

---

# The American Mercury

---

## WHAT CAN WE EXPECT OF EUROPE?

BY

JAMES BURNHAM

THE United States has always sensed that its destiny is more irrevocably linked with Europe than with Asia. The United States has realized, in its own way, that its civilization is a projection of Western, Christian civilization, the source of which lies in Europe, not in China or India or Central Africa. It has felt, rightly, that the modern age has been the time of the world leadership of Western civilization, and that all the vast spaces and swarming peoples of the non-Western cultures have not counterbalanced the science, tech-

nology, and will to power of the West.

In this century, the United States has fought two great wars in order to control the outcome of contests begun within Europe. Though the second of those wars was fought simultaneously in Europe and Asia, the United States leadership judged, correctly, that the decision would come in Europe, and therefore made the European battle its primary concern. Following this war, the United States, under a variety of formulas, has thrown into Europe aid and

---

**JAMES BURNHAM** is the author of *The Managerial Revolution and other books on political problems*. He is a professor of philosophy at New York University. This is a slightly condensed version of one chapter from his latest book, *The Coming Defeat of Communism*, which is being published by John Day this winter. (Copyright 1950 by James Burnham.)

energies in unprecedented billions.

There are those who argue that this primary orientation on Europe, even if once justified, has become an error. The fate of the world, they say, now rests in Asia, especially in China and India. Europe is finished. Resources poured into Europe are wasted, especially if by vainly sustaining Europe we divert means that might save Asia.

This criticism is well made in its insistence that we must prevent China and India from being swallowed and digested by the enemy. But in its comparative estimate of Europe and Asia, it confuses, I believe, the long run with the short crisis. Two or three generations from now, in our grandchildren's time, or in their childrens', the new age of Asia may come. The survival of the United States (if it still exists) may then be decided in China or India. For the next decade, however, which is the period of the present crisis, the period within which the United States may be obliterated before it has to face the full challenge of Asia, Europe remains the more decisive area. Not only do China and India lack the science, industry and technology for the determining conduct of modern war; they lack also the trained workers and technicians and administrators, and the social and political cohesion without which their potential power

cannot be channeled. These lacks cannot be quickly remedied even by the Communist sorcery.

If, on the other hand, all Europe were assimilated by the Communist empire, even a weakened and shattered Europe; if Europe's trained population and her stores of knowledge, her machines and formulas and historic experience, were joined to the present Communist resources, then the scales would be heavily weighted.

We rightly, then, think first of Europe. We must, however, think carefully, about the Europe that is, not Europe as it has been or might be.

## II

Travelers in Western Europe during the spring or summer of 1949, if they had also been there during 1946 or 1947, could quickly note many symptoms of improvement. In England in 1949, food was still very poor, and life rather drab in appearance; but there was no unemployment, the shop-windows were full, the bomb rubble cleaned away, and the movies crowded. Figures could prove to you that production was greater than before the war, and many types of exports at their highest levels in history.

On most of the Continent, the restaurants were at their most deli-

scious, the wines triumphant, and the goods in the shops, which even a year before had been poor in quality and scarce, were admirable and abundant. In France, the thousands of bombed railroad bridges and culverts had been rebuilt, the tracks of the marshaling yards relaid. During one entire 24 hour period in April, the proud *cheminots* brought every train in France into every station exactly on time. No one in France was unemployed. If the hotels still did not supply soap, they had been redecorated, and well stocked with wine and food and servants. The race-track at Longchamps was still the most beautiful in the world; the valley of the Loire was rich with the stores of two good harvests and the promise of another. In Italy, there were fine new docks in Naples, and a fine new row of hotels along the Bay to replace those that the bombs and shells had destroyed. In Milan and Parma and Florence and Bologna, masons and carpenters were busy on railroad stations and police headquarters and apartments. In the Low Countries, as in England, thousands of new small houses were finished or in process, and factories were busy.

