
A Federalist Europe, A German Europe

by Pierre M. Gallois

General, the French Air Force

It is bound to be difficult for the American public to understand why federalism has failed in Europe. In fact, Europeans themselves are still trying to understand why Europe's realities fail to match its original, Utopian ideals. Three years after the signing of the Maastricht treaty, few believe that it will, as it promised, build a politically united Europe through federal institutions—the confederation being an interim arrangement.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, war-spawned weariness set the stage for the federalist movement to bloom amongst the European elites, especially in France. Impressed with American power, and worried about the Soviet threat, Western European countries turned to the United States for economic relief, security, and political guidance. Quite naturally, they sought new methods to re-stabilize the continent, and found inspiration in the American federal system. The European idea, or rather its Utopian ideal, was born; it was as if the Old Continent, which had been composed of strong sovereign states for two thousand years, could suddenly be made

similar to the United States of America.

Despite the ambitiously utopian nature of the original task, Europe's construction was made easier by post-war Europe's particular geopolitical situation. To the East, the victorious USSR occupied former sovereign nations, protecting itself from the Western threat. In the Center, the German Federal Republic, Benelux, and Italy constituted a group of relatively young nations—modern Belgium and the Netherlands dating back to 1830, Italy to 1862, and Germany to 1870. Furthermore, these nations had partly made up the Holy Empire and were therefore better prepared for the European adventure and its transnational aims. For the old, centralized Atlantic nation states, historical experience was entirely different: England, France, Portugal, and Spain all existed before the fifteenth century, and expanded by means of their respective capital cities. As a result, neither Paris, Madrid, or Lisbon would ever have subjected itself to any form for supra-nationality if it had not been for the war, the defeat of the French army, and Salazar and Franco's isolationism from the Western democracies. London has always refused the notion of supra-nationality, and has only considered European integration as the formation of a free-market zone. France, most likely, would have adopted Great Britain's attitude, had France not been defeated by the Third Reich.

However, after WWII, France still aspired a dominant role in Europe. During the early fifties, Pierre Mendès-France asked General de Gaulle about the future of Western Europe. The General answered, "Europe will probably have to be done—at least with Italy, Spain and Benelux... England needs to be left where it is... Do not talk of Germany." The General envisioned a Europe of nation states in which Paris would play a crucial role, if only because of its Empire, which he hoped to transform into a Commonwealth.

Since then, the political, strategic, economic, and social changes have been dramatic. The globalization of information has revealed institutional inability to erase widespread eco-

conomic and social inequalities: Marxism-Leninism has been rejected, the Berlin wall overthrown, the Soviet Empire dislocated, Germany reunified, the countries of Eastern Europe emancipating themselves from their limited sovereignty under Bresjnev, and Europe recomposing through the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and, more dramatically, of Yugoslavia. At the same time, the economies of the Pacific have developed at the unsurpassed rate of more than 5.5% per year for more than a quarter of a century. While Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand only constituted 8% of world commerce in 1960, they represent 18% thirty years later. They not only satisfy the world demand for consumer goods, but they are also increasingly competitive in the field of high-technology. In 1989, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was founded to prepare for the Pacific's future centrality within the world economy. As a result, free-market doctrine has come under serious strain. Already, the most fervent free-marketers are complaining to certain Asian countries about their underdeveloped social protection and their exploitation of labor, which enable them to lower prices. As will be discussed later, this issue of "European Community preference" has also divided a bit more the "European Union."

With its reunification successfully achieved, Germany is radically changing the European balance of power. Before the reunification, there existed a vague equilibrium between the major European countries. Demographically and economically speaking, Germany, France, Great-Britain, Italy, and even Spain were relatively close to each other. However, since 1990, this equilibrium has gradually unbalanced. Suddenly, Germany's population has reached 80 million and the former West Germany has added six more Länder to its previous ten. Willy Brandt has pointed out that with the actual level of investment in the new Länder, this part of Germany will achieve the highest level of productivity by 1996. Such an increase in German power has dramatically changed the power relations in Eu-

rope.

Immediately following its reunification, Germany adopted an entirely new foreign policy. Up to the 1980s, Germany had remained moderate so as to distance itself from a morally discomfiting past; however, as soon as the two Germanys reunited, Bonn behaved more predictably with its newly acquired power. Without consulting his European partners, Chancellor Kohl equated the deutschmark of the East with the one of the West, creating a financial catastrophe for Germany, as well as for the rest of Europe. Indeed, Germany's European partners had to contribute greatly to reunification's cost, due to the high German interest rate. Obligated to maintain their currencies within the monetary accord's fluctuation limits, the community's members followed the German example of reducing investment and increasing unemployment. In other words, the other European countries were also financing the reconstruction of the six Länder of the East, thereby accentuating their economic inferiority with Germany. In 1994, these new Länder will receive no less than 175 billion deutschmarks, an amount corresponding to nearly half of France's budget.

