Dutch Golden Era • Hungary • Countdown to the Euro

EUROPE

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April 1998

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Ian McEwan
Enduring Love

Jan Morris
50 Years of Europe

Roel Janssen
The Ostrich Code

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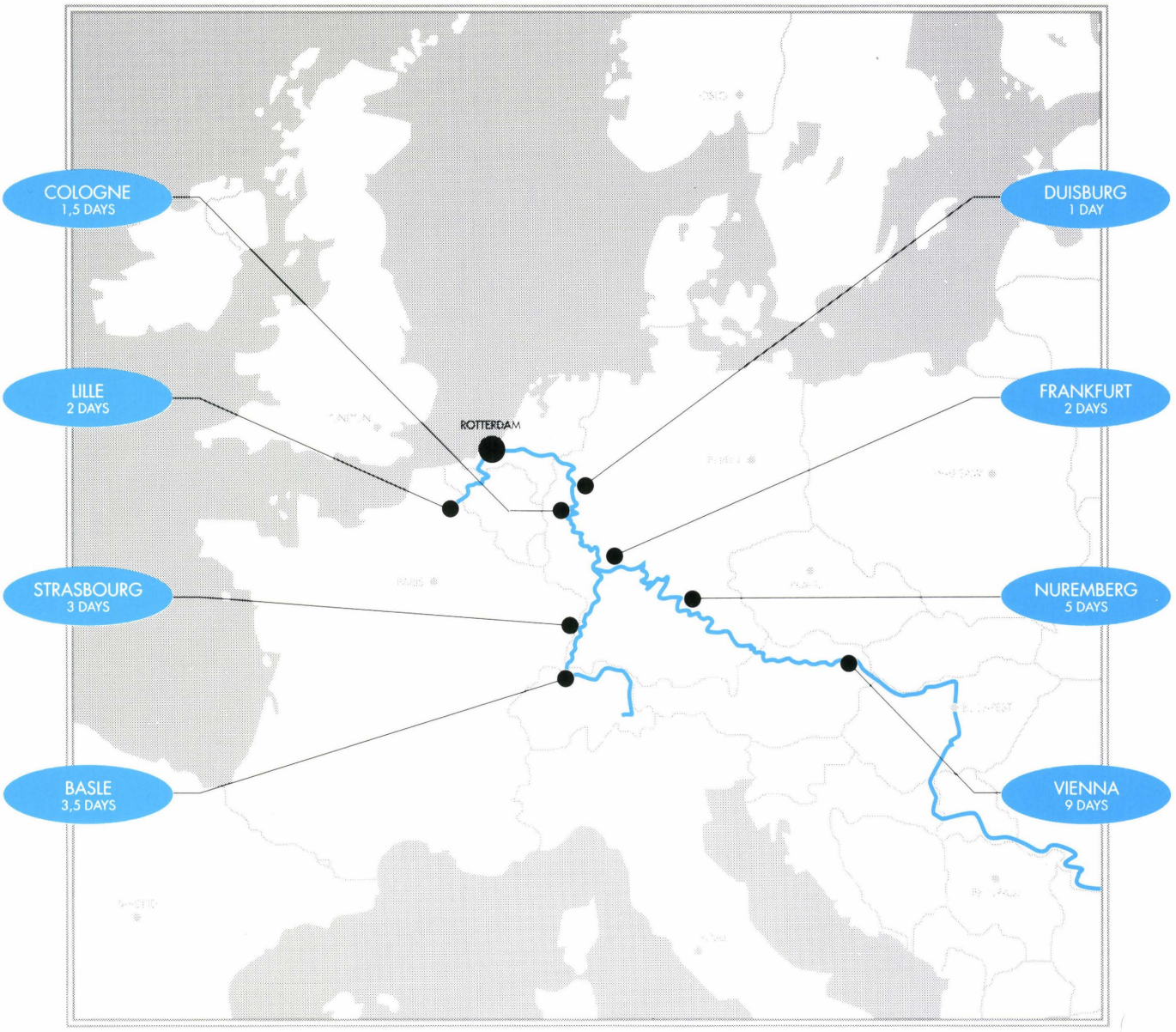

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ROTTERDAM: MAINPORT EUROPE

Port of Rotterdam

ROTTERDAM MAINPORT EUROPE

Rotterdam is the second largest city of the Netherlands and the world's largest port. Every year 35,000 ocean-going ships call at Rotterdam, carrying over a million tons of cargo which can then be swiftly transported to all of Europe.

Western Europe represents a market of almost 350 million consumers, and with the growing economies of Eastern Europe, this market can increase to some 800 million. Rotterdam, of all European ports, offers by far the most extensive and efficient connections to this vast hinterland, making it truly the mainport of Europe. It is, for example, the UK's second largest port and, if one considers the total cargo destined for Germany, Rotterdam is a larger "German" port than all actual German ports combined.

Its hinterland connections, together with the high quality of its services, constitute the key elements to its international success. Of the various modes of transport used—by road, rail, or water—inland shipping and rail shuttles deserve to be singled out as two reliable and ecologically sound options for moving goods throughout Europe.

INLAND SHIPPING

Inland shipping is by far the most important mode of hinterland transport for the port of Rotterdam. Nearly 50 percent of its international cargo is transported by barge. Due to its location on the Rhine, Rotterdam is in a perfect position to make good use of a sophisticated network of waterways linking it to many destinations in Germany, Belgium, France, and Switzerland. Since the opening of the Rhine-Main-Danube canal, which connects Rotterdam with the Black Sea, huge barges can now also sail to Central and Eastern Europe.

Transporting goods by barge is both cost-effective and safe. A 4-barge push unit, used for bulk cargo and containers, has a capacity comparable to 385 trucks, and a roro barge can transport about 600 cars at once.

Port of Rotterdam pilot boats lead the new Maersk Line super container-ship "Regina Maersk" to its port terminal area. Longer than the Eiffel Tower is high, this first of new class of vessel can carry 6000 20 foot-equivalent containers equal to a line of trucks over 22 miles long. It will carry container goods between Western Europe and Southeast Asia.

RAIL SHUTTLES

With European autoroutes reaching near-saturation point, the European Union is actively encouraging the development of rail transport as an environmentally safe way of moving large quantities of cargo quickly over a long distance. Rotterdam is linked by an extensive network of rail shuttles—250 per week—to 26 national and international destinations.

The shuttles depart directly from Rotterdam's two Rail Service Centers, which are situated close to the container terminals to make loading as rapid as possible. Transit times are short, varying from less than 24 hours to destinations in Western Europe to 48 hours for points in Eastern Europe. Rail transport is ideal for a large variety of goods, ranging from bulk parcels like coal and ores to chemicals, cars, and temperature-controlled cargo.

PORT PLAN 2010

For the future, Rotterdam is preparing to retain and strengthen its position as Europe's main port. By 2010, the volume of bulk inland shipping will grow by over 45 percent and inland shipping by container will double or triple in volume. Bulk rail transport is expected to be more than three times greater than at present, while container transport by rail will be as much as four times higher.

The port of Rotterdam will be ready for both. Its expansion plan for the 21st century, Port Plan 2010, includes the creation of additional inland shipping and rail links to the European hinterland. The Betuwe line project between Rotterdam and the German railway network, for example, will create the only European rail link dedicated to freight.

Now and next century, Rotterdam offers exciting international business opportunities in the busiest port and industrial area of the European continent.

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EUROPE

MAGAZINE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION


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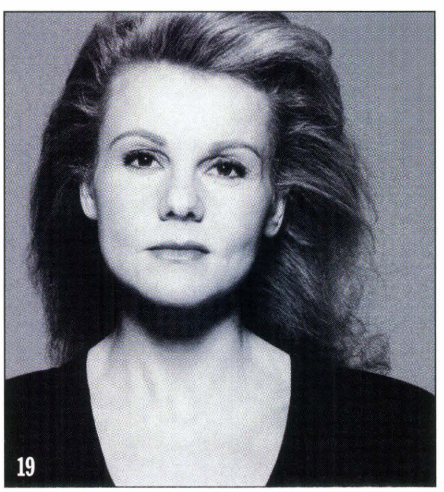
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EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

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BUSINESS

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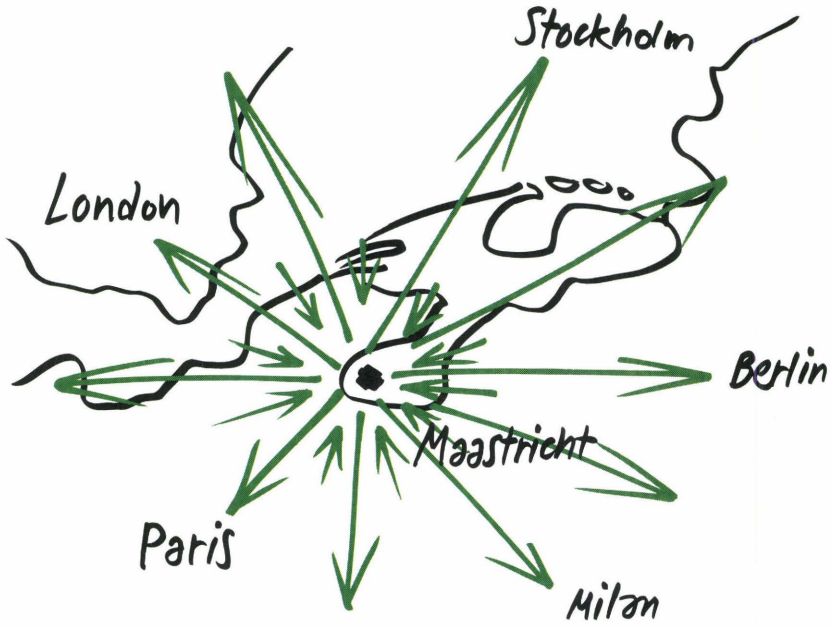
DEPARTMENTS

Calling Europe?



The operator is in Maastricht

In today's Europe, communication has become the key factor in dismantling the barriers to trade between nations. The role of the Dutch, with their European mainport status, has become central in European communications, both internally and overseas.

US companies are familiar with the Netherlands as the gateway to the European market. Its position as the optimal location for central European distribution is well established.

Current developments now point to this country as the preferred site for call center operations too. International access and a multilingual workforce have proved to be the key elements for success in this market.

The Netherlands province of Limburg with its capital, the Treaty City of Maastricht, is well endowed with the resources that guarantee success in this market. It also shares borders with Belgium and Germany and links in to the continental heartland.

Limburg's resources include:

- A multilingual human resource pool of Dutch, French and German speakers, with English as a universal working language
- Additional multilingual resources among a population of 500,000 speakers of Spanish, Italian and other European languages
- The human and intellectual resources provided by five universities with a population of more than 100,000 students
- The logistical flexibility ensured by five international airports, including three express courier hubs, within an hour's drive of Maastricht
- An excellent general logistical infrastructure.

In addition to possessing all the resources necessary for call center operations, Limburg is a good place to work, live and play. Schools, healthcare, housing and business accommodation are in good supply. And the price is right.

If you are calling Europe, call the operator in Maastricht. For information, call Ferdy Bremmer, City of Maastricht on +31(43)350 4042 or Sjoerd Boomsma, Limburg Development Company LIOF on +31 (43)328 0280. P.O. Box 1310, 6201 BH MAASTRICHT, The Netherlands. Email: s.boomsma@liof.nl Internet: www.liof.com

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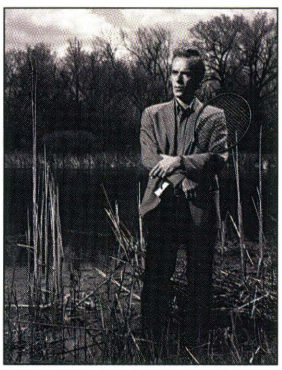
your partner when entering Europe

Letter from the Editor

Did you know that John Grisham, one of America's best-known and best-selling novelists, has a German publisher? Bertelsmann, the German media conglomerate, owns Doubleday, which publishes Grisham and other major American writers. European firms are big players not only in American book publishing but in all sectors of multimedia, from comic books to CDs to movies. Bruce Barnard looks at these European companies, which are "piling into the US publishing industry and increasingly dominating new sectors where American firms once held sway."



Europe by the Book: Many European writers, including British author Martin Amis, have found an American audience.

EUROPE reviews a variety of current best-selling books in the US written by European writers. Sir Martin Gilbert, author of more than sixty books and widely considered the premiere Churchill historian, speaks to *EUROPE* about writing and publishing today and discusses his new book, *A History of the Twentieth Century.* Gilbert declares that today we are living in a "golden age." His comments on this century and his thoughts about why events happened as they did make for some fascinating reading.

"European Union leaders gather in Brussels next month to choose the founder members of economic and monetary union, the most momentous steps since the Treaty of Rome," remarks Lionel Barber as he describes Europe's "mad dash to the new single currency." The May 1–3 meeting in Brussels will determine which EU countries qualify for EMU. Barber discusses the requirements countries must meet to join EMU and looks at how the entire enterprise will work.

Hungary is gearing up for NATO and EU membership. As Barry Wood, who has just returned from three years in Central Europe, states, "Hungary is now firmly anchored in the West and "membership negotiations with the European Union are progressing well."

Nadezhda Mihailova, Bulgaria's foreign minister, tells *EUROPE* that her country hopes to join the EU and NATO in the near future. Her country should be admitted to both organizations, she argues, because "Bulgaria belongs to Europe historically, geographically, politically, and economically."

In his piece "The Postman, the Prince & the Prime Minister," Roel Janssen, our Hague correspondent, reports on the current economic prosperity enjoyed in the Netherlands. Janssen has recently written a best-selling mystery novel with a plot based on the introduction of Europe's single currency. He discusses the experience of writing a book that becomes a bestseller, and our Capitals correspondents profile writers in their respective countries.

Robert J. Guttman

Robert J. Guttman
Editor-in-Chief

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Reuters has contributed to news reports in this issue of *EUROPE.*

EYE ON THE EU

Profiling Personalities and Developments Within the European Union

The three-day EU summit meeting in Brussels on May 1-3 will certainly be the longest, and perhaps also the most momentous, meeting of the EU heads of government since the signing of the Rome Treaty forty-one years ago. The main business to be concluded is to decide which member states will participate in the final stage of economic and monetary union (EMU), beginning on January 1, 1999.

The choice will be made, subject to the recommendations of the European Commission and the Frankfurt-based European Monetary Institute (EMI), which is the forerunner of the projected European Central Bank (ECB). Their views are still awaited, but the general expectation is that eleven of the fifteen member states will qualify. Three others—the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden—would also be eligible, but their governments have chosen to sit it out for at least a few years, while Greece, which would like to join, is at present unable to meet the criteria laid down by the Maastricht Treaty.

There is another, very tricky, issue on the Brussels agenda. This is the appointment of the first president of the ECB, who will have the main responsibility for running EMU and who will, in many respects, be the European equivalent of the American Federal Reserve Board chairman, Alan Greenspan.

Most European governments assumed that the issue was settled back in 1996, when Wim Duisenberg, former Dutch finance minister and later head of the Dutch central bank, was appointed as president of the EMI. The strong presumption was that Duisenberg would automatically carry on as head of the ECB when it replaces the EMI next year.

The three-day EU summit meeting in Brussels on May 1-3 will certainly be the longest, and perhaps also the most momentous, meeting of the EU heads of government since the signing of the Rome Treaty forty-one years ago.

It was therefore a rude shock to the other member states when, last November, French President Jacques Chirac announced another candidate for the post, Jean-Claude Trichet, governor of the Bank of France. There is little difference between the two candidates, both on the question of competence and on the policy views that they hold.

Each of them is given top marks for ability, and both favor highly conservative monetary policies, which would ensure that the new euro would become at least as hard a currency as the German deutschemark. The other member states are aghast at the prospect of having to make a choice between the two contenders, with the risk of upsetting either Chirac or German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (who is a strong backer of Duisenberg) in the process.

Yet neither man looks likely to back down. Chirac followed up his nomination of Trichet by blocking the appointment of a successor to Jacques de Larosière, the head of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), who retired on January 31.

The expectation was that Philippe Maystadt, the highly respected Belgian finance minister, would be designated at the January meeting of EU finance ministers. Yet at the last minute, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the French finance minister, produced a rabbit out of his hat and put forward the candidacy of a little-known head of a French savings bank.

It was hastily agreed to shelve the appointment until May. Nobody believed that the French candidacy was serious. It was intended as a bargaining chip in the larger competition for the ECB presidency, and the nomination will almost certainly be withdrawn when this is settled. In the meantime, the EBRD has to get by without a president for at least three to four months.

President Chirac's action may well be motivated by a belief that France and Germany, as the main architects of EMU, should share the major role in its implementation. The ECB will be based in Germany, so its head should be a Frenchman, he may feel.

Will he get his way? It is unlikely that the summit will choose Trichet over Duisenberg, but the probability is that some sort of compromise will be struck. A surprise third candidate could emerge, though no names have yet been suggested. More on the cards is the prospect of splitting the eight-year term between the two men.

This would involve an undertaking by Duisenberg that he would stand down, probably at the end of 2002, when he will be sixty-seven. He has, so far, strongly resisted this proposal, which has been heavily criticized as undermining the political independence of the ECB president, which the Maastricht Treaty provision of an eight-year term was meant to guarantee. Despite these objections, however, a split term seems the most likely solution to emerge from the Brussels meeting.

—Dick Leonard

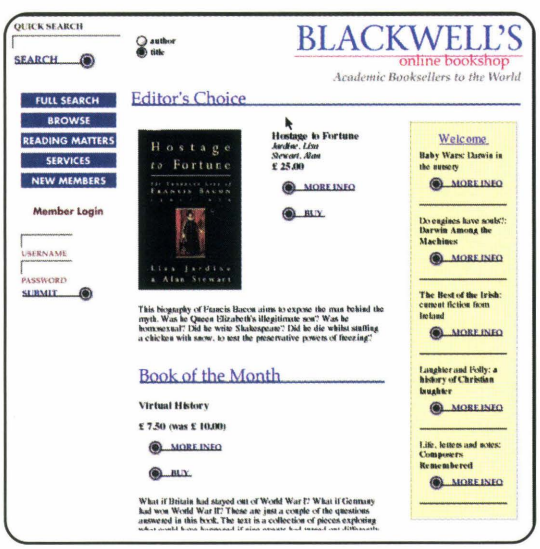
EU ONLINE

BORDERLESS BOOKSTORES

No building will hold a new breed of bookstore that features a million or more titles, discounts, reviews, recommendations, and other reader services. The folks at Amazon.com, a Seattle-based bookseller, are hammering home that point with a massive marketing campaign. But Amazon has some competition as three British bookstores have launched Web sites touting massive numbers of titles along with delivery worldwide.

The Internet Book Shop (www.bookshop.co.uk) includes about 1 million books with each title given a page to display a jacket cover, synopsis, and short biography of the author. Visitors also can find a list of bestsellers in Britain. It claims that many titles, both American and British, are marked 40 percent below retail price. That savings, however, is basically wiped out by the shipping costs to the United States. The company charges 40 percent of a book's price in order to get it to US customers in six to ten days. For those ordering in bulk, about $160 is the maximum delivery charge.

Blackwell's (www.bookshop.blackwell.co.uk), a well-known bookstore based in Oxford, England, has its own Web venture with some 1.5 million titles for sale. It doesn't claim to be a major discounter but includes some interesting services. One feature is a personalized home page in which a customer can reveal certain reading preferences and new offerings in those categories will automatically appear when that customer calls up the site. Or Blackwell's will send similar information by e-mail, if requested. The staff makes reading recommendations and will search for out-of-print books and e-mail customers upon finding the items. Customers also have several delivery options, although none of them are inexpensive. Economy book-buyers can opt for surface delivery—three to five weeks—at a cost of about $5 per book. Shipping by air either costs about $9 per book for six-to-ten-day delivery or about $16 per book for one to two days.



Waterstone's (www.waterstones.co.uk), a UK-based bookstore chain with a few stores in the United States, advertises 20 percent discounts on its list of more than a million titles. It features reviews, which change weekly, of both hardcover and paperback offerings. Its staff will search for out-of-print books. And it includes a literary magazine called *W* as part of the Web site. The magazine portion of the site was under construction on a recent visit, although back copies were accessible. Shipping costs here are either 25 percent of the order, which can arrive as much as three months later, or 55 percent, for five-to-ten-day delivery.

The bottom line for US customers is that if Amazon. com (www.amazon.com) or any other American bookseller has the desired title, it will likely be cheaper than ordering from overseas. With some 2.5 million titles, 20 percent to 40 percent discounts, and shipping costs starting at around $4, Amazon is the obvious starting place. But obscure books published abroad may be absent from Amazon's stock. This is where the overseas bookstores on the Web can find their niche. The extra costs of shipping are not so outrageous when you've saved a transatlantic telephone call.

RACING AROUND THE WORLD

Trying to reach a faraway destination by balloon would be considered anachronistic to most jet age travelers. It is, however, the transportation feat that preoccupies a small group of aerial adventurers. They use science and the latest technology in attempts to do what no one has—balloon nonstop around the world.

The public television series *NOVA* filmed the five groups that have tried to achieve the distinction over the past two winters. Steve Fossett and his balloon, *Solo Spirit*, traveled 7,300 miles from St. Louis before technical problems forced him to land in a small Russian village on the Black Sea. None of the others even came close to circumnavigation. Because the jet stream is much faster in winter months, the groups will wait until later this year for relaunch. In the meantime, those who are curious about ballooning should investigate the *NOVA* Web site (www. pbs.org/wgbn/nova/balloon/) for a fascinating look at this high-altitude recreation.

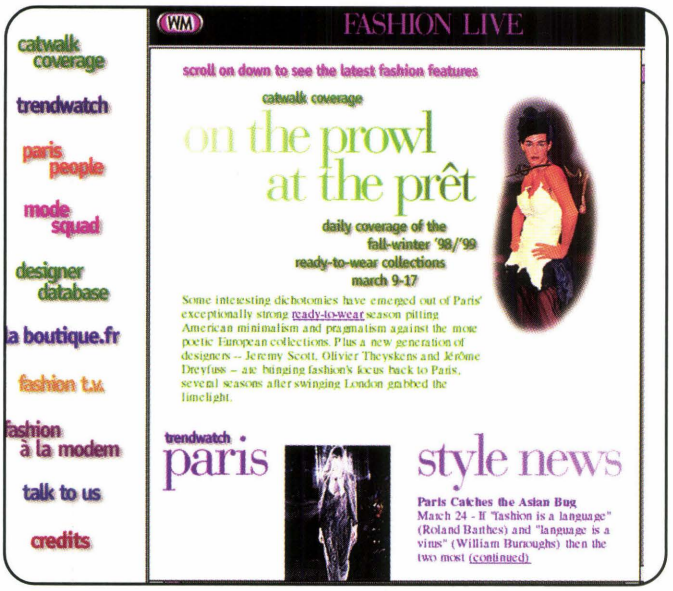
The site includes pages on the five teams taking part in the unofficial competition. Its creators take visitors aboard Baron Hilton's *Global Hilton* craft in an impressive slide show and an interview with the hotel magnate about sailing in the upper atmosphere at close to 300 mph. Richard Branson, Virgin Airways founder and one of the competitors, also sat down with *NOVA* for an interview that gives visitors an understanding of how his crew prepares for a three-week journey aboard a tiny capsule. The interview can be heard on computers that can handle Real Audio technology. Visitors can learn about past flights and find out about technological advances,

namely the Roziere balloon, which can stay afloat for much longer than its earlier incarnations.

The drawback of the site is the lack of information on the flight attempts made in January. *NOVA* stopped updating the site in December, but it provides links to the individual balloon teams for more timely information. Despite that deficiency, the sharp graphics and interviews make the *NOVA* site as close as virtual travelers will come to tagging along for the ride.

