

'A 14-point vision of federalism' from Fédération (July 1948)

Caption: In July 1948, the French journal Fédération outlines the objectives of European federalism in 14 points and sets out the means of achieving it.

Source: Fédération. Revue de l'ordre vivant. dir. de publ. Richard, Max. Juillet 1948, n° 42. Paris: Imprimerie de la Seine. "Les quatorze points du fédéralisme", p. 6 et 7.

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A 14-point vision of federalism

Our federalism is not an expedient but rather a political theory and a principle to guide our action. We have not suddenly discovered the need to reform the State because Communism threatens it, nor the obligation to build Europe in the wake of the Prague coup or in response to pressure from East or West. Nor do we intend to allow the flag of federalism to be usurped by a neo-liberalism that is more beneficial to a certain vision of international capitalism than to genuine cooperation among peoples. Our federalism is not a panic response nor again window-dressing for other interests: it is a rational construction.

1. — We intend in the first place to react, at all levels and in whatever circumstances, against an individualism that sees society only as a mass of individuals, and against a collectivism that arrives at the same result by totally absorbing individuals into society. We maintain that man is not only an individual but is the subject too of collective affiliations of which the State is currently the broadest. We affirm or — more exactly — we observe the existence of different forms of social life of a private, economic and political nature, where man's spiritual and material activities are for the main part pursued and where — and where only — they achieve their fullest development. These are, at the private level: the family, school, religious and cultural organisations; at the economic level: workshop, company, profession; at the political level: municipality, region, nation.

2. — The preceding list indicates that these forms of social life are naturally organised in a hierarchy. We say that this hierarchy is natural because, starting from the elementary group closest in scale to man, it superimposes other groups whose formation is prompted by the increasing complexity of individual and collective existence, in the interests of the subordinate groups themselves. Thus it is that, at the economic level, the domestic, municipal, provincial and national economies have successively been superimposed, to arrive at the international economy, the organisation of which is the current topic of debate.

3. — For this natural hierarchy to be efficient and thrive, it must have a legal basis, i.e. the groups listed above must be recognised and provided with statutes that safeguard their activities and freedoms. Such statutes will necessarily vary according to the nature of the group; they may concern its own administration or the representational forms through which it is associated with the administration of the higher-level groups, as determined by its own degree of competence.

4. — There is little need to point out that, contrary to a common criticism which can only be put down to stupidity, ignorance or bad faith, such a construction is radically different from all known or conceivable forms of fascism and totalitarianism in that it strives to guarantee the freedoms of social groups with respect to an oppressive State; it nevertheless guarantees individual freedoms through each member's meaningful participation in the administration of the group to which it belongs; and it is essentially pluralist as opposed to monistic.

5. — In this light, federalism appears to provide the only valid solution to a number of fundamental present-day issues, as an instrument for, firstly, relieving pressure on the modern State, whose administrative and economic role should be to lead and control subordinate groups, keeping the number of tasks it performs itself to a minimum, and, secondly, deproletarianising workers through their participation in the administration of their company or professional group.

6. — Reference to these principles must necessarily precede the statement of our position on European federalism, a position that can only be an extrapolation from those principles, if federalism is to avoid the errors of policy and procedure towards which it is already tending. The major error is that of creating an international pseudo-federalism, rejecting national federalism and thus building on a void.

7. — For our federalism, international organisation is a natural extension of national action, because the essential problem to be addressed in building the perfect society is that of optimum size. This optimum size has varied throughout history, from the city of antiquity to the commune and then on to the province and finally the nation. Manifestly, the time has come to move beyond this stage.

8. — The optimum size lies somewhere in the middle. Where they are too small, the states or groups of states do not have sufficient means to guarantee the freedom, activity and sometimes the lives of their citizens. Where they are too large, they encompass very diverse populations and must inevitably break up, as has happened eventually to all great empires. It follows that an authentic and lasting federation of states cannot grow out of a theoretical agreement among too large a number of states but must, like any federalist construction, be a movement from the simple to the complex, i.e. from neighbourhood federations to more comprehensive combines.

9. — In the current state of affairs, a Federation of Western Europe seems to be an objective that is not only acceptable, but necessary. Such a federation would bring together countries that are close to each other geographically, share the same civilisation and have similar cultures, and which, singly, could ensure neither their economic independence nor their political security. We are thus precisely in a situation where there is an obvious need for a grouping that is superior to the national groupings, in order to meet the latter's needs, and where the concept of a European 'common good' clearly emerges.

10. — Just as we have accepted, at national level, that the hierarchy of social groups entailed the relinquishing of some prerogatives, without prejudice to the rights and freedoms of those groups, to enable the higher group to defend the common good or common interests of all the groups, so we are prepared to accept, at international level, abandonment of a fraction of the participants' sovereignty.

Ruling out such a hypothesis in the France of 1948 is the empty manifestation of a purely verbal nationalism, considering the present state of its economy, its finances and its army. Even disregarding these exceptional circumstances, it should be remembered that French unity in no way destroyed but, on the contrary, reinforced regional freedoms and activities until the advent of excessive centralisation, which is precisely one of the things federalism means to combat.

11. — We could only, however, consent to the relinquishing of sovereignty to a qualified authority that would make effective use of it for the common good. It follows from these various points that the immediate creation of an international super-parliament, derived from national parliaments elected on the sole basis of individual votes, would not be constructive and would be no more than a spectacular gesture. *A fortiori*, the election of such a super-parliament by direct universal suffrage, apart from the many practical organisational difficulties this would entail, would also bring the inadequacies of ill-conceived national structures even more starkly to the fore at international level.

12. — While it is necessary, given the urgency of the current situation, to establish an international body that will stimulate and control the process of federalist construction, it is important that it include, alongside the representatives of the national political bodies, representatives of the various social groups defined above. At all events, this international body will only be fully representative once the participating nations have each introduced reforms to their internal structures that are federalist in spirit if not federalist to the letter.

A European Federation will not be formed against the federalist principle or in disregard thereof.

13. — Neither at political nor at economic level will the European Federation be built *from the top downwards* on instructions from, and according to the sole dictates of, a more or less qualified deliberative body. It will be built *from the bottom upwards*, that is to say by the juxtaposition of restricted but progressively expanding unions. This method will in no way exclude the conclusion of multipartite political or economic agreements in response to immediate requirements. But the soundness and effectiveness of those agreements will obviously depend on the more or less rapid construction of authentic federal relations.

14. — The most effective propaganda for the European Federation must therefore be driven from *within* in such a way as to ensure a national federalist 'substrate' throughout the Federation. This would avoid the Europe-wide expansion of purely formal parliamentarianism or the prevalence of companies adhering to a purportedly reformed liberal capitalism.