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I. THE INTEGRATION OF EUROPE

by Dr. C.L. Patijn

(This is a translation of the last section of an article on this subject by Dr. Patijn, appearing in the Dutch magazine Wending, October 1953. The first section of the article analysed the work of the various organisations through which European economic, political and military integration is being sought.)

Lack of Alternative

It is not yet certain whether the European Defence Community will "make it": there are so many doubts in the French Chamber. But in the meantime it has become clearer and clearer that there is no alternative. None of the opponents of EDC have been able to suggest a tenable one. All the Governments of the Western States are agreed that every conceivable effort must be made to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on Germany, but none of them can see any indication that this is a possibility in the foreseeable future. German neutrality is no guarantee to anybody, even the Soviets. An independent, united and neutral Germany - even were the Soviet Union willing to accept this in exchange for the abandonment of the German bond with the West - would be unacceptable to Germany's neighbours, because the future of peace would thereby be once again in Germany's hands. This would mean that future German Governments (whoever they might be) would be in a position to bring the balance of power over definitely on to one side or the other. We must not expose Germany to such a temptation and we cannot put Europe in such a position after the experiences of 1914 and 1939.

Another point adduced against EDC has likewise not stood criticism. In France it is argued that a rearmed Germany seeking, for instance, the revision of her eastern frontiers would be in a position to drag her European EDC partners into war. This danger is, however, still greater if Germany is allowed to stand on her own feet, by giving her an army of her own within NATO, and not linked into a European framework. An intensely national Germany can more easily launch out than a Germany anchored to Europe in every possible way. The danger to Germany's neighbours is thus even greater without EDC than with it.

It has come to be better realised by all concerned that America and Britain have a vital interest in the establishment of EDC. For the United States it is the only way in which Germany can be rearmed without excessive risks. Her main reason is as simple as it is unknown to the average European. It may be put as follows: No American Government can in the long run persuade a father in Milwaukee or Kansas City that his son must serve in Bremen or Munich while Europe will not allow Germany to raise twelve divisions. German rearmament is thus the condition for the continuation of American military support to Europe. This is at the same time the reason why Britain is at present advocating speedy ratification of EDC: it is not only EDC that is concerned, it is the continued existence of NATO.

Hence there is the chance that EDC may yet be established. Many factors are driving the responsible statesmen of the countries concerned in this direction. Dr. Adenauer, much strengthened by the verdict of the German electorate, is working for it with all his might. The French will quite possibly have to do so too, faute de mieux.

Meantime, the scheme for a European Political Community has come to be the focus of attention. If the Governments of the Six reach agreement, we are all set for European integration. There is still a great deal of disagreement as to the composition of the political authority and the powers to be conferred on it. In addition, the Dutch Government has stressed that the formation of such a community must acquire greater solidity by means of further progress in the sphere of economic integration. We are thus faced with the question whether political integration is to set the seal on economic integration, or is conversely to precede it. Discussion of the merits of EDC is still in full swing, and will in coming months be playing a considerable part in European politics. Much attention will have to be paid to the results Western European union will have on relations with the Soviets, and strong pressure will be exerted on Great Britain to make herself clear as to her relations with the new Continent. Again, much thought will need to be devoted to cooperation between the new group and the other European countries both inside and outside the Council of Europe and NATO. Essentially, however, all this concerns the little Europe of the Six, the six countries which are seriously considering entering into such special relationships as to result in a new political structure increasing relativising their historical nationhood. The question is whether European federation is desired or not.

Balance of Advantages and Disadvantages

It should be possible to draw up a balance-sheet of the advantages and disadvantages accruing to the process of European integration. On the credit side we may note that integration may actually lead to a marché unique, the great European market on which there can be production of a nature to compete with the rest of the world. Modern technology demands plenty of space for the sale of its wares, and can no longer fulfil its promises if national fragmentation continues. The economic integration of Western Europe would thus greatly benefit the soundness of our economic production. On the other hand, among the disadvantages must be listed the fact that the abandonment of national protection may have important social repercussions in a country such as the Netherlands. Will the social achievements of the Dutch working classes, the new financial stability of this little country, the proper and responsible management of national economic interests, be maintained when the frontiers are flung open and Germans, Frenchmen, Italians can take a hand in our affairs? It is a question which merits the most serious attention.

