

'Anti-Europe' from Corriere della Sera (22 May 1962)

Caption: On 22 May 1962, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera describes General de Gaulle's European policy.

Source: Corriere della Sera. 22.05.1962, n° 120; anno 87. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Anti-Europa", auteur:Guerriero, Augusto , p. 1.

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Anti-Europe

For four years the Western World has been listening with anxious concern to General de Gaulle's anti-European and anti-Atlantic declamations. For a long time, we have hoped that he would gradually recover from his bombast and nationalistic rhetoric and see the reality as it is, not as he imagines it to be. A vain hope.

Basically, General de Gaulle is aware that his ideas are doomed to fail. The proof is that he does not admit to them. On the contrary, he does his best to conceal them. When you listen to him, you get the impression that there is no keener 'Europeanist' and advocate of the Atlantic alliance than he. Speaking about Europe, he always starts by making fervent declarations of Europeanism: 'In the eyes of France, economic construction is not sufficient. Western Europe will have to form a political union.' Speaking about the defence of Europe, he starts with solemn declarations of allegiance to the Atlantic Alliance: 'The Atlantic Alliance exists. For as long as the Soviets pose a threat to the world, this Alliance will have to be kept up.'

After reading these sentences, one feels reassured. 'At last! France is on our side! And in favour of the European Union! And in favour of the Atlantic Alliance.' But soon after uttering these sentences, the General starts to have reservations and his words become tortuous and obscure. And at the end one realises that the European Union he is talking about is profoundly different from the Union to which Europeanists aspire, and that the Atlantic Alliance which he has consented to preserve is profoundly different from the Atlantic Alliance we have known so far and that has warranted the defence of Europe until now. '*Ibis, redibis numquam peribis in bello ...*', such syntactic ambiguity worthy of the Delphic oracle is the constant pattern of the General's speeches. In the country of *clarté*, this king of obscure thought has become a dictator.

What is this Europe that General de Gaulle wants to create, or rather what form would it take? Until yesterday, there was always talk about a '*Europe des patries*' — a 'Europe of Nation States'. But now he denies ever having used those words and instead prefers the expression '*Europe des États*'. Let us not start splitting hairs about wording: the substance is that the General wants to 'institutionalise' the consultations between the Heads of State and Government. That is all. And that is what he calls 'establishing Western Europe as a political union'.

'What does France propose to its five partners?' everyone wonders. To which he answers, 'We will bring our Heads of State and Government together at regular intervals so that they can examine the problems that affect us all, and take decisions that will be valid for the whole of Europe.' France, therefore, is only proposing what has already existed for a long time or what has always been done: meetings among Heads of State and Government. The only innovation that General de Gaulle wants to introduce would be the 'regular occurrence of these meetings. Was it really worth doing all this work and having all these discussions for so little? The funny part about it is that de Gaulle believes or claims to believe that it is sufficient to make those meetings 'periodic' in order to 'establish Europe as a political union'.

Let him believe what he wants. But what he cannot allow himself to say is that Europe, as the 'Europeanists' understand it, implies renouncing one's homeland. 'Europe cannot be a living reality if it does not include France with its Frenchmen, Germany with its Germans, Italy with its Italians, etc. Dante, Goethe and Chateaubriand belong to the whole of Europe insofar as they were Italian, German and French.' And who has ever claimed to want to create a Europe that does not 'include' France and its Frenchmen, etc?

Let us quote Paul-Henri Spaak, 'I have been, am and will always be a strong advocate of the what is called supranational Europe, meaning a Europe organised in such a way that whenever an issue has been discussed and has to be voted on, this decision will have to be taken by a majority vote, so as to prevent an *impasse*'. This is what Mr Spaak said, and all Europeanists think likewise.

Suppose Europe were to decide things by a majority, would all Frenchmen, Germans and Italians renounce their homeland? In a Europe that takes a majority vote, would Dante no longer be Italian and Goethe no longer German?

Such are General de Gaulle's ideas on 'Europeanism'. On the subject of 'Atlanticism', they are even more aberrant and absurd. His reasoning is in fact more than strange. He says, for example, that the Atlantic Alliance was created 13 years ago, when the Americans had a nuclear monopoly. Now, the Soviet Union also has bombs, a whole arsenal of them. We are, therefore, exposed to far greater risk. Hence we would expect him to conclude that we should strengthen our ties with the United States and treasure its alliance, which is our only defence. Instead, General de Gaulle thinks the exact opposite and claims, 'It is necessary for our defence to become a national defence again'. These words, if they have any meaning, mean that France will have to defend itself. Thirteen years ago, the Soviet Union had no nuclear weapons and, therefore, we needed the protection of the United States. At present, the Soviet Union has numerous powerful nuclear bombs and, therefore, we no longer need the protection of the United States. Is it possible to be any more irrational?

President Kennedy has called any idea to make the Americans leave Europe 'folly'. The word is harsh, but correct. It is the folly of a Don Quixote who believes that by the sheer strength of his arm he can restore justice on earth, right all wrongs and protect the weak. But everyone knows how weak this arm is. President Kennedy has reaffirmed the United States' willingness to defend Europe and, in reply to a question about General de Gaulle's intention to create a defence community separate from the Atlantic Alliance, has said, 'I believe that many years will pass before the European Nations will be able to defend themselves without the presence of the United States'. And this is true.

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