

Research Project:

***The International European Movement (EM) and
Gaullist France from 1958 to 1969***

For over a decade, from General De Gaulle's return to power in 1958 (in the wake of events in Algeria) until he resigned in 1969, the process of European integration was strongly influenced by France's Fifth Republic. This was undoubtedly due to the central role traditionally occupied by Paris in European matters, but also the dynamism of the new French leadership driven by the desire to restore the country to its position as a significant and incisive player in European and international politics.

The aim of this research project is to examine the stance taken by the International European Movement (EM) ahead of the Europeanist initiatives adopted by the Gaullist regime.

The International European Movement (EM) was founded in October 1948, after the Hague Congress held in May of the same year, with the aim of coordinating the initiatives of the main Europeanist movements, political parties and trade unions in favour of European unification.

The EM had and retains the distinction of being organised on the basis of National Councils that reflect the organisational model of the International Movement while retaining the unique characteristics of the individual countries they represent. The councils are constituted by representatives of political parties, trade unions, federalist and Europeanist movements, entrepreneurial organisations, associationism and the world of culture.

After its activities had stalled for a long period, particularly following the collapse 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, transforming it into one of the most significant opponents to the confederalist option pursued by the General.

The problem for De Gaulle was being able to conciliate his radical commitment to a traditional vision of the state, founded on the absolute sovereignty of the nation, with the needs of the contemporary world that were beginning to surpass such a concept. These two contradictory requirements, which still greatly influence the actions of the political class, found a solution in De Gaulle's political doctrine proposing European confederation.

It should be noted that in the first three years, from 1958 until 1961, the attitude of the EM directorate was generally to cautiously observe the French government's initiatives. The unknown quantity represented by the General was considerable, and his rise to power had caused contrasting reactions within the EM, especially considering the fact that his initial actions seemed to hint at an attitude in favour of European unity. De Gaulle, albeit from a perspective of defending France's national interests, had certainly not "frozen" the Treaties of Rome, which had come into force just a few months before his return to power on January 1st 1958.

The years 1961 and 1962, unlike the period that was to follow (notable for the obstructionist role assumed by the French government), were strongly characterised by the "constructive" spirit of Gaullist politics, which aimed to exert great influence on the process of constructing the new Europe. The aim, however, was to direct the process, according to the aforementioned principles, towards confederation rather than federation.

The European Community's first summit of heads of state, heads of government and ministers of foreign affairs, called in order to examine De Gaulle's proposals, was held in Paris on February 10th and 11th 1961. It entrusted a commission, composed of representatives of the six governments, to prepare concrete proposals for the implementation of greater and closer political cooperation. The commission, chaired by the French Ambassador to Copenhagen, Christian Fouchet, eventually came up with the so-called Fouchet Plans.

At the Bonn Conference on July 18th 1961, when relations between the six heads of state

and government were at their best, it was established that meetings should be held periodically in order to discuss policy and establish common positions. It was intended that such cooperation should be extended from foreign policy and defence to such areas as education, culture and research. The functionalists of the European Movement, particularly Baron René Boël, Fernand Dehousse and André Philip, expressed their support for the French proposals.

Many myths, however, were exploded on the following November 2nd when Christian Fouchet presented a draft treaty to the commission of government representatives which would later take his name, even though the basic ideas were undoubtedly those of General De Gaulle. The draft treaty outlined a typically confederal union, in which the Commission, independent of the member states and answerable to the European Parliament, would give way to an intergovernmental body accompanied by an assembly which would play a merely advisory role. Furthermore, on January 18th 1962, the French representative proposed a text which was even more reductive than the first (Fouchet Plan II). Economic matters were effectively included among the responsibilities of the Union, and consequently the Communities would be set completely within an intergovernmental framework. All references to NATO had been removed and the role of the Parliament had been further diminished.

All this was compounded by the United Kingdom's formal request to take part in negotiations. From that moment, this issue became the focal point of controversy above all between the Belgian and Dutch governments on one side, and the French on the other. As such, talks were interrupted and did not resume again for the remainder of the year.

During a press conference held on the following May 15th, the French president, strongly against the supranational integration model, vigorously defended his conception of a *Europe des États*, provoking heated reactions among the federalists and the EM, whose suspicions regarding the true intentions of the General had in their eyes been confirmed. As they saw it, the Communities were destined to short circuit, and be overshadowed by a Union Council which would deliberate according to unanimous voting.

