

The finality proposed by Robert Schuman on May 9, 1950 is still unachieved, although desperately valid for the future. Therefore, is there any "new statement" to write?

We all remember that Schuman presented his proposal as a first step toward a European federation. But not only has this point been ignored, it is, to add insult to injury, more and more contested nowadays: many a member of the European union wants to remain "sovereign". Or, even worse, to leave.

The pivotal argument of Schuman was that to create a community with a supranational government - as was the case for his brainchild the Steel and Coal Community - between former European archenemies was the surest path to peace. However, at that time there was no need to bring peace among the exhausted Europeans. After two world wars, Europe which had dominated the world during the XIXth century, fell to the rank of a semi-colonial area caught between the two rival winners, the United States of America on the one hand, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the other hand. The cold war which resulted from this situation prevented per se any potential conflict between the European nations.

Whereas Europeans were shy - and still are - about creating a strong federal entity, powerful nations-states the size of a continent emerged, and are acting on the world chessboard according to machiavellian rules or Realpolitik of old. In front of them, each individual European nation-state is a dwarf the supposed "grandeur" of which is nothing but a pipe dream.

In that sense Schuman was a visionary: if the European nations keep on behaving like sleepwalkers as they did before World War I, they are bound for big troubles. How then to avoid a surefire catastrophe?

Why are Europeans so reluctant to the rational idea of a federal Europe advocated by the Ventotene Manifesto during World war II? A possible answer is that most of them do not know about the history of Europe as a whole. This because during the XIXth century these nations became nations by inventing national narratives which still shapes their minds. And this, even though these mythical stories are to a large extent responsible for the abject barbaric butchery of the two World wars.

Hence it is high time is to create and promote a narrative of Europe to which, in addition to the "national story", all of the Europeans would adhere and thus desire the aim of a federal Europe, i.e. a Europe as a sovereign state with a supranational government, democratically elected and democratically controlled, in charge of issues of continental magnitude, with external policy and defense ranking first. Such a narrative would be the necessary cement which for the time being is cruelly missing. There is precedent. Switzerland in 1848 after a war between its components decided to transform her confederal union into a federal one. A narrative was created for that purpose to become the mental backbone of the country. A very successful move indeed! And a convincing source of inspiration!

So that an updated Schuman statement would aim at promoting to the attention of the public opinion both the concept of a federal European union - promotion which since 1950 has not been done with the required intensity - , together with shaping and diffusing in particular via schools and universities a narrative of Europe as a whole encompassing the national stories. And this would contain the following strong message:

Being the forefront of the humane adventure, Europe is capable of the best as well as of the worse. Given that it has abundantly been wallowing in the worse, the only "grandeur" now is to bring forth the best. And this for the benefit rest of the world as well as for its own benefit. We urgently need to create a strong United federal Europe as a "soft power", i.e. a model state of peace, prosperity and ethics, and a positive source of inspiration for the rest of the world.

As a first step, this is could be achieved within some countries of the Eurozone, for example the six founding nations, which would merge into a United federal European state which could then gradually welcome other members of the E.U provided they fulfill strict specific requirements. This move implies that France accepts to mutualize her seat at the Council of the United Nations Organization as well as its nuclear armament.

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