

## 'The States-General of The Hague' from Fédération (January 1948)

**Caption:** In January 1948, in the French periodical Fédération, Alexandre Marc, Head of the Institutional Department of the Union of European Federalists (UEF), outlines the objectives and progress of preparations for the Congress of Europe to be held in The Hague in May 1948.

**Source:** Fédération. Revue de l'ordre vivant. dir. de publ. Richard, Max. Janvier 1948, n° 36. Paris: Imprimerie de la Seine. "Les Etats généraux de La Haye", auteur:Marc, Alexandre , p. 5-6.

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**Last updated:** 23/08/2019

## **The States-General of The Hague**

**by Alexandre Marc**

For several weeks now, a quiet rumour has been circulating that is helping to revive weakening spirits and breathe life into the hearts of Europeans: No, all is not yet lost! If the ‘third force’ of politicians is merely an illusion, a real third force is developing and will emerge very soon. Europe will at last have its chance to be heard. Representatives from all the forces active on our continent will be called to attend a meeting in The Hague from 21 to 24 May 1948. There, they will affirm to the world their determination to survive and their desire to reform Europe.

This rumour, as it gathers force and gains momentum, needs to be clarified; on our own behalf, and without wishing to reflect any particular orthodoxy, we shall try to focus on several issues that relate to the organisation known by the eminent title of the STATES-GENERAL OF EUROPE.

### **The European Coordination Committee**

The idea of convening an assembly that might be able to speak on behalf of Europe without incurring ridicule has already been entertained for many months by officials in the European Union of Federalists.

The Montreux Congress (August 1947) was the origin of this idea of creating an assembly. As a result of this Congress, other projects — similar, but less consistent and definitely less daring — materialised: these favoured the establishment of a European Coordination Committee, whose task was to prepare for the great operation that was planned.

Within this European Committee, the European Union of Federalists works alongside ‘United Europe’, the ‘Independent League of European Cooperation’, and the ‘French Committee for a United Europe’. Some people were surprised that the Federalists, especially ‘staunch federalists’, agreed to associate with groups or individuals that not only do not share our beliefs but sometimes go so far as to advocate a policy with which we cannot agree. This legitimate reaction of surprise deserves to be clarified by means of a detailed explanation; however, we must content ourselves for the moment with two observations:

— If we are really determined to ‘rebuild Europe’, we must cooperate, at least at the outset, with everyone who shares the same goal.

— This cooperation does not in any way mean that the European Federalist Movement gives up its autonomy, nor that it agrees, even for the time being, to put on the back burner those principles of liberation and revolution that inspire it.

On the contrary, a renewed effort is now required from the federalist activists: an effort that only they can undertake with success.

### **National European committees**

Our first and most urgent task is to establish, in each of the European countries that are involved, a national committee responsible for keeping the public informed and, above all, for constituting the ‘national’ team of delegates that will participate in the proceedings in The Hague.

In order for this complex project to be a success, each national committee must constitute a type of ‘short cut’ to the delegation that it must try to create: that is to say, a faithful image of all the healthy elements in the nation. It therefore follows that it will be up to the federalist activists to inspire these committees, encouraging them to mobilise all the European resources effectively. As long as they are clear about the objectives, we are sure that they can succeed.

What are our objectives? To alter the course of events in order to avoid the catastrophe that is brewing; to enable Europe to realise the revolutionary nature of its mission; and thus to set in train, as it overrides the frontiers of the nation states, the force for 'integral' transformation, which, once it has come from the mass of the people, cannot be halted by any obstacle.

It is to stress the importance that must be given to the sound formation of each of these national committees: for on their representative nature, on their balance, courage, and dynamism will depend not only the future of our project but the very future of Europe.

### **Formation of the delegations**

Once the national committees have been organised, they will have to endeavour to create subcommittees in different 'regions', conceived not merely on a geographical but also on a social basis, so that a solid infrastructure can be established for the forthcoming project.

These subcommittees, in direct contact with the people involved, will investigate the various organisations that influence the country's way of life and try to recruit individuals who can effectively affirm a commitment to European integration. Together, these individuals, coordinated by the national committee, will make up each country's delegation at the States-General of The Hague.

As we have already said, each delegation should reflect, as faithfully as possible, the shifting balance of social forces and roles. Each delegation will therefore include union leaders, workers, farmers, employers, representatives of cooperatives, federalist parliamentary groups, youth organisations, etc. Each delegation must also have writers and 'technicians', university teachers and clergymen, representatives from large national and international organisations, and of course, delegates from all of the federalist associations.

It is clear that the ideal would be for all of the delegates to hold mandates from the organisations that they represent. Whenever possible, and without further ado, the organisations involved should be invited to meet, to hold a general debate, to proceed with a properly held election of the delegates, and then, if possible, to give them a specific mandate.

However, the time constraints with which we are faced will frequently render it impossible to proceed in this fashion. For practicality's sake, it is therefore up to the national committee, with the help of various subcommittees, to make the necessary selection.

