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# De Gaulle, the “Empty Chair Crisis” and the European Movement

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## Abstract

European Movement International (EM) was founded in October 1948 after the Hague Congress held in May to coordinate the initiatives of the major European movements and political forces in favour of the unification of the Old Continent.

The aim of this essay is to analyse EM's stance in defence of the Community institutions established under the Treaties of Paris (1951) and Rome (1957), in the face of the so-called "empty chair crisis". This crisis between the French government and the other Community partners was triggered by proposals made in March 1965 by the Commission of the European Economic Community, chaired by Walter Hallstein, which established a direct relationship between the renewal of the financial regulation of the Common Agricultural Policy, the shift towards a system of "own resources" (from agricultural levies and customs duties) and the strengthening of the European Parliament's powers.

## Key-words

Charles de Gaulle, Empty Chair Crisis, European Movement, French Europeanism, Maurice Faure, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi



## 1. The European Movement and French Europeanism during the de Gaulle Presidency

From General de Gaulle's 1958 return to power in the wake of the events in Algeria until his retirement in 1969, the European integration process was strongly influenced by the choices of the Fifth Republic. This was certainly due to Paris's traditionally key role in Old Continent affairs but also to the dynamism of the new French leadership, driven by a desire to restore the country's significant and decisive role in international and European politics<sup>I</sup>.

The aim of this essay is to analyse the stance of European Movement International (EM) in defence of the Community institutions, established under the Treaties of Paris (1951) and Rome (1957), in the face of the so-called "empty chair crisis". This crisis between the French government and the other Community partners was triggered by proposals made in March 1965 by the Commission of the European Economic Community (EEC), chaired by German lawyer and Christian Democrat politician Walter Hallstein<sup>II</sup>, which established a direct relationship between the renewal of the financial regulation of the agricultural policy, the establishment of the Community's own resources (from agricultural levies and customs duties) and the strengthening of the European Parliament's powers<sup>III</sup>.

European Movement International (EM)<sup>IV</sup> was founded in October 1948 after the Hague Congress in May to coordinate the initiatives of the major Europeanist movements and political parties in favour of European unification. Duncan Sandys, Winston Churchill's son-in-law, took the initiative and, through the Anglo-French United Europe Movement (UEM), convened a meeting in Paris in July 1947, during which the decision was made to set up a Coordination Committee. The European League for Economic Cooperation (ELEC), the Union of European Federalists (UEF) (Pistone 2008), the European Parliamentary Union (EPU), all of which later pulled out, and the *Conseil Français pour l'Europe Unie*, which was the French section of the UEM, joined it.

Later, in addition to the founding organisations, the Christian-Democrat leaning *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales*, the *Mouvement Socialiste pour les États Unis d'Europe*, the



Council of European Municipalities (CEM) and the *Association Européenne des Enseignants* (AEDE) (Hick, 1992: 174-176) also joined it.

The EM was and still is made up of national councils, based on the organisational model of the international movement, albeit reflecting the peculiarities of each individual country, including political parties, federalist and Europeanist movements, trade unions, business organisations, social forces, associations and the world of culture.

After a long period of inactivity, in particular as a result of the failure of the Treaty of the European Defence Community (EDC) in August 1954, the need to counter the Gaullist vision of a *Europe des États* revitalised the EM, turning it into one of main opponents of the confederalist approach pursued by General de Gaulle (Palayret 1996: 169-177).

De Gaulle strove to reconcile his radical commitment to a traditional view of statehood, based on the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state, with the needs of the modern world, which even at that time were providing the impetus to overcome this view in order to create, at least in Western Europe, a supranational and integrated order. Gaullist political doctrine actually offered a solution to these two contrasting needs by proposing a confederation model for Europe which, acknowledging that only legitimate entities could remain states, envisaged a form of political and economic union based on institutionalised intergovernmental cooperation and respect for the absolute sovereignty of the contracting parties.

Specifically regarding the relationship between Gaullism and movements for European unity, it should be immediately noted that General De Gaulle's ascent to power led to a weakening of federalist and Europeanist movements and organisations in France, except for, of course, the ones supporting the *Europe des États* model pursued by the new government. As pointed out by Alain Greilsammer (1975), this occurred for a number of reasons. First of all, the political staff (ministers, members of parliament and senior officials) had become less and less attentive and involved in the initiatives of the federalists. During the Fourth Republic for many public political figures attending meetings, conferences and public meetings hosted by the federalists in an attempt to garner political and electoral support from these pressure groups was almost considered a duty. However, with de Gaulle's return to power, this practice progressively, yet rather significantly, diminished. Secondly, due to the spread of the confederalist ideas advocated by de Gaulle,



federalist organisations lost their influence as they had neither the human resources nor the material means to counter the Gaullist propaganda. Thirdly, federalist organisations often found themselves on the defensive in an attempt to safeguard Community institutions, which, while harbouring some unconcealed doubts about their inadequate level of integration, particularly at the political level, needed to be defended against “assaults” and strict Gaullist initiatives almost as if they were “a fortress under siege” (Greilsammer 1975: 86-87). Moreover, after the failure of the EDC Treaty, Europeanist and federalist movements suffered deep divisions (Greilsammer 1975: 85-94).

When the Fifth Republic was created, French Europeanism actually seemed rather diverse, although most of the movements, organisations and groups were part of the *Organisation Française du Mouvement Européen* (OFME), the national section of EM International, the board of which was made up of, in succession, diplomat André François-Poncet; jurist René Courtin; René Mayer, former President of the Council of Ministers; and former Minister Pierre Sudreau.

