**PROLOGUE**

**America's Europe: A Hobbit Among Gandalfs**

E. P. THOMPSON

I do not think that I can be accused of being anti-American. It would be strange if I were, for I am ethnically half-American myself. My mother came of stock reaching back to seventeenth-century New England immigrants, and surely three centuries is long enough to establish some ethnic credentials?

I first crossed the Atlantic from England when I was a child of 5, in 1929. The Atlantic seemed to me then, as I clambered about the decks of an ocean liner, to be an immense stretch of water. But the faces and gestures which I met with in America appeared as reassuring and familiar.

What bothers me now, as a frequent visitor to the States, is that the Atlantic seems to be growing wider, even though it now takes only some six hours to cross. The gestures, the voices, indeed the whole mind-set of the dominant politics and media are becoming more and more unfamiliar. There are times when Europe and America appear to have drifted beyond range of communication.

This drift is bringing both continents into immense danger. And a European feels the need to raise his voice and shout out some warning to his American friends.

But how is this to be done? There are already sufficient authoritative voices on this side of the Atlantic, ready, at the drop of a fee, to expound to the American public what Europeans think and need. What they need (it seems) is to be defended by the United States, by the most advanced and hideous nuclear weapons imaginable; and they want the United States to be strong, decisive, and to pay the bill. The more querulous commentators grumble that Europeans don’t want to pay much for their own protection, and—the Blessed Mrs. Thatcher apart—they want, in their decadent materialist way, to benefit from trading and money-lending to the Warsaw Pact nations while Uncle Sam holds a nuclear umbrella over their churning tills. It will therefore be necessary for the vigorous new administration of President Ronald Reagan to bring Europeans to a proper sense of their duties to the Free World.

This is what the American public has been told, in various places, throughout 1980, and what it will be told, more loudly, in 1981. For example, Flora Lewis, who has the reputation of being an able columnist, informed readers of *The New York Times* (October 17, 1980) of “the dominant European view” of United States diplomacy and military postures, and she reassured them as to “basic Western solidarity” and an increased European “sense of dependence” on the U.S.A.

One answer to this kind of statement is that “Europeans” are not, any more than Americans, of some kind of standard issue. I am sure that Ms. Lewis will have been told this kind of thing by public relations operators around the Foreign or Defense Ministries of certain Western European nations—that is, by persons who are employed to tell American columnists whatever they have come to hear. But there is rather a lot of evidence, about which readers of the American press have been left singularly ill-informed, as to what other Europeans have been thinking and doing in 1980.

**Another Europe**

If we leave the Warsaw Pact populations aside (although these are also Europeans), a brief summary would show this. Sweden, Austria and Yugoslavia have continued to pursue policies of active nonalignment, pressing disarmament upon both superpowers. Norway and Denmark refused even to consider harboring cruise missiles on their territories. (The Norwegian Prime Minister, in his New Year’s message for 1981, has now called for a nuclear-weapons-free zone embracing five northern European nations.) The Dutch and Belgian Governments, which initially went along with the NATO decision (of December 12, 1979) to “modernize” theater nuclear weapons, have been forced to backtrack on their agreement in the face of nationwide agitation extending from the churches to the far left. In West Germany only Chancellor Helmut Schmidt’s dexterous political ambiguities are postponing the moment when a smoldering political revolt will flare up in his own party and far beyond. In Greece it is now considered probable that Andreas Papandreou’s Pasok, with nonaligned, anti-NATO policies, will head the polls in the 1981 elections.

In Britain the main opposition party, the Labor Party—which is now way ahead in all opinion polls—is committed to policies of unilateral nuclear disarmament and outright opposition to the introduction of cruise missiles, and the Labor Party’s leader, Michael Foot, has promised that if Mrs. Margaret Thatcher’s Government introduces these missiles, the next Labor government will send them back across the Atlantic. And on October 26, 1980, some 70,000 people assembled in Trafalgar Square, London, to signal their outright opposition to every measure of nuclear menace and weaponry.

