

EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE

WHY EUROPE ?



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CHAPTER IV

CRISIS OF BASIC UNITY

Unity of origin and culture creates homogeneous fundamental attitudes. It offers a common basis for political and social institutions elaborated in spirit and form. However, this fundamental unity has often proved powerless to overcome conflicts of interest or feeling. Since the dawn of the 19th century the common, spiritual and institutional heritage of the Europeans has produced disruptive forces of which the three principal are defined below.

1. NATIONALISM

One of the main tasks of the European countries since the end of the Middle Ages has been the attainment of national unity and increased economic power.

The struggle for national unity, which began under the absolute monarchy, found its philosophical and political expression in the French Revolution. The Revolution enforced the recognition of both private and national individuality by proclaiming the Rights of Man and their corollary: the right of peoples to self-determination. Through the representative system new social classes began to play a part in expressing the national will. This beginning of the socialization of internal power helped to strengthen state intervention and to give absolute state sovereignty legal force. These two essential attributes of the State are the instrument of national unification and the denial of any law higher than the nation.

The "nation" as an idea and a motive force has gone through four stages in its historical development in Europe:

- 1) The birth of the first nations: England, France, Spain;
- 2) The apogee of nationalism in the 19th century with the formation

of Germany and Italy, whose unification was effected but recently by means of national totalitarianism;

- 3) the "Balkanization" of Europe, (29 states in 1919)

- 4) The nation begins to be in obvious contradiction to the new factual conditions following the Second World War.

By enabling the mobilization of new social forces, the dynamic concept of the 'nation' first ensured the economic growth of the nation. It promoted industrialization and permitted economic expansion, therefore stimulating the colonialist ambitions of the nations.

2. INDUSTRIALIZATION

The Industrial Revolution caused a profound change in human conditions. It multiplied the power of man by introducing the machine and the division of labour. Yet despite its supra-national trend it remained, paradoxically, circumscribed within national boundaries and, in fact, reinforced the State's will to power. It should have drawn countries together but actually led to headlong competition between the nations for the conquest of markets and sources of raw materials. While it helped to give birth to new ideologies with internationalist tendencies (liberalism and socialism), advocating the abolition of national frontiers, but at the same time it accentuated extant division between States by concentrating their economic and political power.

The liberal 19th century lived in the shade of one dominant economy, that of Britain. The beginning of the 20th century was marked by the growth of German strength and the decline of Britain's power — these two were the dominant and rival European economies — and by the rise of non-European countries: the United States and Japan. This new spurt of industrialization led perforce to a protectionist policy which intensified "autarchic tendencies" or the separation of economies, and wedded industry to the national State.

The conquest of markets and sources of raw materials led to powerful conflicts, which between the two wars even gave rise to antagonism between friendly nations like Britain and the United States, and set European nations at loggerheads. At the present time these conflicts between European nations persist, though devoid of any real sense, now that the fate of the world depends on two dominant powers: the United States and the Soviet Union.

3. COLONIALISM

The vertical division of labour inside nations was paralleled by a horizontal division of labour in their relations with the rest of the world. The economic expansion of the industrialized nations forced them to secure access to sources of raw materials. Their policy was logically anti-colonialist when they possessed sufficient raw materials in their own territory, like the United States, herself once a colony, but was undisguisedly colonialist when they were deprived of raw materials, like Germany. Consequently, the expansionist forces of Germany were to enter into direct conflict with the conservatism of the privileged nations like Britain and France. Colonial ambitions and interests outside Europe were therefore to be a further cause of division and war in Europe.

The ideological battle was therefore engaged between two ways of life, the democratic and the totalitarian systems.

4. RESULT : THE WARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The clash of interests, national feelings and ideologies led to an armaments race, which resulted in two world wars in less than half a century. Of an essentially European character, they were to involve the colonies and the non-European powers, because of their interdependence and the central rôle of Europe. Of nationalist or imperialist inspiration, they were also civil or ideological wars involving all the forces of the nation-states. By undermining the prestige and power of Europe they accelerated its decline. They unleashed new ideologies and new forces, enabled the establishment of the Communist empire, were the precursors of the rivalry between the two dominant non-European powers and led to the belated or peripheral nationalist movements and the anti-colonialist reaction.

5. THE CONSEQUENCE : LOSS OF THE COLONIES

The presence of Europe in the colonies and dependencies led to European ideas and techniques being transplanted there. The exhaustion of Europe by internal conflicts and the expansion and antagonism of the USA and the USSR, both of them anti-colonialist, have led to the revolt of the coloured peoples and the loss of the colonies. *The European principle of national self determination has been generally applied; it turned upon the Europe it had divided.*

