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FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS IN THE GAULLIST THOUGHT

Introductory remarks

The main goal of this article is to prove the thesis that the Gaullist doctrine relating to the Franco-German relationship was mainly based on pragmatism and the desire to safeguard France's interests¹ in accordance with the so-called „doctrine of circumstance”². The Federal Republic of Germany was supposed to play an important role in the process of strengthening of France's position. Charles de Gaulle expected the Federal Republic of Germany to become a French ally, as a „junior partner” that would support the Gaullist concepts of European unity, Western Europe's independence from the United States and the nuclear ambitions of the French Fifth Republic³. Although he saw the need for a peaceful settlement of the relations between France and Germany and a reconciliation between the nations (and acted ardently to that end) de Gaulle never wanted for both countries to have a relationship based on fundamental equality⁴, because he was well aware of French weaknesses and German advantages and, consequently, still feared the Germans and retained a certain degree of mistrust in relation to the Eastern neighbor⁵.

¹ H. Möller, *Charles de Gaulle et la question allemande: remarques sur les éléments traditionnels et l'évolution d'une pensée géostratégique*, „Espoir” 1991, no. 76, September, Quoted after: <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/l-homme/dossiers-thematiques/de-gaulle-et-le-monde/de-gaulle-et-l-allemande/analyses/de-gaulle-et-la-question-allemande.php> (28.12.2016).

² More on the „doctrine of circumstance” see: R. Bielecki, *Co to jest gaullizm?*, Warszawa 1978, p. 100.

³ W.J. Szczepański, *Europa w myśli politycznej de Gaulle'a*, Warszawa 1979, p. 156–157.

⁴ Ch. Bloch, *De Gaulle et l'Allemagne*, [in:] E. Barnavi, S. Friedländer, *La politique étrangère du Général de Gaulle*, Paris 1985, p. 135.

⁵ A. Szeptycki, *Francja czy Europa? Dziedzictwo generała de Gaulle'a w polityce zagranicznej V Republiki*, Warszawa 2005, p. 64. We can therefore agree that there was a certain contradiction in de Gaulle's policy in relation to the Federal Republic of Germany. On the one hand he

The objective of this article is not a simple descriptive presentation of the Franco-German reconciliation process. The objective is a presentation of the doctrinal foundations of this phenomenon and an analysis of Charles de Gaulle's views on the so-called „German problem”. As it will be proved, de Gaulle's ideas were crucial for the opening of a new chapter in the Franco-Germanic history.

Additionally, the goal of this article is also to „demystify” the romantic history of the reconciliation between the Germans and the French by identifying the pragmatic objectives that guided not only de Gaulle but also the German authorities. The following considerations will focus on demonstrating the foundations, evolution and implementation of de Gaulle's views on the Franco-German relations in the subsequent historical periods and in his political activity. In addition, Konrad Adenauer's ideas on the issues of France and Germany will also be used in order to introduce a certain point of reference necessary for the correct interpretation of de Gaulle's intentions and actions towards the Eastern neighbor.

The Gaullist perception of Germany and the Germans until the first world war

It is highly likely that Charles de Gaulle's first associations concerning the broadly understood Germany were very negative and could be characterized by hate. It is hardly surprising, however⁶. De Gaulle, who came from a deeply patriotic family⁷ and was born less than 20 years after France's humiliating defeat in the war with Prussia⁸, was a typical representative of the generation of young Frenchmen living at the turn of the century⁹, for whom this defeat represented an existential problem. The sense of indignity and the thirst for vengeance was so strong, that the idea of reclaiming the lands „savagely stolen” by the Prussians

wanted to see this country as a partner supporting France with its strong economy, and on the other hand, he wished for West Germany to remain weaker than France and to not be able to pursue its own ambitions, quoted after: *ibidem*, p. 66.

⁶ More on the socio-political atmosphere in France, see: J. Gerhard, *Charles de Gaulle*, t. I, Warszawa 1972, p. 10–22, R. Poidevin, J. Bariéty, *Les relations franco-allemandes 1815–1975*, Paris 1977, p. 82–87.

⁷ More on the de Gaulle family, see: J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 22–23.

⁸ The Franco-Prussian War: an armed conflict lasting from 19 July 1870 to 10 May 1871 in which France lost to Prussia. It was caused by the rivalry between these countries who fought for domination in Europe. As a result of this clash France lost the affluent regions of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany and was forced to pay high contributions. More information: G. Lefebvre, Ch.H. Pouthas, M. Baumont, *Historia Francji*, t. II: *Od 1774 do czasów współczesnych*, Warszawa 1969, p. 373–385.

⁹ More information: A. Hall, *Naród i państwo w myśli politycznej Charles'a de Gaulle'a*, Warszawa 2005, p. 34.

and getting revenge in a „the war of retaliation” (*guerre de revanche*) was becoming popular among the French youth¹⁰. On the other hand, the same Frenchmen belonging to the generation of the so-called „revanchists”¹¹, displayed certain admiration and respect (usually concealed) towards the German nation, above all due to its achievements in the field of technology and science. The admiration was so great, that it found expression in a popular saying: „learn from the enemy, to beat him with his own methods next time” (*Apprendre de l’adversaire et le vaince la prochaine fois selon ses propres méthodes*)¹².

Charles de Gaulle also seemed to follow the above mentioned adage. The unequivocally negative attitude of the French nation towards the neighbor from the other side of the Rhine did not prevent the future President of the Fifth Republic from developing a rational perception of the problem. Sensing a future conflict with the „eternal enemy” he attempted to learn more about it. To this end, he took many trips to Germany (especially in the border region of Schwarzwald), during which he not only practiced his German-language skills but also learned about the German people. De Gaulle also knew and even valued German literature¹³.

The confrontation with Germany, „coveted” by many Frenchmen, began in 1914. While serving in the army, de Gaulle was wounded during the battle of Verdun and was taken into captivity by the Germans¹⁴. De Gaulle devoted the time that he spent in the POW camp in Ingolstadt¹⁵ to close observation and an attempt to gain an even deeper understanding of the mentality, the weaknesses and the strengths of the German people, as well as to improving German language skills¹⁶. He presented his observations in a book published in 1924 entitled *La discorde chez l’ennemi (Discord among the enemy)*. In this lucid work, he has made many accurate observations about the German people, some of which were later confirmed¹⁷.

With regard to his attitude towards the Germans expressed in the above mentioned book, de Gaulle, on the one hand talks about the Germans as a „valiant

¹⁰ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹¹ More on the idea of revanchism: R. Poidevin, J. Bariéty, *op. cit.*, p. 109–112.

¹² Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Jan Gerhard invokes a statement that de Gaulle supposedly made to one of his colleagues: „I joined *Saint-Cyr* (military academy – author’s note), in order to reclaim Alsace and to impress Clarisse”. quoted after: J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 28.

