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The Suicide of the East?

1989 and the Fall of Communism

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There was no World War III. A fictional one, depicted in the 1978 international bestseller *The Third World War*, was imagined by one of the most remarkable soldier-scholars of his generation, a retired British general named John Hackett. His war begins when a 1985 crackup in Yugoslavia lights the great-power fuse, 1914 style. Analogies to World War I, of decaying empires and military machines primed to attack, were very much in the air when the book was published. It was the late 1970s, and Soviet interventionism had reached a high point, while the Soviet Union combined a sprawling, ill-governed military with an aging, insecure political class.

But by the time the real Yugoslav war did come, in 1991, another kind of chain reaction had already transformed Europe. In the late 1980s, Moscow was experimenting vigorously with economic and then political reform. The Soviet Union and Poland held limited elections in early 1989 that, in different ways, shook the foundations of their communist establishments. Soon, Poland had a noncommunist government. Hungary effectively defected to the West, attracting a flow of refugees from East Germany, thus undermining the bastion of Stalinism they left behind. The cascade quickened. Czechoslovakia's government was toppled by a "velvet revolution," and the Berlin Wall was breached when a bureaucratic snafu inadvertently opened the floodgates. Bulgarians overthrew their leaders, and as the year ended, Romania's brutal dictator died before a firing squad. As the Germans created a new unity for their divided nation, national movements splintered the Soviet Union itself. By the end of 1991, the Soviet empire had disintegrated.

Although there had been some bloodshed in China and Romania, there had been no great war. Hundreds of millions of people now led new ways of life in new states with new borders. The world was rearranged as in a great postwar settlement -- but without a war. So profound were the changes that when Yugoslavia started to break apart and the outside actors -- conditioned by habit to play

leading roles in the drama -- stumbled onto the stage, the players seemed bewildered and scriptless.

Seen two decades later, it seems like a blur. As this episode passes into historical memory, 1989 has become the totemic year when the people rose up, and the November collapse of the Berlin Wall is its exemplary moment. A fresh crop of books now attempts to unpack this epic story. Was it really a revolt from below, or was it more from above, a civil war within the Communist elite? Both is the obvious answer, but these books put more weight on the struggles within the Communist elite. Some focus on the revolutions of 1989. Others emphasize the settlements that shaped the world of today. Two of them take in the full narrative arc of the communist experiment in organizing modern society. Hardly any discuss the challenge of fashioning a tempting alternative to it. That is unfortunate, because so many of communism's initial adherents were men and women disillusioned by the apparent failings of liberalism.

SEEING RED

Once upon a time, the "ten days that shook the world," in Russia's 1917 revolution, had a comparable grip on the public's historical imagination. Once upon a time, the future of the world seemed to belong to the states descended from that older bolt of revolutionary lightning.

These were total states. They encompassed the unprecedented forces of creation and destruction that humanity had so recently discovered, and they were driven by Nietzschean supermen with a will to power. Or so it seemed to the disillusioned Trotskyite James Burnham by the end of the 1930s. In his influential 1941 book, *The Managerial Revolution*, Burnham argued that ideologies such as socialism or fascism were just masks worn by new kinds of "managerial states," their resources mobilized and industries led by a technocratic elite. The states that would triumph were those that could carry their principles to their logical limits and use power ruthlessly. Capitalism, he predicted, was "not going to continue much longer." Shortly after World War II, Burnham returned to his theme of governing power elites, "the Machiavellians," who might adopt democratic forms to perpetuate their rule. If U.S. leaders hoped to survive, they would have to acquire their own will to power and use their fleeting nuclear advantage, in a preventive war if necessary.

Especially in light of Burnham's former prominence on the American left, his arguments intrigued George Orwell, a self-described "democratic socialist." Writing from the United Kingdom, Orwell noticed the fascination with power and force that so imbued what Burnham called his "realism." In early 1947, Orwell wrote that for Burnham, "Communism may be wicked, but at any rate it is *big*: it is a terrible, all-devouring monster which one fights against but which one cannot help admiring." Against Burnham's visions of monsters and cataclysms, Orwell hoped that "the Russian regime may become more liberal and less dangerous a generation hence, if war has not broken out in the meantime." Or perhaps the great powers would "be simply too frightened of the effects of atomic weapons ever to make use of them." Yet Orwell acknowledged that such a nuclear standoff was a dreadful prospect, as it would mean the lasting "division of the world among two or three vast super-states," run by Burnham's technocratic dictators -- the Machiavellian managerial elite.

