

BOOKS

[*Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, Tony Judt, Penguin, 896 pages]

Daydream of a United Europe

By James P. Pinkerton

TONY JUDT LOVES EUROPE. He is sad when his continent is wounded and divided, he is happy when it is healing and prospering. In *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, Judt outlines a vision for a harmonious Europe. It's a long shot, he acknowledges, but when he hopes for a continent united by culture and tradition, he is summoning up an ancient ideal: a United West. At a time when Europe is under grave threat from the East, it's a goal that makes more sense than ever—even if it seems harder than ever to achieve.

By West, Judt means the European Whole, from Britain to the Bosphorus to the Baltic. He is disdainful of those historians who wrote off Eastern Europe after 1945, either because they assumed that communism was the happy “end of history” or because they simply couldn't be bothered to set their horizons east of London or Paris.

There probably aren't too many humanities professors at New York University who prefer the cautious pastel politics of 20th-century Christian Democrats to the vivid utopianism of grander unelected ideologues, but Judt is one. He is pleased that an “irenical, pacific continent had risen, ‘Phoenix-like,’ from the ashes of its murderous—suicidal—past.” And for the London-born Judt, author or co-author of 10 previous books about European issues and ideas, the story is personal. Disdaining the soulless “master narratives” of historical hedgehogs, Judt tells his story fox-like: he knows many things, from

the Chetniks to Chernobyl to Charter 77 to Christian Dior.

He also knows his is a grim tale, especially at the beginning. Judt reminds us, first of all, of the scale of World War II's destruction. In addition to the 36 million Europeans killed during the conflict—the equivalent of the total population of France—millions more were displaced; in September 1944, 7.5 million foreigners lived inside the German Reich—not many of them by choice. Indeed, the two main Euro-malefactors, Germany and the Soviet Union, expelled or exiled some 30 million people during the war and a similar number in the aftermath years.

And while Judt is mindful of the unique horror of the Holocaust, he makes plain that for many Soviet citizens, life under the Nazis was better than life under the communists. He quotes one Soviet woman as saying that none of her fellow citizens complained about being forced to work in German industry: “For all of them,” she declared, “that was the only possibility of getting out of the Soviet Union.” Of course, as Judt notes with proper outrage, most of these unfortunates—along with many pre-war Russian émigrés, who had never been Soviet citizens—were shipped back to the USSR, where they faced a firing squad or Siberia.

Relentless in his anti-communism, Judt also seeks to honor those who fought against Eastern Europe's descent into captivity, often receiving little help from the West. Heroes such as the anti-communist agrarian leader Nikola Petkov of Bulgaria, shot in 1947, are revered, while the communist commissar Ana Pauker of Romania—who proved her loyalty to Stalin by waving off her own husband as he went to the gulag—are reviled. And in keeping with his theme of European communion, Judt says of the Soviets, “In brutally cutting the Soviet Union adrift from its ties to European history and culture the Bolsheviks did great and lasting damage to Russia.”

Speaking of the Cold War, Judt asserts flatly that it began when the Bolsheviks

took power—that is, not after World War II but after World War I. So he pays brief but solid tribute to the United States for making a revived Europe possible through aid and arms; he admires the humanitarian vision of those Americans who established the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in 1943—long before the war ended, long before the formal United Nations existed. And American generosity, bolstered by the Marshall Plan, saved millions of lives in the coming decade; the last Displaced Persons camp in West Germany closed in 1957. But Judt appreciates the value of cold steel as well; after pausing over not-so-little details, such as the 73 Allied airmen who died during the Berlin Airlift of 1948-9, he offers a terse but telling treatment of the Red Army threat confronted by Harry Truman and the architects of NATO.

Of particular interest is his take on Yugoslavia, a stance that is free, once again, of the left-wing revisionism that once dominated the American academy. Judt reminds us that Tito and his partisans were simply one bunch of killers among many; he quotes the Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas as recalling that rival bands would hike up rocky ravines “to destroy a little group of their countrymen, often neighbors, on some jutting peak six thousand feet high.” Such acts, Djilas concluded, are “what had become of all our theories and visions of the workers' and peasants' struggle against the bourgeoisie.” Once in power, the communists showed no improvement; Judt reminds us that Tito was to Stalin's left when Belgrade and Moscow parted company.

