CHAPTER V

Legacies, Ancient and Modern

The Idea and the Tree

THE HISTORIES OF Europe and America have bequeathed to us different legacies. In Europe economic and political power begins with the state. In America it begins with the individual. But, although we are both products of our cultures, do we see clearly who we are, or, perhaps more accurately, what we have become? There is no right answer to this question, but I received an unusual response to it from a German colleague in Hamburg. He began his explanation with a quotation:

> America, you've got it better
> than our old continent. Exult!
> You have no decaying castles and no basalt.
>
> Your heart is not troubled,
> in lively pursuits,
> by useless old remembrance
> and empty disputes.
>
> So use the present day with luck!
> And, when your children a poem write,
> protect them with skill and pluck,
> from tales of bandits, ghosts, and knights.[1]

That quotation comes from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem "To The United States," written in 1827—for us that is not very long ago. It puts the differences between Europe and America, that you have been telling me about, into another kind of context. It is one in which age and time play the decisive roles. Goethe was saying that the youthful history of the US allowed America to go forward without any of the quarrels that so typified "Old" Europe, that you should make the most of it, and that yours is the land of the future. In other words, you were without the weight of ancient legacies symbolized by decaying castles and recounted in stories of knights, robbers, and ghosts. Americans consider castles and knights part of their romantic image of Europe, and in truth they are. For us, however, they are images of our European background.

Europe is a region, a historical fact, like a tree, with European countries representing branches of the same tree. At one time Europe was the name for central Greece and perhaps you could say, as Roman armies explored the land mass of Europe, it later became an idea associated with the relationship of Romans with their government. But that point is always subject to different interpretations. So let us just say that at least during the Roman Empire the relationship was symbolized by an acronym that appeared on public buildings everywhere: S.P.Q.R. In Latin it was written *Senatus populusque Romanus*, and stood for *The Senate and the People of Rome*. And of course to be a citizen of Rome—*Civis Romanus Sum*—that is to say of the Roman empire, was to take pride in being Roman and subject to Roman law; in a manner of speaking it was the Roman dream.

But fifteen hundred years have gone by in the meantime, and that idea has long since been forgotten, although Roman law still provides the basis for much of Europe's legal system. Europe today is the result of its history of rule, both ancient and modern, a history of war and conquest, of victory and defeat, of destruction and reconstruction, of dark ages and enlightenment. In this sense Europe's history very much influences its present. Europe's past does not become more distant as time goes by, but forms an ever larger part of its future, as Europe grows older.

America was never a historical fact. It was an idea, a symbol of hope. And today it still is, in spite of your many differences of opinion or perhaps because you express them so freely. To be sure, America is a distant relative of the European tree. But it is an idea of freedom, independence, and opportunity that you, of all ethnic backgrounds, rediscover and renew with

> each passing day. That is why you still remind yourselves, constantly, that you are Americans. The symbol is your flag, but the substance is your idea. As America grows older this idea of freedom is a living part of your present, and continues to beckon. It is, almost, as though you hold time in contempt.

The idea of Europe as a nation, whose citizens have real European hopes and concrete dreams, is still a wish very much father to the thought. To paraphrase André Malraux's observation from the early 1970s, that is what it will remain, a wish:

> There is no such thing as Europe, there never was. It is the last of the great myths. There's a pink spot on the map and then it was decided that there is a Europe because there was a Christianity. Christianity! That was something important. Europe is a dream.[2]

Malraux notwithstanding, it was true in early 2005, according to a study by the Royal Elcano Institute in Madrid, that about 45 percent of Europeans considered their European identity to be as significant as their nationality.[3] Their identity, however, is no longer associated with Christianity, but without it what is it? What do they believe in? Those who live in Europe are Europeans in the sense that they share Europe's past, present, and future, but they are not Europeans in the same sense as Americans in America. Rather, they are nationalities, such as Swedes, Italians, Spaniards, Poles, Germans, and French, all speaking different languages. They are part of, and equally proud of, their respective national pasts and are very much committed to their different customs and traditions. In some cases they have existed as nations well over a thousand years. Europeans may travel as citizens of the EU with an EU driver's license or with an EU passport (on which is written the name of the country of which they are a citizen), and businesses in Europe can give their Internet addresses a European Union identity with a ".eu" extension, but these contrivances do not create loyalty to a European identity.

To speak of the idea of Europe in the same way that Americans define

the idea of America is a fiction. As a grand European concept the vision of building one nation may stimulate the imagination, but it does not create a union or a nation, because Europeans are not committed to the idea of Europe as Americans are to the idea of America. The European Union, writes Imre Kertesz, the 2002 Hungarian Nobel laureate in literature, may be a web "of financial and economic ties, but a European spirit, an identity that binds us together beyond our individual nationalisms, has yet to be born."[4] In fact, one of Kertesz's neighbors, the former Romanian foreign minister Andrei Plesu, has taken the opposite view by describing Europe as "something in an old faded photograph, the world between the two world wars, a nostalgia, a longing. In the West, Europe is a project. In the East, it's a memory."[5]

The other side of the argument, however, is that the Europeans have intentionally established common institutions. It might well have been pointed out to Malraux, as Jean Monnet did to a British audience in 1962, that "European unity is not a blueprint—it is a process. Human nature does not change. But when nations and men accept the same rules and the same institutions, their behavior towards each other changes. This is the process of civilisation itself."

