

EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE

WHY EUROPE ?



GENEVA - MAY 1958

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This booklet is the teamwork of Hendryk Brugmans, Raymond Racine, Denis de Rougemont and Dusan Sidjanski. It has benefited by numerous studies undertaken by various European institutes and teachers as well as the Economists' Seminar of the ECC. General plan and revision of texts by Director of the Centre.

1st edition (french): december 1956. German, italian, greek and (third) french editions available.

THE UNION WE MUST BE DETERMINED TO BUILD

CHAPTER V

THE POLITICAL NECESSITY OF UNION: EUROPEAN INDEPENDENCE

Before 1914, the world supremacy of European power was undisputed and their actions were only checked by their own rivalries. After 1919 the fate of the world depended on co-operation between European and non-European powers. Since the end of the Second World War the fate of the world has been decided in Europe's absence (cf. the Yalta Conference, in which Britain took part, but where the decisive role was played by the USA and the USSR).

1. THE DEFENCE OF THE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTIES IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE

Before the Second World War Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, each with a population of over 40 million, highly industrialized and strongly organized, were first-class powers. Still recently capable of challenging the whole world (during the Second World War Germany, aided by Italy and Japan, was a serious threat to the rest of the world) and of imposing their policy, they have today become incapable of ensuring even their own defence. The supremacy of the European countries has been replaced by their political and economic dependence on the two really Great Powers. There are material and moral reasons

for their inability to defend themselves. Firstly, the scale of armed forces has changed and the high technical level of their requirements can only be satisfied by means of an economic power, which the European countries individually do not possess. Secondly, their moral exhaustion and internal differences make them incapable of the intense effort required by the defence of an effective sovereignty.

This decline threatens to become still more marked with the discovery of nuclear power and its influence on the economic development and military strength of States. In this sphere the Big Two are considerably in advance of Britain, which is alone among the European powers to possess the atomic bomb. The superior strength of the USA explains the presence of its air force and of nuclear weapons in most of the free countries, even including Britain.

These general facts prove that the forces of a divided Europe are no longer strong enough to compete with the two leading Powers. *They demand a choice between union and ruin.* But the same alternative is also apparent in the present political situation of the biggest European nations.

2. UNITED KINGDOM

At home Britain still has a healthy parliamentary system, a great capacity for national sacrifice and solidarity, but its economic and military power is no longer sufficient to lead the Commonwealth. Its 51 million inhabitants, despite their vitality, are no longer able to finance and defend the Commonwealth, and these responsibilities devolve more and more on the United States and thereby increase its influence (for example, the United Kingdom plays no part in the organization of defence in the Pacific; between 1941 and 1952 the USA lent 82,000 million dollars, of which 36,000 million went to Great Britain; the United States plays a decisive role of financing large-scale projects in India, Canada, etc.).

Owing to this weakness there is a gradual slackening of Commonwealth ties and, in many cases, a common and united foreign policy can no longer be ensured. India's example is significant. She would like to form a third neutral force between the two blocks; her attitude during the Korean war and the Suez events differed from that of the United Kingdom; so did her views on Egypt in general and towards Japan regarding the signing of the Peace Treaty.

In spite of these increasing centrifugal forces, Great Britain, faithful to her past and considering her immediate advantage, gives priority to her non-European interests. This explains her reserved attitude towards European federation and is probably the reason why Britain may fear a continental union such as she has opposed since centuries.

The decline in British political and military strength, the loss of several colonies and the weakening of Commonwealth solidarity all seem to be tending gradually but irresistibly towards a disintegration of the British Commonwealth of Nations (on this point the opinions of Adlai Stevenson and Shepilov coincide!). Will Great Britain wait for this to occur before becoming convinced of the need for European unity? The necessity of Britain forming a part of a European union is obvious if the facts are studied. Whether or not the British people accept this evidence, their destiny will henceforth be more and more intimately linked to the survival of Europe.

