# Interview with Otto von Habsburg-Lothringen: General de Gaulle and Europe (Pöcking, 5 and 6 February 2004)

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[Philippe Nicolet] If you were to name, let us say, the four or five major figures, who would they be?

[Otto von Habsburg] Charles de Gaulle first of all. He was certainly one of the greatest visionaries in Europe and, above all, someone who did a huge amount in what is the most difficult area, namely France. It was he who led them, in effect. I should certainly say Adenauer too. Adenauer, with his Rhenish vision — because the Rhine plays a crucial role in this Europe. Coudenhove, certainly. And then — have I already mentioned Schuman?

[Philippe Nicolet] No, not so far.

[Otto von Habsburg] Then I put him on the same level. I shall not rate one more highly than another because Schuman was certainly one of the really great figures that built this Europe — also because he was a man who led France, the most difficult country. Adenauer and he, both Rhinelanders, did a lot in this direction; for Schuman was a great idealist as well. He was a man of vast vision, but very much the realist. You see, that was the advantage of these Rhenish types: they were both realists and visionaries.

[Philippe Nicolet] There is one surprising point in what you said when you singled out General de Gaulle, someone that is often perceived as being primarily the defender of French culture. One often had the impression that French culture was, in his eyes, predominant and that Europe came a long way behind. Yet you place him as the prime mover. Could you state why?

[Otto von Habsburg] Because he was the only person capable of leading the French. Look here: Coudenhove, one day, during a discussion on the subject of Britain — there was some tension with the English because of the closed door episode, and so on. — Coudenhove said: ‘You know, it is terribly difficult to build Europe with the English, but without them, it is impossible.’ This is very true. And it is the same for France. There are a lot of difficulties with the French, but one cannot do it without them. They are an essential element for us, and without someone like de Gaulle, two things would have happened: France would have collapsed entirely. I was in Bordeaux during the capitulation; he gave them once again an idea, a hope, a myth.