How would Malraux have responded? Would he have questioned whether rules and institutions suffice? And if so, what kind of institutions? What of the importance of the institution of Christianity, and of the significance of its decline on the continent? Would he have said that the concept of unity needs something more than just pacts and regulations in order to become real and lasting? Would he have argued that the American experience cannot be duplicated in Europe? Are the idea and the tree really the same thing?

We know that Europeans and Americans share an appreciation for much that unites; the genius and imagination which have produced the artistic, literary, musical, philosophical and scientific masterpieces of Western civilization. But the similarities do not go further, because political and economic events have ordered American and European society in fundamentally different ways. History has not yet destroyed the continuity of America's trust in freedom; Americans believe in it. Europeans, on the other hand, have no order given to them by one declaration of inde-

pendence, and by one constitution of liberty. So they do not focus on a belief in freedom and opportunity, because it does not exist. That is what separates the idea from the tree.

An inelegant contrast between the American and European concepts of identity is the comparison of America's Constitutional Convention with creation of the European Constitution between 2002 and 2004: citizens as opposed to bureaucrats, inspiring prose versus Eurocratic jargon. My European friends would point out that the comparison is unfair, because more than two centuries separate the two events and because the former was born of revolution and the latter is the child of government. But they would also tell me that the centuries-old European approach of rule from the top down continues today and assures that united Europe will never exist in the same sense that Americans use the phrase ''the United States.''

As an illustration they cite a project which began in the summer of 2002. At that time a 105-person assembly of European politicians from 28 member and candidate EU countries, headed by former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, began to draft a constitution for the EU. This effort was called the Convention on the Future of Europe and had the goal of producing a ''blueprint for a streamlined system of EU policymaking.'' It was completed and signed by EU leaders in Rome in October 2004 as a constitutional treaty of 465 articles, 80 percent of which had been taken from previous treaties and rearranged. The constitution was to be presented for ratification as a treaty by EU parliaments or as a referendum for voter approval. That is to say, the choice was up to the individual country but unanimity would have to prevail. In other words, for it to take effect on November 1, 2006, all 27 members of the EU and the 732-member European Parliament would have to approve it.

The constitution restated the concepts on which the EU's legal, political, and economic order are based in accordance with existing treaties, introduced a Charter of Fundamental Rights, created the positions of European president and European foreign minister, designed a new system for majority rule within the EU, set forth how the EU's policies are to be formulated and implemented and how the provisions governing operation

of its institutions apply. If adopted, the EU would exist as a legal entity whose president and foreign minister could sign treaties and agreements on behalf of its members, and the constitution itself would become "the first statement of EU values."[6]

Following Spanish approval in a referendum in early spring 2005, the constitution was voted down by French voters on May 29, 2005, by a margin of 55 to 45 percent, and by Dutch voters several days later, with a still larger margin of almost two to one. Rejection by two of the EU's six original founding members greatly agitated Europe's politicians, resulted in the appointment of a new French government by President Jacques Chirac, and caused a drop in the value of the euro of close to 5 percent.

The short-term consequence of failure was made immediately clear by the new French prime minister, Dominique de Villepin. Mixed messages would be the order of the French day, which was exactly what the country's majority had voted against.[7]

In a classic example of political contradiction, Villepin announced that his government would (1) pump 4.5 billion € into the French economy to create jobs, (2) cancel President Chirac's 2002 promise to cut income taxes, (3) pass legislation to make hiring new employees financially more attractive, (4) proceed with the long-anticipated partial privatization of Electricité de France and Gaz de France, (5) oppose EU free market reforms that would reduce welfare benefits and weaken labor protections for French citizens, and (6) endorse the message delivered by French voters: "Globalization is not an ideal; it cannot be our destiny." He then blamed creation of most of France's problems on "15 years of socialism."[8]

In some ways, the long-term effects also became apparent quickly. The European Union would go on. The EU commissioner for enterprise and industry, German socialist Günter Verheugen, announced that the Lisbon Agenda would continue, that plans to increase competition would not be modified, and that "more integration is not the problem; it is the solution."[9]

The rejection would not stop the EU from moving forward, but it would focus renewed attention on the reasons why the EU was created in the first place, on the debate between central planning versus the free mar-

ket, on the economic viability of *the old European socioeconomic model*, and on the clash between the forces of rule from the top down and from the bottom up—in other words on the inevitable conflict that emerges when the burdens of historical legacies confront the aspirations of historical undertakings.

