

## **The death of Europe is in sight**

From The Wall Street Journal, 23 October 2015

The death of Europe is in sight. Still hazy and not yet inevitable, but nevertheless visible and drawing nearer. Like a distant planet in the lens of an approaching satellite.

Europe is reaching its end not because of its sclerotic economy or stagnant demography or the dysfunctions of the superstate.

Nor is the real cause the massive influx of Middle Eastern and African migrants. Those desperate people are just the latest stiff breeze against the timber of a desiccated civilisation. Europe is dying because it has become morally incompetent. It isn't that Europe stands for nothing. It's that it stands for shallow things, shallowly.

### **These beliefs are all very nice, but they are also secondary**

Europeans believe in human rights, tolerance, openness, peace, progress, the environment, pleasure. These beliefs are all very nice, but they are also secondary.

What Europeans no longer believe in are the things from which their beliefs spring: Judaism and Christianity; liberalism and the Enlightenment; martial pride and capability; capitalism and wealth. Still less do they believe in fighting or sacrificing or paying or even arguing for these things.

Having ignored and undermined their own foundations, they wonder why their house is coming apart.

### **What is Europe?**

What is Europe? It is Greece not Persia? Rome not Carthage? Christendom not the caliphate? These distinctions are fundamental. To say Europe is a civilisation apart is not to say it is better or worse. It is merely to say: This is us and that is you.

Nor is it to say that Europe ought to be a closed civilisation. It merely needs to be one that doesn't dissolve on contact with the strangers it takes into its midst.

That's what makes the diplomacy of Angela Merkel, undisputed regent of European foreign policy, so odd and disconcerting. The German Chancellor leads a party called the Christian Democratic Union, one of the chief purposes of which is to rally the right to a reasonable conservatism.

Yet there she was in Istanbul this week offering a deal in which Europe would agree to visa-free travel for Turks in Europe starting next year, along with quicker movement on Turkish membership in the EU, if only Ankara will do more to resettle Syrian and other refugees in their own country. Europe would also foot the bill.

### **The Chancellor is begging small favours from weaker powers on temporary matters**

This is machtpolitik in reverse, in which the Chancellor is begging small favours from weaker powers on temporary matters in exchange for broad concessions with far-reaching ramifications. There are 75 million Turks, whose per capita income doesn't match that of Panamanians. The country is led by an elected Islamist with an autocratic streak, prone to anti-Semitic outbursts, who openly supports Hamas, denies the Armenian genocide, jails journalists in record numbers, and orchestrates Soviet-style show trials against his political opponents. Turkey also has borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran. These would become Europe's borders in the event of Turkish membership.

This is the country Merkel proposes to bring into the bosom of Europe. Her apologists will say she's being disingenuous, but that only compounds the disgrace of her overture. It also compounds the danger.

### **A massive influx of Muslim immigrants**

Could Europe's liberal political traditions, its religious and cultural heritage, long survive a massive influx of Muslim immigrants, in the order of tens of millions of people? No.

Not given Europe's frequently unhappy experience with much of its Muslim population. Not when you have immigrant groups that resist assimilation and host countries that make only tentative civic demands. And not when a heedless immigration policy, conducted in fits of moral self-congratulation, leads to the inevitable reaction.

In Switzerland this week, a plurality of voters cast ballots for the Swiss People's Party, known mainly for its anti-immigrant stance. Its sister parties throughout Europe are also the political beneficiaries of the migrant influx, trafficking on legitimate grievances against the postmodern state to peddle illiberal cures. Few things are as dangerous to democracy as a populist with half a case.

### **Europe cannot be Europe if it is not true to its core inheritance**

It says something about the politics of our day that this column will be condemned as beyond the moral pale. Such is the tenor of the times that it is no longer possible to assert without angry contradiction that Europe cannot be Europe if it is not true to its core inheritance.

This is the marriage of reason and revelation that produced a civilisation of technological mastery tempered by human decency.

"It is commendable that the West is trying to be more open, to be more understanding of the values of outsiders, but it has lost the capacity for self-love," a prominent German theologian noted about a decade ago.

### **It is no longer able to perceive what is great and pure**

"All that it sees in its own history is the despicable and the destructive; it is no longer able to perceive what is great and pure. What Europe needs is a new self-acceptance, a self acceptance that is critical and humble, if it truly wishes to survive."

That's Joseph Ratzinger, better known as Benedict XVI. He's out of fashion, which makes him that much more worth hearing.

*The Wall Street Journal*