

*Conventional liberal opinion
in conservative guise*

The Cold War of John Lukacs

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FEW CONTEMPORARY HISTORIANS have attracted more attention and praise from American conservatives than the Hungarian-American scholar John Lukacs.¹ Much of this praise has been attributable to two works, *Historical Consciousness* and *The Passing of the Modern Age*, Lukacs' examinations of the nature of historical knowledge and contemporary society. On the other hand, Lukacs' reputation is founded primarily on his writings about post-World War I Europe. And that reputation is in part well-founded, for Lukacs has produced at least two brilliant works — *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* (1953) and *The Last European War* (1976) — as well as three lesser, deeply flawed, but highly interesting works — *1945: Year Zero* (1978), *The Decline and Rise of Europe* (1965), and *A New History of the Cold War* (1966 — an expanded and updated version of a book originally published in 1961). Much of Lukacs' work has dealt with the Cold War and the relations between the Soviet Union and the Western powers. When Lukacs' writings on these matters are examined, many of his views and judgments seem highly unsound, and the admiration that many conservatives feel for him seems a bit mysterious. His general outlook on social matters is conservative, and he has often expressed contempt for notions congenial to the left. All the same, Lukacs' writings on the Cold War and

related issues — especially *A New History of the Cold War* — were influenced by the zeitgeist of the 1960s, notwithstanding Lukacs' revulsion for many of its aspects. Many of his views seem to be far removed from those of most American conservatives — a group Lukacs has frequently deprecated. These things, however puzzling, are less important than the fact that the Lukacs version of the Cold War is in many respects contradictory, confused, and unreliable. Lukacs' Cold War is a struggle divested of many of its unique and most threatening aspects. It is a struggle seen from a narrow and distorted perspective by an understandably bitter East European refugee.

In Lukacs' view, the Cold War is *not* a struggle between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies for the destiny of the world, but a conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. The struggle between the two powers was a result of the last World War, specifically of the division of Europe. The "principal condition of contemporary history," for Lukacs, "is not the Atomic Bomb and not Communism; it is the division of Germany and of most of Europe into American and Russian spheres of influence. The so-called Cold War grew out of this division."²

Needless to say, that is not the only way of looking at the Cold War. It is rather more probable, in fact, that the division of Europe was merely the product of the first

Soviet moves in a struggle directed against the Western world as a whole. As Stalin commented in his polemical exchanges with the Yugoslavs in 1948, the presence of the Red Army had permitted the local Communist parties to come to power in East Europe; unfortunately, because the Red Army could not get there, this had not been possible in France. Initially, the principal protagonist on the Western side in the Cold War was Britain, not the United States. This is apparent from Lukacs' own works, which actually somewhat exaggerate Churchill's foresight during the latter part of World War II.

In Lukacs' first, and in many ways his best, book, *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, Lukacs stresses the extent to which the fate of East Europe was determined during World War II. "The future of Europe was bound to the undisputed victory of the English-speaking powers and to the well-nigh ubiquitous presence of their armies at the time of victory." Lukacs was a strong proponent of the incorrect notion, popularized in the postwar era by many other writers (notably Chester Wilmot and Hanson Baldwin) that Churchill advocated an invasion of the Balkans. As Churchill's memoirs, the State Department's published documents, and the British official histories all make clear, there was no such plan. Lukacs sees the defeat of this alleged plan at Teheran as decisive: "Perhaps it would not be too exaggerated to say that it was then that Soviet Russia won the Second World War." Lukacs qualifies this to some degree by saying that America and Britain lost their "last chance to shape the future of central-eastern Europe" in the summer of 1944, when the Americans insisted on invading southern France instead of carrying out the British plan to push on in Italy and land at the head of the Adriatic to reach Austria and Hungary ahead of the Soviets. The reader of *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* is left with the feeling that by 1945 the jig was up. In *The Decline and Rise of Europe*, Lukacs also stresses the early accomplishment of the division

of Europe, even before the Yalta conference.³

In the *New History of the Cold War*, however, Lukacs declares that "in 1945 and thereafter a more intelligent and imaginative American policy could have prevented the Russian advance into the very middle of Europe and thus spared much of the cost and toil of the Cold War."⁴ Aside from criticizing, quite justifiably, the failure to push on to Prague and Berlin in the spring of 1945, Lukacs fails to make clear just what he thinks the Americans should have done.