The structure of the French Europeanist and federalist organisations was as follows:

- The European Federalist Movement, the French section of the UEF – known as the Supranational European Federalist Movement after 1959, when it espoused the ideas of Altiero Spinelli and the Italian federalists – the long-time president of which was Henri Frenay (Belot 2003), who was one of the leaders of the French Resistance during World War II.

- French Federalist Movement *La Fédération*, founded in 1944 (Greilsammer 1975: 117-123; Gouzy 1992: 61-89; Bacharan-Gressel 1993: 41-66), the main leader of which was André Voisin, who had contributed to creating the *Centre d'Action Européenne Fédéraliste* (AEF), after leaving the UEF<sup>V</sup>, regarded as being too influenced by Spinelli’s political views and the most radical federalists.

- The European League for Economic Cooperation (ELEC), two of the leading members of the French section of which are worthy of mention: Edmond Giscard d’Estaing and Edouard Bonnefous.

- The aforementioned, Christian Democrat-leaning *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales*, which was founded and long inspired by former Minister Robert Bichet, and which subsequently turned into the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD);



- The *Mouvement Socialiste pour les États Unis d'Europe*, chaired by former Minister Gérard Jaquet.

- The Liberal Movement for a United Europe, founded in 1952 and at the time chaired by former Minister André Morice (Gouzy 1996: 55-57).

Some sectoral organisations and movements also joined the OFME, such as the Council of European Municipalities (CEM), the first Secretary-General of which Jean Bareth was also an activist in *La Fédération*; the *Association Européenne des Enseignants* (AEDE); the Union of Resistance Fighters for a United Europe (URPE) and the Association of European Journalists (Gouzy 1996: 56). There were also some pro-Gaullist organisations, such as the French Committee for the European Union and the Movement for the Independence of Europe, which did not join the OFME.

The former was the French section of the Pan-European Union, founded in 1923 by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (Fondation Archives Européennes 1994; Coudenhove-Kalergi 1965; Brugmans 1970: 57-73; Agnelli 1975; Posselt, 1992: 227-236) and was long chaired by former Minister Louis Terrenoire with Georges Pompidou as vice-president, until he joined the government in 1962.

The Movement for the Independence of Europe was established in 1967 and was a left-leaning, Gaullist movement that was opposed to any supranational development of the Communities. It defined itself as progressive, anti-imperialist and opposed to US policy, which it viewed as hegemonic. Some of its most remarkable members were Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie, René Capitant, Jacques Debu-Bridel as well as others who were close to or members of the French Communist Party, such as Francis Crémieux (Gouzy 1996: 56).

It is also worth mentioning a few international organisations which, albeit not strictly French, had their main centre of activity in France, such as the Action Committee for the United States of Europe (Fontaine 1974), founded by Jean Monnet in October 1955, and the International Centre for European Training (CIFE) (Cagiano, Colasanti 1996), created in December 1954 on the initiative of the UEF, especially that of Alexandre Marc, a member of integral federalism (Gouzy 1996: 57).





## 2. Attitudes Towards de Gaulle's European Policy

Regarding the French Europeanist movements' position on de Gaulle's politics upon his return to power in 1958, it should be noted that in the first three years, from 1958 to 1961, the prevailing approach was based on caution and careful observation, particularly among EM and OFME leaders. General de Gaulle was an enigma and his rise to power had caused mixed reactions within the EM, considering the fact that his first initiatives seemed to presage an attitude in favour of political union.

In order to protect French interests along with other reasons, de Gaulle had not "frozen" the Treaties of Rome, which had entered into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1958, a few months before his return to power. He was aware of the need to modernise the French economy by integrating it into a wider market, and was interested in launching the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), from which the French countryside (an important constituency of the Gaullist party) would have benefited greatly.

While driven by the desire to safeguard absolute national sovereignty, de Gaulle was convinced of the need for strong cooperation among European states, in particular France and Germany, to meet the challenges of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to regain the autonomy of France and Europe in relation to the two superpowers (Pistone 2008: 141-142).

Moreover, it should be noted that some of the organisations already mentioned, such as André Voisin's *La Fédération* and Count Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-European Union were very close to General de Gaulle and supported his domestic and European political initiatives, although *La Fédération*, which joined the OFME, always remained autonomous and did not provide its total support.

The representatives of the European Federalist Movement (the EFM, founded in 1959 through the supranational transformation of the old UEF) were, however, wary or hostile, even though this attitude was not immediately apparent. When de Gaulle took power, the French component of the EFM did not immediately oppose the new Republic established by the General for a number of reasons. Firstly, during the Fourth Republic, de Gaulle had taken very different, and sometimes contradictory, positions on European integration. Therefore, it was hoped that he would endorse a plan of political unity in Europe, as at that time he was, among other things, the only European leader with the necessary political



stature and strength to persuade France's partners to agree with a united Europe. Secondly, the majority of French federalists were so opposed to the Assembly system, characteristic of the Third and Fourth Republics, that they could only see positive features in the new Constitution. Finally, de Gaulle seemed like he could end the war in Algeria. In fact, according to the federalists, the plan to quickly integrate Western Europe both politically and militarily, which had reached its peak in the early 1950s with the EDC and the Statute of the European Political Community (EPC), stalled also because in France the issue of Algeria had attracted far more public attention than the idea of European unity. In fact, in 1960, the French Commission of the EFM, after long hesitation, took a clear stance in favour of the independence of the Algerian people (Greilsammer 1975: 95-96).

Upon closer consideration of the French section of the EM (the OFME), it should be pointed out, as stated by Jean-Pierre Gouzy, that the existence of this organisation at least partially depended on the support of the French Foreign Ministry, and what is more "it could not serve as a framework for federalist action openly opposed to the diplomacy of Couve de Murville" (Gouzy 2000: 1019-1020)<sup>VI</sup>.