Nor is the author kinder to more recent communists. Mikhail Gorbachev, he declares, was “first a communist and only then a reformer,” who let the Soviet Empire fall apart by accident not design. The true heroes on the eastern side of the Wall, Judt insists, were the early protesters, plus some labor leaders and a few intellectuals. And what of the Polish Pope, John Paul II? Judt takes note of him, and of the Reagan administration

that allied itself with him, but he assigns more credit to such Poles as Jacek Kuro and Karel Modzelewski, who first critiqued Sovietism in 1964 and were sentenced to prison shortly thereafter, as well as Adam Michnik and, of course, Lech Walesa.

As a mordant aside, Judt underscores the noisy irrelevance of Europe's student radicals of the '60s. Eager to celebrate communism in far-away Cuba or China, the students were curiously oblivious to the practical application of communism next door, just across the Berlin Wall. In 1968, for instance, the West German radical Rudi Dutschke visited Prague during its brief spring of liberalization; the Czech students, Judt records, were taken aback at Dutschke's "insistence that pluralist democracy was the real enemy. For them, it was the goal."

But *Postwar* is about much more than the Cold War. Although the work digresses over everything from Mozart to punk rock, the political spine of the volume is its chronicle of the centrist leaders, including Konrad Adenauer of West Germany, Alcide de Gasperi of Italy, and Robert Schuman of France—plus a few Social Democrats, most notably the heroically anti-Nazi West German Kurt Schumacher—who muddled and stumbled their way to a better

political freedoms and the rational, equitable distributive function of the administrative state."

Included in that prudential vision, to be sure, was hope for a permanent peace through some kind of formalized European unity. Because so many of postwar Europe's leaders were Catholic, Judt speculates that they were comfortable with a "trans-national 'High Authority'"—even if it was secular, not sacred. But at the same time, Adenauer & Co. were cautious; Judt describes the "crab-like institutional extension" of European Oneness: first the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, then the European Economic Community in 1957, and finally the European Union in 1992.

But as the author makes plain, the EU is more than the story of big-spending bureaucrats bon-vivant-ing in Brussels. The idea of a peaceful European league reaches back to Charlemagne; finally, after 1945, most of the people on the continent were on board. And so the European Union was launched because it was a big idea—even if nobody was sure what its exact dimensions were or would be. As West German Chancellor Adenauer explained to his ministers: "The people must be given a new ideology. It can only be a European one."

talk about human rights. But the freedom mouse was loose in the House of Stalin and not easily caught. The Soviets, Judt concludes, were "hoist by the petard of their own cynicism."

Judt's publishing deadline was late enough for him to include the defeat of the ambitious EU Constitution in France and Holland in 2005; the author is fully aware of the EU's "extraordinarily unwieldy system of government." And so while he, like most Europeans, would like to see some sort of union, he doesn't expect it be much more than a "loosely articulated community." United States of Europe, RIP.

Judt cites Switzerland, officially known as the Swiss Confederation, as a model for the continent—indeed, for the world. The Swiss are stuffy, aging, and affluent, keeping a careful eye on newcomers. Extrapolating from that nation, Judt speculates that such mixed-together politics and economics might be a model, not only for Europe, but also for other countries seeking to split the difference between libertarianism and collectivism.

Many will howl at Judt's closing claim, that "the twenty-first century might yet belong to Europe." A European Century? For those aging, overspending, self-righteous and self-important Venusians? But before American readers demand a refund from the bookstore, they might consider that even here in the U.S., under Republican governance, social-welfare spending continues to soar, pushing us ever closer to European levels. Is it really likely that China and India, with their own deep-felt paternalist-hierarchalist traditions, will follow a substantially dissimilar course? And what if Paraguay or Zambia or Laos stay just the way they are—will entrepreneurs seeking to minimize their tax bills gravitate toward those non-welfare states?

The most serious objections to Judt's bright vision for Europe, of course, are the dark realities of ethnic conflict and demographic eclipse.

Throughout his book, Judt is mindful of ethnic confrontations. He details the

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Europe. Their unofficial credo was "no experiments" because they were mostly on the Right, albeit the Rhenish welfare-statist Right. The Christian Democratic parties, Judt explains, "were ideally placed to capitalize on virtually every aspect of the post-war condition: the desire for stability and security, the expectation of renewal." Operating within moderate margins, these men sought a "workable balance between

Judt weaves together the stories of West and East, reminding us that the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which sought to settle the borders of Europe, also brought about, almost as an afterthought, the discussion of human rights across the continent. The Soviets, eager for geographic legitimization, were enthusiastic about the Helsinki deal, figuring that they could simply arrest any Warsaw Bloc nations foolish enough to

painful and sometimes violent breakup of the polyglot Russian and Yugoslav empires, further noting the long good-byes—some past, some ongoing—of such multicultural combines as Czechoslovakia and Belgium. Indeed, other countries, he suggests, including Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom, are at risk of balkanization.

