

THE IMPOSSIBLE SCHISM

by Francoise Fontaine

We always believed that the great development in this half-century would be the appearance of "Community" structures progressively replacing the old selfish principle of national sovereignty. The construction of Europe was to be the first and requisite stage in this civilising process, but one stage only. The prospect before us seemed simple when we embarked on the task of unifying a continent. It was a question of freeing the Europeans from the bonds of all kinds which stifled them physically and morally and forced them to develop at each other's expense. We thought of a federation because such a constitutional framework, already familiar, seemed to be the political organization that the new ensemble needed. But the essential task for us was not so much to achieve this goal as to set in motion, by creating the first Community, a process of peaceful transformation. We did not know where it would end either in space or in time, for we could not measure its revolutionary potential, and we had not abolished frontiers only to assign ourselves new ones, or destroyed small-scale nationalism in order to rebuild it on a larger scale. In truth we were little concerned with the role of this nascent force in world equilibrium, but our intentions were unequivocal.

Above all, Europe was not to be a Third Force, a political bloc reserving the right to play a special role between East and West. It would be independent economically since its inhabitants would meet all their expenses, at home and abroad, by the product of their own labor. But it seemed to us that once the accounts were thus balanced the self-respect of Europeans would be assured and there would be no inconvenience for them in recognizing and even strengthening the external links inspired by sentiment or imposed by necessity.

Now, at the moment when Europe is approaching economic independence and she can consider calmly her relations with her chosen and her natural partners, she hears a new idea proposed -- political independence. A singular mischance. Political independence is a senseless pretention of the weak when one has achieved the means of freely choosing one's destiny: one then chooses to be tied to one's friends, at the same time as one is tied to one's enemies in a pact of survival.

If the old Europe has recovered sufficiently to prevent the two great powers from confronting each other at her bedside, she should not try to make herself an arbiter between them. She belongs to the West, of which she had become a weak element, but in which she now is solidly regaining her place. If she was, for a long time, dependent on the United States, no supposed logic of growth requires that she should now separate from it. If she has developed her economic strength and to some extent her military strength with American aid and protection, this does not require gratitude but even less does it require ingratitude. Yet, by a false concept of history, some people would like to persuade us that a crisis of confidence between Europe and the United States is now inevitable.

Many people seem to be resigned to such a confrontation. They are often those who fought against united Europe at the time of its birth who, anticipating its coming of age, now demand its emancipation. Nationalism, dislodged from land frontiers, takes refuge at the frontiers on the coast. Banned on the continent, it hopes to begin a new, an intercontinental, career. Finally neutralism, which failed to seduce Europe when she was disarmed, thinks that it may succeed by promising a purely European defense. In a word, we are once more going to find that the front of our old adversaries is still in good order, long after we thought we had defeated them. This time we shall have a naval battle, for what is at stake is the Atlantic, the living center of Western unity, whose destiny cannot be separated from that of European unity.

We must be vigilant: for just when we think we have found the formulae of reconciliation in the ferment of joint action and in the meaning of co-existence,

a new schism is being opened. This time the tireless spirit of disunity will attack on an even larger front. Will these efforts be as effective to-morrow in polluting the Atlantic as they were yesterday in poisoning the Rhine?

In this year of 1964 it is clear that a misreading of history which could block the future of a civilization is being worked out through a mixture of conscious and unconscious motives, some Machiavellian, some innocent, some vindictive, some merely irresponsible.

It is a question of Western civilization. The Europe which created it is no longer its sole repository. North America employs all of its patents and adds her own. To-day it is diffused over the whole earth and this diffusion is at once its strength and its weakness. No one now knows the location of its magnetic pole, nor even its lines of force. By-products or poor imitations of our culture may henceforth fulfill the needs of three quarters of the world's population. Russia, which has labored for 20 years to borrow from us the means of replacing us, sees herself challenged by China, which needs much less with which to dazzle less-favored countries. If Western civilization is defined as a certain level of power and technical capacity, it is everywhere in different stages of development. It has become less important for that civilization to have an active center. On the contrary, there are many who would like to damp down the excessively bright glare of this forge of ideas and objects, which continues untiringly to break its own records on both sides of the North Atlantic. Who is to watch over this crucible? It is precisely around this question that the most dangerous controversy of our time is breaking out.