The OFME and EM leading figure was Maurice Faure, who during the Fourth Republic had strongly supported the process of building a united Europe and was part of the group of federalist integrationist deputies of the Radical Party led by René Mayer (Riondel 1997: 57, 66-70). Faure joined the EM – and was its President from 1961 to 1967 – as well as the EFM, the Action Committee for the United States of Europe and the Liberal Movement for a United Europe (Riondel 1997: 97-99).

During the Fourth Republic, he served as the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for European Affairs in the Guy Mollet government from February 1956 to May 1957 (Sirinelli, Vandenbussche, Vavasseur-Desperriers, 2003). As Under-Secretary, he participated in the negotiations for the Treaties of Rome (Riondel 1997: 117-136)<sup>VII</sup>.

With the final crisis of the Fourth Republic, Faure acknowledged that General de Gaulle's return to power and the birth of a new Republic were necessary steps, due to the difficult situation France found itself in, but failed to conceal his concern regarding the Gaullists' positions on the European integration process (Riondel 1997: 292).

As for the Central Council of Pan-European Union, chaired by Coudenhove-Kalergi, on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1958, it welcomed de Gaulle's return as leader of France. A major obstacle to





European integration was precisely France's political and financial instability. The General's rise to power would open the way for new initiatives in the European field, in particular the creation of a political power among the six countries that had signed the Treaties of Rome, also including other democratic states. This new European power would have the task of coordinating foreign and economic policies and building an indissoluble union that would have to obtain the explicit approval of the peoples of the Old Continent. The Pan-European Union also requested that Paris be selected as the seat of the institutions provided for in the EEC Treaty<sup>VIII</sup>.

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1958, the OFME, chaired by André François-Poncet, adopted a resolution on the new Constitution of what would soon become the Fifth French Republic. The resolution requested that the provisions of the 1946 Constitution on the transfer of sovereignty to supranational institutions be incorporated into the new constitution, and that they be better defined ('Résolution du Conseil Français du Mouvement Européen sur la Nouvelle Constitution Française' 1958: 5)<sup>IX</sup>.

However, after about two months, on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1958 to be exact, the Executive Committee of the OFME adopted a resolution which stated that it regretted that none of the articles in the new draft constitution referred to the development of European construction ('Le Mouvement Européen devant la Constitution' 1958: 3).

*La Federation*, however, while regretting that municipal and regional decentralisation measures were not covered by the draft constitution, asked that it be voted on because a negative vote would have plunged the country into chaos, possibly resulting in a dictatorship as the exercise of all freedoms depended on the authority of the executive power ('Le Oui du Mouvement Fédéraliste Européen' 1958: 3).

The EFM's aforementioned non-hostile attitude a priori towards the Fifth Republic, was confirmed in the referendum on the draft constitution (Greilsammer 1975: 95-96). The Executive Committee of the EFM, which met in Paris on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1958, allowed its members full freedom of conscience for the referendum. However, it should be noted that the emphasis on national sovereignty raised some concern, also because the EFM believed the articles in the new Constitution dealing with international treaties were not clear enough, and concluded the statement by claiming that:



“[...] le Mouvement Fédéraliste Européen se déclare plus que jamais décidé à lutter, le cas échéant, contre la dangereuse illusion d’une prétendue grandeur nationale fondée sur la puissance. Il poursuivra avec la même énergie le combat pour la Fédération Européenne qui demeure pour les peuples du continent la seule voie de salut”<sup>x</sup> (‘Observations du Mouvement Fédéraliste Européen’ 1958: 3).

It was not until June 1959 that the French members of EFM directly attacked Prime Minister Michel Debré, without affecting, however, the President of the Republic (Greilsammer 1975: 96). Only in autumn 1960 were the first articles that were very critical of General de Gaulle’s politics published following a September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1960 press conference (Delmas 1960: 2)<sup>xi</sup>, and the federalists clearly opposed Gaullist politics at the Congress in Lyon in February 1962 (Greilsammer 1975: 96)<sup>xii</sup>.

Following the September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958 referendum, during which voters overwhelmingly approved the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, René Courtin, Chairman of the OFME Executive Committee, in an article entitled *Nos Nouvelles Tâches*, published in the OFME monthly *Courrier Européen*, stated that there was nothing to prevent the continuation of the construction of a federal Europe after the referendum and in the transition to the new Republic. Compliance with the commitments and deadlines set out by the Treaties of Rome should be ensured (Courtin 1958: 1-2).

At first, Faure also had a favourable impression of the Gaullist position on the Common Market. In fact, as aforementioned, after evaluating the overall positive contribution of the EEC in the trade sector, General de Gaulle honoured France’s commitments by signing the Treaties of Rome, and Prime Minister Debré fully respected them.

Nevertheless, Faure remained cautious and wary, noting that the measures taken until then, especially in the area of trade, had been the simplest ones, also because they were the result of decisions already taken and applied automatically (Riondel 1997: 325-326).

Over time, Faure expressed his clear disagreement with the Gaullist model of *Europe des États* at the National Assembly – of which he was a member, serving on the Foreign Affairs Committee in 1960, in 1962 and again in 1967-68 and in 1970 – at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Communities (of which he was a member from 1959 to 1967)<sup>xiii</sup> and within the Europeanist movements: the Action Committee for the United



States of Europe and, above all, the EM, of which he was elected President on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1961, at the Congress of Brussels (and would be re-elected to serve until 1967). In October 1961, he was also appointed President of the Radical Party, succeeding Félix Gaillard, and maintained this position until 1965, and again from 1969 to 1971. Faure became a key figure in French political life, deepening his criticism of Gaullist policy on issues of European integration and harshly opposing the project of constitutional reform for the direct election of the President of the Republic, subjected to referendum on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1962 (Riondel 1997: 292, 350-355).