For Orwell, the only way of avoiding that outcome was "to present somewhere or other, on a large scale, the spectacle of a community where people are relatively free and happy and where the main motive in life is not the pursuit of money or power. In other words, democratic Socialism must be

made to work throughout some large area." He thought that this would have to be in Europe, a Europe unified to serve this ideal. So for Orwell in 1947, the prescription was to avoid war long enough for communist governments to become less dangerous and, meanwhile, to build an appealing alternative to communism.

Not a bad throw at the dartboard for the man who was about to write a novel, *1984*, warning of a Burnhamite dystopia. If Orwell had lived to witness the real 1984, he would have been relieved to see that global war had been avoided. There had been a few serious scares and several regional wars, helped along by the triumph of an especially radical set of Communist enthusiasts in China. But by the early 1980s, their revolutionary dynamism spent, the Communist rulers had turned into a paternalistic managerial elite.

CAPITALISM IN CRISIS

David Priestland's *The Red Flag* is a far-reaching, vividly written account of that evolution, both the best and the most accessible one-volume history of communism now available. Priestland charts the rise of "romantic" Marxism, which once in power morphed into either a "modernist" or a "radical" variant. The first espoused an authoritarian high modernism to reshape society according to the visionary master plans of the guiding party. The second added the killing fervor of continuing revolution, with its militarized mobilization of every element of society and unceasing struggle against the revolution's enemies. By the early 1980s, the somewhat more benign modernist variant was dominant.

But the other half of Orwell's prescription is the relative success of the other side, a factor easily neglected in books that concentrate on communism's failings. Wars are not just lost; they have to be won. Traditional accounts of the Cold War understandably focus on the United States and the Soviet Union. But that contest was a kind of global election, and the swing states were in Europe and East Asia. From this perspective, the turning point of the late Cold War is less a story about 1989 and more a story about the period between 1978 and 1982.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, capitalism was in obvious crisis. "Can Capitalism Survive?" cried a *Time* magazine cover from 1975. "Is Capitalism Working?" asked another in 1980. Yet divided after Mao's death among competing visions of national development, the Chinese made a pivotal choice in 1978. They rejected the Soviet model, opting instead for market-oriented economic reform, but without political reform. (At about the same time, Hungary's Communist leader, János Kádár, with his similar market-opening program of "goulash communism," showed how such a model could work in Eastern Europe, too.)

The Chinese were probably influenced less by the example of the United States itself than by U.S.-backed examples closer to home, such as Japan, South Korea, and -- although they would not admit it -- Taiwan. Not only had Moscow lost its power of attraction, but its political-military posture -- not least its backing of the increasingly powerful government in Vietnam -- also unsettled the Chinese.

In Europe, the model of social democracy achieved much in the late 1940s and 1950s. Its ideal of a big welfare state umpiring among big companies and big unions was at the core of the new European community. But by the 1970s, that model was sputtering on both sides of the Atlantic. The Bretton

Woods system, which put national economic autonomy ahead of the free movement of global capital, had collapsed. Galloping inflation was combined with high unemployment, labor strife seemed endemic, protests and terrorism wracked much of Western Europe.

But capitalism broke out of its slump during the 1970s and into the early 1980s. At different moments, leaders in various states threw their weight behind a liberal economic orthodoxy of hard money and the unregulated movement of capital, limiting national economic autonomy but facilitating unprecedented flows of global investment. The globalized economy of today was shaped during these years, and the Americans played an important part. With his work to liberalize capital markets and coordinate monetary strategies, George Shultz may actually have influenced the course of world history more in his two years as treasury secretary for Richard Nixon than he did in his six-plus years as secretary of state for Ronald Reagan.

The Europeans also played a critical role in this reinvention of capitalism, while winning voters who wanted public order restored. West Germany became an anchor for this new vision of the world economy, especially the Free Democratic Party, which was the indispensable coalition partner of every West German government from the 1970s to the 1990s. The West Germans, in turn, found common cause with the French technocrats who saw in this shared vision of Europe's political economy the basis, first, for a European monetary system, then, for a true European single market, and, finally, for a common currency.

