

Joachim Lund and Peter Ohrgaard (eds.), *Return to normalcy or a new beginning – concepts and expectations for a post war Europe around 1945* (Odense, Frederiksberg: University Press of Southern Denmark and Copenhagen Business School Press, 2007), 144 pp.

Oana Gabriela LĂCULICEANU¹

This book gathers the contributions to the Conference “1945-Return to normalcy or a new beginning – concepts and expectations for a post war Europe around 1945”, hosted by Copenhagen Business School in 2006. The contributions show the changes underwent by different European states after the turning point that the year 1945 has represented in Europe’s history. The main dilemma that European countries were facing was whether after 1945 Europe would relapse into national isolationism or new ways of trans-national cooperation will evolve. An important unifying element for the European countries after the Second World War was their efforts for economic reconstruction. These efforts had the support of the US who realized that its welfare was depending on Europe’s economic stability. If most of the analysts of the post-war period tended to emphasize the US’s role in European economic reconstruction, Patricia Clavin signals the role played by European institutions like the League of Nations which laid the basis for European economic planning that played an essential role for the economic reconstruction in the post war time.

1945 was a key moment in the evolution of both minor and great powers. The great powers were competing for the leading position on the international arena. Great Britain had security and economic interests to defend in Europe. The Soviet threat caused its interest in the establishment of a strong Western bloc in which several small states were included such as the Scandinavian states, which apparently were seen as having a large degree of common interests with Britain. The idea of the United States of Europe was a function of British desire to reunite all democratic forces in Europe against the Soviet threat. It is very interesting that Britain didn’t see itself as a part of this Union but as a protector of it alongside with the US. Several authors argued that Britain wanted to keep distance towards the continent because it did not experience the defeat and it believed that it should take all decisions within a national framework. Other scholars showed that Britain was aware of its superiority to the Europeans and therefore it preferred to concentrate more on its Commonwealth.

¹ **Ph.D. Candidate, Valahia University of Târgoviște.**

Jorgen Sevaldsen explains this attitude through purely economic reasons. Trade with Commonwealth was more attractive due to preferential trade tariffs.

A special case in Europe in 1945 was that of Spain brought into discussion by Carsten Humlebaek. At the outbreak of the Second World War, a civil war had just ended in Spain, culminating with the onset of Franco's dictatorial regime. For Spain, returning to normalcy was impossible at that moment because its relationship with the rest of Europe had to be completely reconstructed. This was difficult to achieve due to Franco's past relations with Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. An even more significant impediment was the incompatibility of its dictatorial regime with the democratic principles promoted in Western Europe. The author characterizes Franco's policy before the war as prudent and habile, seeking to avoid the involvement of its country into a military conflict. During the war, Spain declared itself as non-belligerent but it obviously was leaning towards Germany. Franco even supported militarily the Germans by sending the so-called Blue Division to fight against Soviet Russia alongside Hitler's army. This opportunistic policy kept Spain out of war. In 1943, when Germany showed signs of weakness, Franco gave a democratic character to its regime. He tried to align Spain with the Western Europe in the fight against bolshevism. Nevertheless, the Allied victory placed Spain in an outsider position compared to the rest of Europe. Its political regime was perceived as an anomaly by the democratic western countries. The latter started to put pressure on Spain in order to change its regime to a democratic one. The economic and diplomatic blockade ended because after all Spain's regime was a guarantee that Communism would be kept outside the Iberic Peninsula which was Western interest. From 1947 with the launching of Truman doctrine, pressure on Franco's regime completely vanished and was replaced by a large opening of all western countries towards Spain.

Another interesting case brought into discussion by Morten Heiberg is that of post-war Italy. The downfall of Fascism was followed by the establishment of a democratic republic based on anti-fascist principles. The author raises the question whether Fascism was completely gone from Italy after 1945. He argues that the official symbols, the buildings and monuments of the new regime were a legacy of the Fascist past. In mid 1990s, the Christian-Democratic Party was replaced by neo-fascist parties like *Allianza Nazionale*, *Forza Italia* and *Lega Nord* which promoted pro-fascist and anti-European ideas. At the same time the historians started to question the authenticity of the democratic policy conducted by the Communist Party during the civil war in Italy. Many argued that the patriotic and independent policy line followed by the Italian Communists was only instrumental. A new trend appeared in Italian historiography, with a revisionist character which was trying to dismantle the myth of the anti-Fascist fight of the Communists. What resulted instead was a mythology of the Right in which Mussolini is depicted as a humble patriot that sacrificed himself for the sake of its *Patria* and all achievements in the name of anti-Fascism including the establishment of the democratic republic and the EU integration were seriously questioned.

