

‘Paris Summit: the road towards a new Europe’ from Pravda (22 November 1990)

Caption: On 22 November 1990, the Soviet daily newspaper Pravda speculates as to whether the Charter of Paris for a New Europe provides the necessary guarantees to avoid further wars on the continent.

Source: Pravda. 22.11.1990, n° 326. Moskva. "Dorogi novoi evropy", auteur: V. Bol'shakov, V. Drobkov, T. Kolesnichenko, p. 1/5.

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Paris Summit: the road towards a new Europe

Everything in this world is transitory. The three-day Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) held in Paris has now entered the history books. Seven thousand journalists from around the world descended upon Paris like autumn leaves, surrounding the maelstrom of conferences, press conferences, meetings and debates taking place on Avenue Kléber itself, in the International Conference Centre, in the environs and even in the lobbies of the Conference.

The outcome has yet to be examined in detail. Of course, the politicians have already given their views on the conference. But they have not yet had the time to rise above their political leanings and view the changing face of Europe from the lofty heights of what they have achieved.

That is why it is so difficult for us to fully assess the results. It will take more than just one day to cast off the old Europe for the new because people's outlook alters much more slowly than the political structure. Consider this: 'We undertake to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government in our countries ... Freedom and political pluralism are necessary elements in our common objective of developing market economies towards sustainable economic growth, prosperity, social justice, expanding employment ...' Underneath these words in the Charter of Paris for a new Europe are the signatures of the Presidents of the USA and the USSR, and of another 32 Heads of State or Government. It is more than just a simple declaration of a common objective of peace and friendly relations. The world has taken a significant step in pushing forward the Helsinki Process which began 15 years ago.

Naturally, such developments can be seen in different ways. 'Yalta, symbol of the split in Europe, ceased to exist in Paris today,' French President François Mitterrand declared yesterday. After attending President Mitterrand's press conference at the Élysée Palace, the correspondent of the newspaper *Libération* drew a parallel between Paris and our Crimean city, where the Heads of State of the anti-Hitler coalition in 1945 carved up postwar Europe into zones of influence, dubbing the Paris CSCE 'Yalta on the Seine'. This is rather an apt term. While the Crimean conference symbolised the break-up of Europe, 'Yalta on the Seine' symbolises its unification. It will also symbolise the end of the sphere of influence of the superpowers who, in their new capacity, will lead the way in creating a new commonality of nations across the northern hemisphere. This is perhaps the most significant achievement of the Paris Summit.

Leaving behind more than a thousand years of bloody wars and land grabs, Europe now stands before the new millennium with its leaders and the leaders of the USA and Canada proclaiming the end of 'the era of confrontation and division' on our continent, promising to start a 'new era of democracy, peace and unity'.

The people of our continent knew all too well that it was such high-sounding words and laudable intentions that paved the way to the hell that was two world wars and countless other purely 'European' wars. Where is the guarantee that our pitiful history will not repeat itself?

Of course, the works of our satirists remind us that only an insurance policy will give us a full guarantee. But we are now insured against such a repetition through the comprehensive and mutually binding nature of the document resulting from the Paris forum. The Helsinki Accords had incontrovertible significance because, in the first instance, they were a result of the Second World War, fixing the existing borders, thereby allowing the common European process, which began in 1975, to start existing with a sufficiently rigid legal and geographical framework. And, difficult though it might have been to achieve, not one of the three Helsinki baskets, including the 'human rights' one, was left empty. In them were planted the seeds for the future harvest that is now being reaped in Paris.

Perhaps the most significant of the Paris 'guarantees' is the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and the Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States.

Thus the pillar for international security was given an unusually high profile in Paris. So now it is not only about our mutual survival, not simply about remaining safe from nuclear catastrophe, but also about cooperation in addressing the global environment, energy and other such areas. The Paris Summit also

worked out and approved a substantial raft of practical measures of an organisational nature to buttress the European integration process, creating a new structure that will both manage and stimulate this process. The Council of Foreign Ministers of member states was also created within the framework of the CSCE. It will convene at least once a year. In addition to the Council, a committee of senior officials was set up to take care of coordination.