Lukacs' evaluation of the moral responsibility of the American leaders for the disastrous situation in 1945 and afterwards has also undergone changes. In *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, Lukacs' approach, although often rightly critical of FDR's diplomacy, is essentially moderate in its conclusions. He emphasizes that Roosevelt was not the great villain often portrayed in the early fifties; despite his "fantastic naivete," he was "a great friend of Europe and its culture and should thus be respected by all Europeans." He points out that after Yalta Roosevelt had begun to realize the dangers of his mistaken policies.⁵ In *The Decline and Rise of Europe*, Lukacs is even milder, declaring that it was "too much to expect" the United States to avert the division of Europe. (This perhaps too kind remark, however, is made in the context of praise for Harry Truman, a figure for whom Lukacs has always had a high regard.)

In his later works, however, notably in *A New History of the Cold War and 1945*, Lukacs takes a far harsher view of American responsibility for the division of postwar Europe. In contrast with his sensible remarks in his first book, he blandly denies that Roosevelt *ever* became aware of the Soviet menace or was ready to respond to it, assuring his readers that "everything indicates the contrary."⁶ In fact, the accumulated documentary evidence and testimony to FDR's change of mind was far greater in the 1970s, when Lukacs denied it, than in the early 1950s, when he believed in it. Indeed,

Churchill and the official British historian Sir Llewellyn Woodward took the view that Truman's initial policy represented a slight weakening of Roosevelt's stand.⁷ In none of Lukacs' books is there a really lucid interpretation of the Yalta agreements, but in 1953, although critical of Yalta, he rightly warned against the excessive importance often attached to the agreements reached there. In *A New History of the Cold War*, however, he alleges that Roosevelt simply gave Stalin a "free hand" in East Europe, while also berating General Eisenhower.⁸

In his later works Lukacs' treatment of the division of Europe becomes more unbalanced. Anger at the Soviet Union is almost overshadowed by a hostile view of the United States, partaking partly of Gaullism and partly, perhaps, of the leftist currents of the 1960s. Lukacs, although never an enthusiastic partisan of European unity, is decidedly hostile to notions of Atlantic unity. He stresses that the two are basically opposed and is friendly to De Gaulle. By the time *The Decline and Rise of Europe* was written, Lukacs had discovered that the Americans' postwar network of alliances and military bases constituted a "new American world empire," and in *A New History of the Cold War* this "empire" seems more significant than Soviet aggression. "American troops were now stationed on the Mediterranean, in Central Europe, in Arabia, and in the Arctic even while the Russian Empire did not extend much beyond the frontiers of Tsardom of a hundred years ago."⁹ In this book Lukacs gives the impression that the American "empire" would be semipermanent (much of it has already vanished) while the Soviet empire would prove both limited and ephemeral. In 1945, however, Lukacs seems to have changed his mind about this, and, denouncing America's focus of concern on *West* as opposed to East Europe, he declares that "The Russian conquest of the eastern half of Europe was as unprecedented as it was unnatural."¹⁰

Beneath these muddled views there is consistency in Lukacs' view of the Cold

War. Through most of his writings, Lukacs has emphasized the insignificance of Communist movements and ideology, that there is a fundamental continuity between the Soviet regime and the Russian past, and that Soviet aims have generally been limited, nonideological, and focused on promoting Soviet "national interests." In contrast with Lukacs' indifference to Communism is his outright hatred of the Russian people. Although he does write from a different perspective, and with different emphases, Lukacs' conclusions overlap those of some leftwing revisionist historians.

