

## THE IDEA OF EUROPE

Alumni Course Introductory Lecture, 1997

In 1991, when "The Idea of Europe" was selected as the topic of a newly established senior seminar to be jointly taught by faculty from the Departments of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Cold War had ended, the last customs barriers among the member states of the EEC, now the European Union, were about to come down, and the prospects for Europe seemed extremely promising. Since that time, progress toward a united Europe has continued and prospects look good for the admission of some Central and Eastern European countries into what has until now been a predominantly Western European affair. But there have been serious outbreaks of ethnic, religious, and nationalist conflict in the South-Eastern part of the continent; sectarian violence continues in Northern Ireland; and the ETA or Basque separatist movement remains a destabilizing force in Spain. There is even a violent independence movement on the island of Corsica, which from time to time requires significant deployments of French police and military. In Turkey -- supposedly a candidate for full membership of the European Union in the near future -- popular support for a more religiously based, Islamic society has continued to grow. Russia is encountering enormous difficulties as it tries to make the transition to a Western-style liberal political and economic society. Meanwhile, unrest and instability in Albania, virtual civil war in Algeria, and economic hardship in Morocco and parts of the Near East and Central Asia have led to an influx of immigrants, many illegal, across the Mediterranean and the Adriatic into Italy, Spain, and France, aggravating the social tensions caused by high unemployment in those countries. Finally, the kind of social democracy associated with the major European Union powers, notably France and Germany, and widely perceived as the "European way" in contrast

to Soviet style socialism or Anglo-Saxon Thatcherite capitalism is in trouble as Europe finds itself competing in an ever expanding world economy; there is popular dissatisfaction in certain countries with the economic discipline required to meet the fiscal standards set by the introduction of the new common European currency (to which, moreover, three member states have until now refused to commit themselves); and far-right nationalist, racist, and anti-immigrationist movements in France, Austria, to some extent Germany, and most recently Denmark, show no sign of abating. Despite the overwhelming victory in the British elections of a Labour Party less Colonel-Blimpishly opposed to European integration than the Tories, the British conception of Europe remains essentially that of a confederation of independent states -- a huge *Zollverein* or free trade zone -- with close but voluntary co-operation on most other matters, rather than the federal state that most of the other member states have in mind as the ultimate goal for Europe. It seems, however, that the movement toward such a federal state is unlikely to suffer more than temporary setbacks or pauses. Some reflection on what "Europe" stands for or should stand for is once more appropriate at this juncture.

It is hard enough to define America in purely geographical terms. America means much more. But at least it is possible to trace fairly unambiguous physical boundaries. In the case of Europe, geography is less decisive, especially in the East, where Europe meets Asia. As a result, geographical boundaries are inextricably bound up with history and culture, as the Polish historian Oskar Halecki makes clear in his book on *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, published in London not long after the Second World War. Halecki's book reflects the anxieties and concerns of a Polish Catholic scholar faced with the post-War division of Europe, which cut Poland off from the European culture many Poles felt and continue to feel they belong to. But at least Halecki had no doubt that there is a unified European culture. Others, however,

have argued quite plausibly that the divisions in European culture are as important as, perhaps more important than any supposed unity. The French political scientist and professor of public law, Gérard Soulier, is one who has quite recently put forward such an argument. I'd like to quote a longish passage from his book, *L'Europe: Histoire, civilisation, institutions* (Paris, 1994): "The idea of European unity" -- Soulier says -- "supposes a harmony between the history and the geography of the continent. Such a harmony, however, is by no means an established fact. Geographically, Europe is far from being a natural given; often it is defined as....a peninsula extending out of Asia....Conventionally, geographers have set its eastern limit -- the one that nature did not clearly draw and that therefore causes problems -- at the Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea. But those boundary markers do not correspond to any political boundary. To what extent, then, one has to ask, is Russia to be considered part of Europe? That's only one example, though it is the most important, of the lack of clear definition of a specifically European space. Often we have to look to history to determine geography. But....considered as a whole, the continent does not have a common history either. When Europe is presented from an historical point of view, what most books highlight, as evidence of its unity, is the civilization it supposedly elaborated in its long and troubled history. That history, admittedly marked by violent confrontations, is nonetheless said to have been founded on common values and aspirations. In fact, however, what is described as European civilization is essentially Western European civilization, and one cannot simply identify the whole of Europe with Western Europe. Can one speak of Europe as a unity while discounting a part of it, namely Russia, on the grounds that it extends eastwards across Asia to the Sea of Japan? -- while discounting the Balkan lands, because for ten centuries under the Byzantine Empire and for five more under the Ottoman Empire, their history was significantly different from that of the West?...How can we

envisage Europe as a unity if we simply exclude part of it that has been ignored for centuries by the West? This lack of fit between the geographical space of Europe and what we call European civilization can't just be glossed over. We can't simply pretend that the geographical space was the framework in which the civilization was created. That being so, any attempt to consider the entire space of Europe means facing up to and taking account of the accumulated antagonisms that have divided the continent historically. So, when we hear European civilization or culture being invoked, we should remember that what that term designates is normally associated primarily with the Western part of the continent." (p.12)

What is the idea of Europe, then, if it does not correspond in any obvious way either to a clearly defined physical and geographical space or to a single history or culture? How and in what circumstances did this idea arise?

Perhaps I could chip in, for starters, with some personal recollections of growing up in a large industrial city on the outer rim of Europe in the years before the Second World War. In those years, most people in Scotland simply took it for granted that Europe -- which meant the Great European Powers -- was the center of the universe. What was decided and happened there had always affected the entire world and in large measure continued to do so. In addition, no one doubted that Paris -- together with a cluster of other great cities: London, Berlin, Vienna -- was the cultural capital of the world. Even the United States -- clearly a major power since its decisive role in the Great War and in drafting the peace that followed -- seemed remote and peripheral, especially since it had to a large degree withdrawn from international engagements. Anyway, American culture and the American way of life seemed essentially an offshoot of the European, only more affected by modern technology (refrigerators, automobiles, and the like) and less hidebound by tradition. Besides, in those days when segregation was still the order of

the day and blacks were still America's invisible men, the population itself seemed to be essentially a European transplant. Japan was also certainly a powerful country. It had proved its mettle by defeating the immense Russian Empire at the beginning of the century, and by occupying Korea. By the mid-thirties it had invaded Manchuria and was waging a cruel war against China. At school we were taught to think of Japan as a kind of Asiatic Britain, an Oriental version or rather imitation of ourselves. Japan, I remember being told, was also an island nation, dependent for survival, as we were, on resourcefulness rather than on natural resources. Clearly, by the 1930's it had become a more ominous force; and it was also no longer the ally it had been in the First World War. Still, few people then believed that even the most advanced nation in Asia was capable of being more than a second-rate imitation of Britain, France, or Germany. As for the rest of the world, most of Africa was under European colonial administration, as was all of Central, South, and South-East Asia; Australasia was British, South America was culturally and to some degree economically a kind of European dependency, though it lay within the American sphere of influence. The League of Nations was headquartered in Europe and most of the problems that preoccupied world leaders were European problems.