In Western Germany, a year's change had been the most dramatic of all. Though the buildings were still shattered, and much of the rubble still remained within the shells,

factories were working, trains and cars were running, fairs were being held, and it was possible to buy more things and food — almost any thing, almost any food. In June 1948, the magic wand of the currency reform had conjured out of empty cellars and attics and warehouses the needles and cloth and shoes and bicycles and sugar and meat and pots and pans that had disappeared from the face of the German earth. The next real trouble in Germany will start, they said, if the occupation authorities reduce the German standard of living to that of England.

Even politically, though there was not much that was impressive, there seemed to be a favorable contrast to 1947. In Britain, the government was firm and the opposition loyal. On the Continent, the governments were not so firm, but they were managing to hang on without too much disturbance. The Communists, who looked almost ready to take over several countries in 1947, were still there. After the Italian elections, however, and the failure of the French general strikes, it no longer seemed likely that they could, unaided, take power from within.

To the casual traveler, the European surface could give such impressions in the spring and summer of 1949. But it would not have taken him long to discover, if he chose,

that this surface was not a mirror but a distortion of what lay beneath. Lend-lease, UNRRA, and the Marshall Plan, together with the episodic upturn that was bound to follow the war and occupation, had served to obscure and warp, but not to alter, the European realities.

Inflation had wiped out Germany's money, and had carried other currencies down to a tenth or a thirtieth of their prewar values. The governmental budgets of France and Italy were wholly dependent on deficit financing. Britain was balancing its budget and paying for its too rapid nationalizations and social service extensions by taxes that meant not only a grim austerity but a rise in costs that was pricing her out of world markets. Everywhere the dollar crisis was strangling free world trade. If there were no unemployed in France, there were many in Italy, which was nevertheless increasing its population at a rate of half a million a year. There were goods in the shops, but there was not enough money in the pockets of the masses to buy them—the workers needed every franc or lira or Deutschesmark to get food and a minimum of clothing. The factories, machines and mines were old and inefficient. In France and Italy, the huge capital plant represented by the homes of the people was worn out and literally crumbling;

in Germany, millions of persons lived in odd corners left half-intact by the bombs. Eleven million refugees from Silesia, East Prussia, and the Sudetenland pressed on the West German economy, which was bare of capital and deprived of the greater part of its European and world markets. Throughout Europe, huge and sterile bureaucracies sucked at shrinking resources.

For centuries, Britain has maintained her economic position through her relation to her great Empire; through her merchant ships, which carried half the sea-trade of the world; through her position as the world's money and insurance center; by acting as the principal entrepôt for trade with the Continent; and by enormous foreign capital investments. Now all that has ended. Italy too had and has lost an Empire; and France's empire since the war has cost the billions of francs that have gone into the attempts to suppress revolt and dissension.

The European economy has for centuries been organized in terms of an interchange between Western and Eastern Europe—the grains and minerals of the East for the finished goods and capital of the West. And now the iron curtain cuts that interchange to an unworkable trickle. Europe has acted as banker and workshop for the world; but now the

advancing armies of Communism progressively reduce the area of the world accessible to Europe, while tariffs and exchange controls paralyze the markets in the remainder.

### III

The political realities beneath the relative quiet of the European political surface in the spring and summer of 1949 were only a shade less dark than the economic. Some of the smaller nations (notably Switzerland, Holland, Norway, and Sweden) were political going concerns. And Britain, in spite of the immensity of its difficulties, was a going concern. The British government was a genuine government, a sovereign. The opposition, except for the Communist traitors, was loyal: loyal to the nation and the government, however sharply critical of the party that was leading the government. In accepting the restrictions which they knew to be necessary to their country's survival, the citizens, though they grumbled, were responsible and disciplined, in their homes as well as in public. It was clear that Britain was not ready to quit.

But in France and Germany and Italy, the chief and determining countries of the Continent, all was still in doubt. The citizens were contemptuous of their governments, cynical, disillusioned and often corrupt.