SITE OF THE MONTH: FASHION LIVE

Just as the wool sweaters are going back into the cedar chest, the fashion industry is hauling out its fall collections. Ready or not, the Paris runways are filled with next season's



haute couture and ready-to-wear designs. The Fashion Live Web site (www.world-media.fr/fashion/index2.html) gives the style-conscious a seat along the runways and a look back at the fashions designers hoped would be coming out of the closet about now.

Fashion Live covers the shows of nearly fifty designers with snapshots of the new looks, a peek behind the scenes, and a wrap-up of this year's trends. The site also includes bios for each designer and links to previous collections to give a sense of how his or her designs have evolved. A portion of the site called Trendwatch goes out on the streets of Paris to see if any of the runway styles find their way into the wardrobes of workaday Parisians. And Mode Squad includes fashion-related features, such as where the well-dressed eat and where they find vintage clothing.

Fashion Live remains amusing by not getting too wrapped up in the pedantry of fabric and hemlines. Marquis coats and Islamic-inspired veils may never end up in American department stores, but they make for quite a good show. They also make women count their blessings that they are no longer held hostage to style whims of the moment. But anyone who enjoys the spectacle of Paris at its most fashion-conscious should take a look.

—Christina Barron

European Union leaders gather in Brussels next month to choose the founder members of economic and monetary union, the most momentous step in Europe's history since the Treaty of Rome.

It seems virtually certain that eleven countries, including Italy, will qualify for the elite group built around France and Germany. Britain, Denmark, and Sweden are adopting a wait-and-see policy on political grounds, while Greece will be joining sooner rather than later.

Countdown to the EURO

Momentous meeting will choose charter members

BY LIONEL BARBER

Just twelve to eighteen months ago, few would have predicted such an outcome. Spain and Portugal's chances of meeting the entry criteria for EMU looked questionable. Italy's prospects looked even more remote. Even France and Germany were struggling.

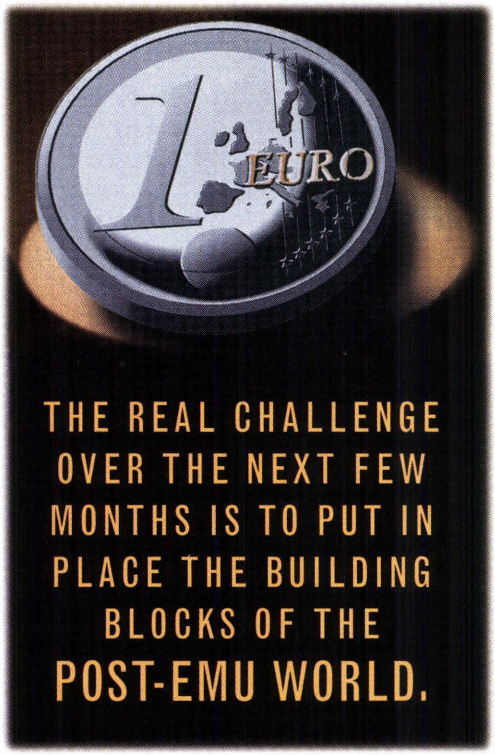
Yet in the last twelve months, all EU governments, especially those in southern Europe, have made a mad dash to the EMU finishing line. They have raised taxes, squeezed public spending, and scoured around for every spare franc, pfennig, and peseta in revenues to hit the Maastricht Treaty's public deficit target of 3 percent of gross domestic product for 1997.

The exercise has been a triumph of political will, especially on the part of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who sees EMU as Europe's (and his own) monument for the twenty-first century. But it has also witnessed a remarkable political and economic transformation, particularly in Italy where Prime Minister Romano Prodi, Treasury Minister Carlo Ciampi, and

Bank of Italy Governor Antonio Fazio have performed heroics.

The question is whether these efforts are sustainable. European governments claim to be reformed characters, but will they avoid temptation once the single European currency—the euro—is formally launched on January 1, 1999? How much are governments relying on one-off measures to meet the EMU entry criteria? Will the enterprise work?

Right now, a tremendous effort is underway to ensure that the EMU selection process is credible—not only in the eyes of a sometimes skeptical public but also in the financial markets, which have so far remained remarkably quiescent as the single currency project has moved from distant dream to imminent reality.



The first decisive event came at the end of March when the European Commission and the European Monetary Institute, the forerunner of the future European Central Bank, published reports on the progress the fifteen EU member states have made toward meeting the five Maastricht criteria for EMU. These are:

- The achievement of price stability: an average rate of inflation that does not exceed by more than 1.5 percent the three best performing member states.
- The observation of "normal" fluctuation margins within the Exchange Rate Mechanism for at least two years without devaluing against the currency of any other member state.
- Interest rate stability: an average rate that is not exceeding by more than 2 percent the three best performing member states.
- The sustainability of public finances: the public deficit should be at or close to 3 percent of GDP unless temporary and exceptional circumstances are prevailing.
- The ratio of debt to GDP should not exceed 60 percent unless the ratio is sufficiently diminishing and approaching the value "at a satisfactory pace."

The Commission will recommend which member states meet the criteria based on its own audit of countries' performances. In Germany, where public opinion is most fragile, Chancellor Kohl has invited the Bundesbank to make its own assessment to reinforce the credibility of the exercise.

Over the next six weeks, national parliaments will debate the recommendations before the fifteen EU heads of government make their formal choice over the weekend of May 1–3.

At the same time, EU leaders will also choose the president of the European Central Bank, the vice-president, and the four other members of the executive board. Along with the finance ministers and national central bank governors, EU leaders will also announce the bilateral exchange rates among currencies in the future euro zone.

The purpose is to minimize exchange rate volatility ahead of the irrevocable fixing of parities when EMU is formally launched on January 1, 1999 and a single monetary policy operates across the euro zone. Euro notes and coins will be introduced between January and June 2002.

So far, so good. But the real challenge over the next few months is to put in place the building blocks of the post-EMU world. This means the successful launch of the new European Central Bank; the maintenance of budgetary discipline through the German-inspired Stability and Growth Pact; the effective coordination of economic policies across the euro zone; and the efficient representation of the EMU bloc in international forums.

New institutions spell a new form of economic governance. In policy terms, the Frankfurt-based European Central Bank will have to decide whether to adopt inflation or monetary targets or a combination of both. But in practical terms, the challenge will be to establish the credibility of the new currency and the new institution with resources that will initially fall short of national central banks.

As Peter Ludlow, head of the Brussels-based Center for European Policy Studies, wrote in his most recent report: "The real problems may arise lower down as the ECB attempts to develop an EMU-wide perspective on monetary policy with a central staff that will almost certainly not exceed 500 on January 1, 1999."

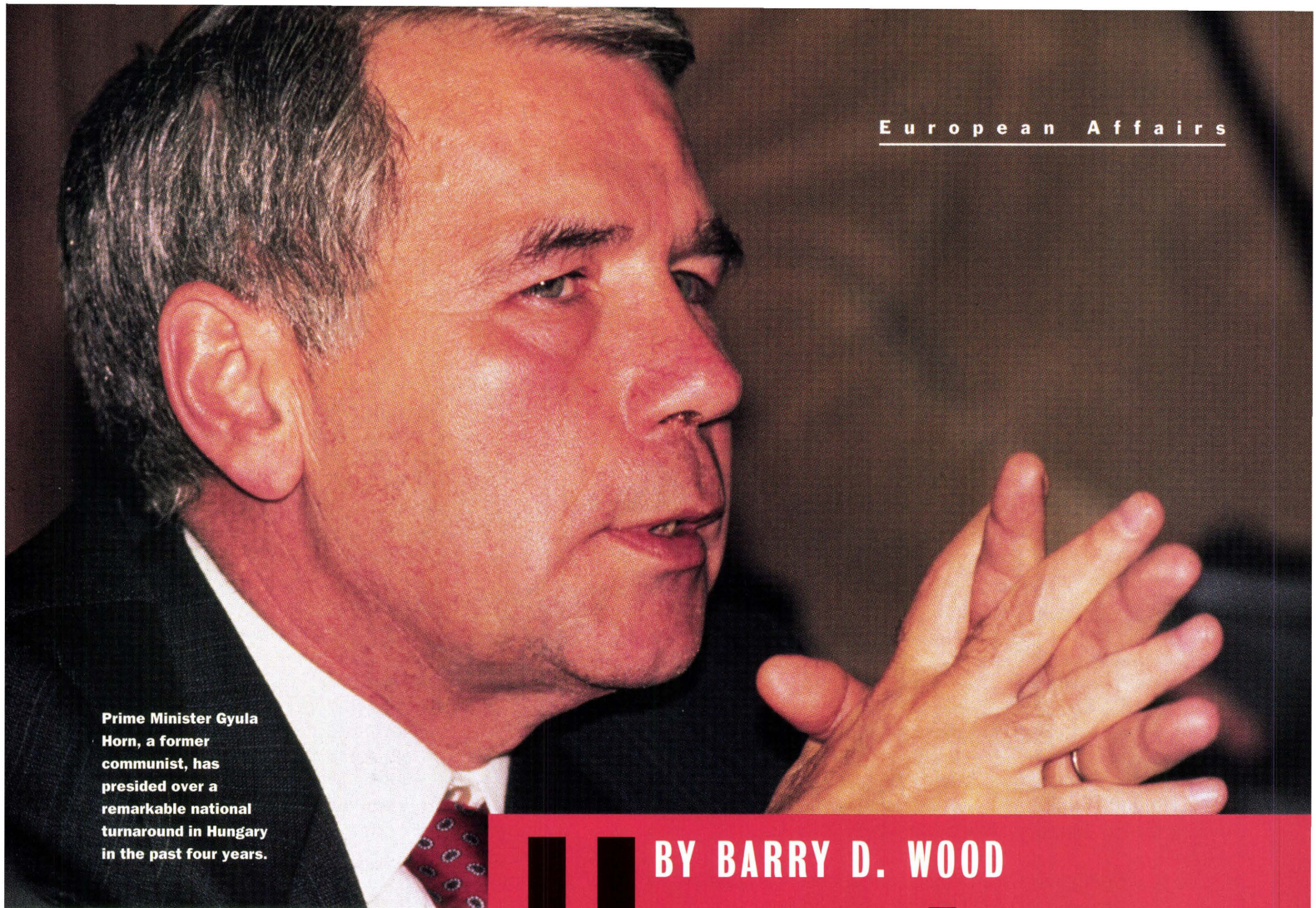
Second, economic management in the euro zone will depend on coordination in established forums, such as the Ecofin meetings of EU finance ministers, but also on the new body known as the Euro-X club. This is the Brussels code word for informal gatherings of EMU members that will not only deal with short-term economic shocks but could also evolve into an important forum for deeper cooperation.

Third, the EMU group will have to settle the issue of external representation if the euro zone is to speak with the authority that its economic weight deserves. The ECB president will have an important voice in the G7 and the International Monetary Fund; but the political representation remains open, though France is exploring the possibility of a permanent chairman of the Euro-X club.

Finally, EMU must earn credibility in the eyes of the ordinary citizen. This will not be easy. Many analysts say that monetary union has been a project of the political elite, a device to curb the hegemony of the D-mark and to unify Europe.

The gestation of the single currency has been painful. In the popular mind, is has become associated with low growth, budget austerity, and high unemployment. Now comes the hard part. E

Lionel Barber is a EUROPE *contributing editor and the* Financial Times' *Brussels bureau chief.*



Prime Minister Gyula Horn, a former communist, has presided over a remarkable national turnaround in Hungary in the past four years.

BY BARRY D. WOOD

Hungary

Firmly anchored in the West, looking toward NATO and EU membership

On the surface Hungary is doing fine, far better than at any time since 1989. NATO membership, overwhelmingly approved in a November referendum, is only a year away. EU membership is moving forward and should be a reality by 2002. After years of stagnation, the economy is booming with 4.5 percent growth expected this year. The Hungarian stock market has been among the best-performing in all of Europe. Friendship treaties with neighboring Romania and Slovakia have resolved long-festering bilateral problems. There have been eight years of post-communist political stability. This, it would seem, would be the perfect environment for Hungary's Socialist-led government to seek a fresh electoral mandate in May.

And yet, this is Hungary, where brooding and personal dissatisfaction are well ingrained national traits. While sixty-five-year-old prime minister Gyula Horn has in the past four years presided over a remarkable national turnaround, few Hungarians hold the former communist in high regard. The Socialists, with a modest outright majority in the outgoing parliament, have governed with the Free Democrats, collectively accounting for more than 70 percent of parliamentary seats. While it had seemed certain that the coalition would cruise to victory in the May 10th and 24th elections, recent surveys suggest that this might not be the case. A Gallup poll in February showed the conservative opposition Young Democrats to be almost as popular as the Socialists while the Free Democrats were said to have declined to only 6 percent popularity. Further, an unexpected dispute over resolving a controversial Danube River dam project with Slovakia has divided the coalition. In late February the Socialists did an about face and suggested they would support building a $2 billion dam they once vigorously opposed.

Few travelers to Central Europe fail to be impressed with Budapest and the

rest of Hungary. Budapest has a well deserved reputation for charm, cuisine, hospitality, and even elegance. Tourists throng the riverfront hotels—among the finest in Europe—and crowd the Danube River embankment with its magnificent views of the Buda hills across the wide and busy river. But walk ten blocks deeper into the city, and there is evidence of the poverty and income disparities that have created considerable social tension. The average Hungarian still earns only $350 per month. One Hungarian economist observes, "We are a deeply divided society. There are rich and poor with few in the middle. Our transition is mostly over, but there are far more losers than winners." Gangland murders are not uncommon. Corruption is a huge problem. The press has run recurrent stories about Ukrainian and Russian Mafias. In late 1996 public outrage that the privatization agency had paid a local lawyer a $5 million "success fee" for restructuring debt liabilities led to the ouster of the agency's entire senior staff and privatization minister.

It is in foreign policy that Hungary's successes loom largest. Prime Minister Horn in late 1995 adroitly and successfully promoted southern Hungary as the logistics base for NATO's operation in Bosnia. With American troops now well established at the former Soviet air base at Taszar, Hungary's military won applause in the West for its professionalism and reliability. Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs credits NATO's impending enlargement with "extending the zone of security from West to East." The new members (Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic), he says, will project that stability still further East. Mr. Kovac says it was the prospect of NATO membership that spurred Hungary's "historic reconciliation and strategic partnership with Romania."

Likewise, membership negotiations with the European Union are progressing well. Hungary's recent record of fiscal rectitude has impressed Brussels. Hungarian trade is now predominantly with the West, with the EU accounting for 63 percent of exports and 60 percent of Hungarian imports. Germany and Austria are by far Hungary's biggest trading partners. As with Poland, agriculture is likely to be the stickiest sector for making Hungarian statutes EU compatible. Hungary's large agricultural sector is skeptical about EU integration, and farmers continue to oppose a law that would permit foreign businesses to own Hungarian land. The farmers fear an influx of German and Austrian ownership attracted by fertile land 90 percent cheaper than in the EU.

Foreign investors in the industrial sector have already made their investment decisions on the basis of Hungary's impending EU membership. With a small domestic market of only 10 million, the avalanche of investments—some $17 billion—by the likes of GE, Phillips, IBM, General Motors, Opel, and Suzuki have been predicated on using Hungary as a low-cost platform for export, mostly to the West. Hungary has attracted more foreign investment than any other post-communist economy. Likewise, multinationals account for a higher percentage of economic activity in Hungary than anywhere else in the East. They account for most economic growth and just three companies—TDK, Philips, and IBM—account for a fifth of Hungary's total exports.

After communism collapsed, Ikarus bus sales plummeted, but the company is making a comeback.

Hungary is not without problems. Its population has declined every year since 1981. Despite economic improvement, its inflation (18 percent) remains much too high. But progress now seems steady. Only 210 companies remain in the public sector (compared to 1,900 eight years ago), and the privatization will be complete by the end of this year. Not bad for a country that only three years ago had a huge foreign debt and was thought to be the next Mexico in need of a Western bailout.

Barry D. Wood recently returned to Washington from three years of reporting from Central Europe.

Will Ikarus Fly Again?

It's been a long hard fall for Ikarus, once the flagship industry of communist Hungary and the world's largest bus manufacturer. Founded in 1895 by a Budapest blacksmith, Ikarus produced buses and even airplane bodies before being nationalized in 1947. In its 1980s heyday, Ikarus plants in Budapest and Szekesfehhervar cranked out 13,000 of the spartan but durable buses each year. In the socialist division of labor, the Hungarians held the franchise for city buses. The boxy Ikarus diesels belched smoke from Karl Marx Stadt to Berlin, Prague, Kiev, Moscow, and all the way across the old Soviet Union. Ninety percent of sales were in the East Bloc.

In Greek mythology Ikarus fell to earth after his waxed wings melted when he flew too close to the sun. In Hungary, Ikarus fell when communism collapsed. Production slid steadily after 1989 and totaled only 800 buses in 1996. Even though the work force fell by nearly two-thirds to less than 5,000, debts exploded as the government sought ways to dispose of Ikarus while keeping it alive. There were false starts in privatization. The big Western bus manufacturers came to kick the tires but didn't bid. They weren't necessarily welcome in Budapest as it was assumed that Volvo or Mannesman would buy Ikarus only to close it to eliminate competition.

Russian investors, drooling at the vast replacement market in the former Soviet Union, got a 30 percent stake in Ikarus in 1991. But real privatization is occurring only now. In March, the privatization agency and a group of Hungarian investors signed an agreement for the government's 53 percent stake for a token payment of $50,000 with the condition that it will assume the company's $38 million debt. New Ikarus CEO Gabor Szeles, a respected entrepreneur who heads the investor group, says the World Bank's IFC may invest $19 million in product development. Szeles believes Ikarus is a turnaround story in the making.

If he is right, Ikarus could fly again.

—Barry D. Wood

Bulgaria

Foreign minister declares her country belongs with Europe

BY ROBERT J. GUTTMAN

"The fact that we lived through forty-five years of a communist dictatorship doesn't make Bulgarians less European than the French or the Germans," exclaims Nadezhda Mihailova, Bulgaria's dynamic thirty-six-year-old foreign minister.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (center) met with Bulgarian foreign minister Nadezhda Mihailova (right) recently at the NATO and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in Portugal.

On a recent visit to the United States, Mihailova explained the reasons why her country has made joining NATO and the EU the two top foreign policy objectives of the new Bulgarian government. "Bulgaria belongs to Europe not only historically and geographically, but [it] belongs to Europe also politically and economically. We would take our membership in the European Union as a partnership and not as a favor from the European Union. Bulgaria could bring many positive things to the EU. Bulgaria has a very keen crossroads position on the Balkan peninsula. This is the door to the East. Today, our crossroads position is our main advantage."

Mihailova is not your average government official from the former East Bloc. Since graduating with a Master's degree in literature from St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia, she has worked as a freelance journalist, as a Bulgarian translator of Spanish poetry and English literature, and in numerous political posts, including serving as a member of Bulgaria's parliament since 1994. Along the way, she has published three books, studied at Harvard, attended a BBC course, and worked on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Although Bulgaria was not invited to join in the first wave of future EU applicants, the country is on an economic upswing. Petar Stoyanov, the president of Bulgaria whose anti-communist Union of Democratic Forces coalition came into power last April, says, "For the first time since the end of the cold war, life is predictable. The national currency has stabilized. Monthly inflation has dropped to around 1 percent."

This progress has not gone unnoticed in the rest of Europe, as a recent article in London's *Financial Times* noted: "Bulgaria's Lazarus-like recovery from what a year ago seemed like impending economic collapse has paved the way for serious talks with international financial institutions to back a three-year recovery and restructuring program."

As foreign minister, Mihailova spreads the word that Bulgaria is a European nation and is committed to joining the European Union. "Even though we are a very small piece on the map of Europe, we are an important one," she says. "I'm sure that the financial stabilization of our country will open a lot of new possibilities for Bulgaria and will be very important for our future membership in the European Union. Financial stabilization combined with reform in agriculture, in privatization, structural reform, and the fighting of crime and corruption are important steps toward our goal of becoming a member of the European Union. We are all working very hard on the preparation of Bulgaria for becoming a member of the EU."

The reform process, she says, "has been speeded up and become real to the people. They now have the self-confidence of belonging to Europe, which is very important."

When asked if Bulgaria would prefer to join the EU or NATO first, Ms. Mihailova responds that "this is two sides of the same coin. You can't have successful reforms without security and stability. We need to become members of NATO in order to guarantee the stability and security of this region of Europe." She also points out that her country is initiating new programs to promote regional cooperation. "Bulgaria recognizes the importance of regional cooperation. This is an important step toward NATO integration."

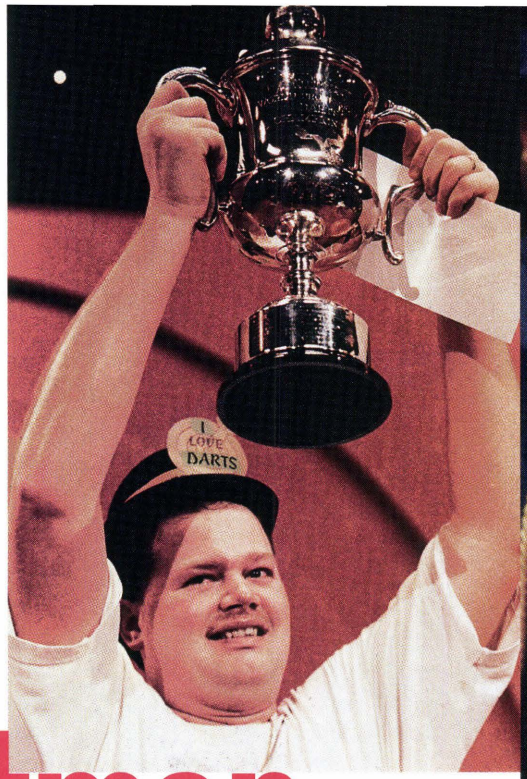
Moreover, Bulgarian President Stoyanov has been quoted as saying, "Our wish to join NATO is not only a matter of fashionable infatuation but a choice based on Bulgaria's contribution to world civilization during our 1,300-year history."

When asked how Bulgaria's former Warsaw Pact ally Russia would react to Bulgarian membership in NATO, Mihailova refers to a recent meeting in Moscow with her Russian counterpart, Yevgeny Primakov. "We do not share the same vision about NATO, but the Russian foreign minister said that Russia will respect the sovereign choice of the Bulgarian people concerning NATO."

With regard to the new European single currency, Mihailova states, "We do support the euro. Eight months ago in Bulgaria we introduced a currency board. The Bulgarian national currency was linked to the German mark. This will help us in our financial stabilization of the country and make a significant step toward the economy of Europe." She says that Bulgaria will be ready to join EMU and will meet all the requirements for the single currency when it becomes a member of the European Union.

While it seems as if it would be difficult for a small nation that had suffered under communism for almost half a century and is located on the periphery of the European continent to bring attention to itself, Mihailova remarks that "former secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger has said that Bulgaria is the best kept secret in Europe. Maybe, this is the time for opening this secret to the world." E

Robert J. Guttman is EUROPE*'s editor-in-chief.*



By Roel Janssen

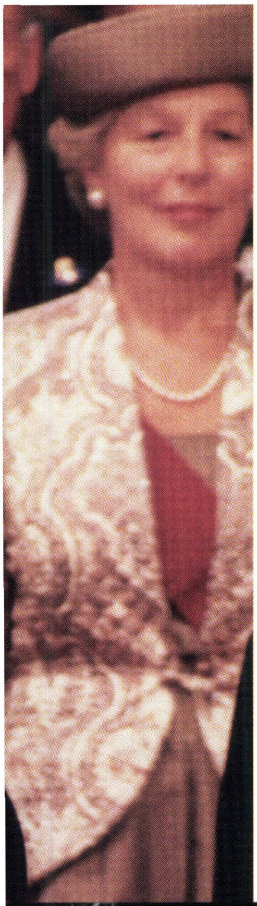
The Postman, The Prince & The Prime Minister

Wim Kok is not a man given to expressions of exuberance. But as the Netherlands' fifty-nine-year-old prime minister assesses the past four years of his government and looks toward the parliamentary elections of May 6, he should feel satisfied. He is by far the most popular and trusted leader of the nation; he will probably return as prime minister of the next cabinet; and he can boast some extraordinary economic and financial achievements during his first term as head of the Dutch government.

