

Back from Europe

MAYBE never before has this yearly pilgrim to the major capitals of Western Europe found so much relief in being a part-time tourist. Just looking at the flow of the great rivers that have made Europe, one slowly regains a sense of release after tense hours spent talking politics. This year an inquiring writer who visits men in positions of great responsibility has little opportunity to question them about the trend of political affairs in their countries or within the Alliance. Rather, he is asked about American politics and policies. The interviewer is interviewed. A private American citizen is asked for opinions he has already put in print on the very subjects under discussion. The hard test comes here, particularly for one who has been occasionally critical of the administration and now finds himself attempting to rationalize his government's policies. There are moments in these dialogues when communication is maintained or even strengthened by a long silence.

There is anxiety in European capitals about our country, an anxiety differing in intensity according to various national temperaments and occasionally reaching fits of anguish in the countries most exposed to Russian aggression. Sometimes it comes from oversensitivity, sometimes from the administration's failure to explain to the allies measures it has taken that are of definite allied concern. The list of European qualms or, if one wants, gripes is very long and thoroughly known. One does not need to go to Europe to learn that our U.N. policy is thoroughly bewildering there, or that the support given by the administration to Indonesian imperialism is found rather revolting all over the Continent, and not just in Holland.

In fact, not much that is new can be gathered by going from one country or one continent to another: one has the feeling of never having left home. The playfulness of the New Frontiersmen, their addiction to larks and practical jokes, are subjects of lively con-

versation in Milan as in San Francisco and make the front page just about the same day. All is published, all is known that has happened or that might have happened on both sides of the ocean. All is known about us, except the essential: the overriding, ultimate aims of our government. Yet speeches, speeches, speeches are made on this very subject. It is the Alliance, it is also the U.N., and "interdependence"—one does not know whether interallied, world-wide, or cosmic.

It is as if we had taken over from Russia the role of the sphinx—a chatty, sometimes prankish, sometimes preacherish sphinx, that does not impose any cruel riddle on anybody, but whose behavior is in itself a riddle. There is nothing mysterious or sphinxlike any longer about Russia. Khrushchev has been stating over and over again with merciless pedantry what he wants. He only wants peace—his peace. And he wants the world. Of course he keeps secrecy inside Russia, but there is no mystery about his ambitions outside. Exactly the opposite can be said of our country. Everything is known about us, all the trivia of our national life is blown up by dazzling publicity. Yet we are an enigma in other people's minds and our constantly proclaimed aims are so lofty that it is as difficult for other people to take them seriously as it is for us to live up to them.

IT WOULD BE FOOLISH to attribute to the present administration the sole responsibility for the uneasiness about us abroad. This uneasiness is perhaps greater in Europe than anywhere else for two reasons, one very old and one very new. Europe is our past, but in the last few years it has also become our future. Europe is now reshaping itself into a formidable supranational entity, of which the ultimate forms cannot possibly be defined or foreseen but which is, nevertheless, an irreversible reality. It is, in some aspects, similar to us to the point of being our caricature, in that process

vulgarly called Americanization that goes from the uniform passion for gadgets to eating or drinking habits. On the other hand, it is immensely different from us; for whatever political unity it may achieve, the impetus for this creativeness has come not from any constitutional design but from a massive effort to produce and distribute more and more things for the satisfaction of the producers' ever-increasing ambitions and needs. This used to be America, but by now Europe has become so much our future that the President has sent explorers there to learn what the Europeans are doing in the field that used to be supremely ours.

For all its similarities and all its differences from us, Europe is part of us, and we of it. Together, we are the West; the complex of political institutions and economic creativeness which, no matter how brutally copied in the East, is still the only civilization shaping the world. Something, however, has happened to our relations with Europe that can best be described by comparing it to the evolution of our economy. Just as the control of wealth has become largely disassociated from ownership, so the power of our country has come to be a decisive, controlling force acting upon peoples far beyond the boundaries of the American Republic. In other words, though we have a legitimate title to our might, its assemblage and eventual use affect and depend upon a far larger constituency than the American electorate. These are the peoples who share our ideals, contribute to our might, and who could be immensely damaged should our wisdom fail us. In the same way, our nation has legitimate title to its wealth; yet, should this wealth be squandered, should our dollar be mishandled, inordinate suffering would be imposed on Americans and non-Americans. In all truth, title aside, our nation administers a prodigious amount of might and wealth that does not belong to us alone.