Black market manipulations in gasoline and foreign exchange, privilege and favoritism and graft, were open and accepted scandals. Taxes were a matter of deals with officials, not of law and regulation. With two or three exceptions, newspapers were the paid propaganda sheets of individuals and cliques who subsidized their deficits. Fascism, Nazism, occupation, and the two terrible wars in which even the victors had been defeated, had left the unhealed scars of moral deterioration.

There was evident in these three nations a partial dissolution of the community. The inhabitants were functioning as semi-autonomous individuals, groups and factions, not as members of single national communities. Peasants, bankers, merchants, financiers, industrialists, trade union officials, bureaucrats, soldiers, police, political parties — each sub-group was out to do the best it could for itself, with little concern for the effect on others or on the interests of the nation as a whole.

Under such circumstances, the governments were not genuine governments, not truly sovereign. (In Germany, of course, with the occupation and the East-West division, there could not in any case have been a genuine government.) They were interim, liaison committees in which the various divisive real interests in-

tersected and, by a process of endless manipulation, were compromised just enough to keep things going.

The mark of sovereignty is the ability to decide. These governments were incapable of decision. In France, they could not decide to tax the peasants, who were prosperous; and in southern Italy, they could not decide to distribute land to the peasants, *who were poor. They could not decide to discharge useless bureaucrats, or to force efficiency on high-cost nationalized industries. They could not discipline middlemen who were fattening on outrageous profits, or put an end to the raids of speculators in international exchange. They could not decide what kind of army they wanted, or how to get it. They could not suppress the Communists, or live without them. They could not cut social services nor find means to pay for them. Though they knew that Europe must be united, they could take no actual step toward unity. Above all, they could not decide whether to commit themselves finally in the world struggle against the advancing Communist empire.*

The ministers of these governments were chosen by the central committees of various of the many parties into which the formal political life of the countries was divided. Most of the parties and their central committees, however, had lost all living

contact with the respective peoples. With the help of systems of proportional voting, which prevented any direct check by local constituencies, the central committees were self-perpetuating, and were able to select all candidates and functionaries. The party leaders were old in years and older still in political age; the parties themselves were the ghosts of a past era. Military defeat after Italy's fascism and Germany's Nazism, liberation after France's occupation, found those three countries with no political structure or leadership corresponding to the real movements within the masses. A makeshift political scheme was imposed, partly on the insistence of Britain and the United States (reasoning as parliamentary doctrinaires). The old parties were dragged up from the dust-heaps, given addresses, and printed on ballots. Old leaders, who had shown courage in concentration camp or exile but now represented only a shattered past, or who had lived aside in a university classroom, or who had simply kept drearily alive with a record of error and cowardice and even betrayal, were eased into the party offices and the parliaments.

Why should we expect these men, with their parties, to be able to lead Europe? Are we to rely on Daladier, the apostle of Munich? on Reynaud, the veteran of boudoirs and banks?

on the friends of Badoglio and Ciano? on Blum, who made the Communists a force in France by welcoming them into the united front? on Queuille or Schuman, who survived by a studied policy of remaining obscure? on the chauvinists of the Ruhr and Bavaria who use the German Christian Democratic Union?

In France, the unsovereign government has taken the name of "Third Force"; and the term Third Force has been generally applied to the type of government which is now prevalent on the Continent. It is one of the oddest of ironies that the idea of the Third Force has found much favor with the literate public and also with the government of the United States.

The real meaning of the "Third Force" is to be discovered in its origin: a speech delivered by Juan Perón of Argentina, early in 1947. The idea of the Third Force, Perón said, was the expression of Argentina's determination not to take sides in the world struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States. This continues to be the basic meaning in Europe, in spite of the local variations and the ideological decoration given by popular intellectuals.

In France, the two serious organized political forces, both of which do have genuine roots in the masses, are the Communists and the Gaullists. Together they command the adher-

ence of a majority. Neither, of course, was represented in the government of 1949 — which is one most obvious indication of why the government is not a genuine government, why it can decide nothing. The French governments since 1947 have, in relation to the internal political situation, been able to exist only by balancing the two real internal forces — Gaullism and Communism — against each other; and this has been possible only because the issue between these two forces has not been settled. This internal balancing is only the local expression of the more general international performance. The Third Force, in political fundamentals, is the attempt to balance internationally between "Soviet dictatorship" and "American imperialism" (as they are called by the ideologists of the Third Force); the attempt to avoid taking sides, definitively and irrevocably, with either one or the other; the attempt to be neutral in the world struggle.