Last year, about 200,000 new jobs were created (in a population of 16 million inhabitants), making the Netherlands the fastest-growing job producer in the European Union. Where France and Germany are struggling with stubbornly high unemployment, the Dutch "polder model" is attracting wide attention. With sound budget policies, the Netherlands also easily fulfills the criteria for admission to economic and monetary union, the qualifying EU countries of which will be decided just three days before the national elections. It looks almost certain that the present coalition will continue to govern the Netherlands for the next four years under Wim Kok's leadership.

Four years ago, the elections brought about an historic political shift. Until the 1994 elections, the Christian Democrats had dominated Dutch governments since the beginning of the twentieth century. But after a disastrous campaign and open fighting between their leaders, they lost their perennial grip on political power. For the first time since 1913, a coalition government without Christian Democrats was formed. Wim Kok, a former trade union leader turned leader of the social democratic party PvdA, became prime minister.

His three-party coalition consisted of PvdA, the free market VVD, and the liberal D66. Traditional differences on social security and economic policies between the three were shoved aside. The combination of labor and capital, known by their traditional colors red and blue, was dubbed the "purple coalition."



The Postman: Ray Barneveld (left) is the world darts champion. The Prince: Willem Alexander (center) is to marry a commoner.

By and large, the government has fulfilled its economic agenda. Market liberalization—the introduction of more flexibility in the labor market and of more competition in traditionally closed sectors of the economy—has been pushed through. Government, labor unions, and employer organizations agreed on changes in the institutional arrangements of the social security system. Long considered to have one of the most generous welfare states in the world, the Dutch began privatizing parts of the social security system and tightening the rules of state benefits. Actual benefits were not lowered but were made harder to get.

"Work, work, work" and "a shift from public to private responsibility" were the slogans offered in support of the government's plan. The result has been a massive inflow of people into the labor market. Initially most of the new workers were young, first-time entrants and women who were returning to work, but gradually the numbers began to include many from the vast pool of unemployed recipients of social security. Youth unemployment has been declared nonexistent.

The Prime Minister: Wim Kok has helped lead his nation to its current prosperity.

In part, employment creation has been helped by facilitating part-time working, flexibility in working hours, liberalization of shopping hours, deregulation of labor markets, and government-subsidized jobs for long-term unemployed. The result has been that people are moving out of welfare dependency and becoming wage earners.

Booming employment and record profits for the private sector have raised the tax income for the government. This windfall enabled the government to almost double the amount of tax reduction that it promised in 1994. At the same time, the finance minister, Gerrit Zalm of the VVD, has managed to push down the government deficit to its lowest level in twenty-five years. A balanced budget, like in the US, is in sight before the turn of the century.

Such is the influx of tax money that the government is actually starting a savings fund for future pension obligations, anticipating the demographic shift in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Another main area of political action has been the improvement of the nation's infrastructure. The entire country, it seems, has become a building site. Public infrastructure works are taking place on long-neglected parts of the highway system in hopes of alleviating ever increasing traffic congestion, which has come as a consequence of increased mobility, leisure time, and money to spend. The railway system is also being upgraded, and Schiphol airport is being expanded, though at the same time discussions about the location of a future new airport are starting.

This year, the Netherlands celebrates the 350th anniversary of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) that gave formal recognition to the "Republic of the seven united provinces" after the struggle for independence from Hapsburgian Spain. It was the beginning of what became known as the Dutch golden age. It was a time of flourishing trade, thriving industries, global expansion, financial strength, and cultural expression and was documented in the works of Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Frans Hals.

Today, the Netherlands may be on the brink of a new golden age. There is confidence among the political class; there is broad consensus on the nation's direction for the years to come. The population at large is enjoying increased purchasing power. Cultural life is blooming. Dutch authors like Harry Mulisch and Margriet de Moor are being read in large numbers elsewhere in Europe and in the US. In sports, Dutch athletes are doing extremely well—and not just in soccer or speed skating. The world darts championship, to name an odd case, was recently won by a Dutch postman.

In the corporate arena, the Dutch financial sector is among the strongest in the world with giants like ABN Amro, ING Barings, and Rabo. The Netherlands also boasts some heavyweight global companies. Shell and Unilever are half Dutch, and Philips seems to have found its way to recovery again. The Dutch have also discovered a new major export in television productions, which is reflected by the growing number of studios in Aalsmeer.

Politically, there are no major divisions. It is likely that the present three-party coalition will return after the May elections and the Christian Democrats will continue in opposition. As the junior government party, D66 is predicted to lose considerably. There will be a close struggle between PvdA and VVD for becoming the largest party in parliament. That means that the elections will be contested between their two party leaders, Wim Kok of the PvdA and Frits Bolkestein of the VVD. While Kok has the benefit of his status as a nationally respected politician above petty party interests, Bolkestein enjoys a man-of-the-people image.

Queen Beatrix just celebrated her sixtieth birthday and rumors abound that her oldest son, the crown prince Willem Alexander, may marry a commoner sometime in the near future, but without much of the secrecy, hype, and scandals that have accompanied the British royal family. The House of Orange depicts a strong sense of forward-looking pragmatism that is both appreciated by the population and effective in maintaining the traditions of the monarchy in modern times. In fact, this description may serve as an appropriate metaphor for the entire country: pragmatic, forward-looking, self-confident. At the dawn of a new age in Europe and beyond, times are good for the Netherlands. E

Roel Janssen, based in the Hague, is EUROPE*'s Netherlands correspondent and a finance correspondent for the* NRC Handelsblad.

MULTIMEDIA MADNESS

EUROPEANS SCORING BIG IN US MARKET

BY BRUCE BARNARD

Polygram, a unit of the Dutch conglomerate Philips, recently produced the blockbuster movie *The Game* starring Michael Douglas. The company is one of a number of European companies competing for a share of the US's multimedia market.

Europeans are piling into the US publishing industry, counting some of the country's biggest selling and most enduring authors on their lists, and increasingly dominating new sectors where American firms once held sway.

German publishing powerhouse Bertelsmann offered spectacular evidence of this trend when it announced a deal to purchase vaunted New York publisher Random House from S.I. Newhouse.

Random House is not Bertelsmann's first American acquisition. The German conglomerate also owns Doubleday, which features one of the world's biggest selling novelists, John Grisham, and Bantam Books, which has published non-fiction bestsellers like Jerry Seinfeld's *Seinlanguage.* Another German publishing conglomerate with holdings in the US is the Holtzbrinck family, which owns Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Henry Holt, and St. Martin's Press.

Harper Collins, founded in New York City in 1817, seems quintessentially American. But, in fact, it is a unit of News Corp, the giant media empire controlled by Rupert Murdoch whose power derived from London's Fleet Street, the former home of Britain's national newspaper industry.

European firms are still keen to expand across the Atlantic despite a stagnant US market in 1997 that included a 7 percent fall in sales of adult hardbacks, the third year of declining sales for this key sector.

Bertelsmann and Pearson, the British group, were hotly tipped to be among the bidders willing to pay up to $4 billion for Simon & Schuster, the leading US educational publisher put on the block by Viacom Inc.

European firms have also built up an unassailable lead in the US market for professional information, archives, and databases. Reed Elsevier, an Anglo-Dutch publishing group, runs a data warehouse that includes the text and images of more than 5 million patents filed with the US Patent Office since 1975.

Meanwhile the slightly genteel world of book selling in Europe is bracing for the invasion of aggressive US firms like Barnes & Noble, Borders, and Amazon, the pioneer of selling books on the Internet.

Europeans are moving into the United States for a simple reason: It's the world's biggest single language market. And publishing is just part of a giant multimedia sector that spans everything from comic books and music CDs to movies, novels, and interactive videos.

The foreign companies that are big in US publishing are also big in other parts of the mass communication market. Bertelsmann controls one of the top US record labels, BMG, and its main rivals are European firms such as PolyGram, a unit of Philips, the Dutch consumer electronics giant, and EMI, Britain's top record company.

Europeans have also broken into the alien world of US television. Pearson, the British publisher of the *Financial Times* and owner of Penguin Books, controls All American Communications, the company that makes *Baywatch.*

Hollywood is still off-limits for the Europeans, but the lure remains despite the fiasco of French bank Crédit Lyonnais's troubled ownership of MGM. PolyGram, spurred by the global success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral,* still dreams of becoming a major Hollywood studio. Rupert Murdoch, now a US citizen, has been vindicated by the success of the Fox television network and 20th Century Fox's share in *Titanic,* now the world's biggest grossing movie.

Book publishing may be less glamorous than movie making, but the payoffs from hit novels can be equally lucrative. Bertelsmann is keen to expand in publishing even as rivals scale back and has recently appointed Erik Engstrom, a thirty-four-year-old business whiz kid, to run Bantam Doubleday Dell.

Reed Elsevier has just sold its consumer magazine division IPC for the equivalent of $1.44 billion to concentrate on its increasingly US-based information activities.

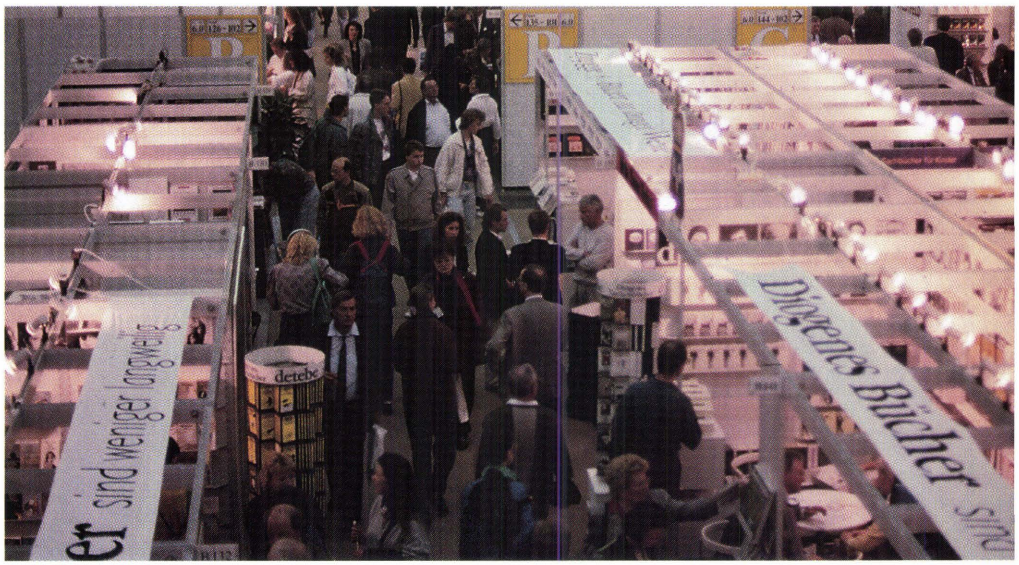
But for most media behemoths, books will always be a minor activity. They accounted for only around 7 percent of News Corp's 1997 revenues.

The Europeans have bought their way into the US electronic publishing market, shedding conventional assets back home to finance their spending sprees. Reed Elsevier, forged by a $1.6 billion Anglo-Dutch merger in 1993, beat off the competition three years ago with a $1.7 billion purchase of Lexis-Nexis, a leading provider of on-line legal information. But it was outbid by a Dutch rival Wolters Kluwer in 1995 for $2.4 billion purchase of US tax specialist CCH.

The two rivals tried to join forces but dropped the $33 billion deal in March in the face of objections from European Commission anti-trust officials. These former book and magazine publishers have successfully made the transition from paper to electronic delivery of academic, business, tax, accountancy, and dictionary publications.

Smaller firms also are making their fortunes in the US. Maid, a British-based on-line information company,

This year the Frankfurt Book Fair attracted some 9,857 companies showing a staggering 306,000 titles of which 80,000 were new publications.



EUROPEANS ARE MOVING INTO THE UNITED STATES FOR A SIMPLE REASON: IT'S THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SINGLE LANGUAGE MARKET.

European Publishers in the US

Company	Country	Top US Holdings
Bertelsmann	Germany	Bantam Doubleday Dell Doubleday Direct Random House*
Holtzbrinck	Germany	St. Martin's Henry Holt Farrar Straus & Giroux
Lagardére Groupe	France	Grolier
Pearson	UK	Addison-Wesley Penguin/Putnam
Reed Elsevier	UK/ Netherlands	Rigby Martindale-Hubbell Butterworth-Heinemann Greenwood-Heinemann
Safra Group	Switzerland	Encyclopedia Britannica Merriam-Webster
Wolters Kluwer	Netherlands	Lippincott/Raven CCH Little Brown Professional

*Deal pending

paid $420 million last year for the much larger, Miami-based Knight Ridder Information to become the world's largest player in this fast-growing sector.

Some firms have been burned in the US. Pearson took a $160 million hit last year from accounting errors at its Penguin Books unit, and Reed Elsevier is to offer more than $300 million to companies that advertised in its hotel and airline directories to compensate for overinflated circulation figures.

Some European media magnates, such as Silvio Berlusconi, the former Italian prime minister, and Leo Kirch, the Bavarian tycoon, are too busy sewing up their domestic digital and pay television and video markets to chance their luck in the overcrowded US.

Meanwhile, cross-border publishing ventures are hampered by Europe's linguistic and cultural differences.

Europe's publishing industry, however, continues to defy the pundits who regularly forecast its decline as books are buried by the all conquering electronic media. The Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's largest, attracted a record attendance last October with 9,857 companies showing off a staggering 306,000 titles, 80,000 of them new publications. Blockbusters, often published by American houses, still grab the most attention, but the thousands of smaller European publishers continue to beat the odds to remain in business.

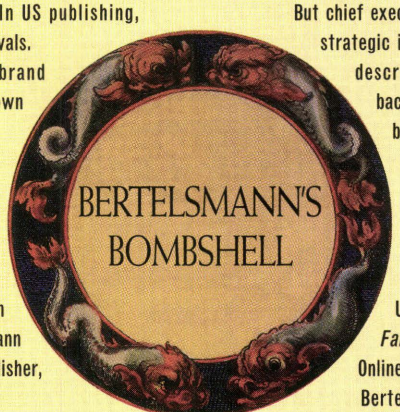
While European book publishers move into the US, American booksellers are moving into Europe. Borders, the Michigan based group, plans to open its first British branch in London's Oxford Street this summer. It will be the largest bookshop built in Britain for fifty years and follows Borders' $64 million acquisition last year of the British Book Etc. chain.

Barnes & Noble dropped plans for its own chain in Britain and is looking for acquisitions of joint ventures as well as setting up a distribution center for its on-line retail operation.

Amazon, which supplies foreign customers from its headquarters in Seattle, is mulling a presence in Britain to spearhead a sales drive into continental Europe.

The publishing industry is heading for massive change, but it seems to be a win-win situation for authors and their readers.

Bruce Barnard is a EUROPE *contributing editor and a correspondent for the* Journal of Commerce.



The bombshell announcement by the German publisher Bertelsmann AG that it had acquired Random House Inc., the biggest US publisher of general interest books, ratcheted up Europe's challenge to America's dominance of the global media industry.

The acquisition catapulted Bertelsmann to third ranking in the world media league behind Time Warner Inc. and Walt Disney Co. In US publishing, Bertelsmann will be more than twice the size of its nearest rivals.

While the two American firms boast immediate brand recognition around the world, Bertelsmann is hardly known outside its home country.

That could soon change. Random House operations, which includes Knopf, Fodor's Travel Guides and Crown and Ballantine, will be merged with Bertelsmann's other US unit Bantam Doubleday Dell.

The takeover will bring best-selling authors such as Michael Crichton, Toni Morrison, Gore Vidal, and Norman Mailer under Bertelsmann's wing. It will also allow Bertelsmann to claim the title of the world's biggest English language publisher, overtaking Penguin Books, owned by Britain's Pearson Group.

Bertelsmann is an unlikely titleholder. Based in the small north German town of Guetersloh, it was founded by Carl Bertelsmann in 1835 as a publisher of hymns.

Today, Bertelsmann remains a private company, with 60,000 employees in 50 countries, making a profit of $560 million on sales of $12.3 billion in 1997.

Today, Reinhard Mohn, the seventy-five-year-old great-grandson of the founder, controls the company. He rebuilt the company after the Second World War selling subscriptions door-to-door to create a German book club with nearly 5 million members. Unlike flamboyant media barons such as Italy's Silvio Berlusconi and Rupert Murdoch, Mr. Mohn leads a modest existence including early morning bicycle rides.

Bertelsmann's enthusiasm for the printed word at a time when other media companies are obsessed with digital television and multimedia services puzzles some industry watchers.

But chief executive designate Thomas Middelhoff has stressed the "vital strategic importance" of the books division to Bertelsmann. He also described it as "our most important cash cow." Against this backdrop, the acquisition of Random House for an estimated $1.2 billion-$1.4 billion makes good sense.

Bertelsmann currently generates around a third of its revenues in the US and is shooting for more than 40 percent. It recently set up BooksOnline to sell books over the Internet.

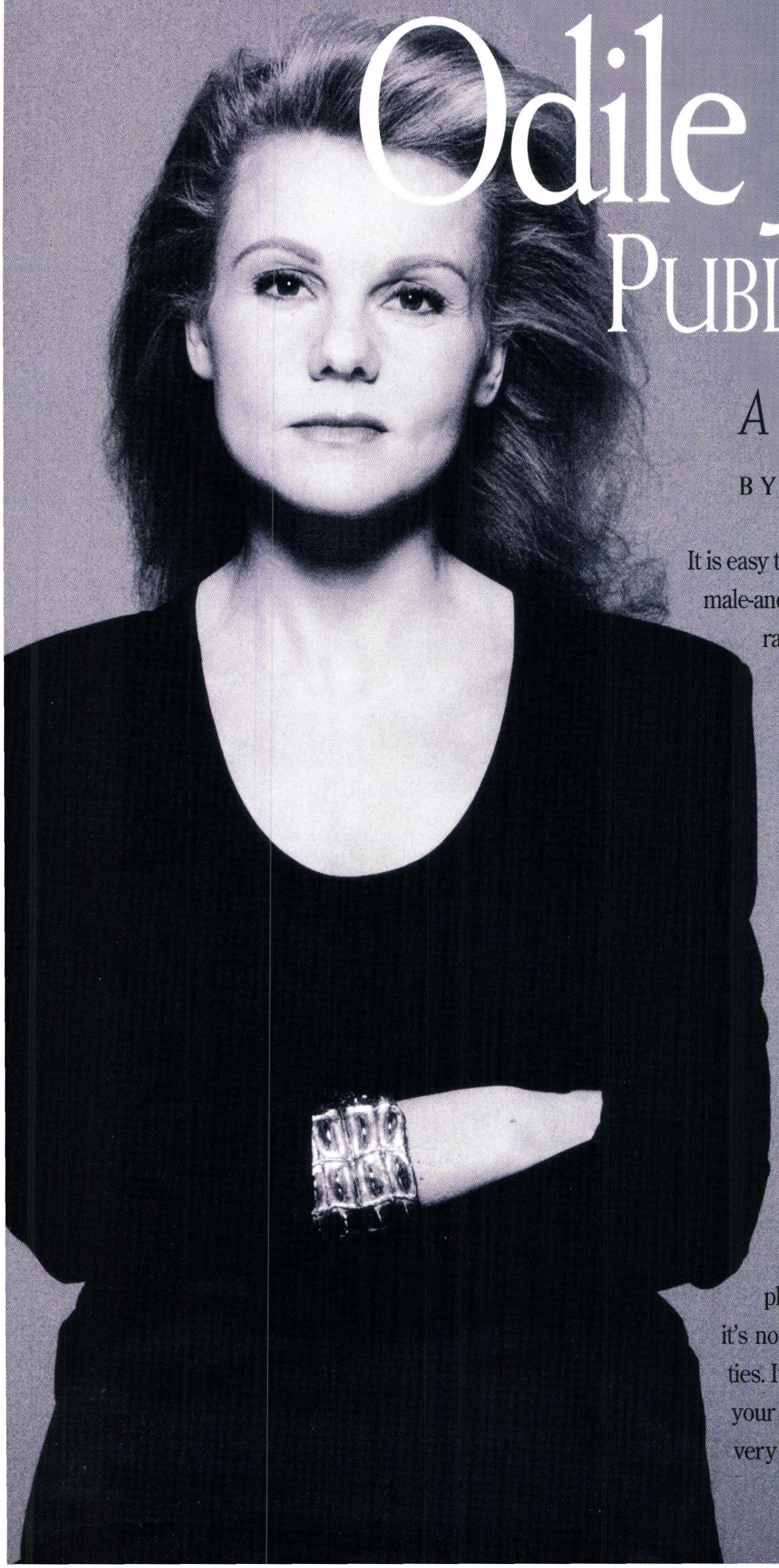
But Bertelsmann is more than just books. It owns several US record labels, including RCA and Arista, magazines such as *Family Circle* and *McCalls*, has a 5 percent stake in America Online and is seeking a way into US television.

Bertelsmann's German interests include RTL, Europe's biggest television network, and it is a major force in British publishing.

Bertelsmann's acquisition of Random House doesn't signal the end of the European invasion of US publishing. Pearson of Britain is a frontrunner in the multi-billion dollar battle to acquire Simon and Schuster, the publishing arm of Viacom Inc., and Reed Elsevier was tipped as a buyer of Matthew Dender, the legal publishing group that is being sold by Times Mirror.

But Bertelsmann's acquisition of Random House will remain the catch of the year.

—Bruce Barnard



Odile Jacob PUBLICATIONS

A One-Woman Show

BY ESTER LAUSHWAY

It is easy to understand why the almost exclusively male-and-proud-of-it world of French publishing raised its collective eyebrows when Odile Jacob burst into their midst. A beautiful blonde they knew how to appreciate, but not as one of their equals and not as the head of a successful publishing house.

When at the age of thirty-two she launched her own "maison" in 1986, dedicated to publishing science non-fiction, they dismissed it as the caprice of a daddy's girl. As the daughter of the 1965 Nobel Prize winner for medicine, Odile was just capitalizing on the paternal address book, they thought, and would soon run out of contacts and steam. "The publishing industry in France is tremendously misogynous," she confirms. "Each time you accomplish something as a woman, it's said that it's not because of your own intellectual qualities. It's either your father, or your husband, or your lovers, but never you personally. It's a very tough world, similar to politics."

Nearly 700 books later, the industry's grudging admiration for her achievements is evident in the various nicknames bestowed on her—"the Amazon of French publishing," "the blond tornado," and "the woman who collects brains"—but the message is clear: She is a force to be reckoned with.

Odile Jacob decided early on that she would not rest on the family laurels. "I was lucky enough to be born with an eminent scientist as my father and a gifted pianist as my mother. But that really is no help in the long run," she says. "Although the right genes can certainly give you a head start, everyone has to make their own way in life."

Her chosen path led her at first to the prestigious Paris Opera Ballet school, then on to university, where she won scholarships to Harvard and the Rockefeller Institute. For five years, she studied linguistics and cognitive psychology in the States and worked in research. But her hunger for tangible results made her turn away from theory to a field where ideas can be captured in solid form, in black and white, on the written page.