On the demographic issue, intertwined as it is with concerns about immigration and assimilation, Judt has less to say—certainly less than needs to be said, even in a book of more than 800 pages. Still, he identifies Muslim newcomers as the turbines slicing through placid European waters. Some will say that his knee jerks left a little when he asserts, “The transmigration of passions and frustrations from persecuted Arabs in Palestine to their angry dispirited brethren in Paris should not have come as a surprise—it was, after all, just another legacy of empire.” In fact, he notes too that Euro-immigration policies, like those of America, have long been driven by cheap-labor-hungry businesses on the Right as well as by human-rights fetishists on the Left.

Is Judt’s hopeful vision for Europe possible? Is an “irenica, pacific” continent even conceivable? Perhaps. Europe didn’t come this far entirely by accident. Its people may have their troubles, but they have been problem-solvers in the past. Maybe they will get the message of the Mohammed-mocking cartoon controversy and close their door to the Middle East. Even better, they could reopen it to Latin America. Why not call back home, for example, all those Argentines whose ancestors left the Old World—mistakenly, as it turned out—in hopes of a better life in the New World?

Meanwhile, the Europeans have finally figured out how to keep themselves clear of most deliberate foreign entanglements. They have given up their colonies and their colonial ambitions—except, of course, when offshore superpowers talk them into futile neo-adventures. But even those are modest and destined to be of short duration.

Of course, the Judtian formula for Europe—call it mass-Switzerlandization—is not a plan for *macht-politik*. Europe is, after all, just a rocky little peninsula on the Eurasian landmass. So maybe few will notice if it sidles off to the second-tier seats of history. In this mellow worldview, it is time for others, the new unbounded hyperpowers, to make their bids for world-historical hegemony.

The Europeans may never again be great, in the traditional metrics of imperialism and militarism. But armed with a few protective Euronukes of their own, and some accumulated Eurowisdom, the folks in Judt’s purview might yet find their way of bicycling and recycling, of bird watching and nature-loving. In that land, amidst their post-industrial pastoralism, they can perhaps build a small confederation of low-key, high value-added tourist traps.

It’s even possible that one of a united Europe’s greatest champions, Pope Benedict XVI, will see his prayers answered. A revival of the Roman Catholic Church on its home turf? It’s hard to see such a revival today, when the fastest-growing faith on the continent is Islam. But if Europe acts to fend off al-Europe—even as the predominant atheists and secularists continue to promote, by preaching and practice, negative population growth—it’s mathematically inevitable that the meekly proactive will inherit that earth.

Such may not be the Euro-scenario that Judt had in mind when he sat down to write this enjoyable and enlightening book. But if the other scenarios at hand mostly involve demographic desiccation, followed by Jihadists on the north shore of the Mediterranean, then Judt might conclude that a Europe further rediscovering its precious heritage is a pretty good topic for his next book. ■

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[*State of War: The Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration*, James Risen, Free Press, 256 pages]

Watching the Detectives

By James Bovard

JAMES RISEN’S *State of War* has opened a Pandora’s Box for the Bush administration that no amount of howling, scowling, or bogus terrorist-attack warnings will be able to close. Risen’s revelations on pervasive National Security Agency warrantless spying on Americans shred the final pretenses to legality of the Bush administration. Now the debate is simply whether, as Bush and his supporters claim, the president is effectively above the law and the Constitution during a time of (perpetual) war.

Risen has been a national security reporter for the *New York Times* for many years. He was not one of the *Times* reporters who simply recycled hokum from the White House Iraq Group. In October 2002, he wrote a piece shooting down the Bush administration’s claims that Mohammad Atta had met an Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague, one of the favorite neocon justifications for attacking Iraq.

Risen had the story on NSA wiretapping before the 2004 election, but the *Times*, under pressure from the administration, sat on the piece for at least 14 months. The paper’s timidity may have awarded George W. Bush a second term as president. After the *Times* finally published Risen’s story in mid-December, Bush seized upon the exposé to portray himself as heroically rising above the statute book to protect the American people. The administration has been boasting about its “terrorism surveillance program” ever since.

Bush announced that “the NSA program is one that listens to a few numbers called from the outside of the United States and of known al Qaeda or