

## FROM THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE TO THE EUROPE OF DEFENSE

### **Jean-Antoine Giansily**

The publication in January this year of the first half of the addresses given at the Strasbourg Atlantic Treaty Association General Assembly has provoked much questioning and reaction on the objectives of the French Association for the Atlantic Community - at a time when political commentators are beginning to reflect seriously on the Europe of defense. An example of current thinking is the *Libération* article a few weeks ago - particularly skeptical by Jean Quatremer,<sup>1</sup> the paper's specialist on Europe.

In truth, the issue that calls imperatively for consideration today by the political leaders of the 19 member countries of the Atlantic Alliance and of the 16 European Union countries boils down to a simple alternative: defense of Europe or the Europe of defense?

It was General de Gaulle who said of NATO in a celebrated 1959 press conference (it is true we were then in the middle of the Cold War) that, as conceived in 1949, "*L'OTAN, c'est la défense de l'Europe par les Américains.*" Since then, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Warsaw Pact have created the political conditions for the passing of an era when Europe was subject to the United States in the choice of its defense to one where Europe was gradually becoming a partner of the Americans, as reflected in a phrase of the Maastricht Treaty: 'the Western European Union is the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.'

It is not just a simple formula; it is rather the progressive transfer to the body of the 15 European Union member countries of the prerogatives of the WEU. The latter, once it was truly in a position to exercise them (that is, from 19 September 1991), was not able to pursue in practice - given the decision of the United Kingdom, Holland, Denmark and Portugal to reject the Franco-German proposal to commit a force of 20,000 European troops for landing on the Adriatic coast.<sup>2</sup>

The Strasbourg meeting, the theme of which, "Towards a responsible Europe in a renovated Alliance", had been carefully chosen, aimed at tabling the various options that would make possible the transfer of the defense of Europe (by the Americans) to the Europe of defense; that is, defense conducted by the Europeans themselves - with the attendant acquisition of the means to intervene militarily on the continent - after concertation between the member countries of the European Union.

For the first time, through what we called the "Gutenberg" program, European students (159 in all) were invited to express themselves both at the General Assembly plenary sessions and during the work of the committees. Moreover, they had the opportunity of visiting the European institutions in Strasbourg - the European Parliament, Eurocorps, The European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe.

It is quite clear, from a reading of the answers to the questionnaire given to the students at the end of their stay published in the issue, that European youth - at least those who take interest in such matters - would like to see a coherent and strong European defense system in place which would meet the criteria set out by the High Representative for Common European Foreign Policy and Security, political, legal

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<sup>1</sup> *Coup d'envoi pour une Europe de la défense*, February 29, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Antoine Giansily, *L'Union Européenne et la crise yougoslave, illusions et réalités*, Editions Denoël, p. 15.

and military resources for a pillar that is separable but not separate from NATO in the framework of a common security policy.

### **Three obstacles**

The obstacles which have to be overcome before these aspirations can be realized will require in the years to come much political will, determination and patience on the part of the 15 members of the European Union and the countries candidate for admission. Seen today, the problem is threefold:

There is **an obstacle of a legal nature**. It arises because at present no truly contractual policy exists such as that applying among member States in regard to the Euro. A proper Treaty is called for, like Maastricht, and which would attribute to the 15 members of the Alliance the responsibilities which are still those of the West European Union - whose Secretary General is Mr. Javier Solana. In fact, by investing Mr. Solana with the Secretary Generalship of the WEU and with that of the Council of Ministers, and by conferring on him the post of High Representative for Common Foreign Policy and Security, Europe has managed to place in the hands of one person all the relevant instruments. This should enable him in the period July-December 2000, under French presidency, to get accepted a text no doubt of consensus but which would - to use Mr. Chirac's terms at Strasbourg - lead to a 'significant advance' in the matter. Thus one may hope that at the Heads of State summit to be held in Nice in December, a "Treaty of Nice" will be adopted that will be for defense what the Treaty of Maastricht is for the European currency.

**The second obstacle is financial**. Assuming that the legal aspect can be resolved in a way to satisfy all 15 Union countries (including the 4 neutral countries), there will arise the issue of the individual members' financial participation.

The French Defense Minister, Mr. Alain Richard<sup>3</sup>, pointed out in Brussels on December 2 last year that if the differences in defense contributions from member countries remain at present levels, Europe could find itself with countries who are producers of defense and those who are consumers of defense.

