

### **'Pierre Werner: accounts of a European vocation'**

*In the second half of 2015, Luxembourg will hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the 12th time. This country, which lies between France and Germany, has taken on the role of mediator between larger powers and has simultaneously succeeded in defending its vital interests. After the Second World War, its politicians made European integration a key plank of their policy. Since the time of Joseph Bech, from Pierre Werner and Gaston Thorn to Jacques Santer and Jean-Claude Juncker more recently, Luxembourg has proved itself to be a master in the art of political consensus and a rich source of 'men of providence' who have been able to find a way out of Europe's successive impasses.*

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In this long list of political figures, Pierre Werner (29 December 1913–24 June 2002), Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Luxembourg for several decades, can be regarded as a *paterfamilias*. Throughout his life, Werner worked tirelessly to bring his ideas to fruition — from the economic diversification of Luxembourg and its consolidation as an international financial centre to the development of a policy for satellite telecommunications and the introduction of Economic and Monetary Union in Europe — becoming a source of inspiration for future generations. The book 'Pierre Werner: accounts of a European vocation'<sup>1</sup> reflects the actions and achievements of this eminent statesman and great European as seen by his colleagues and supporters, political opponents and intellectuals, together with members of his family, all of whom assembled for a round table to mark the centenary of his birth.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission (2004–2014), looks back at Pierre Werner's European career and the balance he was always able to achieve between his work in Europe and his commitment to his native Luxembourg. As a Luxembourger, he was naturally attached to the European idea as it offered a response to Luxembourg's main aspirations, which were linked to its specific geopolitical and economic situation. Werner had been aware of the importance of European issues since his university days, and his commitment to European unification took firm shape in 1949, when he became convinced 'of the urgent need for the countries of Western Europe to undertake the economic and political construction of a united Europe. His experience of working in the international arena, particularly his awareness of the weakness and the divided state of Europe, made it almost an intellectual obligation. By becoming more and more closely involved, through his posts in the Luxembourg Government, in the great issues of European integration, Pierre Werner, who was drawn to act as both a Luxembourger and a European, was to leave his imprint on the key events in that process. José Manuel Barroso also mentions the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Pierre Werner: témoignages d'une vocation européenne. Actes de la table ronde des grands témoins. Luxembourg, 27 novembre 2015'. Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe. Luxembourg, ISBN 978-99959-708-2-6. Also available at [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu). The round table was moderated by Danièle Fonck, Managing Director of Editpress and Editor-in-Chief of the Tageblatt, and included contributions from Marie-Anne and Henri Werner, Pierre Werner's son and daughter; Jacques Santer, Honorary Minister of State and former President of the European Commission; Colette Flesch, former Minister and Deputy Prime Minister; Luc Frieden, Finance Minister; Sir Brian Unwin, Honorary President of the European Investment Bank; René Steichen, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SES; and Charles-Ferdinand Nothomb, Belgian Minister of State and President of the Pierre Werner European Circle since 2002.

innovative research project 'Pierre Werner and Europe', published on [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu), which looks at the ideas and achievements of this eminent figure who contributed to the building of a united Europe.

Jacques Santer, Luxembourg Prime Minister (1984–1995) and President of the European Commission (1995–1999), worked closely with Werner and succeeded him as Prime Minister of Luxembourg in 1984. He describes how Pierre Werner's full and active life largely coincided with the progress of European integration in the second half of the 20th century. As a result of Werner's decades-long career at the highest political level and his capacity for influence, this prominent Christian Democratic intellectual and committed federalist played a major role in regional integration (BLEU, Benelux) and in EEC policy-making, and gained a strong reputation for forging a political consensus between larger powers. In this way he succeeded in defending Luxembourg's vital interests, from the financial centre to the seats of the European institutions. Werner was involved in the major ideological debates of the time, and although he was initially in favour of a monetary approach to European integration, he was one of the first to develop arguments for a symmetrical economic and monetary union and for the 'effective parallelism' principle. The careful balance he imagined reappeared in the Werner Report of 1970, which was presented as a blueprint for EMU in the EU. Jacques Santer particularly mentions the consensus that Werner secured between the 'monetarist' and 'economist' perspectives during the drafting process for the Werner Report, which can be seen as a 'further Luxembourg Compromise' after the first Luxembourg Compromise of 1966, to which Werner also made a vital contribution.

