

The Franco-German cooperation treaty has a hopeful legacy

by Jacques Cheminade

The commentary below was translated from the French newspaper Nouvelle Solidarité.

On Jan. 22, 1963, Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer signed the treaty of cooperation between France and the Federal Republic of Germany, the Elysée Treaty. Recently, 30 years later, François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl celebrated its anniversary in Bonn. The tragedy is that nothing remains of the original spark or impulse to live in friendship, nothing more than a historical reference. Now, more than ever, real circumstances demand that the Franco-German alliance have a design, a mission, not only for its own sake, but for Europe and for world peace. It is necessary to return this design and this mission on the 30th anniversary to our policies, and that is what we are struggling for.

First, let's take a look at the circumstances of the Elysée Treaty, of which there were mainly two.

The first is the great Franco-German reconciliation, which could only be built on the victory over Nazism in Germany and over Pétainism in France. If de Gaulle and Adenauer were able to lay the foundations for the "European cathedral," it was because fascism and the collaborationist mentality were defeated. The second circumstance was the repeatedly confirmed opposition of General de Gaulle to the Anglo-American policies: France was just then forcefully opposing the entrance of Great Britain into the Common Market and blocking NATO projects that aimed at securing the hegemony of Washington and London. Charles de Gaulle, in his *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, clearly demonstrates that "the English who, from the outside, were unable to prevent the [European] Community from coming into being, now plan to paralyze it from within." And it is against this policy, which aimed at assuring that Europe would be subordinated to decisions taken from overseas, that de Gaulle constructs the reconciliation between Germany and France, and the Western European Union.

However, the France and Germany of François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl are not going to tell us that their policies today conform to the spirit of the Elysée Treaty: Those who hold the celebration are shamelessly betraying it.

In fact, today, France and Germany—and it must be

stressed that the France of François Mitterrand is the greater culprit—are not fighting against fascism, but agree that one can sit at the negotiating table with murderers and acknowledge their rights and privileges. What else can one call that sinister masquerade at Geneva? With the acquiescence of France, Messrs. Vance and Owen, co-chairmen of the talks, have profusely thanked Milosevic for "his great contribution to the cause of peace." Radovan Karadzic, who personally led the "ethnic purification," rape, and torture operations, is now officially recognized with the status of negotiator. And to those who organized the concentration camps and mass rape camps, 40% of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina is handed over, whereas the Serbs make up no more than a third of the population! Established, recognized borders in Europe are violated, and here we have people ceding territory to those who criminally conquer it, just as in 1938, signalling a weakness that will not be forgotten, tomorrow, by even worse criminals.