It is obvious that the Maastricht Treaty convergence criteria designed to harmonize the basics of the economies of the 15 do not take into account the distribution of defense expenditure - the actual defense charges borne by each country. One can see the advantage, in times of peace, for countries where budgets are not burdened by national defense requirements - through invoking neutrality or refusal to enter into an arms race. The European Union is not Switzerland; countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy, with their military tradition, have substantial defense industries for which the national budgets provide; they are hardly likely to accept that the smaller countries be dispensed of a minimum effort in terms of research, development and purchase of military equipment.

**The third obstacle is technological in nature**. Although not addressed in depth at Strasbourg, the subject is a serious concern - so much so that the organizers of this General Assembly (they are also, as it happens, those principally responsible for *Regard Européen*) sought the views of Aérospatiale Matra on EADS, whose constitution protocol had in fact just been signed in Strasbourg a few days earlier in the presence of the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, and the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Regard Européen*, 12 (2000), 65.

For the EADS creators, it is not a matter of competing with the three North-American giants who are direct rivals of EADS in the major fields of modern warfare - telecommunications, aerospace and everything that bears on aviation and missiles. The issue is rather that of preparing the future partnership within the Atlantic Alliance and avoiding suicidal competition; the point is that it is a sector where European countries have not made the necessary financial effort in the last thirty years - being persuaded, as they were, that the defense of Europe by America was guaranteed for eternity.

### **The logic of partnership**

These three obstacles, to be overcome properly, mean that we have to be ready legally, financially and technologically to meet the challenge of European defense of the 21st century; they are complicated by a major difficulty of a psychological order: **the need to get across to the Americans that, above all, it is a question of sharing the burden of defense in the framework of a partnership** and that nothing of this is directed as such against the United States.

Let us take, for example, the opinion of Felix Rohatyn, U.S. Ambassador to France, as quoted recently in *Les Echos*<sup>5</sup>: “*For Europe, the priority is the building of a defense industry capable of being measured on an equal footing with (the production of) the big American industrials; for the United States, the priority is the control of arms proliferation worldwide.*”

We must be circumspect about this sort of declaration. That the Americans, world power, should wish to control arms proliferation throughout the world - on the principle that only those arms conceived and manufactured by them are good, and over which they thus have control of production and distribution, is self evident. But the other aspect of the declaration concerning Europe is not exact.

It is true that the priority of the Europeans is the construction of a defense industry in the context of the legal and financial evolution mentioned above. But common sense suggests that such construction is not designed to be on an equal footing with the big American industrials. In fact, beyond all other considerations, it is a matter of Europe providing itself with an autonomous defense capability - as recalled by Catherine Chatignoux in *Les Echos* of January 7, 2000 - after EU member and candidate countries very belatedly realized that the Americans were no longer in Europe. 600,000 American officers and men were stationed in the European Union before the fall of the Berlin wall. Today there are less than 110,000 of whom 35,000 are in the Balkans sector - and thus strictly outside of the European Union.

The redeployment on our continent of a military force comparable to that of earlier years would be justified in the eyes of the American Congress only in the event of a major conflict as in ‘14-18 or ‘39-45. Sad it may be to recount, but although there were 200,000 victims in the Yugoslav conflict and 800,000 people expelled from Kosovo before the April ‘99 intervention, these were - in the eyes of the Americans - merely regional micro-wars in Europe, without major economic interests at stake and which incidentally had no bad effect on a quality immigration to North America.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Il faut construire des ponts et non des murs entre les Etats-Unis et l'Europe*, January (2000).

<sup>6</sup> The United States and Canada provided a haven for many Yugoslav academics and engineers at the time of the conflict. One might even say that, in terms of the ‘brain-drain’, the conflict was rather positive for the United States (see table on page 92 of J-A. Giansily’s book cited above).

It is in this sense that Europeans must be ready and equipped to react, not in any way for competition's sake, but simply because it would be intolerable for a new crisis to erupt in Europe with us not being in a position to confront it immediately.

The solution now lies in the creation of a veritable European spirit of defense to be formally expressed in the constitutive charter of the Union which, from Rome to Amsterdam, has given Europeans the economic and financial means - since the Euro makes Europe's political existence a reality. From the defense of Europe to the Europe of defense, the Treaty of Nice, already on track, should enshrine the existence of Europe in the 21st century, in a climate of entente and partnership with the United States.

*Translated by David Parker*