

The past - Europe back then

9th of May - Europe day. The day when Robert Schuman delivered his visionary speech which is today known as Schuman declaration. Exactly 70 years ago the French foreign minister laid the foundation of European unity. What has been founded as European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, later then developed to become today's European Union.

However, this passage will not retell the history of the EU right now. I would like to focus on the day five years before the Schuman declaration was published - the 9th of May 1945. On this day, the cruel Second World War had come to an end. War crimes and the shocking murder system of the Holocaust marked whole generations. Back then, Europe was nothing more than a continent's name. The countries were divided, often there even were traditional enmities like between Germany and France that have a famous history of war. Decades of peace were rare and there might be nobody who understood the conflict better than Robert Schuman, who was at first German and later French citizen. He knew the hard times of war and he realised the danger of it all. The brilliance of his declaration laid in the braveness to build bridges between old enemies and in the trust that a united Europe, a Europe that is related by its values, by democracy and liberty, by solidarity and equality, would save long-term peace. This peace exists now for exactly 75 years. It is the reason why we need Europe.

The present - Europe right now

The year 2020 - Europe is hit by an unexpected crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic is causing severe damage: People live in quarantine, the economy is struggling and many of us have to suffer the loss of some beloved people.

The current situation is not easy. At this moment, a strong European Union would be needed, for example to coordinate help efforts. Disappointingly, the fact of it is that the EU and its members get mainly attention for fighting with each other. Of course, the EU is now creating aid parcels that shall distribute over 500 billion Euros but as someone that defines himself as European, I am deeply disappointed by the way European governments act with distrust towards each other. This attitude has often been characteristic for European politics over the last years. The anti-democratic developments in Hungary and Poland are only one example for that. Europe seems more and more to divide. The reason for that is the weakness of the current European Union. Important reforms to strengthen the EU were rejected over the last 20 years. Because of the fact that the European leadership hasn't got enough power, Europe loses itself in fighting. By that, solo efforts are increasing. Looking at the main issues of the 21th century it is very clear that only European solutions could make a difference. That is the reason why Europe needs to be united.

The future - Europe some day

While talking about the future of Europe, people are often discussing which policies the EU could handle and what needs to stay in the hands of national governments. To get clarity there, we need to understand the major challenges for the next decades: climate change, the new economic situation regarding China, the new defense situation with less engagement of the US and the complex situation of global politics. So the four main subjects that **European politics should focus on are environment, economy, defense and foreign policy**. For those four aspects it will be useful to create European ministries that should have a real influence on the issues that shape our future.

Nevertheless, before we are getting to the point of building European ministries, the European Union has to become more powerful than today. Two institutional reforms are essential.

At first, the **European Council** must become more capable of action. At the moment it is paralyzed by the situation of every member state being able to veto certain decisions. A voting system, in which a majority of $\frac{3}{4}$ is needed, will be reasonable.

Secondly, the **European Parliament** has to become the most important institution of the EU. It should be able to nominate own candidates for the position of President of the European Commission, as well as get the right of legislative initiative. As a consequence, the European Elections will become more important and the system of the EU would be more citizen-friendly.

Uniting the European nations was the right act in 1950. Robert Schuman created a unique period of peace. Although Europe has some issues today, I believe that strengthen the EU will be important. There are some major challenges facing us and I am certain that having the strongest European Union of all time is the only way how to deal with them.

by Melvin Geretzky

Todtnau (Germany) the 9th of May 2020

melvin.geretzky@gmx.de