For the vast majority of people in my home town of Glasgow, however, the centrality of Europe meant very little and was not something they thought much about. They were far too busy struggling to stay off the dole, feed and clothe themselves and their families, and avoid getting sick or hurt in an industrial accident. Even in the richer and more advanced countries, in those days, life for most of humanity was hard, demanding, and unforgiving, with few amenities and little security. In addition, as inhabitants of Great Britain, particularly its outlying Northern part, we did not feel uniquely or even primarily European. We were taught in school that our

destiny was with the far-flung territories of the British dominions and colonies. Most of us did in fact have relatives (as I did) in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa, where language, manners, and institutions were familiar. Milan and Breslau felt far more remote to us in Glasgow in those days than Montreal or Brisbane. And in many ways they were. There were regular weekly sailings by liners of several shipping companies from the Clyde to Canada. Getting to Milan or Breslau would have been a more complicated business. Reading the account of growing up in Brisbane before World War II by the Australian novelist David Malouf, I had the impression of a kind of tropical Glasgow. Apart from the heat and the fauna and flora, everything else was the same: provincial British. None of us realized in those years that the Empire was about to collapse like a house of cards. So we felt part of Europe but also separate from it. As a result, we did not worry much about European decline. We were British.

On the European continent, however, and even in the less provincial parts of Britain, things were quite different. There was a deepening sense of crisis, and much apprehension about the future of Europe. The cultural pessimism of the *fin de siècle* (of which Nietzsche is the most eloquent spokesman) had spread to large sectors of the educated middle classes. To this, the catastrophe of the Great War and its aftermath had added a feeling of irreversible political decline. The enormous success and influence of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918-24) is symptomatic of a general climate of pessimism. Spengler presented European decline as an inevitable fact and recommended stoical acceptance of it. In his own words: "We were born into this time and we must bravely follow the path to the destined end....Our duty is to hold on to the last position, without hope, without rescue, like that Roman soldier at Pompeii who died at his post because they forgot to relieve him....An honorable end is the one thing that can not be taken from us." (*Man and Technics*, p. 104) Whether it would go down or not, was not an option

for Europe. The only option was whether it would go down nobly or not.

A couple of essays on "Europe" and "the European" by Paul Valéry, the great French poet, dating from the interwar period of the 1920's and 1930's, might seem at first quite up-beat, having been written in the glow of the Allied victory over the Kaiser. But Valery's need to define what Europe represents and what the "European spirit" is, is in itself a sign of the general apprehensiveness that was felt in intellectual circles at the time. When he affirmed bravely in a 1922 essay that "in power and precise knowledge, Europe, still, even today, greatly outweighs the rest of the world," he implicitly acknowledged that European supremacy was no longer quite as certain or as unchallenged as it once had been. A second essay, written in 1935, two years after the National Socialist seizure of power in Germany, is understandably more pessimistic. "The European spirit, formed by the many exchanges between the peoples of Europe," Valery writes with foreboding, "is perhaps on the eve of a disturbance comparable to that in the world of politics and economics...What we once tried to unite, what seemed to be tending to unification by force of circumstance, seems today to be splitting up, and if this movement becomes more pronounced it may well make the men of this continent less and less intelligible to each other." It was around this time that Valery penned the famous elegiac remark: "We civilized societies now know that we too are mortal."

A similar note was struck by the widely read English historian H.A.L. Fisher in his *History of Europe*, which first came out in 1935. Frequently reprinted, this soon became a standard textbook in colleges and universities in the UK and it was well known, I believe, in this country too. Fisher also had a shot at defining the "spirit" or "idea" of Europe. What he had to say was pretty standard. "We Europeans are the children of Hellas," he began. To the Hellenic influence, he went on, must be added that of Christianity: "To be a Christian was to be admitted, as it

were, into the fellowship of the European nations. To be a non-Christian was to be an outcast and an enemy. Much of European history consists in the secular conflict between East and West, which, beginning with the wars of Greece and Persia, was resumed in the long duel between Christianity and Islam..." Fisher, a good English liberal, adds a few more elements that he considers essential to the definition of Europe: "the ideas of nationality and responsible government, of freedom and progress, of democracy and democratic education" and "the incomparable gifts of modern science." But at the end of his work, a more somber note is struck. The Great War, Fisher acknowledges, marked a watershed in the destiny of Europe. "With the passing of Europe under the harrow of war," he writes, "there passed also by sensible degrees out of the average thinking of average men that strong belief in civil liberty and peaceful persuasion which had been a distinctive feature of the nineteenth century...The war has left us an evil legacy. The moral unity of Europe is for the time being broken. Nordic paganism assails Christianity. An insane racialism threatens to rupture the seamless garment of civilization...The League of Nations has failed to realize the hopes of its supporters...A sense of impending calamity broods over civilization." (ed. of London, 1938, vol. 3, 1184, 1222, 1244)

It is almost certainly to this sense of crisis in the European educated classes -- the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as the Germans say -- to the feeling that Europe, and they themselves as elites, had lost their pre-eminence, and to the fear or anticipation of being overwhelmed by the barbarians without and within -- by Americans, Japanese, and Russians on the one hand, by the restless, uneducated but increasingly demanding laboring masses on the other -- that we should attribute a number of works attempting to define Europe as a civilization which appeared between 1930 and 1960 and which are now regarded as classics in the field. These are the works that are constantly referred to in an ever more abundant literature devoted to the idea of



Europe. They include Christopher Dawson's *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity*, which first appeared in 1932 and has been frequently reprinted since; the works of two Swiss writers, Gonzague de Reynold (*L'Europe tragique*, 1934, *Quest-ce que l'Europe*, 1941, and the 7 volume *La Formation de l'Europe*, 1944-57) and Denis de Rougemont (*The Idea of Europe*, 1966); as well as the 2-volume *Europa: Storia di un'idea* (1958) by the Italian historian Carlo Curcio.

The pioneer of the group, Dawson wrote eloquently from an essentially Christian perspective. Noting that "the hegemony of Europe is challenged on every side," with Russia and America having thrown off European tutelage and "the peoples of the East reasserting the claims of oriental culture," (*Making of Europe*, 1953 ed., Introduction, xxv), he insisted that "the true foundation" of the unity, which alone could "defend the cause of Europe" and ensure the survival of European civilization, "is to be found not in political or economic agreements, but in the restoration of the spiritual tradition on which that unity was originally based. "European culture," he explained in a series of lectures given over the BBC in the fall of 1932, "has been undergoing a process of secularisation and materialisation which not only has destroyed its unity but ultimately threatens it with barbarism, since it means a return to the ethics of the tribe, and the reduction of democracy to mass-dictatorship and of science to a kind of utilitarian magic." (*The Modern Dilemma: The Problem of European Unity*, London, 1933) I draw attention to this Christian dimension in Dawson's definition of European culture, since the idea that Christianity is essential to the definition of Europe -- and that the sense of being European was at one time virtually identical with that of being Christian -- is found in so many books and articles on the topic of Europe. For obvious reasons: Europe defined itself as a community, from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, largely in relation to expansionist Islamic pressures

from the South-East and the South-West (the Balkans and Spain) and to the Tartar and other invasions from the East. At the same time, as we are repeatedly reminded by articles and reports in the *New York Times* (e.g. May 20, 1991, September 15, 1991, May 5, 1995, May 6, 1995), the idea that Christianity is essential to the definition of Europe has become problematical since about the middle of the twentieth century, as the demography of Europe has been significantly altered by a peaceful, if not always completely legal influx of non-Christian people. The new demographic elements (chiefly Moslem) seem to be different from the old Jewish population of Europe. The Jews were accustomed to occupying a marginal place wherever they were and on the whole sought only to be tolerated. To the degree that they wished to play a more active or prominent public role in the societies in which they lived, they accepted that they would have to give up their Judaism or at least leave it at home with their families. Perhaps the new populations are not accustomed to such a separation of public and private spheres; at any rate, many appear not to accept it. And their presence is provoking a difficult re-evaluation of what Europe stands for, since neither the Christian nor the liberal and secular visions of Europe seems able to accommodate them. Moreover, the decline of Christian belief and practice in most European countries has made it more difficult to claim that Christianity is still essential to the definition of Europe in any but the vaguest sense, while the propaganda of extreme right-wing racist movements like the Front National in France has made many people feel embarrassed to make such a claim.