The story can be mapped as a tale of two U-turns: In 1972, there was the U-turn of a conservative British prime minister, Sir Edward Heath, who was broken by the unions and then scorned for it by his successor as party leader, Margaret ("the lady's not for turning") Thatcher. The other U-turn was in 1982-83, when French President François Mitterrand -- the first Socialist to take office in France since World War II -- abandoned his agenda of state-owned finance and industry to make common cause with Jacques Delors (his economics minister and later the president of the European Commission) and the West Germans. European integration had trumped the independent socialist path.

This rebooting of capitalism and reinvigoration of the European idea came at a critical time. The left was contesting the future not only of France but also of Italy and Spain. In West Germany, the Free Democrats brought down the Social Democratic government of Helmut Schmidt and made Helmut Kohl chancellor rather than compromise their preferred vision for Europe's political economy. Thatcher, elected in the United Kingdom in 1979, survived thanks in part to the tonic of a victorious small war against an Argentine dictatorship that had recklessly occupied some sparsely inhabited British-owned rocks in the South Atlantic. By the end of 1982, the swing states of Europe were making their choices.

THE ALTERNATIVE APPEAL

The rebooting was about ideas, too. Again, Europe was a fulcrum. Self-described "realists" on both the right and the left wanted to stay clear of alignment with either Washington or Moscow. But many others, including Schmidt, Kohl, and Mitterrand, disagreed. Reagan's condemnation of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" was a rallying point for both those he inspired and those he frightened. The European contest was decided less by outsiders than by the Europeans' own battle of ideas, with the victory of what Germans called the *Tendenzwende* (change of course), which revived a spirit of

"militant democracy" amid the turmoil of the 1970s. Leaders of this movement spoke, as the historian Jeffrey Herf once put it, "in the language of [Konrad] Adenauer and Clausewitz, but also in an international discourse of [Alexis de] Tocqueville and Karl Popper, Raymond Aron and Leszek Kolakowski, Montesquieu and President Jimmy Carter." A colossal political fight over NATO's deployment of U.S. nuclear missiles to offset new Soviet deployments, an initiative pioneered by Schmidt, became the central battle. The issue was effectively decided in West Germany, with the formation of a conservative-liberal governing coalition in 1982.

Most of the writers chronicling the demise of communism give short shrift to these crucial developments in Western Europe, and especially in West Germany. The outstanding exception is a perceptive essay by James Sheehan in *The Fall of the Berlin Wall*, a collection edited by Jeffrey Engel that compiles several national perspectives on these events. Sheehan's subject is less how Europe changed in 1989 and more "how the transformation of Europe after 1945 affected the timing and character of the Cold War's end." Sheehan thus stresses the way war became discredited in European politics and how European politicians subsequently constructed an appealing new European vision for functional modern societies. He shows how these successes created magnetic forces that, standing adjacent to the Soviet empire in Europe, slowly and surely pulled apart the decaying assumptions underlying communist rule. The European ideal of democracy and pluralism became a kind of lodestar for Mikhail Gorbachev himself -- as it did for Italian and Spanish Communists and Socialists.

Against this background, contrast two landmark choices of the communist world in 1979 and 1980. At the end of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Its reason -- that Afghanistan might fall under the influence of Chinese or Western rivals -- was nominally defensive, but even this rationale revealed a monumental insecurity. Although their political purposes were also defensive, Soviet forces were configured to invade Western Europe, molded by a military-industrial complex that had first claim on resources and operated with little constraint. (The political weight and consequences of this complex are neglected in most of these books, save some discussion by Archie Brown in *The Rise and Fall of Communism*. But interested readers will find it handled well in William Odom's 1998 work, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*.)

And at the end of 1980, the Polish government declared martial law and imprisoned leaders of a movement, Solidarity, that had been inspired by a workers' union and a Polish pope. Constantine Pleshakov's *There Is No Freedom Without Bread!* puts the Polish story at the center of his account. Pleshakov, a Russian émigré now teaching at Mount Holyoke College, writes with great verve. He concentrates on major characters, such as Pope John Paul II, and tries to recover the way they saw their world. Pleshakov gives his characters human scale and fallibility, explaining, for instance, the strange Marian mysticism that was so important to Pope John Paul II and many other Polish Catholics. He has a keen eye for the factional contests among Communist barons, Catholic prelates, and Solidarity intellectuals. His is a story of the intellectual bankruptcy of the elite, out of fresh ideas even before it ran out of money. This was the impoverishment that the West German Free Democratic leader Hans-Dietrich Genscher grasped when he told a party gathering in 1981 that "like the U.S.A., we are a part of the West. One must say to those whose talk arouses another impression: American troops are in West Germany in order that free trade unions exist, and Soviet troops are in Poland to see to it that free trade unions there do not exist. That is the difference."

