time, a coherent tactical formation capable of fighting efficiently has to be created. It seems that the guarantee will have to be sought in the integration of material elements that would create real solidarity among autonomous units as well as in a political and economic organisation.

The Pleven Plan therefore rightly advocates as a second step the establishment of federal institutions. The European army is not in itself sufficient to ensure the cohesion of Europe: military integration only provides limited guarantees, as was shown in the famous desertion that occurred at the Battle of Leipzig.

For these institutions to be set up, a fundamental distinction will have to be made between a federal state and a confederation. The federal state absorbs external sovereignties and, from an internal point of view, exerts its power directly on individuals. The confederation, on the other hand, leaves certain external powers to its members and addresses its orders only to its members. This second form of union alone seems feasible to start with. While nothing can be achieved at the beginning without a small revolution, one cannot be too ambitious: politics is the art of reconciling the desirable with the possible. Institutions have a logic and a

physics of their own. Once federal institutions are in place, sovereignties are undermined: progressively and surely. The only important aspect is that the federal power can exert its authority; that it cannot be vetoed in all the essential issues; that it be, in a word, raised to the status of a supranational authority.

The project of a European army may therefore be seen as another attempt at creating a real and efficient federation. Even if there is no direct mention of a political pact being devised, we still seem to be heading in the right direction.

First of all, the experience of the past few years has shown that it is difficult to achieve positive results by starting on the economic level. The confrontation of individual interests tends only to exacerbate them. It is identity of interest that is the principle of federalism. The current reason for federating is the Russian threat: this must be the catalyst for union. This does not, however, mean that the economic aspect should be ignored: it will be easier to secure sacrifices as soon as a decision has been taken to organise the economy according to the strategy.

On the other hand, initially the Federation can only involve countries that have the same solidarity of interest: this interest being strategic, they will have to be the countries that are threatened by the same danger, and it would be inconceivable for one of them to be attacked without the others *ineluctably* being so. One should not be concerned that, initially, the group will be made up only of a limited number of countries.

Finally, because strategy is linked to politics, it is inconceivable for Europe to have an army without its members being indissolubly united by an *automatic* treaty of mutual military assistance and by reciprocal insurance against attempts at subversion that might be fomented from outside.

If the Conference results in the establishment of an integrated army attached to political institutions endowed with effective powers, the European Federation will be born. It will then be necessary only to associate it with the Atlantic Organisation and the other specialised European organisations. The European army and its component institutions will be integrated in the Atlantic mechanism, with greater emphasis put on the European integration, however, than on the Atlantic integration, and a strategic ranking comprising the signatory members will have to be created. If new European states have to enter the Atlantic Organisation, they should first enter the European federation. While connections will have to be established with the other European organisations, the bodies of the future organisation must not be held responsible before bodies of other organisations with different member states.

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In tackling these problems, the Conference is not starting from scratch. Many a lesson may be learnt from history. From the point of view of material technique and the perfection of instruments of death, humanity still has scope for progress. As far as the institutions are concerned, there is nothing to be invented. The precedents of Germany, Switzerland, the United States and the UN show us how the problem has to be solved.

Noël Henry