As a symbol the constitution did, indeed, mirror a European dream, because its purpose was to codify what the EU should become, under a single umbrella of ''rights.'' Its length and contents were not the epitome of clarity and proud principles, but the constitution did provide a canopy for the different branches of the European tree. This was the gist of the argument made by the EU's high representative for common foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, in October 2004:

> What the Maastricht Treaty did for the euro, the constitution could do for Europe's role in the world. . . . A continent that was shattered by war and divided by ideology has been transformed into an attractive and prosperous model of co-operation and a net exporter of stability. . . . The international constitution of the European Union can be a substantial one in a century that will be characterized by global interdependence. We want to work with our friends and partners to help deliver solutions for the many contemporary problems that defy borders. . . . With the constitution, we do not just open a new chapter in European history, we also hope to renew our partnership with the United States.[10]

Solana's declaration of hope, admirable and dignified, was based nonetheless on a contradiction. On the one hand he was equating identity with stability, but on the other he was describing a postwar identity for which the majority of the EU's 450 million citizens would never be called upon to vote. Perhaps in the expectation that it would become more attractive to European voters, Solana too, as all of Europe's leaders, labeled the treaty a constitution. But the document was nothing of the kind, nor did it draw ''on centuries of political experience . . . informed by tragic wisdom borne of millenniums of wars . . . influenced by European philosophers like Hobbes and Rousseau, Hume and Kant, Machiavelli and

Montesquieu, who addressed fundamental questions about government and human nature.''[11]

It was, however, another step very much in keeping with the effort to transform, from the top down, the dream of Europe into reality. In this regard the work of d'Estaing's committee was more than just a noble gesture. It was the crown on the commitment to change the postwar face of Europe, to create a different European inheritance for the future. Thus, a 54-year-old retired Spanish bank employee explained in February 2005 why he would vote to approve the ''constitution'':

> In 2,000 years we've never agreed on anything. The European Union is the only way to mix European cultures and to overcome nationalisms. . . . The constitution treaty is Europe's salvation.[12]

The middle-aged Spaniard was far from alone with his conviction. Similar views were ardently expressed throughout the union, including in France and the Netherlands, but they were not the only strongly held opinions. In the days and weeks preceding the referendum in France the arguments used to justify voting yes or no transformed the vote into a French plebiscite on everything the French liked, and disliked.

The election results reflected suspicions about the financial and political cost of enlarging the EU, frustration with the high French unemployment rate, ignorance of how free markets work, fears of immigration and globalization, doubts about giving up sovereignty to Brussels, and general pessimism concerning the future of a union that lacked identity.

Proponents and critics of the constitution argued both for and against a whole host of issues: Muslim influence in general and Turkish membership in the EU in particular; elitism and social engineering; free markets and stability; ''the Polish plumber'' and social dumping;[13] competition and the proposed single market for services; protection of jobs and greater labor mobility; nationalism and leadership of the European Union; and interventionism and European security.

The differences of opinion did not mirror a clash of conventional political classes, because many of the same positions were argued by conserva-

tives and socialists alike. The differentiation lay in who among them would vote "yes" and who "no," and of this there were hundreds of examples.

The contrast was dramatic among French socialists, whose leader, François Hollande, was strongly pro-constitution while his deputy chairman and former prime minister, Laurent Fabius, spearheaded the no vote. The widow of deceased French socialist president François Mitterrand was in the no camp while her son urged a yes vote, and Mitterrand's daughter was reluctant to commit on either position.

On the other end of the political spectrum, confusing behavior was also the order of the day. A majority of the conservative members of the French Senate and the National Assembly strongly supported the constitution, but there were also those who opposed it with a mixture of xenophobia and nationalist pride in the role France could, or should play in the EU. Less than one week before the vote, a former conservative member of the French Senate proclaimed privately that the future of France lay in the hands of Laurent Fabius, whose leadership and courage of conviction were exemplary.[14]

In short, in the camps of both yes and no the coalitions were patchwork political quilts made up of those on the left, in the center, and on the right. They had nothing in common, with one exception. They all focused only marginally on the contents of the constitution itself.

There was truth to be found in all of the numerous sentiments expressed; but in reality the vote was about confidence, or the lack of it, in the idea of Europe pedagogically described in a draft constitution of almost 500 pages—a trifle too large, some Europeans noted, to carry around in one's pocket. In this sense the debates in France and in the Netherlands reflected a much wider and significant uncertainty in the EU about the identity of Europe itself. Would Europe remain a continent, as Frenchman Guy Sorman had argued in early 2003, where the marketplace is considered to be a means to finance the social contract, or to be an end called freedom?