The choices of all the communist governments in Europe were made under the shadow of financial

debt -- its scale a carefully guarded secret. In the 1970s, the Communist managers started borrowing the hard currency they needed to buy the goods that kept their populations happy. By the 1980s, these governments faced some hard choices. Other less developed countries were entering a series of debt crises that accompanied global capitalism's deflationary transition to hard money. Instead of curbing their debt, the communist countries borrowed even more. They found creditors, mainly in Western Europe, willing to extend new loans.

One of the great strengths of Stephen Kotkin's contribution to this group of books, *Uncivil Society*, is his emphasis on issues of political economy. Kotkin (with help from Jan Gross) shares with Pleshakov the view that the real story of 1989 is less one of a bottom-up revolution than one of a fatal split within the ruling elite, the "uncivil society" of his title. Gorbachev opened the mismanagement up to public inspection. "What Gorbachev did," Kotkin writes, "was to lay bare how socialism in the bloc had been crushed by competition with capitalism and by loans that could be repaid only by ever-new loans, Ponzi-scheme style."

By the mid-1980s, socialism had clearly lost its appeal in both Asia and Europe as an ideology for the future. But there were still many possibilities for how communist governments might evolve, some of them quite violent. Dissent was being managed. China and Hungary were both developing creative ways to use the market. Martial law in Poland had effectively contained the opposition. Then came Gorbachev.

GORBACHEV'S NEW THINKING

Archie Brown, one of the greatest living Kremlinologists and the author of *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, was paying attention to Gorbachev long before ordinary people had heard of him. Gorbachev was a model young Communist, carefully prepared for high office. He had been handpicked for the leadership by Yuri Andropov, then the head of the KGB. Andropov liked creative moves such as those by Kádár in Hungary, but he was also, as Brown writes, "an implacable opponent of overt dissent and of any development in the direction of political pluralism." Andropov had led the way in the choice to invade Afghanistan. Looking to Gorbachev, he wanted a first-rate modernizing Marxist to sustain the momentum against Politburo colleagues so senescent that, nostalgic for Stalin, they were still complaining about Nikita Khrushchev even in the 1980s.

Some historians are brilliant interpreters who offer provocative new syntheses of the record. Others, perhaps not so flashy, build up the bedrock of knowledge with thorough, careful scholarship. If Priestland, with his book, is an example of the first category, Brown illustrates the second one. (Fortunately, the profession has room for both.) Brown has carefully assembled his facts when he importantly observes, of the 1985 selection of Gorbachev to lead the Soviet Union:

The views of every member of the Politburo at the time of [Konstantin] Chernenko's death are known. It is, accordingly, safe to say that if anyone from their ranks other than Gorbachev had been chosen as general secretary, the Soviet Union would have neither liberalized nor democratized. . . . If Andropov had enjoyed better health, minor reform, stopping far short of what occurred under Gorbachev, might well have proceeded. If Chernenko had lived longer, nothing much would have changed while he was general secretary.

The Soviet empire did not end up crumbling from the outside in. It changed from the inside out, starting at the top. Gorbachev's initial reforms failed and even made matters worse, exposing problems and causing panicked hoarding as goods disappeared from shelves. Especially in 1987 and 1988, Gorbachev redoubled reform instead of backing away. What is more, instead of following the Chinese and Hungarian model of trying economic reform without democratization, he went for some political reform, too. The decision to seek legitimizing elections came simultaneously in the Soviet Union and in Poland. It was a deeply un-Marxist initiative. Marx and Engels had never had much use for democratic processes. Historical materialism was a doctrine of science, not political marketing.

THE SOVIET CENTRIFUGE

The words "Soviet" and "union" are worth a moment's reflection. They were extremely meaningful, and they were originally devised to replace two other words: "Russian" and "empire." If the republics were no longer bound together by their supposed Marxist-Leninist ideological fraternity, what would happen to a "Soviet Union"?

As the Soviet Union entered 1989, Gorbachev was increasingly preoccupied with domestic dilemmas. Separatism had already become a major internal challenge, including from the Russian republic and its new leader, Boris Yeltsin. Priestland covers this in the style of a landscape artist; Brown handles it in fine detail; Pleshakov paints a series of impressionistic portraits.

