

# THE OBSTACLES TO PARTNERSHIP WITH EUROPE

*by Dean Acheson*

I invite you to consider with me some of the obstacles which are in the way of that goal of American foreign policy which the President of the United States has called "partnership with Europe." First of all, however, I want to warn you against the words which I have just used. I think that we must put aside from this idea of partnership with Europe our conception of a human partnership—that is, some well-disposed and friendly people working toward mutual gain. That is not what we really are talking about here. What we are talking about is how 400 million people who are situated in non-communist Europe, and 200 million people who are situated on the North American continent can organize their worlds together so that they can counter the efforts of 200 million people who are situated in Soviet Russia, who are attempting to organize the world (not only *their* world, but *our* world) in ways which will be deeply disadvantageous to us.

What must we do if we are to be effective in organizing our part of this confrontation which is the inevitable confrontation of our time? I suggest to you that we have, first of all, to organize the wills of all these fifteen nations in this complex of western Europe and North America, so that they can act specifically and concretely—not that they shall have the same general ideals in common; not that they shall be inheritors of the same civilization; not that, broadly speaking, they wish to accomplish the same human goals,

but that they are capable of acting in concrete and specific situations together.

And the second great problem is that they must bring together their production and expand their production so that they are able to take care of three vital needs which require them to act in some kind of harmony. These are the needs of education. They are the needs of transportation. They are the needs of recreation. They are all needs which look toward giving the people of these democracies the fuller life toward which they are looking.

Then we must have the kind of country which is worth living in, both here and in Europe. We are moving quite fast to destroy this foolishly and unnecessarily, by allowing cities to decay and by allowing populations to overflow into the countryside like lava coming from an urban Vesuvius.

All these things demand a withdrawal of productive capacity for domestic needs. Then there are the great military demands of defense, which become more and more costly.

And finally, upon this Western European-North American nexus, there is the great need for export capital for all the developing parts of the world—not because there is some evangelical demand for this; not because we are trying to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth; not because we are engaged in "do-goodism"; but because we wish to organize the free part of the world in such a way that it is appealing for all people to join—not merely those who do well in it, but those who are developing. And they must be able to see in this free world area an oppor-

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tunity for development such as we saw in the early days of this country.

This means that capital should be made available to those parts of the world, those peoples, who are in a stage to receive it and are able to do two essential things. One is to preserve the necessary order so that work can be done, and the second is to work *in* that order. And if this can be done, these demands of the underdeveloped parts of the world for capital upon the more developed parts are legitimate demands. Therefore, there is this great need for the harmonization of economic and related financial policies in North America and Western Europe, so that we can produce for these purposes.

I want to talk about only two of the many difficulties which stand in the way of bringing about this harmonization of the political, economic, and other activities of these two great parts of the world. These matters, which are vitally important, require almost abstract analysis, because unless one understands the theory of these two matters, one gets simply bogged down in the operational side, by which I mean what you read in the newspapers: Is it possible to do this? Is it possible to do that? De Gaulle says this; Adenauer says something else. The important thing is to get the anatomy of these two difficulties and the way to meet them, and then we can deal with the flesh upon that anatomy.

### *Two obstacles*

The two obstacles that I am talking about are, first, the great difficulty of agreeing, between Western Europe and North America, upon a method—a grand plan—for the defense of Western Europe. This does not exist. The other obstacle is to agree upon why we want a defense at all. Why is it necessary to have a defense? Who is threatening what? What is it that we stand for that other people are against? What is the issue all about? Why do we want a complicated and dangerous system of defense unless there is something to defend? On these two vital matters, there is at the present time, I am sorry to say, no common understanding whatever in the Western world.

Let us go into defense problems. First of all, we must understand that any strategic plan must be militarily sound before it is worth adopting. You all understand perfectly well that defense plans also have political aspects, and the political aspects are quite as important as the military aspect.

What sort of an attack, by whom, can be defended by what sort of a plan? And who is likely to do this? How will it come about? And how do we organize our political life so that if we are met with this threat, we are ready to put into effect the strategic plan which we have devised?