Now another giant power has emerged in Europe. Again, as it has happened in our capitalistic system, whenever competition among giants has been beneficial to the economy as a whole, competition has occurred. It is what, in the language of the economists, is called oligopoly. The very power that Europe has been able to develop is leading to the organization of an inter-European political and economic entity, both independent of us and vitally related to us. The comparison with economics, however, must stop here. The bond between our country and the new Europe is both older and stronger than our common opposition to Communism. It is based on ethical values we share, on beliefs that have made and sustained the unity of the West. This unity, like the one that Europe is tumultuously gaining, cannot possibly be codified in all-embracing, rigorously defined institutions. The roots of its being can only lie in reciprocal confidence.

It is a comparative lack of confidence in our country, or rather in its leadership of the Alliance, that one can find these days across the Atlantic. There are

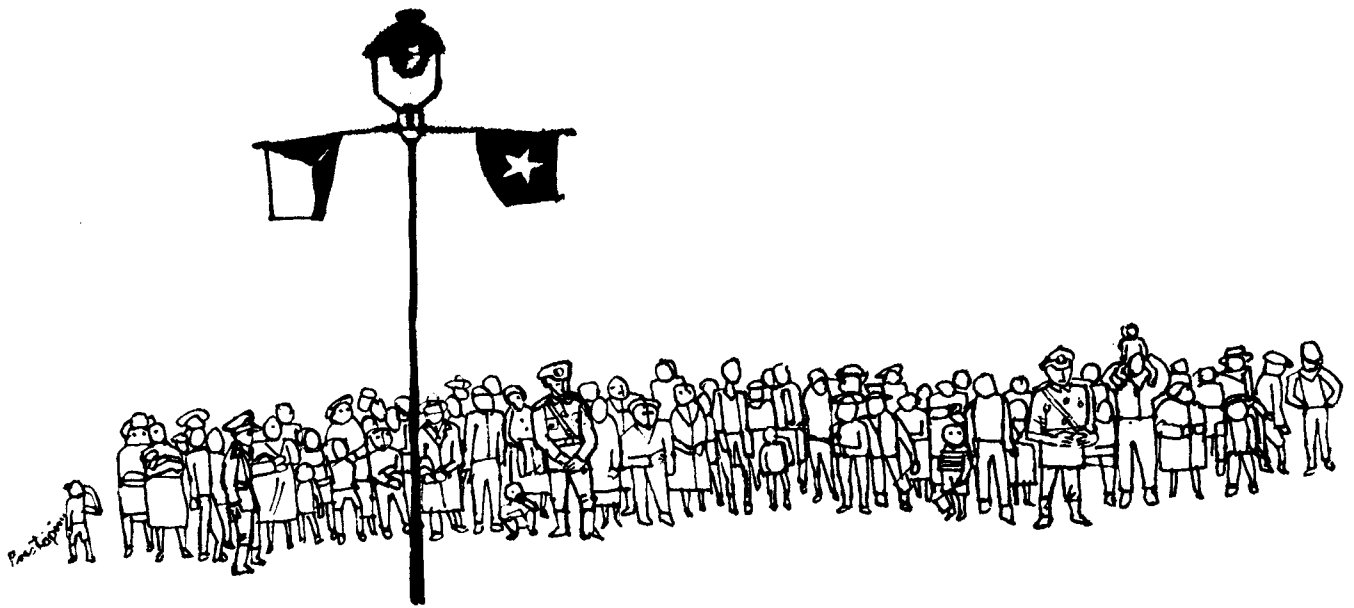
worries, apprehensions—sometimes anxieties—coming from the fear that our administration may be either indecisive or rash in the use of the might and the wealth it controls. Certainly our country has inflicted on Europe a surfeit of exhortations to unite. But has there been also an adequate realization that, to be truly beneficial to all, this unity demands a considerable degree of independence of us, and sometimes even of opposition to us? Lately, there has been too much messing around in internal European politics on the part of official, unofficial, or self-appointed representatives of our government, too open a tendency to favor a different set of rulers for certain European nations, and to consider two major European statesmen as senile delinquents. This messing around, this mixture of arrogance and playfulness, on the part of young and not so young men enjoying a free ride on power, has notably contributed to make us appear to our best European friends as a sphinx—a sphinx without enigma.

