
Waiting for the European Community

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For many journalists, intellectuals, and politicians, the expected arrival of a European economic and quasi-political community in 1992 was a consummation devoutly to be wished. Despite murmurings from English Tories and French New Rightists, mass-circulation publications on both sides of the Atlantic greeted with unmistakable jubilation the order that was supposed to emerge. The European community would empower ethnic minorities, thereby pleasing various factions opposed to nation-states, from Frisian Socialist Greens to Hapsburg legitimists. It would encase Germans in a structure of economic and administrative unity and keep them from venting what some view as their aggressive national character. The new community, it is still hoped, can be extended to the Eastern Europeans, as Charles Gati among others has pointed out, and thereby be made to counteract the authoritarian and nationalist traditions among Slavs and Hungarians. Notwithstanding any concern about possible economic competition with the United States, the democratic globalist Ben Wattenberg marvels at the prospect of "twelve Western European nations with 320 million people, all pledged to free trade and unhindered migration." With Eastern Europe, this new bloc can be expanded to incorporate half a billion people, working consciously or unwittingly toward global free trade and democracy for everyone.

Sides for or against the new order were taken for millenarian and not simply economic reasons. For many of its proponents, 1992

pointed the way toward the end of history and politics, of a world divided into adversarial states and nations. Such visionary thinking was already present among planners of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. Robert Schuman, who created the design for that six-nation agreement, saw it as a path leading toward a "humanity freed of hate and fear which can relearn Christian fraternity." In his *Mémoires*, Schuman's collaborator in organizing the Coal and Steel Community, and later architect of the European Common Market, Jean Monnet, recalls that he considered his work in the early fifties "as a first step toward the organizational forms of the world of tomorrow." Monnet's frank emphasis on constructing "formes d'organisation du monde de demain" contrasts strikingly with the evocations of a universal liberal society among present advocates of an expanded and deepened common market. The French liberal democrat Alain Minc, in words similar to those of Ben Wattenberg, speaks of "politicians abdicating triumphantly before society: such is the meaning of the course of events moving us toward the Great Market. The change that has permitted the reactivation of the European machine expresses a methodological revolution: states are dispossessing themselves for the sake of the Market; they are abandoning their old tendency to build, construct, and impose norms."

Millenarian motives for united Europe.

There were at least two contradictions inherent in the support for the new European order, and it may be useful to note them before proceeding with any warning. One, it is not clear that this order, with its vast supranational administrative apparatus in Brussels, Strasburg, and other European cities, was really an effort to depoliticize Europe. Neoliberal apologists in the European Democratic Union and among the chroniclers of *Figaro* point to the free trade and free movement of labor that 1992 will produce. Yet, it can be argued that both policies are fully compatible with highly regulated and quasi-collectivist economies. It is entirely possible to have states with wall-to-wall bureaucracy agreeing to free trade and free migration of labor within their trade zone. Such an outcome requires the coordination of different levels of administration and has nothing to do with extending a free market economy across Europe. Indeed some of the Tory opponents of English participation in the Common Market are correct from a free market point of view when they resist the statist embrace of the new order. Furthermore, free trade may have been one among many beliefs defended by nine-

Free trade not synonymous with free markets.

teenth-century classical liberals, but it was never the entire liberal gospel. And it was a belief that European liberals ran to discard when they fell under the spell of nationalism. Why has it suddenly re-emerged as a fetish of European and American neoliberals, who are willing to live with any welfare state democracy as long as it moves toward open borders and free trade?

*European
unity vehicle
for world
government.*

Two, it is still up in the air whether the new order, which has now been postponed into the late nineties, is to be strictly European or a vehicle for the political transformation of the rest of humanity. The French militant democrat Maurice Duverger insists on a European duty to bring human rights and political democracy to benighted peoples; and he interprets the reconstructed common market as a tool in this *mission civilisatrice*. His American ideological counterpart Wattenberg also treats the emerging European Community as the matrix of a universal nation organizationally and ideologically akin to "democratic capitalist" America. Each monolith, though similar in so many ways, will have to compete over "what ideas and values will hold sway in the global community." Reading such observations from Europeans as well as Americans, one is reminded of Carl Schmitt's lament in 1978 that any discussion of European unity should speak of it as "a mere first step toward the unification of the world."

