

## CHAPTER 5

# British Riddle, French *Mystère*, American Enigma

It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma -- *Sir Winston Churchill, October 1, 1939.*

Every American knows one must sacrifice part of one's selfish interests in order to save the rest. We French seek to keep all, and thus often lose everything. -- *Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vol. IV, Chapter 8, 1835 (my translation).*

Perhaps we should ask first, not why shouldn't we try to federate Atlantica, but why haven't we tried already? Why is it that we the people of the Disunited States of Atlantica have delayed so long to attempt this? Here is indeed "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" -- as Churchill said of Russian policy. Why have the British, the French and, above all, the Americans -- to mention no more -- shied away so long from even exploring the possibility of Atlantic Union?

### The British Riddle

Consider first what a triple-wrapped riddle this is as regards the British. These pioneers invented representative government. Their Parliamentary system has been copied all round the world. Their Union of England and Scotland in 1707 was a very helpful precedent for the drafters of the Federal Constitution at Philadelphia. The fact that the federal union system was not invented by them but by their "colonials" -- worse still, by colonials who had won the only war the British have lost in centuries -- this would explain why any people, except the British, might scorn to explore Atlantic federal union. The British rightly pride themselves on being not petty but practical in political affairs, on not nursing grudges and on adapting themselves to changed conditions.

British history has long been one of turning peacefully from systems that were no longer giving results, and trying in time other systems that promised to work better. And so it is not surprising that they were the first Europeans to recognize in an official report the practicability of the federal system, and to recommend -- as did Lord Durham's farsighted report in 1838 proposing the Union of the English and French in Canada -- that they try it in their own territory. With this encouragement from London, and the statesmanship of such Canadians as Sir John A. MacDonald, Canada in 1867 became a federal union. Since then the British have done far more to spread federal union around the world than we Americans have (except by the power of successful example). With London's encouragement, the Australian federation, for which the Australian statesman, Sir Henry Parkes, had worked so long, came into being in 1901. In 1910, thanks to the vision of such British apostles of *The Federalist* as Lionel Curtis and Lord Lothian, the victor and the vanquished of the Boer War federated in the Union of South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

## Federation for Sheikdoms -- Not for Atlantic Democracies

Since then federal union has increasingly become Britain's ready remedy for many kinds of political problems, whether in the densely populated multilingual sub-continent of India, the Malayan peninsula or the far-scattered islands of the British West Indies. The British Empire has spawned ten federal unions thus far; in the Commonwealth that has replaced it, seven of the eleven members are federations.

London's willingness to try to solve almost any problem by federal union was perhaps never carried to a greater extreme than when *The Economist* on May 24, 1958, described the dangers that Britain faced in the ten tiny sheikdoms on the Persian Gulf and Arabian coast, and asked:

Is there any choice but federation, or else ultimate absorption by Saudi Arabia? And if the British preference is for the former, how many British interests would be jettisoned if encouragement were given to federation under multi-national auspices instead of on purely British responsibility?

To gain the full flavor of *The Economist's* belief in federalism, one must add that it described these sheikdoms as feudal "fiefs" with undefined frontiers, "poor, quarrelsome, living on little beyond hope of oil, disinclined to be harnessed in unfamiliar traces, entailing federations, frontiers, courts or police," and inhabited by "ragged, hungry and unlettered" people. I confess that *The Economist's* faith that federal union would work even in these conditions far surpasses mine, although some in London have found my faith in a federal Atlantic Union "extravagant." Be it noted that *The Economist*, in proposing to federate the Arab sheikdoms, suggested that this be done under the "multi-national" auspices of the British, American, French and Dutch governments -- but not that the latter nations federate themselves. This brings us to the conundrum:

Why has this great British journal not led in getting the Atlantic problem tackled federally? Why has it not shown here half the faith it has shown in federation elsewhere? I would not single it out for criticism -- its attitude, in this regard has been all too common in London since the war: *The Economist*, in fact, has been relatively advanced on the subject of Atlantic Union -- though, like most other British opinion-makers, its receptivity toward Atlantic Union was much greater in 1939 than since 1945. Why is it that British policy-framers, who found *Union Now* worthy of such serious consideration in 1939 when they faced the Nazi dictatorship, have been so silent or negative as regards Atlantic federation since the still more formidable Communist dictatorship replaced Hitler as the dancer?

## The Churchill Puzzle

The puzzlement grows when one turns to Sir Winston Churchill. His gifts of leadership are magnificent, his prestige vast throughout Atlantica, and particularly in America. Why has he not urged that the United Kingdom and the United States lead in uniting the Atlantic community by the federal principles that had united so successfully the British and the French in Canada? In 1936 he had the vision to write in *While England Slept*:

I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly the stairway that leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on there are only flagstones, and a little farther on still these break beneath your feet.