This great meeting signaled the reentry into British political life—but at an even broader and higher level—of the old C.N.D. (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) founded in the 1950s by Bertrand Russell, J. B. Priestley, Canon Collins and others—a campaign long quiescent. It is now supported, right across the spectrum, by academics and trade unionists, Liberals and Laborists, ecologists and Welsh nationalists, churchmen and women, feminists, and by the youth culture in the popular music world. New C.N.D. branches, local anti-missile groups, women’s groups, specialist groups (of scientists,

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doctors, university teachers) have proliferated.

I have not discussed the similar movements in Spain, Portugal, France and Italy but, altogether, this amounts to quite a few Europeans who, unaccountably, do not take what is supposed to be the European view.” I did attempt to draw the attention of readers of The New York Times to this evidence, but without success. My letter went unpublished, although Ms. Lewis herself was kind enough to send me a courteous note of acknowledgment.

Since her letter to me was private I am not entitled to quote it here. But, in brief, she argued that, since the elected governments of certain NATO powers were endorsing NATO plans for nuclear rearmament, she was correct in reporting this as “the dominant European view.”

Listen, America

Now such a reply is formally acceptable—and it was nice of her to write back—but it is not good enough. I can recall a time when liberal opinion in the United States was finely attuned to the causes and issues of other nations, a time when New York was a great internationalist city which listened to the world—and when we, in Europe, listened back to the causes and arguments of New York.

What Ms. Lewis seemed to be signaling to me was the end of that sort of tradition, when not only ruling parties and great blocs (Europe, NATO) were attended to but when minorities also were allowed voices—and I have been speaking of very substantial minorities, strong enough to defeat governments—and when we tried, across national barriers, to exchange arguments and to work for common causes. There is a substantial, growing, well-informed tide of opinion in Europe which considers that both superpowers—under the pressure of their rival military establishments—are on a collision course which will prove, within some two decades, to be terminal: that is, terminal for all of us. The survival of civilization in the Northern Hemisphere might appear to be a common cause whose movements and arguments merit reporting.

It is not because I am “anti-American” but because I am pro-American—that is, because I think that, on balance, it would be a good thing if American civilization survived—that I am asking for attention to these arguments.

And I must add one more personal note.

From Satan’s Kingdom

In the past two decades I have benefited greatly from intellectual exchanges with American scholars in my own discipline of social history, and I have enjoyed the hospitality of several American universities. There can be no doubt as to the internationalism of the American academic community—it is to the United States that one comes to find out what is happening in many other parts of the world. There is no honor which has delighted me more than election as a foreign honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

I am therefore baffled to know what to make of the Winter, 1981, issue of Daedalus. Daedalus is the journal of the American Academy and it has a distinguished reputation. This current issue is the second of two numbers devoted to “U.S. Defense Policy in the 1980s,” and it is largely concerned with NATO and with European arrangements. The concern is phrased, throughout, in such terms as this: “Are new doubts about the American commitment to its defense taking hold in Western Europe?”

I have read this special issue with attention and with growing astonishment. I find it to be a barbaric utterance, made up of chapters of bad advice from Satan’s Kingdom, and in its sum a signal that civilization is already defeated beyond remedy. (And I would add that the views expressed in this particular issue of Daedalus are representative of the larger community of “defense intellectuals” in the United States.)

Indeed, this defeat is assumed, as a first proposition, from the first page to the last. It is assumed that two great blocs in the world are in a state of permanent war (restrained only by something called “deterrence”) and will, forever, remain so. The expertise of the authors—for they are, all of them, undoubtedly very great experts—is con-
Nuclear Strategy in a Dynamic World: American Policy in the 1980s
by Donald M. Snow

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Notes that "Western Europe (like South Korea) amounts geographically to a peninsula projecting out from the Eurasian land mass, a land mass dominated by the Soviet Union, a land mass from which large contingents of military force can emerge on relatively short notice to invade the peninsula."

Undoubtedly a sage comment. But it puzzles me as a historian. South Korea has not, I think, ever been invaded by Russians, although those new-found friends of the United States, the Chinese, did once enter North Korea in force. Nor is Western Europe exactly like South Korea. Nor, come to think of it, has the traffic, since the time of the Visigoths, always been that way, with invading hordes bearing down on the "peninsula" from the "land mass." I seem, dimly, to recall movements the other way—and on two occasions to the gates of Moscow. I believe that there are Russians still living (for many millions did not survive it) who recall the second occasion.