*Defenders
hate the
nation-state.*

There is a reason for this tendency, which may also explain the contradictions in some of the defenses of the European Community. Almost all the defenders hate nation-states; either because they feel threatened by a particular one (Duverger, for example, refers grimly to the possible "return of Bismarck"); or because they believe such entities restrict either free-floating cosmopolites or national minorities. Admittedly every nation-state has discriminated against someone or some group at some time, and it has often been noted that one of the first acts of the newly united Spanish nation-state in 1492 was to expel Jews and Moors. On the positive side, it can also be shown that the consolidation of nation-states contributed, in the long run, to things of value: for example, legal equality, commercial progress, the end of feudal disorder, and a flowering bourgeois civilization. Significantly, the preoccupation with international free trade and open borders in the nineteenth century came not from national liberals like Emilio Cavour and Francois Guizot but from the democratic Radicals James Mill, John Bright, and Richard Cobden. It was these Radicals who tried to wed the concept of universal de-

mocracy with free trade, self-enforcing legal norms, and a global market economy.

In a probing sketch of James Mill in the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* (Fall 1990), Murray Rothbard underscores the missing link in Mill's argument for the interdependence of democracy and the free market. Mill insisted that what stood in the way of political equality and global capitalism were the "avaricious few," bending the state and economy to their will. By elevating the popular majority to "watchmen" over the grasping few, it would finally be possible to combine majoritarian government and the unrestricted accumulation of wealth. According to Mill as interpreted by Rothbard, "all classes are harmonious and none conflict within the free market and free society; conflicts only arise in relation to who controls, or who is controlled, by the State." The People thus were not expected to replace other narrow interests with their own, for in rising up against political authority, they would eventually come to appreciate everyone's equal right to freedom. When confronted, however, with the possibility that the People might not act so programmatically in the short run, Mill came up with his own proto-Leninist formulation. The People generally know—or at least will come to know—what is in everyone's interest, namely, global democratic capitalism, but their judgment may prove faulty in particular instances. Thus Mill and other English Radicals of the early nineteenth century, as depicted by Rothbard, moved toward anticipating the Marxist notion of "false consciousness." An intellectual vanguard was needed "to educate and organize the masses so that their consciousness would become correct and they would then exert their irresistible strength to bring about democracy and laissez faire."

Intellectual vanguard should guide the masses.

Other difficulties were inherent in the Millian vision of a new world. People have group identities that prevent them from becoming reducible to universal consumers and producers. If given their druthers, moreover, most people vote to redistribute wealth and to create large welfare states. In a democracy it is those who want or need more who will have their way, in spite of legal norms. A remarkable consensus can be found on the contradictions of modern liberal democracy, going from the Marxist C. B. MacPherson to the authoritarian conservative Carl Schmitt. It is a testimony to the power of desperate faith that American neoconservative and European neoliberal journalists continue to sound like early nineteenth-century Radicals. The columns of Paul Gigot, Jean-Marie Benoist,

Advocacy of liberal democracy contradictory.

Power transferred from national to super-national bureaucracies.

Michael Novak, and Morton Kondracke all abound with counterfactual remarks about how political equality and a free market economy (usually quite broadly defined) go hand-in-hand.

At the present time it is the proponents of liberal democracy who back the European Community, as an alternative to nation-states. Germans who feel uneasy about their own national identity since the Nazi catastrophe, together with Jewish intellectuals who have soured on any national identity but their own are obviously among those boosting the new European internationalism. But there are also visionaries who still dream of a depoliticized world, in which "politicians abdicate triumphantly before society." An abdication may in fact occur with the advent of the European Community, but the victor will not be civil society without government. What will more likely happen is a transfer of power from national to supernational bureaucracies. The new order of Euro-managers will enforce political values and economic policies and be in a position to impose their will on European societies in more than one way. Consigning legal questions about human rights, discrimination, and proper democratic practices to supernational institutions is more, it may be assumed, than a good-will gesture. Such acts involve both transfers of state sovereignty and authorizations of a new government to oversee Europeans whose states have abandoned some of their functions and most of their independence. "Sovereign is the one," according to Schmitt, "who decides the challenge of the exception." After 1992 this may be changed in the European Community to the more relevant dictum: "Sovereign is the one who decides what human rights and democracy mean in a particular case."

I would not suggest that there was nothing wrong with the European state system, which began to self-destruct in the early twentieth century. And there are certainly advantages to economic and military agreements among European states aiming at both regional security and material enrichment. Neither should be spurned by states or by nations. There is also much to recommend the character of Robert Schuman, a sincerely religious European of Franco-German origin who wished to reconcile Europeans. My quarrel is with a plan for European unity whose defenders misrepresent it. They claim to be freeing society from the state while actually calling for the creation of new bureaucracies and the destruction of established political identities. If their work succeeds, it will invite national minorities to compete with each other for special status, to the detri-

ment of already weakened nation-states. Linguistic, territorial, and "human rights" disputes among "aggrieved" minorities will be taken gradually but ineluctably away from nation-states and assigned to transnational agencies. This regime will not represent a community of any kind but will resemble the American federal bureaucracy and its clashing clients. But such may be acceptable for those who oppose even the bureaucratic remains of the European state system with its national and territorial divisions.