That this is the meaning of the Third Force is openly stated, in Europe, by the leaders and publicists of this hermaphroditic political tendency. (For publicity in the United States and England, the point is put more palatably: "to avoid dictatorship whether of the left or of the right.") Beneš of Czechoslovakia, who was always the personal and political

friend of the present Third Force leaders in Western Europe, was a model Third Force statesman. Today, the spokesmen of the Third Force in France, Italy, and Western Germany seem more inclined to Washington than to the Kremlin. That is because today the pressure on them from Washington is heavier than that from Moscow; and the nature of the Third Force is to yield to the heavier pressure. But in Prague, the weight was from the East, not the West, as tomorrow it might be in Berlin or Frankfurt or Paris.

The Third Force cannot suppress, or even materially weaken, the internal Communist movements, because the Communists are necessary to the existence of the Third Force — you cannot balance unless there is something to balance on. If the Communists were removed, the Third Force as a political tendency would automatically and simultaneously disappear. The Third Force cannot in external policy take an unyielding stand against Soviet Communism because the world meaning of the Third Force is the attempt to avoid the consequences of the world struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States.

I have said that it is oddly ironic that the European Third Force has been favored by many in the United States, and by many within the

United States government. It is ironic because the Third Force is in reality a sticky obstacle to the development and prosecution of an adequate U. S. policy. The favoring attitude, however, is also natural. The United States has not yet fully made its own decision, and therefore feels a lingering sympathy for the Third Force for the very reason that the Third Force is the distilled essence of political indecision.

#### IV

The question confronting Europe is, simply: "Will Europe survive?" Perhaps, today, the question is, more exactly: "Does Europe wish to survive?" If it does not wish to, it certainly will not.

It may seem absurd to ask this second question; yet, just as in the case of individuals, so in that of social organisms, there can come a point where the will to survive vanishes. In that disappearance, perhaps, as much as in external attack, lies the explanation of the collapse of Sparta or Egypt or Rome. It may be that modern Europe has undergone too much, that the perpetual struggle no longer seems worth while. Centuries of wars and sufferings and tyrannies and revolutions have culminated in the unparalleled ravages of this century. And what is there, or may there be, ahead? Another war, still

more terrible, atomic and biological. Europe again the battleground, again the scene of occupation, and no less threatened by Liberation than by defeat. Why not, then, quit now, live for the present, and adjust passively to whatever future comes?

There is evidence of the weakening of the will to survival in the loss of the sense of community, to which I have referred, in the demoralization and separatism and cynicism. There is further evidence in the mood that a stranger feels in the books and conversation and art, in the popular café-philosophies, like Sartre's form of existentialism, and in the attitudes of profound indifference (*je m'en fichisme*). When the Communists staged their great Paris "Congress of the Partisans of Peace" in April 1949, no anti-Communist Frenchman even cared enough to picket or to denounce; no one had been sufficiently indignant to tear down any of the thousands of posters on which Picasso's sinister dove was advertising the Congress.

At a Florence street café, one spring evening in 1949, I saw the insolent leader of a small gang of neo-fascist schoolboy hoodlums punch and kick a little head-waiter (because, apparently, he was an Algerian — a "foreigner"). The Italian crowd (in Florence, which had a Communist mayor), and the other waiters and the

café's professional bouncers (the police not even appearing), went no further in their concern than a half hour of loud and elaborate mass talking, after which the hoodlums retired singing, in good order.

It is easy to be deceived in one's judgment of mood and feeling. In the case of Europe, however, there are more objective tests of the wish for survival.