One current of thought, powerfully supported in France, seeks to imbue Europeans with a feeling of arrogant self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency suffers from a contradiction which minds, formed under the old doctrines of nationalism, have not yet been able to overcome: why is it that when one no longer owes anything to any person, one yet remains bound to everyone, and especially to one's former creditors? With "everyone", things might perhaps be arranged - and a kind of neo-nationalism in France is beguiled by dreams of a European network of very flexible world-wide relationships, directed from Paris. But the fact that the material ties which are strongest and hardest to break are those which bind us to our former protectors, and to rivals for influence - this situation is an unacceptable one to the European autonomists. The most intelligent see clearly, however, the logic in the increasing inter-action of the great economic units; as a result they place greater emphasis on cultural differences. They would have these differences considered fundamental and material solidarity secondary; inevitable perhaps but in any event paradoxical.

This attempt to disassociate European culture from American culture, at a time when necessity and reciprocal advantage are bringing about a close interpenetration of the material interests of the two continents, can only lead to serious psychological disorders. We must not be afraid to denounce as a purely political maneuver the current propaganda campaign to set allegedly superior European values against a caricature of the so-called American way of life. Clearly an artificial attempt is being made to create a moral fissure between two loves of the same civilization. What is the aim of this operation? What are the risks if it should succeed?

There is no point in dwelling on the ulterior motives of those who are organizing with the powerful information media they control the campaign to denigrate American society, a campaign which no Frenchman has been able to avoid for the last few months. They deem it necessary to disenchant our people in order to restore awareness of their own virtues lost through the misuse of dollars during the ten years from 1948 to 1958. By so doing they imagine that they will produce a reflex of withdrawal to facilitate the operation of diplomatic and strategic disengagement which technically can only be achieved in a certain emotional climate. How is Europe involved in this plan? That is the unknown factor. The campaign leaders, nevertheless, seem to hope that a nationalism based on anti-Americanism will be contagious among neighboring peoples. A formidable means of psychological leverage would then be at the disposal of the leaders of a European Third Force.

The anti-Americanism of 1964 in this country is therefore a movement inspired by unconcealed strategic purposes. Moreover it can find accomplices even in circles which condemn the policy it is designed to serve. For many short-sighted minds it is a justification for the neutralism they were unable to achieve ten years ago. This petty revenge makes it well worthwhile to go a little way with their own worst enemies. For others, who affect a higher form of Machiavellianism, everything which may serve to strengthen the consciousness of "Europe", even contempt for all that is not European, must be used provisionally. If Europe needs a foil to increase its own awareness of itself, and if the United States can play the part, then let's use it, they say.

Let us consider more closely now those who are sympathetic to this demonstration of Europe's superiority over America and who sincerely fear the danger of decadence which too thoughtless a contact might bring. We meet them every day among the French intelligentsia, less often in Germany and Italy. It is in France, however, that they are most uneasy. Perhaps because here the problem arises most often and in particularly insidious terms. "Do you want to become Americans" they ask, "or would you prefer that our civilization follow its own course?" The question answers itself not only because it implies that the American way is inferior but because a question put in this form is a challenge to one's patriotism and evokes a defensive reaction. Who would not choose fidelity to his own threatened culture? At that point, one no longer considers whether the choice is real. That, however, is the essential issue.

Once perhaps there was a real choice: but the moment for it passed unnoticed. Certainly the choice will never again be presented to us by men because it has already been made by history. It is no longer a question of whether we shall remain purely European or whether we shall become American; the mixture is already far advanced and we on both sides of the Atlantic belong to a civilization which henceforth is common to us all, and our differences will soon be due only to the climate or the character of the people. Whether we like it or not, the cultural legacy which we gave to North America from the time it was first settled has never ceased to be repaid to us. The economic and military aid of which we have heard so much in these last 20 years is insignificant compared with the moral influence the United States has been exerting on Europe for generations past. This influence, moreover, is not one-sided, and Europeans are often glad to emphasize their constant contribution to forming the American spirit. Is it beneficial for us? Is it excessive? These questions are futile, and obsolete. What we have absorbed from America is definitive: the corruption is incurable, if corruption it is. But for the future there is a doubt, and we are brought back to the choice which some people would like to force upon us in 1964.