Beset at home, Gorbachev needed peace and support from the United States. Reagan provided it. As Melvyn Leffler argues in a recent book, *For the Soul of Mankind*, the conciliatory Reagan made a major contribution to ending the Cold War. So did Reagan's successor, George H. W. Bush, after he and his advisers took several months to judge whether Gorbachev was still Andropov's protégé or really was qualitatively different. (Some of Gorbachev's own advisers, especially on the military side, were struggling with the same question. They did not become convinced that he was different, which for them meant becoming disillusioned with him, until 1990.)

By August 1989, communism was mutating. Along with the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary led the way in Europe. Poland installed a non-Communist prime minister, and Hungary's leaders, already reform-minded, shrugged their shoulders and readily tacked to pick up the westerly winds.

China, however, chose quite a different path: it crushed political reform. Then, in 1992, its leaders devised a strategy to offset political oppression with a redoubled commitment to economic reform. Chen Jian has a superb and up-to-date summary of these choices in his contribution to Engel's *The Fall of the Berlin Wall*. Some Eastern European leaders were attracted to a "Chinese solution" of dealing firmly with dissent. But such a strategy would have done little to reaffirm communism's vitality.

The revolutions of 1989 cascaded into East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and -- bloodily -- Stalinist Romania. It is a stirring story. Anyone wanting to recapture the passion and tumult of that year will enjoy Victor Sebestyen's journalistic narrative, *Revolution 1989*. Sebestyen, a Hungarian émigré living in the United Kingdom, has done an excellent job. He has touched all the bases, knows the terrain, and has skillfully woven in material from interviews and primary sources. Another journalistic account is Michael Meyer's *The Year That Changed the World*, in which Meyer revisits his work for *Newsweek* in 1989 and provides some eyewitness snapshots. Meyer is concerned with

knocking down the notion that the Cold War was just won by Reagan, but today this is something of a straw man. A more substantive contribution from Meyer is the significance he gives to the discussions between Hungary and West Germany that set in motion the events leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall. His evidence strengthens the case that Kohl was trying to shape events, not just reacting to them.

In starting the chain reaction that brought down the Berlin Wall and led to Germany's unification, Hungary was more important than Poland. In August and September 1989, the internal upheavals of the communist world uncorked the long-bottled German question and, with it, much wider questions about the future of Europe. As the Cold War began to unwind, a whole new set of issues arose about the character of a postwar settlement. This is the point at which the coverage of the "1989 books" by Pleshakov, Kotkin, Sebestyen, and Meyer falls off.

AFTER THE FALL

Although they start earlier, Mary Elise Sarotte's *1989* and Frédéric Bozo's *Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War, and German Unification* are really "1990 books." They are mainly about the settlement that shaped the new Europe. When historical scholarship works as it should, historians build on prior work to extend and improve it. That is what Sarotte and Bozo have done.

Sarotte's book is compact and highly interpretive. Yet Sarotte has thoroughly mastered the original source material in all the key countries. She distills it with great skill, constantly enlivening her account with a sensibility for what these changes meant in life and culture. Hers is now the best one-volume work on Germany's unification available. It contains the clearest understanding to date of the extraordinary juggling performance of Kohl. After describing several possible models for a postwar settlement, Sarotte documents the triumph of what she calls the "prefab" approach, which extended the proven institutions of German democracy, European integration, and the security umbrella provided by NATO and the United States. Perhaps the book's only weakness -- shared with all the books under review -- is a lack of attention to the military settlement codified in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which addressed the unglamorous but vital balance of armies and air forces across the continent. Military imbalances had been the most costly and potentially destabilizing aspect of Europe's security environment for the previous 40 years -- and the 400 years before that.

Bozo's more detailed book seeks to reappraise Mitterrand's achievement, especially in coupling German unification with greater European integration -- a monetary union and a political union, which later produced the European Union. But Bozo is too modest when he claims to concentrate on Mitterrand's role. He provides a general account of the diplomacy of German unification that, although it stresses the French perspective, is informed by sources in other countries, too. Paris was close to the action, but on most issues not at the very center. Thus, telling the story primarily from the French perspective provides a more detached yet highly informed account of the diplomacy.