There were several disputes about the creation of the Conflict Prevention Centre within the framework of the CSCE. Some feared that such an institution would result in the participating governments losing their sovereignty in foreign affairs. But it seems that these fears were dispelled in Paris. For now, it has been agreed that the first task for the Conflict Prevention Centre will be to carry out confidence-building and security measures. A number of other institutions will be set up, about which *Pravda* has already reported. Together, they will form part of the new mechanism to accelerate European integration, making it a stable and gradual process.

Could more have been done in Paris? In theory, yes. In practice, probably not. The step-by-step approach is also a guarantee of stability. On behalf of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev proposed in Paris to continue the disarmament process within the SALT II framework, something which received unanimous agreement. Although delegates at the Paris Summit agreed that enhancing the common European process should be the major common political structure for ensuring stability and cooperation in Europe, they did not agree to eliminate the bloc structure, even though that must happen sooner or later. For the time being the American position prevails and US representatives are making no attempt to conceal the fact that the NATO bloc remains its main bastion of support in Europe. But, for the sake of fairness, we shall not lay everything at Washington's door. The bloc mentality remains strong for many of the European participants at the conference. The editorial in today's *Le Figaro* is evidence of this very fact. The author laments the fact that the Paris Agreement will result in the USA being removed from Europe whilst '34 % of troops and weapons on the continent still belong to the Soviet Union'.

As delegates considered the evolving situation in Europe, they reflected on how we are doing, even though this was not on the agenda. The heads of the most advanced European states, the USA and Canada, sought and apparently found ways to help us, including helping us to survive the particularly harsh winter that we are experiencing. This is an issue of the utmost urgency. President Mitterrand warned against a 'two-speed Europe', stating that, in the long term, the construction of the new Europe, our common European home, would not be possible if the Eastern European countries were to remain so hopelessly behind the West in terms of their development. Therefore, one of the first challenges after Paris is to accelerate economic growth in Eastern Europe and to do everything possible to get us out of the shameful position of being unable to provide ourselves with goods, services or even food.

All is not rosy in other parts of our continent either. Even though the walls that separated nations have been torn down, age-old enmity and ethnic hatred are all still very much alive. And, as was noted with alarm in Paris, it is not just in the USSR that blood has been spilled because of such divisions. The President of Cyprus, Georgios Vasou Vasiliou, reminded us of the tragic division in his country, where, following its invasion in 1974, the Turkish army is still deployed. The Spanish representative F. González stated that Great Britain's colonial control over Gibraltar could not be permitted to continue. There was also alarm at the increase in xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racial hatred throughout Europe.

But all of these issues were overshadowed by the current crisis in the Persian Gulf. As one Paris newspaper reported, 'Saddam Hussein has his feet under the table at the pan-European conference.' Of course, this is an exaggeration, as was the assertion that the USA came to the Paris forum only to garner global support for its actions against Saddam Hussein. The US delegation in Paris showed that the CSCE process is of no less importance to Washington than it is to Europe's capitals. But the USA did indeed try to secure the blessing of four of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council present for the possible use of force against Iraq.

Characteristically, in its talks on the crisis in the Persian Gulf, the USA has applied the accepted CSCE method of 'consensus'. Nobody put pressure on anyone else, nobody pushed the crisis to the top of the

agenda, but there were two reasons why it could not be ignored. Firstly, European security does not mean security only from the Atlantic to the Urals. In our diverse but interconnected world, there is no such thing as isolated events. Therefore the issue of European security is closely linked with the problem of the 'hot spots' throughout the world. Secondly, as the old saying goes: beware when your neighbour's house is on fire. Europe could not remain indifferent if the flames of a destructive war were to flare up close to its borders. That is why all present, including the representatives from Washington, are seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Gulf. Of course, patience always has its limits.

In Stanley Kramer's famous film *Judgment at Nuremberg*, one of the heroes has the line 'totalitarianism and mass murder begin the moment you put an innocent man in prison and everyone remains silent'. The new world order may be violated in much the same way; it takes just one act of aggression to go unpunished, just one aggressor to achieve his objective with force. This cannot be permitted to happen. On this, all present at the pan-European conference were agreed. In any event, Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait. And all here agreed that the solution to this problem has to be found not by individual countries but by a united front within the framework of a body such as the UN. And it was the UN that was given the leading role in Paris to define the measures to counter the aggressor. This is yet another important indicator of the way the common European process is currently developing.

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