This choice, let us repeat, can no longer be made in favor of a purely European Europe, because America has sown as many seeds of her personality in our culture as we have in hers. Furthermore, no matter how high we build the wall of moral protection around our nations or our European Community, the American example, which has travelled as far as Australia and penetrated even into the Soviet Union, will come back to us in roundabout ways and in bastardized forms. Something, nevertheless, can still be decided in 1964, and on it depends the vitality of the whole Atlantic civilization and of each of its components -- the establishment of a quasi-institutional framework in which the United States and a uniting Europe would together face their common problems on a basis of equality. Without such a framework the most active, the richest, the most objectively homogeneous human grouping would seem to have condemned itself to remain formless, and paradoxically less organized, less studied, less self-aware even, than any Polynesian society. Are we to let Western society assail itself, wear itself out in futile theological quarrels and jealousies, or are we to recognize its fundamental unity and to set up the political structures which will consolidate it?

Why does this problem, whose practical solution will not be found tomorrow morning, arise today? It was not we who began the battle. We were too confident that time was on our side to announce prematurely the birth of a civilization which for once was maturing peacefully. For just the same reason the shrewd opponents of Greater Europe; of the immense civilizing zone which the Atlantic world could be, launched their attack. We are, therefore, about to confront each other in a confused struggle on the shifting grounds of

intentions and ulterior motives. Those who wished to provoke a schism will have a religious war on their hands.

The first battle was fought and won by the schismatics in January 1963 when they brutally put an end to the difficult and still uncertain efforts to anchor Britain to the continent. Their rationalization for such action was the danger Europe was running in taking on an insufficiently differentiated part of the Anglo-Saxon world. They were correct in suspecting that the advocates of British entry into the Common Market aimed at consolidating the whole Western world and not just geographic Europe. They were mistaken, perhaps deliberately, when they claimed that within the Community the British would be docile agents of the Americans. Actually they feared above all that the British, once they became naturalized Europeans, would never permit the United States of Europe to have a destiny separate from the United States of America. But is this not merely a different way of expressing the same suspicion as to the unspoken motives behind the British candidacy? The truth is not so simple. Equally plausible is that the objective was to avoid having the British thrown definitely toward the Americans, who were less anxious than ever to have the responsibility for this European territory drifting offshore. But we must also not be afraid to say that the partisans of the project were inspired by the desire to tighten the links between Europe in the making and the United States, by means of the future British partner, and that it was on this aim that they were confronted and beaten.

That this was the heart of the matter has been unceasingly proved since then by the perseverance of the "Europeans" in trying to restore the weakened links. While an academic dispute about British membership continued, a second battle was joined on the Continent. Clearly, the Americans' "Trojan horse", when it was no longer British, became German. In their turn, our isolationists found themselves isolated. Their first spectacular victory had weakened them. Their too easy success in rejecting the British intermediary, whose hesitations had made it suspect, revealed the background of the drama, an Atlantic void. Whole peoples became alarmed, and even in France incantations were not enough to reassure public opinion, which knows where the real guarantees of its security lie.

It was evident that fear would once more dominate relations between western nations as soon as there was talk of calling a halt to the experiment of total solidarity. If this lesson has not yet been too severe, it is because confidence accumulated during the war years, and then in the years of joint reconstruction, was still enormous. One can squander it all the more easily in the belief that it is inexhaustible. Even those who question Atlantic solidarity and prepare systems of independent defense, rely on the protection for an indeterminate period of the partner whom they suspect of selfishness. Nevertheless, it would be wrong entirely to disregard the warnings of these cynics. They have the merit of drawing our attention to the fragility of tacit commitments and de facto situations. Our fears today are tempered only by the certainty that both bonds of sentiment and a concordance of interest still exist between America and Europe. If tomorrow those bonds were to be loosened by accident or design, or if there were to be a slight divergence of interest, our peoples would be panic-stricken. We must arm ourselves against this danger which our adversaries both proclaim and promote. **We must meet their simple and illusory answer -- a Third Force or even neutralism -- by the difficult but fruitful effort for an ever-closer association of the peoples of the West.**

This association, which will be more than an alliance and less than a Community, will long be in search of its proper structure. There are no ready-made solutions, and the history of international relations offers few encouraging precedents. In the past when a similar problem arose, dynasties were linked or noble hostages exchanged. Today the equivalents of these pledges of interdependence are found in joint financial ventures or in the supplying of Polaris missiles. Guarantees of this nature are plainly precarious and create new tensions. Nevertheless, the solidarity of material interests has proved itself in the Common Market. Many material links, none of which separately is unbreakable, have finally made six nations into a Community which is practically indissoluble. Could we not renew with Britain, and even with the United States, the experiment begun in the Schuman plan -- the fusion of vital interests, administered by common institutions?