I have observed elsewhere that Europe cannot survive unless the following four conditions are realized:

(1) Eastern Europe must be brought back into active relation with Western Europe. But this cannot be done so long as Eastern Europe is under Communist domination.

(2) Europe as a whole must get at least some measure of economic and political unification.

(3) The Communist movements within the Western European nations must be reduced to impotence, since, so long as they are powerful, they are able to, and they will, sabotage European recovery.

(4) Europe must find outlets for its population, energies, products and capital in less developed sections of the world.

Europe's will to survival can, therefore, be measured by the extent to which it wills these conditions, and takes steps, or at least attempts to take steps, toward their realization.

The fact is that the governments and official leaders of the major Continental nations are doing almost nothing of importance with respect to any of the four. Far from promoting any policies that aim to push the iron curtain eastward, they draw trembling back from all concrete proposals that might have that effect. They permit their internal Communists to have complete freedom, and take no steps against them even when the Communist leaders openly announce their treason — as they have done in their declaration that Party members will not under any circumstances obey orders to fight against the Red Army. The principal moves toward European unification made by the major nations are eloquent speeches by ancient politicians at polite conferences, while in practice the nationalistic restrictions are continued and in some cases increased. The tendency is withdrawal from, rather than expansion in, the rest of the world. Individual Europeans who write, for example, that Europe must begin the major development of Africa are laughed at as dreamers.

Under these circumstances, it is hard not to wonder what is to be expected from the proposed European rearmanent program. In order to resist, the first requisite is not arms but the will to fight and, if necessary, to die — the will that is the first

derivative and the primary demonstration of the general will to survive. If Europe does not wish to fight, what good will arms be? Those men in whom the will to survive has been strong have usually managed to find arms, or to take them.

Under the present French government, the post of the head of the Atomic Commission, the most sensitive and perhaps the most vital of all posts bearing on modern war, is held by a member of the French Communist Party, Frédéric Joliot-Curie. Under his administration, the Atomic Commission is laced with agents of the MVD. It was Joliot-Curie who was Chairman of the Communists' Congress of the Partisans of Peace. At that congress, one of the principal speakers was Yves Farge, the sole French observer at the Bikini atomic tests. How close a military liaison do the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff want with a government which considers such arrangements fitting? What return should be expected from the arms with which it might be supplied?

Indeed, granted the present European circumstances, the North Atlantic Pact is itself a doubtful device. It, too, is an expression of the containment policy. It does not say to the Communists, "Go back," but only, and not very loudly, "Come no further (in Europe)." It adds not an ounce of real weight in the power

balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. It can, moreover, become a kind of psychological and diplomatic Maginot Line, under the illusory protection of which the need for more dynamic action may seem less urgent.

## v

To the original question — “What is to be expected from Europe?” — the answer must be: from Continental Europe, under its present circumstances, very little, and perhaps less than nothing. However, the present governments and governmental parties are not identical with Europe, and the present circumstances are not necessarily eternal.

The Communists stand actively for the death of Europe — its death, that is to say, as a historical, cultural and moral entity, since the victory of Communism would entail the destruction of the set of values and historical traditions which give Europe its meaning.

The attitude of many of the European political parties and leaders, and of some at least of the west European governments, is equivalent to a passive acceptance of the death of Europe, since they are not willing to initiate those steps upon which European survival depends.

There remain in Europe, at the same time, many millions of persons

in whom the will to European survival is not faded, however its expression may have been frustrated by the artificial, unreal political structure that has been erected over Europe during these recent years. Some of these persons are organized, or beginning to organize, though often in curious ways. Others are isolated, sometimes bitter individuals. Some are resting, as if by a collective understanding, on the sidelines, until they have some assurance that action — and sacrifice — shall be to some purpose. The anarchist workers of Belleville, the silent peasants, the engineers and foremen blocked by an outworn economic organization, know, better than Paul Reynaud or the ideologues of the Third Force, the catastrophic nature of the European crisis. But they are not willing to respond with action to outworn men and parties and ideas.

