



The World in Sixty Lines

Up from protectorate

EDITOR'S
NOTE
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1990

Unless one takes the point of view of Honecker or Kim Il Sung, it is hard to imagine that the recent evolution of East-West relations could be seen as a dangerous element of destabilisation, with an in-built risk of war. There is however one European NATO country that has reasons to worry of the negative consequences of a drastic reduction in the Soviet threat and an ensuing disintegration (or fading out) of the Western alliance. This country is Greece.

While the attention of foreign commentators was concentrated on the several inconclusive attempts it has taken to elect a functioning majority in the Athens Parliament, Greek public opinion and political class, perhaps the former even more so than the latter, has been focusing with increasing preoccupation on the hypothesis of a reduction in the role of NATO, and above all in the European role of the Alliance's hegemonic power, the USA. And it cannot be excluded that these worries have played a role in the eventual defeat of the Socialist Party, whose blackmailing relationship with its American ally had been the cornerstone of Greek foreign policy throughout the 80s.

From the Athens point of view today, it is no longer permissible to conduct a policy like that of Papandreou, that systematically tended to raise the price of US military bases on Greek soil. On the contrary, it is logical to fear that American interest in the strategic locations Athens can offer is bound to subside as East-West détente proceeds, affecting not only Europe, but also to a degree the Middle

East conflict, in which Greece is not-so-marginally also interested. Above all, what Greece has to fear is a fading out of the interest of its NATO allies—and Washington in the first place—in avoiding a Greco-Turk conflict.

All Greeks are well aware of how crucial a role American diplomacy has had in systematically defusing tension between Athens and Ankara. And no Greek has been absent from the on-going appeal to the Greek-American community to counter with its pressure and electoral clout in American domestic politics the obvious US interest in arming and maintaining good ties with Turkey, whose strategic value against the Soviet threat is unquestionably higher than Greece's own one.

Indeed, for over forty years, the relationship between the eleven million Greeks who live on the territory of the homeland and the three million of the US "diaspora" has been the main weapon of Athens' strategy vis-à-vis the Turkish threat.

This threat cannot be considered merely a memory of the past, especially if one considers that the Cyprus question is still unresolved. And Greek fears of Turkey are constantly fed by the demographic growth figures of the two countries. Few outsiders—but many in Athens—know that at the time of the last Greco-Turk war, in 1922, which ended in Athens' defeat and in a tragic exodus for Greek populations in Asia Minor, the ratio of the Turkish population to that of Greece was two to one. Today this ratio is six to one, and will be over seven to one by the end of the century. To this has to be added the spread, in Turkey, of Islamic fundamentalism—fortunately still embryonic—and of a renewed feeling of belonging to Asia, two political factors that risk changing in a radical manner the characteristics of a country that about seventy years ago chose to become culturally European, and politically secularised. Understandably, this phenomenon is regarded perhaps with even more concern in Athens than in Ankara.

In Greece and in Turkey the alliance with the United States has had a dual role. On one hand, and above all during the early years, the alliance held at bay Stalin's ambitions of expansion into the extreme south-eastern quarter of Europe. Subsequently, it mainly fulfilled the role of a collective security system. But this second role will no longer be possible if out of the current upheavals in European equilibria comes a strongly reduced interest of the alliance hegemon in being present in Europe. Then Greece will discover it cannot go on hiding for protection under the wing of the main Western power and of the Greek-American community in order to be shielded from Turkey, especially as Turkey's key role for the West grows in importance every day, and the hypothesis of a major "conflict of civilisations" between the West and the Islamic world becomes more realistic.

Athens therefore has no other alternative but to abandon the idea of being a type of American protectorate and to try to strengthen its position through a constructive role in Europe, as an independent and sovereign member of the Western European bloc. On this new front, however, new tools will have to be adopted. Greece will no longer be able to play the "diaspora" card, since in the European countries there is no Greek diaspora, only immigrants who have no electoral weight at all. Its only chance is to make its presence felt in the EEC through political initiative as a member-state. This, Greece has yet to do. On the contrary, the Greek governments of the 1980s have played their European card neither fairly nor in full. Up to now, the Athens line in Brussels has consisted in a rather cheap mix of requests for economic aid and proud refusals over devolution of sovereignty. But if Greece does not wish to be left "naked" in the very possible case where American commitment is substantially reduced, it had best become accustomed to this idea now, and behave accordingly.