She returned to France, spent two years learning the publishing trade at Lattès, now part of the Hachette group, then moved on in 1981 to direct a collection of scientific works at Fayard. Five years later she decided she was ready to strike out on her own. The goal she set herself was to make the rarefied realm of scientific thought accessible to the general public, to develop a "laboratory of ideas" that would help the French to understand the modern world in its complexity and diversity.

In February 1986, Odile Jacob Publications were launched. Not just the name is her own. She watches over every detail with passionate care and handpicks every one of her authors, from the three scientists she persuaded in her first year, to the nearly 400 names she now has on her books. More than just choosing them, Odile Jacob explains that, in a way, she "almost created them, because they were people who had never written for the general public. They'd published articles, but they had never written a book. They had to be convinced and guided through the writing process."

> *"Each time you accomplish something as a woman, it's said that it's not because of your own intellectual qualities. It's either your father, or your husband, or your lovers, but never you personally."*

According to Jacob, scientific writers generally require more from their publishers. "When you publish a first novel by someone, you can expect a string of other novels by the same author. Writing is his profession. The people I publish only produce one or two books in their entire life, so you have to always renew your list, be very open, and keep up with what's happening in all the different fields. It's a profession that requires a lot of imagination and creativity."

Over the past decade, some of the finest minds of this century have signed with Odile Jacob. The names appearing on her trademark white covers with the triangle logo, an ancient symbol of femininity, include eminent scientists, philosophers, historians, and politicians like Mikhail Gorbachev, Stephen Hawking, Elie Wiesel, and Shimon Peres. Her own father, François, contributed two titles to her catalogue and another François—the late French president Mitterrand—entrusted her with his unfinished memoirs, interrupted by his death two years ago.

Intellectually challenging fare like this does not sell hundreds of thousands of copies, the way a popular novel does. Odile Jacob considers sales of 20,000 enough to qualify one of her books as a bestseller. The two most popular titles she has ever published, *L'Un est l'autre* and *XY*, both studies of the changing identity of men and women in modern society, written by the French philosopher and sociologist Elisabeth Badinter, each sold 250,000 copies.

To draw in a wider public (and also keep the bank manager happy), she has diversified her range of publications to include books on health, medicine, and some practical topics such as parenting, weight loss, and sexuality. But she has steadfastly stayed away from fiction. "I wanted to do something very different from the rest," she insists, "and also—unless I came across truly exceptional people writing fiction—I personally prefer ideas, in the widest sense of the word. My feeling is that, at the moment at least, I would not contribute very much new if I started publishing French fiction."

Her high-brow publications have done so well in France that Odile Jacob Publications ranks among the top dozen French publishing houses, with yearly sales of nearly $10 million, without counting the distribution of her titles by other publishers.

Having proved herself on home ground, she is now eager to expand her horizons. She has already co-edited a number of works with Harvard University Press in the US, Penguin in the UK, and Piper in Germany, but she would like to do more. "I don't think of myself at all as a purely French publisher. We're lucky to have been successful at home, but we're also very open to international ventures. Our goal is to create a publishing house that's a lasting reference for the free exchange and debate of ideas that are not limited to the French-speaking world."

In the fall, she will publish simultaneous English and French versions of a major new book by Shimon Peres, reflecting on the current situation in the Middle East and what it means for the rest of the world. Her voice, when she describes the project, becomes slightly breathless with excitement. Although this woman has it all—brains, beauty, and character—there is not a trace of smugness or complacency about her. "You can never take anything for granted," she assures. "You have to carry on, evolve, change; you must never sit down, fold your hands, and say 'that's it.' You have to always be ready to imagine and anticipate the future." Whatever is written in the future for Odile Jacob, it is certain that she will edit it to her own high standards.

Ester Laushway is EUROPE*'s Paris correspondent.*

SIR MARTIN GILBERT

BRITAIN'S EMINENT HISTORIAN SPEAKS OUT ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

EUROPE INTERVIEW

In 1968, at the age of thirty-one, Martin Gilbert was appointed official biographer of Sir Winston Churchill. Since then he has established himself as one of the foremost historians of the twentieth century. In addition to his work on Churchill, Gilbert has written sixty books, including a definitive history of the Holocaust, a series of historical atlases, and comprehensive studies of both world wars. Most recently, he has published *A History of the Twentieth Century 1900–1933*, which is the first book of a three-volume series.

He is married with three children and lives in London. Since 1962, he has been a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford. He was knighted in 1995.

He was recently interviewed in Washington by EUROPE's editor-in-chief, Robert J. Guttman.

Why do you feel it's important to write a book on the twentieth century now. Hasn't there been enough written?

You can't really ask a professional historian "hasn't there been enough written" or I'd be out of work from a purely professional point of view. I don't think there'll ever be enough written about the past. The problem is a lot of what we read is inevitably recycled material. Every historian recycles things that others have found, and I've tried in all my work, of course, to go back to archives and to go back to original material. And inasmuch as I've been successful finding it, it gives the volume some reason. It's not merely the stories repeated in a different form.

Every historian has a different perspective, and I've been very concerned to present what I call "the human experience." On one hand, the policies of governments, on the other hand, the effect of those policies on ordinary people. The model I use for this book is remarks of Churchill because in his day people reflected on what the century was at different phases of it, and it became known as the "century of the common man" by which was meant the century in which the common man, the man in the street, was the greatest beneficiary of technology, science, medicine, universal education, and democratic progress. But he rephrased it in a way. He said it is called the century of the common man because in it the common man suffered most. And when I first read that years ago, I thought, "It's so true." Of course, he was sensitive to these things, and no doubt I was influenced by his sensitivities.

I've tried in my books since very early on to present individuals...as human beings. And in the twentieth century to try to bring in the experiences of ordinary people—people whose children went off to wars, people who went off to wars themselves. And I shall remember them. I tried to find also certain passages of literature which would convey this.

So the theme of your book would be the common man?

The theme is the impact of policy on life, daily life, ordinary life, and trying to describe the policies of the highest level of government and diplomacy. And to look and see how it affected ordinary people—mainly adversely, but not entirely.

Is the twentieth century going to be known as the century of war? Is that the common theme?

Yes, I think so. And of the spreading nature of war, both in terms of spreading from soldiers to civilians and in terms of spreading, if you like to put it crudely, from land and sea to air.

Are people becoming immune to these terrible atrocities? Are we getting more hard-hearted or what's happening?

First of all, there's more of it, so how do you react? The scale increased; the Italians were able to kill half a dozen Turks by dropping bombs over the sides of airplanes in 1912. But the scale of bombing became enormous—firebomb raids on Tokyo or the British raids on Hamburg were inconceivable in the earlier part of the century.

Is there a predominant positive theme in the book?

The positive theme is that human beings go on, they go on believing that they can improve their lot, that they can get it right. War has been abolished before. For example, the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Kellogg, the great American, got the Nobel Peace Prize for abolishing war in 1924. Well, war turned up again, but more Nobel Peace Prizes have been awarded since then. Norman Angel who predicted there would be no war before 1914 on the severely practical grounds that wealthy nations wouldn't destroy their wealth by going to war; industrialists would not agree to war. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1933 when his prediction had been proved disastrously wrong. So the human instinct to try again is there. Thank goodness it is there. And so we're now at the stage—look at this whole triumph of the European Union. No European power will go to war again with its neighbor.

What do you think of the nuclear deterrent?

I support it, and I support it on the grounds of deterrence. I'm sure the peace was kept in the world since 1945 between the great powers because of the nuclear deterrent. It's a fascinating thought, though you can't speculate. That's another branch of historical science. I don't do "what if." But what if the atom bomb had not been developed? What would then have stopped the Soviet Union if they were the main force for aggression in 1946, 1947, 1948, with their vast armaments, moving into Europe? I'm sure that the Truman Doctrine was as much responsible for maintaining peace as was any other single factor, and the Truman Doctrine existed because of the existence of the atom bomb.

Do you think the European Union is an instrument of peace?

Definitely. It is a very exciting development. Clearly, risks are taken. I'm a very strong supporter of the extension of the European Union. It is the way forward. But I think it is primarily what Europe had hoped to do in 1900; what the Hague International Corps and the various Geneva Conventions and the various conferences were held. In *Twentieth Century*, I try to get into this quite a lot.

I gave a lecture at the beginning of this year, in Luxembourg, on this theme of the evolution of Europe since 1945 and the various turning points, psychological turning points, and I'm just old enough to remember, as a schoolboy in France, the hatred of Germany. And I'm also old enough to remember the devastation of Germany. I remember being absolutely shattered in seeing Cologne for the first time as a young boy.

And then, exactly, I suppose, what had not happened in 1920 took place. And at the same time, the other sort of flaw, fatal flaw, of 1920, the United States withdrawal from the whole European arena had been rectified. And again I offer that the Marshall Plan is a much underrated element in the postwar history. And in my volume two, I shall certainly be dealing with that with its origins and with its impact.

So you think the Marshall Plan was quite a momentous plan?

The combination of the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine basically insured that the world's most powerful nation would not be absent when we other nations made our next effort to resolve the conflict. And Britain was always in a particular position there because of its relationship with the United States. Whatever the special relationship means, it always was a relationship and a very different relationship to that of other countries.

Do you agree with the beginnings of the European Union?

I do, actually. And, as I say, bringing the Germans in and starting with the economic basis and then moving slowly forward to whatever form the federal integration will emerge.

When you say emerging, what do you think of the single currency? Is that going to draw people together?

Oh, I think so. I'm totally in favor of the single currency concept. I always thought it was a tragedy that the Conservative Party, with all its great qualities, allowed the single currency to become the issue.

You could still have a war even with a single currency. A single currency still doesn't mean a war won't occur?

No, but you have common institutions at every level, and such a complexity of common institutions. I mean, maybe all that I'm doing is parroting Norman Angel's argument of 1909 that what Churchill called the interdependence of trade and traffic would make war impossible. But everything is so intermeshed. And it's more than just intermeshed, isn't it. It's more now. I mean, the European Union is more than just some sort of economic convenience. You can have German factories in Britain and British workers in Germany, but it's much more than that.

So you think we'll see in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century, that the European Union will still be an instrument of peace?

Yes, I'm certain. What we seem to be confronted with now, and how my last volume will end, is these enormous number of regional disturbances and regional conflicts, and what I suppose one would call medically, running sores, if you take something like Algeria. It's extraordinary in a way, that you can have an ongoing, continual killing and slaughter, and there is no international instrument to end it, and there's no national interest, apparently, upon the people who destroy the fabric of society. I can remember going to Afghanistan in 1958 and thinking, "What an idyllic country," and they, too, have managed to completely destroy themselves. And again there was [no] outside instrument.... That is what is happening in this century. And that doesn't affect, you know, it doesn't bring submarines into the Atlantic. It doesn't bring German soldiers trying to get to Paris again.

But it does bring smaller conflicts.

Smaller conflicts, for some reason, we now seem able to say, will be a plague on both their houses, or a plague on that country. If they want to tear themselves apart, let them do so.

Are we looking at small scale conflicts rather than world wars?

Yes, I suspect that the nuclear deterrent must remain. On the other hand, what happens if small countries that don't have the same restraints acquire the bomb? Everybody now talks about Iran, and all our governments are working hard to find a policy to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear power because the assumption is they would use their weapons or could use their weapons.

And we have had, you know, the other feature of my book, is this question of group action. The book begins with this incredible international expedition to drive the anti-foreigners from Peking to restore order and Western harmony in China. And this is an expedition with the United States and Britain, and Germany and Japan and Russia all working together. And that was in the beginning. This was always also a feeling, that whenever there was a conflict, the serious nations, the civilized nations, "the powers" as they were known—the word "great powers" came later—the powers would take effect. In action that goes on—the international action in the gulf, the international action in Somalia. These are manifestations of that. But it's curious. There will not be international action in Algeria.

Has the United States always been a key power?

It has to be involved or it has to support, but that was always the case. For Hitler to be defeated, the United States had to be involved, and it took a long time for it to happen. Churchill's task was not allowing Britain to be defeated until such time as the United States could turn up, as it had done the previous time, and defeat the enemy.

Has there ever been anything like this in world history, to have a power like the United States so dominant in so many fields?

Not really. I suppose the Roman Empire and Charlemagne's empire were similar in their day. But that's a long time ago. Charlemagne died about nearly 1,000 years ago.

Is this quite unique?

It is. I mean, again, in *History of the Twentieth Century*, this is one of the themes. And in volume one, it's extraordinary to find how quickly the United States emerges in this century as the one power who, when all is said and done, is going to be required...as the decisive make-weight in World War I. It had become clear, even to a country like Britain, which had a great empire, that the industrial production of the United States was such that there was no way countries could conduct wars or perhaps even maintain themselves without a benign United States, and in the end, without the United States' alliance and the United States' participation.

Is this dangerous? Is there any danger to this—having one dominant country? Or is it positive?

America is benign. Others who tried it were malign, such as Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia.

I sometimes feel that people in the United States are not entirely aware of the enormous benefits of their institutions nationally and internationally. And the place which they have, of course, will always be transient to isolationism with people who say we should help America first, or we shouldn't involve ourselves in all these squabbles.

But the truth is, America is a democracy and it is a country in which there is a respect for human rights. It may be that more than half the population of the world, for one reason or another, regard what you and I consider human rights with contempt.

Do you think it will continue? Until a few years ago, people were saying it was the Asian century or the European century. Do you think it will continue to be an American-dominated world?

I think so. As long as what we're talking about is the predominance of what I call Western values, it will be the United States. I don't think Europe can ever replace the United States in that. I mean, it can be a partner; it can be a vigorous partner; it can be, even through the new NATO, a powerful partner and, through the extension of the European Union, an economically powerful partner. But America will always be the leader in that—I'm not particularly familiar with the nitty-gritty of combined industrial productions of America on the one side and the European Union on the other. But America will be the leader.

The question is then, who will challenge it, by demography and accident, and perhaps even take it over. Islam is a very powerful factor numerically and territorially, and as you say, the Far East, what we call the Orient, the mysterious Orient, remains somehow a mystery in that regard. But when it happens, I don't know. I suppose you could say that it will happen is one of the few certainties of the future. But it may be in five years' time or fifty or one hundred.

What do you think about Europe working together? Will they remain a dominant power or will they fade?

No, I don't think they will fade. I think the European Union has a lot of life yet. It's really in its fairly early days. It's at the beginning of flexing its muscles. People in Britain are gradually becoming aware of the thousands of different areas in which European Union legislation and European Union rules and regulations are beneficial and comprehensive.

If people can work together now at the end of the century, what was the problem at the beginning of the century?

There was a much greater nationalism, and the nationalism which felt that if you open fire with guns that were bigger than the people you were firing at, you would blow them out of the water. And this is almost literal. You know, the eight-inch gun which gave way to the eleven-inch gun gave way to the fifteen-inch gun. The British then thought, well, if we've got fifteen-inch guns against the Turks, the Turks are finished. And if you have this mind-set, then all your national aspirations, greed, can think in terms of a swift military victory. So until Christmas 1914, the idea of war as a simply rapid [process]—I mean rather than send Dr. Kissinger to Paris, you send the German army and you'll get it quicker—that persisted until it ceased to be true at some early point in the First World War. You know, the first two decades of this century were somehow dominated by that.

In the early part of the century, you talk about war being the dominant theme. Is the Soviet Union breaking up one of the leading events of the century?

Yes. We haven't seen the end of repercussions from that. What will become of Russia? First of all, the Soviet Union, by accidents of history, ended up being the last great empire with vast imperial possessions. Forty years after the British empire disintegrated and India was independent, the Soviet Union still ruled throughout central Asia. Now that's all gone, overnight, pretty well, at the end of 1991. But what role Russia (which still extends from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific) will play still seems to be unresolved. And whether there might not be some perhaps some recoalescing of Russia and Ukraine.

It seems so probable now, and yet in 1989, if we'd sat here saying, "Will the Ukraine ever separate from Russia? Of course Ukraine will never separate from Russia. It is Russia. As indeed it is. The Russian heart. The Baltic States going their own way. Poland joining NATO." These were sort of fictions. They were unrealities.

But the future of Russia is still uncertain. And it is still a vast country. And it's got itself into an awful mess.... Who knows, in fifteen years time, Russia could be economically powerful.

We've had nationalism, Nazism, and communism. Do you see any new "ism" coming? Is it capitalism or globalism?

I don't think globalism because there are too many sort of basic divisions. I'm sure capitalism has a lot of life in it yet.

Do you see a name for this era? We had the cold war. Nobody's ever come up with a name.

I just think it's a time of exceptional prosperity and pleasantness for the Western world. Do people in Britain and the United States really appreciate, or France or Germany, what they have now? I mean in terms of the opportunities, in terms of peace. We don't have conscription. I mean, most of the century and most of the world was cursed by conscription, by men being taken out of productive work to become soldiers in Russia. The Soviet Union was based upon compulsory military service.

We are in a time of exceptional success for our way of life and for our lifestyle. And when it's challenged or when it disappears, we'll look back and say, "Goodness me. We never knew we had had it so good."

Who are the dominant personalities of the twentieth century for good as well as bad?

I'd put Stalin number one as a person who, if you like, entrapped and impoverished his nation for longest, and scared other people in the process. Spread a lot of fear. Essentially, as you'll see in my book, it ends in 1933 in the beginning, not only with Hitler and Roosevelt coming to power, but with Stalin's first public purge trial. And effectively from 1925 to 1955, 1965, or 1975, he and the apparatus he put in place were a blight for hundreds of millions of people. And as they included physical disruption of opponents and perceived opponents, they've also had a sort of numerical aspect.

Now Hitler, of course, lasted much longer, but much shorter than he'd hoped, to establish his 1,000-year Reich. He lasted twelve years. Probably in some absolute scale, he would come number two in both senses—in terms of the time in which he twisted and blighted the lives of his people, and in the numbers who were murdered as a result of his regime. They say that the Stalin number is probably larger than Hitler, though none of them was killed on the battlefield. But those extracted from their homes in the middle of the night and killed.

(continued on page 26)

Inside EUROPE

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EU News

EU Takes Historic Step: Recommends Eleven Nations for Euro

On March 25, in one of the most important events since the Treaty of Rome, the European Commission announced that eleven countries have met the tough criteria to join the single currency, called the euro, on January 1, 1999. European Commission President Jacques Santer remarked, "A Europe that can do something like this is a Europe that can win, a Europe that can move into the twenty-first century with confidence." He went on to say that "we are at the end of an historic process" as he recommended that the European Commission select Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain to join the single currency. The final decision on which countries will inaugurate the new currency will officially be made at the EU summit in Brussels, May 1–3.

Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the European commissioner for economic and financial affairs and monetary matters, described the upcoming summit as "an historic event when the heads of governments meet to decide the list of the first member states who will participate in EMU. That will be the most important event since the end of World War II."

The European Monetary Institute (EMI), which will transform into the European Central Bank (ECB), released its report in Frankfurt, Germany on the same date, giving its assessment of the economies of the EU countries.

Greece Joins ERM

European Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy welcomed Greece's entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) last month and praised its stabilization plans. The European Union's monetary committee agreed last month to admit the Greek drachma to the ERM with a 14 percent devaluation. The Greek government said it wants to join the single European currency by the year 2001.

European Enlargement Update

The reunification of Europe became tangible on March 31 with the long awaited launch of negotiations to admit five former communist nations into the EU.

The Yalta agreement that carved up the continent at the end of World War II has become an historical footnote as the applicant countries, led by a post-communist generation, focus on the third millennium as a realistic date for joining the EU.

But the standoff between Belgrade and Kosovo's ethnic Albanian community; the twenty-four-year-old ethnic division of the sixth EU applicant, Cyprus; the deterioration in relations between the EU and Turkey; and the fear of a fresh flare up in Bosnia provide uncomfortable reminders that Europe remains divided on its periphery.

The EU will have to perform a delicate diplomatic balancing act between the five Eastern and Central European countries that have just begun accession negotiations in Brussels—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Slovenia—and those not deemed ready—Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania. At the same time, it must keep Turkey, which applied to join the EU back in 1987, on board.

The British presidency of the EU hosted a twenty-six-nation summit in London in mid-March to launch an "historic new era" for Europe on the eve of the accession negotiations. But Turkey's boycott of the summit followed by an acrimonious row between Greece and France over Cyprus underlined the difficulties ahead.

The EU mollified Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania by offering to review their applications every year, holding out the prospect, however unlikely, that they can catch up with the five countries at the negotiation table.

The euphoria that surrounded the official launch of the accession negotiations on March 30 are likely to give way to weariness as the talks slip from the headlines. The negotiators are in for a long haul. The earliest realistic date for the first new member to join the EU is around 2002 or 2003.

Politicians in the EU and the applicant countries have hailed the negotiations as a final breakthrough. However, the negotiators themselves, facing more than 80,000 pages of dense text covering everything from competition regulations to product liability, know better. The former communist countries have made great strides adapting to market economies, but their per capita income remains only one-third the EU level; their industries would buckle under the competitive pressures of the single market; and agriculture still accounts for a large slice of their economies.

The applicants will only be allowed to join when they can convince the European Commission they can apply the so-called *acquis communautaire*—the EU's massive rulebook of thousands of pieces of legislation from environmental standards to monetary union.

The rhetoric of enlargement soon will be sullied by squabbling among member states over its cost. The Commission calculates it can be financed without any real increase in the EU's budget. Countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, which are all net contributors to the EU coffers, agree, but others like Spain and Portugal fear funds will be funneled to the East.

The Commission began the horse trading with member states in mid-March by outlining plans to reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) aid programs, which consume half the EU budget, and the regional aid programs, which swallow a further quarter. The current recipients will fight tooth and nail to protect their handouts, casting a shadow over the accession negotiations.

The EU and the applicants are already engaging in shadow boxing. There is concern in Brussels that East Europeans are slowing the reform process for fear of provoking a political backlash. For their part, the East Europeans are going public with some of their demands. The applicants, however, are realistic about the timetable of negotiations and the likely date of entry. "Forget about the year 2000," said Ryszard Czarnecki, the head of Poland's EU integration committee. He expects Poland to be an EU member in "six to seven years time."

The EU itself will have changed significantly by then with all fifteen members likely to have adopted the single European currency, the euro.

Seven years may seem a long time before Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Slovenes, and Estonians can join the EU. However, seven years ago, they were only just emerging from the iron grip of communism; their currencies were worthless; and their factories were bankrupt.

—Bruce Barnard

DANISH RULING PARTY WINS TIGHT ELECTION

Denmark's ruling Social Democrats turned back a tough challenge by the center-right opposition to win re-election by a very narrow margin in March. The Social Democrats won ninety seats of the 179-seat Folketing, while their opposition won eighty-nine seats. Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen will remain in power.

EU JOBLESS RATE

The European Union's unemployment rate in January was 10.4 percent. It is estimated that 17.5 million men and women were out of work during the month. Luxembourg had the lowest EU unemployment rate at 3.6 percent, followed by Austria at 4.3 percent. The Netherlands is at 5.8 percent. Spain, Finland, France, and Italy have the highest unemployment rates.

WHAT THEY SAID

"I would like to see nothing better than the euro come into the market as a major new currency and compete with us. I think it will make us better. I think it will make the world better."
—Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve

"The euro will be the number two currency in the world from day one. This has never happened before, where a currency is so widely used from the start. It is a unique experiment."
—Norbert Walter, chief economist of the Deutsche Bank Group

"Europeans know nothing about the Middle East. Our problem with Europe is that all of you have a colonial past and think the hills of Jerusalem and Samaria are like those France occupied in Algeria and Spain occupied in the Philippines."
—Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli prime minister

"I have a lot of sympathy with the people of Israel. I am a member of the Friends of Israel, but their security depends on the economic development of the Palestinians."
—Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission

"The unspoken reality about EMU is that in every country, in every sector, in every community there will be winners and losers. But we all believe that in the long run the winners will far outnumber the losers."
—Niall FitzGerald, chairman of Unilever Corporation

"I'm not sorry to have lost a dinner. I've had four-course meals already since I came to the Middle East. It is something of a mercy to be spared a further full meal."
—Robin Cook, British foreign minister, representing the European Union on his recent controversial trip to the Middle East, discussing his views when Israeli Prime Minister Banjamin Netanyahu cancelled their private dinner.