¹⁵ Charles de Gaulle spent 32 months in captivity. He made five attempts to escape, each of which resulted in being transferred to a different POW camp. After the last attempt de Gaulle was placed in a penal camp located in the fortress of Ingolstadt. quoted after: *ibidem*, p. 47.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

nation” (*une peuple vaillant*), with a „collective willingness to succeed” (*une volonté collective de vaincre*), „a stubbornness in strength” (*une obstination d’endurance*), and „an ability to suffer” (*une capacité de souffrir*) which, according to de Gaulle, allowed the Germans to gain recognition but also to shake (and amaze) their enemies, and which won this nation the „tribute of history” (*l’hommage de l’ Histoire*)¹⁸.

On the other hand, de Gaulle criticizes the Prussian command staff for its „characteristic penchant for over scaled projects” (*„Le gout caracteristique des entreprises démesurés”*), the „desire to extend their personal influence at any price” (*la passion e’entendre, coute que coute, leur puissance personnelle*) and the „contempt for the limits designated by the human experience, the common sense and the law” (*le mepris des limites tracés par l’experience humaine, le bon sens et la loi*)¹⁹. He accuses admiral Alfred von Tripitz²⁰, who he calls a „quintessential Junker and an old Prussian” (*essentiellment junker et „vieille Prusse”*)²¹, of starting an unlimited submarine war in 1917, which prompted the United States to join the conflict (and led to Germany’s defeat). De Gaulle contrasts Tripitz with then-chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg (with whom Tripitz was in conflict), who he considered to be a „a jurist and a democrat” (*juriste et démocrate*)²², a man of honor, who was nonetheless too weak to overpower the Prussian generals²³.

Despite the fact that the events of the interwar period did not offer any grounds for optimism with regard to the Franco-German relationship, it seems that Charles Bloch was correct in his assessment, that in de Gaulle’s works from this period we can notice signals indicating that he was aware of the need for a peaceful arrangement between France and Germany²⁴. This change is primarily confirmed by the fact that de Gaulle analyzed the reasons for the Franco-German antagonism in the book *Vers l’arméé de métier (Towards a professional army)*

¹⁸ Ch. de Gaulle, *La discorde chez l’ennemi*”, Paris 1944, p. VII.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. VIII, de Gaulle saw the symptoms of such attitude among the Prussian generals i.a. in their adoption of Nietzsche’s „philosophy of the superhuman”, which he of course criticizes. quoted after: *ibidem*

²⁰ Alfred von Tripitz: German admiral, creator and commander of the German Imperial Navy. More on Alfred von Tripitz, see: P. Wiczorkiewicz, *Wstęp*, [in:] A. von Tripitz, *Wspomnienia*, Warszawa 1997, p. 3–9.

²¹ Ch. de Gaulle, *La discorde chez l’ennemi...*, p. 27. As a side note, it should be added, that de Gaulle’s later perception of the German nation will be characterized by pointing to the differences and identifying (which was perhaps to some extent „wishful thinking”) the antagonisms between the individual „German peoples”, especially between the „evil Protestant Prussians” and the „good Catholic Rhinelanders”.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ More: *ibidem*, p. 27–38

²⁴ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

published in 1934. In the book the general notes, that in the absence of a clear geographical barrier between the „two races” (*les deux races*) a „constant osmosis” (*l'osmose perpetuelle*) is always taking place, which strengthens the bilateral relations. Despite the development of these relations, the „Gallo-Germanic” (or later the German-French) border is considered by de Gaulle as „the edge of a wound (*la blessure d'une levre*), which is constantly bleeding. De Gaulle sees the reasons for this state of affairs mainly in the differences dividing the two nations. In an exceptionally colorful description he states, that the conflict is largely fueled by differences or „opposition of temperaments” (*l'opposition des temperaments*).

He uses oxymorons and writes about the French as a nation „with so much order in its mind and so little in its activities”, calling them „the logicians who doubt everything”, „the hard-working nonchalants” and „the colonizing stay-at-homes”. He wonders how the French, who on one hand „are the lovers of the Alexandrine, the frock coat and the Royal Garden” and on the other hand „are sloppy Jacobines cheering: long live the Emperor”, that is, how an unsteady, mobile and contradictory nation is supposed to be understood by the Germanic people? The Germanic people that de Gaulle sees as „natural born artists with no sense of taste”, „engineers, who remained feudal”, „bellicose fathers of families”, „persecutors who want to be loved”, „separatists, who are ready to subordinate at their rulers' beck and call”, and who are „a combination of powerful but murky, turbulent instincts” focusing on „the power of nature that they care most about”. The general sees Germany as a country that is at times „a sublime and boggy ocean, from which the fishing net alternately brings out either monsters or treasures”²⁵. In the assessment of the author of this article, this exceptionally poetic description of both nations indicates, that de Gaulle was perfectly aware of the negative characteristics determining the weakness of the French and also felt a respectful fear towards the eastern neighbors resulting from their strength and their certain unpredictability.

Analyzing the historical aspect of the Franco-German relationship de Gaulle notes that successive French governments and rulers, aware of their weakness in relation to Germany, tried to eliminate the threat from the neighbor not only through military force but also through all sorts of behind-the-scenes activities, such as promoting all kinds of „clienteles and interest groups” in the German states. According to de Gaulle, these activities were meant to utilize what he sees as the natural „Germanic tendencies towards clannishness” and forming separate groups. The goal of such measures was to prevent the unification of the Germans into one powerful state, which would sooner or later result in an attack of the „whole of German might” against France. De Gaulle was aware, however, that

²⁵ Ch. de Gaulle, *Vers l'arméé de métier*, Paris 1944, p. 18–22, cf. J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 49.

this tactic, which mixed power and intrigue, and utilized, for example, the rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns, has been exhausted in the 20th century (when as he himself said „national facts” became the most important political facts)²⁶.

De Gaulle also notes that in the course of the mutual conflicts, the victories achieved one time by the Gauls (the French) and another time by the Germanics (the Germans) „have not resolved or satisfied anything” (*n’ont rien tranché ni rien assouvi*). Using his characteristic metaphors, he compares the two antagonized countries to „wobbly wrestlers” (*des lutteurs chancelants*) who seem to come closer when they lose their balance, but start attacking each other again once they regain it.

In the same book de Gaulle points to the divisions existing in Germany, but according to Jan Gerhard, he does not believe that they can be utilized²⁷. He writes about „Bavarians for whom the Prussian dominance is onerous, Catholic Rhinelanders for whom life is hard under the rule of Prussian officials, or Hamburg’s merchants forced to endure the same regime as the Pomeranian Junkers”. These varied communities, pressure and interest groups could lead to the development of many centrifugal tendencies in Germany. However, it is precisely this specter of anarchy (*„cette menace d’anarchie”*) that pushes the German Empire towards great projects. De Gaulle speaks of Bismarck, who is supposed to be the first to understand that the condition for Germany’s unity are great initiatives and outward expansion, the benefits of which help in bearing the sacrifices²⁸.