The Wall and the Moat

EDITOR'S
NOTE
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Construction of the tunnel that will finally put an end to Britain's insularity proceeds way beyond budget predictions and amidst delays in digging (mainly on the British side), fatal accidents that have cost the lives of six English and two French workers, and ensuing suspensions of work. Such tragedies, difficulties and slowdowns are probably inevitable given the size and audacity of the endeavour, and do not seem in any case to endanger the completion of a project that has probably passed the point of no return. Still, they keep in a state of anxiety those Europeans who attribute to this technical achievement not only an undeniable and quite substantial symbolic meaning, but also a decisive role in the physical and economic integration of the continent.

A railroad link between the UK and France will in fact pave the way for the creation of a Europe-wide transportation system with technical characteristics by far more suitable for the European continent than the one presently in use. Based on the aeroplane for inter-city travel and on the automobile for urban transportation, the current system is clearly of American origins and reflects not only the technological but also psychological and political dependence on the United States that has characterised the Old World after the two disastrous "European civil wars". But it is easy to see that neither the smaller distances, nor the higher density of population, nor even the climatic characteristics of the European continent justify imitation of the American model. On both urban and inter-urban distances the train is far more appropriate for Europe than air or road transportation. In terms of speed, cost, reliability—without even mentioning questions such as pollution and energy consumption—the train in Europe is in a position to be a victorious competitor of both cars and planes.

The Channel Tunnel and its final realisation after so many decades of projects and discussion, is thus a part of Europe's

re-discovery of a transportation technology more appropriate to its natural and economic environment—a re-discovery that can be seen in several quarters of the continent. Testimony of it is the tenacity of French authorities pursuing their TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse) project, whose technical success is demonstrated not only by the extension of networks beyond French borders, but also in the constant progress in velocity, whose record has to date exceeded 500 kilometres per hour.

Naturally, though, the TGV still carries with it heavy national connotations, as does the German project for the not yet operational Siemens train. It is not only a matter of healthy competition between firms and technologies. The two projects reveal the traits of two industrial strategies aimed at bringing about national economic predominance. Even the proposed networks reveal the competition between the main EEC member countries to acquire a predominant role in increasingly unified Europe: the Germans have outlined creation of a high speed axis running from the Low Countries to Italy, while the French are already in the process of creating a continent-wide star-shaped system, with Paris at the centre. And it is precisely from Paris that one of the star's rays will cross the Channel all the way to London, and in the future to Manchester and northern England.

That these national rivalries still persist at a moment when Europe is at the height of its unification efforts cannot surprise or shock anyone. And neither denying this rivalry nor pretending not to see it best serves the European cause. It is instead quite natural, as a consequence of the renunciation of all political and military conflict among European powers, that pacific rivalries appear in other areas, which in the past lived in the shadows of strongly protected national borders. If the French and German army have to abandon the hypothesis of fighting each other, it is the turn of the French and German railway companies to take EEC-wide competition into account.

National interests will of course continue to exist in a united Europe. Actually, national interests have become the main engine of the process of unification. What, indeed, if not national interest pushes traditionally anti-European unity countries, like the Scandinavian ones, to move towards the EEC? What, if not national interest, is finally bringing to implementation—just to stick to the subject—the projects of a Sweden-Denmark bridge and of a causeway between the Copenhagen island and the German coastline?

Isn't it the very survival of these rivalries and of the habit of reasoning in terms of national interest and even of national predominance which, over the past few months, has sparked the undeniable worries about the crushing weight a unified Germany will have in the Community, over the effects of the demolition of the Berlin Wall on delicate continental equilibria? These worries do exist, and will continue to exist in the foreseeable future. But there is no better way in which the whole of Europe could respond to the demolition of the Berlin Wall than by the bridging of the formidable moat that is the English Channel. If the opening of the Brandenburg Gate and the politico-institutional earthquake underway in countries like Hungary and Czechoslovakia risk moving the Community's centre of gravity to the east, the Channel Tunnel represents, then, the best way to correct this tendency, bringing London within a two-hour train ride from downtown Paris. This is in everybody's interests, but mostly in the interest of the British Isles, which otherwise risk becoming for geographic as well as political reasons, a provincial and folkloric archipelago off the coast of Europe.

The future of neo-conservatism

EDITOR'S
NOTE
May 8, 1990

For the winter of 1990 every observer had expected to see bread riots in Russia and Poland, a legacy of the structural inefficiency of communism. Street protests instead broke out at the end of March in Mrs. Thatcher's England, that is, in the country that in recent years has been associated with the opposite extreme of the political spectrum.