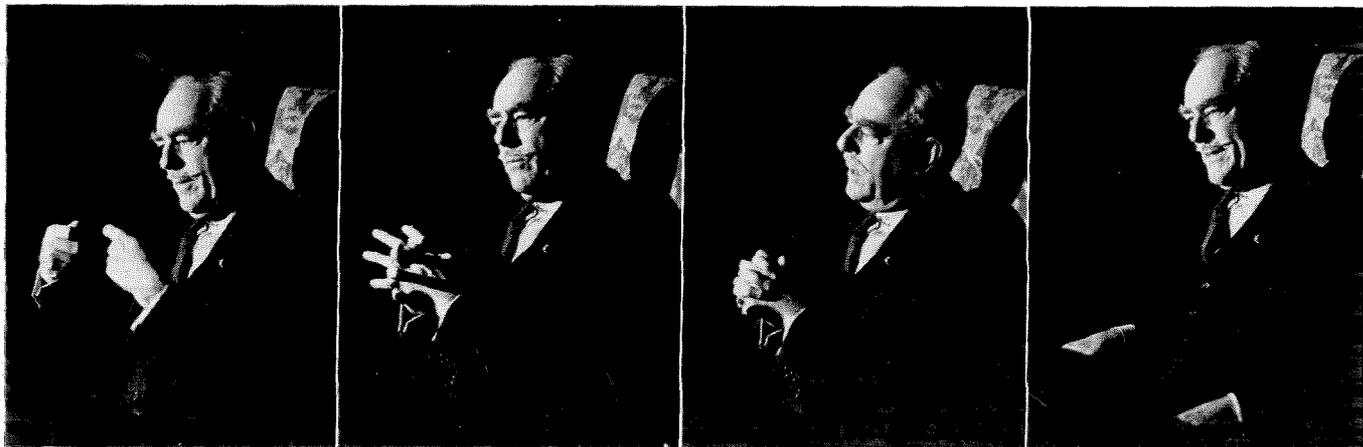
Let us go back a little while and see what plans we have had since the war, and what have been the strategic ideas of the NATO countries? First of all, I point out to you what I have said several times, that NATO has never put its mind on why it is doing what it is doing. It was faced in 1947-49 by the danger of an unprovoked, senseless movement of forces, the Russian troops in East Germany, who had no opposition and who might just start rolling westward and end up at Brest on the Atlantic coast. Therefore, we must devise a military plan. So we had a treaty which said "an attack on one will be regarded as an attack on all, and all will go to the help of one" — a very primitive sort of an idea, but a good enough one for that time. I think I can say that with proper criticism, since I wrote the words myself. But it still was a rather primitive idea.

### *A monopoly of nuclear weapons*

From 1947 to 1950, our idea was that it wasn't necessary to do very much, because we had all the nuclear weapons there were. We had what was called a "monopoly" of the nuclear weapons, and that was regarded as deterrent enough. Then it began to dawn on other people besides ourselves that all it took to make a monopoly was one weapon — but one weapon wasn't necessarily a very powerful defense. Therefore, from 1950-53, we tried to organize in Europe a conventional military force with a united command, over which General Eisenhower became the commander, which would interpose some sort of a check in front of these Russian divisions which might start to roll.

This we attempted to do, with only mediocre success. It was very difficult. These nations were prostrate. The Marshall Plan was just an operation to try to bring them back to some sort of a prosperous condition, and we had very little success with it — but some. We had enough to change the pre-existing situation so that grave trouble would come from a military force just moving forward.

In 1953 a new idea occurred. The new idea was: This is all very expensive; we can do this much more cheaply by what was called "massive retaliation." (By this time we had a much larger



*Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson at a press conference held during his Caltech visit this month.*

nuclear stockpile than we had before. Before it was entirely atomic; now it began to have some nuclear weapons, and it became fairly formidable.) And so the government said, while cutting down the military budget, saving from 5 to 8 billion dollars a year, we would adopt a new theory. And this is, that if the Soviet Union does anything, anywhere in the world, which is hostile to our interests, we will deal with them by massive nuclear retaliation.

The only trouble with this idea was that it came just at the time when the monopoly was broken. This is the way human ideas often do develop. Therefore, we were saying: We will employ a weapon which is not any longer ours alone. We are now exposed to a retaliation from those upon whom we are going to retaliate. And it became more and more clear to us that this was an unprofitable venture.

### *Two ideas we sold to the world*

Unhappily, we had sold to the rest of the world two ideas. One was that nuclear weapons were a status symbol. The great powers had them; if you didn't have them, you were a second-rate power. Secondly, if you had them, you could do anything. These were magical weapons; without all this business of soldiers going around and getting in everybody's way, and costing a lot of money, you could, by nuclear weapons, threaten people, and then they would stop doing these unattractive things which they planned to do.