THIS is not a pleasant phase in the life of the Alliance, but if there is enough wisdom and decisiveness on both sides of the Atlantic it will pass. The occasion that will make it pass is just a few days, or a few weeks ahead. And we all know its name and its place. Berlin. It is not a place of our choosing. Khrushchev chose it, to test our will and break the bond between the new Europe and ourselves. He has been saying for about four years what he wants to do, perhaps with the thought of so unnerving and inuring us with his constant threat as to find us divided and jittery at the hour of ultimate consummation. That hour is upon us.

Sometimes immensely complex issues all of a sudden become simplified to the essential, reduced to the size of a human person, to a point where a passing episode acquires the clarity of eternity. This took place recently in Berlin when that boy lay dying for one hour a few yards away from the western sector while American troops looked on and an American officer failed to send him a doctor to relieve his pain or a chanlain to bring him the Cross.

I arrived in Germany three days after that death. Everything has been said about it, but what that agony did and is doing no one can describe or analyze. It is as if it were still going on. So many young men are butchered every day everywhere, so many victims of Communism and of other forms of brutality. But that young man happened to die in a setting that defies oblivion. It is this way, once in a million times, that a victim of injustice becomes a martyr.

We Americans never stop preaching about the sanctity of the human person, and the extraordinary thing is that deep inside we believe in it. Now the test is coming when we can no longer act as if the death of that young man, indeed the fate of the East Germans, were no business of ours.



The Forbidden City

EDMOND TAYLOR

WEST BERLIN
IF THERE IS one lesson to be drawn from the latest Moscow decision on Berlin," *Le Monde* wrote after the Soviets abolished their military command in the eastern sector of the city, "it is the urgent need for the western powers to cease standing motionless on positions that are being undermined a little more every day. It is high time they regain the initiative. They should reply to the latest Soviet proposals with counter-proposals which take into account the new realities of the situation—and not only those favorable to Moscow." Even the *Times* of London advised supplementing diplomacy at the next emergency along the Berlin wall with "first aid squads, smoke grenades, and brisk bursts of covering fire."

Quotations of this nature—they could easily be multiplied—reflect a growing conviction on this side of the Atlantic that western policymak-

ers should take greater account of the real elements of strength inherent in our seemingly precarious foothold in Berlin.

The key factor in the developing Berlin crisis today is the steady worsening of the politico-economic situation in East Germany. George Bailey's *Reporter* articles over the last two years demonstrate that this is not exactly a "new reality," but the German Democratic Republic's continuing economic decline during the past twelve months has a special significance.

WHEN the Berlin wall started to go up on August 13, 1961, it not only stopped the flow of refugees that was draining away the very substance of East Germany but dealt a blow to West German morale that many feared might prove fatal. The immediate effect was to heighten Walter Ulbricht's prestige inside the East German Communist Party, to

consolidate the shaky authority of the state, and to make a number of East Germans resign themselves to living indefinitely in a vast concentration camp. Eventually, however, the Berlin wall turned into a grave political liability. This spring, meat and potatoes, which in recent years had been freely available, were put back on the East German ration list. Shortly afterward Bruno Leuschner, East German deputy president for economic questions, glumly announced that in the first five months of 1962 meat production had fallen 34,200 tons short of the figure for the first four months of the previous year. Butter was down 237,000 tons over the shorter period last year, while the production of eggs dropped off by no less than 210 million units.

"You see," one American expert explained to me, "Ulbricht used to be able to blame all the East Zone's economic difficulties on the mass exodus of East German workers and