Ten years later, he spoke in Fulton, Missouri -- after events had proved his prophetic powers. Why did he not make his island still more famous then by leading boldly toward Atlantic Union? Did he think that Britain must await American leadership? Such considerations never kept him during the war from standing up stoutly for his ideas, however much they differed from President Roosevelt's. After the latter's death left Sir Winston the one towering statesman and hero of Atlantica, he did not hesitate to give a lead to America in his Fulton speech of March 5, 1946 on "The Sinews of Peace." But the lead was toward Anglo- American alliance -- to base peace on the sinews that had failed the Thirteen States in the Articles of Confederation and that Washington in his Farewell Address had warned against, as bound always to fail. Sir Winston had offered Union to a falling France when alliance failed Britain in 1940; why did he not propose Union to America in the we even explore the possibilities for peace that lie in an Atlantic-wide development of the federal sinews that made his motherland no less famous than his father's isle. Why?

### **To the Land of Locke, Can the Lands of Lincoln And of Lenin Be Equal?**

Why have his successors in London continued to shy away from any proposal -- whether on an Atlantic or a European scale -- that applied to the United Kingdom the same federal principles that London was then encouraging the people of the Empire, from India to the West Indies, to apply in more difficult circumstances? Did these Prime Ministers feel that, lacking the Churchillian prestige, they must follow Washington's lead? But they, too, did not hesitate to differ from Washington. They recognized Red China. They opposed General MacArthur's strategy in Korea. They landed at Suez. They led a skeptical President Eisenhower to seek peace through the Summit meeting ... that blew up in Paris.

Some Britons say the reason is that federal union and written constitutions are foreign and distasteful to the British spirit, which prefers the "functionalist," "gradualist" approach. But none of this has deterred the British from recommending written federal constitutions for Britons from Canada to Australia -- and proposing one even for illiterate sheikdoms. Certainly no one would say that the United Kingdom has never proposed trying to solve its own Atlantic problem by this method because the British feel themselves to be less politically mature than the Americans, Australians, Burmese, Canadians, Hindus, Nigerians, South Africans, West Indians -- (not to mention again these sheikdoms).

Who can explain the postwar attitude of the British -- parent of Parliaments, godfather of Federal Unions, nurse of John Stuart Mill, tutor of Lord Acton, -- situated on their famous island, the natural bridge between Western Europe and North America . . . this practical people, this magnanimous people, whom Churchill called "unique in this respect: They are the only people who like to be told how bad things are, who like to be told the worst" (of course, about themselves, too)? Here is this people, of all peoples, helping divide Europe in Sixes and Sevens, helping balance the Earth between Communism (Chinese and Russian) and Freedom (American and British) and preaching federal union to everyone, but themselves. They talk as if it were

practical to base disarmament on the assumption that equality in weapons counts more than inequality in the will to kill ... that if only they can get the Russian or Chinese Communist believer in violence, and the American believer in the ideals of freedom and peace (which the finest spirits of Britain itself have always held high) both to agree to outlaw or limit atomic weapons, all will be well -- that gunmen are no more likely to attack than pacifists ... if only both are armed equally with .22 caliber pistols.

Here are the people who produced and who cherish Locke (and the Labour Party), seeking to prevent war by putting the Power that produced and cherishes Lenin on a par, as regards peace, with the Power that produced and cherishes Lincoln. Here are the great British people, through whom I, like so many others, have learned so much, and come to expect so much ... putting their trust now in the antitheses of all that made them great -- not in trying themselves to practice on an Atlantic scale the federal principles they have spread to all the races of mankind ... not in working with bulldog tenacity to create the oceanic nucleus of Tennyson's Parliament of Man ... Is this not "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma"?

### **The *Mystère* of De Gaulle's France**

When we turn to President de Gaulle's France, the riddle is no less baffling, if we have some of the understanding of the French (and of what they have done for freedom and union) that we have of the British and Americans.

No other people has in their blood the spirit of individual freedom through union of sovereign states so much as have the Americans -- *except the French*. The very name of *France* stands, indeed, for the political ideal of all the Atlantic Community -- as the names, *America*, *Britain*, *Germany* and that of other nations do not in their derivation. *France* and *French* come from the Franks; that Teutonic tribe left their name even in English as an adjective, *frank*, originally meaning "free-not in bondage," and now meaning in a positive way, "free in uttering one's real sentiments" -- the same as *franc* means in French. And *français* meant *freeman* -- what we all aspire to be -- long before nationalism reduced its meaning to the present one, a citizen of one nation.

