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DE GAULLE'S DRANG NACH OSTEN

As a French journalist wrote earlier this week, "the wind is blowing very hard on Paris at this moment." France's Foreign Minister M. Couve de Murville, a virtuoso in his element, is having -- or has had -- talks this week with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Koca Popovic, Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Vaclav David and Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivan Batshev. Rumanian Vice-Premier Alexandru Birladeanu has already conferred this week with French Scientific Research Minister Gaston Palewski, and Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki may visit Paris on his return from the forthcoming UN General Assembly meeting.

Clearly this is an East European week in Paris. It marks what could perhaps be called the end of the first phase of de Gaulle's attempt to erase the "East" in East Europe, an attempt that showed its first concrete results last July during the Paris visit of Rumanian premier Ion Gheorghe Maurer.

There is nothing new or exciting in these French moves toward the East, or at least there should not be. De Gaulle's policy toward Eastern Europe is no enigma and any French attempt to improve relations with the Communist regimes of the East is but the logical outcome of clearly stated, oft-repeated Gaullist policy.

In his first press conference as leader of the fifth Republic, de Gaulle made the first reference to a Europe stretching from the "Atlantic to the Urals." He returned to the theme of East Europe in his second press conference, November 10, 1959. Here de Gaulle stated his faith in East Europe, his belief that the seeds of renaissance were present:

"...Doubtless this same regime (the Communist regime) which Russia has made use of in order to govern by force, through fraudulent intermediaries, the territory of its own neighbors in Europe -- doubtless it recognizes that, while it may be ruling over Poland, Czechoslovakia,

Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, Prussia and Saxony, it has not won the people over, and that there is no doubt that if the populations of these countries could express themselves freely, they would reject this regime by a tremendous majority."

End to Ideology

It is no secret that ideology means nothing to the General. In the above excerpt he has made a distinction between ideology imposed by force majeure and the true desires of the Eastern populations. He has affirmed that they are a part of Europe and that they must belong to the Europe of the future. For if Europe can be normalized, if, as de Gaulle seems to imply, the East and West of Europe could be brought together -- even under a grouping we today would refer to as "neutralized" -- then the cause of peace would be advanced and the future of man immeasurably expanded. For instance, de Gaulle believes that one of the causes of present East-West tension is that the Soviet Union wishes to distract attention from its own difficulties:

"...Despite the coercions, isolation and acts of force in which the Communist system encloses the countries which are under its yoke, and despite certain collective successes which it has achieved by drawing upon the substance of its subjects, actually its gaps, its shortages, its internal failure, and above that its character of inhuman oppression, are felt more and more by the elites and the masses, whom it is more and more difficult to deceive and to subjugate." (Fifth press conference, Sept. 5, 1961)

What must be done is clear, but how is it to be done? It is either a tribute to de Gaulle's vision or a monument to his egoism that he believes the mantle of rapprochement falls naturally upon France. Through aid and trade, through a trickle of contacts which eventually form a flood, France can fill the gap between East and West. As the President said in a radio and television address on October 2, 1961 "undoubtedly she (France) could also facilitate the emergence of a Europe balanced between the Atlantic and the Urals, provided that totalitarian imperialism ceases to manifest its ambition there." This does not mean that de Gaulle is prepared to wait until communism vanishes from the face of the earth. He is a self-proclaimed realist; whether a regime calls itself Communist or popular means nothing to him. It is how it acts to its people and how it behaves in the European context that is important.

What de Gaulle is saying to East Europe is this: if you want independence, if you want to rejoin the mainstream of your history, culture and tradition, reach out to France. A united Europe, in de Gaulle's view, is not the Monnet conception of a de-nationalized United States of Europe, but a confederation of all European states from Portugal to Poland. As he said in his fifth press conference, "France believes

that the future of modern civilization can lie only in the understanding, then the cooperation and, finally, the osmosis between the countries that created civilization and continue to create it, and which have spread it throughout the world and continue to spread it and, above all, the osmosis of all the European peoples."

There is one facet to de Gaulle that cannot be repeated too often: he means precisely what he says. And so again, on May 15, 1962, at his sixth press conference, de Gaulle repeated that France's policy is "to contribute to the construction of Europe in the fields of politics, of defense and of economy, so that expansion and action of this ensemble may aid French prosperity and security and, at the same time, re-establish the possibility of a European balance vis-a-vis the Eastern countries."

What part does the Common Market of today play in this policy? De Gaulle outlined his vision in the sixth press conference:

"If a structure, a firm, prosperous and attractive organization, can be created in Western Europe -- then there reappear the possibilities of a European balance with the Eastern States and the prospect of a truly European cooperation, particularly if, at the same time, the totalitarian regime ceased to poison the spring."

This is what de Gaulle means; the postwar era has already ended in the West and now it is time for it to end in the East. "France, in effect, has for a long time believed that the day might come when a real detente, and even a sincere entente, will enable the relations between East and West in Europe to be completely changed, and she intends, if this day comes....to make constructive proposals with regard to the peace, balance and destiny of Europe." That day may not have yet come, but de Gaulle is opening doors with his agreements in the East, doors which France can push wide when the time does come. "We must," said the President in his December 31, 1963 message to his nation, "envisage the day when, perhaps in Warsaw, in Prague, in Pankow, in Budapest, in Bucharest, in Sofia, in Belgrade, in Tirana, in Moscow, the Communist totalitarian regime, which still succeeds in confining peoples, will gradually come to an evolution compatible with our own transformation. Then there would be open to Europe as a whole prospects in keeping with its resources and its capacities."

might say, the same Europe. France's new voice, its nuclear capacity, its burgeoning economy, are being used by de Gaulle to dissolve this cement.