Finally, for evidence that educated young people closer to the centers of culture and power than I was in far-off Scotland were deeply concerned about the outlook for Europe, had a sense that it was in serious decline, and were looking around for ways to save it, we might take a look at *The Turning Point* (New York, 1942), an autobiographical narrative of growing up in the

1920s and 30s by Klaus Mann, the son of the great German novelist Thomas Mann. It was Klaus Mann's anxiety about the future of Europe that led him to take an intense interest in the Pan-European movement of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.

Not many people remember this movement now but in the 1920s and 1930s it commanded quite wide support. As many of the ideas it propagated (largely through its own publishing wing, the Paneuropa Verlag) still cluster around the contemporary European unification movement, it is worth saying more than a few perfunctory words about it.

Coudenhove-Kalergi, a cosmopolitan gentleman-scholar-diplomat, was born in Tokyo in 1894 of a Japanese mother and a father descended from Austrian and Greek nobility. He held Czech citizenship, since the family lands were located in what became Czechoslovakia after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, but in 1939 he became a naturalized citizen of France.

Coudenhove launched his movement for a United States of Europe in the early 1920s -- that is, in the aftermath of the disastrous war that completely wiped some old European countries, like the Habsburg Empire, from the face of the map, transformed others, like the old Russian Empire beyond recognition, and left all, including the victors, drastically weakened. Pan-Europe congresses were held in Vienna in 1926, Berlin in 1930, Basel in 1932, Vienna again in 1935. The next congress was held in exile, in 1943, in New York, where Coudenhove-Kalergi had become a Professor at NYU, having fled Austria at the time of the *Anschluss* in 1938. These congresses were surprisingly well attended and were addressed by eminent figures from politics and literature. Among the movement's many supporters, some were liberal or left-inclined; most, however, appear to have been centrist or leaning to the right. They included Aristide Briand, the French Foreign Minister, Gustav Stresemann, the German Foreign

Minister, Edouard Herriot, a leading member of the French cabinet and President of the Chamber of Deputies, Edvard Beneš, the President of Czechoslovakia, Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt von Schuschnigg, successive Chancellors of Austria, Leo Amery, the British Colonial Secretary, and the young Winston Churchill, the young Konrad Adenauer and the young Maurice Schumann. The movement also found support among historians and political theorists like Guglielmo Ferrero, an Italian liberal, and Bertrand de Jouvenel, a conservative; among writers -- Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, Jules Romains, Thomas and Heinrich Mann (Klaus Mann's father and uncle), Bernard Shaw, Ortega y Gasset, Unamuno, and Salvador de Madariaga, to name a few; among musicians -- Bruno Walter, Fritz Kreisler, and Richard Strauss. Einstein and Freud expressed benevolent interest, and the Catholic Church treated the movement favorably in a number of articles in the official Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*. (Coudenhove-Kalergi; *Le Pionnier de l'Europe unie*, Lausanne, 1971, 101-105). Winston Churchill sent greetings to the 1943 Congress in New York and a decade later, in 1954, contributed an introduction to a new edition of one of the dozen or so books in which Coudenhove argued passionately for a European Federation. In fact, that Introduction was lifted from a long article by Churchill entitled "The United States of Europe," which had appeared as early as February 15, 1930, and in which the then fairly junior statesman discussed Coudenhove's movement and -- following his friend Leo Amery -- gave it his blessing. It was after meeting again with Coudenhove in London in 1946 that Churchill, now the great leader and architect of victory over the Nazis, delivered his famous 1947 speech at the University of Zurich urging the nations of Europe to unite in a federation -- which Britain, still in Churchill's eyes the heart of a world Empire, could not join, but which it would welcome and support. Churchill's vision of a Federated Europe was the same in 1947 as it had been in 1930 and it corresponded exactly to

Coudenhove's, for Coudenhove also excluded both Britain and Russia from his European Federation.

The idea of Europe as something more than the geographical term it still is in the *Geography* of Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) was of course not new in the 1920's and 1930's. In the early Middle Ages, a certain idea of Europe had been associated with the remnants of the Western Roman Empire, and increasingly with Christendom in general. In the sixteenth century, the Reformation, the development of powerful national monarchies in France, Spain, and England, and the secularisation of politics after Machiavelli disturbed this older conception of Europe as essentially coterminous with Christendom, though it never completely overturned it. But the revival of learning and the renewal of classical studies brought to the fore another basis (which, in turn, had never completely disappeared during the Christian Middle Ages) for a sense of European community and a shared European culture. Europe became coterminous with the international and interdenominational *respublica litteraria*: it was embodied in literature and the arts and sciences, in a common Christian and Classical heritage. As European influence spread overseas in the wake of trade, exploration, and colonisation, and the danger from Islam receded, a new self-confidence became noticeable among the writers of the cosmopolitan and optimistic eighteenth century. Voltaire, for example, was generously open to other cultures and with his *Essai sur les mœurs* created a truly revolutionary universal history in that it broke with the Eurocentric model. Yet Voltaire did not conceal his pride in the achievements and growing influence, so disproportionate to its modest dimensions, of the smallest of the continents, "notre petite Europe," as he called it. William Robertson, Principal of Edinburgh University and one of the great historians of the Enlightenment, had in mind the new system of the "balance of power," which had evolved to ensure relative peace and equilibrium among all the nations of the

continent, when he declared that it was no longer possible to write the history of any one European nation without also writing about all the others. "Whoever records the transactions of any of the more considerable European states during the last two centuries, must write the history of Europe," he declared in the Preface to his *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769). "Its various kingdoms, throughout that period, have been formed into one great system, so closely united, that, each holding a determinate station, the operations of one are so felt by all as to influence their counsels and regulate their measures." Robertson's greater contemporary Edward Gibbon wrote in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* that "a thoughtful historian must consider Europe as one great republic, whose various inhabitants have attained almost the same level of politeness and cultivation. The balance of power will continue to fluctuate, and the prosperity of our own or the neighbouring kingdoms may be alternately exalted or depressed, but these partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts and laws and manners, which so advantageously distinguish, above the rest of mankind, the Europeans and their colonies." Edmund Burke refers to an "aggregate of nations, a commonwealth...virtually one great state, having the same basis of general law, with some diversity of provincial customs and local establishments." Burke is one of those who emphasize the Christian component in the idea of Europe. "The nations of Europe," he writes in 1796 (in *Letters on the Proposal for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France*), "have had the very same Christian religion, agreeing in the fundamental parts, varying a little in the ceremonies and in the subordinate doctrines," while "the whole of the polity and economy of every country in Europe has been derived from the same sources" -- i.e. "the old Germanic or Gothic customary" and "the feudal institutions which must be considered an emanation from that customary...the whole digested into system and discipline by the Roman

law." Only a few years earlier, just before the outbreak of the Revolution, the Frenchman Antoine de Rivarol had noted that Europe had attained "a degree of power" in the world "unprecedented in history: the number of its capitals, the frequency and speed with which people move about, the development of public and private communications, have transformed it," he said, "into one immense republic...composed of empires and kingdoms, the most formidable that has ever existed."