Focusing on his role within the EM, it should be noted that Etienne Hirsch, President of the EFM Central Committee, suggested that EM treasurer Baron René Boël consider Faure as a possible successor to Robert Schuman as President of the organisation.

Once elected, Faure's objective was first to revive the EM, which came across as an elite body that was more concerned with influencing the ruling class than the public opinion.

It was also at this time that de Gaulle put forward concrete proposals to develop political cooperation between the countries of the European Community, based on a confederal approach.

On February 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 1961, a summit of Heads of State and Government as well as Foreign Ministers of the Community took place in Rambouillet. During this summit, a committee, composed of representatives from the six governments and chaired by French Ambassador in Copenhagen Christian Fouchet (Fouchet 1971) was given the responsibility of drawing up proposals to institutionalise political cooperation.

A second summit was held in Bad Godesberg, on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961. At this summit, the Heads of State and Government agreed on the possibility of holding regular summit meetings, attended by Foreign Ministers as well, to develop the policies of the six governments. Cooperation would cover not only international relations and defence, but also the fields of education, culture and research. The Fouchet Committee was also asked to table proposals to "provide the union with a statute as soon as possible" ("Comunicati del Vertice Europeo, Bonn 18 luglio 1961').

However, on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1961, Fouchet presented a draft treaty – which bore his name (Fouchet Plan I) – that was strongly characterised by the Gaullist intergovernmental vision. This was even more evident in the second version of the proposal (Fouchet Plan



II), submitted in January 1962 (Bloes 1970). The issue was also connected to England's first application for membership, and led, in the spring of 1962, to an impasse in negotiations and to the abandonment of the project, due, above all to the hostility of the Netherlands and Belgium.

The EM opposed the Fouchet Plans on several occasions and, in particular, on December 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961, when the OFME was promoting talks on the European political situation, with an introductory report written by René Courtin, Pierre Uri and Georges Vedel<sup>XIV</sup>, and on June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 1962 at the Congress for the European Political Community, held in Munich (Riondel 1997: 371).

### 3. The “Empty Chair Crisis” and the October 1965 EM Congress in Cannes

After the events of the late 1950s and early 1960s, 1965 was a crucial year in the history of the EM and of the European integration process in general due to the outbreak of the aforementioned “empty chair crisis” as defined by historiographers and political journalists.

The EM's reaction – after Gaullists decided to suspend the participation of French government representatives in Community body meetings – was extremely harsh.

In an article published in *Le Monde* on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Etienne Hirsch, President of Supranational EFM, which was part of the EM, underlined the very high risks of returning to a divided Europe. Hirsch sharply criticised de Gaulle's politics because, although he did not do away with the Communities when he came to power, he had always tried to impose his will by pushing to size them down within the intergovernmental framework. However, he accused France's partners of meeting him on his own ground and constantly bargaining, while they should have asserted that Community institutions were supranational in nature, lending support to the Hallstein Commission's proposals (Hirsch 1965)<sup>XV</sup>.

In a letter dated July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1965, EM Secretary General Robert Van Schendel addressed all the member organisations and emphasised the serious crisis triggered by France's decision, a crisis that threatened to jeopardise the fundamental principles of the Communities and that, while appearing to be a disagreement on technical issues, was actually a political one.



Therefore, Van Schendel, mandated by the *Bureau Exécutif*, called for the mobilisation of member organisations and the raising of public awareness in their countries. He also announced that a demonstration was to be held in Brussels on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965 as well as an international conference in Nice or Cannes in early October (ACIME, 1965, *copie de la lettre adressée le 9 juillet 1965 par le secrétaire général [...]*).

In a statement to the Italian press agency ANSA, Faure declared that if the partners truly wanted to continue on the path to political integration, “alors la marche en avant pourra reprendre, l’Europe politique s’amorcer, l’Angleterre y participer pleinement. Sinon, nous en reviendrons aux erreurs du passé: axes, alliances, nationalismes, neutralismes, etc.”<sup>XVI</sup> (Riondel 1997: 400).

Faure did not conceal his concern about whether the crisis would deal a fatal blow to the balanced evolution of the European integration process. He sensed that the Gaullists’ goal was to question the roots of the Community method.

As predicted by Van Schendel, a large Europeanist demonstration took place in Brussels on July 19<sup>th</sup> on the initiative of the EM Executive in order to publicly state its reiteration of its desire to achieve the political, economic and social objectives included in the Treaties of Paris and Rome<sup>XVII</sup>.

The statement underlined that the crisis had revealed a “growing difference in Member States’ views on the political and democratic prospects of the European Community” and acknowledged the “persistent opposition that at least one of them displays [has displayed] towards the objectives, institutions, spirit and methods defined by Robert Schuman on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950, and subsequently enshrined in the Treaties of Paris and Rome” (“Grande manifestazione europeista a Bruxelles’ 1965: 2).

The statement went on to specify that the breakdown in negotiations and refusal to continue negotiations were reactions which were not only completely out of proportion with the dissent manifested within the Council, but also “an attack on the Treaty” (“Grande manifestazione europeista a Bruxelles’ 1965: 3).

However, the EM declared that it was still “incredulous” of a deliberate willingness to stop the development of the Common Market and invited the Council to continue examining the Commission’s proposals, urgently and without any preconditions.

