

'The Germany of tomorrow' from Le Figaro (5 December 1944)

Caption: On 5 December 1944, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro analyses the political, economic and military future of defeated Germany.

Source: Le Figaro. dir. de publ. Brisson, Pierre. 05.12.1944, n° 92; 118e année. Paris: Le Figaro. "L'Allemagne de demain", auteur:D'Ormesson, Wladimir , p. 1.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_germany_of_tomorrow_from_le_figaro_5_december_1944-en-e297eb2c-3faf-492d-8a5f-c3ed1bb9531e.html



Last updated: 05/07/2016

The Germany of tomorrow

It is still too early to speak with any accuracy of the changes likely to take place in Germany. What is certain, however, is that the collapse of the military power of the Third Reich will result in profound upheavals. The precise situations that arise must be used as effectively as possible to increase the security of Europe.

At all events, and for reasons that I have set out in previous articles, the arrangements made by the Allies with regard to Germany should be motivated by the following principles:

1. It is Prussia that is chiefly to blame for the troubles that have tortured Europe and the world. It must not only be subjected to very strict supervision but also reduced to its most basic form. The territorial acquisitions made during the last two centuries must be confiscated. This does not necessarily mean — except in the East, where Poland is owed some compensation — that these territories should pass into foreign hands. For the most part, they should remain German, but not under the iron fist of Prussia. Their administration might, in some circumstances, come under international law;
2. The centre of gravity of the Germanic world should cease to be Berlin;
3. Every effort must be made to remedy the basic error that was made after the last war when the Third Reich became the only organised great power in Central Europe. A federal system should be created around Vienna, one that is flexible enough to guarantee to each country, each racial group participating therein, their historic rights; specific enough — especially from an economic viewpoint — to represent an order and a real force. This implies that the problem of Germany will not be solved unless a solution is found for Central Europe and the Danube that will provide the necessary guarantees, because these two problems are related. This was not fully understood in 1919.

Undoubtedly, following its defeat, Germany will be plunged into a revolutionary state. Communists, Socialists and Catholics will be the most powerful forces. But beware! Revolution is a word that has no roots east of the Rhine. ‘Revolution is not an alternative,’ a very educated German told me once. This is absolutely true. The ‘revolution’ of 1918 was just a sharp attack of nerves. There may well soon be chaos in Germany, but there will be no revolution. It is not the same thing. However, the state of chaos will produce an instinctive desire for order. A republic or republics may reappear. But, dare I admit it, at the risk of irritating many of my readers, I see no future for a republic in Germany. The German man in the street has no notion of republicanism as we understand it. He has moved from a monarchical system, representing a hierarchical order as essential to him as equality is to us, to a dictatorial system that epitomises the ultimate expression of this hierarchy. Germany passed from the Weimar Republic to Hitler, with the enthusiastic and almost unanimous support of its people, because Nazism was closer to its ideal than parliamentary democracy. The return of certain dynasties (like the Wittelsbach family, in Baden) is preferable to further experiments in republicanism that would just reinforce the unity of the German Reich. The only way of weakening this unity is to rely on the dynastic solution, otherwise there will be just talk and nothing tangible will result. In addition, it is perhaps better that these dynastic families should be associated with the troubles that the disillusioned Germans are going to have to suffer; otherwise they may become a dangerous focal point in the future. How can one expect the Germans to want a republican regime when it is being presented to them as the ultimate punishment? In order to make such a system more attractive, must we compromise our safety?

That said, whatever shape Germany takes, even if the Germanic world ceased to appear threatening, we must not be under any illusion! The Germans remain a large, dynamic population, full of strengths and weaknesses, the worst of which is that their strengths reinforce their weaknesses. They have many resources; they still have an exceptional work ethic and inventive capability. Their dynamism, their pride, their moods and their dreams will remain a powerful force. They will always be a danger. Even separated, they are united.

Of course they should be disarmed, but we have to realise what that implies. All factories must be under

strict supervision 'for many years'. It was from the Ruhr, Silesia and the Saar that the Third Reich obtained its resources to fight a war. Consequently, the Ruhr and Silesia should be subject to arrangements. As for the Saar, I would hope that it would form part of the compensation package that we are due. Drastic measures must also be taken in the field of aviation. Germany must not be allowed — at least not for a very long time — to manufacture aircraft or have any civil aviation industry. This is the prime area in which daring international solutions must be envisaged for the future.

However, let me say it again, even if we secure the same promises and guarantees in the military, industrial, chemical and aviation fields as in territorial and political matters, even if Germany appears unable to harm anyone, none of this would be of any value if the English-speaking nations, the French and the Russians slackened the bonds which unite them. Security is primarily dependent on this four-power alliance.

Vladimir d'Ormesson