Just as these ideas had come to be current, the Russians put up the Sputniks. Unfortunately, as they did this, we also got into trouble with our allies over Suez. So that in 1956 two things happened at once. Our allies said, "These Americans are capable of separate ideas, and this is very bad." And, as the Sputniks went up, they said,

"The Russians are ahead of the Americans. Very dangerous to fool around with nuclear weapons." So we were left in a puzzling defensive posture which sometimes has been called "stalemate," but which really meant that, as it developed, each one of these great nuclear powers could so damage the other that neither would think it worth while to go forward except on a matter of very vital importance.

### *Reviewing defense policies*

At this time also, as I said, we had made nuclear weapons a matter of status. Therefore, when we came to 1961, we had a review of defense policies in Washington, and the administration decided what seemed to me to have been clear for about the last ten years. At the beginning of the period between 1949 and 1961 the Russians had had a vast excess of conventional power. We had had nuclear power. In the meantime, the Russians had begun to in some way catch up with us on the nuclear side. We had done nothing on the conventional side. They could put pressure on Europe by their conventional forces. We could not resist that pressure in the same way. What we had to do was to say, "We will meet you with nuclear forces." But they could meet us with theirs — and therefore we were at a disadvantage.

Well, this sounds as though I were a boy who was playing with tin soldiers and didn't understand anything about the real forces of life, and hadn't read Chester Bowles, and many other things of this sort. This is not really so. I *have* read many of these things — not always with profit. But what occurs in international politics is what the Russians refer to quite wisely as the correlation of forces. If all the operating forces are forces which push in one direction, events are very likely to move in that direction. If, on

the other hand, you can in some way balance these forces, or change the direction, or the push, you may get a different political development.

So, as we began to review policy in Washington in 1961, we discovered that our allies were quite immovable about doing what seemed to us a wise thing to do. The wise thing to do was to *increase* the conventional forces in Europe — to take away from the Russians their overwhelming superiority in this method of pressure. Our allies were very much opposed to this for several reasons — reasons, I thought, which stemmed from pride, from fear, and from ignorance: pride, because, as I have said, nuclear weapons became a status symbol; from fear, because they had expressed the worry from time to time, as a result of this or that or the other congressional speech, that we would withdraw from Europe and leave them alone, and since they had no nuclear capacity at all, they were at the mercy of the Russians; and from ignorance, which we had induced by the excessive secrecy which we had thrown around the whole idea of nuclear weapons.

That ignorance led them to overestimate the capacity for deterrence of a small nuclear force. This you will see if you read General de Gaulle's press conference of January 14th. He believes that a small force, a minute force, can threaten the Soviet Union with what he calls "the death of millions and millions of people." This is quite absurd.

### *Secrecy — and understanding*

The reason that it is absurd is hidden from the Europeans because of *our* secrecy. They do not understand that these weapons cannot do what they think they can do — in the first place, because they won't be able to deliver the weapons; in the second place, because, if they begin to issue this threat, they themselves will probably be taken out before such weapons can ever be useful.

All these things the Europeans do not know, and this is indeed our fault. They think, therefore, that we are urging them to do something silly. "Why create this cannon fodder?" they say. "You want to send your power through the sky — ICBM's — while you want our soldiers to trudge through the mud."

But we are not asking anyone to do anything except what we are doing ourselves. There are 400,000 American soldiers in Europe. No other nation approaches that number, except the Germans, who are about 380,000 at the present time;

and the Turks, who are somewhat over that.

Therefore, the debate between our European allies and ourselves has developed over the mystique of a weapon and not over either strategy or politics. Let us look for a moment at this basic element of strategy. What is the basic strategy of Europe since the end of the war? The USSR, the United States, and the European countries are all united in this appraisal — which is that the *decision as to the future of Europe lies in Central Europe, and particularly in Germany*. Is there going to be a United Germany which will fall within a United Western Europe — *within an Atlantic Alliance* — or is Germany going to be drawn into the Soviet orbit to get reunited in that way?

This is perfectly clear analysis by everybody. You remember that Stalin said, "I would rather have 20 million Germans on my side than 60 million Germans against me." This was his analysis. Therefore, the issue has been: Will Germany be divided at the Helmstadt Line, with Soviet control coming up to that point in Europe, and will the rest of Europe try to be viable west of Helmstadt?