In virtually all of his works, Lukacs belittles the importance, power, and appeal of Communism as a movement and doctrine, often to a wholly unreal extent, while in contrast he plays up the power and appeal of Fascism and Nazism. He constantly stresses and even exaggerates the weakness of Communist movements outside the USSR. In *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* Lukacs remarks that in 1945 "Stalin knew that in contrast with Nazi-type and Fascist-type states all over the earth, where the existence of the German, Italian, and Japanese armed forces was not the necessary prerequisite of the establishment of such dictatorships, the Communist world movement throughout three decades had singularly failed to establish a stable and permanent Communist state anywhere without the previous existence or the strategic domination of Russian armies in those territories." *The Decline and Rise of Europe* argues that Europe entered an anti-Communist or post-Marxist phase as early as 1918-1919 when initial Communist attempts at revolution failed. In 1945 he still insists that there was never any European country where a successful Communist revolution occurred and that even China was only a partial exception to his earlier announced rule. In *A New History of the Cold War* he writes that "even though the number of Communist countries increased immediately after the Second World War, this was not due to successful Communist revolutions, but simply

because the victorious Russian army installed pro-Russian puppet Communist regimes in a number of countries adjacent to the Soviet Union.”¹¹

If we disregard the problem of where those Fascist and Nazi regimes “all over the earth” actually were, it can be said that Lukacs’ views are not wholly incorrect; most Communist regimes have in fact been the product of Soviet military occupation, not “true” or domestic revolutions. There is also truth in his arguments that Communism made no real progress in the era between the World Wars, at least in Europe. Its appeal in the English-speaking world and in most advanced countries has always been small. Nonetheless, he ignores the facts that Marxism-Leninism has manifested at least some appeal in most countries and that Communist parties have taken power in a few countries without Soviet help. In East Europe the Soviets were able to rule only with the help of a pre-existing fifth column with little precedent in modern history. To most observers, if not to Lukacs, it is obvious that Communism, as a universalistic and pseudo-rational doctrine, has had much more ideological appeal than Nazism or Fascism, at least outside of Central Europe. It is Communism, not Fascism or Nazism, which has shown some capacity to spread without great power occupation. The appeal of Fascism, not Communism, was inherently parochial and limited. While Fascist and Nazi parties were established in virtually all western countries, and in some non-Western ones, between the wars, they were never successful without German or Italian backing. Lukacs’ view perhaps reflects his own youth in Hungary, where the Nazi-type Arrow Cross party was far more powerful than the local Communists. Even in Hungary, however, the Arrow Cross did not take power until the Nazis installed it. Curiously, Lukacs seems to have forgotten that a Communist regime was able to take power in Hungary in 1919, albeit in very peculiar circumstances, and was dislodged only after it was defeated by Romanian and Czech armies.

Indeed, to Lukacs the fact that the Soviet Union itself is a Communist state is not very important, at least since Stalin came to power. Stalin’s aims were “national rather than international, Russian rather than revolutionary”; he was a radical Great Russian nationalist.¹² There was allegedly a basic continuity between his regime and the Russian past, although Lukacs is sometimes unclear about which era of the Russian past Stalin reminds him of. *A New History of the Cold War* asserts that Stalin’s aims were similar to those of the World War I Foreign Minister Sazonov, and that his regime was comparable with that of Nicholas I, or that of Ivan IV, or even that of the Tartar Khans.¹³ Although Stalin is seen as a conservative, Lukacs is unclear as to what Stalin aimed to conserve. He merely tells us that “His conservatism was the suspicious and obstinate conservatism of the peasant.”¹⁴ At one point he stresses that “Leninist” Communism was international, revolutionary and agnostic, while Stalin’s reign was xenophobic, puritanical, and anti-Semitic.¹⁵

It should be stressed that Lukacs’ continuity thesis is intrinsically pessimistic. Lukacs is a decided Russophobe, and there are indications that he doesn’t care too much for other inhabitants of the Soviet Union. He even suggests that Hitler’s brutal occupation policies in the Soviet Union, usually regarded as evidence of Nazi stupidity, were not unwise; Hitler was perhaps right in believing that the conquered peoples would be impressed by brutality.¹⁶ (This is not a view shared by non-Nazi Germans who worked in occupied Russia.) Lukacs’ hostility to the Russians as a people leads him to misrepresent Churchill’s views. He depicts Churchill as a Russophobe like himself and claims that Churchill was not worried about Communism, nor concerned about the spread of Communism beyond the reach of the Red Army.¹⁷ This is contradicted by Churchill’s courageous efforts to defeat the Greek Communists in 1944. An examination of Churchill’s attitude toward the Russian Civil War shows that

he was motivated by anti-Communism; he fought efforts by true Russophobes like Curzon to break up the Russian Empire. He looked forward to an alliance between a "White" Russia and Britain against future German and Japanese threats. Churchill's friendly view of Mussolini in the interwar era was the result of his acceptance of the common but erroneous belief that Mussolini had prevented a Communist takeover in Italy.