In 1947 Britain, seeking to preserve some advantages within the Commonwealth, granted political independence to India, thus avoiding the explosion of Indian and Moslem nationalisms, favoured by the USA. Freedom led to partition into two rival states, India and Pakistan. Burma left the Commonwealth and proclaimed her independence. Indonesia became a sovereign state in 1949 after the Netherlands' military intervention had failed. Indo-China followed suit in 1954. The Arab countries of the Middle-East (Egypt, Saudi-Arabia, Yemen, Syria, the Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan) members of the Arab League, obtained their independence after the Second World War. France granted independence to Tunis and Morocco. In short, the horizontal division of labour is becoming weaker or being severed, tending to push *Europe back into its own narrow geographical limits.*

One of the most striking aspects of this general situation is the retreat of Europe from Asia. China is closed to the West. The cry of Asia for the Asians, first launched by Japan, has been taken up by Nehru. The Arab world has risen and united against the hold of the divided nations of Europe. Its supports the revolt against France in Algeria. When Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal and imposed her effective control on that vital European supply route, the Arab world showed its solidarity by its threats concerning Near East oil, the main fuel of European industry. Thus *the European states continue to depend on resources whose control they are in the process of losing.*

6. EUROPE IS NO LONGER THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

By the end of the last war, the world situation had completely changed. *The centre of the world had moved from Europe; instead there were two separate poles of attraction.* Two factors were indirectly responsible for this revolutionary development: the changed economic conditions and the entry of the masses on to the political scene. On the one hand, economic development depends on a rising population and large highly organized areas, permitting large-scale production and offering vast markets. On the other hand, this quantitative economy brings into prominence new sections of the population which take an active part in economic and political life and use against Europe its own theories and its own weapons (nationalism, revolution, education, technology, propaganda, weapons of war). These new conditions have led to the formation of continental powers and to the stagnation of

Europe, whose nationalist ideas prevent economic expansion and whose national structure is a brake on social progress.

7. USSR : IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY

Unlike the French Revolution, which was made in the name of the rights of man and the rights of the nation, the Russian Revolution proclaimed the ideal of the working masses and their universal mission. Through a total dictatorship, concentrating political, economic and military power in the name of a materialist creed, the militant minority has succeeded in leading the masses along the road to intensive industrialization. Firmly established, thanks to its police and political apparatus, Communism developed its world imperialist ideology. In 1940 the USSR annexed the Petsamo corridor, Karelia, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the eastern Polish provinces, north Bukovina and Bessarabia. In 1945 she annexed Königsberg, East Prussia and the Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia (in Czechoslovakia). She extended her area of domination through the establishment of satellite countries and increased her influence through the Communist parties in the European countries.

The Soviet sphere, then, comprises in addition to China with its 600 million inhabitants, 8 Eastern European countries (105 million inhabitants) forming a totalitarian block of nearly 1,000 million people.

8. USA : ECONOMIC HEGEMONY

On a different basis, the United States combine both dominant economy and leading political strength. Continuing the tradition of individual initiative, private property and human liberties, the United States have combined these principles with mass production and the co-operation of the working classes in the establishment of a very high average standard of living. Although there are similarities with the USSR (size and quantity) the USA differ profoundly from Russia in its conception of man. Its power and philosophy make it the champion and the banker of the free world and it protects democracy while extending its economic domination. Together with the USSR the USA was the true victor of the last war. After the war ended, it bolstered up the finances of Western Europe and helped to organize its defence. The Marshall Plan and NATO were the instruments of this policy of economic hegemony and the defence against Communiste expansion.

9. EUROPE BETWEEN TWO GREAT POWERS

The conflict between these two leading powers is a natural consequence of their ideas and expansionist forces. The present situation in Europe reflects this more or less open clash. Europe is divided into Eastern and Western camps by the Iron Curtain and is a prey to innumerable contradictions. "Europe lives in fear of the Russians and on the charity of the Americans", exclaimed P.H. Spaak at Strasbourg. In figures this means that 330 million men live in fear of 200 million and on the charity of 166 million. But the Europeans only feel that they are 43 millions (French), 9 millions (Belgian), 4 millions (Danes) etc. and therefore too small.

The new basis of modern economy is in complete contradiction with the political division of Europe. While the two leading powers are concentrating their efforts and their productive forces on vast populated areas, Europe remains divided. *Nationalism, formerly the source of the European countries' expansion, has become the main obstacle to the proper use of Europe's human and productive potential.*

In this respect the influence of the USA is twofold. On the one hand the economic and military assistance it affords the European states, revives national rivalries despite definite efforts to unite them (Marshall Plan, NATO); on the other hand the needs of common defence against Communist invasion lead them to adopt a policy favourable to that "integration" enabling Europe to defend itself and to survive unaided.

Fearing European union, the USSR is practising a policy of division. Its foreign policy tends to revive past enmities and to prevent any effective rapprochement by making bilateral promises (promise to unify Germany etc.), but its most effective action takes place inside the European countries through the Communist parties. Thanks to the powerful position of those parties, particularly in two great parliaments, the Soviet Union is able to exercise pressure on the European governments (rejection on the European Defence Community for example). This powerful attraction produces cracks in the structure of the nation-states.

Thus, apart from separation into nations, there is an internal ideological division. These two antagonistic tendencies produce convergent effects and divide the basic unity of Europe.

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