Going back to the period immediately after the First World War, it must be stated that as an intelligent man, reasonably assessing the international situation, de Gaulle knew very well how weak France was after the great war. In order to ensure peaceful reconstruction, it was necessary to pacify Germany, which still remained the greatest threat to France. One can guess that de Gaulle accepted Maurice Barrés’ idea of making Germany a federal state with a weak central government concentrated in the West, and namely in the Rhineland region. This was supposed to be a *sine qua non* condition for the beginning of the Franco-German reconciliation process²⁹. It should also be noted that in the book *„Memoirs of hope”* de Gaulle criticizes the French government for giving up on the reparations after the First World War, which „should have provided us with the funds to industrialize the country, and thus to compensate for our huge loss of life and material losses”³⁰.

²⁶ E. Dominik, *Charles de Gaulle: polityk i wizjoner*, Warszawa 2001, p. 57.

²⁷ J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 100.

²⁸ Ch. de Gaulle, *Vers l’armée de métier...*, p. 18–22.

²⁹ R. Poidevin, J. Bariéty, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

³⁰ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei*, Warszawa 1974, p. 202.

In light of the fact that the weakening of Germany after the First World War was not strong enough and did not last long enough, already in 1925 de Gaulle published an article in *Revue militaire française* in which he proposed securing France against an attack from the East through the creation of a system of fortifications on the border with Germany (which was later actually implemented as the so-called *Maginot Line*). He became further convinced about the inevitably approaching new confrontation with Germany during his military mission in Trier in the years 1927–1928, when he noticed that many Germans wanted revenge for the humiliation caused by the Treaty of Versailles and that the German Army (*Reichswehr*) was not as weak as it was commonly perceived³¹. Therefore, according to de Gaulle, the peace concluded after the First World War between France and Germany was a „peace of exhaustion” (*paix d’épuisement*) and not a „peace of reconciliation and harmony” (*paix d’entente*) and concealed „unfulfilled ambitions, hatred, national animosities more vibrant than ever”³².

On the eve of the Second World War de Gaulle wrote that German unity „supported by our illusions” (*favorisé par nos illusions*), „sealed by our failures” (*scellé par nos desastres*), and „confirmed by our haste in limiting the last victory”³³ (*confirmé par notre hâte à limiter la récente victoire*), meant that the same colossus began to once again turn to the West with similar strength and without delay³⁴.

From de Gaulle’s above statements we can easily reconstruct his perception of the German nation, the Franco-German relations and their assessment before the outbreak of the Second World War. Above all, he was of the opinion that Germany, as a bellicose nation which is untamed but on the other hand able to organize and subordinate itself for the purpose of expansion, is a constant threat to the French who are contradictory and too disorderly. De Gaulle would like to see the development of regional particularism in Germany (he would be glad to see the growth of antagonisms, for example, between the Rhinelanders and the Prussians) but he was aware that they were not as strong as in the previous times. In the opinion of the author of this article, de Gaulle’s statements regarding Germany are characterized by respect but also a certain degree of fear arising from the awareness of France’s weakness in confrontation with Germany. It should also be noted that de Gaulle made a correct assessment of the two nations. This assessment was very important as it became the basis for France’s approach to Germany after the Second World War.

³¹ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 114, It is worth noting that in 1929 de Gaulle concluded that Germany would soon occupy Austria, attack Poland and attempt to reclaim Alsace and Lorraine.

³² Ch. de Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets: 1905–1918*, Paris 1980, p. 536, quoted after: E. Dominik, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³³ More on the attitude of the Americans and the British towards Germany after the First World War in: *ibidem*, s. 117–118; J. Baszkiewicz, *Francja w Europie*, Wrocław 2006, p. 61–62.

³⁴ Ch. de Gaulle, *Vers l’armée de métier...*, p. 22.

De Gaulle's concepts after the Second World War

The well-known history of the outbreak and the course of the Second World War proves the validity of the concerns that de Gaulle presented towards Germany in the interwar period. The year 1945 brought the much desired peace to the world and to France, but the end of the war did not mean the end of de Gaulle's worries in relation to the neighbor beyond the Rhine. Even before the end of the war, speaking to the Consultative Assembly, he described the Germans in the following manner: „a great nation, that is constantly seeking war because conquest is its only dream; a nation able to make incredible efforts and bear the greatest sacrifices in order to crush other nations; a nation always ready to enthusiastically follow, also in crime, those who promise conquests – that is how the German nation is”³⁵. It has been this way especially since it was overwhelmed by the ambition and the iron hand of Prussia on the ruins of the old Habsburg Empire”³⁶. The above fragment once again proves that the essence of de Gaulle's perception of the German people has not changed in relation to his previous views. In addition, we can once again notice the general's aversion towards the Prussians, the „Protestant militarists” who – as we know – he blamed for German expansionism.

However the post-war Germany, defeated and deprived of the eastern territories (which was likely very important for de Gaulle, as the „evil Prussian spirit” supposedly originated from there), was unable to undertake any aggressive initiatives against its neighbors for a long time. In my assessment, de Gaulle predicted that the defeated Germany will attempt to peacefully settle its relations with the victors. However, due to concerns over the „immutability” of the German bellicose nature, de Gaulle believed that until Germans take a permanent „path of peace and reason”, France should act as if „Germany continues to be a threat”³⁷. I believe that de Gaulle was afraid of a repeat of the situation after World War I, when revanchist and revisionist tendencies quickly developed among the German people following the „great humiliation of Versailles”.

Therefore since de Gaulle continued to see the risk of a resurgence of the „Germanic lust for domination”, it was necessary to undertake all possible measures to ensure that the „Germanic demons are not able to rise to power again”³⁸. Perhaps he remembered Winston Churchill's famous statement: „*The*

³⁵ De Gaulle saw the sources of German expansionism also in the German science, culture and art. The philosophy of Nietzsche, the music of Wagner or the dramas of Goethe were supposed to be elements conducive to the creation of a system in which the strengthening of German might was „both a right and an obligation”. More information: E. Dominik, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³⁶ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne*, Warszawa 1968, p. 343.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

³⁸ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 212.

Hun is always either at your throat or at your feet”³⁹. In accordance with this saying, but also with the concepts that France tried to pursue after the First World War, he wanted to weaken Germany as much as possible⁴⁰.

Therefore, one of the most important problems – if not the most important problem – faced by de Gaulle at the end of the Second World War and immediately after, was to develop his own concept for the future of Germany and to promote it among the so-called „Big Three”, in order to secure the Hexagon against the possible next aggression, so that France could safely rebuild from the war destruction⁴¹. This is confirmed by de Gaulle’s words in „*Memoirs of hope*”: „To live once again in an already shaping world full of dangers, under the threat of war caused by a neighbor who so often showed a penchant for aggression in the past, who has war in its blood, would be impossible for our country to reconcile with economic development, political stability, moral balance, and without them any effort would prove futile”⁴².