The Russian political tradition is, in fact, one of despotism, and Stalin did see parallels between himself and Ivan IV. To some extent all foreign policies are determined by geography, and the Soviet Union occupies approximately the same area as the old Tsarist empire. Both sought expansion. All the same, Lukacs' references to the Russian past are overly selective and arbitrary. Russian rulers have never been very nice, but Ivan IV and Stalin were certainly atypically horrible even for Russia. Ivan IV was seen as a maniac by the Russians themselves until Stalin had the textbooks rewritten; Stalin's feeling of kinship with him is evidence of his madness, not of the basic continuity of Russian history.

Other breaks can also be discerned between the Tsarist and Soviet states. Late Imperial Russia was an increasingly limited autocracy, with a still influential landed aristocracy and a small-holding peasantry. It was a country with a growing bourgeoisie, privately-owned industry, an incipient parliament, and a growing degree of freedom. The autocracy, which was traditionally oriented, and upheld an established church, in all respects was the opposite of the Soviet regime. The two regimes also pursued different foreign policies. Nineteenth-century Russia preferred and promoted conservative regimes on its European frontiers, but it did not seek to spread or enforce its own political system. The Tsarist regime, although aggressive and expansionist in the Balkans and Asia, sought stability, not conquest, on its European borders and maintained a policy of limited aims. Lukacs' implication that Stalin somehow

represented a reversion to conservatism after Lenin's revolution cannot be taken very seriously. Stalin did not effect a return to the past; he increased the pace of change, and carried out a virtual second revolution. It is surely difficult to understand the "conservatism" of the man behind collectivization, the Five-Year plans, and the Communist conquest of half of Europe!

Lukacs does make a number of unconvincing attempts to argue that Soviet policy is basically non-ideological. Stalin's interest in the Nazi-Soviet pact, Lukacs argues, shows that Stalin was interested in "security, not revolution, territory, not ideology." In his history of the Cold War, Lukacs writes that "few events indicate more clearly the Russian national and imperialist, as distinct from Communist, motives and ambitions of Stalin than the dark (and at times almost comic) story of Russian-Yugoslav misunderstandings."¹⁸

Actually, if security had been Stalin's principal aim at the time of the pact with Hitler, he would more logically have sought an alliance with the West; nor was his exploitation of the opportunities it offered free of a Communist dimension. The Baltic peoples might have been reconciled to a "preventive" Soviet occupation which did not interfere in their internal affairs. Instead, they were brutally communized, and Stalin would have done the same to the Finns if not for their heroic resistance. The Soviet actions which provoked the conflict with Tito had little to do with either "Communist" or "national" aims; rather they exhibited Stalin's obsessive personal desire for absolute control, and, perhaps, the inability of totalitarian states to cooperate as equals in the long run — a more general lesson, supported by the fate of the Soviet alliance with China.

Throughout his writings on the Cold War, Lukacs has consistently upheld a thesis first tentatively advanced in *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*. It is that Stalin never aimed at the conquest or communization of West Europe and that the Cold War was due to a "fundamental mutual misunderstanding — Washington

presupposing that the immediate Russian aim was to upset and conquer Western Europe, Moscow presupposing that the Americans' aim was to upset and reconquer Eastern Europe — and that both sides were wrong.”¹⁹

This argument is remarkably similar to that of some of the more moderate left-wing revisionist writers, though the latter often deny that Stalin even wanted to communize East Europe. Lukacs, as an East European bemoaning the fate of his homeland, considers American policy misdirected: it should have been directed at securing the salvation of East Europe.²⁰ In 1945 he is justifiably bitter at the bizarre disorientations of American opinion that helped to prevent any such efforts; his brilliant sketch of these opinions, in fact, redeems an otherwise grievously flawed work. Nevertheless, he praises President Truman's actions designed to curb Communist expansion. He applauds the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the response to the Berlin blockade, and the decision to intervene in the Korean War, while deploring the fact that such decisions were taken in the name of anti-Communism. Truman — but not Roosevelt or Eisenhower — is a hero to Lukacs; he vastly exaggerates the difference between FDR and his successor.²¹ This is an odd way to look at a leader whose policies were, in Lukacs' view, unnecessary! Or were they?