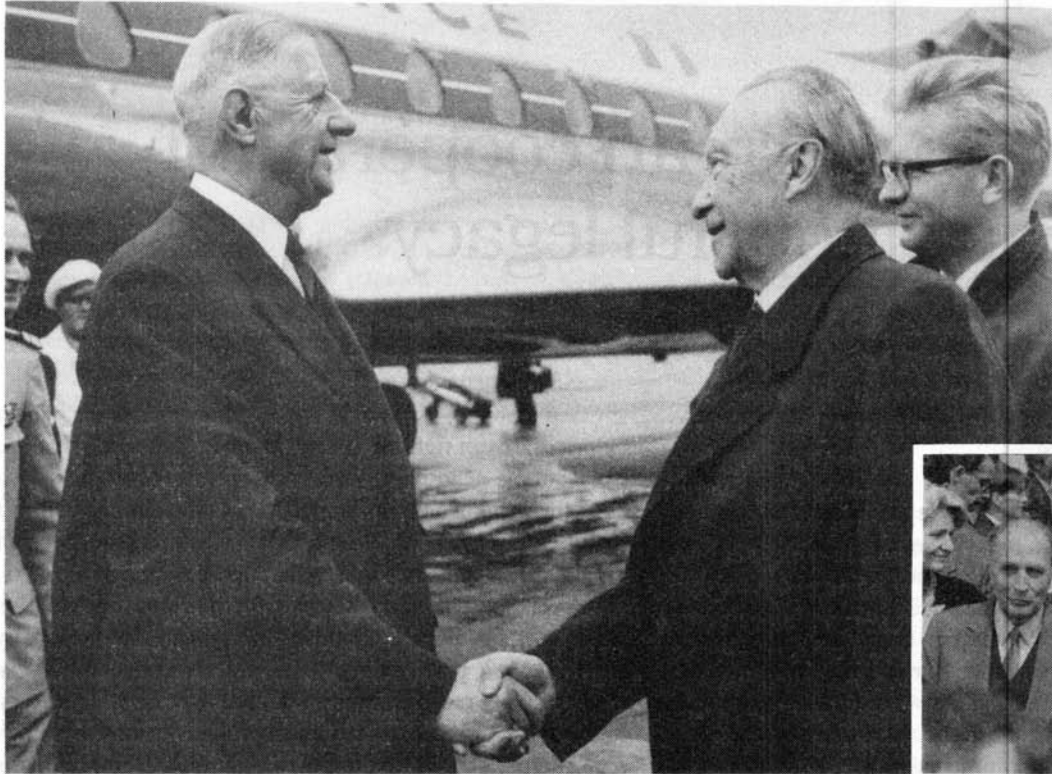
A legacy betrayed

The first foundation of the Elysée Treaty, the victory over fascism, has thus been betrayed by those who hold the celebrations. As for the second, it is clear that, despite a bit of rearguard resistance here and there, François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl, quite the opposite of Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, accept the order outlined by Washington and London. Admitted into the midst of the Common Market, Great Britain "is paralyzing Europe from within," and France and Germany, since the Gulf war, have rallied to George Bush's "new world order." Yes, the Franco-German Eurocorps was created, but will only become operational in 1995, and then under NATO.

Who is really able to take seriously, in the face of the challenges history now presents us, the meaning of the Elysée Treaty?

Certainly not the President at Elysée Palace today. Either Mitterrand understood nothing about the Anglo-American geopolitical aims, or he has consciously decided to bend to them in hopes of a few crumbs from the table.

London and Washington today are looking for a way to stop Europe from making itself, this Europe which the Elysée



French President Charles de Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in Bonn in 1961, meeting to sign the treaty reconciling French and German peoples. Inset: Their counterparts in title, but not in spirit, Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand at a 1990 meeting in Germany.



Treaty tried to build, the “European cathedral,” and Paris and Bonn are even collaborating with London and Washington.

The design, the mission of those who still believe in the Elysée Treaty, is to reject Anglo-American geopolitics, the legacy of the world of Versailles and of Yalta, and to replace it with a policy of peace through development and reconstruction.

It is in rediscovering economic development, as opposed to the ever-smaller world financial order over which London and Washington exercise their mastery, that peace can be rediscovered, as can hope. Otherwise, within the sleep of reason and the ruin of economies, the old monsters will reappear.

That is why, the moment it arises, we must immediately say “no” if anyone tries to call into question the recognized borders between peoples. When the old monsters of fascism and ethnic purification reappear, we point them out, rather than tolerate them at the negotiating table, and put them on trial, as was done in earlier days at Nuremberg.

Frenchmen and Germans, despite the relative limits to our means, thanks to the nearsighted military policies of the last few years, must prove our authority in the face of the return of the intolerable. To give up, to compromise, to resist the general push to deploy force—which Mitterrand has chosen to do—Messrs. Chamberlain and Daladier showed us where these policies lead. This does not mean blustering, but rejecting evil when it rises up.

Engendering hope

Even more profoundly, it means giving new birth to hope, to say that a plan for reconstruction and development is possible in Europe, if the financial interests are curbed. Bosnians must be allowed to rediscover justice and faith, as must the Croats, the Serbs, and all the peoples of eastern Europe.

The neo-liberal shock therapy has led to the worst, and its effects will soon be even more severe, unleashing a chauvinist and racial counter-reaction as far as Russia and China. So then, what are Paris and Bonn waiting for, before speaking out loud and clear in the name of right and justice? Don’t they hear the Polish foreign minister demanding, in the name of peoples in the East of our continent, to be part of Europe, this Europe which conforms to the Elysée Treaty, which we must reestablish? Don’t Paris and Bonn hear the demands of justice knocking at our door?

De Gaulle, in his notes for a speech in Bonn, in June 1965, wrote: “When our cathedral is built, we will throw open the doors to others. Who even knows, along with them, having once developed a taste for building, we might not build another even greater and more lovely, the union of Europe as a whole?” This summarizes the fate of Europe and the world today: Either the prospect of war, engulfing first the Balkans, then Europe, and the world, or instead, this new cathedral of all Europe, open to all peoples of the world.