Laurent Fabius understood the significance of the challenge and the

ultimate outcome. This is why he had begun calling for modifications in the constitution in the autumn of 2004. He argued that the treaty should "include provisions that protect wealthier West European countries from losing jobs to the east, where labor costs and taxes are lower." He accused the constitution's framers of "paving the way to a European Union 'where competition reigns above all else,'" and noted that the word "market" appeared in 78 different places in the text while the phrase "social progress" was used only three times.[15]

To couch his objections in another way, the concept of equality of result had a new rival called *the demand for equality of opportunity*, a life-threatening challenge to the legitimacy of the socialist idea at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Even though socialism in Europe was still an enormously powerful political force in 2005, it was also in danger of becoming obsolete in an increasingly competitive economic environment. The fear of irrelevancy may explain why Fabius sought to polarize the political landscape by distorting his references to the words "social," and "market." A review of the draft constitution in March 2005 did show that the word "market" appeared at least 65 times, but it also showed that the word "social" appeared in the document more than 125 times.

Fabius' objections, as well as those of his conservative counterparts, were understandable. Both wanted to slow down the movement toward unity, toward creating a European identity in a European marketplace, because both had much to lose. A strong European Union, based on a vibrant free market competing successfully on the stage of world trade and commerce, would undermine rule from the top down, whether of the left or of the right.[16]

Was it possible to tell from the results of the referenda in France and in the Netherlands what the purpose of the constitution really was? Was there a hidden agenda to make rivals of the EU and America—a rivalry in which Europeans would view themselves as "a net exporter of stability" and Americans would consider themselves a committed exporter of freedom? Or was this too simplistic an explanation? Was it more accurate to ask whether the convention's intent was to produce a constitution of lib-

erty and opportunity; or a constitution of entitlements and equality? For these questions there were no direct answers, but one of the convention's members noted that "it was the Bill of Rights that created American identity. They were Americans and so they had rights. It will be the same with Europeans."[17]

Many Americans, and some Europeans as well, would take exception to the latter conclusion. They would argue that it was because Americans knew exactly who they were and what they believed in that they created the Bill of Rights, and not vice versa. The Bill of Rights did not give them their identity it was a mirror image of it, transformed into law. This is why, for some Europeans, the interpretation of "rights" as the definition of their identity was more than just disturbing. They were apprehensive that the identity as set forth in the constitution was not made of who they were, but was being imposed on them.

From an observer's viewpoint there was reason for unease. Between 2002 and 2004 the convention had focused on what powers should be given to government and on how much political and economic control government should exercise. There were no formal meetings to consider how much freedom the individual might lose as a result. To some it appeared as though the constitution's writers were more intent on symbolism and compromise than they were on writing a constitution of liberty. The draft contained an official motto, "United in Diversity," and designated Schiller's "Ode to Joy," set to the music of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as the European anthem, the euro as the official currency, and May 9 as Europe Day.[18] It did not contain a single reference to God, to Christianity, or to Europe's Christian heritage, or to the fact that those who had formed the Common Market in 1957 welcomed specifically, one year later, the proclamation by Pope Pius XII naming Saint Benedict as the "Father of Europe."[19]

The constitution's preamble acknowledged "the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, democracy, equality, freedom and the rule of law." This insipid description, far from elevating, prompted the Roman Catholic primate in Hungary to remind the drafters that "without Christianity, the heart of Europe would

be missing." Where, wondered not only clerics, did respect for human rights come from, if not from Christianity? What kind of risks did denial of Christian heritage entail?

Indeed, if the European Union's heart was not a Christian one, what was it made of? The aim of the union, as defined in the treaty, was "to promote peace." The union shall work for "sustainable development . . . based on balanced economic growth . . . a social market economy . . . [and] full employment and social progress." This ambition was bolstered by a 50-article charter of fundamental rights. The charter contained no references to responsibility, but an almost inexhaustible recitation of concerns at least one of which would appeal to every man: a right to life, integrity of the person, collective bargaining, fair working conditions, prohibition of slavery and forced labor, shelter, liberty and security, respect for private and family life, marriage, freedom of thought, freedom of the arts and sciences, free compulsory education, the rights of the child and of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence, social security and social assistance, health care, environmental protection, and a right to good administration. As Giscard d'Estaing described it in June 2003, "of all the men and women in the world, it is the citizens of Europe who will have the most extensive rights."[20]

As a commentary on this observation it should be noted that the convention's chairman was trying to sell the constitution's virtues, as was Javier Solana one year later. Some Europeans, however, questioned the real value of having more rights than anyone else when so little attention was focused on where they came from, or on the obligation to protect them. Others did not understand why Solana praised the EU as "a net exporter of stability." The words were unquestionably reassuring, but it was unclear what they meant. Still others were concerned with the "disappearance" of Christianity. If Europe's leaders no longer believed in the value of the Christian commitment, what did they believe in?

Had the leaders of "Old Europe" forgotten, so soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that the best guarantee for stability is an unequivocal commitment to human freedom, backed up by the means to defend both?