Lukacs not only denies that Stalin sought a victory for the local Communists in France and Italy; he also ignores the German problem in the crucial stage of its development after the war. In 1945 he confines himself to arguing that it was unimportant in 1945 and that both great powers were willing to postpone dealing with it.²² Elsewhere he implies that the Soviets consistently sought a weak, dismembered Germany until after the Berlin blockade. Interestingly, he seems to view the blockade as a move by Stalin to eliminate the last Western island in East Europe.²³

In fact, as Stalin explained to the Yugoslavs in 1946, he intended to gain

control over all of Germany. By the end of the war Stalin dropped any pretense of favoring the dismemberment of Germany. The division of Germany was the product of two mutually opposed wills, not the result of a tacit agreement between both sides. As Stalin made clear at the time of the Berlin blockade, he wished to use Berlin as a lever to disrupt the West's creation of a West German government. Eliminating Berlin was only a secondary, and perhaps only a fallback, aim.²⁴ Moreover, the West European Communists, and presumably their Soviet backers, did aim at taking power in the postwar era.²⁵

In contrast with his dogmatic and incorrect minimization of Soviet aims in the immediate postwar period, Lukacs offers little real analysis of Soviet aims thereafter, or indeed of Soviet aims and actions outside Europe. Though Lukacs is a Europeanist, his all but total indifference to Asia and the underdeveloped countries is not really suitable in a historian of the Cold War. The balance between the description of the “main events” and the “main movements” of a period, which is a striking feature of *The Last European War*, is lacking in Lukacs' writing on the Cold War. There is a wealth of philosophizing on Russian and American history, but a fatal inattention to the details of the conflict. Crucial events of the early Cold War years, like the Greek Civil War, the Chinese Civil War, and the Iranian crisis, are hardly discussed. The arms race is barely mentioned, since Lukacs believes that atomic weapons have had little effect on world politics since 1945. However, this does not prevent him from using the bomb as an excuse for insulting scientists, one of the most disagreeable features of his writing.²⁶

Sometimes Lukacs' account is simply mistaken. For example, he tells the reader that the Soviets only belatedly supplied their allies in Korea with jet fighters in 1951, hinting that major political conclusions should be drawn from this. In fact, MIGs were sighted in November 1950, as soon as the Chinese intervened.²⁷ Lukacs

has twice denied that the Soviet attack on Japan on August 8, 1945, was "the result of a hasty Soviet decision to cash in on the impending collapse of Japan." He suggests that Stalin was simply carrying out a long-standing promise to attack on August 8.²⁸ Not so. At Potsdam the Soviets informed the Americans that they would attack only after August 15 and after the conclusion of a treaty with China.²⁹ The Americans' belief that Stalin was rushing into the struggle simply for spoils was wholly justified.

Many of Lukacs' judgments are not properly supported. He never gives any explanation of Soviet aims in the Far East or Stalin's intentions in launching the Korean War. Though he delivers the perhaps correct judgment that the Soviets had no intention of engaging in an all-out war in the early fifties, he vigorously backs the Truman policy in discussing the Truman-MacArthur dispute. Though elsewhere he denies that Stalin intended pushing beyond his 1945 gains, he declares that "Full-scale American involvement in a war with China would have suited Stalin well, to the detriment of Europe," citing General Bradley's famous warning against the wrong war, with the wrong enemy, at the wrong time, in the wrong place.³⁰