Even before the Maurer visit there was a noticeable quickening of French-East European exchanges. The most dramatic -- and here it must be added that French diplomacy has tended to make all these exchanges seem very undramatic -- was the French decision on December 16, 1963, to raise its diplomatic representation in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria to ambassadorial rank. Poland and Czechoslovakia already had ambassadorial relations with France.

On balance it would seem that French moves toward the East began to pick up around 1960. Bulgaria signed a three-year trade accord with France in 1963 (a renewal of the 1960 accord) which created a mixed trade commission required to convene once a year. In the last two years, two French parliamentary missions have visited Bulgaria; last September Michel Maurice-Bokanowski, French Minister of Industry, opened the French section of the Plovdiv Fair and conferred with Foreign Trade Minister Bondinov.

Trade exchanges with Hungary were renewed in 1960; that same year a delegation of French industrialists visited Budapest. A three-year trade agreement was signed in 1963. Poland ranks second only to the Soviet Union among East European buyers of French goods. In 1962 it signed with France a cultural agreement in 1962 which provides 200 French one-year scholarships for Polish students and over 180 other short-term grants. A commercial treaty was signed in February 1964 which, it is believed, will result in large-scale French exports to Poland of wheat, barley and corn from the '65, '66 and '67 harvests. Under an agreement signed in 1962, Poland has already agreed to buy 200,000 to 600,000 tons of grain from the 1964 harvest.

The most important event in postwar French-Czechoslovak relations is the visit this week of Foreign Minister David, for he is the first Czechoslovak Minister to visit Paris officially since 1948. French-Czechoslovak trade to date is minimal; France is only the fifth largest Western trading partner of Prague. A two-year trade agreement was signed in January 1964 which provides for a 10 per cent increase -- presumably for each year of the accord -- of trade between the two countries.

The last two years have witnessed a marked acceleration in French-Rumanian exchanges. In 1963 Trade Minister Levente, Foreign Minister Monescu and Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Anghel visited Paris. In 1964 more Rumanians arrived, representing the metallurgical industry, the machine construction industry and the postal services. Over the past five years trade has increased almost 75 percent, from a total of \$31 million in 1958 to about \$54 million in 1963. French firms are supplying industrial equipment in large quantities: two complete sugar refineries, two petroleum refineries, a radio television factory and various other installations.

have already been delivered. The greatest undertaking to date in a French investment of \$32 million in the Rumanian steel complex at Galati.

As the events taking place in Paris this week demonstrate, Maurer's July visit to Paris and the subsequent Franco-Rumanian accords could not be described as the climax of French-East European exchanges.

On September 7 a French parliamentary financial commission delegation arrived in Warsaw at the invitation of the Sejm planning commission. France and Czechoslovakia, September 26, signed a cultural-scientific-technical protocol which provides for the exchange of university professors, scientific workers, sport and cultural groups and cooperation in the field of radio and television. Also in September, a ten-man delegation of Rumanian deputies visited France for 11 days and conferred with French parliamentarians and visited industrial and agricultural installations, including a nuclear power center. A nine-man Rumanian delegation, headed by Mihail Florescu, Minister of Petroleum and Chemical Industries, visited Paris during the first week of October. That same week, the state-run French radio began a series of weekly, 15-minute broadcasts on East European literature.

It was announced October 13 that a \$5000 grant provided by the Ford Foundation would help finance a French-Polish professor and student exchange program that had been in existence since 1958. On October 28, Hungary's Minister of Transport and Communications, Dr. Csanadi, arrived in Paris as a guest of the French Communication Minister, M. Marette. The same day it was announced that France and Albania had agreed to raise their legations to embassy rank.

Even the Soviet Union has been involved in this busy autumn of French diplomacy. Pravda, October 27, called for "business-like" cooperation with France. Two days later the French Finance Ministry announced that the Soviet Union and France would sign a new five-year trade treaty on October 30 which provided for Soviet purchases worth around \$140 million a year for the five years beginning in 1966.

It is impossible to read de Gaulle without sensing his belief in the essential unity of the West -- and West includes the U.S., even for de Gaulle. It is a unity of tradition and culture, a unity of religious and political liberalism. De Gaulle envisions for Europe -- all Europe -- and the U.S. a future which may be far away, which may be difficult to attain, but which never the less constitutes a goal shared by all. The contacts taking place in Paris this week are but a first step. Others will follow, including, perhaps, a French mission led by the General to the East next year. Western capitals may occasionally blanch at French means, there may be a greater strain put on Western unity, but basic unity should remain if for no other reason than that the goal is agreed upon.

De Gaulle's last words on the subject, delivered at Strasbourg on November 22, repeated the attitude toward East Europe he expressed in that first press conference (as President) in early 1959:

"...For the future, given the perspectives of an interior and exterior evolution in the totalitarian bloc of the East under the elementary pressure of men who aspire to regain their dignity and peoples who intend to take back their national rights ... (one may)...envision the rapprochement of Europe, together, balanced, settling its problems and preparing its vast resources for progress and for peace."