Surely, the outbreak of violence in the streets, the successive Conservative defeat in the local elections of early May, and the latest inflation figures (9.4 per cent, a measurement that shows how the English economy is the worst managed in the EEC) are worrisome signs for the British leader. But here it is a question of even more significant phenomena, in the sense that the Conservative leadership has become in the last decade a veritable ideological reference point for all supporters of liberalism in the European sense of the word, even outside of the British Isles. In spite of her personal pragmatism, Mrs. Thatcher's image has been marked by a strong ideological connotation, and her ideology has been finding converts not only in the United States and in Western Europe, but also in the ex-satellite countries and even in the Soviet Union.

Regardless of Great Britain's economic and diplomatic marginalisation, a consequence of many years of an outdated foreign policy, the English example remains nonetheless emblematic and of general interest. The obstinacy and continuity with which the liberal experiment was carried out has insured that the English case stands—for the European political experience of recent years—comparable in importance, though on a smaller scale, to the failure which brought down so-called "real socialism". And while communism has entered the final phase of its historic parabola, neo-conservatism had a decade of success and rising expectations. Some very serious limitations, however, have begun to appear.

In England as in the United States it has certainly stimulated the economic growth, but not enough to restore to the Anglo-Saxon countries the economic primacy they had lost in the first half of the 1970s. Furthermore, although it reduced the cost of the work force and the power of the unions, in the end a favourable impact was produced mostly in the service sector and not in the manufacturing one, where the new economic power-houses, in particular Germany and Japan, have over the past 15 years been challenging the US.

This is not to say that the neo-conservative revolution is finished, nor that the British Conservatives will necessarily be defeated in the next elections, and not even that Mrs. Thatcher's present difficulties will lead to the replacement of the "iron lady" (who might indeed have accumulated an excessive amount of hostility) with a new leader of the Conservative Party capable of adding a component of "enlightened", old-style, upper-class conservatism to Mrs. Thatcher's frank preference for a society that rewards the winners and encourages initiative and creativity. An alternative, because of many years of Labour—mostly verbal—extremism, internecine squabbles and political inconclusiveness, is still absent from the British political scene.

But this is not the case for the late-arriving imitators of Anglo-Saxon neo-conservatism of the 1980. From their point of view, a different meaning can instead be attributed to the British prime minister's difficulties and to her partial change of political course, which is already in its initial stage. There, alternatives on the left are sometimes credible and reliable, and even more so are the forces that occupy the center of the political spectrum, such as the Christian Democratic parties.

At the moment the place where the idea and very name of socialism are instead discredited in an apparently irreversible manner, and where the market and private sector myth enjoy their greatest popularity, is in the ex-

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satellite countries. And it is only logical that after so many years of foreign domination masquerading behind socialist slogans, public opinion is now pushed to the opposite extreme, to the idealisation of capitalism, and to a general disposition of mind that, for a while at least, promises well for conservative parties and politicians.

Accordingly, a possible inversion of the political geography of Europe could be sketched. In the foreseeable future the continent might thus be again divided into two camps with distinct ideological references, although not as bitterly opposed as in the past. Eastern Europe will probably search for a solution to the problems deriving from forty years of bureaucratic barbarity by way of formulae inspired by free-market ideologies. Western Europe might at the same time be led to rediscover the virtues of welfare capitalism. And in order to avoid destroying the conditions that in the last decade, have created so much wealth and growth, it is quite possible that the concept of the welfare state will be reconsidered in a new framework, the framework of the EEC, which implies an integration of the national economies that is in itself an extremely powerful stimulus for the economies of Europe, more and more intolerant of the limits and constraints imposed by national borders.

Fragments of reunification

EDITOR'S
NOTE
May 18, 1990

Less than two weeks before the summit of the Soviet and American heads of state, Secretary of State Baker's visit to Moscow has shown what a great deal of effort it costs to push forward US-Soviet relations and disarmament agreements after the chaotic season of change that has marked the last ten months. The collapse of the "Evil Empire" psychology, the advent of a feeling of shared interest between the two superpowers and the climate of détente have probably born all the fruits they could bear. What is left now are objectively difficult problems—arms cuts, the reorganisation of the two alliances, the opening up of the Soviet economy.

