

'Nixon's warning' from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (18 March 1974)

Caption: On 18 March 1974, the German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung analyses the economic and political tensions between the United States and the European Economic Community and considers the threat to withdraw US military forces from Europe.

Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. Benckiser, Nikolas; Deschamps, Bruno; Eick, Jürgen; Fack, Fritz Ullrich; Fest, Joachim; Welter, Erich. 18.03.1974, Nr. 65. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Nixons Warnung", auteur:Reifenberg, Jan , p. 1.

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Nixon's warning

by Jan Reifenberg

Either the 'Europe of the Nine' is prepared to cooperate economically and politically with America or the two pillars of the Atlantic Alliance will move apart. Either a fair compromise is reached in both areas or the number of US troops stationed in Europe will be unilaterally cut. If the Western Europeans gang up on the nation that guarantees their security there is now hardly a congressman prepared to argue in favour of retaining the current troop levels. 'One-way traffic' across the Atlantic is no longer an option. America's proposals for a reformulation of the Alliance are on the table.

The choice and the responsibility now lie with the Europeans. President Nixon will not be travelling to Western Europe in the present atmosphere of transatlantic acrimony, but he may well go to the Soviet Union, for there is no wish to break off the ongoing dialogue between the two world powers, so crucial to the survival of both parties in the atomic age, because of quarrelling amongst the Allies. Anyway, the President has no inclination to sign a declaration with the Europeans that would simply gloss over the deep differences of opinion that exist.

Every word in Nixon's tough, challenging statement, delivered on Friday in Chicago, had certainly been carefully weighed. No amount of appeasing discourse from Europe's chanceries, no amount of diplomatic embellishment can hide this simple fact: the President has given the Europeans something very close to an ultimatum. It is twenty years since anything similar came out of America, when John Foster Dulles, in connection with the clash over a European Defence Community, threatened a 'painful re-examination' of US foreign policy. The Defence Community failed because of France, and today Nixon is again addressing France, though without mentioning it by name. He can, however, and this makes the matter easier for him, vent his anger on the Federal Republic of Germany, which at present holds the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Nine.

Nixon and Kissinger have become more and more resentful of Europe over the past year. In their view, America's allies are to blame for the failure of 'European Year': they behaved unworthily during the Middle Eastern conflict in rushing to secure supplies from the Arab oil-producing countries. After the Washington Energy Conference, Kissinger believed his cooperation plan was secure. France appeared isolated. All too quickly, the Germans also believed this. They rejoiced too early.

Kissinger regarded the European Community's decision, taken under pressure from the French, to enter into long-term cooperation agreements with the Arab states as a slap in the face. America had in his view been presented with a *fait accompli*. German suggestions that Kissinger, after his discussions with Scheel in Bonn, must basically have been aware of what was going to happen in Brussels on Monday did not go down well in Washington. Nixon and Kissinger were irritated even further when France succeeded in pushing through deletion of the word 'partnership' from the planned declaration on cooperation between the Community and America.

It was already clear during the Energy Conference that Nixon saw security, the economy and energy as inseparable. Now the President has repeated that any split here would break up the Alliance as well. Europe could not at one and the same time seek American protection and line up against America. Nixon, like Theodore Roosevelt before him, is courteous in manner, but wields the big stick: the withdrawal of troops and the removal of the nuclear umbrella. He leaves Europe in no doubt that America, tired of its Atlas role, is experiencing an isolationist backlash.

The worst thing that could now happen would be for this serious transatlantic argument to become a party-political football, in Bonn for instance. That would be proof of the small-mindedness of which Nixon has reproached the Europeans. The President is also annoyed because he cannot count on early success in Europe to help him out of a domestic political corner. What angers him even more is that the Europeans, as he sees it, are ungrateful. Nixon belongs to the generation that created the Atlantic Pact. He sees it as an act of American generosity. Like most of his compatriots, he is dismayed when he hears cynical statements

from Europe — from Paris, for example — to the effect that America is only ever guided by self-interest.

Nixon's warning carries particular weight for the Bonn Government. The President knows what shock waves comments about troop reductions trigger off there. He has addressed in the person of Brandt not only the spokesman for the Nine but also the partner most dependent on American protection. Europe — which ought to make some response — is politically impotent. Whether the shock therapy applied by Nixon and Kissinger will be salutary depends not only on the Europeans. Nixon's warning could make Gaullism, which he so admires, all the more determined. If that were to happen, the Atlantic rift would be further widened and the consequences for Western Europe would be grim. The Alliance would celebrate its 25th birthday in the wan light of political fiasco: and the winner would be Moscow.