All these views of Europe were essentially federalist: Europe was an "aggregate," a "commonwealth." It was made up of states – mostly Western and Central European -- that had grown together through a shared history and a common cultural heritage and that were held in balance by the so-called "balance of power." Napoleon had the idea of a single European state. The Emperor, we can read in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, "would have aimed at the same principles, the same system everywhere...A European code, a European supreme court with full power to review all wrong decisions; money of the same value but in different coins [just like the new Euro!]; the same weights, the same measures, the same laws, etc. Thus Europe would soon have formed a single nation and every traveler would have everywhere found himself in one common homeland." Those two competing notions of Europe as a federation of states and of Europe as a federal state are still around, with the British in general favoring the first, more old-fashioned solution, as I already mentioned, and most of the others the second, more modern solution. In itself the debate is not new. The Europeans are used to it (as, of course, are Americans). It arose in relation to Germany, for instance, after Napoleon officially abolished the old Holy Roman Empire: was Germany to be a *Staatenbund* (a confederation or league of separate states) or a *Bundestaat* (a federal state)? It arose in the wake of the Civil War that in 1847 divided the Swiss cantons into two warring camps: the Protestant and liberal cantons,

inclined to greater centralisation, on the one hand, and the Catholic and conservative cantons, which being weaker, were fearful of being overwhelmed in a federal system, on the other. The former won out and the Swiss Federal Constitution of 1848 transformed a confederation of independent cantons into a federal state. Often this transformation seems to have occurred in response to a perceived threat -- in the case of Switzerland and Germany, from the large, increasingly powerful unitary states on their borders. In the case of modern Europe, in response to huge concentrations of power in the U.S.A. and the old Soviet Union, and more recently in the vast emerging countries of the Orient.

In the nineteenth century, as in the eighteenth, many writers had a consciousness of the unity of European culture and some even put forward proposals for a European political federation: Goethe, Hegel, the Schlegels, Saint-Simon (whose proposal for a united Europe was published at the time of the Congress of Vienna), Novalis (whose *Die Christenheit oder Europa* envisaged the unification of Europe on a Christian basis), Proudhon, the French anarcho-socialist, the great French poet Victor Hugo. But with the possible exception of Saint-Simon's project, all these ideas of Europe were products, as Heinrich Mann observed, of the minds of poets. "The idea of European unity" -- I am now quoting Gérard Soulier, the French political scientist whose 1994 book on Europe I referred to before -- "is in fact quite recent. It doesn't really come from Antiquity or the Middle Ages or even the eighteenth century. It was not clearly articulated until the nineteenth century, and then only in the minds of some philosophers and poets, at a time when important changes in the situation of Europe became quite visible: on the one hand, the established European political order was seriously threatened by nationalist movements on the continent; on the other, the great powers of Europe could see new powers developing on other continents that might some day challenge their domination of the rest of the



world. But no government at that time ever gave any consideration to such an idea." (p. 6) If no government supported it, there was no popular support for it either, no popular notion of Europe, no popular sense of being "European" as there was a popular sense in the nineteenth century of being "German" or "French" or "British." There was a sense of being "white," maybe, as opposed to the so-called colored peoples of the immense European colonies and empires, as opposed to Africans and Asians; Christian, maybe, as opposed to pagan or Hindu or Buddhist or, above all, Moslem, but not really "European." "European," in fact, meant above all "Christian and white." It would be interesting to see how often the term "European" was also used to designate white Christian Americans or Canadians or Australians in order to distinguish them from native Americans, aborigines, Maoris, Japanese or Chinese, and African-Americans.

What people felt they were, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at least, was not "European" -- except in relation to the non-white and non-Christian world, the world that Europe had colonized or subjected to its rule -- but French, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, and so on. Coudenhove himself noted this in one of his early books (*Pan-Europe*, published in German in 1923; Engl. trans., New York, 1926): "With the cleavage of occidental Christianity [into Protestant and Catholic nations], with the secularization of Europe, and with growing enlightenment," he wrote, "the spiritual bond decayed which had inwardly held the peoples together. Language took up the heritage of religion...Among all the peoples of Europe there grew up national literatures, which were multiplied and broadcast by the printing press...Through its national literatures Europe came to be divided into a number of great school communities, which in consequence of the diversity of languages could not attain to a mutual understanding. In the end, the introduction of compulsory school-attendance forced every European to join one or another of these national school communities. These school

communities of the European spirit are the nations. They are secular-religious communities, welded together by the sacrament of language and the cult of national poets and national heroes. School, literature, and the press are the organs of the modern nation." (pp. 157-58) In the light of these comments by Coudenhove, one can understand why an old-fashioned, ancien régime style European such as the nineteenth-century Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, who hailed from the ancient free city-state of Basel and belonged to none of those new nations, but, on the contrary, looked on them all with deep misgiving, could go completely against the grain of his time by professing utter disdain for both the press and compulsory school-attendance. The old *respublica litteraria* had still been united by a common classical education and knowledge of Latin, if not Greek, even after everybody had begun to write solely in the vernacular languages. And even then, most educated Europeans could communicate in one of those vernaculars, namely French. It was popular literacy and the nationalisation and democratisation of schooling, according to Burckhardt (and -- more or less explicitly -- Coudenhove), that had fomented nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalism and undermined the old European cosmopolitanism: "the culture of old Europe," as Burckhardt liked to say.

The idea of a European community, in one form or another, had thus been around for many centuries. Some writers had even drawn up proposals for a political association. But Coudenhove seems to have been the first person to create a genuine, moderately successful political movement around concrete proposals for a European Federation and to have appealed with some success to a sense of being "European" at least among the more educated upper classes. He was tireless in his search for allies and supporters -- and hardly less indiscriminating. Though he strongly opposed Hitler and was unequivocal in his condemnation of Nazi anti-semitism, he reports proudly that in 1923 he wrote an open letter to Mussolini,

