

'We shall either make Europe or make war' from L'Aveyron Libre (10 January 1948)


Caption: On 10 January 1948, in the French weekly publication L'Aveyron Libre, mouthpiece of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO), Paul Ramadier, former French Prime Minister, launches an appeal for pacifism and for the unity of the countries of Europe.

Source: L'Aveyron libre. 10.01.1948. Rodez. "Faisons l'Europe ou faisons la guerre", auteur:Ramadier, Paul , p. 1-2.

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We shall either make Europe or make war

by Paul Ramadier

We can always wage war when we want to; but we can also decide not to unleash it when we do not want to. War is never totally inevitable. Inevitability is only an excuse, like the old divinity or *Lebensraum*, to which we can resort when it suits us.

The fact is that no one in the Western world wants war, nor is it in their interest. The most recent war has left behind too many ruins — most of which can still be seen — for us to imagine that anything could be gained from it at all. However, there are some nations — even the largest — who are afraid that others want war; they speculate anxiously until they start hallucinating. When they can finally sense that war is imminent, with its inevitable devastation, they begin to wonder if they would not be better off starting it immediately; they calculate their current superiority and their potential future weaknesses. Then temptation grows, invading the national spirit, inflaming it and throwing it into turmoil. And so war breaks out ...

This is what will happen if nations do not try to get along. But why should they not get along? The distance between Moscow and New York is great, but to travel that distance is to travel through an old world that has been inhabited for several thousand years and is the cradle of our civilisation — not the civilisation of just one nation or even of several nations, but of all the nations of Europe and America. This Europe, mother of human philosophy, has been devastated, torn apart by two world wars, and has lost its material power, whilst the prestige of the great victorious nations — the United States and the Soviet Union — has grown.

It is the confrontation between these two superpowers that has conjured up this notion of rivalry, conflict and war. Their strengths are different: one is a major manufacturing country, the other has a growing population and vast and untapped natural resources. They have taken the inclinations of the European soul to two extremes: one tends towards liberty, the other towards a mass form of Socialism. In this conflicting situation, they find grounds for mistrust, and mistrust ultimately breeds hostility.

However, we Europeans from Europe lie halfway between the two extremes: liberty was born on our soil, as was democracy. Our capital cities fight for the glory of possessing the mother of parliaments. From an early age, we learnt to respect the individual and the sovereignty of reason. We also know that the strength of a nation and of its social constitution is dependent on the initiative, the robust spirit and the sense of citizenship of its people.

The experience of long periods of hardship has also taught the people of Europe that capitalism destroys as many human lives as it creates matter and that, through its deliberately exaggerated use of liberty, it eliminates any real chance of liberty. We Europeans have now been seeking Socialism for a century and a half. It belongs to our intellectual heritage. It now belongs to it as a sort of inherited asset, which no one can disown without rejecting the heritage itself and to which European societies are gradually becoming accustomed. A flexible, diverse, progressive, immensely balanced form of Socialism is being established year after year in this ancient land that has been enriched by so many experiences.

Our moral heritage is intact; it expands and grows every day. Only our material strength has been weakened. But it is being regained; it will be regained quickly if we are prepared to work and to unite. It is certain that, in the modern world, which is shared and dominated by the masses, old Europe's delicate structure, with its subtleties and its specific characteristics, appears to be too fragile and exudes a sense of weakness. We shall not regain our moral influence if we do not coordinate the efforts of all our members. Europe must unite if it is to be glorious.

It will then act as a centre of attraction, the necessary synthesis of the American thesis and the Soviet antithesis. By combining both of these, Europe will, in turn, unite them, and war in the Western world will no longer be possible.

However, if it admits defeat, in the confusion and isolation experienced on all sides, opposing influences

will take hold throughout Europe in its weakest and most vulnerable areas. It will soon become — if it is not one already — a proving ground, a training ground — tomorrow, a battleground.

Friends of all the ancient lands of the old world, let us unite, and there will be no war.

Our fate has already been decided: Europe will unite or perish.