

Europe and the USA : partners and competitors

Autor(en): **Huise, Christopher**

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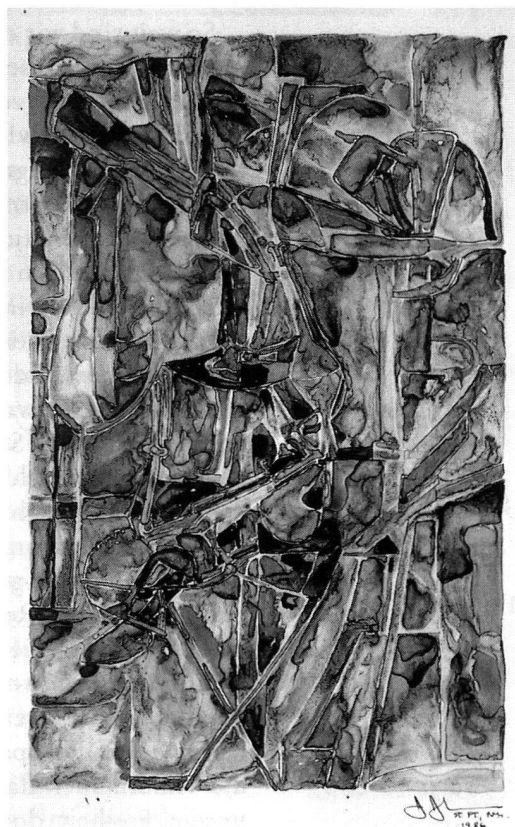
Christopher Hulse,
Botschafter Gross-
britanniens in Bern

EUROPE AND THE USA: PARTNERS AND COMPETITORS

«The Americans see the British as useful partners because of their EU membership and not despite it», says Christopher Hulse, British Ambassador in Switzerland. Robert Nef interviewed Christopher Hulse in Berne.

Robert Nef: Europeans tend to cherish many clichés about Americans. What are the prejudices you encounter among Europeans? What is your response to them?

Christopher Hulse: Some Europeans ascribe hegemonistic ambitions to the Americans. This is an outmoded view – if it was indeed ever valid. The Americans have for many years been encouraging the Europeans to do more for their own defence, for example. They are also strong supporters of European unification.



Jasper Johns, *Untitled*,
1986, Ohne Titel. Tusche
auf Kunststoff, 66 x 46 cm.
Besitz des Künstlers.

In the competition of systems, capitalism has clearly been victorious. Nevertheless, the announcement of the end of history has proved to be at least somewhat premature in

that controversies about the merits of different brands of capitalism, some of which strangely resembling socialism, have not abated so far. Do you think that the competition between European and American capitalism will end up by improving both versions of capitalism, or is there the danger of increasing confrontation?

It is not certain that there are different brands of capitalism. It is not an ideology or a political system. Most people would accept that wealth is generated by markets, but also that the state or – ever more frequently – groups of states establish frameworks within which markets operate. Competition is inherently healthy but conflicts between the US and Europe, where they arise, will increasingly be regulated by bodies such as the WTO.

Is Switzerland perceived to be a special case of a European nation?

There is a lot in Switzerland that is *sui generis*, particularly because of its highly developed system of direct democracy and its cultural diversity. These elements would be of great benefit to the EU, if the Swiss people decided to join.

Has the special relationship between the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. survived Britain's joining the European Union? Does it have the power of creating a rift within the European Union between group favouring free trade and another one seeking salvation in interventionism, redistribution and all-European protectionism?

The United Kingdom pursues its own interests within Europe and this has nothing to do with its relationship with the US. The Americans see the British as useful partners because of their EU membership and not despite it. ♦