Aware of the „old-new” threat, de Gaulle decided to appeal to France’s long-standing tradition of actions aimed towards the institutional division of Germany and the creation of an entity on the German-French border, which would constitute a buffer between the two neighbors. Stating that it is necessary to „put an end to the existence of a centralized Reich” de Gaulle advocated for Germany to return to the system existing before 1871 (that is, prior to unification under the leadership of Prussia), because he saw the existence of a centralized Reich, subordinating the individual German states, as a source of German imperialism, much like the Prussians themselves. In spite of the previously mentioned awareness of the possible exhaustion of the potential for regional particularism within Germany, and in the face of the emerging division of the country into West Germany and East Germany, de Gaulle decided to once again refer to the concept of the strongest possible division of Germany’s unity. He stated the following in relation to the regulation of the eastern neighbor’s future political regime: „Each of the states belonging to the Germanic national community would be able to exist independently, to govern itself in its own way, to be guided by its own interests, and this would provide a great chance that the federation created by them will not seek to subjugate its neighbors”⁴³.

In addition to the above mentioned idea of breaking up the Reich into a federation or even a confederation of many states, the second pillar of the Gaullist

³⁹ These words were spoken by Winston Churchill in a speech before the Joint Session of Congress on 19 May 1943.

⁴⁰ S. Parzymies, *Przyjaźń z rozsądku Francja i Niemcy w Nowej Europie*, Warszawa 1994, p. 17.

⁴¹ More information: Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne...*, p. 185.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 52.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

doctrine of eliminating the German threat involved the creation of a „buffer state” on the German-French border. This role was to be played by the region of Rhineland. This land, located along the German course of the Rhine river, separated France from other German states. Rhineland and its heartland in the Ruhr (addressed in the later part of the article) was of crucial importance for blocking any possible German invasion of France. The key importance of the Rhineland region was confirmed by de Gaulle’s statement regarding the issue of the German threat during his aforementioned speech to the Consultative Assembly: „We cannot imagine a settlement of this problem, if it would fail to provide elementary security, which nature itself placed on the banks of the Rhine – both for us, as well as for Belgium, the Netherlands, and to a large extent also for England”⁴⁴. We should also pay attention to the following quote from the „Memoirs of hope”: „The Rhine provinces, that is, the left bank of the Rhine river, are a borderland. Almost all invasions to the West always passed through this territory. This territory is also a natural border”⁴⁵.

De Gaulle spoke in a similar, and even further-reaching tone, during his visit to the Kremlin in 1944, stating that the entire Rhineland should belong to France⁴⁶. It seems, however, that de Gaulle was not thinking about an annexation of Rhineland (inhabited by Catholics, who were dearer to his heart, but were still Germans nonetheless), but rather about an economic, political and military dependence on the basis of occupation. This is confirmed by de Gaulle’s note addressed in April 1945 to the ministers of foreign affairs and war, concerning the occupation of Germany. In the note, speaking of the French occupation zone, he stated that „it should include both the territories of the Rhineland, that we will decide to break away from the Reich, as well as some territories on the right bank of the Rhine, that we anticipate to occupy for an indefinite period”⁴⁷.

De Gaulle therefore wanted Rhineland to be occupied by French, British, Belgian and Dutch troops. In addition (anticipating the emerging pro-European tendencies) he wanted it to be „associated with a grouping established by the Western countries”. Over time other German states were supposed to join this Rhineland, economically and culturally associated with the Western world⁴⁸. According to de Gaulle, in this way the „Germanic world” was supposed to regain its diversity and to join the Western world, losing the ability to wage war, but without losing the means for its own development⁴⁹. It should be noted that

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 62. In the same speech he also stated, however, that the Germans should be provided with an „absolutely peaceful future” so that a real unification of Europe is possible.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 423.

⁴⁶ J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 343.

⁴⁷ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne...*, p. 391.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 52–53.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

de Gaulle also emphasized the need for reconciliation, writing that in the process which he prepared for Rhineland, no part of the German territory would be annexed by France, which would contribute to a peace agreement⁵⁰.

A separate issue, although related to the problem of Rhineland, was that of the Ruhr, which is the industrial heartland of Germany. Since the problem of Prussian militarism was *de facto* solved⁵¹, it was also necessary to deprive the post-war Germany of its industrial base which produced the means for the invasions. In the „*Memoirs of hope*” de Gaulle stated: „the economic security of the whole of Western Europe is dependent on the Ruhr. If Germany had exclusive control over the coal production of 140 million tons per year, and the industry of the Ruhr area, it would regain its economic power, and also the means to become dangerous once again”⁵². During the above-mentioned conversation with Stalin about the future of the Ruhr, de Gaulle stated: „The Ruhr should be removed from the sovereignty of the German state and placed under international control, both in terms of administration and operation of mines and factories in the interest of peace”⁵³.

Focusing for a moment on the issue of Rhineland and the Ruhr area, it is worth to learn about the views of Konrad Adenauer, who was an architect of the German-French reconciliation alongside de Gaulle. This is all the more important since Adenauer was a Rhinelander, and had a considerable influence on the affairs of that region, serving for many years as the mayor of Cologne (the largest city in the region).

Adenauer’s biographer Henning Köhler argues, that „there can be no question” of a serious separatist movement in the Rhineland (and Palatinate)⁵⁴. If such a phenomenon existed at all, it was represented by narrow circles from large cities such as Cologne, Koblenz, Aachen or Mainz. The ideas of „Rhenish separatism” were certainly not popular among the masses⁵⁵. Konrad Adenauer also did not seem to be a supporter of this concept, although we could find some episodes in his political life in which he seemed to endorse this idea. However, according to the already mentioned Köhler, Adenauer’s references to Rhineland

⁵⁰ This refers to the Saar District – de Gaulle wanted for it to „establish itself as a separate state and join France in the field of economy, while retaining its German character” – quoted after: *ibidem*, p. 53. A similar solution was also proposed by Maurice Barrès.

⁵¹ This occurred through the annexation of the eastern regions of the Reich by Poland and the Soviet Union.

⁵² Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne...*, p. 423.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 337.

⁵⁴ Palatinate (*Pfalz*): a geographical region located (like Rhineland) in the Western tip of Germany.

⁵⁵ H. Köhler, *Adenauer a nadreński separatyzm* [in:] *Konrad Adenauer Człowiek, Polityk i Mąż stanu*, ed. H.P. Mensing, K. Ruchniewicz, Warszawa 2003, p. 16–17.

separatism and the creation of a separate state on the Rhine River were reactions to „hard but possible to overcome crises” in Germany and were meant to ensure that Rhineland finds a way to survive⁵⁶.

This was the case, for example, during the crisis caused by the Munich Putsch. At that time Adenauer was to declare that „the Rhenish state should remain within the boundaries of the Reich and should become independent of the Weimar constitution. It should be a powerful and prosperous state within the German confederation, equipped with power and with coal, which could dictate its will and influence the German policy on European peace. Maintaining this peace would be the main task of that state. The Rhenish state should have a parliament, a budget, a currency and diplomatic representations⁵⁷.