Obstacles to this plan do remain, however, and may grow more serious in the future. On March 21, 1991, *Le Monde* reported a gaffe by German Bundesbank president Karl-Otto Poehl who complained of the "disaster" of the German monetary union. Poehl went on to note that, if the attempt to merge the disparate economies of the two German states had already produced severe difficulties, the attempt to do the same for all of Europe might be foredoomed. In a *mise au point* (also in *Le Monde*) on March 22, Horst Koehler, the German Secretary of State for Finance, took qualified exception with Poehl's comments. Yes, East Germany still lagged economically behind its Western counterpart by several years; and yes, the German government was still involved in an expensive indemnification of East Germans whose property had been expropriated by the Communists. The monetary union, all the same, was proceeding without snags "within the (foreseeable) rate of inflation." More bothersome to Koehler than Poehl's disparagement of the German economic union, however, was the complaint of Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission, that Germans had become "rigid" about advancing a parity plan for all European currencies. Delors and his French countrymen were afraid that Germans were placing their interests before those of other Europeans. Whereupon Koehler angrily retorted: "It is necessary to take into account the problems that we have in Germany. The people may awake one day and say: 'What is our government doing? Is it selling the deutschmark for something like the Greek drachme?'"

Economic obstacles remain.

Such remarks indicate that the rhetoric of human rights and world democratic community that German leaders have embraced does not lead necessarily to the acceptance of economic hardship. The Hungarian conservative Thomas Molnar predicts that the "Disneyland of European democratic community" will inescapably crash on the shoals of economic reality. Those with good economies and currencies will not sacrifice their fortunes to a one-Europe or

one-world vision. Nor will the liberal hope for individuals freely engaging in commercial transactions across national borders replace the world of group interests. Molnar's observations are certainly bolstered by the comments of the German Secretary of State for Finance.

American corporations like unified Europe.

All the same, other forces do strengthen the hand of Euro-managers and the global administrators who may eventually take their place. Both the United States government and multinational corporations are on record as favoring the European community, and, as former U.S. Ambassador to East Germany Roseanne Ridgeway pointed out to me in conversation last January, it is impossible to broach delicate diplomatic questions without expressing public support for "global democratic capitalism." Neoconservatives and others who use such language receive generous corporate capitalist support in the United States and elsewhere. The Bush administration, moreover, was careful to stress that European unity does not conflict with the American "new world order." A European Community advocate and zealous liberal democrat, Nigel Ashford, has made the obvious point that a large European free trade bloc receptive to American cultural and other influences benefits American corporations. That is to say, the United States can negotiate free trade agreements more easily with another large bloc than with a multitude of separate European states. And if American pop culture and current political values continue to overwhelm Europe, as Wattenberg hopes, then the opening to a unified Europe from this side of the Atlantic may be all the easier.

Having attended a conference at Elizabethtown College with members of the European Democratic Union, who are neoliberals in favor of the European Community, I find another reason to suspect that the new agenda transcends mere economics. The German and English participants at the conference dwelt on Eastern (or Central) Europe's "return" to European civilization, a phrase that offended the Czech, Hungarian, and Yugoslav speakers who were less sympathetic to the Union. Most of the Central Europeans present denied that their regions had ever turned away from Europe, and one Czech, a professor of philosophy and a devout Moravian Brother, Ladislav Hejdanek, expressed confusion about what exactly the Democratic Union meant by our "European roots." Hejdanek complained that none of the participants mentioned Plato, the Old or New Testaments, or anything other than improved material ar-

rangements and political parties. A German Christian Democratic official at the conference even rejoiced that Europe was through with “truth” and had now introduced democratic procedures.

With due respect to the modern Hussite Hejdanek, who does embody the West’s spiritual greatness, the Democratic Union was on to something important: Western Europeans are fleeing Europe in the sense that Hejdanek wishes to preserve it. What the French call *économisme* is clearly in the saddle throughout the West, together with the bad conscience that this economic obsession has aroused. But this obsession is also seen as useful. The old Europe, it is widely believed, was full of war and bigotry and inevitably produced a political culture leading to Hitler and Stalin. Making money, practicing party rotation in cooperation with government administrations, and cultivating therapeutically sensitized human relationships have all become alternatives to an older European civilization; and especially among the Germans, for whom national guilt is seen as a badge of respectability, liberal democratic militancy is the prerequisite for social acceptance at home and abroad.