Again, under "advantages" comes the fact that a European army constitutes the only means of rearming Germany without undue risk. At the least, it ensures that the German General Staff in its classic form will not return. Yet over against this we realise that any German rearmament involves risks, that the Russians are frightened, and that there is every likelihood of German generals giving the orders in the European army of the future.

In the "advantage" column it should further be noted that Europe's influence in the world would soar on the emergence of a federation. In Washington this would certainly be the case. We may be sure that the weight which a United Europe would carry in American politics would be much greater than the combined weight of the Six separately; Europe would thus be able to exercise more influence than she now does on world politics. On the debit side, however, there is the fact that the position of the small countries within a federal union would show a comparative decline, since to a considerable extent it would be the bigger partners who ruled the roost. In addition - and this applies particularly to Holland - there is the great disadvantage of the absence of Britain, which is not yet prepared for political union with the Continent.

These advantages and disadvantages, and numerous others, are being subjected to constant consideration, discussion and examination. It has become more and more evident that it is not possible to balance these conflicting arguments against one another. The pleas are too disparate, so that the pleaders find it hard to persuade one another. While political circumstances are more and more pushing events towards this point, the European nations are facing their new union with a divided mind. Some discern a new springtime, and for the first time in years are filled with hope. Others are very hesitant in regard to this trend, because the ground to be traversed by European integration is still so unfamiliar and the consequences so hard to compute. We are faced with something wholly new, a terra incognita in history.

The Challenge

Now that the battle over the advantages and disadvantages of European integration is in full swing, and it is at least obvious that a United Europe will come, it is necessary to ask what would happen if the whole thing were to fall through. Toynbee has introduced a new study in historiology, which promises well for the understanding of particular historical situations. He holds that civilisations are sometimes in the course of their existence faced with a "challenge", a threat which has to be averted and which so to speak constitutes a défi to which they can react either positively or negatively. If the threat is of such a kind, and the vitality of the nations concerned of such a degree, that the emergency can be overcome, then the civilisation or nation comes out stronger than ever from the difficult phase through which it has passed. If, on the other hand, the threat is too great and the vitality too small, then there may be, in the eyes of history, a collapse, with grave consequences for the life of the peoples concerned. Europe every so often goes through a period when her very existence is menaced. After the two wars and the intervening period of economic conflict and political nationalism, the chance of a unification of Europe is a challenge to the creative faculties of the European nations which they can no longer evade without incurring universal frustration.

What aspect does failure assume in the light of these observations? What happens if the European Community is not established? It is always hazardous to speculate on the future, but a number of reflections on the possible form of a European failure force themselves on our attention. In the first place, we should see a vigorous resurgence of that economic nationalism which flourished in the thirties and had such a disastrous influence on the standard of living and the peace of our Continent. Militarily speaking, we should probably soon see the raising of an independent German Wehrmacht, the Americans withdrawing to the so-called peripheral defences. This last might entail the holding of bases in Britain, Spain and North Africa, but the presence, so vital as a preventive measure, of American troops on the rest of the Continent would possibly come to an end. Consequences in the political sphere are still harder to forecast than in the other two; it may, however, be stated that in Germany the way would lie open for a new nationalism full of irredentist feeling, and that in France, especially on the withdrawal of American protection, a grave collapse of political morale would ensue. The small, peaceful countries of the Continent would, to begin with, be able to go on without much change. But the shadow which would come from the European situation to lie over their existence too would stifle all hope for the future.

The Nature of the Answer

Thus it can now scarcely be a matter for doubt that the success of European union has become a matter of vital importance for our peoples. The political circumstances and the national factors tending towards a United Europe will not, however, win Europe away from the numerous conflicting forces and technical obstacles unless there arises a widespread sense of self-commitment, and unless they are backed by a public opinion which realises the existence here of a historical and moral vocation. This personal ardour, without which the cause would fail, cannot, however, be expected so long as we confine ourselves to mere Schwärmen over the concept of "Europe". The Europe of the orations is too anaemic, or else too much a piece of cultural snobbery, to be equal to the tasks now confronting us.

Nor shall we reach our goal if we imagine we can construct Europe by appealing to the common European heritage. We shall have to ask ourselves seriously whether, after all that has happened in the last forty years, the traditional pan-European values, which have obviously been incapable on two occasions in the recent past of averting catastrophe, are strong enough to serve as the foundation for the future of Europe. Intellectual riches and strong traditions have not stopped the house being divided against itself in a way which has left behind much bitterness. The legacy of Christianity and antiquity as a formative force has thus forfeited much of its importance.

