

'Germany in Europe — increased responsibilities' from Europe (3 October 1990)

Caption: On 3 October 1990, Emanuele Gazzo, Chief Editor of Agence Europe, comments on the reunification of Germany and analyses the role of a unified Germany in the European Community.

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Germany in Europe — increased responsibilities

Europe greets the new Germany born today under the sign of European unity reinforced by confirmed common will.

We recall that when Nicholas Ridley was forced to resign further to the harsh judgement expressed by him on the subject of the consequences that German unification would have on Europe, we wrote “Ridley goes, but the problem remains” (Ed. of 16 July). We pointed out on the same occasion that, although Ridley’s accusations against the German people and certain aspects of its character (as well as the organisation of European unity within the Community framework) should be strongly rejected as being entirely without foundation, the fact remained: there are persistent and widespread fears in large sectors of public opinion.

This fear is quite naturally heightened in the face of the increased might of unified Germany. As always, fear, even if it is latent, is dangerous as it can inspire erroneous reaction and create lack of understanding which seems to justify the very same fear: a lethal combination.

Today, also, mistrust and lack of understanding are nurtured by arbitrary interpretations of the event such as those made by the people who — when referring to the Vienna Congress of 1815 when 4 major powers (Russia, Prussia, Great Britain and Austria) gave new outlines to the map of Europe — affirm that it will always be the sovereign Nation States which will settle the course of history. As if we did not know, it took only a few decades to undo the order established in Vienna and that, later, the reconstruction of Europe after two world wars was only possible through the sharing of national sovereignties.

It is, therefore, necessary to join in vigorous fight against latent fear and above all to act so that any suspicion or doubt is dispelled — firstly by having faith in the solemn commitment and undertakings of the highest officials. The preamble to the Treaty of union expresses the wish of the German people “to establish German state unity to serve peace in the world as an equal and sovereign member of a united Europe”. Mr. Kohl has solemnly confirmed this commitment on more than one occasion, also here in Brussels. As regards Mr. Genscher, he has stated and written in no uncertain terms that Germany would never use its increased might to claim to be a greater power, but rather to exert greater responsibility. It may be said that men fade away and Constitutions change. This is true, but such is history: it is the role of the political forces to orientate evolution. Today, democracy has been established in Germany in a way which is no less solid than for its European partners. Naturally, the new Germany is different from that of yesterday. It will be useful to analyse changes which are other than purely quantitative and which bear the signs + or -. One can “speculate”, try to imagine what the future holds. On the whole, Germany will be more Nordic and more protestant, more eastward looking. It will keep a core of “protesters” organised in the “Landsmannschaften” for the separate “compatriots”. The relative balance of parties could change. It will be necessary to try to answer still more questions. There will, certainly, be a change of “specific gravity” in Europe but each and every one must make an effort to establish a satisfactory overall balance. For France, this is a difficult problem as it is becoming “less necessary” to Germany (the possession of a nuclear weapon is no longer of great significance). As regards security policy, one must avoid drifting towards the creation of “sanctuaries”, whether national or bi-national.

All this confirms what we wrote one year ago, that is, that the reply to the German question is European federation. Why? Because acceptance of the federal order automatically pushes to one side any hint of hegemony. This is true in time: but in the immediate future, the test of European commitment on behalf of Germany lies in the “psychological” acceptance of a European currency which will replace the Deutschmark and, thence, the fixing, as from now on, of deadlines and contents of stages which should bring about monetary union.

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