This judgment may be correct, but it is not quite congruent with Lukacs' confidence in Stalin's lack of interest in further conquests. It is, however, a judgment indistinguishable from that of many liberals. Indeed, much of Lukacs' treatment of the Cold War after 1950 differs little in its conclusions from conventional liberal opinion, though as a Hungarian, Lukacs is understandably bitter at the Hungarian rebels being left in the lurch. A *New History of the Cold War* paints an optimistic picture of the period when it was published and of the future. Lukacs saw the whole period after the late 1950s as

one of the "decrystallization of the Cold War" and believed that the thaw after the Cuban missile crisis would continue. Lukacs vaguely predicted further normalization of Cuba itself and of Cuban-American relations.³¹ Needless to say, none of these happy things has come to pass. In a recent article Lukacs continues to insist that the Soviet domination of East Europe is waning, as though the Soviets have not offered sufficient proof of their determination and ability to crush, although not to convert, the luckless peoples of that region. In line with his crusade against America's alleged "globalism," he asserts that the United States has "little business" in the Persian Gulf, Indochina, Angola, or Egypt. Incredibly, while he belittles any Soviet threat, he warns that "the main danger facing this Republic is invasion from the South by Mexicans and Caribbeans."³²

It remains a mystery as to why American conservatives take a friendly view of John Lukacs. It is even more of a mystery when one examines his strident attacks against American conservatives and anti-Communists, whom he lumps together. For example, he jeers at Senator Goldwater as a "self-professed conservative — that is, a radical nationalist." American political conservatism is "fanatical, ideological and technological, characterized as it is by a profound ignorance of history together with a vast belief in the efficacy of airplanes." American conservatives espouse not the Constitution, but the FBI. American conservatism is "nothing more than radical nationalism of a shallow and second-rate nature." The *National Review* is "McCarthyite, pro-German, and sometimes mildly pro-Fascist."³³ Fortunately, Lukacs' historical scholarship is sometimes at a higher level than these grotesque insults would suggest.

¹For two examples see Russell Kirk, "Returning Humanity to History: The Example of John Lukacs," *Intercollegiate Review*, 16, no. 1 (1980), 23-31, and Lee Congdon, "History as Personal Knowledge: John Lukacs and His Work," *Continuity*, no. 3 (Fall 1981), 61-75. ²Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War* (Garden City, 1966), pp. 3, 249. ³Lukacs, *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* (New York, 1953), pp. 479, 556, 560, 607, 678-681, 686, and *The Decline and Rise of Europe* (Garden City, 1965), p. 35. ⁴*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 82. ⁵*The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, pp. 661-662, and *The Decline and Rise of Europe*, p. 43. ⁶Lukacs, *1945: Year Zero* (Garden City, 1978), pp. 81-107. Lukacs' exaggerated hostility to Roosevelt and his carelessness are shown by his denunciation of Roosevelt's sending an incorrect report to Churchill on Sept. 5, 1944. This claimed that the Polish forces had fled Warsaw. This, to Lukacs, shows FDR's deviousness, callousness, and unwillingness to deal with the Polish problem (*1945: Year Zero*, p. 101). Actually, when this erroneous intelligence report was corrected, the Americans resumed efforts to send a large-scale air supply mission to the Poles. This was carried out on Sept. 18, and Roosevelt ordered another mission to follow. The Air Force found that it could not be carried out. (*The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Craven and James Cate, III [Chicago, 1951], 316-317). ⁷Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, VI (New York, 1962), pp. 410-411, 476, 487, and Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, III (London, 1971), 546, 572-573, 579-581. ⁸*The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, esp. pp. 647-654, 676, and *A New History of the Cold War*, p. 350. But cf., however, pp. 53-54, which seem to suggest a milder view of Yalta. ⁹*The Decline and Rise of Europe*, p. 51, and *A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 161, 346-347. For a recent denunciation of American "globalism," see Lukacs' article "Open Your Eyes, For God's Sake," *National Review*, March 5, 1982, pp. 223-230. ¹⁰*1945: Year Zero*, pp. 152-153. ¹¹*The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, pp. 674; *The Decline and Rise of Europe*, pp. 11n14, 197, 262n5; *1945: Year Zero*, pp. 46, 121, 124; *A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 27-28, 311-312. ¹²*A New History of*