If they needed a reminder the leaders of "New Europe" in Budapest, Warsaw, and Prague and in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were well qualified to teach this lesson learned from their history of the twentieth century. But they were not asked, nor were they the architects of the European Union.[21] Neither, of course, was American journalist William Pfaff. But at mid-year, 2005, following the treaty's rejection, he drew some troubling conclusions:

> People become uneasy when religion is brought up as a basis of civilization, but historically that has been the case. Europe now is deeply secular, but Europe's secular civilization itself is Christian. That's what makes it different from secular civilization in Japan. . . . People say Europe can't stay a Christian club. This is considered illiberal or discriminatory, or even 'racist.' But Europe is what it is, and well-intentioned meddling with the values, perceptions and assumptions responsible for a society's deep sense of individual and national identity is very dangerous. . . . The EU's crisis is due in part to its leaders' efforts to de-Europeanize Europe in the name of internationalist abstractions. The French and Dutch have rebelled against this. Europe's leaders, I think, should reflect more on the significance of what happened three weeks ago.[22]

The draft constitutional treaty was a reflection of the views of those who drew it and thus a symbol of the European experience, just as the American experience "is completely alien to the European mind, as exemplified by the remark attributed to Georges Clemenceau[23] that Americans have no capacity for abstract thought, and make bad coffee." In a book entitled *The Age of Reagan*, Steven Hayward continues that "the maxim for European foreign relations is *raison d'état*—reasons of state, that is, self-interest. There is no shorthand maxim for America's foreign outlook, but it might be—if we spoke French—*raison droit* [sic] or perhaps *état de droit*, that is, reasons of morality or a state based on right." And he concludes that "this turns Clemenceau on his head, for the basis of America's moral outlook on the world was what Lincoln called an abstract truth, applicable to all men at all times."[24]

The differences Hayward writes about apply not only to the foreign

relations of the EU, as Solana outlined them, but also to domestic pursuits. If Americans think of freedom in terms of rights and responsibilities, Europeans think of freedom in terms of stability and order. Because of the continent's history, Europeans are preoccupied with keeping their glass no less than half empty, and stable so it does not spill, with balanced economic growth, full employment, social markets and social progress, and sustainable development as the desirable alternative to the continent's history of endless conflict.

The European preoccupation with equilibrium and order—what Americans might describe as "don't rock the boat"—is another lesson taken from history, a lesson which was described for me by a French friend of many years, educated in California, who lives with her husband in Brussels.

> We like to talk about the traps, not about the opportunities. We are reluctant to take a chance. We're suspicious, so we always question the motive, and ask "what is your self-interest?" We do that because that's how we look at the world; we call it being realistic. Our teacher is our history. So is yours, of course, but your history is different. When you focus on a concern—foreign or domestic—there is always an idealistic or moral element to the consideration. That element makes you want to state your case in terms of what is "fair" and "just." You do that because you don't think about acquiring "interests" as though they were pieces of property. You talk in terms of defending principles, and the definition always has a portion of "freedom" attached to it. In other words, Americans may support opposition to tyranny because they believe it is in the national interest. But you also do it because you believe it is morally "right." And maybe, for you, the two are one and the same.
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> I would say, as a European—and my husband and I have talked about it for almost forty years—that this difference explains why you became involved in Europe during World Wars I and II, why you defended Berlin after 1945, why you went to Korea, to Vietnam, to former Yugoslavia, and why you fought against a dictator in Iraq twice. In all those cases most Americans felt something wrong was happening and that something had to be done about it.
>
> Many of us, of course, roll our eyes at all this because we're made differ-

ently. We can't imagine that you're serious when you talk about national interests and morality in the same breath. It's not part of our political and economic culture to think this way. We believe in order, in protecting what we have acquired, not in waging crusades for freedom. What we think today was said long ago by Lord Palmerston, England's prime minister in the late 1850s and early 1860s. You have to agree that he put it memorably, and maybe a little indelicately—''We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.''

History Lessons

Much of what America and Europe have accomplished separately has reinforced nonetheless our faith in the values we have in common. That confidence is just as strong today as it has ever been. When we do have disagreements they are not about the values, but about the most effective way to re-enforce and defend them in a world in which Americans and Europeans have learned different lessons about freedom and peace. It is in the realm of interpreting the meaning of history that our vision is not always the same. Understanding why this is so is of crucial importance to us both.

In 1945 the smoking ruins of continental cities sent an impressive message about war to Europeans which contained an immediate problem and a long-term challenge. The problem was how to deal with the urgent demands of political and economic recovery and reconstruction. The challenge was how to assure that war would never again ravage the continent. The answer chosen lay in the concepts of defense and prevention. The creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 became the means of defense, and European economic integration became the means to prevent war.

As Europeans began to rebuild their continent, the rubble in the streets of Germany, but also the cemeteries above the beaches of Normandy, were a constant reminder of the unholy heritage of war. Some of Europe's

great cities, such as Paris, Prague, and Vienna, had been spared destruction, but most of them were as dead as their inhabitants. All the Europeans, from Finland to Spain, from Ireland to Greece, from England to Germany, from France to Russia, were affected by so many lives gone—for example, almost 500,000 in England, about 250,000 in Denmark, almost 600,000 in France, more than 530,000 in Italy, around 6 million Germans, and millions more in Russia.