In spite of that it seems that calling Konrad Adenauer a „Rhenish separatist” would be incorrect⁵⁸. Adenauer never really wanted to create a Rhenish state separate from the „German community”. This is confirmed by the fact that in February 1919 during a meeting of influential politicians and mayors of Rhenish cities, he prevented the proclamation of an independent Rhineland Republic. On the contrary, he wanted the creation of a federal Reich in which a strong Rhineland⁵⁹ would weaken the position of Prussia, which was for him (like for de Gaulle) the center of nationalism, centralism and militarism, i.e. phenomena threatening the future of Germany⁶⁰.

Getting back to the main topic of these considerations, we should keep in mind that while de Gaulle wanted to weaken Germany and eliminate it as a threat, the idea of reconciliation between the German and the French nations was also close to him. At the end of the war, he was increasingly aware of „the inevitability of reconciliation” with Germany and he additionally started to notice the conditions for it to take place.

⁵⁶ More about Rhineland separatism: *ibidem*, p. 22–23

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ H. Köhler, *Adenauer: eine politische Biographie*, Frankfurt am Main 1994, p. 1002–1003. The only fact confirming Adenauer’s interest in the concept of a separate Rhenish state, was his support at the beginning of 1920s for the creation of a „republic of peace” which would consist of territories on both banks of the Rhine and which would include the economic heartland of Germany. With such strong foundations, this state would actually be able to prevent any possible war between France and Germany. However, following the signing of the peace treaty after the First World War Adenauer rejected its creation and deemed any contacts with the French as „decadent”, quoted after: H. Köhler, *Adenauer a nadreński separatyzm...*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ It should also be noted, that in the interwar period Adenauer did not accept the foreign policy carried out by the Prussian Gustav Stressemanna who wanted to continue Bismarck’s policy, according to which Germany was to be a country of the middle, between the East and the West. Even back then Adenauer advocated for consistent rapprochement with the West. quoted after: K. Ruchniewicz, *Adenauer a Europa Polityka europejska pierwszego kanclerza RFN (1949–1963)*, Warszawa 1991, p. 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

His journey around the French occupation zone was a significant event that guided him towards the recognition of the need for reconciliation with the Germans. Seeing the ruined German villages and towns de Gaulle concluded that „the aggressive Reich, which tried to obtain world domination three times within one generation, has been laid to rest. From now on, for many years the ambitions of the German nation and its policy objectives will inevitably focus on raising the standard of living and on reconstruction”⁶¹.

De Gaulle’s emerging conviction that the Germans renounced imperialism (which was, as previously indicated, the condition for France to cease treating Germany as an enemy) was strengthened by the fact that Germany was divided, and that the Soviet Union seized the territories from which the ideas of a need for „Lebensraum” originated⁶². De Gaulle’s turn to the peaceful path of reconciliation was evidenced by the words he uttered to general de Lattre de Tassigny (commander in chief of the French occupation forces in Germany). According to witnesses he said that there was no way to „make Europe” (*faire l’Europe*) without the participation of Germany. He uttered similar words in October 1945, during an official visit to the French occupation zone in Germany, stating that „the line connecting Western Europe runs here, it is the Rhine River passing through Strasbourg” (*Le lien de l’Europe occidentale, il est ici, il est le Rhin qui passe a Strasbourg*)⁶³. During a visit to Trier he told the local notables that „France is not here to take, but to resurrect life”, and in Mainz he told the local elites: „Everyone here, we all come from the same race. Today we find ourselves in a common circle of Europeans and Westerners. How many reasons we have to stick together from now on”⁶⁴. De Gaulle spoke in a similar vein during talks with the US President Harry Truman in August 1945. He noted that his duty was to adopt any measures to eliminate the German threat to the French, but that it was not the intention of the French government „to lead the German people to despair”, but that it wanted them to „live, prosper and even become closer to France”⁶⁵.

We should remember, however, that at the end of the Second World War, France was not able to impose its point of view on the so-called Big Three, and de Gaulle himself had to withdraw from politics in 1946⁶⁶. Of course, he con-

⁶¹ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne...*, p. 212.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 212.

⁶³ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁶⁴ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne...*, p. 225.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

⁶⁶ De Gaulle’s resignation from the post of prime minister of the interim government stemmed from his refusal to accept a return to the domination of political parties and his rejection of the „rule of the National Assembly”. More information: K.M. Ujazdowski, *V Republika Francuska Idee, Konstytucja, Interpretacje*, Kraków 2010, p. 73.

tinued to engage in the public discourse, but mainly focused on internal (discussion on France's future political system) rather than foreign affairs. It is worth noting, that he still maintained his opposition to the creation of a „centralized Reich”. During a press conference on 12 November 1947 he strongly advocated for „international control” of the Ruhr area. On the other hand, he supported German nation's participation in the Marshall Plan as that of „a people associated in a common effort of humanity and especially of Europe” (*hommes associes a l'effort commun de l'humanite... et surtout de l'Europe*). He was not particularly opposed (and we can suspect that he was probably supportive) to the emerging division of Germany into the East and the West⁶⁷. In a nutshell, just like the French government after World War I, de Gaulle wanted to bring about a situation where Germany would be weakened as much as possible and for as long as possible, in order to give France time to rebuild itself. On the other hand, he was aware that the future unification of the continent will not be possible without the participation of the Germans. A true and lasting peace could not be based on principles that were not accepted by the German people⁶⁸, as was the case in 1919.

As was already mentioned, however, the fate of post-war Germany did not depend on France⁶⁹. As J. Krasuski aptly noted, „de Gaulle claimed the right to play a role far exceeding France's real capabilities”⁷⁰. After the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany, de Gaulle, as a pragmatist, had to adjust his concepts to the new reality. A change in his perception of the German problem can be observed in the speech he gave on 25 September 1949 in Bordeaux, where he stressed the need for direct agreement between the French and the Germans: „The success or the failure of the creation of Europe (especially as England moves away) will depend on the possibility of a direct agreement between the Germanics and the Gauls” (*Il y aura ou il n'y aura pas d'Europe (d'autant plus que l'Angleterre s'en éloigne), suivant qu'un accord sans intermédiaire sera ou non possible entre Gemrains et Gaulois*)⁷¹. On 16 March 1950 he referred to the threat of Soviet Russia by comparing the Soviets to the Huns, and invoked the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains⁷² „where the united Franks, Gauls, Germanics and Romans led to the retreat of Attila” (*la victoire des Champs catalauniques*

⁶⁷ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁶⁸ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 212.

⁶⁹ In 1948 the Americans and the British put an end to the Gaullist idea of internationalization of the Ruhr region. quoted after: J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 409.

⁷⁰ S. Naruszewicz, *Konrad Adenauer Kanclerz i Europejczyk*, Białystok 2004, p. 152.

⁷¹ Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, t. II, Paris 1970, p. 309–310.

⁷² This refers to a battle fought on 20 June 451, in which the Romans under the command of Flavius Aetius, along with allies (Salian Franks, Burgundians, Saxons), defeated the Hun army led by Attila. More: D. Gazda, *Pola Katalaunijskie 451*, Warszawa 2005.

ou les Francs, les Gaulois, les Germains et meme les Romains reunis mirent en deroute Attila)⁷³. In the assessment of the author, the above statement can attest to de Gaulle's desire to create a European defense community (importantly, without the participation of USA), which would constitute a barrier against the threat from the Soviet Union. For this purpose he also accepted West Germany's military sovereignty obtained in 1955, the creation of the Bundeswehr and the integration of West Germany into the structures of NATO and the EEC⁷⁴.

