

# Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

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## France and the Alliance

AFTER several visits to Europe during the past year it has become fairly plain to me that the President was right when he said recently at Georgetown University that "the Atlantic Alliance is not in the midst of crisis . . . but it is in the midst of change." Our



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prime need is to come to an understanding of that change so that our attitude and our policy may deal with the real world as it is today.

The Cuban confrontation of 1962 brought a successful testing and stabilization of the balance of nuclear power between the Soviet Union and the United States. The changes within the Atlantic Alliance have been in the making since the late 1950s. But since the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation in 1962 the almost universal European conviction has been that the world is not in the near future faced with a nuclear war. This has released the forces of change throughout the whole continent and indeed in the Soviet Union as well.

If we keep this in mind, it soon becomes evident that the question of whether the Western defense shall be "European" or "Atlantic" is a false issue. All European policies, French, German, British, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, Yugoslav, start from and depend wholly on the maintenance of the balance of power which was reached in 1962 and has been accepted both by the Soviet Union and the United States. When I say accepted, I mean that the United States has accepted the commitment to maintain its nuclear power and that the Soviet Union has accepted the existing

relations between its nuclear power and ours. This was sealed and ratified in the test ban treaty which was an abandonment by both countries of the search for an "absolute weapon." Everyone in Europe starts from this premise, be he General de Gaulle, Mr. Wilson, Chancellor Erhard or the new leaders in the Kremlin.

WHERE then do the differences with General de Gaulle begin? Not on the fact that the peace of Europe depends on the big American nuclear force rather than on the small French force. Not on the fact that Western Europe wishes to keep the six American divisions on the continent. On the contrary, despite all that is said about the independence of Europe, the French

government is counting upon and hoping for the continuing presence of American troops for at least ten years more. As one Frenchman who speaks with authority said to me in discussing the recurring question of reducing the American forces in Germany: "We know you will not keep them there forever but we would rather have four divisions that stayed for ten years than six divisions that stayed for only three years."

There are no important differences on the basic view of East-West relations,—that the two halves of Europe are drawing together through increasing economic and cultural intercourse, or that the reunification of Germany will eventually come as part of this process, or that the Sino-Soviet conflict is irreconcilable for some years

to come and that Russia will thus draw closer to Europe. There are, surprising as perhaps it sounds, no fundamental differences over the association of Great Britain with Europe. The eventual inclusion of Britain in Europe is assumed by the French. The question, as the French see it, is whether and when and how Britain will adjust its vital interests in the remaining empire, in the Commonwealth, and in the sterling area, to the European situation.

IF THE conflicts within the Alliance do not arise from vital issues, what are they about? They are about what to expect and what to prepare for in the next ten or fifteen years. General de Gaulle, knowing that the present Soviet-American balance of power will not last forever, assumes that the immediate business of Western Europe, as distinct from the United States, is to begin to prepare now for the emergencies which may arise some fifteen years from now. His mind is fixed on the years immediately ahead of us when there is still time for Europe to prepare for the future.

About that future he makes certain basic assumptions. One is that in the course of a generation the United States may not be willing to bear the burdens of protecting Europe which it has assumed since the Second World War; the United States has vast and complicated interests in Asia and Latin America and Africa which will demand increasing attention. Moreover, he assumes that the European nations will not forever be willing to depend for their defense on the United States. The task of the West Europeans in this post-Cuba era is to begin to

unite politically and to prepare for their own defense.

THE FIELD of the Franco-American discussion is this coming fifteen-year period when Western Europe, secured within the balance of power achieved by the United States, must seek to find its political unity and an effective defense of its own. I made a special effort to understand concretely the French view of what the American role during this period would be.

There are a number of plans for European unity in circulation, a French, a German, a Belgian, and an Italian. All of them, I think, begin with the proposal for regular meetings, say quarterly, of the heads of the European governments. Each has its own trimmings dealing with such matters as a European Secretariat and a European Parliament. The essential and common idea in all the plans is that there must be regular consultation at the highest level by the French, the Germans, the Italians, and eventually the British.

If we think of these European meetings, we shall not go far wrong in understanding General de Gaulle's purpose when he lays down the essential French condition: it is that no European country shall take its problems to

Washington until there has been a European consultation. The French say that Europe will never be united if London and Bonn and Rome are each trying to make special arrangements with Washington.

They must first deal with one another and not compete for the favor of the United States. This is the basic reason why France opposes the entry of Britain into "Europe" at this time because the British count upon a special relationship with the United States which has priority over the interests of Europe. This is why the French are so strongly opposed to the American plan for the MLF—because it is in their minds a special German-American military alliance outside of NATO.

WHETHER or not the French conception of European unity will work is a question that cannot be answered unless and until it has been tried. It is not hard for the American traveler in Europe today to see strong reasons why a unification of Western Europe is exceedingly difficult in view of the divergent national interests and preoccupations of Britain, partitioned Germany, and Italy.

I shall attempt to deal with these questions in my next article.

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