But even then, in the event of such a choice being made, it will somehow have to be ratified with the utmost objectivity and discernment — be it officially or unofficially — by those responsible for it.

In short, if the ideal of directly electing representatives by their constituents is not always possible, it is nonetheless true that the national committees will be morally obliged to do everything in their power to come as close as possible to this federalist ideal.

As for proportional representation within the delegation of the various professional and social categories, there is no magic formula that will strike the perfect balance. It is important for the national committees to follow these two rules:

— The proportion of the constituent elements within a delegation should not stray too far from the actual proportion within the social structure itself.

— There must be no likelihood of the dynamic and revolutionary forces, under the pretext of objectivity, being crushed under the weight of apathy, selfishness and cowardice.

These two rules seem to be contradictory, and we must recognise that, to some extent, they are: this is a contradiction that cannot be overcome until our policy develops further.

## Support for the basic principles

Since the European Coordination Committee has not formulated the criteria for participation at the Hague Conference, the following considerations express no more than our personal point of view on this matter.

We believe that such a large and diverse assembly (with probably more than 1 000 delegates) might well develop into a talking shop — as infertile as it is easy to realise — and degenerate into a new Tower of Babel.

To overcome this danger, we could ask all of the delegates at the outset to express their support for a number of key issues. If these key issues were not acknowledged, no action could be taken.

(1) The European States are called on to transfer some of what they call their ‘sovereignty’ to federal organisations.

(2) The European economy is to be organised as a whole, according to collective needs and respecting social justice and the freely expressed initiatives of individuals and groups.

(3) European political, economic and social rights are to be protected, not only by declarations of principle, however solemn these may be, but also, and above all, by a supranational organisation exercising effective control.

(4) The European Federation of the future will be opposed to all forms of imperialism, whatever its origin; far from favouring the establishment of blocs, the Federation will endeavour to promote federalist solutions with a view to global organisation.

(5) The federated nations will undertake to work together to emancipate their former colonies as quickly as possible and to bring about their economic and political association in the creative venture of a united Europe.

These basic principles are certainly not enough to solve all the problems posed. However, if used as guidelines, they should at least facilitate the elimination of those who are undecided and powerless and even weed out the *agents provocateurs*.

## Adoption of basic principles and establishment of permanent bodies

Once the States-General have convened, it is essential that iron discipline, albeit freely accepted, must be strictly observed in their sittings so as to avoid debates deviating from the subject or turning into never-ending discussions.

In our opinion, the Assembly should be asked to confine itself to taking a decision on the five points outlined above. The task of developing, expanding and supplementing these points should be earmarked for those permanent bodies set up to continue, and to put the finishing touches to, the work of the States-General.

Once the basic principles have been adopted, the delegates will disperse — after several public events designed to catch the public eye have been arranged — but not before having elected a Permanent Bureau, whose task will be to bring the decisions of the Assembly to a fruitful conclusion. Given the important role that this Permanent Bureau will play, its election should be carefully prepared and executed under conditions that will condemn to utter failure any backstage manoeuvring or manifestations of personal ambition and demagoguery, which will inevitably occur.

Once it has returned to its own country, each national delegation will undertake to consolidate the activities of its national committee, as well as those of the subcommittees, be they regional or ‘operational’. In this

way, even before the ‘seizure of power’ phase, the Permanent Bureau, with its specialised departments (or committees), supported by all the national committees and subcommittees, will constitute a living, working model of the European society to come.

Let us note in passing that it is the ‘specialist committees’ — coordinated by the Permanent Bureau and closely linked to the corresponding departments of the national committees, as well as to the ‘operational’ subcommittees — that will have the task of giving shape and form to the various aspirations, plans and projects that will inevitably come up at the Hague Assembly. Whether it be a question of a European system for clearing payments or a federal transport organisation, a ‘pool’ of raw materials or a European Electricity Office, a new Charter of Rights or even a Constitution, these issues will not have a chance of success unless they have been, on the one hand, systematically and ‘technically’ formulated, and are, on the other, the result of genuine and constant cooperation between the ‘summit’ and the ‘base’. It is only when these conditions are met that decisions will acquire such authority as to render them indisputable.

If all of the preliminary operations are energetically and competently carried out, the means will not be lacking for a European authority constituted in this way to exert progressive and, if need be, violent, pressure on hostile or reticent governments. It would not be the first time in history that a new, apparently defenceless, authority triumphs over a well-entrenched power!

### **The duties of the federalists**

The points set out above will, no doubt, have to be supplemented as the first breach, opened by our strategic breakthrough, widens. This breakthrough — which will perhaps be decisive — has yet to be made, however.

All of the federalist forces must concentrate their joint efforts at the exact point where the enemy line can be broken, allowing an in-depth operation and a war of movement of which no one can predict, at this time, the possible outcome.

The hour is about to strike for Europe: we hope that it will be, for the cause that we represent, a decisive and a victorious hour.

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