We should also mention that in the second half of the 1950s both in the French society and in the West German society major changes occurred in terms of mutual perception. Young Frenchmen and Germans seemed to have an increasingly favorable view of the neighbor from the other side of the Rhine. The settlement of the status of the Saar district has also ended the territorial dispute between the two countries⁷⁵. The societal situation was becoming ripe for the process of reconciliation between the nations to begin. However, great politics, games between the powers, and visions of the unification of Western Europe were also at stake.

„Great politics”, „Grand France” and „the Great Reconciliation”

Charles de Gaulle returned to power, and at the same time, to great politics, on 1 June 1958⁷⁶. At this point he was already a man with defined views on the most important issues of France's public life, including the issues of foreign policy. He was also aware of the cold-war realities, which were determined by the American-Soviet rivalry. De Gaulle was opposed to this certain kind of „Soviet-American hegemony”⁷⁷. He correctly noted, that Europe stood to suffer the most from the cold war conflict. In his memoirs he concluded, that in a time when both the countries (the United States and the Soviet Union) have the means for mutual destruction, they will not decide to attack each other. He feared that their confrontation could take place in the territory of Europe. As a result of this state of affairs „for the Western European countries NATO was therefore no longer a guarantee of their existence. If, however, the effectiveness of protection is questionable, why should one entrust their fate to those who provide this protection?”⁷⁸. Of course, in de Gaulle's vision it was France that was supposed to

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 348–350.

⁷⁴ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

⁷⁶ More on the crisis caused by the war in Algeria, see: K.M. Ujazdowski, *op. cit.*, p. 74–75.

⁷⁷ E. Dominik, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁷⁸ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 245.

break the American-Soviet „dictate”⁷⁹. Therefore one of his first actions upon his return to power was to submit a memorandum to the United States and the United Kingdom, the goal of which was the inclusion of France into the „mainstream” of world politics⁸⁰.

In that memorandum, addressed on 17 September 1958 to the American President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, de Gaulle pointed out, that in the face of the current events and the tensions in the Middle East and in Asia, NATO, which was focused on the defense of the North Atlantic area, no longer corresponded to reality. He indicated the need for change and the establishment of a global organization, with the strategic participation of the USA, the UK and France, which would jointly make decisions concerning global security, military strategy, and (most importantly) the use of nuclear weapons⁸¹.

The main objective of this proposal was a reform of NATO’s structures to ensure they no longer limited France’s sovereignty, at the expense of the USA. Such a limitation of sovereignty was acceptable for France during the „hottest” days of the cold war but seemed unnecessary and even dangerous on the verge of a new period of détente between the USA and the Soviet Union. It should be noted, however, that de Gaulle did not want for France to withdraw from NATO, but for such reforms to take place, which would enable France to regain control of its own defense system. We should remember, that at that time foreign troops using special privileges were stationed in the territory of France, and additionally NATO authorities could make decisions about France’s defense without consulting the authorities in Paris⁸². For de Gaulle this situation was unacceptable and stood in contradiction to the idea of France’s independence.

The rejection of de Gaulle’s proposed „triumvirate” by the United States and the United Kingdom, led him to seek ways to strengthen France through relationships with the countries of continental Europe⁸³. A discussion of de Gaulle’s vision in relation to Europe is important, because it was an important factor in his policy towards West Germany⁸⁴.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 204.

⁸⁰ More on the memorandum: *ibidem*, p. 245–246; J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 68–69.

⁸¹ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁸² A. Szeptycki, *op. cit.*, p. 84–85.

⁸³ To everyone’s surprise he ratified the Treaties of Rome (which, after all, limited French sovereignty in the economic and political sphere). quoted after: Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁸⁴ De Gaulle’s approach to Germany may have been influenced by a letter that Heinrich Himmler wrote to him shortly before the German surrender, addressing him in the following words: „Knowing where you started, you deserve great respect, General De Gaulle. But what are you going to do now? Will you turn to the Anglo-Saxons? They will treat you as a satellite and you will lose your honor. Will you get together with the Soviets? They will subjugate France to their

De Gaulle's European policy was therefore aimed at establishing „a concert of European States”, so that their strengthening mutual ties would lead to increased solidarity⁸⁵. However, it opposed any centralization or attempts to create a „European nation”⁸⁶. According to de Gaulle, European countries (lead by the 6 founding states)⁸⁷ should primarily strive to create an economic community, so that the contacts resulting from it would contribute to mutual familiarization, intensification of relations and the development of the already mentioned solidarity. When it comes to any political community, it should be realized only through the privileged and regular consultations between the sovereign national governments⁸⁸.

The implementation of the Gaullist concept of Europe⁸⁹, consisting in a certain emancipation from the American domination, and establishing Europe as a „third force” in the international relations, required France to settle and strengthen its relations with Germany⁹⁰, because, as de Gaulle himself wrote about Germany (affirming the statements made immediately after the war), „such is their fate, that without them nothing can be built”⁹¹ and that „Europe has always relied on the agreement between the Germanic and Gallic peoples”⁹². For France West Germany was a key state needed to establish a political, military and economic bloc that would guarantee effective competition against the United States and the Soviet Union as well as pushing the English away from Europe⁹³.

law and will get rid of you. Really, the only way that can lead your people to greatness and independence, is an agreement with the defeated German”⁸⁴, quoted after: Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki wojenne...*, p. 181.

⁸⁵ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 211. We should also quote a fragment of de Gaulle's speech delivered on 18 March 1944 to the Consultative Assembly where he very clearly laid out his concept of Europe: „It seems to us, however, that for the old, renewed continent to be able to find a balance that corresponds to the conditions of our times, we need to create certain groupings, naturally without prejudice to the sovereignty of any of the states. From the point of view of France we think that a grouping created with our participation, based on an economic platform as broad as possible, would provide many benefits. Such a grouping, extended to Africa, remaining in close relations with the East, and notably the Arab countries rightfully seeking to unite their interests, and a grouping that would have the Channel, the Rhine River and the Mediterranean Sea as its arteries, would constitute a major world center for production, trade and security”, quoted after: J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 305–306

⁸⁶ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 211.

⁸⁷ This includes France, West Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

⁸⁹ More on the Gaullist concept of Europe see: A. Hall, *Charles de Gaulle*, Warszawa 2002, p. 365–367, and W.J. Szczepański, *op. cit.*, p. 130–134.

⁹⁰ A. Szeptycki, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁹¹ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 212.

⁹² G. Pompidou, *Pour rétablir une vérité*, Paris 1982, p. 76–77.

⁹³ J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 75.

