

## Interview with Jean-Pierre Gouzy: structuring the federalist movement in France after 1945 (Paris, 19 October 2007)

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[Jean-Pierre Gouzy] The federalist movement in France was characterised by a proliferation — initially, at the outset — a proliferation of initiatives and organisational structures. I ventured to say earlier, and incidentally it is clear in a number of brochures that are still in existence, that there were 14 or 15 different federalist organisations represented in Montreux, or at that time.

An initial consolidation took place and led to the recognition, in the federalist organisation, of just four, I believe, or five organisations that were to survive. One was the European Economic and Customs Union of Gaston Riou, Gaston Riou and others, but anyway, which was linked to the pre-war period, that organisation, clearly. It dated from the pre-war period; they were people, for me, from the pre-war generation for the most part. Secondly, the Union of European Federalists. So in France, the French Union of Federalists. No, I mean, the European Economic and Customs Union, sorry. The umbrella organisation was the French Union of Federalists. There was the federation, the French Federalist Movement, that was what it was called, which was responsible for everything, or at least everything that took priority, in terms of internal federalism — what we called internal federalism, but which took a great interest in European federalism. There were the internationalists, the internationalist part. So these three movements, and we have to add a fourth, the Socialist and Federalist Circles, which took a Socialist, trade unionist view. These four movements, precisely, made up the French Union of Federalists. This was probably in 1948, 1949.

Then, over the years, it became evident that it was still too much, that we had to try to condense all of that into a single organisation. And in 1952 — the time when debates were being held in Strasbourg on proposals for an ad hoc Assembly, so we were saying to ourselves that maybe we were going to have a political community, it would be the turning point. We had to unite all these groups. So it was decided that the French Union of Federalists would be transformed, in two stages, into a united movement. The first stage was that the constituent members would continue to exist but they would no longer recruit new members. All new recruiting would be done directly by the new movement. And the old movements continued to exist. So there was a compromise of that sort. That took place in September 1952, and they looked for a Secretary-General to lead this campaign and it fell to me. I became Secretary-General of the French Union of Federalists in September 1952. And I still remember a debate that did not bode well for the next stage of the work. It was a very heated debate between Henri Frenay, who was President at international level of the federalists at that time, the Union of European Federalists, and Michel Debré, who had been invited — we don't know how, or who had invited him, but he was there — and who clearly, you know the stance of Michel Debré, the uncompromising Gaullist, who set out his ideas in a strong, if not violent, way, and there was a complete contrast, and we wondered what Michel Debré was doing at a congress of the French Union of Federalists, which was seeking greater coherence. But anyway, it was like that, those are the oddities of life, of history.

I took the General Secretariat and began to tour France to establish this new movement, when, one day in early 1953, I found myself in Annecy, where I was urgently recalled by telegram because the Congress, which was due to result in a complete merger, had been discharged *sine die*; there was a disagreement — I mentioned the disputes to you ... it had been discharged *sine die*. I came back to Paris and three of the movements supported by the Union of European Federalists, the parent institution, the supranational institution, were working together. The federation was going its own way, and it would do so on a permanent basis, and so we started again with what was left, the Socialist Circles, the internationalists, Riou's group and the new members, and on that basis we had to make a new movement worthy of the parent institution, the Union of European Federalists, given that in Italy there was a movement with 40 000 members led by Spinelli and in Germany the Europa-Union Deutschland was growing and prospering. We had to make up for this lost ground, so I was entrusted with that mission. It consisted — not entirely — but it mainly consisted of creating a network in France of groups, structures and activists so that this movement would be properly represented at national level, in the true sense of the term. I think that this was done, and that was my main role as leader during all those years.