The statement also asked the six governments not to question the application of the Community Treaties, the Commission’s role, majority voting in the Council and the





transition to the third stage of the Common Market (planned for January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1966), stressing that no government had the right to hinder the smooth functioning of the European institutions. An extraordinary congress planned for early October was also convened in Nice; however, later Cannes was chosen as the congress site ('Grande manifestazione europeista a Bruxelles' 1965: 5-6).

At the EM Extraordinary Congress, which took place in Cannes on October 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 1965, the Community crisis was at the centre of debate. At that meeting, the EM took a clear stance in opposition to the Gaullist positions.

In the letter of convocation, Faure announced the three objectives of the Congress: define the conditions and procedures to reaffirm the Community; demonstrate that now more than ever the foremost leaders in European political, cultural, economic and social life felt that European integration was an imperative, urgent need; and proclaim the EM member's adherence to Community principles and their faith in the unity of Europe (Riondel 1997: 40 2-403).

One thousand delegates gathered at the Congress Palace in *Boulevard de la Croisette* under Faure's chairmanship. In addition to the representatives of the Community's countries, delegates from the Scandinavian, British, Swiss, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and Turkish sections (*Ibid.*) also participated in it.

Jelle Zijlstra, former Minister of Economy of the Netherlands and member of the *Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (ARP), presented a report to the Congress entitled *How Can We Make the Emergence of a Wider Europe More Likely?*, in which he pointed out that the conflict with France over the Commission's proposals was to be expected. According to Zijlstra, it was better to do only that which was feasible (i.e., create the customs union as soon as possible) to avoid risking the failure of the Community experience. A political federation needed to be created gradually as history is subject to ebbs and flows. Therefore, patience and a willingness to compromise were needed at the tactical level in anticipation of "a new tidal wave". The Dutch member also displayed little enthusiasm for the hypothesis of the direct election of the European Parliament (EP) without strengthening its powers. The crux of the problem lay in the division of competences between the Community institutions and, in particular, between the Commission and the Council. As long as the center of gravity remained with the Council, the Parliament would continue to be an advisory body,





regardless of its election procedure (ACIME, 1965 Zijlstra, *Come rendere più probabile l'avvento di un'Europa più ampia*: 9 -10).

Leo Tindemans, Secretary-General of the Belgian Christian Social Party, presented a report entitled *Comment Renforcer la Communauté Européenne?* in which it was evident that there were no alternatives to the Treaties of Rome and that abandoning them would lead to chaos (ACIME, 1965 Tindemans, *Comment Renforcer la Communauté Européenne*: 13; 17-18).

The Congress was pervaded by the atmosphere of the electoral campaign of the French presidential elections. François Mitterrand also participated in the event – with Faure leaving the way open for him as General de Gaulle's opponent – and gave a long speech restating his convictions on Europe and his identification with Faure's views.

Other speakers were René Mayer, Pierre Uri, Etienne Hirsch and Baron Jean-Charles Snoy et d'Oppuers who, regarding the attitude to adopt towards the French policy, oscillated between Uri's moderate stance and Hirsch's uncompromising approach (1997 Riondel: 40 3-404).

In the speech of the President of the Italian Council of the European Movement (CIME), Giuseppe Petrilli, he pointed out that the French position questioned the institutional framework of the Treaty, and it was “clear that, behind the pretexts invoked to justify the breakdown in negotiations, the intention was to reduce European economic integration to a mere customs union with a series of measures supporting individual economic sectors and a return to the traditional formulas of intergovernmental cooperation” (ACIME, 1965 *Intervento del Prof. Giuseppe Petrilli*: 1-2).

However, the President of CIME added that the attitude adopted by the French was also an easy excuse to justify the hesitations, misunderstandings, lack of cohesion and clarity of other states where European problems were often considered foreign policy issues that should only be addressed by a handful of specialists. Petrilli reiterated that, given the level of development which had been reached by the six countries, economic integration could only succeed if there was also a unified decision-making process (*Ibid.*: 2-3).

Regarding the EM's role, it was not perceived simply as an advisory body to national governments and the Communities. Rather, the movement's activities needed to be differentiated from those of the government, to better make criticisms and mobilise public opinion.



Another Italian politician, Giovanni Malagodi, Secretary-General of the Italian Liberal Party and President of the Liberal Movement for a United Europe, argued that the situation had not become critical as a result of a simple conflict of interest, but as a result of a conflict with one, basic concept: de Gaulle's, which was "based on an anachronistic notion of the overall values, interests and possibilities of the old-fashioned nation-state" (ACIME, 1965, *Testo del discorso dell'On. Malagodi*).

However, according to Malagodi, de Gaulle was not the only one responsible for the crisis, the apathy of the other partners was also to blame. At this point, in addition to the implementation of the Treaties of Paris and Rome, the building of Europe had to go on, even without France, however, always leaving the door open for it, and working hard on the accession of the United Kingdom. Maintaining the Atlantic link was crucial, as was Europe's definition of common objectives at the global level (ACIME, 1965, *ANSA nr. 199/2*).

The British EM Council, through a memorandum presented to the Congress, asked that UK membership, and that of other countries wishing to join the Community, be put at the centre of political initiative. The British section expressed its full support of extending the Community principle to include foreign policy and defence, as well as the strengthening of the EP, while pointing out that, under the current circumstances, the EM should concentrate its efforts on two priorities: preserving the Communities and ensuring enlargement as quickly as possible (ACIME, 1965 *Memorandum présenté par le Conseil britannique du Mouvement Européen*).

