

## Ukraine celebrates Europe Day with the EU



Ukraine President Zelenskyy & EU Commission President von der Leyen in Kyiv today.

Yesterday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy submitted a bill to the Rada, accompanied by a decree making the proposed legislation effective immediately. If approved, as it surely will be, the legislation will formally change Ukraine's Victory Day in World War II from May 9, the date of Russia's Victory Day, to May 8 and establish May 9, instead, as Europe Day – the day the member states of the European Union celebrate French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's Declaration on May 9, 1950. Schuman, whose father lived in Lorraine and thus became, after Germany annexed Alsace-Lorraine following the Franco-Prussian War, a German citizen, grew up as a German citizen, went to German schools and universities, and worked as a lawyer in Metz until, after World War I, Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France and he suddenly found himself, in his early 30s, a French citizen. He was elected to the French Parliament in 1919, fought in the Résistance, became a minister of finance in Charles de Gaulle's provisional government, was a member of the Christian Democratic MRP (Popular Republican Movement), and subsequently served in several Fourth Republic governments, including, from 1948 to 1953, as foreign minister.

Schuman's Declaration, which he privately discussed with Konrad Adenauer, the new Chancellor of the Federal Republic, before presenting it to the French government and then to the public, said in part, "France has always had as her essential aim the service of peace. A united Europe was not achieved and we had war....Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity. The coming together of the nations of Europe

requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. Any action taken must in the first place concern these two countries. With this aim in view, the French government proposes that action be taken immediately on one limited but decisive point. It proposes that Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole be placed under a common High Authority, within the framework of an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe. The pooling of coal and steel production should immediately provide for the setting up of common foundations for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe.”

Schuman did not come up with the idea of a coal and steel community; that was the idea of Jean Monnet, at the time the head of the planning office in the French government, as a “Plan B” once the International Authority of the Ruhr formed in 1949 turned out not to give France the access to Ruhr Valley coal it hoped the IAR would give it. But Schuman, unlike others in the French government to whom Monnet took his plan, immediately supported the idea and contacted Adenauer about it, even before taking it to the cabinet. Negotiations began immediately after Schuman’s announcement. In April 1951, the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg signed the Treaty of Paris creating the European Coal and Steel Community and in July 1952, the treaty took effect.

It was very much in the spirit of Robert Schuman that Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, traveled to Kyiv today and met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and the Schuman Declaration was in the minds of both leaders; indeed, Zelenskyy quoted the first sentence of the Declaration, that “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts – proportionate to the dangers which threaten it.” Continuing, he said, “Now that we are once again jointly confronting the evil of aggression and the policy of hatred that modern Russia has brought back to the continent, when we once again need to win, we are once again turning to the meaning of those words from the Schuman Declaration. Our efforts for a united Europe, for security and peace must be as strong as Russia’s desire to destroy our security, our freedom, our Europe. We must act together proportionally to the threat, not weaker, to defeat this evil of aggression.”

Zelenskyy and von der Leyen discussed in some detail both the EU’s continued support of Ukraine in the war and Ukraine’s future relationship with the EU. In regard to the former, Zelenskyy expressed Ukraine’s gratitude for the readiness of the EU to provide Ukraine with necessary ammunition – specifically, one million artillery shells – and related issues pertaining to the procurement and supply of ammunition. And they spoke about Ukraine’s progress in moving toward eventual membership. Last June, the European Council, which consists of the heads of state or government of the 27 member states, formally approved the Commission’s recommendation that Ukraine be granted the status of candidate for membership. At the European Council meeting in late June, the question will surely be whether Ukraine has fulfilled the conditions specified in the Commission’s favorable opinion that must be satisfied in order to begin the negotiation

of its accession. In that regard, Zelenskyy said today, “The time has long since come to remove the artificial political uncertainty in relations between Ukraine and the European Union. It is time for a positive decision to launch negotiations on Ukraine’s membership in the European Union. Our values, security, our prosperity, peace on the continent – all of this can be realized to the fullest extent for Europe only together with Ukraine.” His office said that, in his discussion with von der Leyen, Zelenskyy “stressed that our country expects to receive a positive interim assessment of its progress on the path of European integration by the European Commission in June.”

Ukraine will undoubtedly receive a positive interim assessment of its candidacy. But it’s unlikely the Commission will recommend that accession negotiations be opened. Von der Leyen said, "It is impressive to see that, despite a full-blown war, Ukraine is working hard, tirelessly and intensively on the seven steps. A lot of progress has been made, but work has to continue." She said a preliminary “oral update” on Ukraine’s progress in regard to a series of reforms the Commission called for last June will be presented to the leaders next month, followed by a detailed report in the autumn. In its opinion last June on Ukraine’s application for membership, the Commission concluded it “is well advanced in reaching the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; has continued its strong macro-economic record, demonstrating a noteworthy resilience with macroeconomic and financial stability, while needing to continue ambitious structural economic reforms; and has gradually approximated to substantial elements of the EU acquis in many areas. On this basis, the Commission recommends that Ukraine be given the perspective to become a member of the European Union. It should be granted candidate status on the understanding that steps are taken in a number of areas.” Among the steps specified by the Commission are enactment and implementation of legislation on the selection procedure for judges of the Constitutional Court, completion of integrity vetting of candidates for the High Council of Justice, strengthening the fight against corruption, ensuring that anti-money laundering legislation complies with EU standards, implementation of the Anti-Oligarch law, adoption of a media law to align Ukraine legislation with that of the EU, and completing the reform of the legal framework for national minorities.

Nevertheless, Ukraine clearly has a very strong friend in the presidency of the EU Commission. In Kyiv today, von der Leyen wrote on Twitter, “Good to be back in Kyiv. Where the values we hold dear are defended every day. Ukraine is on the front line of the defense of everything we Europeans cherish: our liberty, our democracy, our freedom of thought and speech. Courageously, Ukraine is fighting for the ideals of Europe that we celebrate today.”

David R. Cameron  
May 9, 2023