Politics of Survival

But these are expert matters which we must leave to the experts. What we cannot leave to the experts are the politics of human survival: and on this small matter, one might have supposed, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences might (in two generous issues) have solicited a contribution. This matter confuses me very deeply; I feel myself severed in half, as a citizen of Europe and as a visiting scholar enjoying American hospitality.

For the editor of Daedalus, Prof. Stephen Graubard, is a member of the history department at Brown University (where I have been teaching), and he has an office at the top of the same pleasant old house in which I work. We have not been introduced to each other, but no doubt we have met and nodded genially on the stairs. No doubt, if he has heard of me at all, he thinks of me as a very confused hobbit, needing all the protection that American Gandalfs can bring.

Professor Graubard's own introduction to this special issue is bland, and it might even be thought that he had done no more than exercise his necessary editorial duties in putting this Satanic handbook together. Yet, at a second view, it is clear that he is very much in accord with the first assumptions of his contributors. He shares the prime assumption, upon which all else is erected, that there is "a potential Soviet
threat to the very heart of Europe,” and that this must be so, forever and ever, amen. The “gravity of our predicament” stems from the loss of United States “dominance” in Europe, and this loss “can only be thought of as tragic.” The growing desire, even lust, of Europeans, East and West, for nuclear disarmament and for détente, is seen by Graubard (as by several of his contributors) as regrettable and as something presenting “problems” to defense experts and to Western politicians, who must somehow—by fictive gestures at arms control—negotiate around the susceptibilities of their electorates. And Graubard shares with other contributors a sense of alarm at the possible “Finlandization” of Europe, while, at the same time, writing that “Europeans are openly shocked by evidences of American indecision and incompetence.”

Hired Scholars

Now, I wonder who these “Europeans” are? I think that they may be fictions of defense experts and editors, counters in the rhetorical games of the cold war. If Professor Graubard and I were to stop on the stairs one day and exchange courtesies, I would feel bound to go on, beyond courtesy, to ask him some questions. I would ask him why he assembled for this number this set of contributors and not others: for example, those many distinguished American scientists, arms-control experts and others (some of them longstanding Fellows of the Academy) who have, over the years, in such places as the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, performed a service to the entire world by presenting seriously researched information and by proposing alternatives to the never-ending arms race? And if Professor Graubard replied that “defense experts,” in Western Europe as well as the United States, are into this kind of Satanic vocabulary and are prisoners of their own discipline, then I would readily agree; and would agree, also, that a similar compilation of worst-case scenarios and tabulations of megatonnage could be put together in the Soviet bloc as well. But I would go on to ask whether the discipline itself may not be suspect, corrupt and at enmity with the universal principles of humane scholarship; whether it was the business of scholars, at a time when civilization itself is threatened, to serve as the (well-funded and -rewarded) apologists of military establishments and states?

I would then tell him that I do not know what “Finlandization” means, but that if it means a process by which, in the Warsaw bloc, the bankrupt ideology and methods of Soviet Communism give way before increasing pressures for democratization, while in Western Europe the pressures grow for disarmament, trade and cultural exchange, this is an end devoutly to be hoped for. And what shocks my kind of European is not American “indecision and incompetence” but its menacing measures of military deployment and nuclear armament, its refusal to engage in any disarmament negotiations in plain earnest, its ridiculous and threatening claim of the Persian Gulf as an American sea, the manifest desire of its strategists to reduce Western European nations to an inert state of clincy, its instrumental and opportunist use of the issues of civil rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, not as causes which can actually be won but as amazing propaganda-fodder in the media cold war, and, in sum, exactly that infantile and self-con-
fimming view of hostilities in perpetuity which is the premise of this issue of Daedalus.