In a speech given at the October 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress, Duncan Sandys pointed out that the UK's possible accession would benefit not only the UK, but the Community itself, at the industrial, scientific and technological levels. Divisions in Europe led to impotence, and the very concept of partnership with the United States did not make sense without political union in Europe. However, regarding this union's form, Sandys confirmed his cautious, gradual approach and discussed building the union in stages, starting with the core Community institutions and including foreign policy and defence. The British representative rejected any ideas on European unification without France, which was supported by Malagodi and others, as aforementioned, as Europe would have been incomplete without France, as it was without the United Kingdom (ACIME, 1965 *Intervention de Rt Hon. Duncan Sandys, 2 Octobre 1965: 1-6*)<sup>XVIII</sup>.



The Cannes congress was also characterised by a harsh attack on Count Coudenhove-Kalergi and his organisation – the Pan-European Union – , which had now taken, as mentioned above, a clearly pro-de Gaulle stance, and several members of the government party joined the French section of the movement to make their stance even clearer.

Pressured by the federalists, a motion to remove Coudenhove-Kalergi as one of the Honorary Presidents of the EM was prepared, since his stance was getting increasingly closer to de Gaulle's, to the point that he condemned the Brussels' Commission for daring to propose the federal solutions which, in his opinion, had come to undermine "collaboration among states". Because of its delicate nature, this question was not publicly voted on during the conference, but was sent to the *Bureau Exécutif* (ACIME, 1965, *Circolare di informazione. 1) L'azione dei federalisti al Congresso straordinario del Movimento Europeo a Cannes*; ACIME, 1965, *elenco dei firmatari la mozione*).

However, Coudenhove-Kalergi, who was informed of the situation, spontaneously resigned in a letter dated October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1965, which was addressed to the President of the EM Maurice Faure and accused the EM of turning into an international anti-Gaullist movement, when it was absolutely clear that the unity of Europe could not be achieved without France's participation, all the more so because France was in favour of European unity. Coudenhove-Kalergi concluded his communication by stating that he could not provide moral support to a movement that divided Europe, rather than unite it (ACIME, 1965 *Lettre Adressée par le Comte Richard de Coudenhove-Kalergi [...] à Monsieur Maurice Faure [...]*, 11 Octobre 1965).

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Faure responded to Coudenhove-Kalergi's criticisms noting that the EM was neither against nor in favour of the Fifth Republic, as this would have made no sense. The EM defended the Community Treaties and their economic and institutional constraints, and the letter ended by stating that:

“Ce sont ceux qui chicanent sur le respect des Traités ou qui entravent leur accomplissement et leur développement, qui nous paraissent ‘diviser l’Europe au lieu de l’unir’ et retarder l’avènement nécessaire de la Communauté des peuples de l’Europe sur une base fédérale et démocratique.



Nous voulions nous refuser à la tristesse de vous compter désormais parmi les partisans d'idées qui sont l'opposé de celles que vous aviez semées jadis. Nous avons tort<sup>xix</sup> (ACIME, 1965, *réponse de Monsieur Maurice Faure* [...], 15 octobre).

It should be noted that the relationship between Coudenhove-Kalergi and the EM had long been tense, precisely because of the Pan-European Union's acceptance of the Gaullist model of *Europe des États* (Riondel 1997: 407-408).

Faure gave the closing speech at the Conference in Cannes, which defined the arguments in favour of intergovernmental cooperation as reactionary and outdated (ACIME, 1965 *Discorso di chiusura del Congresso straordinario del Movimento europeo, pronunziato dal Signor Maurice Faure* [...]: 3). According to the President of the EM, the criticism that supporters of European integration were proponents of Europe's submission to the United States was difficult to understand as the opposite was true, namely that the path to independence was founded precisely upon the Europeanist ideal (*Ibid.*: 3-5). Faure argued that European unity up to the Ural Mountains was difficult to achieve – a suggestion often invoked by de Gaulle – due to Eastern Europe's different social-economic regimes (*Ibid.*: 5-6). Moreover, this political decision, likely made independent of the Atlantic Alliance and its friendship with the United States, and founded on the idea that Europe's problems could only be solved within an exclusively European context, led to a resurgence in German nationalism because it established the pursuit of the unity of the country as the main objective of German policy. However, the peaceful reunification of Germany should have been the main objective of the entire free world. Faure stated that he disagreed with the views of those who believed that a disintegration of the West would result in a corresponding relaxation in Eastern Europe (*Ibid.*: 6-7).

The President of the EM went on to reiterate that the Community should continue to operate under the rules of the Treaties, countering those who wished to overpower the competences, prestige and authority of the Community institutions, primarily its driving force, the Commission, the independent, impartial body responsible for ensuring Community interests as well as those of a state that was in a minority in the Council. Moreover, in the work of the Commission, it often adopted a moderate, flexible approach to achieve broad consensus on its initiatives. Although the proposals put forward by the Commission in March 1965 seemed too premature for governments to accept, the latter,



because of the flexibility of the Community framework, would have to act within the framework of the European institutions themselves (*Ibid.*: 7-9).

On the other hand, the Commission, because of its vocation and competences, was expected to be the vanguard and the engine of the Community. It certainly was not expected to step back in its positions, dragged along by other European institutions or national governments (Riondel 1997: 404). In the end, the participants voted unanimously for three resolutions. The first invited governments to create a common front to safeguard the Community, without seeking “an equally dangerous and illusory compromise” on significant issues (ACIME, 1965 *Risoluzioni approvate allo straordinario congresso di Cannes*, October 3<sup>rd</sup>). Europe would find neither salvation nor any guarantees for its future without complying with the spirit and letter of the Treaties. It was also asked to resume the regular meetings of the Council, even without France, so all the decisions required and foreseen by the Treaty could be made, particularly regarding budgetary matters, and to examine the Commission’s proposals in order to reach a decision as quickly as possible regarding the financial regulation and the outstanding agriculture issues.