Western Europeans are fleeing the West’s spiritual greatness.

As Jürgen Habermas put it in the *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung* on June 6, 1986, in response to the attempt by the historian Ernst Nolte to “banalise” Auschwitz by comparing it to the Soviet gulag, Germans should be grateful for their “guilt” which has saved them from their “chief devil”: the “romantic nationalist temptation” to slip back into communal traditions. Habermas rejects comparisons between Nazi and Stalinist crimes not because they are inaccurate, but, to the contrary, because Nolte and other historians who make them may be right. And the effect of their observations may be to undo the democratizing process which the stress on Germany’s uniquely wicked past has produced. Admittedly, there is a crudely apologetic side to German World War Two revisionism. And perhaps Andreas Hillgruber and Ernst Nolte do make forced arguments in presenting the Third Reich as a frenzied reaction to a perceived Stalinist threat. But Habermas and his supporters among the editors of *Spiegel* take an even more curious position in what has been called the “historians’ quarrel,” defending the purportedly incommensurable historical wickedness of Germany and its integral relationship to the entire German past as a useful but not necessarily accurate belief.

There is no reason to accept the commonly made error of confounding this democratic militancy, even when prefixed with “lib-

European Market not inspired by economic liberty.

eral" or "neoliberal," with a demand for free market economies. The European Market, admired by militant democrats in its present and projected forms, rules out a return to economic freedom. Prominent advocates of the Community include socialist Maurice Duverger and social democrat Jacques Delors. Such men understand that the European Community is a vehicle of bureaucratic integration, characterized by price-setting and restrictions on the trade practices of those living in the member states. What they and other supporters of the European Market are about is not the restoration of the free market but political homogenization achieved through coordinated material inducements and deterrents. Having a socialist government is not an impediment to a state's joining or remaining in the European Market; but, as Market officials questioned by me hastened to point out, not having a properly democratic regime is. Significantly, most nineteenth-century Western countries had less regulated and far less distributionist economies than today's European Market members. But, even so, none of these countries, given their limited or non-existent franchises, could have measured up to the current standards of political correctness. It is the pursuit of democratic sameness and expanded bureaucratic control, not economic liberty, that fuels the idealism behind the European Market.

Cultural self-alienation prepares way for globalist political identity.

Materialism and political correctness, nonetheless, do not provide spiritual nurture or high civilization; and those who embrace them must find something to do to make these facts less obvious to themselves and to others. The escape from Europe, as a millennial, cultural, and religious legacy, has thus been expressed as a materialist and collectivist vision, one featuring an end to history and elevating the European Community to a first step toward a globalist political identity. This cultural self-alienation may be less present among Eastern Europeans than among their Western, and particularly West German, counterparts. Indeed what unsettles American intellectuals such as Charles Gati and Flora Lewis is that Eastern Europeans have remained largely unchanged under Communism, and may feel nostalgic for Admiral Horthy, General Pilsudski, and other interwar authoritarian leaders. While there is little palpable evidence that this is the case (or that General Pilsudski was a bad presidential choice for interwar Poles), it is certainly true that Eastern Europeans have lived in a time warp relative to their Western cousins. Hence the present fixation of *Foreign Affairs, Commentary, The New Yorker*

and other advocates of Euro-managerial politics on closing all gaps between Eastern and Western Europeans, Poles, and Hungarians. All these, it is feared, may return to their real roots, which can only mean increased fascism and wife-beating.

It is hard to deny that Europeans have done beastly things in the past, as non-Europeans are doing even now. More questionable are the views (repeatedly suggested but not always stated) that European civilization has been generally beastly and that managerial reconstruction, done in the name of a return to Europe, is the only way to prevent further beastliness. Such *Gleichschaltung* may not work in the end, but judging by the progress of the American managerial state in helping us to “overcome” our past, the new order could work all too well. Despite continuing economic problems, it may go forward as a custodian of human rights and of democratic education. According to Plutarch, Alexander the Great hanged Callisthenes and other rhetoricians who conspired against his authority in the name of philosophical ethics. In the modern age, Callisthenes would likely become a Euro-manager and punish Alexander for violating human rights. Though I do not endorse Alexander’s imperialism, I would find it even harder to welcome governments run by Callisthenes or by his Euro-managerial counterparts.