"This is the chance of a lifetime for peace in Ireland. You must do it for yourselves and your children."
—President Bill Clinton presenting his view that now is the time for a real peace in Northern Ireland. The president made his remarks on St. Patrick's Day after meeting with Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern.

EU News (continued)

EU Seeks Kosovo Meeting

Meeting in Edinburgh, EU foreign ministers last month called for an international conference on Yugoslavia and the crisis in the province of Kosovo. The attendees at the conference would be the leaders of countries in the region and leaders of the US and Russia. Toward the end of March, the EU imposed an arms embargo and a moratorium on export credits against Yugoslavia. The EU hoped to put pressure on the Yugoslav government to find a peaceful solution to the problems in Kosovo.

Sir Leon Brittan Calls on Japan to Take Action

Speaking on his recent trip to the US, European Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan said bold action by the Japanese government to stimulate domestic demand and deregulate the economy would be in everyone's interests, including Japan. Agreeing with his US counterparts, Brittan urged Japan to boost its economy in order to help absorb some of the exports of its economically troubled neighbors.

Business Briefs

German luxury auto maker **BMW** appears to have been successful in its drive to buy **Rolls-Royce,** the last remaining British-owned auto maker. **Vickers PLC,** Rolls-Royce's parent company, announced that it had reached an agreement to sell the company for $570 million, a deal that must still gain shareholder approval.

Others competing for Rolls-Royce, which has symbolized the essence of British prestige throughout the twentieth century, included German auto maker **Volkswagen,** British venture capital firm **Doughty Hanson,** and **Acquisition Consortium,** a group of investors trying to keep the car maker British.

BMW, which in 1994 bought the British auto maker **Rover,** has said that it will invest $1.6 billion into Rolls-Royce and double its work force to more than 5,000.

Last year, the company, which also produces **Bentleys,** sold a total of 1,918 of its hand-crafted cars, 438 in the United States.

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Eurex, the all-electronic continental European futures exchange, which signed a strategic alliance with the **Chicago Board of Trade** (CBOT) and the **New York Stock Exchange,** has asked twelve top European firms to take part in a pilot study of round-the-clock global trading.

The partnership between CBOT, the world's biggest derivatives exchange, and Eurex, will intensify pressure on **London's International Financial Futures Exchange** (Liffe), which has lost market share to rival European exchanges in the past year.

Eurex, a merger of Frankfurt's **Deutsche Terminborse** and **Soffex** of Switzerland, is also involved in a venture with **Matif,** the French futures exchange.

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Portugal launched a privatization program that will net the government around $3 billion from the sale of stakes in the national airline, **TAP-Air Portugal;** the biggest cement producer; and the national power utility, **EdP**.

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Europe's top firms are gung-ho about Asia despite its recent financial crisis, and many are boosting their investments in the region.

ABB, the Swiss-Swedish engineering conglomerate, reacted swiftly to the crisis, taking a $866 million charge to finance layoffs, slow Asian sales, and the loss of a Malaysian dam contract. However, Goran Lindahl, ABB chief executive, is bullish. "We believe Asia will begin to bounce back in the next two to three years and resume growth even faster than before."

Among other Asian bulls is **ABN Amro,** the Dutch bank, which bought a 75 percent stake in **Bank of Asia,** a medium-sized Thai bank. **Axa,** the French insurance group, also is eyeing buying opportunities in Japan and South Korea. "There is an opportunity. It will not last a long time," said chairman Claude Bebear.

Bayer, the German chemical giant, however, cancelled a plan to build a $1.5 billion plant in Taiwan in the face of delays in getting approval from local politicians. Instead, the plant, which was to have been the main hub for Bayer's Asian chemical operations, will be built in Texas.

•••

Ispat International, the British-based global steel company, jumped into eighth place in the world rankings after its $1.43 billion takeover of **Inland Steel,** the sixth largest US producer.

Ispat produced 12.5 million tons of steel last year at plants in Mexico, Germany, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Canada.

Ispat's founder, Indian-born Lakshmi Mittal, also controls companies in Indonesia and Kazakhstan, which produced 7 million tons of steel last year, making him the world's third-largest steel maker.

The Ispat acquisition follows a wave of consolidation in the European steel industry, including a merger of the steel operations of **Thyssen** and **Krupp Hoesch** in Germany and the acquisition by Luxembourg's **Arbed** of a 35 percent stake in Spain's **Aceralia.**

•••

Inside Europe

Correspondent
Bruce Barnard

Reuters contributed to news reports in this issue of *Inside Europe.*

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Business Briefs (continued)

The merger of **Kredietbank, Cera Bank,** and **ABB Insurance** will create Belgium's biggest company with a stock market capitalization of $13.6 billion, just ahead of **Electrabel,** the electrical engineering group, at $13.36 billion.

The merger has tilted the balance of financial power to Dutch-speaking Flanders, putting pressure on **Generale de Banque,** the country's largest bank, to find a partner to tilt the balance back to francophone Belgium.

•••

Telefonica de España, the private Spanish telecoms group, has launched an ambitious overseas drive and plans to attack **Telefonica,** the former state telecom giant, in the domestic market.

The group said it is going on the "offensive" with a $5 billion capital increase that will fund expansion in Brazil, Mexico, and the United States.

The overseas drive follows a partnership agreement with **Portugal Telecom** and a global alliance with **WorldCom** and **MCI,** the US operators that struck a deal after MCI severed ties with **British Telecom.**

Telefonica's international unit **Talis** already operates in Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Puerto Rico.

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Sema, the Anglo-French software and computer services group, plans to spend up to $1 billion on acquisitions in the US.

The group boosted pre-tax profits by 28 percent to $106.5 million on sales 22 percent higher at $1.88 billion.

Likely US targets are an information technology group, a telecoms services firm, or several small product companies.

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Granaria Holdings, a privately held Dutch investment company, paid $743 million for **Eagle-Picher Holdings,** a Cincinnati-based manufacturing conglomerate with more than fifty factories in the United States and Europe.

Granaria, established in 1912 as a grain-trading group, has recently expanded into food processing in Europe, but the company has no business activities in common with Eagle-Picher, which makes components for the auto, aerospace, defense, and construction industries.

"Granaria wanted to have another core business, another engine for growth, in the US," said Joel Wyler, the Granaria chairman.

•••

Adidas of Germany, the world's second-largest sports goods manufacturer, lifted its 1997 pre-tax profit 52 percent to $372 million as it captured North American market share from its US rivals **Nike** and **Reebok.**

Sales in the US soared by 66 percent to $3.2 billion last year, largely helped by the acquisition of **Salomon,** the French ski and golf equipment company.

Sales in Asia grew by 67 percent, but volumes will slow in 1998 in the wake of the financial crisis in the region.

Adidas is expected to power ahead of its rivals in the summer as it takes advantage of being the official sponsor of this year's soccer World Cup in France.

•••

Daimler-Benz, Europe's largest industrial group, mirrored the economic upturn on the continent with a 78 percent leap in operating profits to $2.4 billion.

However, Jürgen Schrempp, chairman of the German giant, which manufactures cars, trucks, and planes, isn't satisfied. "We have achieved a substantial improvement in our earnings but have not yet reached the return level we are aiming at in order to be one of the top performing companies in the world."

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Bic, the French disposable pen, lighter, and razor manufacturer, is diversifying into barbecue and gas cooker lighters.

The red-handled childproof "Sure Start Lighter," which was launched in the US in February, will be sold in Europe and the rest of the world in 1999.

The ever innovative group has also launched new types of nibs and ink to cope with humidity in its growing Asian markets.

The traditionally secretive group broke cover in March by holding its first ever press conference to announce its 1997 net income of $130 million. It revealed it paid $30 million for **Schaeffer,** a US fountain pen manufacturer, and $46 million for **Tipp-Ex,** a German manufacturer of ink correction fluid.

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Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publisher, has nearly $3.5 billion to spend on acquisitions following the collapse of its planned $33 billion merger with Dutch publisher **Wolters Kluwer.**

Finance director Mark Armour said the company is "flush with cash" after selling IPC, its British-based consumer magazine group, for $1.43 billion.

Top target is said to be **Matthew Bender,** the US legal publishing group worth an estimated $1 billion, which was put on the block by **Times Mirror.**

•••

Fiat, the Italian car manufacturer, plans to invest $11 billion over the next four years to boost output by 10 percent, design fifteen new models, and expand into new markets.

Roberto Testore, chief executive of Fiat Auto, said production will exceed 3 million vehicles in 2002, compared with 2.7 million in 1997.

But Mr. Testore conceded the investment probably wouldn't help Fiat regain its position as biggest carmaker in Central and Eastern Europe, which it lost last year to **Skoda,** Volkswagen's Czech unit.

•••

Ahold, the acquisitive Dutch supermarkets group, raised $1 billion through a global share offering to fund small to medium-sized takeovers, mainly in North America.

The group is actively scouting for a fresh acquisition in the US beyond its base in the northeastern states.

The group generated 55 percent of its sales in the US last year, thanks largely to the $3 billion acquisition of Massachusetts-based **Stop and Shop** in mid-1996.

•••

Fortis NV, the Belgian-Dutch banking and insurance group, paid $600 for Miami-based **John Alden Financial Corp,** creating a US group and individual health insurance business with annual revenues of $2 billion.

The deal brought the number of US acquisitions by Fortis to six, which were worth more than $1 billion in the past year. John Alden will be merged with Fortis's Milwaukee-based unit, **Fortis Health**, to create an independent provider of health insurance to more than 1 million people.

—Bruce Barnard

EUROPE IS ON THE LINE

Consider that you're looking at almost 400 million potential customers. How do you reach this market?

For U.S. companies, making the right telemarketing and teleservice connections in Europe is not always easy. The possibilities as well as obstacles can seem daunting. Crossing geographical boundaries can present multiple problems: site selection, language barriers, staffing, varying rates and tariffs. For companies that want to establish or expand their business to tap this potential, a pan-European call center gives you the opportunity.

For decades, the Netherlands has been the central distribution point for American companies operating in the European market. Of 611 U.S. owned European distribution centers identified by Buck Consultants International, 57% are located in the Netherlands. They realize the benefits from a superior distribution infrastructure, and low-cost distribution facilities for order fulfillment throughout Europe. As for U.S. companies establishing a pan-European call center in Western Europe in the 1990's, almost 50% of them have chosen the Netherlands. Similarly, companies are opting for the Netherlands and PTT Telecom Netherlands for their high-tech telecommunications centers.

The Netherlands' tax structure is very favorable to international operations, including a unique network of tax treaties with more than 50 countries to avoid double taxation. And, the Dutch advance 'ruling' practice provides pre-set tax rates in advance of establishing a business presence. The attitude of the Dutch government has always been business-oriented and deregulatory. As a result, PTT Telecom Netherlands was the first telecommunications provider on the continent to be privatized and is now one of the most competitive telecom providers in Europe.

UNMATCHED QUALITY

In addition to a 100% digitized network, PTT Telecom Netherlands has one of the highest call completion rates and fastest maintenance response times in Europe. This is due in part to continuous circuit auditing, strong relations with other European carriers and options for double-routed communications links. It is these unique qualities, along with an unmatched work force, that have made PTT Telecom Netherlands call centers the choice for many U.S. companies such as Access Graphics, Federal Express, Novell, Right Source, Sun Express, Microsoft and Holiday Inn.

TAILORED SOLUTIONS

PTT Telecom Netherlands provides integrated, flexible solutions for a multitude of call center applications. Working in close cooperation with vendors and third parties, PTT Telecom Netherlands can advise you on available incentives and grants, assist you with site selection, recruiting of staff, or outsourcing solutions and help you find the distribution and logistics facilities you need.

From the telecom standpoint, International Freephone Services removes the barriers and lets your customers to call you. Even better, they can call you free of charge by simply lifting a phone and direct-dialing your number. International Freephone Services support number/country recognition and offer multiple routing options allowing your customers' calls to be answered in their native language. Customers may also choose from the portfolio of our alliance partner, AT&T/ Unisource, including International Call Center Service (ICCS).

With over 300 Call Centers behind them, PTT Telecom Netherlands has a lot of experience and state-of-the-art call center specialized technology. Their Amsterdam based Call Center Solutions group (CCS) is uniquely positioned as the application center for a wide array of call center services, customer systems, software and consulting expertise. CCS assists its customers in establishing their own call center, small or large, or working through a service bureau. They can accommodate any specific need and configuration. PTT Telecom Call Center Solutions offers you a flexible, turn key approach, helping you make the most of the tremendous European marketplace.

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And then I would switch the table, and I'd look at Churchill and Roosevelt in rather a similar way in terms of benefits. Churchill again first, because his influence was over a much longer period of time, not only as war leader, a leader of whatever you call it, the military lines we call the grand coalition. But also because of his general contribution from before World War I until his great efforts in the 1950s to try to bring Russia and the West together to try to prevent the cold war from spinning out of control. And then Roosevelt I'd put second; again, only second because in a sense, he lasted for a shorter period of time. In fact, it was exactly the same period as Hitler, 1933 to 1945. They both came to power within a few weeks of each other, and they both died within a few weeks. And also perhaps his constructive influence is underestimated when you consider that he came to the aid of what was left of Western democracies, using, and perhaps abusing, his powers as president in order to push through the help and assistance without which Britain would have been defeated completely before the end of 1941. And then on a much wider scale, going back to the New Deal. And his general influence on something like the four freedoms made as great an impact as did Woodrow Wilson's.

What was the first idea of the concept of Europe? Or do you feel there is such a concept? Is there such a thing as Europe?

I suppose in our time, if you want to call it that, it must have been somehow Napoleon, and one day I'd like to write about Napoleon and Europe. The old hat, old-fashioned nationalism and conquest and dominance and putting brothers on thrones. It was a European structure. But he ruled it. He ruled it from Paris. He controlled it. And one of the things, if you look at some of the currents of the European Union legislation is basically an attempt to standardize and unify and also advance somehow socially. He also had that in mind. Perhaps again in a simpler form, but trying to standardize weights and measures and calendars and trying to have a European community. You know, travel and transport and so on.

Do you think Churchill was in favor of a European Union?

Definitely. And he was prepared to start with Great Britain and France after the war. Of course he believed it. And also he had very close attachments to France. He knew France well. He liked France. He was deeply versed in what France had been through—the defeat of 1870. And, of course, the disasters of 1914 were intimate to him.

Do you think Churchill would have been a supporter of the European Union today?

Yes. But he wouldn't have been a very good negotiator.

What's made you such a prolific writer?

My sons tease me mercilessly. As I approached my sixtieth birthday, I had written fifty-eight books, and they said, "Dad, you know, you're not going to make it."

So what made you start with Churchill? I mean, were you fascinated by him as a young man, or what?

Yes, I really was fascinated by him. But, like the other thing, things happen in different ways. His son had heard about my work from a friend and asked me to join his team as the junior researcher in 1962. I joined on my twenty-fifth birthday.

What do you think makes your books so popular?

I try to write a narrative, a brisk narrative. The nicest thing that ever happens to me is when people come up to me after lectures and say, "I've read all your books," or produce an old title to be signed. And I like to feel that they like them because they're so true. They are accurate and written with a certain drama, and that drama derives entirely from the content.

Are you optimistic about the future of serious books like yours?

There will always be people who want to read books, certainly in my lifetime. Sometimes I get letters from people who listen to my books on tape, so that's clearly one element.

Are you concerned about the effect the Internet and other electronic media are going to have on books?

No. I suppose in one sense it can only help make books better known if it refers to them. And I saw, for example, that my Washington lecture last night appeared on the Internet. So it can only help.

What about so many publishers going out of business and being owned by three or four people. Does that bother you?

Yes. That's not good news. The one thing which has changed in the last few years is in the main, when I started writing you had an editor, a publishing editor, who had a personal relationship with you. If you worked for a certain publisher, there they were. And now every few years, the publisher is bought by another publisher, and the editor disappears. You know, bloody sackings. And suddenly you find yourself with somebody who is a perfectly decent person, but they are not the person who commissioned the book, they're not the person who saw you through one phase of it. It can be very disruptive.

I try to find publishers or end up with publishers with whom I can have a personal relationship. I think that's essential. When it works, it can be very exciting. They become part of the enterprise of getting the book read.

Is there a difference between American audiences and European audiences? Do you see a difference?

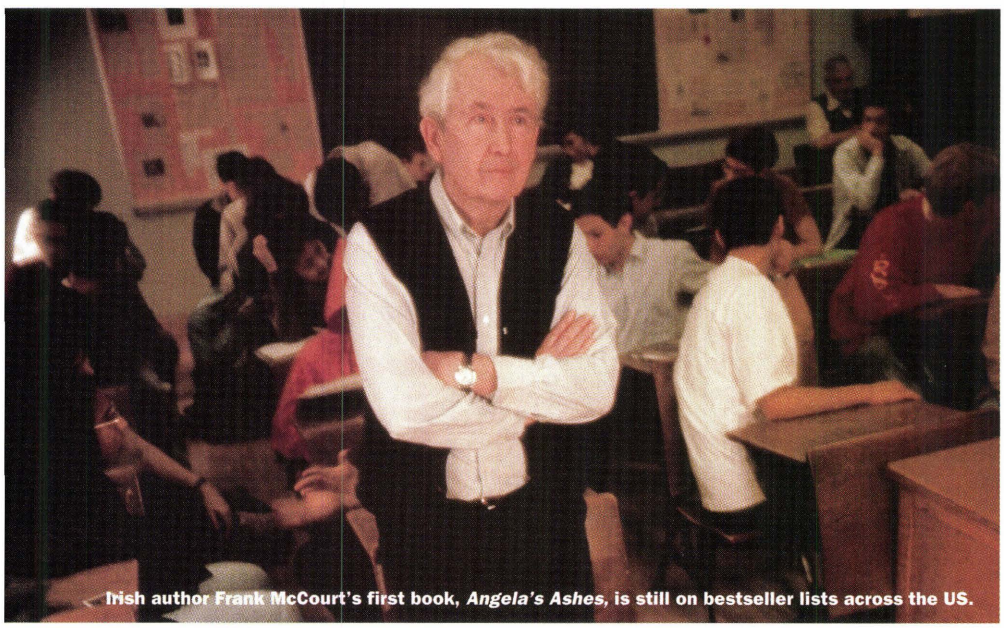
I'll tell you one thing. There's a great difference between American reviewers and interviewers and the British, and that is the Americans read the books. In the main, the British interviewers and reviewers do not read the book. They write a spirited and often unpleasant essay based on reading half a page or the blurb. And almost always you'll see in the States people have read the books and are interested in the content. But the British review scene at the moment is pretty poor. And the reviewers are very clever people who parade their own brilliance, which is not good for authors. It's probably good for the circulation of the magazine and the ego of the reviewer.

Are you're an optimist on the future of civilization?

I think so. Whether or not God has actually abandoned us, we still seem to have a lot of resilience in us.

Is Everyone Writing in Ireland?

BY MIKE BURNS



Irish author Frank McCourt's first book, *Angela's Ashes*, is still on bestseller lists across the US.

Anyone who has experienced the questionable delights of an Irish bar on a wet afternoon can help set the scene:

Customer 1: "Haven't seen you around for a few days. Been ill?"

Customer 2: "No. I got caught up in writing a book, and I decided to stay at it in case the inspiration deserted me."

Not entirely true, perhaps, but it is a shared belief among Irish people that *all* have at least a book or two in them...if only they made enough time to sit down and write and stop talking about it in pubs.

Happily, the tiny island that gave the English literary world William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, John Millington Synge, Thomas Moore, Somerville and Ross, Jonathan Swift, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Brendan Behan, Edna O'Brien, Flann O'Brien, Benedict Kiely, Patrick Kavanagh, and a host of other international names is still turning them out.

Take last year's hundred best-selling paperbacks in Britain. Irish writers accounted for four of them, and two—Maeve Binchy's *Evening Class* and Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*—made it into the top three, beaten only by John Grisham's *The Runaway Jury.* Binchy sold more than a million copies in Britain, McCourt almost three-quarters of a million. Roddy Doyle (*The Commitments*) was twenty-eighth on the British list with *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors,* and Seamus Deane was placed eighty-sixth with his *Reading in the Dark.*

Other writers like John McGahern, John Banville, and Roy Foster, harnessing a variety of literary skills and varying landscapes, are perhaps lesser-known in the United States but command a wide international readership.

Even politicians are now getting in on the act. Three current members of the Irish parliament—Alan Shatter, Liz McManus, Maurice Manning—and former justice minister Máire Geogheghan-Quinn have recently penned best-selling thrillers. (Manning, who has written a number of highly-acclaimed political biographies and is now beavering away on another novel, says he was inspired by a book written by the late John Kelly, a former attorney-general.)

A host of new women writers including Gemma O'Connor, Patricia Scanlan, and Marion Keyes—all following in the footsteps of Maeve Binchy and Deirdre Purcell (*Falling for a Dancer*)—have added immeasurably to the quality and range of emerging Irish writers.

The wider international market beckons—as it has already done for thirty-two-year-old Dubliner Colum McCann, the son of a journalist who worked as a reporter himself before setting down to more serious writing. His recently-published third book, *This Side of Brightness* is set among the people who populate the New York underworld of subway and train tunnels and focuses on the story of a mixed-race American family.

Another Dubliner, Niall Williams, has just published his first novel, *Four Letters of Love* to much critical acclaim. Pat McCabe's *Butcher Boy* has been filmed (in recent years, Ireland has become a happy hunting ground for the stage, television, and Hollywood). And the prolific *Irish Times* journalist Fintan O'Toole (now based in New York) has published *A Traitor's Kiss*, a splendid biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the enigmatic eighteenth-century Irish dramatist, politician, and philanderer.