The desire for reconciliation and cooperation with Germany also had another dimension. We should remember that de Gaulle was familiar with German resourcefulness and the pace with which that country was rising from the post-war ruins. While France struggled with economic problems⁹⁴ Germany was experiencing a period of prosperity known as the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle). However, it was not strong enough politically to be able to pursue ambitious international projects on its own. Therefore Jan Gerhard rightly concluded, that the metamorphosis in de Gaulle's approach to Germany was driven by France's search for a partner who would be easily controlled and who would not become too powerful. De Gaulle tried to take the initiative, stay ahead of the events, and take advantage of a moment when France was still able to impose its view of the mutual relations on Germany. He was also aware that Germany needed some kind of a „guarantor”, who would reintroduce it to the community of nations⁹⁵, and he wanted to take advantage of this.

In light of the above, de Gaulle presented a new approach towards the Eastern neighbor. Aware of the failure of the previously submitted concepts concerning the division of Germany, he opted for different conditions of the „reset” in German-French relations. Firstly, Germany was to recognize and respect its borders, including border on the Oder and Neisse and respect the independence and integrity of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Secondly, Germany should be a part of a „European confederation” that would ensure the security of all the countries from „the Atlantic to the Urals”⁹⁶. Thirdly and finally, Germany was to maintain „preferential ties” with France (*les liens préférentiels*)⁹⁷. There is no doubt that de Gaulle's desire for reconciliation with Germany was influenced by the fact that it was divided, weakened and continuously threatened by the Soviet Union, which fits into the previously mentioned idea of establishing alliances with German states that are divided and do not pose a threat to France⁹⁸.

The final confirmation of the desire to establish closer Franco-Germanic relations were the words spoken by de Gaulle to France's new ambassador in Bonn, Francois Seydoux: „Mr. Ambassador, I would like for France to have cordial relations with all the peoples of the world. But there is one nation with whom these relations should be as cordial as possible, and it is the German nation. Of course a lot will depend on chancellor Adenauer, but if I find in this

⁹⁴ This mainly included the very weak position of the French currency (in 1958 one US dollar was equal to 420 French francs), inflation reaching 13%, constant budget issues and a negative trade balance, quoted after: R. Bielecki, *op. cit.*, s. 211.

⁹⁵ J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 71.

⁹⁶ More information: A. Pazik, *Między pragmatyzmem a idealizmem polityka europejska gen. Charles'a de Gaulle'a w latach 1958–1969*, Toruń 2012, p. 62 et seq.

⁹⁷ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 212–213.

⁹⁸ A. Szeptycki, *op. cit.*, p. 62–63.

great man tendencies that correspond to mine, we will achieve great things together”⁹⁹.

The then-chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Konrad Adenauer had slightly different motivations, which nonetheless led him towards the same goal, that is, a German-French rapprochement. Already in 1948, Adenauer told a representative of the Reuters agency: „With regard to Germany and France I can only repeat what I already said at various occasions. I see the lasting good relations and reestablishment of neighborly contacts between France and Germany as an important condition for the settlement of relations in Europe”¹⁰⁰. For the German chancellor one of the most important reasons for rapprochement with France was the desire to ensure security for his country, in light of the threat from the Soviet Union¹⁰¹. There is no doubt that Adenauer feared that France and the Soviet Union might sign an agreement or establish an alliance that would be very dangerous for Germany, which could be surrounded by unfriendly states both from the West and from the East. Adenauer’s fear of a possible Franco-Russian alliance was confirmed by his statement during one of the conversations with de Gaulle: „Both nations (the French and the Germans – author’s note) must be tied together so strongly, that even many years from now neither the French nor the German government is able to independently unite with the Soviet Union”. (*Beide Völker müssten so stark verklammert sein, dass auch in vielen Jahren weder eine französische noch eine deutsche Regierung mit der Sowjetunion zusammengehen könne*)¹⁰². We should also mention that Adenauer similarly feared that the United States and the Soviet Union would reach an agreement over West Germany’s head (e.g. due to the way in which the United States and the United Kingdom resolved the Berlin crisis, which he saw as unfavorable towards West Germany)¹⁰³. In addition Bonn saw the alliance with France as a chance for Germany to get out of isolation and to do away with the historical burden of the past. However, the approach towards the USA represented a clear conflicts of interest between West Germany and France, which would have a bearing on the process of reconciliation. As was already mentioned, the French wanted to break the American hegemony to which Germany could not agree¹⁰⁴.

The meeting between Adenauer and de Gaulle which took place on 14 and 15 September 1958 in Colombey-les-deux-Eglises, the family residence of the French president, is considered a historical milestone in the Franco-German rec-

⁹⁹ J. Lacoutre, *De Gaulle 2. Le Politique 1944–1959*, Paris 1985, p. 636.

¹⁰⁰ K. Ruchniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁰¹ H. Köhler, *Adenauer: eine politische Biographie...*, p. 1189.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 1192.

¹⁰³ K. Ruchniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 32. More on Adenauer’s fears, see: K. Adenauer, *Erinnerungen 1955–1959*, Stuttgart 1978, p. 409–415.

¹⁰⁴ More information: W.J. Szczepański, *op. cit.*, p. 166–167.

conciliation¹⁰⁵. During this meeting, de Gaulle said to Adenauer, that bearing in mind the horrifying wars caused by „German desire for domination”, the French nation cannot neglect the precautionary measures which are supposed to keep it safe in the future. He also said, however, that in light of the current situation and the challenges faced by Europe, especially with regard to its future unification, cooperation between Bonn and Paris is essential, and attempts should be made to reverse the course of history, so as to bring about a genuine reconciliation of the German and French nations, combining their efforts and talents¹⁰⁶. As a side note it should be said, that during this meeting the question of German reunification was also addressed. During the conversation de Gaulle noted with satisfaction that Adenauer, a „traditional, Catholic Rhinelander”, was in no hurry for West Germany to annex the „Prussian, Protestant and Socialist complex”. Of course, he did not intend to give up on reunification on behalf of Germany, but he shied away from specifying any deadlines for that¹⁰⁷. We should remember, however, that even before the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany Adenauer strongly argued against any political division of Germany¹⁰⁸.

Another important step on the path to reconciliation was de Gaulle’s visit to Germany on 4–9 September 1962. Going to Germany de Gaulle could have many concerns about how he would be received by the German people. After all he was aware that his return to power was met with a negative response in Germany. He was seen as a nationalist who would attempt to stop all efforts towards European integration and due to his fierce fight for the French national interests the press dubbed him „Jean d’Arc”¹⁰⁹.

However, de Gaulle’s visit to Germany turned out to be a great triumph. People no longer saw him as an enemy from the Second World War, but treated him with respect and kindness. In reciprocation for the warm reception, during an official speech de Gaulle spoke of „the great German nation with its significant contribution to European civilization” (*au grand peuple allemand avec sa contribution considerable a la civilisation europeéne*). This trip, therefore,

¹⁰⁵ More on the meeting with Adenauer – Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 214 et seq., K. Adenauer, *op. cit.*, p. 424 et seq., H. Köhler, *Adenauer: eine politische Biographie...*, p. 1004 et seq.