In some ways, Mitterrand's vision for Europe was the closest to Gorbachev's own notion of a "common European home." But, Bozo writes, "instead of a rebalancing that favored a Western Europe called to become a strategic actor itself, there followed an unexpected reaffirmation of the established Atlantic order. . . . It was in the pan-European dimension that the balance sheet of French policy was

most unfavorable in 1991." Yet Bozo also notes that now, 20 years later, the United States, preoccupied with other global concerns, is retreating more from Europe, putting questions about European leadership into the foreground once again.

Sarotte and Bozo both give good marks to U.S. diplomacy in late 1989 and 1990. Sarotte, in particular, does a good job of judging old disputes about how to assign credit and blame at some critical moments. She also clarifies how both money and NATO reform were building blocks in getting to a final agreement.

Sarotte qualifies her praise by wondering, quoting former British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, whether the Americans, had they been geniuses on the order of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, could have said, "The whole game is coming into our hands," and updated all the institutions, including the United Nations. As a former diplomat who served in the George H. W. Bush administration, I am biased. But consider the architecture that was being put in place by the end of 1990: a unified Germany, a transformed EU, the most significant arms control arrangement (the CFE) in European military history, a preserved and extended Atlantic alliance, a revitalized UN that mobilized a coalition to reverse Iraq's conquest of Kuwait, a Euro-Atlantic agreement on principles of political and economic life (the Paris agreement of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), the Brady Plan to clean up international debt crises, a revived global trade round that would produce the World Trade Organization, and a new framework for diplomacy in Asia (the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum).

Sarotte makes a good argument that Russia was left resenting the outcome. Yet consider this passage from her book: "Gorbachev would complain to [U.S. Secretary of State James] Baker in 1991 that the money from Kohl had already vanished: 'Things disappear around here. We got a lot of money for German unification, and when I called our people, I was told they didn't know where it was. [Aleksandr] Yakovlev told me to call around, and the answer is no one knows.'" "Clearly," Sarotte goes on, "Moscow needed more than just credits to ease its transition to being a modern market economy, but (other than from Bonn) it got little. Western advisers would descend on Russia later en masse, of course. But they arrived after fatal resentments had already piled up." After rereading that passage a few times, it seems that devising a happier outcome would have indeed required the application of some rare form of genius.

Given the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe, the backwash that accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, and the return of Russia's borders to approximately those it had had in the eighteenth century, what may instead seem amazing is that the diplomacy muted Moscow's resentment as much as it did. This again is a tribute to Gorbachev and several members of his team. The cordial relations between Washington and Moscow in August 1990 were invaluable as the endgame of German unification converged with another crisis, the need for diplomacy to rally the world -- and the UN -- against Iraq, a country that, as it overran Kuwait, was also hosting 10,000 Soviet military advisers.

A FUTURE OF FREEDOM

When, in 1947, Orwell articulated his scenario to save the world, with his vision of a humane example of progress led by a more united Europe, he identified four formidable obstacles: Russian hostility,

American hostility, imperialism, and the Catholic Church. The future seemed bleak. "The actual outlook, so far as I can calculate the probabilities, is very dark," he wrote, "and any serious thought should start out from that fact." These four fears still deserve serious thought, although now, aided by books like these, one can reflect instead on Russians who fell for the European ideal, Americans who nurtured a positive vision, the decline of the imperialism Orwell knew, and a Catholic Church that inspired fights for freedom.

In 1964, Burnham, the author of the nightmare vision that so provoked Orwell, was helping William F. Buckley edit the *National Review*. (Reagan would later award Burnham the Medal of Freedom.) At the time, Burnham's latest book had administered another powerful dose of pessimism. Titled *Suicide of the West*, in it Burnham argued that modern liberalism had lost the fervor of classical liberalism. The modern variant treated peace and security as equal to or greater than the commitment to preserving freedom. Since the focus on peace denigrated the use of power against a ruthless foe, Burnham predicted that the West was slowly committing suicide.

History dealt Burnham's argument a strange hand. He would be pleased to see that a belief in defending the West was a factor in the American and European revival. But the positive, dynamic ideal offered in Western European countries and Japan was so magnetic precisely because those countries seemed to be discarding their traditional reliance on force and hard power.

At supreme moments of crisis in 1989 and 1990, critical choices were indeed made in favor of peace, in favor of nonviolent change. But those choices were made by men groomed from adolescence to be model Communist leaders. The suicide was in the East, not the West. And the suicide was not an act of self-destruction. Theirs was an act of creation.

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