The total loss approached 50 million, which does not include the murder of more than six million Jews. Whether the number is 50 or 56 million, however, it is a statistic more of shame than of substance, because it is impossible to imagine that many dead on a field before you, stretching as far as the eye can see. But the painful meaning of death and devastation was much easier to grasp for the families affected—the loss of husbands and wives, children without parents, hunger, disease, streams of refugees fleeing from the violence of the "Red Army" into Western Europe. The Europeans all had to put their lives back together again.

This point applied as well to thousands of American families that had also been torn apart by the tragedy of warfare. They, too, had lost fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, and they had been touched by something else that many Europeans tend to ignore today. During the war Americans suffered in a different way. On the other side of the Atlantic they sat helpless in their living rooms, listening to their radios or reading letters from Europe with no return addresses – it was news about war, about the deportation, arrest and murder of their European relatives across the continent, from London to Paris to Berlin to Moscow.

It is true that once the war was over Americans did not have to rebuild their towns and cities, nor did they have to worry about how to find medicine, if there were enough to eat, and where they were going to sleep. In America postwar generations grew up in comparative plenty without daily reminders of loss and privation, while European postwar generations grew up haunted by the silhouettes of bombed-out buildings. These two circumstances did not make Americans less sensitive and the Europeans more so. But the war, and its aftermath, did mold American and Euro-

pean perceptions of what was important in the world, and did so differently.

The values of freedom and peace were recognized and understood by Americans who had fought in Europe to defend the one and achieve the other. That is why American soldiers went across the Atlantic. But on the continent the idea of freedom was of less importance to Europeans than the assurance that war would never take place again, under any circumstances. That the Europeans had brought the plague of war upon themselves, twice within three decades, was exactly the point. A phrase was coined for it in Germany almost immediately after 1945, *nie wieder Krieg* (never again war). It became the rallying cry of the peace movement, and although the political orientation was left wing, the plea was one to which millions of Germans, of all political persuasions, subscribed. One of the consequences was major opposition to the rearmament of Germany, not only among Germans but among Europeans as well. When it did begin in the mid-1950s it took place very slowly, and when, almost forty years later, newly unified Germany became a member of NATO, it renounced the manufacture, possession, and control over nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

It was not only in Germany that the European experience with the horrors of war had many consequences. Preservation of peace was not a joint American-European effort of equal proportion. After 1945 America assumed the primary burden for the defense of Western Europe, because the government was in the position to do so, and because American citizens favored it. European governments were not in that position and hundreds of thousands of European soldiers were dead.

Initially, disproportionate sharing of burdens did not pose major problems. But it meant that Western European security was dependent on American armed forces and on America's willingness to maintain them. As long as Europe remained divided, and as long as America assumed the major role, there was little incentive for European governments to improve their own military capabilities. With the notable exceptions of

England and France, the rest did not. The eventual result was a gap between the relative strength of European and American military power. The larger the chasm grew, the more acrimonious became transatlantic conversations about sharing the economic and military responsibilities for preserving freedom and peace.

By the end of the 1970s America was informing Europeans that they "needed" to understand that they "must" spend more on defense. Unless the Europeans devoted more of their gross domestic product to national security, so it was argued, the already "troubled partnership" would become more stormy. This, indeed, is exactly what occurred during the decade of the 1980s, until three things unexpectedly occurred: (1) Communist governments collapsed in 1989–1990, (2) the military threat from the East disappeared at the same time, and (3) in the absence of the threat the rationale for developing greater European military power seemed to vanish, for many.

Everywhere on the continent the reaction to "the velvet revolution"—the phrase coined to describe the collapse of Czechoslovakia without a shot being fired—was jubilation, because the Cold War was over. It was also a relief, because Europe was no longer divided. Many Europeans believed that the peaceful end to "history hung in chains" presented an unprecedented opportunity to unite Europe. Others were quick to point out that there were not just one, but two intimately related opportunities. The second was the chance to modernize Western Europe's defense forces and integrate them into a strong security framework for all of Europe. To accomplish both would require visionary leadership on the continent and strong support from America.

Few Western European governments, however, saw any reason to close the gap between European and American military power. Nor did European leaders take any significant steps toward creation of a strong security framework for all of Europe. In addition, little encouragement was sent across the Atlantic by American leaders. The consequence was threefold. European leaders developed a post–Cold War identity, a security framework for all of Europe remained unbuilt, and the American-European partnership drifted.

European politicians were not prepared to justify spending money on

defense against a threat that no longer existed, and be accused of squandering ''the peace dividend.'' Neither were they anxious to increase their defense budgets and risk being voted out of office. In addition, they were unwilling to decrease expenditures for their respective social contracts. But they were eager to declare that all Europeans, free from dictatorship for the first time in more than fifty years, shared as their first priority elimination of the causes for future war on the continent. This is why European leaders, in 1991, turned to transforming the Western European economic community into a European Union.