It is toward these millions that American eyes ought to be turned, and on them that American policy ought to be oriented. The fact of the European situation is simply this. Europe, under the blows of the twentieth century, has been battered into a condition in which it cannot itself take the initiative toward its own revival. This was in effect recognized by the proposal and acceptance of the Marshall Plan. In this condition, the voice from the East counsels suit

cide, the acceptance of death. The problem for the United States, therefore, is to counter that negation with a clear summons to renewed struggle, and a clear assurance that the struggle will be worth making. This summons and assurance must be communicated not merely to ministers and bureaucrats, after the manner of traditional diplomacy, but to those men, not now prominent on the official surface of European events, in whom the will to European survival is still firm.

The United States must itself, in other words, announce, implement, and be prepared to enforce, the program of European revival. The main lines of this program we have noted elsewhere: the shattering of the iron curtain; the unification of Europe; the smashing of Communism; and the opening up of the entire world to a new period of economic, social and political advance. A European correspondent of mine summed up the problem: "What the European masses need is not another conference of Big Four foreign ministers, but a demonstration that the United States will have a firm and consistent policy against the Soviets." This is an adequate summation because the Soviet policy is in general and in each detail a guarantee of the death of Europe. The Soviet policy is to maintain and advance the iron curtain; to block by every means any moves

toward European unification (on any other than a Communist basis); to increase the power of Communism within every nation; and to prevent non-Communist access to ever-widening sections of the world. A program for European revival, consequently, can only be, in every respect, an anti-Soviet, anti-Communist program.

The United States can expect of Europe that which the quality of United States leadership calls for. If the United States appeases, yields to the Soviet Union and Communism, then to the degree of the appeasement, the United States will contribute to the further deterioration and the final annihilation and death of Europe. If the United States, under the illusions of a purely defensive policy of containment, drifts with those forces in Europe that have neither intelligence nor will left for anything more than drift, then the United States may perhaps prolong, but will not avert, the agony. If the United States accepts the responsibility, assumes the initiative and offers the leadership, then — and only then — Europe will respond creatively. The Europe that today seems to be like an aged parent who clutters up the house, drains his child's substance, and querulously runs up doctors' bills, will again prove a wise counselor, and a brave partner in the building of a new world order.

# THE ANATOMY OF SCHOOL SPIRIT

BY LYLE OWEN

FIRST as a seeker after wisdom, and then as a purveyor of that commodity, I have knocked around American institutions of higher learning for many a year. In classrooms, in assembly halls, at faculty meetings, at bonfire rallies, over the coffee cups, under the shady trees — everywhere I have heard the demand for more “school spirit.” Almost everybody, from the newest freshman to the loftiest trustee, is in favor of more of this stuff. But hardly a man among them can tell the inquirer what it is.

Though concrete definitions of school spirit are hard to come by, there seems to be general agreement as to some of the background facts. Major among them is the sad circumstance that school spirit is not a steady burning light, but often flickers, even at universities bearing the noblest names — though their libraries be bursting with books and their faculties outshining the stars above. Agreement is also general that a series of football victories is the most potent

specific for flagging school spirit, and that a school that never wins might as well pension the faculty now.

In office and classroom, in boarding house and byway, I have searched through high and low samples of the human mind for a good definition of school spirit, and have found none. *Someone*, I thought, should tell us what it is and how we may measure it, since it is so precious and so oft lost.

I gave much thought to this matter — as much, that is, as the arduous duties of a pedagogue would permit. And at last the answer came. As a flash, I had it: the Decibel Theory of School Spirit. As so often happens, the answer came not as an apparent result of long-protracted mind rumblings and turnings, but as a sudden simple inspiration, tripped off by a trifling event.

The event was the invasion of my classroom by a roaring mob of lunatics early one Monday morning. The mob was led by a great ape, of the ancient species *Homo insapiens*, lustily beating

---

LYLE OWEN has taught economics and government at colleges and universities in four states, and is at present the head of the economics department in a Western university. His articles on economics, race relations, and education have appeared in a variety of magazines.