A second resolution, defined the enlargement of the EEC as the essential objective of the EEC, and called on governments to reach an agreement on the accession of the democratic countries which were willing and able to undertake the commitments laid down by the Treaty of Rome (*Ibid.*: 2-3).

Finally, under the third resolution passed by the Congress, the EM decided to launch a public opinion campaign “to demonstrate the value and necessity of common European institutions for the resolution of problems on which the future of new European generations depends” (*Ibid.*: 3).

#### 4. The 1965 French Presidential Elections

As for French domestic politics, Faure wanted to create a great centrist *rassemblement*, bringing together centre-right and non-Communist, leftist forces. This democratic and Europeanist coalition would balance out the strength of the Gaullist party. To this end, in 1963, Faure made efforts to search for an alternative candidate to de Gaulle, who defended the federal concept of European construction against the confederal concept of the founder of the Fifth Republic.





In the first phase, his choice of candidate was Socialist Gaston Defferre, who was also a fervent Europeanist, an opponent of General de Gaulle's personal power and opposed to any form of agreement with the Communists. However, conflicts between the SFIO (*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*) and the Popular Republican Movement (MRP) prevented Defferre's candidacy from taking off (Riondel 1997: 416-418).

Faure himself was also proposed as a candidate but he did not seem convinced and, in any case, did not obtain the support of the SFIO, which argued in favour of François Mitterrand, who backed an alliance with the Communists (Riondel 1997: 418-421).

The Radical Party supported Mitterrand's candidacy, but Faure decided to back Jean Lecanuet, with a markedly Europeanist stance, even though it should be noted that, a few months after the presidential elections, Faure veered away from Lecanuet's positions, which he deemed too moderate towards de Gaulle's politics.

It should be noted that in the 1965 presidential elections the OFME took an explicit stance, calling on the French people to express their fidelity to the ideal of a united Europe (ACIME, 1965 *Resolution adoptée à l'unanimité moins deux voix, dans sa séance du 5 Novembre* [...]). It reiterated this stance after the first round of elections, pointing out that forcing de Gaulle into a run-off confirmed the French electorate's broad support of Europeanism. In the second round people were asked to restate this position (ACIME, 1965 *Déclaration adoptée par la Délégation générale de l'Organisation française du Mouvement européen, au cours de sa séance du 15 décembre* [...]).

After the 1965 presidential elections, won by de Gaulle in the run-off, the "empty chair crisis" was resolved under the January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1966 agreements, the so-called "Luxembourg Compromise". It marked the defeat of the Commission's plan to acquire a power which was autonomous from the states and become the embryo of a European government. The primacy of the Council of Ministers was rather confirmed and France, which disagreed with the other five partners on the issue of majority voting, confirmed its right to resort to the veto. The six delegations stated that this discrepancy did not prevent the work of the Community from being resumed according to normal procedure (Loth 2001a, 2007; Gerbet 1994: 269-284; Levi, Morelli, 1994: 162-163).

A week earlier, on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1966, the EM *Bureau Exécutif*, which met in Brussels, approved a resolution calling for a prompt resolution of the crisis, stressing that the Treaties of Rome would allow effective decisions to be taken while safeguarding the





essential interests of the States. The document also warned against any solutions that compromised, both openly, by revising the Treaties, and indirectly, through agreements defined “interpretive”, any progress by reintroducing the right to veto and weakening the Commission. Furthermore, the resolution stressed the importance, once the crisis was over, of opening the Community up to countries which were willing to accept Europe’s rules and develop Europe’s political unity based on Community principles (ACIME, 1966 Bureau Exécutif International, Réunion du 22 Janvier [...], *Procès-Verbal*: 5-6; *Ibid.*, *Résolution*).

## 5. Conclusions

The issue analysed highlights the EM as a forum for linking national political dynamics (in this case, French in particular) to supranational and European ones. EM was a movement that safeguarded European Communities against Gaullists’ attempts to profoundly change them, even though it was, by nature, characterised by strong internal pluralism. The gradual emergence, both within the OFME and the international movement, of opposition to General de Gaulle’s politics did not eliminate internal fractures, i.e., divisions between the sectors of the EM that were in favour of developing Community institutions based on a model of institutional or integral federalism and those that were more oriented towards a functionalist and gradualist approach, not to mention the extremely cautious positions taken in terms of support for a supranational Europe by some national councils, such as the UK and Scandinavian councils. Therefore, EM expressed a plural Europeanism, which conflicted with Gaullist politics not only due to opposition, which was certainly broad and prevalent, to its institutional plan regarding Europe but also due to the positions taken by General de Gaulle on Euro-Atlantic relations, as well as on British accession to the Community.

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding Gaullist France’s European policy, many works could be cited, such as, but not limited to: Massip (1963); Beloff (1963); Pinder (1963); Grosser (1965); Juvé (1967); de Gaulle (1970); Couve de Murville (1971); Deniau (1977); Debré (1979); Berstein (1989); de La Gorce (1992); Institut Charles-de-Gaulle (1992 a, b) Maillard (1995); Soutou (1996); Bozo (1996); Vaisse (1998); Gerbet (1994); Peyrefitte (1994-2000); Bitsch (2001); Quagliariello (2003); Malandrino (2005); Bossuat (2005); Mangold (2006); Ludlow (2006); and



Lachaise, Le Béguec, Sirinelli (2007).

<sup>II</sup> Regarding the Hallstein Commission and the personality of its President, cf. in particular, Malandrino (2005); Hallstein (1970); Loth *et al.* (1998), Loth, Bitsch (2007); and Loth (2007a).

