

Pierre Werner (* 1913 - † 2002)

Biographical note

Pierre Werner was born of Luxembourgish parents on December 29th 1913 at Saint-André, near the Northern French town of Lille. He went to primary and secondary schools in Luxembourg before studying law in Luxembourg and the University of Paris (1934 to 1937) as well as political science at the “Ecole libre des Sciences politiques” in Paris.

In January 1938 Mr. Werner was awarded a PHD in law in Luxembourg. During his years at university, Pierre Werner was active in various student organizations and was chairman of the Association of Catholic Students (1935 to 1937) and vice-president of Pax Romana (1937).

Mr. Werner started his professional career as a lawyer in Luxembourg in 1938 before joining an important bank in Luxembourg city where he stayed until 1944.

After the government's return from exile after World War II, Pierre Werner became a civil servant at the Ministry of Finance. In 1945 he was nominated Commissioner for banking control, a post he held until 1949 in parallel with being government counselor. Mr. Werner's assignments ranged from organizing banking control on the Luxembourg financial market as well as international financial cooperation within the framework of the newly founded Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank).

On December 29th 1953, the day of his 40th birthday, Mr. Werner, although not a politician, was named Minister of Finance and Minister of Defence in the newly formed government of Prime Minister Joseph Bech who succeeded the late Prime Minister Pierre Dupong.

After the general elections of June 1954, Pierre Werner is re-appointed Minister of Finance and Minister of Defence.

In the March 1959 general elections Pierre Werner heads his Christian-social party's campaign and is appointed Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

After the general elections in June 1964 Pierre Werner is again appointed Prime Minister as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Treasury and Minister of Justice.

After a third successive win in the general elections Mr. Werner is re-appointed Prime Minister in February 1969, in a government in which he also holds the Finance portfolio.

In March 1970 Mr. Werner is asked by the Council of the European Economic Community to chair a high level group for studying the prospects for a progressive achievement of an economic and monetary union in the Community. The final report of the high level group came to be known as “Werner Plan” and, interestingly, foreshadowed, even in details, the later economic and monetary union as it was laid down in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. However, the oil crisis and the general economic slowdown in the 1970s and 80s, prevented further progress in this field.

After significant losses in the general elections in June 1974, the Christian-social party chose not to participate in the next government and Pierre Werner assumed the unusual role of opposition leader for 5 years.

In June 1979 the Christian-social party made an impressive come-back in the general elections and Pierre Werner was appointed Prime Minister for the fourth and last time since he was no longer a candidate for the general elections in June 1984, thus making room for his successor-to-be, Jacques Santer.

In July 1984, Mr. Pierre Werner left politics definitely and was awarded the title of honorary Prime Minister.

From 1985 to 1987 Mr. Werner was Chairman of the Board of the “Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télédiffusion” (CLT) later to become RTL Group.

From 1989 to 1996 Pierre Werner was Chairman of the Board of SES (Société européenne des Satellites), the operator of the ASTRA satellite fleet.

Pierre Werner married Henriette Pescatore in 1939 († 1984). The couple had 5 children, three sons and two daughters.

Pierre Werner died on June 24th 2002 in Luxembourg.

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