On all these fronts, complex equilibria that had been consolidated for forty years or so have to be rethought and replaced with new ones. Especially in Europe, the problem of arms reduction has proven to be so technically complicated as to delay the evident willingness of both sides to reach an agreement. The reorganisation of the two old-style military organisations into what could become a pan-European Collective Security System is made more difficult by the de facto disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. And the opening up of the Soviet economy, although in a very initial stage, has already created in Soviet society a mixture of public and private, of market and planning that might very soon prove explosive. The "dollarisation" of some fragments of the Soviet economy and the beginnings of a South American-style inflation of rouble prices have set in motion a social process that justifies the fears of a collapse in law and order and of imminent civil strife. On all these issues a pause of reflection is therefore inevitable. Actually, a slowing down of perestroika is already visible.

On no other question, however, have the difficulties and second thoughts of Soviet diplomacy become as evident as on the German question. In the very same days of the

Baker-Gorbachev meeting in Moscow, a rather worrisome signal came from East Germany, where a partial withdrawal of Soviet troops that seemed to be an acquired fact was suddenly put in doubt again—a further sign of the fact that on the German question Gorbachev has reached a limit. In spite of the concentration of power in his hands that one could infer from his recent appointment to the position of President of the USSR, he obviously will be forced to negotiate inch by inch any further concession. This has been quite clearly shown by the subtle distinction, put forward by Soviet diplomacy between “domestic” reunification of Germany and its “international” reunification. To the former, Moscow seems ready to bow, while the latter will have to be further negotiated. In reality, Moscow has understood that it is impossible to prevent the total dissolution of the GDR into the Federal Republic, and is thus trying to limit the damage, introducing a distinction aimed at saving as much as possible the privileges that accrue to the victorious powers of World War II in terms of international tutelage of Germany.

The difficulties and repeated prolongments of the Baker-Gorbachev meeting, with the ensuing postponements of the final press conference in Moscow, was in sharp contrast with the climate of euphoria that dominated on the same day in Bonn, where finally the treaty was being signed providing not only for the monetary unification of the two Germanys, but also for the total abandonment by the East Germans of any possible heritage of forty years of “socialism” and the full-fledged acceptance of the market system and private property. This contrast of the atmospheres prevailing in Bonn and in Moscow shows the increasing and dangerous gap between these two reunification processes: the reunification of what pertains to the form of society and to the everyday life of the Germans, and the reunification that will have to heal the wound that divides the heart of Europe passing through the heart of Germany.

And although the Germans might have reason to celebrate the progress of their "domestic" unification, the Europeans as a whole (thus including the Germans, but also the British and the French, i.e. the two European victors of World War II) have reason to worry because of the difficulties of the "international" reunification. Bonn obviously rejects this distinction between two aspects of its national reunification that are strongly related and in the end inseparable. But even if the German authorities emphasise their refusal of the idea that the two reunifications might be dealt with separately, an idea that risks delaying for an unforeseeable number of years the overcoming of the heritage of Germany's military defeat, they push as much as they can in order to implement in all its aspects whatever unity is immediately possible.

The Russians were thus confronted, on the very same day, with a move on a third front of German reunification, a front on which Bonn seems convinced that it has to act at maximum speed. While Baker was negotiating with Gorbachev and the two German foreign ministers were signing the monetary agreement, the process for the implementation of the Schengen Agreement took off again. It might be useful to recall, in respect to this agreement (which provides for total freedom of circulation between France, Germany and Benelux, and for strict border controls at the common outer frontier of this bloc of contiguous countries), that its completion had been delayed some months ago by the refusal of the Federal Republic to sign an agreement that would add new weight and significance to the dividing line between the two Germanys. But now, after the radical changes that have occurred in the GDR, the agreement has been reinterpreted in the sense that it will grant free entry in all these countries to East Germans as well.

Moscow cannot oppose such a move, which by a purely legal point of view, can be seen as a unilateral concession of the countries signing the Schengen Agreement to the advantage of the East German nationals. But it is evident

that the limit between "domestic" and "international" reunification is thus being severely blurred. With recognition of the right of free circulation in the "hard core" of the EEC, within a group of countries that form the vanguard of "two-tier EEC", an important fragment of the "international" reunification process escapes Soviet control and Moscow's possibility of delaying the process. And also in Bonn it is possible to draw from this case a general lesson—that unique opportunities of eroding that area of its national unification process which Moscow still tries to keep under its control are offered by the process of EEC integration, namely through the enlargement of Community competence to foreign relations and security matters.