



The Congress of Europe in The Hague

Europe Day - 9 May - overshadow another event that took place two years before Robert Schuman's famous speech. On May 7, 1948, under the Gothic vault of the Dutch parliament in The Hague, Winston Churchill opened a congress attended by nearly 800 representatives from 25 European countries. The original commentary from the opening of the event has retained some of the optimism of the European movement of the time:

"Mr Winston Churchill, honorary president of Congress, said it was a movement of the people, not the parties. A united Europe is the only solution which must be adopted without delay. "

Many of the participants in the congress went through the trials of World War II. One of them was the French socialist Leon Bloom, who wrote in prison in the spring of 1941:

"After this war, either common European institutions will be created or this war will not be the last."

The European Congress in The Hague in May 1948 called for the establishment of a Council of Europe. It involves various national European unions, transnational alliances and world-famous politicians, such as Robert Schumann, Alcide de Gasperi, Paul-Henri Spaak and Konrad Adenauer. This is the time of the birth of the European movement. It was marked by discussions between federalists and unionists, the central issue of which was the question of renouncing sovereignty at national level in favor of Europe. And if everyone is convinced that a united Europe is indeed a guarantee of future peace, then disputes arise over what powers the European institutions should have.

The document "Political Declaration" called for political and economic unification of European countries with partial restrictions on national sovereignty. However, neither the creation of a European federal state nor a European constitution is mentioned as a goal. However, several points of the Hague Resolution became so important that they were later put into practice within the Council of Europe. These include the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Court of Human Rights and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

According to Hendrik Brugmans, the Hague Congress should become a bell to wake even the "dead". Indeed, a year later, this bell heralded the creation of the Council of Europe, which gave birth to the European Convention on Human Rights. Even more. According to one of the last idealists on the European scene - Jean-Claude Juncker, the program of the Hague Congress is the material from which today's European Union is woven. During the congress, for the first time, two political approaches to achieving the common goal were clearly distinguished: supranational and intergovernmental cooperation.

The United Kingdom and the Nordic countries believe that European unity can be achieved through intergovernmental cooperation. In this spirit, the resolution adopted in The Hague, on the one hand, affirms the need to transfer a number of sovereign national rights in order to exercise them jointly, but, on the other hand, rejects the proposal to establish a European political body under the form of a European Council composed of ministers from the member states to be responsible for the management of European affairs.

The federalist model is defended by France, which believes that European political cooperation needs formal organizations, political institutions that have real power that goes beyond national interests.

The Federalists put forward in the resolution a text proposing the establishment of a Supreme Court capable of issuing binding human rights decisions, but the Allies managed to limit the mandate of the envisaged European Assembly, which brings together members of national parliaments, entrusted only with advisory and not founding powers.

Sources:

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Congress of Europe, May 1948; Council of Europe, 1999; [ISBN 92-871-3918-0](#)

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