Colette Flesch, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in the Werner Government (1980–1984), explains how Pierre Werner contributed to the establishment of Luxembourg's own, independent system of diplomacy — thereby continuing the process launched by Joseph Bech at the start of the Second World War — and how he helped to form Luxembourg's diplomatic and intellectual elite. She mentions how she witnessed his concerted action in a crisis situation at first hand. In 1982, a move by Belgium which put the Belgo-Luxembourg monetary agreements under strain endangered the Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU), and Luxembourg seriously considered withdrawing from the monetary union. With Pierre Werner in the driving seat, the Luxembourg Government toned down its reaction and, aware of the considerable political importance of the BLEU, continued the partnership, while at the same time increasingly asserting its monetary autonomy. As a way to a lasting solution, it called in the experts, who concluded that a purely national monetary system was viable. That being so, the Luxembourg Monetary Institute (LMI) came into being, which made it possible for the country to assert its monetary identity and above all put it on an equal footing with the other countries in the European Monetary System (EMS).

Colette Flesch describes how, during the period from 1960 to 1974, the Luxembourg Presidencies of the EC Council were held exclusively by various Werner Governments in succession, and Pierre Werner, acting as President each time, spoke on behalf of the Community at a range of international meetings and forums. In his moves to foster dialogue and rapprochement, Werner adopted an approach which he saw in theoretical terms as a method for any presidency: 'I regarded my presidency as an opportunity, primarily, for creating an atmosphere and a climate of negotiation which took account of the delicate sensitivities of partners aspiring to reach agreement. The agreement must not leave any losers in a squabble over minutiae of language which may disguise a persistent underlying disagreement.'

Pierre Werner's name is inextricably linked with the Luxembourg international financial centre. Luc Frieden, Minister for the Budget (1998–2004) and for Finance (2009–2013), describes Werner's role in the development of the financial centre, having held lengthy discussions with him regarding its prospects and its potential as a 'laboratory' for the ECU and the euro. It was Werner who, in 1946, was commissioned to draw up a report on the reorganisation of the banking system in Luxembourg. He was then appointed as banking commissioner with responsibility for setting up an authority to regulate the organisation of the credit market and international financial collaboration. He represented Luxembourg in international negotiations on several occasions, particularly in Switzerland and within the Benelux. Werner became Finance Minister in 1953 and was involved not only in reforming the country's public finances but also in the legislative infrastructure of the banking sector, which coincided with his reflections on a common European currency. From 1961 onwards he was in close contact with Jean Monnet's Action Committee for the United States of Europe and also with Robert Triffin and other advocates of European monetary integration. In the 1970s, Pierre Werner set up a think tank on the future of the financial centre composed of international specialists and experts from Luxembourg, which made projections about the future. Luc Frieden also identifies Werner's vital role in raising awareness of European issues among several generations of Luxembourg political leaders, including Jacques Santer and Jean-Claude Juncker.

Werner's name is also associated with the modernisation of Luxembourg. As soon as he joined the Government as Finance Minister, Pierre Werner turned his attention to the major projects for the reconstruction and development of the country, which mobilised considerable resources. With a view to making Luxembourg a modern, forward-looking country and a 'true international platform', a large-scale town-planning scheme to redevelop the Kirchberg plateau was launched in 1961. Specifically, this 'European quarter' of Luxembourg City was developed to serve as a significant asset for the country in the battle for the location of the Community's seats and to confirm the country's role as a permanent capital of the Community institutions. Securing the seat of the European Investment Bank was one of the objectives at that time, as mentioned by Sir Brian Unwin, President of the EIB (1993–1999).

In July 1984, when his party emerged as the winner in the general election, Werner withdrew from political life but remained active in public affairs. His favourite fields of action were the promotion of EMU and euro (he was joint chairman, alongside Raymond Barre, of the ECU Institute in Lyon), and the development of the media and the audiovisual sphere, particularly through the project for the *Société Européenne des Satellites*, which marked a new era in Luxembourg's economic development. René Steichen, Chairman of the Board of SES (1996–2014), discusses the foresightedness of this project launched by Werner and implemented in 1995 by the first Santer Government. Luxembourg's bold venture into this field paid off with the development of the audiovisual industry: SES is now the second-largest operator in the world and its satellite fleet covers the entire planet.

Pierre Werner's children Marie-Anne and Henri offer a more personal description of Pierre Werner, as does his friend, theologian Mathias Schiltz. We learn that Werner was an intellectual with a passion for literature and music but that he was also a man of faith, a citizen who was committed, together with his wife Henriette Pescatore and their five children, to those in need. Marie-Anne Werner reminds us of the credo that Werner mentioned in his memoirs, published in 1992, which can perhaps best sum up his personality: 'A political achievement is never the result of the intelligence or desire of a single man. A political leader must above all serve as a catalyst for the energies of those around him, those who assist him in the pursuit of a major goal. I believe in the greatness of politics when it is underpinned by the desire to bring people together.'

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