

'A meeting of the Heads of Government of the Six may be necessary' from Le Monde (23 January 1962)


Caption: On 23 January 1962, the French daily newspaper Le Monde comments on the rejection by the Netherlands of the second plan for European political union (Fouchet Plan II).

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. BEUVE-MÉRY, Hubert. 20.01.1962, n° 5 293; 19e année. Paris: Le Monde. "Une réunion des chefs de gouvernement des Six pourrait être nécessaire", auteur:S, J. , p. 3.

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Rejection of the latest French plan for European political union and its aftermath

A meeting of the Heads of Government of the Six may be necessary

Asked on Saturday evening in The Hague about the revelations in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* concerning the new plan for European political union submitted by France to the Fouchet Committee on 18 January, a spokesman for the Dutch Government said: 'We consider the French plan to be a step backward on the road to European integration.'

The response of the official spokesman to the revelations in the Dutch newspaper, published by *Le Monde* the same day, caused surprise in Paris. It had been specifically agreed last Thursday by members of the Fouchet Committee — on the initiative of delegates who were not French — that strict secrecy should surround negotiations and the new French plan in order to facilitate the resumption of work and the task of those trying to find a consensus.

This leak will be particularly regretted in Rome. At a time when domestic affairs are dominating the political scene, the Government would have preferred to keep their European policy out of the headlines. The Italians may be unable to take part in the follow-up meetings between the Six made necessary by the rejection of the French proposal.

It appears unlikely that the meeting of experts scheduled for next Thursday will suffice to clarify the situation. The Council of Ministers of the Six will meet as soon as possible. However, we may find that only a meeting of the Heads of Government, like the European summit in Bonn in July, can get European political integration back on the rails.

Paris, meanwhile, claims it is all a misunderstanding, resulting from a change in the presentation of the French proposal. It is convinced a further reading will show that there are no insurmountable difficulties. As for the requirement of unanimity for the admission into the European Political Union of members already belonging to the Common Market, the general feeling here is that there is nothing unusual about it: it is the rule for accession to any organisation of sovereign states.

The French Government is clearly sticking closely to the principles for political union set out by the Heads of State and Government of the Six in the Bonn declaration of 18 July 1961, in particular the statement that the common objective is to favour political union in Europe and thereby strengthen the Atlantic Alliance. On these grounds, France did not think it necessary to include another specific reference to NATO in its latest plan.

It is probably the provisions concerning control of the existing European Communities by the future European union which, in the new French plan, arouse the greatest misgivings among France's partners. However, Paris finds it hard to see how the most sensitive issues — increasingly political in nature because of the very success and growth of the Communities — can be resolved in practice without the agreement and cooperation between the governments themselves.

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