Although initially favoring a European Union, French public opinion has begun to question its powerful neighbor's behavior. Immediately after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which aimed to establish a common European policy and defense, Mr. H. D. Genscher, during a meeting in Brussels on December 16, 1991, imposed on his European colleagues a veritable *diktat*. Although no one, save for Germany, wanted to intensify Yugoslavia's dislocation by recognizing Slovenia and Croatia, Bonn insisted on it. During the first voting round, eight countries voted against, and only three countries voted with Germany. Presiding over the meeting, the German Foreign Minister refused to adjourn before his views had been accepted. After applying pressure and barely hidden threats, Genscher obtained satisfaction on the 17th, at four o'clock in the morning. It was decided that the "recognition" would not

take place before January 15th, so that the jurists of the European Commission could examine the case. Neither Bonn, nor the Vatican, respected this engagement. On December 19, the two secessionist Republics of Yugoslavia were recognized. Germany implicated its diplomatic partners in contemporary history's worst European civil war.

With Bosnia's inevitable independence, the West will accept the most disputable element of Tito's legacy: identifying religion as if religion entitled the establishment of a State. Within a Muslim State, the Islamic population would, paradoxically, be in minority, the orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats being more numerous and owning more territory. How can these two minorities—constituting a Christian majority—accept life under the leadership of a president who has declared, "there will be no peace, nor any coexistence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social institutions. Having the right to govern its world, Islam clearly excludes the right and the possibility of the establishment of a foreign ideology on its territory?" This text, nearly a quarter of a century old, appears dangerously similar to others emanating from Iran and from Muslim fundamentalism. Hence, while some Frenchmen were killed by fundamentalists in Algeria, others, following Paris's orders, died in Bosnia while supporting a Muslim State in the Balkans. As if the difficult coexistence between the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East had not proved prophetic, the Western powers still backed a Muslim state in a Christian environment.

German diplomacy deprived nearly three million Bosnian-Serbs of their nationality and turned them into mistreated minorities in Bosnia and in Croatia. The war has, so far, caused 300,000 deaths, and has created more than three million refugees. It violated the Constitution of the Federal

Germany's diplomacy implicated its partners into contemporary history's worst European civil war.

Republic of Yugoslavia, which subjected the emancipation of one or more of its republics to the consent of the entire Yugoslav population. It transformed administrative limits into international boundaries, thereby violating the Helsinki Act and the Paris Charter. And Germany, by the sheer strength of its economy, canceled the principle clauses of treaties that had been elaborated in 1919-1925 and in 1945 to sanction its military defeat. Germany pleased the Croats, who had been its allies during WWII, and the Muslims, who had delivered SS divisions to the Third Reich. Germany punished the Serbs, who had twice been the faithful allies of the democracies, sacrificing 23% of its population in WWI and 15% in the second one.

Naturally, the French and the English grew weary. The newly reunified Germany had much too rapidly exerted its might to the detriment of the alliances and the interests of its main partners. What did this signify for the European idea? Domination, perhaps, through a European economy it could not conquer militarily?

During an interview given to *Politique Internationale*, Chancellor Kohl defined in the following way the aims of his European policy: "federalism, subsidiarity and the integration of the regions are for us the essential structural principles for the edification of tomorrow's Europe."

Federalism signifies the disappearance of the nation states and federal government. The Maastricht Treaty goes in that direction; however, the Germans seem to understand it differently. When the Federal Constitutional Court of Karlsruhe examined the legality of the Maastricht Treaty, it interpreted the treaty's finality in a more restrictive manner. As a result, the European Union would no longer be a federal State, but a group of States, it could not evolve into an organization with unspecified powers, and the passage to a monetary union would not be automatic. The Court noted that "the indication of a date must be understood more as an objective rather than as an executive date." Additionally, the Court also added that "the interpretation of the treaty cannot lead to results equiva-

lent to a modification of the treaty, since such an interpretation of the rules would be without enforcement right in Germany.”

Hence, the Court insisted the Treaty's governmental limits implied that the European Court would not respect the rights of the member states. Also, Germany retained the right to revise the legal acts that would go against German law, as its constitution stipulates.

Is this just one of these exceptions nearly all of the member countries claim to allow, as Great Britain and Denmark have shown? Probably. At the same time, France has passed internal measures in order to prepare itself for its own decentralization and for a better integration into the future Federation. Although the fifth Republic had already stripped the elected Assemblies of much of their powers, Mr. Delors praised the French docility towards the instructions coming from Brussels; 63% of the legislation adopted by the French Parliament emanated from the European Commission. Indeed, France's regional, political, and administrative decentralizations, as well as its docility towards Brussels, aim at reducing the already over-administered State powers (36,600 Communes, 100 Departments, 22 Regions, a bicameral system with their own politics and administrative procedures). In addition, certain regions have established “antennas” in Brussels to defend their interest and to avoid going through Paris. This chaos does not only affect France. Indeed, the Treaty of Maastricht encourages the “nationalities” to manifest themselves: the Flemish and the Walloons want to separate, the Northern Italians refuse to support a poorer and less productive Southern Italy. These separatist movements and the deterioration of century-old nations favor Germany and its federalist structure.