The personal commitment needed for the establishing of Europe will need to be better motivated. The only way in which this policy can be conceived as a duty is by bearing in mind the desperate spiritual struggle in which the European countries are involved in order not to relapse into the bondage of nationalism and into social stagnation. In this connection we shall have to realise what it means to have Dr. Adenauer seeking to embed Germany in Europe. We must realise that the unhappy Prussian tradition, and nationalism and militarism and the vaunting of the German way of life, must never be allowed another chance, that an evil chain must be broken. All this is possible only provided Germany does not revert to her old national isolation, but is conducted while there is the chance into a sort of new home in a different political structure, where nationalism has lost its meaning and its potentialities.

The question must also be asked, what is to become of France if she remain wedged in her national introversion, with all the great memories of the past before her, forcing her to a constant withdrawal and reliving of her own history. In a country where everyone is instinctively out to keep what is his, and where not a single government has yet apparently been in a position to break out of the national impasse - for you cannot pull yourself out of a morass by your own hair - problems which thanks to vested interests have become quite insoluble can only be broken down in a political situation where measures are not bound up with national limitations, and new urges have scope to appeal to the imagination. And that last is a thing France has never lacked.

Again, the same is true, mutatis mutandis, of the other European countries, all of which, to a greater or lesser extent, are suffering material and spiritual oppression within their borders. Anyone who has the wellbeing of the European nations at heart must play his part, in these times, that they may be got out from that house of bondage, their national watertightness.

We shall need to avoid any new European nationalism, but so far this danger is purely visionary. It may not, however, be uncalled-for to remind certain advocates of European integration that it is a political programme that is being

sought, not a crusade. The whole point of the struggle would be distorted if it were to be represented as a campaign in defence of Christian civilisation. Christian civilisation is not a thing that can be defended by political means. Dr. Visser 't Hooft, in his article "Does Europe Have To Be Defended?" in the April issue of Wending, made a number of points which deserve to be taken to heart. It is that very element which is most valuable and which forms the very essence of our culture that is impossible to defend and threatens to go up in smoke if political machinery to defend it is set in motion. And European integration is political.

What the integration of Europe really can amount to is something much more modest. It is a concrete political assistance programme, on behalf of which people must resign themselves to self-denial and learn to carry one another's burdens. The point is not that we should feel affection for Europe, for we have no trouble in warming to that idea. But we shall not achieve anything if we are not prepared to feel affection for Frenchmen and Germans, Belgians and Italians. Further, we shall manage it only provided we envisage them as being menaced. Europe is not a concept, it is a concrete policy which is capable of helping nations and individuals amid the difficulties of the times and the personal sacrifices required.

Only on this basis is it possible to conceive of the policy of European integration as a moral duty, and only if large numbers of people play their full part will it stand the test of criticism. Last February all Europe ranged itself beside us in the battle of the dikes. That was a token of a potentiality which demands to be given political form in a wider sphere.

Finally, two further points. The first is that European integration must not be something anti-Russian, and indeed is not. The aim is the laborious building-up and restoration of the impaired life of Western Europe. This has no hostile purpose and threatens no-one. There is not one European country which has the slightest interest in living at enmity or picking quarrels with Russia. On the contrary, the peoples of Europe and the future European Community must strive, separately and together, constantly and perseveringly, to reach understanding with the Russians. They must not and indeed cannot do otherwise. It is quite false to imagine that the integration of Europe as at present projected is a threat to anyone or anything.

My last point, a purely incidental one, relates to the sentiments which inspire us as we share in the construction of Europe. If circumstances are obvious, and the political pros and cons are taken into account, and the topical urgency of the matter is understood, still after all that we can find a place for emotional factors. So let us admit that we are fond of Europe. We love incomparable Paris, "Capitale douce et fière", love an evening such as Marsman describes as "in the purple glimmer of a spacious shadowy Burgundian Square", love our spiritual homeland, Italy, and the gaiety of her people, love the German music which stamped our youth, love the intellectual liberty and the decency of Europe. And let us then admit that if all this is to be given a new chance, European integration is not a harsh obligation but something to rejoice over - and that not every generation is privileged to have its imagination appealed to.

