

'The last of the founding fathers' from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (25 June 2002)

Caption: Pierre Werner, founding father of the Economic and Monetary Union, dies on 24 June 2002 in Luxembourg at the age of 88 years. The German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung pays tribute to this great man.

Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. Eckart, Dieter; Jeske, Jürgen; Kohler, Berthold; Nonnemacher, Günther; Schirmacher, Frank. 25.06.2002. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Der letzte Gründungsvater", p. 4.

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The last of the founding fathers

On the death of Pierre Werner

The unification of Europe needs vision in order to live. The Luxembourger, Pierre Werner, was the last of the founding fathers, those men who were responsible for developing ideas of a united Europe that were not only bold, but sometimes even breathtaking. Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi and Konrad Adenauer also had the means and the powers of persuasion to build, step by step, a European peace settlement on the ruins of the war. For Pierre Werner, the issue of monetary union became a mission, one which occupied him fully for many long years in his professional life.

One year after he had become Prime Minister of Luxembourg for the first time in 1959, Werner, a Christian Democrat, published his vision of a closely coordinated monetary policy in Strasbourg. The response was encouraging. At the end of the 1960s, at a time of increasing monetary turbulence, it was the obvious step to entrust Werner, together with some of his expert advisers, with the task of drawing up a plan for the implementation of monetary union. In October 1970, under his chairmanship, this body proposed a phased plan that bore Werner's name and was to become the model for the 1989 'Delors Plan' which is the foundation for the euro. It was not the fault of Werner and his colleagues who backed his proposals, among them the later President of the German Federal Bank, Hans Tietmeyer, that their plan ended in failure. The 'Werner Plan' was a victim of the oil price and dollar crises of the 1970s, and it came a few decades too early for the constantly dithering politicians. Many of them simply could not imagine that a common European currency could ever compete with the dollar.

In the late 1990s, when the euro was gradually taking shape, it was the fulfilment of the dream of a lifetime for Werner, who had retired from public life in 1984. In those days, sitting by the fireside in the living room of his house in the heart of Luxembourg, he was able to recount, with great enthusiasm, the stories of his days as a student of public finance during the war and of the beginnings of the Community currency. In spite of all the setbacks, he was unswerving in his opinion that a common market could not be sustained without a minimum degree of monetary integration. When Delors set about undertaking a second attempt at monetary union in 1988, he invited Werner to dinner and also distributed copies of the 'Werner Plan' to all the members of his group. Now the father of European monetary integration has died in his home town at the age of 88. (Ho.)