

THE BAYEUX MANIFESTO

CHARLES DE GAULLE

The nation and the French Union are still awaiting a constitution which is made for them and of which they can fully approve. Actually, although we may regret that the structure remains to be built, everyone certainly agrees that a success slightly postponed is more valuable than a quick, but imperfect, achievement.

In the course of a period which does not exceed twice a man's lifetime, France was invaded seven times and was governed by thirteen different regimes—to the detriment of our unfortunate people. Because of so many upheavals, poison has accumulated in our public life, and this has had an intoxicating effect on our old Gallic inclination to dissension and strife.

The unprecedented trials that we have just lived through have obviously only aggravated this state of affairs. Because of the present world situation in which the powers between which we find ourselves confront each other behind opposing ideologies, we must not permit the element of impassioned confusion to enter our internal political struggles. In short, the rivalry between the parties betrays one of our fundamental characteristics—that of always questioning everything and thus too often obscuring the highest interests of the country. This is an obvious fact which is based on the national temperament, the vicissitudes of history, and the present turmoil; but it is indispensable to the future of our country and of democracy that our governmental institutions take this fact into consideration and protect themselves, in order to preserve respect for the

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laws, the cohesion of the governments, the efficiency of the administration, and the prestige and authority of the state. . . .

To be sure, it is the very essence of democracy that opinions are expressed, and that they endeavour, by means of the right to vote, to guide public action and legislation accordingly. But all principles and all experience also require the powers of the state—legislative, executive, and judicial—to be clearly separated and well balanced, and a national arbitration—capable of maintaining the highest degree of continuity in the midst of intrigues—to be established above political contingencies.

It is clearly understood that the final vote on the laws and the budgets belongs to an assembly elected by universal and direct suffrage. But the first actions of such an assembly do not necessarily involve perspicacity and complete serenity. Therefore it is necessary to give to a second assembly, elected and composed in a different way, the function of examining publicly that which the first has taken under consideration, of formulating amendments, and of proposing plans. . . .

It goes without saying that the executive power cannot emanate from a parliament composed of two chambers and exercising legislative power without the danger of leading to a confusion of powers in which the government would soon be reduced to nothing but a gathering of delegations. In the present period of transition it was undoubtedly necessary for the constituent National Assembly to elect the president of the provisional government because, with a clean slate, there was no other acceptable method of selection. But this can only be a temporary arrangement. Truly, the unity, the cohesion, and the internal discipline of the French government must be sacred, or else the very leadership of the country will rapidly become powerless and disqualified.

But how could this unity, this cohesion, and this discipline be maintained in the long run, if the executive power emanated from the other power, with which it must be in balance, and if each member of the government, which is collectively responsible to the entire national representation, held his position solely as the delegate of a party?

Hence the executive power ought to emanate from the chief of state, placed above the parties, elected by a body which

includes the parliament but which is much larger and is composed in such a manner as to make him the president of the French Union, as well as of the Republic. The chief of state must have the responsibility to reconcile, in the choice of men, the general interest with the direction given by the parliament; he must have the task of appointing the ministers, and first, of course, the premier, who will have to direct the policy and the work of the government; the chief of state must have the function of promulgating laws and issuing decrees, because it is towards the state as a whole that these obligate the citizens; he must have the task of presiding over meetings of the government and of exercising that influence of continuity there which is indispensable to a nation; he must serve as arbiter above political contingencies, either normally through the council or, in moments of grave confusion, by inviting the country to make known its sovereign decision through elections; he must have the duty, if the Fatherland should be in danger, to be the guarantor of the national independence and of the treaties concluded by France.