On the subject of war and peace there is a major difference between Americans and Europeans. Today, a majority of Europeans of both socialist and conservative persuasions discuss peace as though it were black and white; that is to say, one is *for* peace and *against* war, or *for* war and *against* peace. On this subject Europeans notice very few shades of gray, which is ironic, because Europeans normally see shades of gray everywhere. When European leaders refer to peace it is as though the word were not just a vision, but an inventive tool of diplomacy. Another way to express this thought has been found by French novelist Pascal Bruckner, who argues that ''our great problem as Europeans is that we want to exit from history. Sometime after 1989 we developed the belief that barbarians could be refuted intellectually.''[25]

In contrast to Europeans, Americans talk about freedom as a principle of diplomacy, genuinely believe it, and consider it the indispensable ingredient for a just and viable peace. They have learned from their experience, and from the Europeans themselves, that freedom has enemies, and that sometimes it is necessary to fight for freedom in order to preserve it. Europe's long and tragic history of anti-Semitism has also taught Americans that if a disaster such as the Nazi Holocaust—that began in Germany in the 1930s and ended in Germany in 1945—is to be avoided in the future, there can be no appeasement of dictators, wherever they may be.

European history has also taught Americans another lesson. German political scientist Christian Hacke defined it in April 2003, when he wrote that the experience of World War II should have produced the conviction

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in Germany of ''never again dictatorship and aggression'' rather than ''never again war.''[26] He also expressed the view, shared by many Americans, that ''whoever wants to prevent war, must in the last analysis be prepared to fight one.'' For Americans the lesson of World War II was that military weakness is no substitute for military power, and some Americans would argue they were reminded of it brutally, again, on September 11, 2001.

In reference to Europe's ''catastrophic loss of status'' since World War II Henri Astier, in a brilliant review of Jean-François Revel's book on anti-Americanism in France, summarized his conclusions on the legacy of twentieth century conflagrations in Europe:

> Europe virtually tried to commit suicide in the twentieth century, and American preponderance is a direct consequence of its self-inflicted wounds. In the space of thirty years, the Europeans triggered two World Wars from which the Americans had to come and rescue them. But rather than face up to this sorry history, Europeans prefer to pose as victims of America's drive for world domination. American 'unilateralism . . . is the consequence, not the cause, of power failures in the rest of the world.'[27]

Another consequence of power failures, as Ravel names them, is the attempt to transform the vision of peace into an effective weapon, in the absence of real military strength. By definition such an attempt is condemned to failure, unless all support the vision of peace in the same way. In the last decade of the twentieth century the failure was nowhere more evident than in Europe where, to cite French commentator Dominique Moïsi, ''the seeds of intolerant nationalism'' and violence were still alive and well.[28] The decade of the 1990s was full of both in provinces of the former Iron Curtain countries, from the former Soviet Union to former Yugoslavia, but also in Ireland and Spain.

Members of the newly created European Union urged restraint, condemned violence, and counseled peace, but they were unwilling and unprepared to stop the bloodshed while thousands of people were murdered

during the mid-1990s. Intolerant nationalism continued to express itself in internecine warfare, euphemistically baptized ethnic cleansing by journalists covering events in former Yugoslavia. In those countries no one knows what the Europeans might have done, eventually, because America finally intervened to stop the killing. Under the circumstances the American conclusion that the Europeans may have learned that war is terrible is hardly surprising, but they have neither the will to preserve peace nor the power to protect freedom.[29]

In wealthy Western Europe, to which some Americans derisively refer as "paradise," the Europeans are reminded every day of the consequences of war, and therefore of what they do not want to lose again. They recognize the signs in the streams of refugees arriving in the countries of the EU from different parts of central and Eastern Europe and from Russia, escaping both poverty and strife. They see the reminders also in the monuments to those who have been killed, on the lists of those who have died in war and revolution, carved into the stone of their church walls, and in the inscriptions on the tombstones of their cemeteries. Most Europeans recoil at the prospect of war, and when asked to describe it, call it immoral and catastrophic.

European leaders talk about peace as often as Americans talk about freedom. There are two, predictable, results. Americans wonder if Europeans have had the desire to defend themselves bred out of them, and Europeans wonder if Americans are so preoccupied with freedom that they are unable to see that without peace, freedom is not very useful.

Even if Americans and Europeans do not agree, this difference in approach has been put in terms they both can understand:

> Europeans think that Americans are on their way to betraying some of the elementary tenets of the Enlightenment, establishing a new principle in which they are 'first among unequals.'
>
> And Washington accuses Europe of shirking its international responsibilities, and thus its own human rights inheritance.
>
> After all, what is the point of international law if it prevents intervening

> in the affairs of a brutal regime to stay the hand of a tyrant? Who is the true advocate of human rights: the one who cites international law to justify standing by while genocide is being committed or the one who puts an end to the genocide, even if it means violating international law?[30]

This fascinating and frustrating difference in attitude, presented by German writer Peter Schneider, can be reduced to a straightforward conclusion: Americans see peace without freedom as bondage, and Europeans see freedom without peace as war. This simplistic logic, however, begins and ends here.

