

'For the United States of Europe' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (16 November 1948)

Caption: On 16 November 1948, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung reports on and takes a critical look at the debates which took place during the Congress of the Union of European Federalists (UEF), held in Rome on 7 November.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. FRIEDMANN, Werner; GOLDSCHAGG, Edmund; SCHÖNINGH, Dr. Franz Joseph; SCHWINGENSTEIN, August. 16.11.1948, n° 103; 4. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Um die Vereinigten Staaten von Europa", auteur:Schönigh, Franz Josef , p. 3.

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For the United States of Europe

On the Congress of the 'Union of European Federalists' in Rome

By Franz Josef Schöningh

When the Congress of the 'Union of European Federalists' opened recently at the Palazzo Venezia in Rome in the presence of representatives from 13 states, nobody could have been more appropriate to give the inaugural address than the Italian President, Luigi Einaudi. He had already recognised during the First World War the enormous danger that the principle of sovereign nation states poses for the small, fragile Europe. He has not refrained since from pointing out time and time again the need for a European alliance in which each state renounces a part of its sovereignty, although Fascism eventually forced him to remain silent for a while. In his address at the Palazzo Venezia, referring to Paragraph 11 of the new Italian Constitution that already paves the way to such a European union, Einaudi reiterated the thoughts that he had first expressed over a year ago in a moving speech in front of Italy's constituent assembly and that climaxed in the question: Is a united Europe a utopian dream? Maybe. 'But then we have only the choice between utopia and death, between utopia and the law of the jungle.'

This justified and breathtaking alternative at the same time characterises the trap into which such a Congress may easily fall: that the utopian element predominates, leading to resolutions adopted in a vacuum and to decisions not backed up by genuine powers. In his lucid opening address which perfectly analysed the European situation, the President of the Executive Committee, Henri Brugmans, a university professor from Utrecht, entirely dedicated to the pan-European ideal, identified two groups as the true bearers of the European ideal: those who are just 'believers' and those politicians who, out of realistic insight, are working for the unification of European states. The latter certainly cannot do without the suggestions and encouragement of those who advocate the European ideal with an almost religious fervour. But, at the same time, he sees these 'believers' as a danger in the sense that, like our forefathers in St Paul's Church in 1848, their utopian visions provide a weapon which their opponents may use to discredit what is really possible as well. The Rome Congress proved this point entirely, so that it was not always easy for the 'realists' in the Policy Committee, where, in addition to the Constituent Committee, the true emphasis lay, to trumpet the slogan that all pan-European efforts should bear in mind: 'Keep your feet firmly on the ground!' That this did not succeed in all the committees is proven by their resolutions which, taking agricultural policy as an example, were nothing but empty phrases and commonplaces. Is that not the case when calls are made for farmers to remain faithful to their land, their traditions and, hence, to Europe? Or when the resolution adopted by the Youth Committee expects the world to be saved by the establishment of a European Youth Council? Maybe it was the marvellous surroundings, seemingly unreal to North Europeans, that contributed to this. The Palazzo Venezia's splendid rooms with their exquisite art treasures and the sunny gallery over the still flourishing garden under a bright blue sky may not exactly have been an invitation to sober reflection and objectivity for many a participant. Consequently, it was emphasised all too strongly that neither the Marshall Plan (currently promoted in an exhibition at the Galleria Colonna) nor the imminent intra-European customs unions would constitute a real solution, instead of welcoming them as an essential and above all real step towards the common target. The oft-quoted slogan '*La politique d'abord* — politics first' seems rather ill-chosen, and that explains, to a certain extent, a derogatory remark made by the American Ambassador in Rome.

All the more important were the efforts of the 'realists' in the Policy Committee to press for stronger coordination between the various existing European associations which all convened in The Hague last spring without, however, succeeding in forming a proper joint organisation. As a result, Coudenhove's 'Parliamentary Union' even declined to become involved. In Rome, too, the danger of federalism, which is the very shadow of its strength, was again apparent: the mistrust towards any unity that might culminate in centralism. But the Rome Congress of the 'Union of European Federalists' did prove how necessary it is to cooperate closely with the other five existing movements, not only for the sake of the subsequent increase in power but also for the sake of political soberness. There should be no real doubt that the 'United Europe Movement', inspired by Churchill, provides a sufficient guarantee for this. But it was actually to cooperation with him that the Italians raised their strongest objections, escalating into heated debates that wasted

precious time.

If there is one feeling in Italy that unites all the parties, including the neo-Fascists, it is the deep longing for peace and the elementary abhorrence of war. It is quite unbelievable that, in this country, the concepts of the heroic and the imperial could circulate for two decades as a token coin while being as fake as the dusty inscription celebrating the myth of the Vittoria Veneto on one of the conference rooms' walls. Moreover, there is an easily recognisable anti-British affectation in Italian public opinion, based, since the Abyssinian War, on all kinds of reasons. The Italian delegates consequently became noticeably nervous when Churchill's broad shadow appeared over the assembly. The former Italian Ambassador in London, Carandini, even went so far as to interpret Britain's pan-European endeavours as an attempt to give English Imperialism a covering shield for its policy towards the East. But, at the same time, even the Italians could not deny that a united Europe could not exist without Great Britain. There was, however, a general conviction that Britain's twin approach to Europe and the Empire would require a special, though obviously not a hegemonic position in a European confederation.

German delegates in particular, especially Eugen Kogon, tried tenaciously to arbitrate between the various points of view and to ensure that the objective of closer coordination between all European movements would not be lost from sight. Whether this will succeed will be proven during the first months of the coming year, when members of all the national parliaments and the more important associations are to meet as a European parliament. The German delegation, by the way, duly remained in the background, all the more so since it was met with particular cordiality. The need to admit Germany as an equal partner in a united Europe was unanimously accepted, and that unanimity was repeatedly expressed with eloquence and warmth. When, towards the end of the Congress, the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Sforza, spoke in his jovial manner with a mixture of scepticism and bonhomie, his thoughts ended with the very point that he declared was decisive for the East-West conflict: giving Germany back its autonomy within a European Community, if peace was really being sought. And, at a rally at the Eliseo Theatre, the French trade union leader, Jouhaux, declared that a European federation was impossible without a free, democratic Germany.

The special and strongly emphasised interest that the Pope showed towards the Germans during a reception given for Congress participants at Castel Gandolfo was also significant in this respect. In his speech, he made two allusions, which were more than mere hints and certainly understood as such by all concerned: he opposed the misuse of political dominance for the suppression of free economic competition between the nations and the enslavement of nations through their own glorious history that would prevent them from seeing reality in its true light and from planning for the future. Both points would hinder the establishment of a united Europe at a stage when it was high time for such a united Europe to be created. Neither the old elites, no longer existent or else meaningless, nor the masses could fulfil this task, but only those many individuals who recognised the essential prerequisite for true order in the Ten Commandments and the natural rights of every human being and were prepared to defend it.

The Congress itself proved that a united Europe could not be established without acknowledgement of this religion-based ethical foundation. Without this, hatred and mistrust would be stronger than any understanding of the burning need for a European confederation. It was, therefore, more than a coincidence that the Congress ended in the presence of the Pope's white-clad figure, a symbol of European unity over the centuries.