pleading with him to "save Europe" by encouraging the reconciliation of Germany and France as the first step on the road to a European Federation (*Europa erwacht!*, Paris/Zurich, 1934, 94-96). The real danger to Europe, he told Mussolini, was not from Germany but from the West (i.e. the U.S.) economically, and from the East (the Soviet Union) politically. It is interesting to find the idea of a Europe threatened by two colossal new powers in the East and the West clearly articulated at this stage. (Hints of it can be found still earlier, in writers like Michelet and Tocqueville). For at least some of the founding fathers of today's European Union also started from the notion that the unification of Europe should serve as a means of countering the influence of the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, both of them viewed as modern mass societies, both considered in one degree or another materialist and "un-historical," as Burckhardt once said of the Americans, that is: disconnected from the cultural traditions of Europe and having no stake in the preservation of continuity with a past reaching back into the Middle Ages and Antiquity. In addition, Coudenhove already expresses fear of a potential alliance between Germany and Russia, which would move the frontier of "Europe" to the Rhine and confront it with a huge "Eastern" colossus -- "one of the gravest dangers to the fate of Europe," he wrote. How important to the founding fathers of the European Union, one wonders, was the project of establishing a European "third way" between American capitalism and Russian communism -- a kind of Christian socialism? And how important was the goal of attaching Germany firmly to the West and preventing the dreaded emergence of a super-colossus in the East? Even today, the idea of a Third Way retains a certain potency. While showing no sign of reverting to Marxism, the Germans and the French are not comfortable with what they see as the "Anglo-Saxon," Thatcherite solution to the problems of the post-World War II welfare state. Likewise, keeping Germany firmly attached to the European core appears to

remain a major goal of French policy -- to which French governments, including Socialist governments, seem willing to sacrifice a good deal of their own freedom of action, in economic matters especially.

A decade after that first letter to Mussolini, in 1933, Coudenhove again approached *il Duce* for support for his movement. This time he travelled to Rome for an interview with him. His account of that interview in his Memoirs indicates that he had been greatly impressed. (*Crusade for Pan-Europe: Autobiography of a Man and a Movement*, New York, 1943, 169-76) In general, the founder of the Pan-European movement seems not to have been too fased by what he calls (I quote) "moderate fascism like that of Salazar in Portugal or Dollfuss in Austria, based on authoritarian government, corporative representation, and Christian ethics uninfected by the paganism and antihumanism of Hitler's racial doctrines." (*Crusade*, 174) Dollfuss's destruction of the Austrian Republic in 1933, his dismissal of the Austrian parliament and his refusal to permit new elections, had been essential, Coudenhove claimed, for the defence of Austria's independence from Nazi Germany -- something that the Social Democrats, who denounced Dollfuss as an Austrian Mussolini, "were unable to understand," as he put it. (*Crusade*, 163) (On the brutal methods Dollfuss used against the Social Democratic opposition Coudenhove maintains, in contrast, discreet silence.) As for those who criticise Cardinal Pacelli, the Vatican Secretary of State in 1933, later Pope Pius XII, for not having taken a clear stand in favor of democracy and against fascism, "they start," he holds, "from the wrong premise." There is, in his view, "no reason for a basic anti-Fascist attitude on the part of Catholicism," because "Catholicism is the fascist form of Christianity, of which Calvinism represents the democratic wing." This explained -- to Coudenhove's satisfaction; modern American Catholics are unlikely to go along with him -- why "Catholic nations follow fascist doctrines more willingly than

Protestant nations." When the time for European reconstruction comes, Coudenhove declared in his Memoirs (published as late as 1943), that "fact" about the nature of Catholicism and Protestantism will have to be borne in mind. For in constructing the new Europe, it will be necessary to reconcile the Protestant emphasis on personal conscience and the Catholic emphasis on authority and obedience. (*Crusade*, 174).

If all that makes quite strange reading to us today, there is stranger stuff yet. Coudenhove suggests that had Hitler been more "statesmanlike" he might have realized Pan-Europe at the time of the fall of France. "Immediately after the Armistice," he writes in his Memoirs, "Hitler would have concluded a generous and definite peace with the fascist government of France, a peace without any territorial concessions, based on a military, political, and economic alliance. He would then have established a supreme council for Europe, composed of himself, Mussolini, Pétain, and Franco, with himself as its chairman. This European council, based on legal equality, but on a *de facto* hegemony of Germany, would have achieved the economic union of Europe and assured throughout the entire continent social reforms by authoritarian means. Based on such a federation, he might have done his best to ensure good relations with Russia and with America, until Britain would finally have accepted some compromise with the united Continent." It was Hitler's bad judgment that he pursued instead a policy of exploitation and repression of the defeated peoples, which effectively made the creation of a genuine Pan-Europe impossible. (*Crusade*, 230-31) Some of the British suspicion of "Europe" (an article in the *Washington Post* for June 15, 1997 by the op-ed editor of the *Times of London*, Daniel Johnson, explicitly evoked Hitler's New Order as one of the forerunners of a united Europe) may seem less insular and Colonel-Blimpish in the light of Coudenhove's suggestions as to what Hitler "would have" done had he been more

statesmanlike, or perhaps "should have done" in Coudenhove's view. I bring up Coudenhove's relative tolerance of certain moderate forms of fascism not to insinuate that there is something fascist about the whole project of European Union (as seems to have been the intention of the author of the *Post* article), but to raise the question -- to which we shall return briefly later -- whether the idea of "European civilization," as distinct from the idea of "Western civilization" in general, does not in fact include an aristocratic element, an acknowledgment that elites of one kind or another *should* enjoy a degree of authority, and that this is as important as the "democratic" element. When the great German historian Leopold von Ranke represented Europe as the common creation of the Romance and Germanic peoples in the early years of the Restoration, just after the French Revolution, one of the things he had in mind was that Europe's destiny is to achieve and maintain a balance between what he saw as the democratic and egalitarian impetus of the French and its counterweight, in his view: the traditionalist and aristocratic influence of the Germanic peoples.

Let me go on for a little longer about Coudenhove. I have three reasons for wanting to do so. First, his many books, most of them quite repetitive, pick up scattered notions about Europe that appear to have been extremely common and that you can find in many works that are not directly about the idea of Europe or European unity at all. (For instance, the idea that Europe contains within a relatively small area an extraordinary geographical, historical, and cultural variety, which distinguishes it from both the vast empty spaces of the New World and the monotony and uniformity of the immense Oriental landmass. The contrast with the latter was almost universally interpreted as symbolic of the contrast between European freedom, energy, individualism, and competition, within the constraints of law, on the one hand, and Oriental despotism and passivity, on the other. It's no accident that the harem -- despots, eunuchs and

submissive women -- came to function as a sign of the Orient in general. This idea is found in Voltaire, in Ranke, in the French historian Jules Michelet, in the philosophers Hegel and Friedrich Schlegel and in the nineteenth century Italian political philosopher Vincenzo Gioberti, to mention only a few. You still find it today.) By gathering this and similar more or less consciously held stereotypes or cliché-ideas together, Coudenhove turned them into a kind of European doctrine.