Before nationalism became a disuniting foe of freedom, it was a force for union. I would agree with Bernard Shaw that it began among the French, with Jeanne d'Arc, to unite people of the same language in an ever-wider community and government. The French were not only the first great people on the European (continent to be united under a common government; as Tocqueville pointed out in his *Ancien Regime*, they had, long before the French Revolution, gone much further than any other nation there in breaking down feudalism's multitudinous barriers.

The French Revolution has some striking things in common with the American Revolution that immediately preceded it. It wiped out the customs barriers among the provinces of France as the Federal Constitution removed those among the Thirteen States. Both peoples established free trade over an immensely greater area than it had known before, and both did it by peaceful agreement, and at one stroke -- not gradually over a long period, as elsewhere. What is more important, both achieved this miracle by tying economic union to free political union.

Most strikingly similar of all, both the American and the French Revolutions began their work of union of the free in the same way. They both began by declaring in writing fundamentally the same principles of individual freedom and equality as the basis and the purpose of government. Practically no other peoples on earth accepted these principles then; now practically no people on earth does not at least pretend to practice, or aim at some of them. Having thus agreed on their aims, both the Americans and French proceeded to set up written constitutions to provide institutions by which to attain them.

As the United States led in the New World in uniting states by its federal example, so France has led in the Old. First, it set the example of uniting people of the same language, divided by feudal sovereignties, in the modern nation-state -- an example that Italy and Germany followed in the 19th century. Then France led in trying to unite nation states by federation.

Blind to the fact that nationalism could be a balkanizing as well as a uniting force, the United States raised Woodrow Wilson's banner of the "self-determination of nations," and the ideal of a League of all nations rather than a Union of any. It was France that then raised the federal banner. As *The New York Times* correspondent at the League in Geneva, I had the ironic experience of reporting the efforts of Aristide Briand to unite Europe as early as 1929 on principles more American (though not fully federal) than those of Wilson's League.

When National Socialism seemed on the verge of victory, it was again a Frenchman, Jean Monnet, who led with the proposal for an Anglo-French Union. And it was General de Gaulle -- as his *Memoirs*<sup>2</sup> relate -- who urged Churchill to make this offer then. It was again from France (after an ephemeral Churchillian gesture) that came the leadership which produced the Schuman Plan, Euratom, the Common Market.

### **Prime Minister Debré for Atlantic Union**

President de Gaulle himself picked for his Prime Minister, Michel Debré, who in the book, *Peace by Oceanic Union*,<sup>3</sup> which he co-authored in 1945 with Emmanuel Monick, eloquently called for Atlantic Union in such words as these:

Let the Atlantic Peoples unite in the same union that brings together the inhabitants of a great city when threatened, and there will then immediately be an opportunity for peace.

How then to explain the Atlantic policy that President de Gaulle has pursued? Does it result, as so many say, from an "obsession" with the "grandeur" of France? In an "Open Letter" to him, entitled "'Grandeur' or Greatness?" which I wrote in the April, 1959, *Freedom & Union* on the eve of his visit to the United States, I explained at length why I believed that this explanation was not valid. To quote it:

Why am I so bold as to differ so completely on these basic matters with the multitude? Partly because I believe that France means to you basically what America means to me. It does not mean primarily the land or even the people (though we love the land we were born in and have a sublime faith in its people). It means certain ideals for which our country stands and which to you are the soul of France as they are to me the soul of America.

If this intangible, immortal spirit were not France to you, if the land and the people came first, then you would have agreed with Petain that all was lost when the latter two were occupied and surrendered. Instead, from another country and all alone, you broadcast, "France is not lost!" You held that the true France was not then on the Continent but on an island, and that its true spokesman was not its government, but a lone Frenchman in London. You proved that your concept of France was the latent concept of your countrymen.

Another reason why I am so bold as to differ with the multitude about you is that even you can not be more passionately devoted to your concept of France than I to my concept of America. Nor can even you -- with all respect -- have more faith in your fellow-citizens than I in mine, nor be surer that what we love above all in our countries is not only latent in our compatriots, but the thing they will sacrifice most for in the end.

### **Greatness Needs No Passport**

The basic question, I added, was this: Shall France, America, Britain, continue to seek greatness in nationalistic terms that convince no one of their greatness least of all Mr. K -- who boasts that Communist dictatorship will soon "bury" even the greatest of the three by this definition? Or shall we all seek the kind of greatness that we all know at heart is truly great -- that History will confirm and that will meanwhile bury dictatorship? Shall we seek it together, in union -- and thereby, incidentally, put behind our common free ideals or more of the armed and industrial power we now prize so much than any of our nations can possibly gain alone or in mere alliance? I then appealed to President de Gaulle personally to lead:

To change our present concept of national greatness to the one by which we ourselves judge the past, and by which the future will judge us in turn, some statesman with a deep sense of History must point the way. You have that sense of History, Mr. President, to a rare degree. You have also the courage and the Atlantic-wide personal authority that are needed too, for this is no little change. And so I turn to you.