‘Protest and Survive’
I would have to go on to explain why I do not wish to be “defended” by American nuclear weaponry, and more than this, why increasing numbers of Western Europeans regard the proposed introduction of cruise missiles and Pershing IIs onto their territory as, so far from being any defense, a move that, by making them priority targets in any nuclear war, threatens their existence. And I would then have to explain how I came to be one of the speakers at Trafalgar Square on October 26, in a demonstration under the slogan “Protest and Survive”—a slogan which was taken from a pamphlet of that title issued last April.

The editor of The Nation, who holds to the old and estimable tradition of international exchanges, has done me the honor of proposing that some large part of this pamphlet, Protest and Survive, may be of concern to American readers. And I must ask these readers, in what follows, to have the courtesy to place themselves for a while in an alternative, European, perception. I have struck out some merely local British passages, but I have not attempted to adjust the argument as a whole. This would not be possible, and it is, in any case, precisely the alternative perception which I wish to convey. If readers will do me the kindness, for a while, to consider themselves as Europeans or even—painful as this may be—as British protesters, then I will attempt, in the conclusion, to return them to themselves.

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PART I

‘Modernizing’ NATO: The Mendacity Game

We have academic defense “experts” in Europe also, who are on very much the same circuit as the contributors to Daedalus. One such is Prof. Michael Howard, until lately Chichele Professor of the History of War, and now promoted to be Regius Professor of History at Oxford, perhaps the most eminent position in the British historical profession.

Professor Howard wrote to The Times of London (January 30, 1980) urging extensive provisions for civil defense, as a component in British “defense posture.” And he continued:

The presence of cruise missiles on British soil makes it highly possible that this country would be the target for a series of pre-emptive strikes by Soviet missiles. These would not necessarily be on the massive scale foreseen by Lord Noel-Baker in your columns of January 25. It is more likely that the Russians would hold such massive strikes in reserve, to deter us from using our sea-based missiles as a “second strike force” after the first Soviet warheads had hit targets in this country.

This initially limited Soviet strike would have the further objective, beyond eliminating weapons in this country targeted on their own homeland, of creating conditions here of such political turbulence that the use of our own nuclear weapons, followed as this could be by yet heavier attacks upon us, would become quite literally “credible.”

On these grounds Professor Howard argued that “civil defense on a scale sufficient to give protection to a substantial number of the population” is “an indispensable element of deterrence.”

Civil Defense Pipe Dreams
What such measures of civil defense might be, or what scale would be necessary to protect a “substantial number” of the population Professor Howard did not explain. I therefore consulted the letter which he cited by Philip Noel-Baker in The Times. Lord Noel-Baker is the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for his work for international conciliation over very many years. We may take it that he keeps himself well informed.

In his letter he notes that “many voices are being raised in the United States, Britain and elsewhere to argue that nuclear wars could be fought without total disaster; some even suggest that nuclear war could be won.” He then goes on to detail the findings of Mr. Val Peterson, who was appointed United States Civil Defense Administrator some twenty-five years ago, and who organized many exercises, national, regional and local, at the height of a previous cold war.

Mr. Peterson drew the following conclusions from his successive exercises. In 1954 the national exercise was estimated to have had a yield of twenty-two million casualties, of whom seven million would have been dead. In 1956 fifty-six million, or one-third of the population of the United States, were presumed as casualties. In 1957:

If the whole 170 million Americans had Air Raid Shelters, at least 50 percent of them would die in a surprise enemy attack. In the last analysis, there is no such thing as a nation being prepared for a thermonuclear war.

From evidence of this order Lord Noel-Baker concludes:

Any use of nuclear weapons will escalate into a general war. . . . There is no defense against such weapons; and . . . nuclear warfare will destroy civilization, and perhaps exterminate mankind. To hope for salvation from Civil Defense is a dangerous self-deluding pipe dream.

There is a good deal of talk around today, from defense “experts,” military strategists and the like, which leads us to suppose that the military, on both sides of the world, are capable of delivering very small nuclear packs, with the greatest accuracy and with no lethal consequences outside the target area. In the bright vocabulary of “deterrence” they chatter on about “surgically clean strikes” with “minimum collateral damage.” Professor Howard’s speculations were evidently supported by some such assumptions; thus the Russians are supposed to “eliminate” the 160 cruise missiles which the United States is bent