

**POLITICS****CONFLICT**

# THE WALL AND THE END OF HISTORY

**MORE THAN JUST COMMUNISM ENDED IN 1989;  
2,000 YEARS OF BLOODSHED CAME TO A CLOSE.**

BY JOSEF JOFFE

TWENTY YEARS AGO, A FEW MONTHS before the Berlin Wall fell, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama predicted "not just the end of the Cold War ... but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

He was wrong, of course, as were all the "end of" prophets of the past. Liberal democracy is hardly what inspires current forces like Iranian Khomeinism, global jihadism, the *caudillismo* of Latin America, or the neo-tsarism of Russia. But what about Europe?

The collapse of the 3.7-meter-tall monster in Berlin on Nov. 9, 1989, did bring about—or, more accurately, complete—a momentous transformation of the Old Continent. For the past 2,000 years, Europe had been the source of the best and the worst in human history. It invented practically everything that matters: from Greek philosophy to Roman law, from the Renaissance to the fax machine, from Brunelleschi to Bauhaus. But this was also where the world's deadliest wars erupted, killing tens of millions. It was in Europe that the most murderous ideologies were invented: communism, fascism, and Nazism, complete with the Gulag, the Gestapo, and Auschwitz.

That history truly ended with the Berlin Wall. Gone are the million soldiers who once manned a line running from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and so are thousands of nuclear weapons. The French and Germans no longer fight over Alsace-Lorraine, and it's impossible to imagine another partition of

Poland, or mass murder in the name of the Lord, or a flood of refugees like the tens of millions who crisscrossed Europe in the 20th century. Yes, we recently saw ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, but that was a cottage industry compared with what Hitler and Stalin wrought, and it was quickly bankrupted by the U.S. Air Force.

Post-wall Europe, meanwhile, has come to mean peace, social democracy, and the EU Commission, which has made Karl Marx's prediction come true at last: after the final class struggle, "power over men" would yield to the "administration of things." So it has: regulation has replaced revolution, and the welfare state has trumped the warfare state. Marx got only the timing wrong; it would take 140 years from the Communist Manifesto to the fall of the wall.

But the wait was worth it. The wall fell without bloodshed; the Soviet Union was the first empire that died in bed, so to speak, with barely a shot being fired. The Velvet Revolutions that made Europe whole again truly ended European history as we knew it. Traditional revolutions beget counter-revolutions and new rounds of repression and revolt. That cycle was broken in 1989, a miraculous first that bodes so well for the future. Yes, conflict continues in Europe, but not the kind that sets fire to history. Today the clashes are over taxes and spending, zoning and shop-closing hours, the sway of Brussels and the reserve rights of national capitals, abortion and same-sex marriage. Politics hasn't been abolished, but the really touchy items have been safely outsourced to the courts—far from the streets and even from parliaments.

The fall of the wall did not create this

brave new world; it sped it up and ratified it. But as a revolution without victims (except for the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, who was shot, and a few other leaders who served short prison terms), Nov. 9, 1989, deserves a towering monument in every European capital—a marker of something completely new under the European sun. Unlike in 1789, the promise of peace and liberty was truly delivered. Unlike in 1919, when the continent erupted in revolutions that spawned totalitarian counterrevolutions, 1989 brought an end to the worst part of European history. That's not bad when you consider the origins: a flustered East German functionary looking

into the TV cameras and announcing, well, yes, as far as he knew, East Berliners could freely cross into the West—right now.

Elsewhere in the world, history continues in its bloody fashion. But if you want to know how to end it nice and smoothly, check out what Europe managed 20 years ago.

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**SCARS**  
MEMORIALS TO  
THE HOLOCAUST  
AND THE WALL.

ULRICH LEBEUF—MYOP (5)