Second, Coudenhove was the first, I think, to create a history of the idea of Europe, to provide his project for a Pan-European Union with a pedigree. Before him (in Burke, say, or in Saint-Simon) there might be occasional references to the medieval Church or the Graeco-Roman heritage as significant factors in keeping the European powers from fighting too much among themselves and in providing a kind of common culture for all the European peoples. Coudenhove establishes a chronological sequence not only for the gradual establishment and definition of Europe as a geographical and political *entity* (from proto-European forms such as ancient Greece and the Mediterranean Empire of the Romans to the first truly European formation in the Holy Roman Empire of the Germans, etc.), but for the development of the *idea* of Europe and the *project* of Europe as a federation of states. The links in the chain of the *idea* of Europe are Dante (*De Monarchia*, 1308); Pierre Dubois, a Norman lawyer and contemporary of Dante, author of a *Treatise on curtailing war and civil strife* (usually dated 1300); Georg von Podebrad, a 15th century King of Bohemia; Henry IV of France and his minister Sully; the Emperor Charles V; William Penn, who along with so much else was the author of an *Essay toward the present and future peace of Europe* (published in 1694); the abbé de Saint-Pierre (*Project of Perpetual Peace*, 1712, popularized by Rousseau); Napoleon; Saint-Simon and Thierry, and so on, all of whom articulated ideas of or for European unity. This sequence was

taken up by later writers like de Rougemont and quickly became the accepted genealogy of the idea of Europe. The realization of a European Federation was thus made to seem like the realization of a centuries old project, the fulfilment of a dream as old as Charlemagne, something that Europe had been straining toward, more or less consciously, for a thousand years. But we should bear in mind that that impression was deliberately created by Coudenhove. To many modern historians, in contrast, including Gérard Soulier and another Frenchman Jean-Batiste Duroselle, author of *L'idée de l'Europe dans l'histoire* (1965), it is very debatable that there ever was such a consistent aspiration toward European unity.

Lastly, Coudenhove's own work makes it clear that, despite the distinguished pedigree he provided for his movement, Pan Europe is about power and not just about culture, that it is about preparing Europe to compete in a new world power struggle -- a point often taken up by the contemporary Anglo-Dutch journalist and essayist Ian Buruma (e.g. in a 1991 article in *The New Republic*). Coudenhove's own point of departure and that of the entire modern United Europe movement -- as we've already noted -- was the perception by the educated European elites that the very foundations of the societies they had grown up in and were attached to were under threat both from within and from without, from the extreme Left and from the extreme Right, as well as from new world powers to the West and to the East, and that they would have to organize if they hoped to defend their inheritance. As we saw, Coudenhove's conception of the inheritance that was to be defended was fairly elastic and accommodated both predominantly liberal and democratic regimes, like the French, and fairly authoritarian ones, like Dollfuss's Austria, Salazar's Portugal, and even Mussolini's Italy. Variety, you will recall, was supposedly one of the characteristics of European as distinct from other civilizations.

Coudenhove himself underlined the extent of the decline of European power by



contrasting the picture of Europe at the pinnacle of its power and influence in the mid-nineteenth century, as drawn by Leopold von Ranke, with the sorry spectacle of Europe at the end of the second decade of the twentieth. Ranke had described how Europe "faced the rest of the world as a single body," despite "numerous internal conflicts and antagonistic tendencies." "The past," he had written, "saw the flowering of other nations and other groups of peoples, animated by other principles. They created their own institutions and developed them to a remarkable extent: today, virtually nothing is left of them. How threatening and powerful Islam once stood in the face of Europe! Not so long ago the Tartars swept across Poland as far as the borders of Germany; the Turk occupied Hungary and besieged Vienna. Today, however,...the Ottoman Empire has been overwhelmed by Christianity, and penetrated from all sides. When we speak of `Christianity' we do not refer to religion alone; the term `culture' or `civilization' would be just as inadequate. It is the genius of the West. It is the spirit that transforms people into well organized armies, that builds roads, digs canals, takes possession of the seas by covering them with fleets, fills distant continents with colonies, probes the depths of nature by means of exact sciences, penetrates into all domains of knowledge renewing them through incessant labors, without however losing sight of the eternal truth, the spirit that maintains the rule of law and order among men despite the diversity of their passions. This spirit is making tremendous advances before our very eyes. It wrested America from the raw forces of nature and the indomitable tribes that inhabited it; by various roads it penetrates into the most distant regions of Asia where only China remains closed to it; it encompasses Africa along her entire coastline. Irresistible, multiform, unequalled, invincible thanks to its arms and science, it is conquering the world."

In stark contrast to this -- to us perhaps not altogether untroubling -- vision of Europe

triumphant, Coudenhove's *Pan-Europe* (1923) offers a somber acknowledgment of defeat and humiliation. "The first quarter of the twentieth century," we read, had "witnessed the overthrow of Europe's world ascendancy. Today Europe has ceased to be the center of the world, alike as to political and economic power. The world has emancipated itself from Europe." "European world domination, which dates from the sixteenth century, came to an end in the World War," he reiterates in a later book (*Europe Must Unite*, Glarus[Switzerland], 1939). "It had already suffered a serious set-back through the liberation of America. At the turn of the century it had received another blow by the victory of the United States of America over Spain and of the new Japanese military power over Russia. Thenceforth, America and Asia are equally rivals of Europe, and its world domination is destroyed for all time...A divided Europe faces three growing world powers [he means the U.S., the Soviet Union, Japan]. Even if it unites, it can never recover its lost domination. But it can still maintain its equality and its position in the world in face of these three rivals, provided that -- but only provided that -- it unites, and unites in time." (p. 92) In this text, as in many others, this point is illustrated with "the warning example of the downfall of the Greek world, thanks to its disunity and division... As Europe lies between the Soviet Union, America, and Asia, so Hellas lay between the Great Powers, Macedonia, Italy, and Persia -- superior to them all in its genius, but inferior in its disunity." (p. 95; cf. *Pan-Europe*, 51-54; *Europa erwacht!*, 11-14) If the European states are to avoid the fate of the Greek *poleis*, they had better find a way of getting together. Another warning example from history is that of 17th century Germany. As its many petty states became pawns of the new great nation states -- France, England, Sweden -- Germany became the battleground of Europe. "England and France," as Coudenhove puts it, "fought out their colonial differences on German soil, and largely with German soldiers." (*Pan-Europe*, 19)

Coudenhove's view of the geo-political situation in the interwar years is simple. There are five world powers or "planetary fields of force," as he puts it: the American (sometimes referred to as *Weltreich Amerika* or Pan-America), the British (sometimes referred to as *Weltreich Britannien* or "The Empire of the South" because so much of it lay in the Southern Hemisphere: India, West, East and South Africa, Arabia, Australia), the Russian (*Weltreich Sowjetunion* or "The Empire of the North," since it stretches from the Himalayas to the Arctic), the Eastern Asiatic (also known as *Weltreich Ostasien* or "The Empire of the East" embracing Japan and China), and the European (*Weltreich Europa*, which is not limited geographically to Europe but includes the African colonies of the European powers and "embraces Continental Europe from the North Cape to the Morea, and the Western half of Africa from Tripoli and Morocco to the Congo and Angola"). (*Pan-Europe*, 14-16, 99, *Europa Erwacht!*, 66-89) No hint of decolonisation or self-determination here! No questioning of the association of Europe with the so-called white race either. Despite his frequently expressed and sharp criticism of anti-semitism and the idea of European racial purity (*Europe Must Unite*, 127-128, *Das Wesen des Antisemitismus* Vienna, 1929; republished 1992), the half-Japanese Coudenhove refers unequivocally to Europe as "the nucleus of the white race and the centre of its civilization" and warns that "the fate of white humanity, its rise or fall, depends on the fate of Europe." (*Europe Must Unite*, 129) He lists without any embarrassment the territories and populations subject to the rule of this "white humanity" and obviously believes that they should remain in that condition in the ideal new order he is proposing.

