

## VIEWS

### **& EDITORIALS & COMMENTARY**

#### **D-Day and anti-Americanism ■**

By Josef Joffe

## It's hard to love a savior

**D**ecade after decade, the Germans were not welcome at D-Day anniversary festivities. Although they had joined NATO in 1955, and although over the following 40 years they fielded the West's largest army on the front lines of the cold war, they were told ever so politely: Sorry, this party is just for us, for Europe's liberators and those whom they liberated.

But on Sunday, the 60th anniversary of D-Day, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder will be inside the tent — not outside biting his knuckles, like his predecessor Helmut Kohl.

This "reunification" will be the fitting conclusion to the 20th century, which spans Europe's most grievous political and moral failures. Genocide, revolution, man-made famine, expulsion and war yielded a death toll of 100 million, give or take a few million.

Given this catastrophe, the happy end looms even more impressive. And it clearly bears an American imprint. American power saved Europe in 1918, and it saved it again when Eisenhower's troops waded ashore on the "longest day," at the end of which the Allies counted 10,000 casualties.

Nor was the job done on May 8, 1945 when Hitler's armies surrendered. If Europe is whole and free today, it is because Americans stayed ashore for the next 40 years, holding off the Soviet giant.

It was President Ronald Reagan, not President François Mitterrand of France, who exclaimed in Berlin in 1984: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." It was President George H.W. Bush, not Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, who made sure that the Berlin Wall fell five years later and that the last Russian soldiers withdrew peacefully from Central Europe.

But as yesterday's enemies and allies gather for one last time — there won't be anyone left to make the journey in 2014 — a curious sense of unease is wafting across the cliffs of Normandy.

Suddenly it is America that looks like the odd man out. In 2002, Schröder ran a carefully coded anti-American election campaign, and won. Then the Spanish socialist leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero ran his campaign against the United States and the Iraq war — and won.

Perusing the European media from Madrid to Munich in the wake of the

Abu Ghraib scandal, one might think America is Darth Vader and Adolf Hitler rolled into one. On the 60th anniversary of D-Day, Europe is awash in a tsunami of anti-Americanism that is light-years removed from a rationally argued critique of U.S. behavior in Iraq.

Why are the second and third post-D-Day generations so obsessed with America that they will stop at nothing to discredit and dehumanize the country?

One answer is easy enough. Those who are weak detest the strong, especially when they no longer need them for their safety. Of course, it does not help that Bushist America has turned into Gulliver Unbound. Swift's giant at least made nice to the Lilliputians, while the United States of Bush and Donald Rumsfeld speaks arrogantly and wields a huge stick.

But these rational reasons for resentment cannot explain the sheer contempt and loathing of America. Maybe Freud can help. He would probably mumble: "Go back to D-Day and recall that we hate those most who helped us most." We will never forgive the Americans for saving us so often from our own worst failures.

America is a constant reminder of Europe's catastrophes; hence the irresistible urge to even the score by stripping Uncle Sam of the last vestiges of moral worth. Unwilling or unable to use power, post-cold war Europe must still turn to the United States when the Balkans flare up and bad guys like Slobodan Milosevic need chastening.

And then there is Temptress America, a culture that radiates outward and pulls inward. Europe eats, listens, dances and dresses American, and if the lure of low culture weren't enough, there is the glamour of

U.S. universities that makes the worst anti-American diatribe usually end with: "Can you help get my daughter into Harvard?"

Will this, too, have passed by the time we mark D-Day 2014? It might, but only on two conditions. Europe will have to shed the arrogance of weakness, and the United States the arrogance of power.

Watch George W. Bush on D-Day  
'04 for signs of a kinder and gentler  
America. The United States is still the  
greatest power in history, but it has  
learned the hard way in Falluja and Abu  
Ghraib that even giants can't go it alone.  
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