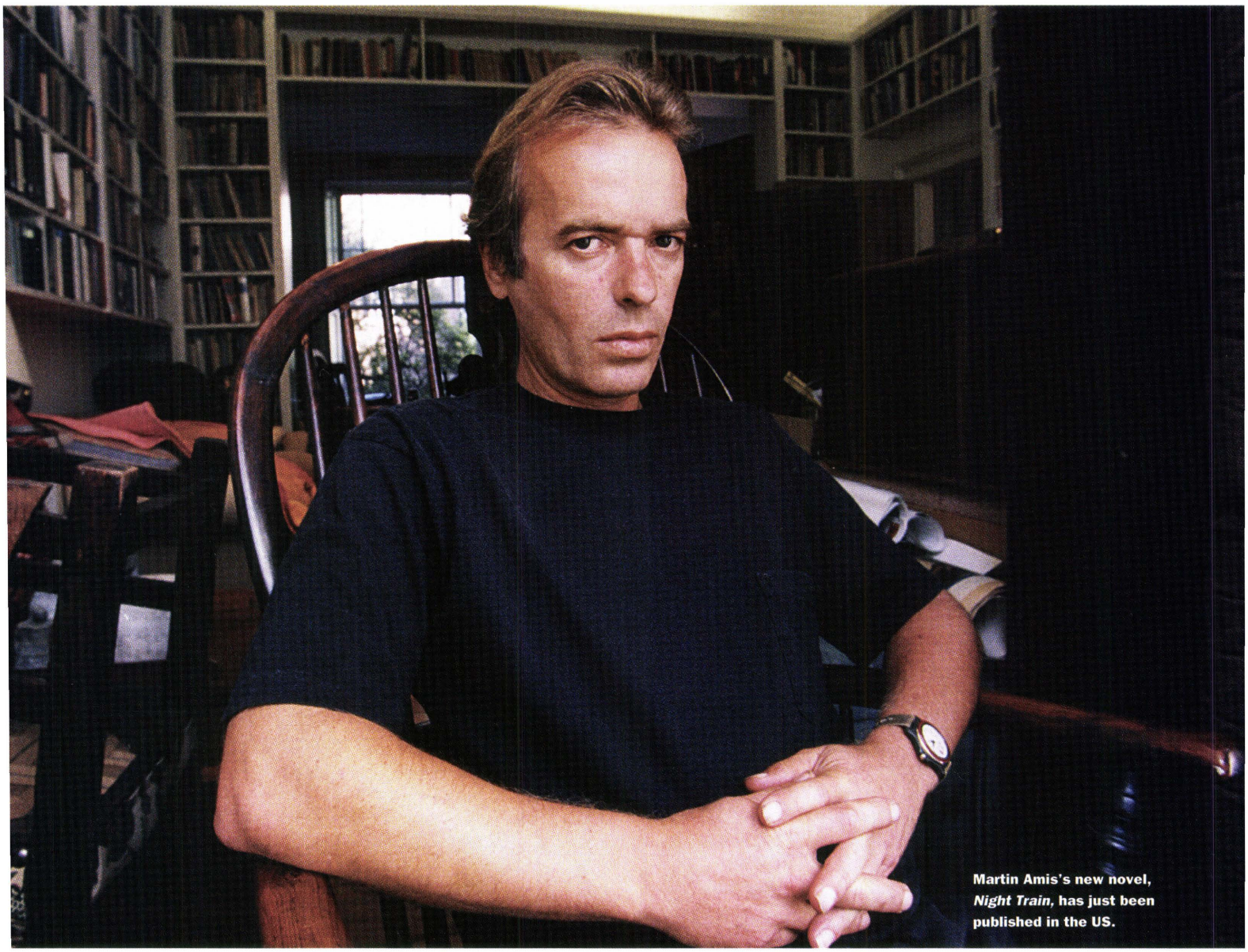
Poet, playwright, and novelist Sebastian Barry has already sampled success. In 1995, his play, *The Steward of Christendom*, won wide critical acclaim and a host of awards. Three productions of the play open in Washington, Atlanta, and Philadelphia this month with another in the works in Paris.

His latest novel, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, has just been published, and his new play, *Our Lady of Sligo,* will open in Britain later this month.

And the Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney? You'll be happy to hear that he, too, is busily working on a new collection of poetry.

Mike Burns is EUROPE*'s Dublin correspondent.*

BEST-SELLIN



Martin Amis's new novel, *Night Train*, has just been published in the US.

The event of the year so far in British literary circles has been the publication of Birthday Letters by the poet Ted Hughes. The book is an autobiographical narrative of Hughes' marriage to the American poet Sylvia Plath told in the form of a sequence of poems.

It's a book with powerful claims to be as much a *success d'estime* as a *succes de scandal*. Hughes' thirty-five-year-long silence about the marriage, which ended with Plath's suicide in 1963, had suggested a chilly, selfish side to his character.

The lyrical and heart-felt *Birthday Letters* has exposed that as a mask, and the book has been judged a classic. Perhaps more surprisingly, it's also been a bestseller. Published in January, it immediately soared to the top of the hardback sales lists and in little more than a month had sold in excess of 70,000 copies, virtually unprece-

G BRITS

THE UK'S HOTTEST NAMES IN PRINT

By Alan Osborn

dented for a volume of poetry.

All in all it's been a good period for Hughes—his poetic translation of *Tales from Ovid* recently won the Whitbread prize for the best book of 1997 in any category.

What else are the British reading? One perceptible trend over the past year or so has been a growing taste in both fiction and non-fiction for the miniaturist book—usually quite short, handily priced, shrewdly marketed, and narrowly focused.

An example is *Longitude* by the American scientist Dava Sobel, a highly readable account of how the concept of longitude for navigation was discovered. It's been one of Britain's top-ten, non-fiction hardbacks for more than a year now.

Similarly compact and direct, *Fermat's Enigma* by Simon Singh confronts a mathematical riddle that had eluded solution for centuries until solved by a British mathematician in 1994. Another unexpected bestseller in this format was *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by the French journalist and author Jean-Dominique Bauby whose words were communicated through the movement of an eyelid as the author lay in a hospital, paralyzed from a stroke.

Also with much success was *Mrs. Chippy's Last Expedition* by Caroline Alexander, the story of the cat that accompanied the crew of the *Endurance* on the 1914–15 Antarctic expedition.

You may not regard *The Little Book of Calm* by Paul Wilson as in the same category of literature, but at around $3, the miniature guide to a less hectic life headed the British non-fiction paperback sales list last year and was still pulling in readers this spring.

More predictably, the last year or so has underscored Britain's continuing love affair with the American travel writer Bill Bryson, whose *A Walk in the Woods* has triumphed over indifferent reviews. Bryson's part-affectionate, part-acerbic look at Britain in *Notes from a Small Island* was the third-bestselling non-fiction paperback last year.

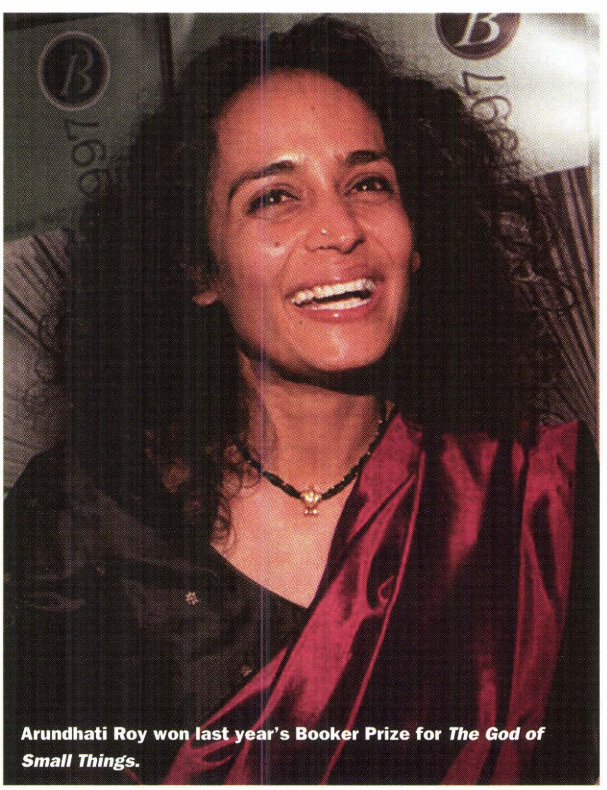
As you'd expect, the Diana industry charged ahead in the latter part of the year. Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story* was given new impetus by the author's disclosure that the princess herself had been his main source, and the book rose to third in the 1997 sale charts. By common consent, the year's outstanding biography was *Jane Austen* by Claire Tomalin.

Where fiction is concerned, a similar narrowing of focus has been apparent. Britain's Booker Prize, the country's best-known literary award, was won by *The God of Small Things* by the Indian author Arundhati Roy. A sharply drawn, precisely detailed, portrait of Indian life seen through the eyes of seven-year-old twins, the book conspicuously lacks the panoramic sweep and grand vision of Salman Rushdie or Vekram Seth but has touched a chord with the reading public.

The number one best-selling work of fiction in 1997 and early this year and winner of the British Book of the Year Award, is, however, the anti-heroic comic novel *Bridget Jones' Diary* by Helen Fielding, a chronicle of contemporary life narrated by an engagingly dysfunctional female "thirty-something." More than any other contemporary fictional character, Bridget dominates media attention in Britain at present.

More serious works selling well recently include Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*, a tale of obsession arising out of a ballooning accident; Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*, rooted in the Holocaust; John Banville's fictional reworking of the life of spy Anthony Blunt in *The Untouchable*; and Peter Cary's Dickensian *Jack Maggs*.

Finally, the British Book Awards Author of the Year is Louis de Bernieres whose *Corelli's Mandolin*, a sometimes harrowing narrative of World War II set on the Greek island of Cephalonia, has been a classic "slow burn." Published in 1994, de Berniere's book has slowly crept up the sales charts through word-of-mouth recommendation. E



Arundhati Roy won last year's Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things*.

Alan Osborn is EUROPE*'s Luxembourg correspondent.*

THE BOOKS

AN ECLECTIC, TRANSATLANTIC TOUR OF BOOKS BY EUROPEAN AUTHORS WHO HAVE FOUND A US AUDIENCE.

HISTORY & POLITICS

A History of the Twentieth Century: Volume One: 1900–1933
By Sir Martin Gilbert; William Morrow & Company; 846 pages; $35

It would not be facetious for me to state that after reading Sir Martin Gilbert's excellent book that I am very grateful that I had the good fortune to live at the end of the twentieth century rather than at its beginning. The years 1900–1933 will be remembered mainly for World War I and the rise of fascist dictatorships across Europe and Asia.

Gilbert has taken a very bleak time period and written about it in a way that, while showing the follies and misdeeds of mankind, reaffirms the human spirit and its undying optimism in the face of overwhelming misfortunes.

While it may seem strange to quote Leon Trotsky in this context, his remarks while in exile in Turkey in 1933 seem correct: "It is clear that the twentieth century is the most disturbed century within the memory of humanity. Any contemporary of ours who wants peace and comfort above all has chosen a bad time to be born."

Gilbert, the well-regarded official biographer of Winston Churchill, quotes the very quotable former British politician throughout this history of the first one-third of the twentieth century. Churchill, one of the most dominant figures of the century, stated in 1922: "What a disappointment the twentieth century has been. How terrible and how melancholy is the long series of disastrous events which have darkened its first twenty years. We have seen in every country a dissolution, a weakening of the bonds, a challenge to those principles, a decay of faith, an abridgment of hope, on which the structure and ultimate existence of civilized society depends."

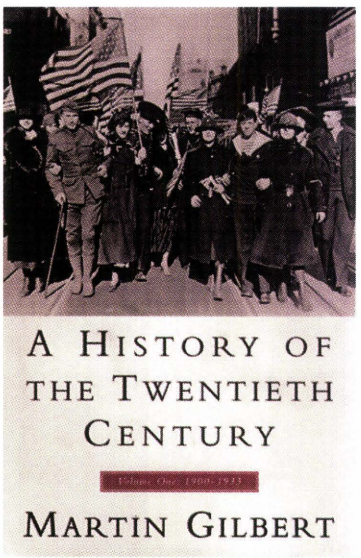
It is remarkable to see how some of the trouble spots at the beginning of the century are recurring problem areas as we look forward to the next century and the new millennium. One is struck by Gilbert's mention of the ethnic problems in the Balkans, which eventually led to World War I, while today we hear reports of fighting in Kosovo and continue to see more than 30,000 US and European troops stationed in Bosnia to preserve the peace.

At the end of each of the chapters, which are divided by years, Gilbert notes some positive accomplishments. For example, the reader discovers that in 1911 the state of California gave women the vote and in Britain the first nursery school was opened. In 1929 Hollywood awarded the first Oscars, and the yo-yo was patented.

Gilbert writes so well that, even though we know the outcome of the events he is chronicling, we are brought to the edge of our seats reading this remarkable and illuminating study of mankind in the first thirty-three years of the century.

This reviewer looks forward to Gilbert's next two volumes in this series with great anticipation. In fact, just last month Gilbert published his sixty-first book, *Israel: A History*. One wonders what this eminent historian, already noted for his books on Churchill, the Holocaust, World War I, and World War II, will do for an encore.

—Robert J. Guttman



Imagining the Balkans
By Maria Todorova; Oxford University Press; 257 pages; $20

My very first assignment as a research assistant at the Woodrow Wilson Center, back in 1995, was Maria Todorova's book on the Balkans. Despite our long talks over lunch, however, I never had the opportunity to discuss Maria's collective thoughts on the material we were researching and translating until I recently read the finished book.

Todorova's book aims to explain how the Balkans' "frozen" negative image persists to this day. Born in Bul-

garia but now living and teaching in the United States, Todorova's goal is "to explain and oppose something that is being produced *here* and has adverse effects *there*." *Imagining the Balkans* is not a morality tale, Todorova tells the reader, aimed to expose Western bias or to depict the Balkan people as innocent victims.

Motivated from the current writing on the subject (which often cites "Balkan mentalities" and "ancient enmities" to explain the war in former Yugoslavia), Todorova leads the reader through an interesting journey of how a stereotype is formed and perpetuated.

Todorova's analysis takes us from the story behind the word "Balkan" (an Ottoman Turkish term that was not adopted by Westerners until the mid-nineteenth century), to Balkan self-perceptions, and ultimately to Western perceptions from the fifteenth century through the twentieth century.

To give one example of this long journey, during the nineteenth century, travel literature was very fashionable in Europe, particularly in Britain. According to Todorova, it is through these works that many perceptions began within the English speaking realm. These travelers were, most often, educated aristocrats or bourgeois who found it increasingly difficult to relate to the "uncivilized" populations of the Balkan region. As the historian C. M. Woodhouse writes, "They loved the Greece of their dreams, the land, the language, the antiquities, but not the people. If only, they thought, the people could be more like the British scholars and gentlemen, or failing that, as too much to be hoped, if only they were more like their own ancestors, or better still, if only they were not there at all."

In the twentieth century, Todorova writes that "an image of the Balkans had already been shaped in European literature." In the following years, it was further embellished with new generalizations following the emergence of the Macedonian question, problems with brigandage, the Balkan wars, World War I, racism, World War II, and finally communism. As a result, in our century, violence, murder, and intrigue have become synonymous with the Balkans. A collective negative image, in Todorova's words, has crystallized and has been reproduced in numerous writings—from Agatha Christie's *The Secret of the Chimneys* to the controversial *Balkan Ghosts,* where Robert Kaplan seems to blame World War II on the Balkans, claiming that Nazism had Balkan origins.

Todorova believes that "as in the case of the Orient, the Balkans have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the 'European' and the 'West' has been constructed." She concludes, "if Europe had produced not only racism but also antiracism, not only misogyny but also feminism, not only antisemitism, but also its repudiation, then what can be termed Balkanizm has not yet been coupled with its complementing and ennobling antiparticle."

Although *Imagining the Balkans* is an academic book intended to stimulate discussion, it is also a book that raises one's awareness of the power of stereotypes, a book that journalists, politicians, and anyone interested in the Balkans should read before rushing to any conclusions.

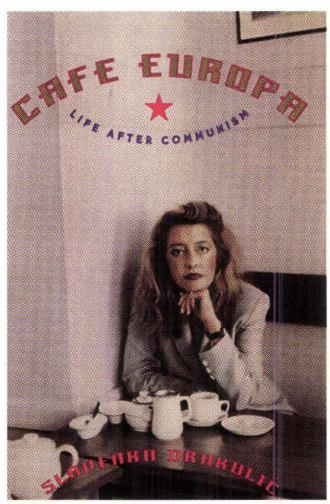
—*Angeliki Papantoniou*

Cafe Europa: Life After Communism

By Slavenka Drakulic; W.W. Norton & Company; 213 pages; $21

"Can't you see that we belong to the West too," writes Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulic in *Cafe Europa*, "except that we have been exiled from it for half a century?" Drakulic writes in a sad but humorous way about why Eastern Europeans feel as if they are the "poor relatives" to their "cousins" in Western Europe.

In this book, consisting of short chapters focusing on the daily routines of life, the author attempts to come to terms with the fact that even though she and many of her fellow citizens are free they still feel as if they are second-class citizens in the eyes of the West. "One needs to understand that we, the people from the communist world, are still children in the political sense. We need a daddy, somebody who will look after us so that we don't have to look after ourselves. We don't know how to be free, and we are not ready for responsibility," writes Drakulic, whose articles appear frequently in the *New Republic* and the *New York Review of Books.*



People who have lived under communism for the past fifty years now long for what they think in their minds they should have as Europeans. But, she writes, "What does Europe mean in the Eastern European imagination? It is something distant, something to be attained, to be deserved. Europe is plenitude: food, cars, light-everything—a kind of festival of colors, diversity, opulence, beauty. It offers choice. It offers freedom of expression."

Then she goes on to point out, "The negative approach is perhaps more useful: Europe is the opposite of what we have, and what we want to get rid of—it is the absence of communism, of fear, and deprivation."

While it seems that Drakulic, who lives in both Zagreb and Vienna, might have a chip on her shoulder about what she perceives to be the attitude of her counterparts in Western Europe toward her and her fellow newly free Eastern European citizens, she humorously documents episodes in her daily life where this type of "discrimination" appears. When she talks about getting a passport or crossing borders, she notes that "barriers do exist and citizens from Eastern Europe are going to be second-class citizens still for a long time to come, regardless of the downfall of communism. Between us and them, there is an invisible wall."

From discussing the problems of buying a vacuum cleaner to blaming the government for one's bad teeth to debating the evils of former communist rulers, Drakulic has given readers a taste of life in these newly free countries of Eastern Europe. By cleverly writing about her daily life, she has given us a snapshot of the everyday struggles ordinary people are encountering living under democracy and capitalism. Ultimately, she declares, "Eu-

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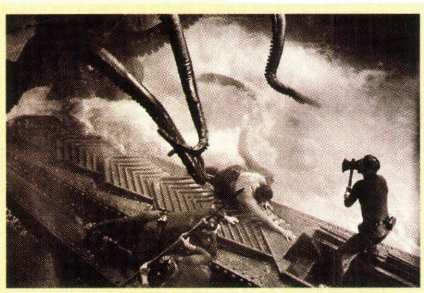
Historic writers still selling after all these years.

The number of European novels gracing the shelves of local bookstores is not in itself surprising. Instead, what amazes is the sheer diversity of titles available. Classic and contemporary novels alike are selling well, with more traditional texts attracting a greater following every year and new fiction highlighting Europe's promising pool of up-and-coming authors. Here then is a glance, and it is but a glance, at European favorites, from the ancients to the most modern.



Classic novels have begot classic movies, such as Disney's version of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.*

Italy and Spain have produced two of the most widely read novels of all time. Dante published *The Divine Comedy*, his allegorical journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven, in the fourteenth century. Considered an excellent representation of Florentine thought of the day, it has been translated into twenty-five languages, studied in academic institutions since the fifteenth century, and has inspired many an artist since. Much the same can be said for Cervantes' splendid novel *Don Quixote*. His tale revolves around a nobleman who sets out to overcome the injustices of the world and whose romantic notions are countered by the pragmatism of his companion, Sancho Panza. Readers' opinions may differ as to whether this is indeed a comedy or tragedy, but it continues to charm all who read it, some 400 years after its first publication.

European literature flourished during the nineteenth century, producing many novels still enjoyed today. France yielded two great novelists, Dumas and Hugo (both born in 1802), who have achieved an everlasting popularity. It is easy to see why Dumas is France's most widely read author and why he has traveled so well across the Atlantic. Most will be familiar with at least one of his historic novels, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, or *The Count of Monte Cristo*. His sense of adventure,

(continued opposite)

rope is not a knight sent to free us. Most likely, Europe is what we—countries, peoples, individuals—make of it for ourselves."

—Robert J. Guttman

Fermat's Enigma

By Simon Singh; Walker and Company; 315 pages; $23

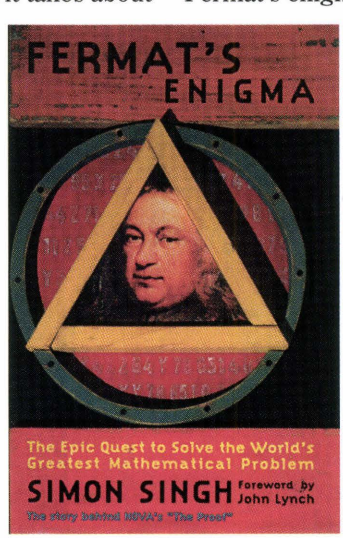
Admittedly, I've held something of a grudge against my ninth grade geometry teacher, Mrs. Gordon. I still grimace when I think of the hours I spent trying to prove whether or not a triangle was of the "right" variety. But the most frustrating aspect of math for me and millions of other left-brain folks lies in the age-old question: Beyond the need to be able to perform the essential calculations needed for modern life, what's the point?

The answer can be found in British author Simon Singh's telling of the pursuit and ultimate solution of "the world's greatest math problem" in his highly engaging, *Fermat's Enigma*.

Pierre de Fermat was a seventeenth century French judge and an accomplished mathematician. By nature a very secretive person, Fermat was loathe to disclose his methods or solutions. Upon his death, however, a mysterious note in his handwriting was discovered in which he claimed to have proved that there are no solutions for $X^n+Y^n=Z^n$ where n is an integer greater than 2. (If you're like me, it takes about four readings and a trip to the dictionary to look up "integer" to understand the gist of this problem.)

Fermat's challenge had been issued, and mathematicians from all over the world would spend the next three and a half centuries trying to recreate Fermat's proof.

Singh accomplishes two difficult tasks in *Fermat's Enigma*. First, he presents an engrossing historical outline of the study and development of mathematics—from the secret mathematical brotherhood led by Pythagoras in ancient Greece to Alan Turing and the British mathematicians of Bletchley Park who broke the German codes during World War II. In between, he highlights other mathematicians whose works have contributed to proving parts of the equation.



Into this history, Singh carefully weaves the basic math principles needed to generally understand the complexity of Fermat's proof. Certainly, he reveals only the proverbial iceberg's tip, yet it is enough for even the mathematically-challenged reader to grasp the seeming futility of proving the theorem.

As of five years ago, mathematicians had still not reproduced Fermat's solution. But in 1993, Andrew Wiles, a British mathematician who had been working in seclusion at Princeton University stunned the math world with his announcement that he had duplicated Fermat's feat.

In all honesty, I can't remember the last math book I read. However, I vaguely recall hurling one out of a dorm window at the end of a semester. Nevertheless, I found myself enthralled by Singh's descriptions of the lives spent exploring the world of numbers and my eyes racing down the page as Fermat's proof is revealed.

But most surprising are his intriguing depictions of numbers, their various characteristics (rational, prime, perfect), their relation to one another, their consistency, their infinity. About halfway through the book, it dawned on me that Singh, in telling the story of Fermat's enigma, is also presenting the case for appreciating math—not in terms of the sum of its utility but rather for its inherent beauty.

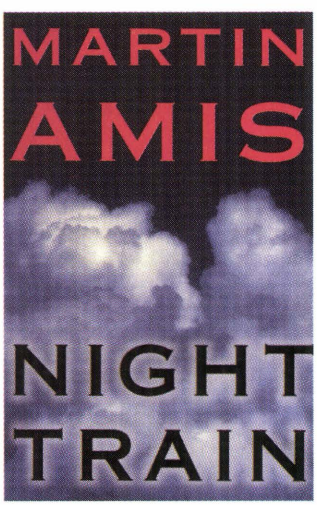
Note to math teachers: Make *Fermat's Enigma* required reading and prepare for more animated discussions of the Pythagorean theorem, et al. If it can make me interested in math, it can convert anyone. Just ask Mrs. Gordon.

—Peter Gwin

FICTION

Night Train
By Martin Amis; Harmony Books; 175 pages; $20
It is true that not everyone likes Martin Amis. But everyone should read him. At least once. Whatever your views on this celebrated yet controversial writer, there are few who dispute that his prose on the page reads like poetry. And his latest offering, *Night Train*, is no exception.