<sup>III</sup> As for the “empty chair crisis”, cf. Loth (2001a; 2001b; 2007b); Germond (2006: 79-96); Malandrino (2005: 173-90); Gerbet (1994: 269-284); Levi, Morelli (1994: 162-163); and Di Nunno (2012).

<sup>IV</sup> As for European Movement International, cf. Schöndube (1987: 156-166); Hick (1991; 1992: 171-181); Palayret (1994: 365-383; 1996: 151-178; 2000: 743-781); Mouvement européen/European Movement (2001); Deschamps (2009: 691-694); and Caraffini (forthcoming).

<sup>V</sup> In the spring of 1956, the Dutch federalists and German federalists of *Europa-Union* left the UEF and formed the *Centre d'Action Européenne Fédéraliste* (AEF) with the support of smaller groups, especially the French groups that were part of *La Fédération*. See Morelli (1996).

<sup>VI</sup> However, it should also be added that the public contributions to the OFME were significantly reduced.

<sup>VII</sup> At the time, within the French Radical Party there was strong opposition between three components: the one led by René Mayer, joined also by Faure, which was further right on the political spectrum, supported a liberal economy as well as the supranational integration process of Europe; another component that was further left, the leader of which was Pierre Mendès-France, in favour of a command economy and far more cautious on European issues; and, finally, a component, the main exponent of which was Edouard Daladier, that opposed European integration, also because it was wary of Germany. See Riondel (1997: 67-70, 83-87, 117-120, 164-290).

<sup>VIII</sup> As for the location of the seats of European institutions, the Pan-European Union wanted the Council of Europe to remain in Strasbourg, the European Coal and Steel Community in Luxembourg and the Euratom in Brussels. Cf. ‘Réunion du Conseil Central de l'Union Paneuropéenne’ (1958: 7); ‘Résolution du Conseil Central de l'Union Paneuropéenne’ (1958: 19).

<sup>IX</sup> See also the Archive of the Italian Council of the European Movement (hereinafter ACIME), Fald. 11, b. EST/6, doc. 70, “Organisation Français du Mouvement Européen”, *Communiqué*.

<sup>X</sup> “[...] The European Federalist Movement wishes to declare that, now more than ever, it is determined to fight, if necessary, against the perilous illusion of presumed national greatness founded upon power. It will continue its struggle, with the same unyielding strength, to create a European federation, which is still the only path to salvation for the peoples of this continent”.

<sup>XI</sup> On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1960, de Gaulle presented his proposal for cooperation between the Western European countries in the fields of politics, economics, culture and defence, which included quarterly meetings of the Heads of State and Government and maintained the appointment of members of the European Parliamentary Assembly by national parliaments. The creation of such a union would be subject to European referendum (Riondel 1997: 366-367). This proposal was followed by the Fouchet Plans initiative.

<sup>XII</sup> It is worth mentioning Mario Albertini's stance, who, while rejecting the General's basic nationalist and confederalist orientation, believed until 1966 that some aspects of his policy objectively promoted progress towards European integration. See Albertini (1961, 1962, 1963, 1966) and also Albertini (1964), in which, unlike Altiero Spinelli's stance, he advocated the need for Europe's nuclear weapons.

<sup>XIII</sup> Faure's appointment to the European Parliamentary Assembly (which changed its name to the European Parliament in 1962) took place in 1959 at the express will of Prime Minister Debré, despite the initial opposition of the Gaullist parliamentary group. However, according to Faure himself, his relationship with Debré was one of deep friendship, going beyond their divergent views on the evolution of the European unification process. Debré felt that appointing Faure was a duty, as he was an expert on Community institutions and did not consider their different views an obstacle. See Riondel (1997: 336).

<sup>XIV</sup> As for the OFME initiative, cf., ACIME, Fald. 36, b. EST/5-A – Bureau Exécutif International 1961-1965, doc. 39, *Bureau Exécutif International – Réunion extraordinaire du 19 janvier 1962 – Procès-Verbal*; *ibid.*, doc. 41, *Rapport introductif sur l'Organisation politique de l'Europe (approuvé par la Délégation générale de l'Organisation française du Mouvement européen)*.

<sup>XV</sup> This article can be found in ACIME, Fald. 35, b. Note informative del Movimento europeo, doc. 118, *Mouvement européen*, *Informations*, n. 24 Juillet 1965, Section IV, pp. 1-2.

<sup>XVI</sup> “Only then can progress continue, can a political Europe be created, and can Britain fully participate in it. Otherwise, we will go on repeating the mistakes of the past: axis, alliances, nationalisms, neutralisms etc.”

<sup>XVII</sup> As for the July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965, demonstration, see ACIME, doc. 291, Consiglio italiano del Movimento



europeo (CIME), Comunicato stampa n. 27, *Per iniziativa del Movimento europeo indetta per lunedì a Bruxelles una grande manifestazione europeista*, Roma 16 luglio 1965; *Ibid.*, doc. 296 *Réunion extraordinaire du Mouvement européen 19 juillet 1965 – Liste des participants*

<sup>XVIII</sup> Greek delegate Cassimatis also expressed very strong doubts about the idea of excluding France, at least temporarily, from the European integration process while involving Great Britain. He pointed out that this, in addition to being very controversial, would not allow them to avoid the risk of having to revise the Treaties. See ACIME (1965, *ANSA nr. 199/2*).

<sup>XIX</sup> “Those who seek loopholes regarding compliance with the treaties or come in the way of their implementation and development are the ones who seem to be “dividing Europe rather than uniting it,” delaying the necessary construction of a Community of the peoples of Europe on a federal and democratic basis. We would have liked to avoid the sadness of now having to include you among the supporters of ideas that are the opposite of the ones you once disseminated. We were wrong.”

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