

'Socialism and Federalism' from Le Monde (27 April 1948)

Caption: On 27 April 1949, the French daily newspaper Le Monde considers the position taken by socialist groups on plans for a European federation.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 27.04.1948, n° 1011; 5e année. Paris: Le Monde. "Socialisme et fédéralisme", p. 1.

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Socialism and Federalism

The International Socialist Conference, attended in Paris by representatives of 14 nations covered by the Marshall Plan, discussed which line it should take towards the plans for European Federation. It is well known that the first International Federalist Conference will be held next month in The Hague.

Socialist parties are not the only ones to have been somewhat lukewarm in their response to the idea of a European Federation. Although, in all countries, many eminent figures immediately rallied to the cause, the political parties themselves have been a little less forthcoming. Political parties are bound by doctrine and self-interest: confronted with a new idea, they begin by asking if it is in line with their manifesto, and what it might do for them.

The Socialists are no exception to this rule: even more so since the great hero of Federalism was Mr Churchill, and since, in the United Kingdom, it is his Labour Party opponents who are in power. The Labour Party has officially turned its back on the Churchillian movement, while at the same time seeming sympathetic to the idea that inspired it. It is not abandoning this attitude: as *Le Monde* reported on Saturday in the Latest News section, Mr Morgan Phillips, the Labour Party Secretary-General, has just urged Labour MPs not to go to The Hague.

Admittedly, that was just a gesture, in keeping with the position that the United Kingdom has taken from the beginning, perhaps also with the desire to balance Left and Right; it is the Labour members who had expressed their support for Mr Nenni who have been rebuked. This gesture will not be enough to hide the interest that British Socialists still feel, despite everything, for the European idea: one of their leaders, Mr Dalton, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, represented the party at the Paris Conference.

Socialism, which has always preached in favour of international alliances, cannot but be favourable to the European Federation. Accordingly, it is not so much the principle that is at issue as the tactics and, in particular, the role that might be played by the Socialist parties.

It goes without saying that all are in favour of a Socialist Europe. However, the question is whether they will support only an organisation that is purely Socialist, or whether, for the time being, they will work alongside other parties who share the same goals. The first approach is that of the hard-liners, like the Belgian, Max Buset, the second is that of Mr Léon Blum. The Chairman of the French Section of the International Workingmen's Association (SFIO), who takes the view that, while Europe should one day be Socialist, it is not at the moment, believes that this must be taken into account and that they need to 'work together for a while' with non-Socialists.

The resolution adopted by the Conference was difficult to draft. It makes concessions to both sides, by, on the one hand, deciding to establish a 'Socialist Documentation and Propaganda Centre for a United States of Europe' in Paris and, on the other hand, emphasising the importance of the economic organisation set up by the Marshall Plan. It will necessarily involve economic planning more or less in accordance with Socialist ideas; however, not all Western governments are Socialist. In agreeing to work together in rebuilding Europe, they have already set aside doctrinal differences.

Noting that European organisation should, for the time being, be limited to the Western nations, the Conference wants to continue relations with countries of Eastern Europe. At the very least they want to maintain trade. It is to be feared that no further progress will ever be made on this and that the Socialist parties of the West will no longer be able to maintain ties with Eastern European parties, given that these are, one after the other, merging with the Communists.

We may suppose that Socialist policy towards Federalism will become clearer following the Hague Congress which numerous Socialists will attend in a personal capacity, if not as delegates of their parties.