The creation of a federal Europe, as Coudenhove conceives it, is justified almost exclusively in terms of the geo-political interests of Europe as opposed to those of America, Asia, the British Empire, and -- above all -- the Soviet Union. While it is intended to ensure

peace among the European nations as the unification of Germany ensured peace among the former German states, on the international level, peace, it seems, will depend -- as the peace of Europe once depended -- on the maintenance of a "balance of power" among the five great empires. The creation of Pan-Europe thus seems to correspond quite closely to Bismarck's creation of a united Germany, which enhanced Germany's position vis-a-vis the other European states, without necessarily providing a more solid basis for peace among them. It is striking that Coudenhove sees the League of Nations as a rival ideal, an Anglo-Saxon diversion that has in fact stood in the way of Pan-Europe and that has imposed an "Anglo-Saxon peace." "In place of the four hundred year old world supremacy of Europe, we have the world supremacy of the Anglo-Saxons," he writes in *Europa erwacht!* (91) "The League of Nations," he had complained as early as 1923, "constitutes a lasting menace to the independence of Europe. Thanks to it, the non-European Powers of Latin America, Eastern Asia, and the British World Empire have legal sanction for meddling in European affairs, whereas Great Britain would deprecate any interference upon the part of European states in its imperial affairs; and similarly the United States, by reason of the Monroe Doctrine, would resent any interference in American affairs...Against the exercise of such tutelage by the League of Nations, Europe must sternly set itself...A hundred years later than America, Europe must proclaim its own Monroe Doctrine: 'Europe for the Europeans!'" (*Pan-Europe*, 89-92) In our present rapidly globalizing universe, the geopolitical ideas underlying the project of a United Europe may seem quaintly anachronistic. Gérard Soulier has even dared to raise the question whether, in view of the establishment of a global market and of free trade on a planetary scale under the general aegis of GATT and the World Trade Organisation, in view of the modern commitment to multiculturalism and suspicion of Eurocentrism, the objective of a united Europe might not have

already been overtaken by events; whether, in other words, the whole project of European union might not be an idea that has already become obsolete even before it has been brought to full fruition. (Soulie, 6)

In discussing the boundaries of Europe, particularly the Eastern boundary, Coudenhove anticipates the main issues raised in Halecki's *Limits and Divisions of European History*. The Eastern boundary is not necessarily the Urals, he argues. As long as Russia saw itself as a European power and accepted European civilization (that is to say, as long as it was the Russian *Empire*, from Peter the Great until the 1917 Revolution) the Urals, as the Eastern political boundary of the Russian "mother-country," could indeed be thought of as Europe's eastern frontier. But Coudenhove reminds his readers that Russia was part of Asia -- under the Tartars from 1200 until 1498 -- for longer than it was part of Europe and even during its two centuries of European life, he says, "it adopted outwardly the cultural forms of Europe, without becoming European at heart." (*Pan-Europe*, 30-31) At any rate, since the Revolution, Russia no longer views itself as the heart of an Empire, but as part of a union of communist states stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific. As a result, "the revolution of 1918 has split the empire of the Tsars into two unequal parts. Finland, the Baltic states, Poland, and Bessarabia joined the Western cultural world, while the remaining parts of the empire of the Tsars deliberately cast off this culture and tradition in order to establish a new form of life, a new society, and a new economic system on a Bolshevist foundation." "Bolshevism has cast aside the European civilization imported by Peter the Great and his successors. It turns its back upon Christian and democratic Europe. (*Pan-Europe*, 31; also *Europe must unite*, 97-100) In other words, Russia has opted for what Halecki calls the "Eurasian" solution to the question of its identity. Coudenhove, the Pan-European, and the Russian Slavophiles are in agreement: Russia is not

really part of Europe.

Since the collapse of the Soviet regime, the place of Russia in the European system is again very much on the table. The issue of NATO expansion simply focuses attention on it. How the West has thought of Russia and how Russia has thought of the West have again become issues of urgent contemporary importance. Three thought-provoking texts recommended by Professors Caryl Emerson and Michael Wachtel of our Slavic Languages and Literatures Department throw a great deal of light on this issue: they are the *Letters from Russia* (originally *La Russie en 1839*) of the Marquis de Custine, which seem almost as relevant today as when they first appeared in 1843, Dostoevsky's "Pushkin Speech" (1880), and the exciting novel *Under Western Eyes* (1911) by the Anglo-Polish writer, Joseph Conrad.

Equally problematic for a time was the place of that other extremity of Europe, Britain. Anticipating de Gaulle, Coudenhove excluded Britain from the European Federation and saw her as a potential spoiler. If, however, Britain were ever to cease to be an imperial power, he conceded, and if she renounced her "special connection" to the United States, Canada, Australia, and the so-called "Anglo-Saxon" world (which, like de Gaulle, he doubted that she would ever be either able or willing to do), her exclusion could and indeed should be reviewed. That review of the case did, of course, take place, and Britain, shorn of Empire, belatedly joined the old EEC, the ancestor of today's European Union. But Coudenhove's and de Gaulle's reservations seem not entirely misplaced. While they appear reconciled to a relatively minor role on the world's stage and view their Imperial moment as now irrevocably part of the past, the British remain the least enthusiastic and the most skeptical members of the European Union, exactly as Coudenhove predicted.

The boundaries of Europe are thus still somewhat ill-defined today -- in the East, in the

West, and, of course, in the South-East. Is Turkey part of Europe or not? Will she be admitted to full membership or not? Coudenhove dealt with that issue too, as it happens. A secular, Western-inclined Turkey ought certainly to be included in Europe, he thought, and this inclusion of Turkey was consecrated, in his view, by the 1923 treaty of Lausanne -- a renegotiation, with the new secular Turkish republic of Kemal Ataturk, of the settlement imposed on the old Ottoman Empire as one of the defeated powers at the end of the Great War. An Islamic Turkey, however, could never be part of Europe, Couenhove believed. There are many staunch Europeans today, three quarters of a century later, who continue to think, as he did, that Christian Europe cannot accommodate a large Muslim country. Was it not a Dutch foreign minister who undiplomatically admitted as much a few years ago. It now seems almost certain that Poland, Hungary, the Czech republic, even Slovenia, Slovakia, and the Baltic states, will be admitted to membership of the European Union before Turkey, which has been sitting in the waiting room as an associate member since 1963.