I suggest no sacrifice of the true greatness of France, nor of America, Britain or any other people. I firmly believe that France's greatness is beneficial and essential to us Americans as ours is to the French. I know the inspiration, courage, faith that I myself have drawn from Jeanne d'Arc, from Valmy, from Verdun, and, if you will pardon me, from you. I have seen plenty of proof that the virtues of those who incarnate the greatness of America, as do Washington and Lincoln, help make Frenchmen and France greater, too. Greatness needs no passport. The quality that permits this transfusion of spirit across national boundaries, oceans, ages, is to me a precious asset of human nature and it is found throughout our species. It is no less human -- but no asset -- that we all see the faults in other men and nations much more easily than our own.

My appeal to President de Gaulle to lead in bridging the Atlantic concluded with these words:

A bridge so wide cannot be built from either shore alone. It must be built simultaneously from both, and from solid bases. What firmer bases does History offer for bridging the Atlantic by political union than France and the U.S.A.? The momentous enterprise seems about to begin on the American shore. It depends now on you, Mr. President, in France. Shall France not continue

to lead in the Old World as America in the New, in this, the great line of their history? In this greatest venture toward Union of the Free, it rests now with you whether they shall lead together.

Is it not another "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" that so great a man, with so great a love for France, should not yet have given this honor to the land of Lafayette, Tocqueville and Victor Hugo -- to the people from whose *Congrès, Parlement, Constitution* and *Union Fédérale* the English-speaking world drew the words for our most cherished free institutions?

### **The American Enigma**

The enigma of America's long failure even to explore Atlantic Union is the greatest of all -- but it is so obvious as to need the fewest words. We Americans created federal union -- or the Federal Constitution created the American people, as a body politic -- whichever way you prefer. We have more experience with federation than has any other people, or than we have with diplomacy, alliance, league, confederation or any other system of inter-state relations.

No people has ever been so immensely rewarded by any political system as we have been by federal union. Nor has any people ever been warned so strongly against the other inter-state systems as we by rightly revered statesmen. In his Farewell Address, Washington stressed that alliance would never work even among our own Thirteen States. He said:

To the efficiency and permanency of your Union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliance, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances at all times have experienced.

Both Washington and Jefferson warned against entering into entangling alliances with the nations of Europe -- never against our federating with other democracies. Yet we have risked Atlantic alliance rather than attempt Atlantic Union.

How can it be that in our federated "home of the brave," presidential candidates, party platforms and Congressional resolutions do not dare even breathe aloud such honored American words as "Union" and "Federal," when they refer to the Atlantic democracies? Why is it that, however much they may stress the "imperative" need to unite effectively, they speak instead of "unity," "community," "cooperation"?

Those who would be tomorrow's leaders call on the American people to open "new frontiers" ... and never recall the means by which we have always pushed the frontier forward -- Federal Union. Or they call on us to "have the courage and the confidence that inspired our forebears" ... but would have us show this by moving "toward confederation" in Atlantica -- not toward the goal of "a more perfect Union" in which our forebears put their trust, and to which they dedicated us, in the Preamble of the Federal Constitution. Why? Why? Why? Is this not the greatest "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" that any Atlantic people presents? Here even the Kremlin must concede we lead.

If any one thing is the answer to this British riddle, this French *mystère*, this American enigma, is it not the confusion over sovereignty that afflicts all the free people of Atlantica? Let us seek again to clear it away.

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1. Both Lionel Curtis and Lord Lothian gained by study of American constitutional history, an understanding, of and a devotion to federal principles and a willingness to try to solve the toughest problems by them which I have rarely seen equaled by my compatriots. I cannot recommend too strongly *World Order (Civitas Dei)* by Lionel Curtis (Oxford Press, 1939). As for Lord Lothian, my own belief is that had it not been for his untimely death in 1941 while he was ambassador in Washington, the Great opportunity to build an Atlantic Union which we had during the war would not have been lost.
2. See "De Gaulle Urged Federal Union on Churchill in 1940," July 1958 *Freedom & Union*. A reprint is available from it for \$0.10.
3. This book was published serially under this title by Freedom & Union, starting in July 1959, from the original French book entitled *Demain La Paix* (Plon, Paris). These reprints of chapters in it may be had from the magazine: "National Sovereignty -- an Obsolete Dogma" (\$0.30), "Let the Atlantic Peoples Unite" (\$0.20), and "Oceans Unite Men" (\$0.20).