¹⁰⁶ Ch. de Gaulle, *Pamiętniki nadziei...*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 217. With regard to the issue of German reunification it is worth to quote the words spoken during a press conference on 25 March 1959: „The unification of the two parts of the country into one Germany, which would be completely free, seems to us to be the natural destiny of the German nation, provided that it will not question its present borders in the West, East, North and South, and that it will try to one day join a legally operating Europe-wide organization for cooperation, freedom and peace”, quoted after: J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 81.

¹⁰⁸ During one of the meetings of the CDU’s zone board, he was to adamantly state, that the German nation submits its inalienable right to establish a political unity of the whole of Germany. quoted after: S. Naruszewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁹ H. Köhler, *Adenauer: eine politische Biographie...*, p. 1001.

made de Gaulle widely popular among the German public and is considered a big step in the reconciliation between the two nations¹¹⁰. As *Die Welt* wrote at the time, the secret of the success was that „his extended hand, his great conciliatory gestures, eradicated everything from the past which thus far seemed to be ineradicable” (*dass seine ausgestreckte Hand, seine grösse Geste der Versöhnung etwas von der Vergangenheit bewältigt, die bisher gemeinhin als unbewältigt galt*)¹¹¹.

In the assessment of the author, the visit to Germany was only a confirmation of societal processes that have already taken place. The early 1960s were marked by a sharp increase in economic exchange between France and West Germany to the extent that they became the most important economic partners for each other. Both the French and the German public opinion accepted and considered (albeit sometimes with reserve) the former enemy as a partner and even a friendly country. An excellent example of the positive development of the French-German relations was the increase in tourism between the two countries (especially when it comes to youth)¹¹².

The process of German-French political reconciliation culminated with the French-German cooperation treaty (known as the Élysée Treaty) signed on 22 January 1963. It provided for periodic meetings of the heads of state and the governments (at least once a year), the foreign and defense ministers (at least once every 3 months), the Chiefs of the General Staff and ministers of youth affairs (at least once every 2 months) as well as senior officials of the two ministries of foreign affairs (at least once per month). In addition, the treaty stipulated that the two governments would consult each other before taking any important decisions in the field of foreign policy and, where possible, develop common positions. When it comes to defense cooperation, it was determined, that the two countries would seek to develop common tactical and strategic concepts and that cooperation in the field of armaments would be established¹¹³.

We should keep in mind, however, that the „political strength” of the Elysée Treaty has been weakened, as it was ratified in Bonn along with a preamble significantly affecting its meaning. The resolution adopted by the Bundestag on 16 May 1963, stated that the goal of the Federal Republic of Germany is „to maintain and strengthen the alliance between the free nations and especially the close cooperation between Europe and the United States of America”. In addition, the preamble advocated for the development of political cooperation among the countries of Western Europe, which would include the United Kingdom, and

¹¹⁰ Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹¹¹ H. Köhler, *Adenauer: eine politische Biographie...*, p. 1194.

¹¹² Ch. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹¹³ A. Szeptycki, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

the abolition of customs barriers between Western Europe and the USA¹¹⁴. The call for increasingly close relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States was emphasized even more strongly by West Germany's new chancellor Ludwig Erhard¹¹⁵, which led to new divergences between the two neighbors. However, in spite of that the Treaty of Elysee was still observed and cooperation was carried out at a level previously unknown in the history of the French-German relationship¹¹⁶.

As for de Gaulle, he often spoke on the topic of the eastern neighbor virtually until the end of his reign. In February 1965 he stated at a press conference, that the final solution of the German problem will take place when an evolution in the direction of progress and freedom occurs in Russia, and its satellite states will be able to play an independent role in Europe. Then the regulations concerning Germany, adopted with the participation of neighbors from the East and from the West, will also address the issues of borders and armaments, and the economic community of Western Europe will be extended to the political and defense sphere, thereby guaranteeing a new balance on the continent¹¹⁷. The above passage proves that de Gaulle had the ability of predicting the future, because as we know the above concepts have been to some extent realized after 1989.

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¹¹⁴ W.J. Szczepanski, *op. cit.*, p. 222. On the problems between France and Germany following the conclusion of the Elysée Treaty see: J. Gerhard, *op. cit.*, t. II, p. 241.

¹¹⁵ On the conflict between the „Gaullists” and „Atlanticist” see: W.J. Szczepański, *op. cit.*, p. 223–224, and R. Poidevin, J. Bariéty, *op. cit.*, p. 335–340.

¹¹⁶ More information: R. Bielecki, *op. cit.*, p. 262–263.

¹¹⁷ S. Parzymies, *op. cit.* p. 51.

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Summary

The presented article attempts to describe and analyse the evolution of Charles de Gaulle's ideas regarding the relations between states and nations of France and Germany. Beginning with the first look towards the eastern neighbour, through the events of interwar period until the time of de Gaulle's presidency, the article presents ideas and demands formulated by de Gaulle in the issue of franco-german relations. The article also describes the process of evolution of Gaullist approach, from the desire of the vengeance on Germans to the belief in the need of reconciliation of two nations. The article intends to prove that the franco-german relations (as viewed by de Gaulle), just like gaullism itself, had one pragmatic object: to ensure „the greatness of France”. The last object of the article is to disenchant the „romantic history” of franco-german post-war reconciliation. To achieve this object the article analyses the views and postulates of German chancellor Konrad Adenauer the second great architect of franco-german reconciliation.

Keywords: Charles de Gaulle, gaullism, Germany, France, Konrad Adenauer, reconciliation, franco-german relations

RELACJE FRANCUSKO-NIEMIECKIE W MYŚLI GAULLISTOWSKIEJ

Streszczenie

Przedstawiony artykuł podejmuje próbę opisanego i analizy ewolucji koncepcji Charles'a de Gaulle'a na stosunki Francji i Niemiec oraz narodów: francuskiego i niemieckiego. Począwszy od pierwszego spojrzenia w kierunku wschodniego sąsiada, poprzez wydarzenia okresu międzywo-

jennego, aż do czasu prezydentury de Gaulle'a przedstawione zostały założenia i postulaty, jakie formułował odnośnie do relacji francusko-niemieckich. Wykazany został również proces ewolucji, jaką przeszły koncepcje de Gaulle'a na przestrzeni lat; od chęci wzięcia rewanżu na Niemcach aż do przekonania o potrzebie pojednania narodów. Artykuł ma udowodnić również tezę, iż relacje francusko-niemieckie podobnie jak cała doktryna gaullistowska w sposób pragmatyczny miały realizować jeden cel: zapewnić Francji „wielkość”. Wykorzystane zostały również spostrzeżenia i koncepcje drugiego z architektów pojednania francusko-niemieckiego – Konrada Adenauera. Zapewni to realizację ostatniego z celów niniejszego artykułu, jakim jest swoiste „odczarowanie” romantycznej historii o francusko-niemieckim pojednaniu poprzez wskazanie pragmatycznych celów obu państw, które leżały u jego podstaw.

Słowa kluczowe: Charles de Gaulle, gaullizm, Niemcy, Francja, Konrad Adenauer, pojednanie, relacje francusko-niemieckie