Further on, Bent Boel is looking at the case of France. After the war, France was still a great power mastering a huge colonial empire but its economic and military power was seriously undermined. The main question was whether France will manage

past this deadlock or it will be stuck into a rearguard battle. Although its former allies tended not to recognize it as an equal partner, France came up with very ambitious foreign policy goals striving to regain its former international prestige politically, militarily and morally. This required a quite high price. Its leader, Charles de Gaulle had to give up its ideal due to the conflicts with the left parties for whom it was more important the internal economic welfare of the state. In order to enforce its position in front of Germany, France tried to ally with Soviet Russia but soon this proved to be a wrong option, as Russia was actually undermining French interests especially regarding the German issues. France turned to the US from mid 1945 and supported the idea of creating a Western European Block. The US represented a challenge for France in 1945. They were a great world power supporting economically the entire Europe. France was especially dependent on its financial sponsorship. This wasn't in accordance with the French desire for independence and regaining international prestige. France's attempts to improve its rapports with Great Britain were not so successful. Their divergent interests in the German affair and the Middle East made it almost impossible. Only in 1947 they were able to sign the treaty of Dunkirk. The idea of creating a Western European united front was again brought into discussion and was connected with the French desire of playing a leading role over a European custom union. This plan faced the disagreement of both the US and the USSR. Consequently, France's ambitious plans would not succeed as they were completely incompatible with its resources. France succeeded to maintain its international status symbolically and formally. According to the author, this was possible not necessarily as a result of French foreign policy but perhaps more of its Western Ally's willingness.

Joachim Lund analyses the attitude of the Nordic countries towards the post-war Europe. In Scandinavia, in 1945, there was an alternative to European cooperation. This alternative was known as *Scandinavism*, a term which designated the cooperation between the Nordic countries. It had a long tradition starting from the mid 18th century as a Danish student movement aiming at closer relations between Denmark and the Scandinavian countries. In this way it sought to strengthen Denmark's external position considerably weakened following the Napoleonic wars. Scandinavism was based on a series of common traits of the Nordics: the language, the history and the religion. It generated the creation of a monetary union between the Scandinavian countries in 1873-1914. This movement had its ups and downs like in 1864 when Sweden refused to take the Danish side in the conflict with Prussia. During the First and Second World War it revived. This explains the sympathy the Scandinavian countries have shown towards Finland when it sided with Germany. It was more important that it was fighting Soviet Russia as a great aversion towards bolshevism united the Nordic countries. Therefore, Denmark sent volunteers to fight alongside with Finland.

The forethoughts regarding the future of Scandinavism after 1945 were often contradictory. Some analysts have considered that the Scandinavian states did not possess sufficient military power in order to face eventual external aggressions. Others argued that Scandinavism ended at the beginning of the Cold War when Denmark and Norway adhered to NATO while Sweden chose to remain neutral. In economic and security terms, Europe proved to be more attractive for the Nordic countries due to

their enormous dependence on foreign supplies and trade. The best example is that of Denmark which turned to Europe for economic reasons even if it keeps the nationalist idea of self-sufficiency.

In the next chapter, Per Ohrgaard discusses the attitude of the German writers towards Europe in the first years after the war. The country's division into allied occupation zones was followed by an implementation of re-education measures especially in the cultural field. The German intellectuals' publications after the war expressed the desire that their country should be reconstructed after its own ideas and not by following the receipts offered by their occupants. Their writings showed the will of reconciliation with the rest of Europe and at the same time the desire to take part in the reconstruction of a new Europe. In their view, Germany was not guilty of Hitler's crimes and was entitled to take part in Europe's rebuilding. The author takes into discussion the articles written in one of the most popular literature magazine, „Der Ruf”. The main idea expressed by the authors of this periodical was that Germany had a lot to share with Europe where a major role was predicted for it.

Europe occupied a central place in West German intellectual debates after the Second World War. The pan-European propaganda presented the West Germans as model supporters of supranationalism, more precisely of Western Europe. The general conception was that of „Europe as a third power” in which Germany had to be integrated. According to Axel Schildt, within this concept there could be identified three main ideological currents that shaped at the beginning of the Cold War. The first one was promoting the idea of a strong and politically independent Europe in spite of the general tendency of splitting between East and West. This current found opponents in the extreme right for whom the reconstruction of the German unity was a priority. There were also very ambitious plans such as Eurafrica or the Atlanta project which were envisaging the extension of European control over wide external regions and the creation of a Europe which would act as a great power. Another alternative was Atomic Europe whose power would reside in the technological progress and prosper internal market. The second ideological current was conceived by Catholics and federalist conservatives who were seeing the necessity of a Christian rebirth in Western Europe. It envisaged the creation of a strong Occident whose unity was to be created around the fight against the bolshevism. Finally, the third current supported the idea of an Atlantic alliance and European integration and was more modern and liberal than the second one. For instance it included former communists as it was promoting a total freedom of thought. As a conclusion, the author emphasizes that all three currents have in common the ideal of creating a community of European cultural elites, a fact proved by the existence of a large number of institutions having this purpose.

The contributions comprised in this book offer interesting and original analysis relevant for the understanding of the evolution of Europe in the post-war period, when the premises of the cold war were prefigured. A general conclusion would be that the expectations that the European countries had for their future were very ambitious and often conflicting. The idea of European unity was a function of their desire to retain power and prestige.