### *Two schools of thought*

This being a clear understanding of the central strategic issue in the world — the European world — following the war, there have been two schools of thought as to what we do. One of these schools has been popularized by George Kennan, and it now has the great authority of General de Gaulle behind it. That school is: Get the Americans out of Europe, and once they are out, Western Europe may be brought together in some kind of a balance against Eastern Europe, and Europe may find an equilibrium within itself.

The other school is the one on which NATO is founded, and the one with which I have been associated since 1947, which is that no equilibrium in free Europe is possible without the alliance of the United States. And therefore there must be a U. S.-Western European nexus before there can be a reuniting of Germany, a unification of Europe, and an Atlantic community.

Now these two ideas are diametrically opposed. They cannot be proved as you prove propositions in the physical sciences. All one can do is to amass the evidence and exercise a judgment. And it seems to me that the best way to do this is to assume that we have accomplished a result either way, and then make up our mind what is going to happen from that result.

What I would like to do here then is to ask you to assume that all the difficulties of persuading our allies to do these things have been overcome, that they have gotten over the difficulties about everybody wanting their own atomic independence. Then what we have arrived at is a European strategy, a European-American strategy and defense force, in which we have removed from the Soviet Union the overwhelming superiority on the Soviets' western front, so that they cannot look forward to putting the pressure of conventional arms on the West, and therefore giving us the election between giving in or returning the pressure with nuclear fire. We know that we have gotten out of that terrible dilemma, and we know that we have put them in the position where, if they wish to use force to achieve an object, the Russians themselves must face the use of nuclear force.

### *A changed Berlin*

Suppose we have done that, and suppose, therefore, that Berlin is no longer a dangerous outpost, weakly held by the Western powers, in the center of a Communist-controlled Eastern Germany, but an area in which the Russians would hesitate very much indeed to put conventional pressure, because they would be faced with equal conventional pressure on the other side. This isn't too difficult to achieve. One doesn't have to have 175 divisions to do this; probably 30 or 35 divisions, plus the same number of reserves, would make it quite impossible for the Russians to exercise conventional pressure in Central Europe.

Suppose we have also, in the meantime, brought together a strong economic combination between an integrated Western Europe and a closely allied Atlantic community, by which all our economies have been moving ahead vigorously against a somewhat stagnant Soviet economy. Suppose this Western economy exercises a tremendous drawing power on East Germany and on the European satellites of Soviet Russia; what new coalition of forces might come about?

I don't intend to write the scenario. I don't intend to say who does what at what particular time. But what I do say is that if that result is brought about, it seems to me inevitable that the Russian forces will retire from Europe, back into their own country, that there will be a reunification of Germany, that there will be a larger measure of national independence and identity in the Eastern satellite countries, that there will be a real equilibrium of power between East and

West which will then make it possible for the withdrawal of troops on both sides, and for some control of armaments which will really be sensible, and we will begin to have a period of real détente.

### *Assuring the other side*

Now, assume for a moment the other side. Suppose that the De Gaulle view of Europe is the one which prevails. Suppose, at the request of Europe, the United States forces withdraw. Suppose Europe is much more united than it is now. What then does one look forward to? One looks forward, I suppose, to the fact that the disorganized will of even a De Gaulle Europe must face the vast, organized, concentrated power of the Soviet Union. And there the coalition of forces must inevitably lead, in my judgment, to a series of compromises and agreements on the part of Western Europe, and more and more Russian direction and control of economic life in Western Europe — not a march across the country, not a communization of all of Western Europe, but more and more and more control of the economic life of the countries of Western Europe until their own separate affairs become unmanageable. Now this seems to me to be what we are looking forward to.

And it seems to me that what I am proposing, and what I have consistently proposed for the last decade, is a combination of political analysis, political policy, and military analysis and policy which bring all these forces together in the direction of the most hopeful organization of democratic national powers that I know of.

True, it is extremely difficult. Many people say: This is Realpolitik; this is Machiavelli; there is no idealism in this. I really don't understand what they mean by the word "idealism" in this phrase. A policy which carries out the greatest conceptions of freedom that the Western world has ever conceived of, and gives us what to me seems to be a permanent place on this earth, I should suppose was the height of idealism. But apparently that isn't the way many people construe the word. Idealism now seems to be interchangeable with evangelicism. If one can hit the sawdust trail, if one can believe that by a succession of "Hallelujahs" all will come well, then one does not need to use one's brains. One does not need to use one's courage. One simply sails down a line of concessions to what seems to me to be the inevitable disaster. With these unprejudiced words, I leave the issue to you.