The present institutions of the European Union must evolve. A commission regrouping anonymous and non-elected experts cannot indefinitely impose its regulations on 300 million people from fifteen different nations. It is true that the national ministers have final authority over these texts, but one may wonder how twelve, and soon fifteen, foreign minis-

ters will be able to conceive and apply a common foreign policy. Confronted with states like the US, Japan, China, India, Brazil, and others, such collegial direction would only reveal its contradictions and weaknesses. Furthermore, in what concerns the European Parliament, it only serves as an alibi for a so-called democratic Europe. And if this "group of states," as the German Court calls them, would appoint a strong executive, it would necessarily be German, since every "group" is always dominated by its main component. This perspective is far from appealing to most European countries.

This is especially so because Germany has, so far, served the interests of an eventual European Union much less than its own interests. When its interests are involved, it does not seem to worry about "community preference." For instance, in 1986, when Paris tried to create an ambitious spatial program, Bonn refused to go along, arguing that the American space station could be used instead. Accordingly, the German computer giant Siemens allied itself with IBM and Hitachi, rather than with European firms. Also, the French firm Alcatel had been charged to fix the Yugoslavian telecommunication system; but observing the embargo to the letter, Paris interrupted the execution of the contract. Siemens, however, which was as restricted as Alcatel by the embargo, hurried to Belgrade to take over the market won by the French firm, thereby blatantly disregarding the embargo. Daimler-Benz associated itself with Mitsubishi in order to build a solid group for weapons manufacturing and for accessing the Asian market. Finally, while at the same time accusing Russia of violating the embargo against the Serbs, Germany violated the arms embargo by supplying the Croats and the Bosnians with weapons from former East-Germany.

With regards to the "common defense" objective of the Maastricht Treaty, it seems increasingly compromised. The German Constitution prohibits any military intervention outside of the NATO zone. The German conception of the "identity of the European defense" is particular because the Ger-

man minister of defense has emphasized that German troops would be placed under the command of NATO if they were asked to do so. In order show its good will, Bonn has consequently divided its combat force into four organizations: a future Franco-German force, a Germano-Dutch group, a participation in the rapid intervention forces of NATO, and the rest being directly allocated to NATO. Where is the "common defense, specifically European" in this bizarre military dichotomy?

Regardless, France has made multiple concessions to Germany; it established the Bank of France's independence so as to subordinate it to the Bundesbank. And this change occurred, even if France's economy differs substantially from the German one, only because the latter must finance the cost of reunification. Also, because of strong American and German pressures, France agreed to open its markets further at the cost of increased European unemployment, reduced living standards, and social tensions. With the Schengen Accords, which canceled the internal frontiers in Europe, France accepted to leave the control of its own territory to Spain, Italy, and Germany. As a consequence of this, France lost more than forty billion francs in fiscal revenues, illegal immigration increased, an invasion of industrial waste occurred, and the Schengen Accords had to be suspended indefinitely.

Although the French President had always advocated a deepening of the European Union in order to strengthen its institutions, France nevertheless accepted enlargement at Germany's demand. The inclusion of countries such as Austria, Finland, Sweden, and possibly Norway in the European Union only moves the center of the European economy farther East and adds more Germanic languages to the political union. Furthermore, since these northern economies are healthier than those of the Mediterranean countries, the latter have developed fears about a potential economic dictatorship of the North over the South. Further skepticism of the European Union occurred when Great Britain opposed itself to in-

creasing the veto minority from 23 voices to 27. The resulting failure of the actual institutions of the European Union must be acknowledged.

With regards to labor-intensive industries, the European Union represented 25.5% of the world production in 1973, 22.3% in 1988, and will have fallen to 20% by the turn of the century. (Between 1973 and 1988, Japan went from 3.3% to 18.1%.) The European electronics industry constituted 24.4% of world production in 1980, and will only constitute 15% in the year 2000. The decline of the automobile industry is similar (from 30% in 1980 to 20% in 2000).

In the field of unemployment, Europe counts more than 25,000 men and women searching for work. This extraordinary level of unemployment probably announces a new form of society, where the machine will increasingly liberate the worker, making him useless and costly to society.

The transition towards a European Union is far from successful. Only Germany manages, with the sheer strength of its economy, to succeed where it had previously failed, and establishes its dominance. However, the Europe it finds is a sick one.

The populations of Western Europe realize this. During the Italian and German elections of December 1993, the electorate rejected the pro-European parties. The European Union's ludicrous behavior in the Yugoslavian crisis, the increase in unemployment and the political and financial scandals have enlightened the electorate on the nature of the European myth. As a result, the members of the European Parliament have begun to rebel against the enlargement and against the decisions of the Commission and of the Council of Ministers.

If the Mediterranean countries and Northern Ireland keep their fate in Europe, it is only because they receive large subsidies from Brussels. Further divergence between France and Germany is to be expected. France has already developed itself geographically and politically; Germany has not. Of the "Great European Powers," Germany is the only one which has

still a considerable potential of expansion, since its partners will only stagnate or regress. As a consequence, if the European Union became a viable political reality, it would be under the direction of Germany. Hence, from Bismarck's era to about 2020, the aim of a European Union, pursued from Charlemagne to Hitler, will have been achieved in one and a half centuries. ❧