

A United Europe Will Be A Long Time Coming

Pride. Awe. Relief. Admiration. These were some of the emotions with which I, like most Americans, greeted the end of the Persian Gulf War. I was proud of our country for saying it would do a job and then doing it with a minimum of loss and a maximum of effectiveness; I was awed by the terrifying efficiency of our weapons and relieved that our casualties were so light; and I was filled with admiration at the skill with which one of the most complex logistical military operations of the century was carried out.

Over the last twenty-five years our military had developed a reputation for foul-ups that became defining examples of the word "snafu," but it seems the lessons of past disasters have been well-learned. Most important this time, there was one clearly designated leader, as well as one clearly stated goal, and one basic rule: once the balloon went up, the special interests and agendas of individual service branches and differing methods of carrying out the plan were put aside. Everyone had the same goals and was listening to only one commander. The results were nothing short of spectacular.

The response of our neighbors in the European Community was less clear cut. By all accounts, the troops sent from the various European countries performed admirably; it was the tardy, vacillating response of the countries themselves that has been the subject of criticism and anxiety on both sides of the Atlantic. People who had seen the events of the last two years as the harbinger of a united Europe that would speak with one voice politically and militarily were sorely disappointed. When push came to shove, even over an issue as economically important to Europe as securing the major source of its petroleum supply, the twelve members of the EEC could not find a common voice or a common will, much less a single leader. They had similar goals, but no unified agenda for reaching them.

Whether that is a tragedy or not is a matter of opinion. The

fact remains that a united Europe is not here now, nor will it be any time soon; and, perhaps, neither we nor our European neighbors should be too anxious over the fact.

Building an economically and politically united Europe may be an admirable goal, but it will take time. American history could be instructive here. Starting from scratch, with a common language and without generations of past conflict to live down, it took the United States eighty years, culmi-

nating in five years of civil

war, to decide that we would be one nation speaking with one voice, not just a collection of individual states and regional interests. Real unity will not come any easier in Europe.

The fact is that a united Europe will probably not be built until some event of cataclysmic proportions forces all the nations of the continent to put aside their individual differences and act together. If the threat to its basic energy supply didn't do it, one shudders to think what will.

At present, the individual nations of Europe apparently lack the motivation or the will to unite completely. What is possible is some kind of economic cooperation.

More unity than that will be a long time coming. Being anxious or frustrated with one another over it will not change things.

For the foreseeable future, the international community will have to deal with the complexities inherent in a multi-national Europe and remember that nothing is ever gained by forcing a good idea before its time.



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