The lessons Europeans have learned from the struggles to wage war, to protect freedom, and to preserve peace are not all black and white, they reflect shades of grey as well. When comparing themselves to Americans, some Europeans observe sarcastically that defending freedom and preserving peace is not like conquering the American west; namely, it is done once and it is over with. Their history has taught them that nothing is ever final, that little is ever what it seems to be, and that the use of force always has unintended consequences. That is why war frightens many Europeans, and why so many of them are willing to go to any length to avoid it, as though a state of peace were an Eleventh Commandment.

Europeans often dismiss the American commitment to "the defense of freedom" as arbitrary and naive, and assert that Americans are ignorant of the consequences of warfare, and therefore foolishly rush into it. They condescendingly explain that wars in which Americans have fought during the last one hundred years have always taken place somewhere else, which by insinuation, makes Americans insensitive to the real horror of warfare. It is true that, with the exceptions of War of 1812, the Civil War, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the attack on the World Trade Center, Americans have been spared the tragedies of death and destruction at home. It is also true, however, that when Americans look at their flag they do not see different shades of gray. They see freedom, as trite as it may sound, in the colors of red, white, and blue. They know what they are for, which is why their elected representatives spend a significant portion

of American taxes on maintaining the military means to defend America's freedom, and also to defend that of others. This is why it is difficult for Americans to be patient with European condemnation of America's willingness to defend freedom against threat, as though Americans love violence.

Like Americans, Europeans also think in terms of historical experience, but unlike Americans that experience has taught Europeans what they are against, not what they are for. Europeans do not have a Declaration of Independence, or a constitution of liberty, in the sense that American culture and tradition is the idea of freedom. What Europeans do have is a collective memory of war's atrocity, punishment, and sorrow. For ordinary Europeans war means tanks in the streets, and they fear them more than the threat of an asserted axis of evil formed by countries on other continents.

If the foregoing applies to America, what does Europe stand for? The formation of the European Union is one answer to the question. In the spring of 2001 Heide Simonis, then minister-president of the *Land* Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, urged an American audience in New York City to recall Europe's past:

> We have to remember that for 1,500 years, up to 1945, no period of peace in central Europe lasted longer than 30 years. The nations that have now come together in the European Community were constantly at war with one another in various constellations. Then, for 40 years, [the reference is to the period 1949–1989] we had no war in central Europe, but some 500 million people on the Old Continent lived under the threat of a global nuclear confrontation. We were dead certain we would be the battlefield of a potential worldwide conflict between East and West. In the truest sense of the word: *dead certain*.[31]

Several months later, in July, the president of the EU Council of Ministers, Louis Michel of Belgium, was more specific. "It is high time," he cautioned members of the European Parliament, to acknowledge "that Europe stands for peace. . . . We must trumpet the fact that European

integration is all about bringing men and women from different countries together for a common cause, making them aware of what united them and giving them a shared destiny."[32]

Both Simonis and Louis Michel expressed a European conviction honestly held, and particularly so by Germans. To Europeans who recalled World War II there was nothing strange or secret about the purpose of the European Union. It was not created to become a rival to the United States. Its overriding purpose was simple and straightforward: to preserve peace by creating an integrated European economic, political, and military union served by common institutions.

Americans note that the Europeans are making agonizingly slow headway in this direction, and are critical of what even some Europeans call moving "at the pace of the slowest camel in the train." But if the Europeans have learned from their experience as well as they assert, they will continue their efforts; hence, they admonish, don't judge a tortoise by its speed. They may sometimes take two steps backward for each step forward, but they will advance on a circuitous path made of European history lessons, just as Americans travel a direct path made of the American experience with the history of freedom.

In that summer of 2001, as Louis Michel held forth on what Europe stands for, it was unlikely that the leaders of the American republic and the architects of the European Union were aware of a little known message to Americans sent by a European in the 1930s. Had they been familiar with it, they might have found it helpful following the eleventh of September when American and European fervor about freedom, peace and war reached new heights.

J. J. Jusserand was married for almost forty years to Elise Richards, an American, from a New England family. He also served as the French ambassador in Washington, D. C., between 1902 and 1925. Shortly before he died in 1933, he sent a letter of "farewell forever" to his American friends:

> The sands in the hour-glass are running low; I must take leave, probably forever. May peace, prosperity, happy homes be the meed of your energy,

good sense and kind hearts. When we judge each other we are not bound to applaud all that the other does, nor even to avoid expressing our blame when there is cause; but blame must not be peppered with sarcasm and irony; the tone should be that of the affectionate reproach to a loved brother. . . . Remember this also, and be well persuaded of its truth: the future is not in the hands of Fate, but in ours.[33]