the Cold War, pp. 44, 73, and *1945: Year Zero*, pp. 127-128, 66. ¹³*A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 23, 77, 105, 334; and *1945: Year Zero*, p. 93. ¹⁴*1945: Year Zero*, pp. 125-126. ¹⁵*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 77. ¹⁶Lukacs, *The Last European War* (Garden City, 1976), pp. 144-145, 385n4; *A New History of the Cold War*, p. 172. ¹⁷*1945: Year Zero*, pp. 52-53, 62-63, 66. ¹⁸*The Last European War*, pp. 327-328, 40, and *A New History of the Cold War*, p. 73. ¹⁹*The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, pp. 693-695; *A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 80-82, 333; *The Decline and Rise of Europe*, pp. 28, 54; *1945: Year Zero*, pp. 111, 121, 130-131; "Open Your Eyes, For God's Sake," p. 225. ²⁰*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 82. ²¹*The Decline and Rise of Europe*, pp. 42-43; *A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 69-70, 73, 184; *1945: Year Zero*, pp. 2-63, 134-137, 169. ²²*1945: Year Zero*, p. 153. ²³*The Decline and Rise of Europe*, pp. 31, 52, and *A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 74-75. ²⁴Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962), p. 153, and *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948* (Washington, 1973), pp. 999-1003. ²⁵Edward Mortimer, "France," in *Communist Power in Europe*, ed. Martin McCauley (New York, 1977), pp. 151-166, and Alfred J. Rieber, *Stalin and the French Communist Party* (New York, 1962), pp. 236-237, 358. ²⁶*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 222, and Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modern Age* (New York, 1970), pp. 147-151. ²⁷*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 99. Cf. Robert Futrell, et al., *The United States Air Force in Korea* (New York, 1961), pp. 205-206. ²⁸*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 89n5, and *1945: Year Zero*, p. 147. ²⁹*Foreign Relations of the United States: Conference at Berlin, II* (Washington, 1960), p. 345, and Harry Truman, *Off the Record*, ed. Robert Ferrell (New York, 1980), p. 5. ³⁰*A New History of the Cold War*, pp. 102, 170, 268-269. ³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 247 ff. ³²"Open Your Eyes, For God's Sake," pp. 223-230. ³³*A New History of the Cold War*, p. 262; Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness* (New York, 1968), p. 325n5; *The Passing of the Modern Age*, p. 34; *The Decline and Rise of Europe*, pp. 159n48, 262n7.

*The intellectual dandy and
the prophet of the past*

Conservatism's Metaphysical Vision: Barbey d'Aurevilly on Joseph de Maistre

T. John Jamieson

IN HIS *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke repeatedly uses the word "metaphysic" as a pejorative term — saying of natural right theories, for example, that "in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false." "Political reason is a computing principle: adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally, and not metaphysically or mathematically, true moral denominations."¹ Burke's rhetorical attack on the *philosophes'* political science is an appeal to Anglo-Saxon common sense. But it has also served as an excuse for leaving conservatism inarticulate and without well-developed intellectual defenses, and for letting conservative common sense degenerate into philosophically reductive skepticism.

Yet in defiance of Anglo-Saxon hostility to it, the metaphysical realm exists, and it has political consequences. The conservatism of Burke rested on a metaphysical basis as much as the radicalism of the revolutionaries did; the difference was that Burke did not articulate his metaphysics and that the metaphysics of the revolutionaries were deformed. In

fact, conservatism cannot exist without metaphysics. To determine the true political *summum bonum*, one must presuppose the existence of the All-Good. The thinker who exposed conservatism's ontological roots was the so-called "French Burke," Count Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), who said,

Once you leave the sphere of material and sensory experience to enter that of pure philosophy, you must leave matter and explain everything metaphysically. I mean here the true metaphysics, and not that which has been cultivated so ardently for the last century by men who are seriously called *metaphysicians*. Splendid metaphysicians, who have spent their lives proving that there is no such thing as metaphysics, famous ruffians in whom genius was brutalized!²

Suffering from a disease de Maistre called "theophobia," the *philosophes* grounded their so-called metaphysics upon *ideology* — Destutt de Tracy's term for a "science of ideas" that derived all concepts from sense impressions. Pope's dismal prophecy in the *Dunciad*, of a com-