The justification of the national state, according to Ranke, writing at the beginning of the age of nationalism, lay in the protection it provided to national cultures. In addition to obvious practical political advantages -- being able to represent the interests of some 400 million inhabitants of the member states (or at least the interests of the great enterprises on which many of those 400 million depend for their livelihood and wellbeing) more effectively as a federation of states than any one of them could do singly in the new global economy -- the European Union does conceive of itself as in some way the defender and promoter of European *culture*, to some degree even as the creator of a new more fully integrated European culture. The justification for monetary union, the abolition of frontiers and barriers, in the minds of those committed to a Federal Europe is said to be not simply economic, not simply to ensure that

there will be no more wars among the European states; it is also intended to promote European traditions and European culture and to defend them from various perceived threats -- American popular culture, for instance. Now what is the "spirit" of Europe, the specific culture that the new European Union is intended to embody, protect, and promote? It seems -- as already noted -- to have something to do with Christianity as a form of culture and a tradition, but not surely as a religion, since fewer and fewer Europeans are practising or even believing Christians. It seems also to have something to do, as everybody says, with the classical tradition, with Greek esthetic and political ideas and with Roman ideas of law and administration, as well as with "Germanic" ideas of freedom, even if not all the countries of Europe have been equally touched by those influences. And in an era of mass education and triumphant technology, knowledge of Latin and Greek and of classical culture cannot even be taken for granted among the European elites, never mind the democratically enfranchised masses. The scientific tradition in both its aspects -- as a disinterested search for truth using reason and agreed on rules of evidence and as the application of the knowledge so acquired to technologies that increase man's control over his environment -- is also often closely associated with the European spirit, as is the concept of "commerce" -- the free exchange of goods and of ideas. The value of individuality and the rights of the individual are similarly widely cited as achievements of European civilization. Europe must presumably defend and promote all those things. But in what respects is this complex of values and practices different from the "Western culture" that Europe shares with America, Australia, and other parts of the world?

We might begin to look for an answer to that question by glancing back to the way the term "American" was used in the late nineteenth century by writers concerned with questions of culture -- Matthew Arnold, for instance, or the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, or for that



matter the American Henry Adams. For Arnold and Burckhardt, rightly or wrongly, "American" meant above all the dominance of the majority over the minority, of popular values over elite values, of the current or contemporary over tradition and precedent, and in general a kind of historical indifference or amnesia, a lack of interest in and respect for historical and cultural continuities. They associated that condition with political democracy. Arnold accepted that democracy was bound to come to Britain and that it was something new. "The political freedom of England owes more to the grasping English barons than to democracy," he wrote in 1869 in an essay on "Democracy." "We have never yet been a *self-governing democracy* or anything like it." The problem, for him, was, how to "keep high ideals," as he put it, under democracy. "Our society is destined to become much more democratic: who or what will give a high tone to the nation then? That is the grave question." For the "high tone" had previously been given by the aristocracy, by elites of one kind or another. And these were now swiftly losing their grip on power and on people's minds. "On the one hand, the masses of the people in this country are preparing to take a much more active part than formerly in controlling its destinies; on the other hand, the aristocracy, while it is threatened with losing its hold on the rudder of government...is losing also that influence on the spirit and character of the people which it long exerted...On what action may we rely to replace...that action of the aristocracy upon the people of this country, which we have seen exercise an influence in many respects beneficial, but which is rapidly, and from inevitable causes, ceasing? In other words, and to use a short and significant modern expression which every one understands, what influence may help us to prevent the English people from becoming, with the growth of democracy, *Americanised*?" (*The Portable Matthew Arnold*, ed. Lionel Trilling, New York, 1949, 451-55) "European," by implication, and in contrast, presumably supposes an ability and a willingness to recognize quality, distinction,

superiority. A "European" democracy would thus be one in which the masses freely and democratically subscribed to elite values. Burckhardt's concern, as expressed in lectures he gave at the University of Basel only a few years later was similar. "Art and science have the greatest difficulty in preventing themselves from sinking into a mere branch of urban money-making and from being carried away on the stream of general restlessness. The utmost effort and self-denial will be necessary if they are to remain creatively independent in view of the relation in which they stand to the daily press, to international commerce, to world exhibitions....What classes and strata of society will now become the real representatives of culture, will give us our scholars, artists, and poets, or creative personalities? Or is everything to turn into big business, as in America?" (*Reflections on History*, London, 1943, 170) What he feared most was what he called "the American man of culture," by which he meant some one who "has rejected historical continuity and a large part of spiritual continuity but would like to keep art and poetry as a luxury item" (*Über das Studium der Geschichte*, ed. Ganz, Munich 1982, 182) -- or, as we would say, as a commodity, which anybody with the right amount of money can acquire.

What is not "American" and is, by implication, "European" thus seems to be not only a particular history but a particular way of relating to history: neither the blind worship of tradition and resistance to all change, attributed to the Orient, nor the blithe, insouciant forgetfulness of everything past and the eager embracing of everything modern attributed to the New World; neither a rigid hierarchy of values, nor the reduction of all qualitative difference to the quantifiable and uniform value of money.

Whether the creation of a United Europe will protect these supposedly characteristic features of European culture, whether it will be able to preserve the "variety in unity" thought to

be a quintessential aspect of Europe is not certain, of course. Burckhardt was already complaining in the second half of the nineteenth century about "the decay of local patriotism, with its advantages and disadvantages, and a great decrease even in national patriotism" (*Reflections*, 170). It is possible that European Union will in fact further diminish the significance of particular historical and cultural traditions, until they become picturesque items of decoration, a kind of national kitsch, just as the creation of centralized nation states in the modern period created unified national cultures that gradually weakened most local and provincial cultures. Scottish culture was weakened as a common British culture developed and the center of national life moved to London: Scots themselves began to see it as whisky, kilts, bagpipes, Burns Suppers, haggis and Harry Lauder; Breton culture was practically destroyed, along with the Breton language, as the Republic turned twenty million French peasants into citizens; the differences between Prussian and Bavarian or Saxon and Swabian may well have become less and less significant in real terms, even as the contrast between the two becomes more and more a popular cliché. To the very degree that Europe is successful in creating a common sense of identity and a common experience, it may, in other words, undermine the very variety that the Europeans have often taken to be the defining characteristic of their culture.

Alternatively, insofar as measures are taken to preserve that variety and diversity, it is possible that these will inhibit the emergence of a vital new European culture and that Europe will simply become an administrative apparatus that regulates trade, transport, defence, basic civil rights, and so on. Coudenhove liked to point to the example of Switzerland, where linguistic and cultural autonomy are preserved under a federal constitution. But the Swiss themselves are not specially enthusiastic about the cultural condition of their country. Culturally, one Swiss writer has said, French-speaking Swiss are drawn to France, German-speaking Swiss to Germany.

"The more detached a Swiss is from the world of culture, the more he feels comfortably Swiss." For Switzerland is "not the place of culture; it is the place of cultural regulation." Culture is what Switzerland prides itself on "respecting, not what constitutes it as a nation." (Etienne Barilier, in *The Literary Review*, summer 1993)

With the exception of a few shorter essays, such as Saint-Simon and Thierry's *Reorganization of the European Community* or Novalis's *Christianity or Europe*, most of the books on our reading list do not address the issues that have been raised here directly. Literary works do not deal discursively with intellectual, moral, or political issues, and to the degree that they do, they are usually less successful artistically. Precisely because writers do not normally take stands, make arguments, or plead cases, however – they simply put these into the mouths of their narrators and characters or have their characters enact them -- they treat moral and social questions differently from politicians, philosophers, and even historians. What the texts show, beginning with the medieval French epic *Song of Roland*, is how a certain sense of Europe and being European, an idea of Europe, gradually emerged out of the encounters, real and imagined, of Europeans with Saracens, Persians, natives of the New World, Japanese or Russians; how these same encounters also constantly challenged the Europeans' sense of identity, obliging them to reflect critically on it; and finally, how complicated the strands of religion, language, nationality, and identity are even in a fairly limited geographical area, such as the small Baltic country that is the setting of the most recent of the works on our list, the *The Czar's Madman*, by the Estonian novelist Jaan Kross.