Such a rigid Gaullist stance was indeed the cause of profound irritation in many areas of the EM. On the occasion of the "Congress for the European Political Community", held in Munich on June 7th and 8th, the EM had defined its own plan for the development of the integration process which foresaw direct elections for the European Parliament and the extension of its powers in budget related matters, as well as the institution of a single Commission, Community access to its own financial resources and the introduction of majority voting in the Council of Ministers.

Moreover, in order to strengthen the role of Europe, the EM also proposed a common representation of the Community's member states within NATO, and a concerted definition of an "Atlantic strategy" through negotiations to be held with the United States, with Europe arguing in favour of conventional weapons. The Gaullist idea of an independent Europe becoming the world's third superpower was substantially rejected.

1965 was a pivotal year in the history of the EM and more generally for the European integration process, due to events which led to what historical literature and the media defined the "empty chair crisis".

The reaction of the EM, after the Gaullist decision to suspend the French government representatives' participation in Community meetings, was extremely decisive. A huge Europeanist demonstration took place in Brussels on July 19th of that year thanks to the initiative of the EM, and aimed to make public a declaration which reiterated the will to achieve the political, economic and social objectives contained in the Treaties of Paris and Rome. Furthermore, an extra congress was summoned for the beginning of October.

The Community crisis was indeed at the centre of the debate at the extra EM Congress held in Cannes in October 1965. On this occasion, the EM assumed a stance which totally rejected the Gaullist position. The governments were invited to form a united front in order to safeguard the Community, without seeking a compromise which was deemed as

dangerous as it was illusory. It was also suggested that regular Council meetings should resume even in the absence of France.

In November 1968, in the historic *Ridderzaal* at the Hague, a European Parliamentary Congress was held, twenty years on from the Congress of Europe which gathered in May 1948. In the *Declaration on Europe*, approved at the end of the conference, it was stated that significant progress had been made in the twenty years that had passed, but that the initial momentum was beginning to wane and the risk was not only that further progress could not be made, but that things may start to regress. It was necessary to complete social and economic unification, strengthen the democratic nature of the institutions, extend their powers, and to allow the United Kingdom and other interested nations to adhere to the project. With the aim of achieving the aforementioned results, the document included a summons for a conference of heads of state and government which would indeed be held in the Hague the following December. This was to follow the resignation of General De Gaulle and the election of Georges Pompidou, a fact that led to important developments in France's European policy, favouring a less "ideological" attitude and being more open to dialogue with its European partners.

Archive Sources

This research project will rely heavily on the consultation of the International European Movement's archive, housed in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. It will also be useful to consult the archive of the European Supranational Federalist Movement, housed by the Department of History and Geography at the University of Pavia, the archive of the *Organisation française du Mouvement européen* (OFME) and the and the Archive of the Italian Council of the European Movement (CIME), which is partly kept by the Centre for Studies on Federalism in Moncalieri (TO), and partly at CIME headquarters in Rome.

Europeanist and federalist journals will also be an invaluable source of information, and an extensive collection is available at the Centre for Studies on Federalism.

Objectives

The objective of this research project is to examine the position assumed by the European Movement (EM) ahead of the Europeanist initiatives of the Gaullist regime. It will be important to distinguish between the individual positions of its constituent elements (participating movements and the main National Councils, especially that of France, as well as individual people), shedding light on the debate and any related mediation activities. The research will have to draw a parallel between European matters, the initiatives of the Gaullist regime and the political stance of the EM, attempting to comprehend the level of incisiveness with respect to the choices implemented by social and political forces, governments and national parliaments.

The EM, unlike organisations such as the *Union européenne des fédéralistes* (UEF) and the European Federalist Movement (EFM), which are characterised by their complete independence from political parties and national institutions (although often supporting the more advanced Europeanist decisions taken by them), has distinguished itself by accommodating different schools of thought with regard to potential institutional developments in the integration process, maintaining a close relationship with the political class and political parties.

The UEF (and the EFM) is more of a popular and militant organisation, while the EM is a more top-level structure for the pro-European elite, whose work can be compared, under certain aspects, to that of pressure and focus groups that tend to aim predominantly at the political classes and institutions.