3. FRANCE

The position of France at home and abroad shows a gradual decline. Government instability, the multitude of political parties, the power of the Communist Party, for which a quarter of French voters cast their votes, conservatism and mistrust remain her main characteristics, despite the common effort to meet the national danger caused by the situation in Africa. To this serious moral and political crisis should be added the economic difficulties from which France is suffering. These facts, taken together, increase her dependence on foreign countries and especially on the United States, from whom she receives greater assistance than that given to Germany and almost as much as is given to Britain. The loss of numerous colonies, together with her internal difficulties, prevent France from discharging the responsibilities of a great power. Her domestic policy is dominated by the search for economic stability, political unity and a solution to the Algerian problem. Her foreign policy retains the imprint of her efforts and internal hesitations, nourished by the haunting fears of the recent past.

4. GERMANY

Despite the existence of extremist parties (the Communist Party has just been banned) Germany has the advantage of political stability and

a dynamic population of more than 50 million with a great capacity for hard work and a spirit of self-sacrifice.

Two essential facts have dominated German domestic and foreign policy. Firstly, the existence of two separate Germanies governed according to rival theories. Secondly, Eastern Germany has been deprived of Pomerania and East Prussia (the de facto frontier is on the Oder/Neisse line) and this explains the primary importance attached by politicians, especially in Western Germany, to re-unification.

The chances of this being accomplished are small. The USSR is energetically opposed to it and demands, without believing that it will be done, that a re-united Germany should be neutralized, a solution which the United States cannot accept for defence reasons. The West proposes free elections, a suggestion which the USSR finds unacceptable because of her fears that the Eastern Zone might join the West. This situation cannot last indefinitely. If Europe hesitates to unite and to adopt a common and independent policy which would put her in a position to negotiate with the USSR and obtain re-unification, she will force Germany, now on the full tide of prosperity, to follow her own course, despite the inconveniences which might result.

5. NATIONAL INTERESTS AND THE INTERESTS OF EUROPE

Immediate interests, particularly those of France and Germany, therefore require the establishment of a united Europe, while at the same time providing the necessary foundation. Divided, these nations remain incapable of ensuring their independence, not to mention that of their smaller neighbours. They are doomed ever more to become the tools — or the stakes — of the two great powers.

Yet if their sources of strength were rationally exploited, with the participation of Italy and other European countries which have every interest in preserving balance within the union, these two Powers could firstly facilitate the unification of Germany, obtain an expanding market for her industry and offer this country a European mission, while giving the German people lasting political stability. Secondly, they would free France from her fears by making her part of a dynamic society, capable of awakening her competitive sense and reviving her faith — essential to her internal health — and also of bringing a lasting solution to her foreign problems, and particularly a European solution to the problem of Africa. Thirdly, they would enable peaceful solutions to

be found for the unsettled problems which divide the European States (e.g. the Saar before 1957). Fourthly, they would give Britain the necessary encouragement to pursue a "European" policy and that country, through a united Europe, would be able to find a long-term solution for her growing difficulties. Fifthly, they would make of Europe a power on the same scale as the Big Two, capable of an independent, firm and continuous policy in conformity with her basic interests and ideals.

Coming after Indo-China, Cyprus, Algeria etc., the Suez events showed the tragic lack of European unity and solidarity and, therefore, the lack of strength of European countries at the moment when it was most needed. The Suez crisis showed the whole world firstly the inability of the European States to bring to a successful conclusion, individually or together, a political action in which their vital interests are concerned, secondly the decisive influence of the United States (and even of the presidential elections) on national European policies, and, thirdly, the urgent need for a united Europe, capable of defending her position and her interests with the co-operation, but not under the dictation, of the United States.

Only a united Europe could tip the international balance in favour of the European States.

6. EUROPE IN THE MINORITY

The division of Europe and its lack of basic solidarity goes hand in hand with the diminishing importance of European countries in international organizations, and particularly in the United Nations. The numerical strength of Europe has lessened; whereas in the League of Nations she had 28 votes out of 58, in the United Nations she has only 27 votes (and 10 of those support the USSR) out of 82. Further, far from showing the solidarity which makes the Latin American or Arab States a force within the General Assembly, the European States are divided into two opposing groups; the Western group in its turn is sub-divided by short-lived interests. Thus, as a result of her ideological divisions, the voice of Europe in the United Nations remains weak. She is often in the minority: the power of some of her isolated States is becoming relatively less in the world scale. Here again everything calls for the establishment of a united Europe, since to say that Europe has lost her prestige, that she is in a minority in the world, means that

her divided States, weakened by their rivalries, can no longer represent the potential power of Europe — a power which only union would make real and visible.