Merely to attempt a new edition of a fourteen year old undertaking created in response to a particular historical and geographic situation would reveal small imagination and little good sense. Then, it was a matter of reconciling in a new organization two rival neighboring powers. That was done, and thanks to it the balance of forces on the European Continent has undergone a profound transformation. Britain, a late starter, will have to adapt itself to a new situation and a new balance of forces. On the other hand, one could, in theory, suppose that the system which succeeded in integrating France and Germany might soon be applicable to Europe and America and end in the establishment of an Atlantic Community.

Although we often hear of this "Atlantic Community" as a project nurtured by the Americans and some of their European friends, we have never been able to find its origin. No responsible political leader has proposed a future joint government of the United States and Europe, nor, a Europe integrated in an Atlantic federation which, because of its existing and persistent disproportion of strength, would in effect be under American sovereignty. This same disproportion will similarly prevent for a long time the concept of a true Atlantic common market with the economic institutions which have made possible the union of the Six.

But aside from these utopian projects, too generously ascribed (the better to discredit them) to the advocates of a Europe welded to its Atlantic partners, there remain all the other de facto and de jure methods which men impelled by their need to live together in order to survive can devise. Here the experience of the Community of Six may be invoked. This Community, as has often been written, was forged by means of common rules, replacing old reflexes of rivalry by the idea of a common interest. These rules bring Europeans to evaluate together problems which, from purely national viewpoints, seemed to require divergent and mutually incompatible solutions. By changing the economic attitude of Frenchmen toward Germans and Italians, and vice-versa, the Community has revealed their fundamental kinship. That is the method of the Schuman plan, which liberated European civilization from imminent suffocation. To what extent can it now be applied to Atlantic civilization in crisis?

What is important is not to take the wrong approach. The European Community was nearly shattered when we tried to add military to economic ties. Today some people -- but not the same people as in 1954 -- think that the time has come to resume the attempt on the Continent. They are mistaken. The real common interest, which calls for common rules in this field, is now intercontinental. Integrated defense will be the catalyst of Atlantic civilization.

Why choose this field, where solidarity -- or at least its limits -- is currently the most contested, and which does not present, at first sight, any great civilizing attraction? The answer is simple: in 1964 there is no choice. There was none in 1950: the only possible catalysts then were coal and steel. Agriculture and defense, because they were not ripe for this role, were then the divisive elements. Today, agriculture is the catalyst of Europe, and defense will be that of the West.

Since we are constantly threatened with annihilation whether by fate or by misunderstanding, the problem of defense can be linked with that of civilization. It is hypocritical for European intellectuals to deny the relationship which exists between force and culture-- when the force is that of the H-bomb. There is no modern meditation which does culminate in atomic anguish, no higher cause than the defense of a civilization threatened with sudden death. No doubt this civilization is not limited to the West, but its Western form is that which concerns us and through which we can act. This is no moment to divide it.

The true common interest of Europe and America lies in this zone where life and death are at the mercy of an error. It remains only to find the common rules which will ensure that men on both sides of the ocean will have simultaneously the same concept of their security and the same reflexes of self-preservation. The problem is not easy when all the means of protection are on one side -- which from our viewpoint is the other side. But it is pointless to attack this aspect of the problem, or to disguise it. The significant strength will not be European. It will remain American so

long as we lack a form of association in which the moral and physical conditions for the security of the one side are fused with those of the other.

For this reason the true answer to the dilemma of defense lies in the moral and physical interpenetration of the two continents. All means which contribute to strengthening the feeling of solidarity -- commercial, financial, cultural -- have as much defensive value as purely military agreements. Conversely, it is solidarity in defense which will create in all fields the irreversible community machinery which the best will of diplomats and economists will be insufficient to establish. In other words the multilateral force will be no more a decisive element in integrated Atlantic defense than the "Kennedy Round" can by itself result in an economic community. But all these attempts at interpenetration, in conjunction with each other, will bring about situations and attitudes more and more common to both sides, and from which further steps will be possible.

This course is diametrically opposed to that which the advocates of the Third Force wish us to take. They too claim that they are transferring the Atlantic balance of forces, bringing about new situations and attitudes, but by stirring up differences and threatening rupture. They brandish a private bomb and conduct separate diplomacy. Their policy may have a few advantageous effects, partial and momentary. But such a policy makes the solution of the global problem more difficult and it compromises the future of the association. Such an association can only be brought about by fusing all the small threads of convergence in the framework of the great convergence necessary to American and European society. Let us even beware of the illusion that parallelism would be more satisfying for our interests and our dignity: parallelism is a third force postulate which leads naturally to neutralism and the end of organized Europe.