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Budapest, 28 January 2020

A certain idea of Europe

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Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi introduced his book *Panuropa* with the following formula: “Every great historical event began as a utopia and ended as a reality”.

Then he continued his preface: “Many men have dreamed of a united Europe, but few have decided to create it. There is no point in wishing for it, it must be made an object of will.”

The only force that can make Pan-Europe a reality is the will of the Europeans.

But the only force that can stop it is also the will of the Europeans.

Thus, a part of the world's destiny is in the hands of every European.

Twenty-three years after this call, the union of Europeans began its first steps.

In Sopron, thirty-eight years later, at the Pan-European Picnic, the separation between Europeans came to an end. Then, countries of Central and Eastern Europe, after regaining their national borders, could join the European Union.

All European countries that wish to join are welcome to do so, while respecting the right of peoples to self-determination.

With his realistic vision, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi considered that the union of Europeans would begin with the economy in a large regulated common market open to free competition.

This first step was accomplished with the gradual implementation of common policies through the free movement of people, goods and capital.

With the adoption of fundamental rights in the accession treaties, agriculture and fisheries, structural and regional policies, social harmonisation and development aid were the main areas of Community intervention.

The euro, which has become the single currency of 19 countries, should be adopted by all other members of the Union.

But the task of making the pan-European “utopia” a reality remains considerable. Only the “will of the Europeans” will make it possible to accomplish it.

Our first challenge is to exist by ourselves and for ourselves.

We want a powerful Europe, ensuring its independence, guaranteeing our freedoms, our solidarity and, above all, the durability of our civilisation.

The European Union will have to exercise sovereignty, complementary to national sovereignties, to deal with certain essential missions.

Digital technology, on which we are dependent and which has imposed itself in all areas, is one of our major challenges, along with communication technologies, semi-conductors, artificial intelligence, quantum mechanics and everything that promotes research and innovation. The control of air and sea space is also one of the objectives for our independence.

Europe must not remain under the control and constraint of external multinational companies, which know everything about us, both public and private, thanks to the tools and means they possess.

At a time when the common agricultural policy is being abandoned, we must instead ensure our food sovereignty. To feed itself, Europe can be self-sufficient thanks to its age-old know-how, to land and climates favourable to the diversity of production. In addition, we have an efficient agri-food industry.

The health crisis is also a challenge to which we must provide a sustainable response. We have been suffering from it for more than two years.

It has revealed the insufficient harmonisation of health policies in Europe. Improvisation, lack of masks, testing, hospital capacity and coordinated decisions in dealing with the Chinese pandemic was, and still is, the situation in the European Union.

Nevertheless, it managed to produce and distribute the necessary vaccines to the whole population. We must therefore add health policy to our European objectives.

In order to reduce CO2 emissions, to be exemplary in climate protection, energy transition and environmental protection, which is not the least of its challenges, the European Union must, in particular, succeed in imposing a tariff barrier at its external borders. Otherwise, as is still the case in the areas of taxation and social policy, it would continue to encourage dumping and unfair competition from its trading partners through its imports.

Unfortunately, the European Union has not sufficiently developed a common energy policy. Energy savings, combined with considerable investments in solar photovoltaic and wind power, which are dependent on weather conditions and the absence of storage possibilities, will not be enough to compensate for the planned disappearance of fossil fuels.

Moreover, gas supplies, together with the Nord Stream II pipeline, are increasing the dependence of several European countries on Russia.

Only the contribution of carbon-free nuclear energy can meet the climate requirements within the timeframe we have set ourselves. The European countries that have given up on this have made a mistake, the geopolitical consequences of which are likely to be felt.

Immigration is another challenge of permanent topicality that the European Union must deal with in mutual respect and serenity, together with the governments of the Member States and the countries of origin of immigrants. This issue is not only about jobs to be filled, but also about the human being, the family, the future of our European civilisation and the respect of national identities.

In this sensitive area, the European Union must avoid insurmountable disagreements between Europeans, an escalation of mistrust and rivalries.

The Schengen agreements, which are inadequate and outdated, must be completely revised and must take into account national policies.

In Yalta in February 1945, in Malta in December 1989, recently again in January 2022, in Geneva and so many other places where peace and the future of continental Europe were decided, the "will of Europeans" was not expressed.

