

## **“Hitler’s Cosmopolitan Bastard: Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and his Vision of Europe” by Martyn Bond**

Martyn Bond introduces us to the world of Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, whose passion for Europe and “Pan Europa” was woven around an entire adult life dedicated to proselytising for a united Europe from leaving school in Vienna at the end of the first world war up to his death in 1972.

In his 20’s, against the backdrop of the polka-dot map of Europe and its colonies bequeathed by the Treaty of Versailles, RCK (as I shall refer to him) developed his vision of a unified Europe stretching from the Urals to the Atlantic, where nation would cease to go to war with nation, a continent coexisting alongside the other great power blocs in the world.

With plentiful detail and illustrations, Martyn Bond fluently describes RCK’s perspective on the changes in the contours of Europe - the rise and fall of Nazi Germany with Hitler’s dream of a German-dominated Europe, the fading away of the British Empire and the decline in the relative power of the United Kingdom, the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the building of integration in western Europe.

RCK’s model was the democratic federation where European states would co-operate and elements of sovereignty would be shared for the benefit of all. Excessive nationalism was what tore nations apart. RCK wrote his first book “Pan-Europa” in 1923, “designed to awaken a great political movement that at present is slumbering in all the peoples of Europe.” He founded the Pan-Europa Union movement in 1924, created its journal and from then on throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s held high profile congresses and ceaselessly preached, networked and wrote letters, books and articles promoting the cause of European unity.

As Martyn Bond describes, RCK did all this as a private citizen with no governmental or elected role. His networking in Europe and the USA, which continued into the years of the second world war and afterwards until his death, was of the highest order from Churchill to de Gaulle to Truman and almost every other politician whose influence he thought was valuable to the cause of a united Europe. He maintained a close, if somewhat strained, relationship with Jean Monnet, whose practical step by step approach to the task of building Europe was not one he felt sympathy for. He worked on the principle that politicians should buy into the whole concept and proceed from there.

In his excellent book, Martyn Bond charts the development of the idea of European unity as it started to take flesh after the second world war - Marshall Plan, OEEC, Treaty of London, Council of Europe, European Movement, Schuman Plan, European Coal & Steel Community, Messina Conference, Treaty of Rome and founding of the EEC, creation of EFTA, British applications to join the EEC and de Gaulle’s vetoes, and finally in the year of RCK’s death Britain’s decision to join the EEC. Each is linked to RCK’s ideas and advocacy.

The withdrawal of the UK from EU membership would have disappointed but maybe not have surprised RCK. He would probably have concluded that the lack of effort put into educating the British public about Europe and the EU, the erratic approach of British politicians to playing a leading role in Europe and a longer and deeper overhang of empire, victory in war and exceptionalism had all contributed to Britain not yet being ready to accept what he saw as its rightful place in the world and in Europe. His conclusion might have been that Britain needed more time to learn the consequences of insularity and the benefits of sharing sovereignty.

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