

Vance and Hegseth Make a Good Debut for the Trump Administration in Europe

By Conrad Black

The comments of Vice President Vance and Defense Secretary Hegseth in Europe last week were a refreshing elaboration on President Trump's well-known view that Europe, in both security and economic matters, has been standing over-complacently on the coattails of America.



Vice President Vance during the Munich Security Conference at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel, February 14, 2025
AP/Matthias Schrader

The vice president had been preemptively disparaged by the *bien pensants* of Western Europe, like practically every American statesman since President Franklin D. Roosevelt, (whom they had the decency to recognize as a savior), with the exceptions of Presidents Kennedy and Obama, who seduced Europe – JFK by charm and elegance and Mr. Obama for essentially reasons of ancestry.

Mr. Vance had been the subject of a pompous public discussion by pundits and officious Euro-federalists about his status as a former hillbilly. After an eloquent and affecting condolence on the previous day's terrorist attack at Munich, which was warmly received, the vice president expressed his concerns

about the state of democracy and tolerance in the institutions not only of the European Union but of that great source and bastion of the concept of human liberty, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Vance cited the example of a 51-year-old physiotherapist, Adam Smith-Connor, an Army veteran whom British prosecutors charged "with the heinous crime of standing 50 meters from an abortion clinic and silently praying for three minutes – not obstructing anyone, not interacting with anyone, just silently praying on his own." The accused told police he was praying "for the unborn son he and his former girlfriend had aborted years before," Mr. Vance said.

This was obviously an exceptional event and even in a Great Britain which has had six consecutive failed prime ministers in 11 years, the sensible core of opinion in that country must include a majority that would not approve of such an official foray into thought-crime. The vice president diplomatically declined to take the issue further, but the underlying problem, in Britain and in much of Europe, and to a much lesser extent in the United States and Canada, is that our peoples have become too dyspeptic and personally selfish to inconvenience themselves by procreating at a rate that meets the demographic requirements of our society.

As a result we admit, legally or otherwise, immigration on a scale that maintains the arithmetical fiction of economic growth while deliberately raising the cost-of-living-shelter and other necessities for citizens of modest income, and reducing the compensation for less skilled work because of an artificially created overabundance of unskilled workers. Then, the legitimate protests of the citizens thus harmed by this reckless immigration policy are defamed and unjustly prosecuted as racist.

The overwhelming majority of them are not racist at all, they are citizens trying to make their way in a society that is misgoverned to a point of economic stagnation, that afflicts

most of Western Europe, compounded by reckless policies of immigration. The vice president was diplomatic in not pursuing to its roots the episodes that he cited that raise concerns about the status of democracy in much of Europe.

He did not, with good reason, inflict upon his audience the even more dangerous and dishonest policy of consecutive previous American administrations of both parties, of deliberately permitting the entry into the country of large numbers of unskilled immigrants to enable the Democratic Party to ignore the constitutional requirement that only citizens can vote and attack the traditional Republican majorities in southern and south western states, and in perfect bipartisanship, simultaneously to assist Republican employers in ignoring minimum wage and working condition laws and exploiting these legally vulnerable undocumented migrants. All the pious bipartisan claims to "comprehensive immigration reform" by Senator McCain and others over many years were just hypocrisy.

Mr. Vance also touched upon the recent European cancellation of an election result in Romania because of unsubstantiated and implausible concerns of material interference in the result by Russian digital election advertising. He pointed out that not only is the evidence of that fuzzy, but if the popular will can be overturned by such a trivial and inconsequential level of intervention, "the democracy was not very strong in the first place."

Mr. Vance pointed out for what must have been for many of his listeners the first time, the fact that in contemporary American politics, the president whom he serves and who selected him as Republican nominee, is the champion of constitutional democracy and individual rights in the United States, and not those who tampered with the electoral system and perverted the justice system in an attempt that the voters rejected, to rig and criminalize the political system.

Mr. Vance's point was that the greatest threat to democracy is domestic and not foreign enemies, and that perception is valid in Western Europe, as it is in North America. The United States has turned that corner in the right direction, but Europe hasn't.

Defense Secretary Hegseth was widely criticized for stating that Ukraine could not realistically expect to gain back all of the territory that it had lost to Russia, including the Crimea in 2014, and that it did not appear likely that it would immediately be joining the North Atlantic Treaty. These expressions of European concern were just posturing, since the Ukrainians have done extremely well and been courageous to hold the Russians to the relatively marginal territory they have seized, and the European NATO countries are no more ambitious than the Americans and Canadians are to supplement Ukraine's efforts with NATO ground forces in direct combat with Russia.

Most of the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty, and particularly Germany, have expressed reservations about an early admission of Ukraine to NATO. The outcome of the Ukraine War that the West desires will assure that Russia does not absorb Ukraine, but will also treat Russia in a way that encourages its post-war loosening of its embrace with China and resumption of productive relations with the West.

Salvaging 80 percent of Ukraine from the Russian onslaught will satisfy the first point, and Ukraine membership in NATO could indeed take place in the context of a comprehensive nonaggression pact between NATO and Russia including Russia's close affiliates such as Belarus.

This was a good debut in Europe for the Trump administration, along with the president's uplifting virtual address to the World Economic Forum at Davos – which thoroughly but politely debunked the organization he was addressing.

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