"I am a police," *Night Train*'s central character tells us. "I am a police and my name is Detective Mike Hoolihan. And I am a woman, also." And so Hoolihan relates "an account of the worst case I have ever handled." (And with Amis, the worst must be very bad, indeed.) The case in question is a suicide, but not just any suicide. It is a suicide with complications written all over it. "This was definitely not a yeah-right suicide. This was a no-wrong suicide." In a world of crime, it seems unlikely that such a death can possibly rank as a worst case, but here it is because the victim, Jennifer Rockwell, is the daughter of Colonel Tom, Hoolihan's superior. It also seems inconceivable that Rockwell, a beautiful, brilliant astrophysicist in her twenties, could even contemplate death. "She had it all and she had it all, and then she had some more." Hoolihan knew Rockwell and was fond of her, and what follows is her investigation, which starts out as an inquiry into a possible murder and ends, after the elimination of suspect after suspect, with an attempt at making sense of the death, looking for a motive and other clues.



A longtime admirer of America, citing it as "dynamic and vibrant," it comes as no surprise that Amis has chosen to set *Night Train* in an American city, albeit a fictive one. He himself has said that "it comes quite naturally for me to write in an American voice," and having read David Simon's *Homicide* as part of his research, Amis has successfully created a novel reflecting the world of American police dramas that can be found on television sets worldwide. He plays with police parlance with astonishing ease, "I badgered my way through the tunnel of uniforms around the front door," writes Amis. As for his protagonist being a woman, again Amis has made the transition well, producing a police officer who is both world-weary and wise and who bears the scars of making her living in a man's world, a murder world. "Murders are men's work," we are told, "Men commit them, men clean up after them, men solve them, men try them." Unmistakably the voice of Hoolihan is the voice of Amis.

While *Night Train* may not be a classic whodunit, it is most certainly a classic Amis, guaranteed to satisfy both first time and seasoned readers alike.

—Claire Bose

A Certain Justice
By P.D. James: Alfred A. Knopf; 364 pages; $25
Lock the door, unplug the phone, and for a few hours, turn off the world. Once you start P.D. James' *A Certain Justice*, you will welcome no interruptions.

Baroness James spins an intriguing yarn. She is one of the world's great mystery writers, as well as one of England's most accomplished novelists. A superb stylist, James is able to skillfully blend the complexity of a fine novel with the thrill of the classic detective tale. She is no minimalist, like so many modern crime writers, but is rather an old-fashioned storyteller in the tradition of Charles Dickens.

As ruling grande dame of the British mystery, she excels in her craft and hooks the reader immediately. By announcing in the very first sentence that "Murderers do not usually give their victims notice," James sets the tone of this thriller and gets the book off to a rousing start. By the third sentence, we know that the despicable barrister, Venetia Aldridge, has "four weeks, four hours, and fifty minutes left of life." The author, who paints her characters with a vivid palette, gives us this concise portrait of her doomed heroine: "After her death the many who had admired her and the few who had liked her . . . found themselves muttering

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romance, and good against evil touches a chord with young and old alike. Hugo, too, has fared well, undoubtedly as a result of movie and theater adaptations. *Les Miserables*, for example, has become one of the world's most successful musicals. Both these novelists are likely to see a boost in book sales resulting from the current movie versions of *Les Miserables* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*.

Jane Austen benefited from such screen adaptations a few years ago and has enjoyed a growing readership ever since. Fans have been rewarded again this year with the publication of Claire Tomalin's noted biography, *Jane Austen: A Life*. It is Dickens, however, who remains one of the best-loved nineteenth century British writers. His novels offer a fine reflection of Victorian society and are often revisited. *A Christmas Carol* appears to have more lives than the luckiest of cats and has even received the hallowed Disney treatment (a trend that is becoming more and more common with last year's *Hercules* and *Hunchback of Notre Dame*). *Great Expectations* has been reincarnated twice this year already, first in the modern day movie starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Ethan Hawke and again in Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*, as distinct a Dickensian drama as you can get.

Of course, for true classics, the Greeks champion. Homer is the best-known of all Greek writers, even if next to nothing is known of the man himself. His two epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, still attract a dedicated following, despite their lengthy and foreboding style. Another Greek writer to enjoy favorable reviews recently is Heroditus, whose *Histories* was featured in *The English Patient*.

Early twentieth century literature is renowned for its philosophical works and by three writers in particular: France's Marcel Proust, Germany's Thomas Mann, and Ireland's James Joyce. All three published important and influential books during the first half of the century, all characterized by the minute attention to detail paid to characters and surroundings. It is not surprising then that even more philosophy followed during the middle of the century, especially in France. Existential writers, such as Sartre and Camus, have become synonymous with the cafe society that personified Paris in the 1950s and 1960s.

It is more difficult to gauge the effect contemporary European writers will have in the fu-

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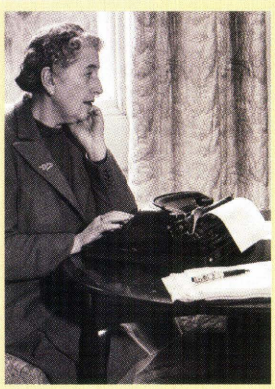
ture. One field where the British seem destined to excel is that of the murder mystery. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may well have been a forerunner to the crown, but Agatha Christie has long been considered the queen of crime. Close to 2 billion copies of her novels have been sold to date, making Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple household names, with Christie's own one-time mysterious disappearance only adding to her mystique. Current favorite mystery writers, whose novels are always eagerly awaited, include Colin Dexter (Inspector Morse), Dick Francis (the racing world), P.D. James (Inspector Dalgliesh), and Ruth Rendell (Inspector Wexford). Of course, it would in itself be considered a crime not to mention the Belgian writer and creator of Maigret, Georges Simenon, who has been a resounding success on both sides of the Atlantic.



The late Agatha Christie's mysteries have sold nearly 2 billion copies worldwide.

All that remains then is to try to identify which of today's writers will produce tomorrow's classics. Roddy Doyle has become immensely popular, as his bittersweet tales of Dublin life, such as *The Commitments* and *Paddy Clarke Ha! Ha! Ha!*, produce simultaneous tears and laughter. Italian Umberto Eco found fame with his medieval mystery *The Name of the Rose*, surely destined to be enjoyed many years from now, and Austrian Christopher Rannemeyer was recently awarded the European Union's literary prize for *The Dog King*, his dark vision of postwar Germany. From the United Kingdom the current favorites are newcomers Helen Fielding and Nick Hornby, who have each managed to capture the lives of thirty-somethings with humor and insight. Both look set to try their luck in the American market when Fielding's superb *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Hornby's *About a Boy* are published later this year.

Difficult to decide on a firm favorite though it may be, one thing is sure: There is certainly an abundance of good writing from Europe, both new and old, to keep even the most avid reader busy. *—Claire Bose*

that it would have pleased Venetia that her last case of murder had been tried at the Bailey, scene of her greatest triumphs, and in her favorite court."

You have a while to guess who will do it. Will it be the slimy Parliament member who's sleeping with Aldridge? Or the intelligent young psychopath Aldridge defended? Could it be a member of chambers in London's Middle Temple? How about the lawyer's own very unappealing daughter? You have lots of time to contemplate since there is no dead body until page 100.

If you are reading this book only because you are enamored of Adam Dalgliesh, the charming poet-detective, you may be disappointed. It appears that James has grown weary of her sleuth, and he makes only cameo appearances. Also, if you like tidy endings, you may be taken aback by the somewhat amorphous conclusion. Remember, however, that the book is entitled, *A Certain Justice*, and as the author points out, "Human justice is necessarily imperfect."

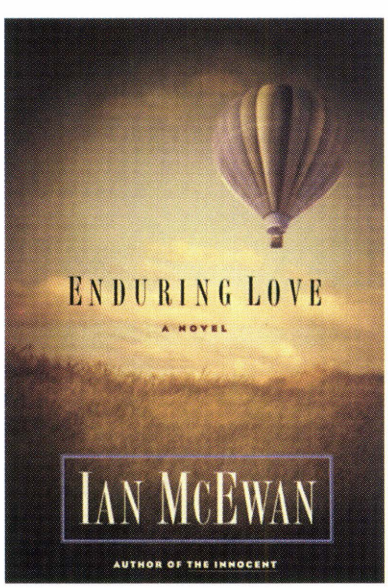
—Peggy van Hulsteyn

Enduring Love

By Ian McEwan; Jonathan Cape; 245 pages; $26

A bizarre accident opens this novel. A man struggles to hold to earth a huge helium-filled balloon buffeted by strong winds in the English countryside near Oxford. In the basket a ten-year-old boy lies terrified. Strangers—hikers, picnickers, farm-workers—rush across the field to help.

In the confusion all the helpers but one let go of the rope and the balloon soars upwards. A solitary man hangs dangling over the earth until he falls to a sickening death.



McEwan's description of this is mesmerizing. Then comes the aftermath. Could tragedy have been averted if all the men had held on ? Who let go first ? It seems we are in for an examination of guilt and panic.

But then the novel takes a sharply different turn into the world of homoerotic obsession. The narrator, a well-known science writer, is pursued by a religious zealot who believes that looks exchanged between them at the death scene amount to a declaration of mutual love.

As the stalker becomes bolder and more obsessed, the writer finds his composure under increasing strain, his marriage at risk, and his proud scientific detachment cracking open. No one will take his fears seriously. He decides to act alone.

Yes, at one level this is the stuff of thrillers. But McEwan has decked out his narrative with enough popular science to make it something of an intellectual challenge as well. And the writing throughout is fluid and immaculate. This is the most lucid and readable so far of the ten novels and short story collections published by McEwan, who is generally ranked with Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, and William Boyd as one of England's most fashionable novelists.

Unlike the others, McEwan's books are firmly rooted in contemporary Europe. In earlier novels and stories he sliced through the surfaces of modern life to expose the physical and mental pain behind much of our twentieth century existence. In *Enduring Love* the horrors are withheld but the book grips with the same urgency.

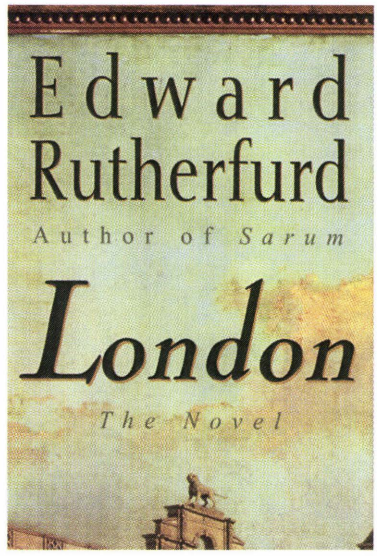
—Alan Osborn

London: The Novel

By Edward Rutherfurd; Crown Books; 829 pages; $26

"This was Londinium: two hills joined by two great streets and enclosed by a wall. Its waterfront was more than a mile long; its population perhaps as much as 25,000. It had already been standing there for about 200 years."

London begins in 54 BC with the majority of this fine novel taking place before the 1700s, although it extends through 1997. Historical characters



and events are interspersed with the fates of six fictional families all living in London. Rutherfurd's trademark, which he pioneered in his first novel, *Sarum*, is to take a single location and present individuals living in this area from the beginning of time until the present day. Sometimes the reader is just getting used to characters when the chapter abruptly ends and the next begins 100 years later with an entirely different cast of people. But there are threads that connect everything throughout this sweeping saga of Europe's largest city.

From the coming of Julius Caesar to the terrible plague to the equally terrible fire to the legend of Robin Hood to the building of the Tower of London to the building of the Globe Theater to the German blitz, *London* presents Shakespeare and Chaucer and kings and queens going about their daily lives alongside its fictional characters.

Rutherfurd's dialogue is very dramatic especially in the early chapters when we read about people with names like Branwen and Segovax coping with the harsh realities of everyday life.

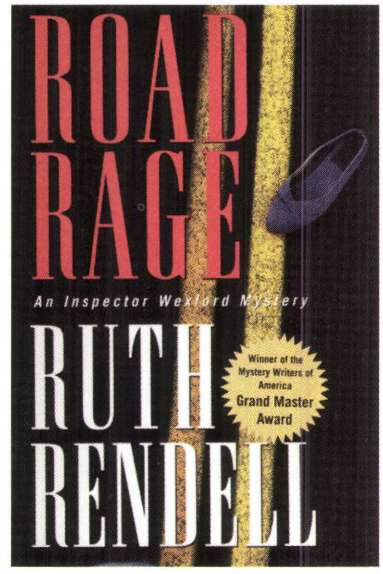
The author is quite witty when he attempts to put historic events in the proper context. "The events of the summer of 1688 marked a watershed in English history, but to refer to them as the Glorious Revolution is rather misleading. There was no revolution; nor was there anything glorious about the business at all."

You have to be in the right frame of mind to read this type of lengthy book that spends most of its pages in ancient times. But if you are willing to take the time *London* is an intriguing novel that really does make Europe's largest city come alive.

—Robert J. Guttman

Road Rage
By Ruth Rendell; Crown Publishing; 342 pages; $25
Ruth Rendell has excelled once again with her latest novel *Road Rage*. An Inspector Wexford mystery, *Road Rage* does not focus on angry drivers, but instead on the animosity fuelled by plans to build a new bypass through ancient forestland adjacent to the town of Kingsmarkham, where this series of novels is set. The proposed new road attracts much attention and draws protesters from all sides of the political and social spectrum, from business magnates to conservative protection groups to environmental activists. Five innocent people are kidnapped by a group of activists, and it is Wexford, whose wife is included in the group of hostages, who is charged with negotiating their release. What follows is a suspenseful drama and investigation into motive and method, with plenty of suspects to keep the reader's attention to the very end.

There is nothing specious in Rendell's plot, and it is clear from the start that her research has been thorough. Any reader familiar with recent attempts to build new roads in Britain will have heard of the emotions that such projects arouse (Newbury is a good example, cited in the book), and so the characters portrayed in *Road Rage* are immediately believable, as are their differing lifestyles. If in her previous Wexford novels Kingsmarkham has seemed a little remote from reality, then this novel paints an amazingly accurate picture of a town thrown into disarray by government and city planners.



Most interesting, perhaps, are the questions that Rendell leaves unanswered. Through her characters, Rendell presents the dilemmas facing environmentally conscious car owners. It is a vicious circle for those who oppose the bypass, but relish less congested roads and abhor the thought of giving up a car altogether, and it is these thoughts that linger after the case has been closed.

All in all, *Road Rage* is an excellent mystery and a riveting read from cover to cover.

—Claire Bose

Travel & Culture

Fifty Years of Europe
By Jan Morris; Villard; 366 pages; $24
It is to Trieste, where the author served in the British occupation army after World War II, that this part-travelogue, part-political analysis of Europe frequently returns. And I must declare up front my own interest in this charming literary device. In this region of much disputed nationality are the roots of my father's family, and it was to the Miramare district of Trieste that our small family gathered from five separate countries in 1979 for one of our rare reunions.

More importantly, the old Hapsburg port of Trieste, from which Maximilian set off on his ill-fated venture to extend his empire to Mexico, is a metaphor for a Europe largely vanished in the madness of the twentieth century—cosmopolitan, civilized, and imperial. Yet, as aware as only a World War II generation solider could be of such relatively recent carnage, the author says the decades since "have turned out to be fifty complex years of return to glory, if not to grace" for a continent now tentatively shuffling to some kind of unity.

Those years also have been anything but placid for the author, who after the war went on to become one of Britain's more renowned journalists. The transformation from Mr. James Morris to Ms. Jan Morris was chronicled in the book *Conundrum*. Volumes of travel

and other books have followed. The onetime British solider and author of a celebrated trilogy on the empire is now a self-described Welsh nationalist and European.

The style employed here is one of quick takes, the indefatigable traveler briskly traversing nearly every nook and cranny of Europe from Scandinavia to the Balkans. Numerous nuggets emerge: that espresso was not created until two years after World War II by a Milanese barman and that Heathrow Airport has its own jail. Morris, who wrote a noted book on Manhattan, finds the right comparison for the towers of Trier: They resemble the superstructures of old New York harbor tugboats.

Alas, this style does not serve the larger scope of this work. The author, who calls herself a pantheist and animist, makes much of the centrality of Christianity for Europe. This is no small topic in a continent of declining church attendance that is grappling with the implications of Islam within or at its borders and whose theologians and citizenry are either confronting or avoiding a critical question of modern history: Christian Europe's destruction of its Jews. These weighty matters do not lend themselves to a hopscotch approach. A brief commentary on the revival of Jewish life in some European cities and some observations on the Holocaust hardly constitute satisfactory analysis.

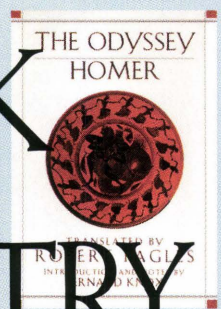
These flaws would have been fatal to a book by any lesser writer. But Morris keeps managing to draw in the curious reader, partly by deft handling of the tension between the component parts of Europe and its whole. In a more united Europe, the author sees a place for minorities such as the Welsh to establish their nationhood, or at least autonomy. Yet as fervently as Morris believes in Europe, she acknowledges that European youth has been united by rock music (a British- American import) and that the strongest force changing European life and manners in the past fifty years has been "the American way." This, of course, raises the only partially answered question of whether the future impulses for unification will come from within or without.

The author squares these circles to some extent by concluding that this fin de siècle Europe has for the first time in its history achieved the single ideology of capitalist democracy. Dull materialism, Morris concludes, has accomplished what the previous ideologies from theocracy to communism could not. It may not be the most exciting of visions. But for Morris's generation, which had to follow its father's into war, and for the two generations that have reached maturity since, it offers more than ample satisfaction and promise.

—Michael D. Mosettig

GREEK POETRY

Makes A Comeback



In the past thirty-five years, the English-speaking public has become more acquainted with modern Greek literature. Often overshadowed by ancient Greek literature (notably Robert Fagles' 1996 best-selling translation of *The Odyssey*), the audience of modern Greek literature has grown since two Greek poets won Nobel Prizes for Literature in 1963 and 1979, respectively.

A diplomat by profession, George Seferis (1900–1970) won the Nobel Prize in 1963. He was, in the words of his student Edmund Keeley, "the contemporary Greek poet who has perhaps made the most of his advantage in being Greek. His poetry fully exploits the survival of mythic gods and heroes in the landscape of modern Greece."

Three rocks, a few burnt pines, a solitary chapel
and farther above
the same landscape repeated starts again
three rocks in the shape of a gate-way, rusted,
a few burnt pines, black and yellow,
and a square hut buried in whitewash;
and still farther above, many times over,
the same landscape recurs level after level
to the horizon, to the twilight sky.

A poet as well as painter and a translator, Odysseus Elytis (1912-1996) won the Nobel Prize in 1979. He was one of the few surrealists in Greek literature, and his work demonstrates a fine balance between the Greek past (classical, but also medieval Byzantine and Christian tradition) and the present. In his celebrated poem "Axion Esti," the reader is swept up by the interchange of Greek landscape with the gods and heroes of the Greek past and the strong religious sentiment:

And ample the olive trees
to sift the light through their fingers
that it may spread gently over your sleep
and ample the cicadas
which you feel no more
than you feel the pulse inside your wrist
but scarce the water
so that you hold it a God and understand the meaning of
its voice
and the tree alone
no flock beneath it
so that you take it for a friend
and know its precious name
sparse the earth beneath your feet
so that you have no room to spread your roots
and keep reaching down in depth
and broad the sky above
so that you read the infinite on your own

For further reading see, *Modern Greek Poetry: Voice and Myth* (by Edmund Keeley, Princeton University Press; 232 pages; $40); *George Seferis: Collected Poems* (edited and translated by Edmund Keeley, Philip Sherrard; Princeton University Press; $15); *The Collected Poems of Odysseus Elytis* (edited and translated by Jeffrey Carson and Nikos Sarris; Johns Hopkins University Press; 528 pages; $35).

—Angeliki Papantoniou

EUROPE asked each of our correspondents to profile a popular writer from his or her country. However, we begin our literary tour at the Hague where our correspondent Roel Janssen writes about authoring his own bestseller.

THE HAGUE

CONFESSIONS OF A FINANCIAL FICTION WRITER

For most newspaper reporters, writing a novel is a distant dream. Instead of pounding out articles that are thrown away at the end of the day, it seems the ultimate challenge to write something that will last.

But how does one go about writing fiction and what should the story deal with?

Late 1995, reading a thriller on a transatlantic flight, it occurred to me what might be the secret formula for successful fiction. The novel had to deal with a topic that should be in the news by the time the book would be published. Instantly, such a plot occurred to me.

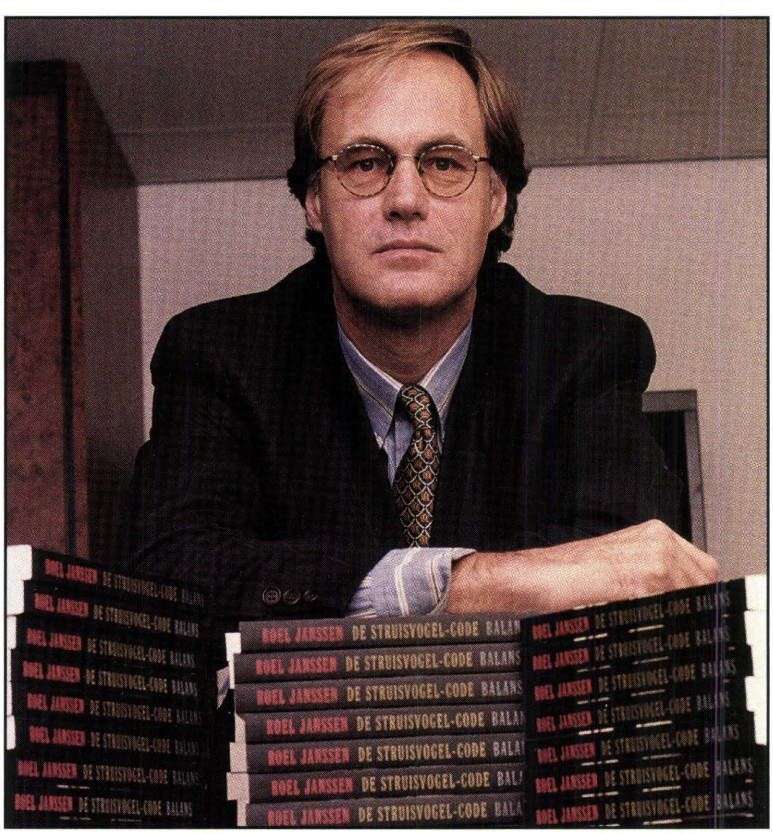
Over the years, I had become an admirer of financial fiction writers like Paul Erdman and Michael Ridpath. As a reporter for a Dutch daily, I had covered Europe's forthcoming economic and monetary union in Europe since before the Maastricht Treaty. By 1997-98, EMU would certainly be in the news. That gave me about a year to write a book.

From my reporting, I knew a lot about EMU, but how could I shape that into fiction and, my ultimate desire, into something that might be considered a thriller? I worked out an idea and started checking the feasibility of it with a retired director of the Dutch central bank, who had been one of my most valued sources when he was still dealing with the European Monetary System. He got so excited that he helped me with valuable hints that ended up in the final version of the book.

With a short outline in hand, I approached a publisher who showed keen interest in my idea. He warned me that writing dialogue between fictional characters is entirely different from quoting sources in news articles and suggested that I write a few test chapters to try out fiction writing. I wrote a few chapters and sent them off. He got back to me and said he liked the result. "Now you're hooked on doing it," he said.

I got a standard contract with a minimal advance on 10 percent of the sale price for the first 5,000 copies sold, 12.5 percent for the next 5,000, and 15 percent for more than 10,000 books sold.

It took the first half of 1996 to collect information, check locations, and do further research. Then, the arduous process of writing and rewriting began. To the chagrin of my children, I started occupying our home computer during the weekends. Though my editors were extremely forthcoming in granting me some spare time, summer vacation was largely spent writing.