Some very simple figures, never enough quoted, will illustrate the fact that not one of our nations, alone, can bear comparison with the great modern empires, but that together they are more than strong enough. Compared with some 50 million Britons or Germans, some 43 million Frenchmen or 48 million Italians, to mention only our bigger States, the United States represents a block of 166 millions and the USSR one of 200 million. Compared to this, Europe, west of the Iron Curtain has 330 million inhabitants or double the population of the USA. If she were re-united with the East European countries, at present satellites, she would have 435 million, more than double the population of the USSR. In addition to this quantitative advantage a united Europe would have a qualitative superiority (spiritual level, inventiveness, skill etc.). The productive power of all the European States together still represents 33 per cent of world industrial production (it was 52 per cent before 1914 !) as against 41 per cent to North America and 16 per cent to the USSR. Europe's potential manpower and productive resources therefore destine her for a prominent place among the great powers. All the preconditions are there, but political divisions prevent proper use being made of them.

7. THE FIRST EUROPEAN ORGANIZATIONS

But is not Europe in the process of being built? Are there not already a bewildering number of European institutions?

In fact only one has any real though restricted power; the few others are consultative only. The list is soon exhausted.

(a) With 15 European Member States, the *Council of Europe* supplies a general framework for European policy and unites its members on the basis of a common ideology (cf. Preamble to the Charter). Its Consultative Assembly, formed of parliamentary delegates without a mandate from their governments, constitutes a useful, living and representative forum. But this potential European parliament actually only plays a consultative role. Its recommendations find their way to the Committee of Ministers, an inter-governmental body subject to a unanimity rule which, in its turn, can only make recommendations to member Governments. From committee to committee, the

apparatus of the Council of Europe becomes more and more theoretical and of mandatory power. It seems as though everything had been done to weaken its activities and preserve the interests of the national sovereignties. Despite all this, the Council does act as a co-ordinator and promoter of union, as may be seen particularly in the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, the extension of the Treaty of Brussels, the European Convention on Human Rights and the ten other conventions drawn up by the Council and implemented by its members.

(b) The defence needs of western Europe are partly covered by NATO (with the participation of the USA and Canada) and by the *Western European Union* (the six of the Coal and Steel Community plus the United Kingdom). Its Assembly is composed of delegates from seven countries meeting at the Council of Europe Assembly. Western European Union replaced the integration of basic units (planned by the European Defence Community) by co-ordination of national armies. The supra-national body, which was to have run the European Defence Community, has been replaced by a Council of governmental delegates, whose decisions are only obligatory if unanimous and supported by indefinite sanctions. The Western European Union therefore offers the sovereign national States substantial guarantees at the expense of efficient defence.

(c) In the economic sphere, OEEC corresponds to NATO. It includes the USA and Canada and is simply an organ of inter-governmental co-operation with no deliberative assembly and whose decisions are obligatory but unenforceable.

(d) In a special sector of economy and over a restricted geographical area (the Europe of the Six), the *European Coal and Steel Community* is carrying out a conclusive experiment. Its main powers are entrusted to the High Authority — a body carrying out its functions in complete independence (nine members appointed by governments, but not acting on their instructions) — and whose decisions, taken by majority vote, have enforceable validity in the territory of its members. The Community's Assembly supervises the activities of the High Authority and can oblige it to resign. The political consequences of this experiment are noteworthy. By increasing production it reinforces the *effective* power and therefore the political independence of its members. It has a favourable effect on wages and standards of living and promotes the process of union by showing the double necessity of extending its sphere of action (to comprise other branches economy and new members,) and

of basing this action on a solid political foundation. The advantages which it offers in the present are the best proof of the future possibilities of European Union.

In their setbacks and their first successes, whether or not they have real powers, these organizations at least show the way to be followed in establishing *real federal institutions*.

CONCLUSION

The European nations have irretrievably lost the two essential criteria of sovereignty: the power to defend themselves alone and to decide their foreign policy alone. Union is therefore becoming essential for Europe to recover that independence, which its individual nations have lost among great Empires. Only a united Europe will be sufficiently strong to negotiate, co-operate and influence, that is to say, to work out and practice a *common foreign policy*.