NATO, which would like to be the shield of the old continent, but to which four countries of the European Union do not belong, has always spoken like a ventriloquist for Washington.

The European Union exists, but it does not ensure its own security and defence. The protection of its fundamental interests and its borders has been delegated to the political and military choices of NATO, i.e. to the Americans.

This is why Europe has been absent from the conferences and decisive meetings that involve it.

It is true that the Cold War, which opposed the European countries of the Atlantic Alliance to those of the Warsaw Pact, could explain this until the collapse of the USSR.

But since its disappearance and the enlargement of the European Union to include Central and Eastern Europe, how can this lack of "European will" be justified?

Europe's strategic independence must become a priority in order to deal with possible conflicts using conventional weapons, but also space, cyber security, new technological weapons and even the nuclear threat.

Once again, we are in a fierce competition of rival powers where the political, economic and military competition of the United States with China will dominate the world stage. For Washington, its main stake is no longer in the North Atlantic and Europe, but in the South Pacific and the South China Sea.

For its part, Russia, humiliated by the failure of the USSR, invested the proceeds of its mineral wealth in the modernisation of its army.

It was a historic mistake for the European Union not to have taken advantage of the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact to conceive a purely European defence organisation. This could have dissuaded Russia's autocratic president, a Stalinist nostalgic, from invading territories neighbouring his vast country.

After Georgia, which was amputated of two regions by the Russian army, it was the Crimea, then the Donbass, that it occupied militarily.

On its western borders, Russia is pursuing its bellicose tendencies.

Putin, a vengeful nationalist, would like to reclaim the territories of the former USSR. And the Baltic States also have good reason to be wary of him.

Faced with this threat, European geopolitics is non-existent.

Economic and financial retaliation and verbal warnings from Washington and Brussels do not constitute the balance of power that has become indispensable.

This is not the fantasy of a Western warmonger, but a dangerous and painful reality, from which the peoples of Georgia, Crimea, Donbass and Belarus continue to suffer.

What purpose would be served by the tens of thousands of soldiers, tanks and missiles that Russia has amassed there, if not to try to put pressure on the Americans and their European allies to abandon their support for Ukrainian democracy and the Belarusian opposition?

Hasn't Putin himself considered the possibility of military intervention? The European Union's recklessness and the weakness of its leaders' reactions should not resemble the history of the unfortunate Munich Agreement of 1938, which sacrificed free and democratic Czechoslovakia to the conquering ambitions of its powerful neighbour.

A policy of abandonment at the centre of Europe would be a tragedy, from which the union, still under construction, would have difficulty recovering.

In an accelerated competition of world powers, the current European institutions are not in a position to face up to these challenges which condition the future of Europeans and their civilisation. Despite successive adjustments, they have remained based on the same principles of distribution of powers, as in the Treaty of Rome.

Under the high political authority of the European Council, the impetus of the six-monthly Council of Ministers, co-legislator with the Parliament, the Commission, guardian of the treaties, has the initiative for legislation and the responsibility for its execution.

The complex institutional organisation of Europe, in constant search of consensus or unanimity with its twenty-seven member states and subject to multiple contradictory influences, cannot take a quick decision when internal or external circumstances require it.

In some areas, these institutions have even granted themselves excessive powers which federal states, such as the United States or even Germany, have decentralised. After a long experience of their operation, which has enabled them to advance the Union, it is now necessary to make a critical analysis of them in order to open the way to their refoundation.

Therefore, proposals for new institutions should be debated through democratic consultation in the European Union. They could be submitted to a constituent assembly, which would draw up a draft that would have to be adopted by referendum in all member states.

Subsidiarity should be established in a new distribution of competences, between what is European and what should remain or return to national sovereignty.

With a qualified majority, more representative of the demographics of the member states, the European Council should be able to take quick decisions when circumstances and the collective interest of the union require it.

While continuing to ensure the proper functioning of the treaties, the Commission, which already has these powers, would be mainly responsible for the proper administration of the Union.

Finally, to speed up the transposition of European legislation in the member states, the national parliaments would appoint a permanent delegation to the European Parliament.

To guarantee Europe and its civilisation a future of peace, in solidarity and diversity of our national identities, in fidelity with our cultural and spiritual roots, such must be, more than ever, the will of Europeans.