Roel Janssen, *EUROPE*'s Hague correspondent, recently published his first novel, *The Ostrich Code*, which has sold 15,000 copies to date.

Basically, the book is about a speculative attack on the French franc just before the start of the monetary union in 1999. The sudden turmoil in the European currency markets threatens to derail EMU at the last minute, making the nightmare scenario of the financial authorities come true. The book's two "heroes," male and female bankers, start investigating and find out what is happening. True to my journalistic background, I interwined the plot with non-fiction details about the workings of financial markets and the monetary union.

The manuscript was finished by the end of 1996, but it lacked a title. At the very last minute, we came up with *De struisvogel code* (The Ostrich Code), making a reference to the Australian ostrich called an "emu."

The first copy was presented to Wim Duisenberg, then the president of the Netherlands Central Bank and currently the president of the European

Monetary Institute in Frankfurt. In my plot, I had built in a controversy about who would become the first president of the European Central Bank. In a twist of life imitating art, Duisenberg and the French central banker, Jean-Claude Trichet, are currently competing for that job. There have been other turns I came up with in the plot that have since occurred in the course of real events, which validated the blurb we printed on the book's back cover: "Fiction that could become reality."

After the book came out, a television current affairs program did a story about it, which boosted sales. Within a week, the first print run of 2,500 copies was sold out. A second and third edition followed. The press wrote generally positive reviews, though some raised doubts about my efforts to include "erotic scenes" in the story. I must admit that I find it easier to write about currency speculation than about speculative sex.

The Ostrich Code picked up even more steam when financial institutions began ordering the book. Some of them asked me to come speak as a draw for various conferences and seminars on the monetary union. One morning, I spent four hours signing a thousand copies in the hall of a major investment fund that had decided to give my book to all its employees. Thanks to this topical attention to the euro, the sixth edition was out by the end of last year. Almost 15,000 copies sold—certainly beyond my wildest imagination.

Book sales in the Netherlands increase every year, and more and more titles find their way into bookstores. Most books, however, never get beyond their first printing and sell less than 2,500 copies. Only a limited number reach bestseller status. The best-selling authors are usually the same established names of Dutch literature or non-fiction writers. Selling more than 50,000 copies in the Netherlands is considered a huge success.

Unfortunately, efforts to have *The Ostrich Code* translated into a wider-read language than Dutch have failed so far. English and German publishers turned the book down. But a new opportunity arose early this year when the film rights were sold to a major Dutch producer.

Writing fiction has been tremendously enjoyable, and *The Ostrich Code* has brought unexpected effects. It has given me a larger public exposure than I had before when I was only a newspaper journalist. It has also opened new doors and given me new contacts. And though I still enjoy writing articles for my paper, I must admit I'm already thinking about my next financial thriller.

—Roel Janssen

LONDON

JEFFREY ARCHER

The books of Lord Archer of Weston-Super-Mare have been published in sixty-four countries in twenty-one languages, with international sales surpassing 120 million. You might know him better as best-selling author Jeffrey Archer.

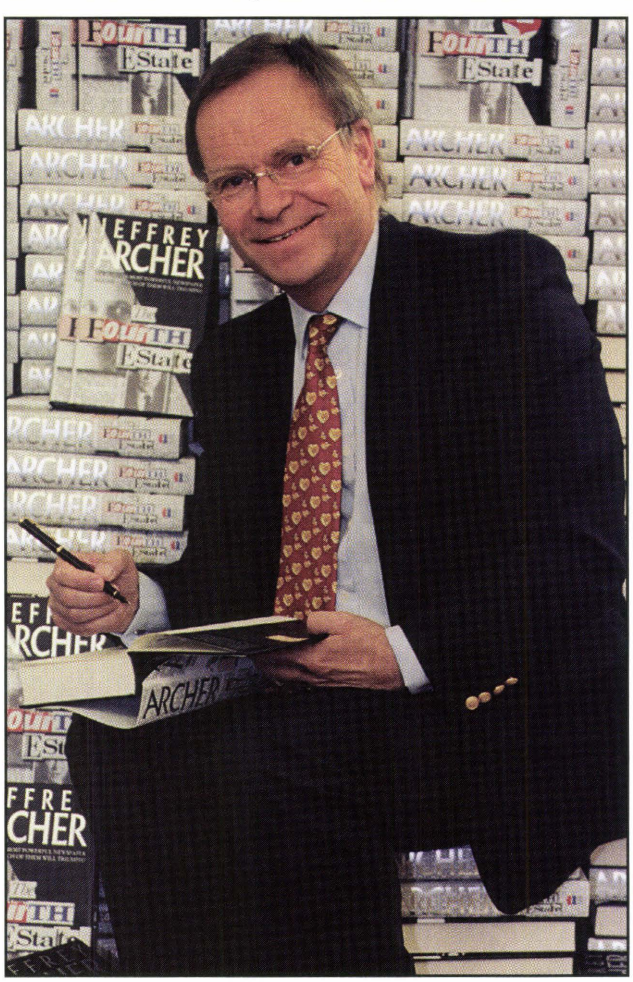
His latest blockbuster novel, *The Eleventh Commandment*, a fast moving thriller about the Russian mafia set in Washington, St. Petersburg, and Sydney Australia is due to be published in May.

Archer went to see the head of the CIA to check some of the facts, such as the number of cars in a presidential motorcade. He delightedly quotes the CIA man as saying, "You've made twenty-six mistakes, which we've corrected, but we've stolen two of your ideas and one is now company policy."

It is a cliché, but true, to say that Jeffrey Archer's own life reads like one of his novels. He has variously been a first class sprinter who ran on the British athletics team, the youngest-ever elected member of Parliament, nearly bankrupt, a best-selling author, a member of Margaret Thatcher's inner team of advisors, and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party.

Lord Archer, as he now is known, having been made a life peer by Queen Elizabeth in 1992, was born in London in 1940 and grew up in Somerset. Being in the public eye began early for him as his journalist mother featured her entrepreneurial, scampish son in a weekly column in the local paper.

Archer is a very hard-working and very disciplined writer. "I wake up at 5 am and start writing from 6 am to 8 am. I have a two-hour break and then write from 10 am to noon. I have a two hour break for lunch, work from 2 pm to 4 pm, take another break and work from 6 pm to 8 pm.



Sir Jeffrey Archer always goes abroad to write his first draft of a novel.

"I always go abroad to write my first draft of a novel. It takes six weeks, approximately 300 hours." The subsequent drafts he does at his home in Cambridge. "I do seventeen drafts, approximately 1,500 hours. I've had this routine for twenty years."

"I've never had writer's block. When people ask me for advice, I tell them they must do draft after draft."

This discipline plus his ability to take risks helped him become the youngest member of the Greater London Council. It was taking a risk which also forced him to resign his seat in Parliament on the verge of bankruptcy.

Because he could not get a job, Archer decided to write a novel. *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* sold more than 2 million copies. The very appropriate theme: the revenge of four people bankrupted by a financial con artist.

A series of bestsellers followed. *Kane and Abel*, a saga about the battle between a Boston Brahmin and a Polish immigrant. Then, drawing on his own experiences, *First Among Equals* followed the fortunes of four ambitious members of Parliament.

Honor Among Thieves, an international thriller published in 1993, was a number one bestseller. *The Fourth Estate,* published in 1996, chronicles the rise of two ambitious press barons, based on the lives of Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell.

One of his plays ran for 600 performances in the West End. Two collections of short stories have recently been reissued in a single volume.

Jeffrey Archer has also been active all his life in charity work. His boundless drive and enthusiasm and his understanding of the need to get the endorsement of the famous have made him phenomenally successful at raising money for good causes.

In 1961, only twenty-one years-old, he got the Beatles to endorse an Oxfam campaign. His close relationship with the late Princess Diana arose because of charity work. "Diana and I were a great team. She knew how to use me, and together we raised millions."

One interviewer, noting his luxurious penthouse on the river Thames and his estimated wealth of $40 million, had the temerity to say he was lucky. "Lucky," he retorted. "I'm not lucky. This is earned. This is years of hard work. I've earned this."

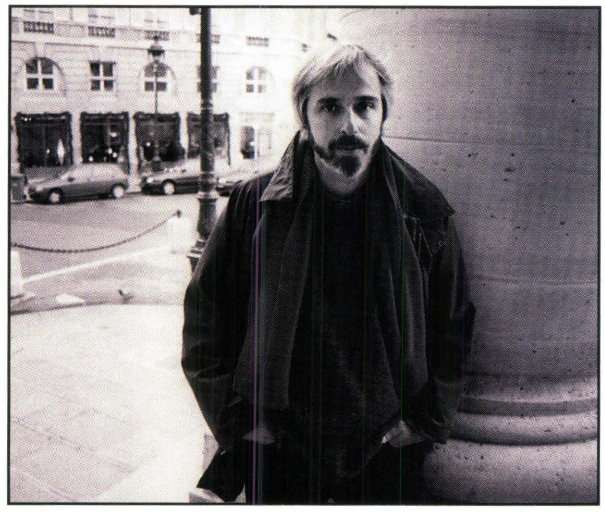
And it is not over yet. Archer wants to be mayor of London. If this May's referendum approves the re-creation of this position, he will put his writing on hold for two years to fight the campaign. Who dares say he cannot win?

—David Lennon

PARIS

PHILIPPE DELERM

The biggest book in France all last year is actually very small, an unassuming little volume just ninety pages long. In thirty-four brief chapters it describes some of life's little pleasures and takes one of them as its title, *La Première Gorgée de Bière* (The First Mouthful of Beer). Its author, Philippe Delerm, is equally modest. He is a junior high school teacher in a small town in Normandy, where he has been writing contentedly, in relative obscurity, for almost twenty-five years. The dozen books he has published in that time have earned him some good reviews, and even one literary prize, but none have ever been a runaway success. He did not expect *La Première Gorgée* to be any different from the rest. It had a first print run of 2,000 copies, and he would have been quite happy to sell around 500 of them.



Philippe Delerm, a junior high school teacher from a small town in Normandy, turned life's little pleasures in *La premiere gorgee de biere* into a runaway hit.

The slim little book proved to be a sleeper. After an article appeared in *Telerama* the up-market television and arts weekly, and Delerm himself was invited as a television guest by the most influential man of letters in all of France, Bernard Pivot, it quietly climbed to the top of the fiction lists and stayed there. It has now sold 400,000 copies and is still going strong, and this year ten foreign

editions will be published, with Picador having acquired the rights for the American translation.

Exactly why this humble little tome has made such a big impact remains one of life's little mysteries. It arouses no grand passions, does not espouse any noble ideals, just describes tenderly, in crystalline prose, a series of simple delights, like eating a hot croissant on the way home from the baker on a crisp winter morning, or shelling peas in a cool kitchen on a summer's day. Many of the tiny treats are related to food and drink, like that first cool, delightful swallow of beer when you are thirsty, or the sticky pleasure of buying a Turkish delight from an Arab grocery store. *La Première Gorgée* is very French in that respect, and at the same time universal. Who has not inhaled the warm, autumnal smell of ripe apples, tried reading on the beach, talked to someone you love on the phone, or driven through the night alone?

It is tempting to suggest that this homely inventory of fleeting joys has made such a lasting impression in France because the country is currently in crisis and people need the consolation of a "comfort book" into which they can slip like a cozy pair of slippers. Delerm is not overly fond of this sociological kind of analysis of his diminutive bestseller. He is not a great believer in sweeping statements or, for that matter, anything on a grand, heroic scale. Reaching for the stars, he thinks, is a recipe for unhappiness. "Resignation, I believe, means dreaming about so-called great things that are completely unattainable," he says. "Doing that, is, in fact, resigning yourself to living a mediocre life. But to find the things that are considered mediocre not mediocre at all, that to me is the opposite of resignation."

In the past, he has written weightier volumes on themes like lost love or the quest for happiness, a book on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and another on the Swedish painter Carl Larsson. Nevertheless, his special talent is describing the unremarkable remarkably well.

His latest book, *Il avait plu tout le dimanche* (It Rained All Sunday) is written on the same small scale as *La Première Gorgée*. Its hero is a solitary little man, Arnold Spitzweg, who works in a Paris post office, likes shopping at the supermarket, prefers riding on the bus instead of taking the metro, and enjoys the occasional meal out. Delerm chronicles Arnold's mundane, minuscule existence in gentle, loving detail. His aging, unadventurous bachelor may not be wildly happy, but at least he is contented, and Delerm believes contentment to be more reliable than happiness. "Happiness is something else entirely. It's a stroke of luck, something extremely fragile that can vanish from one moment to the next. You can enjoy small pleasures even when you're unhappy, but happiness usually depends on the people you love. And when you love someone, you're always taking a risk that you can't control at all."

Delerm himself is content to savor life's small pleasures. He finds being a best-selling author a bit perturbing because it has given him less time to teach and write. He admits that he is looking forward to life being the way it was before, when he could come home from school, have lunch with his wife, and go for a stroll in the forest. In the afternoons he likes to write—the old-fashioned way, with pen on paper. It is difficult to imagine him ever contributing a chapter on the bliss of "Surfing the Internet." The world Delerm offers his readers is not high-tech or high drama but reassuringly low-key and familiar, like having a beer with an old friend.

—Ester Laushway

Austria's short-story crime writer, Helga Anderle, writes crime stories from a woman's point of view.

VIENNA

HELGA ANDERLE

Helga Anderle is a crime writer who doesn't care who did the killing.

"'Whodunit' doesn't interest me at all. I'm more interested in why quite normal people in everyday life have something happen that leads them to murder," said Anderle, a short story writer whose works have appeared in a number of US and European collections.

Last year, Anderle wrote a portrait of Vienna, touching on various crime stories set in the city, for *Crimes of the Scene: a Mystery Novel Guide for the International Traveler* by Nina King, an editor at the *Washington Post Book World*.

The previous year, she contributed the story "Saturday Night Fever" to *Woman on the Case*, an anthology edited by one of America's most popular crime writers, Sara Paretsky.

While American detective stories

often hit it big in the European market, it's far less common to have a European author published in the United States. But Anderle's work as vice-president of the International Crime Writer's Association gave her a toehold in the market.

Anderle edited the first international women crime writers anthology, drawing together stories from such diverse countries as Cuba, Russia, and Algeria. The collection was published in Vienna, but Anderle couldn't drum up interest from the United States.

Frustrated, she contacted Paretsky, president of the group Sisters in Crime, to ask why Americans were so "insular." Paretsky said Anderle should send stories from a handful of the women, as well as works of her own, gaining her entree into Paretsky's anthology.

The Austrian also has been a success at home. Her short story collection *Sag beim Abschied leise Servus*, (Say Goodbye Softly), which was released in 1995, has sold more than 15,000 copies in German-speaking countries.

Like many authors, Anderle started writing at a young age. Her first article was published in a literary supplement of a newspaper when she was still a teen. "I thought, 'gee, now I'm a writer'," Anderle recalled, "but I realized quite soon it's not so easy to succeed as a writer."

As an adult, she worked for various international organizations and traveled extensively, but writing was in her blood. So she turned to journalism to pay the bills, writing on women's issues and cultural affairs for a variety of publications.

Twenty years ago, she began writing traditional crime stories with her husband, Mike Andrews. But solving the crime and punishing the perpetrator weren't her style. Instead, she wanted to write crime from a woman's point of view. Her protagonists are usually women who go from "being victims to becoming active persons."

Despite the underlying theme, her stories aren't heavy works. Her humor and light touch drew the attention of Austria's state broadcaster, ORF, which asked her to write the script for a crime comedy for Saturday night television. Anderle is scheduled to wrap up the first three segments this summer.

She also expects to have another short story collection published soon, and her agent keeps clamoring for her to write a novel. "I always write little things. That's why I never get to write a novel," Anderle said with a laugh. "Besides, then I would have to solve the case."

—Susan Ladika

LUXEMBOURG

ROGER MANDERSCHEID

In Luxembourg the language you write in tends to define you as an author. Traditionally, German language books have largely treated the universal themes of alienation and protest. French literature is a "francophile love affair." And then there's Luxembourgish, the national language.

It needs to be said that Luxembourgish, although a distant cousin of German, is largely incomprehensible to anyone outside Luxembourg, and we are talking here about a country with barely 400,000 inhabitants. If you can sell 2,000 copies of a book in Luxembourg you have a bestseller.

Jul Christophory, author of several books on Luxembourg culture, deplores the fact that authors writing in Luxembourgish are "stubbornly unknown beyond the reaches of the country."

"This is all the more regrettable because it is just these authors who tackle most perceptively the specific issues of Luxembourg's cultural heritage," Mr. Christophory wrote recently. The poets, dramatists, and novelists using Luxembourgish over the last century and a half "have contributed most to widening the readers' field of perception and to scrutinizing underlying inarticulated strata of national feelings and reactions," he says.

Mr. Christophory, a linguist and former director of his country's national library, has become more optimistic about the national literature in recent years. Younger writers have been turning to Luxembourgish "so our national language has at last fully assumed its national role as a means of defense against a francophile upper class, against the temptations of excessive germanization among the middle classes, and against overwhelmingly English technical jargon," he says.

One book, however, over all others has struck a blow for Luxembourgish and made its author the grand old man of Luxembourg literature. This is *Schacko Klak* by Roger Manderscheid, published in 1988 to immediate critical and popular acclaim.

The novel describes life in the village of Itzig in Nazi-occupied Luxembourg between 1937 and 1945 as seen through the eyes of a young boy. Manderscheid was born in 1933 and the narrative is clearly based on his own life.

The title, *Schacko Klak*, can be literally translated from Luxembourgish as "the bang made when a collapsible top hat is squashed flat" and is a dig at the German army. The book, which is filled with mockery and irony, touched a chord across the generations in Luxembourg and spurred readers to see the war in a new light.

Swedish author Astrid Lindgren (right), of Pippi Longstocking fame, was joined by two of her fans, Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria (left) and Linnea Roxenhielm, who plays Pippi on stage.

Manderscheid wrote two sequels to his groundbreaking work, continuing the rites-of-passage theme through the fifties and sixties. These proved less popular.

But *Schacko Klak* did provide a further shot in the arm for the Luxembourgish language in 1990 by inspiring one of Luxembourg's most successful films (bearing the same name) of recent years.

And there was a nice touch last year when *Schacko Klak* became one of the first books ever to be translated from Luxembourgish into another language. Manderscheid began his career writing in German but then switched to Luxembourgish as better suited to the message of his novel. It is ironic that the book will now find a wider readership through translation—into German.

—Alan Osborn

STOCKHOLM

ASTRID LINDGREN

Maybe you know her as Pippi's mother. She is Astrid Lindgren, author of the Pippi Longstocking children's book series, some of the most widely translated and distributed books in the world.

Lindgren, who celebrated her ninetieth birthday last year, began writing about the red-haired, wiry, freckle-faced Pippi in 1944. Today, she still recalls exactly how Pippi came to be:

"In 1941, my seven-year-old-daughter Karin was sick with pneumonia. Every night, when I sat with her she demanded, 'tell me a story!' And one night, when I asked her what I should tell, she said, 'tell about Pippi Longstocking'."

A few years later, when Lindgren herself was lying in bed recovering from a fall, she decided to put Pippi on paper as a tenth birthday present for her daughter. Thinking that other children might also like to read about Pippi's adventures, she sent the manuscript to one of Sweden's leading publishing houses. It was promptly rejected.

But a year later, Lindgren's manuscript won first prize in another publishing company's children's book contest. The Pippi books have now been published in more than sixty languages, and Lindgren has traveled around the world to meet her young fans. The Pippi tales have been turned into a play, movies, and television shows, and Pippi fans can visit her theme park in Lindgren's hometown of Vimmerby, in southern Sweden.

While Pippi may be the most famous of Lindgren's characters, she's far from the only one. Lindgren's personal favorite is a naughty little boy named Emil, who loves to play pranks.

Although written for children, Lindgren's books have much to say to adults. Through her stories, she addresses the injustices that children face and the insensitivity of adults who try to force children to fit into conventional molds.

And Lindgren has taken her children's crusade beyond the printed page. She is the chief patron of the Astrid Lindgren Center for Pediatrics and Pediatric Surgery, whose goal is not only to provide medical treatment for children, but to explain in ways they can understand why care is needed and how treatment works.

Apart from children, Lindgren's main cause is animal rights. She was instrumental in getting laws changed in Sweden so that animals raised for food could no longer be confined in pens without any space to move. She has lent her name to other animal rights groups working for the same goal as a European Union standard.

One of Sweden's most beloved authors and winner of dozens of international honors, Lindgren, nonetheless, has been passed over for one award: the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swedish Academy, which awards the prize, is known for sometimes slighting authors whom members consider to be too commercially popular. But a group is now lobbying for Lindgren and has enlisted international support via a World Wide Web site in English.

While her own vision has become increasingly poor in recent years, Lindgren still looks at the world through children's eyes and will continue to be known as Pippi's mother for many generations to come.

—Ariane Sains

MADRID

ARTURO PEREZ REVERTE

For years, Spaniards knew Arturo Perez Reverte from the nine o'clock evening news on the state television channel. His thin bespectacled face peering out at the viewer from some hot country where people were shooting at one another—El Salvador, Chad, the Persian Gulf.

He was Television Española's "fireman," the reporter who always gets sent to this week's conflict in some hell hole to explain the method to the madness and relay the body counts as refugees, ragged guerrillas, or government troops trudge by in the background.

Today, Perez Reverte is Spain's premier novelist with two books on the bestseller list and the adoration of critics. Last November his latest book, *Limpieza de Sangre* (Cleaning of the Blood), wracked up sales of several hundred thousand shortly after its publication, a rarity in Spanish publishing circles.

With this work, Perez Reverte takes the swashbuckling title character from his 1996 bestseller, *El Capitán Alatriste*, and involves him in a plot about rescuing a novice nun from a convent in the seventeenth century.

Born in 1951 in the Mediterranean coastal city of Cartagena, Perez Reverte studied political science and journalism at university.

At the age of eighteen, he began his career as a reporter and eventually ended up working for a Madrid daily that sent him off to cover the hot spots in places like the Western Sahara, Eritrea, and the Falkland Islands, then graduated to television.

In the early 1980s, he turned to literature while still working for state television and in 1986 published *El Husar* (The Hussar) set in the Napoleonic era and followed that two years later with *El Maestro de Esgrima* (The Fencing Teacher), which takes place in the nineteenth century.

"Spanish history is very negative, but the fact that the peoples of Spain share a common memory is positive and also goes toward explaining our present," the author told a Barcelona newspaper.

Several of his novels have been made into films, he has won a number of European literary awards including France's prestigious Jean Monnet Prize, and Perez Reverte's publishers, Alfaguara, say there are several more volumes in the Capitan Alatriste series in the works.

Clearly, we'll be hearing more from this former fireman.

—Benjamin Jones

BRUSSELS

JEAN STENGERS

Most European countries can boast at least two or three authors who write about historical subjects in a lively and entertaining way but whose scholarship leaves a great deal to be desired. Others are impeccable scholars but write in a dry-as-dust fashion guaranteed to put off all but the most masochistic readers.

Belgium's finest living historian is different. Jean Stengers is a total master of his subject and is able to present his findings in a highly readable manner, creating a true rarity: a popular historian who is esteemed by his academic peers. Now seventy-five years-old, Stengers retired some years ago from the Free University of Brussels but continues to produce a stream of publications from his old, central Brussels house, which is bursting at the seams with books and documents.

He has lived all his life in Brussels, except for the war years when the university closed down rather than accept German orders. He completed his degree at Liege University, choosing as the subject for his dissertation *The Jews in the Low Countries During the Middle Ages*. He says he was "perhaps unconscious" of the fact that this was a highly sensitive subject to choose during the German occupation, though he was appalled by the antisemitic propaganda which was on sale at his local news agent at the time.

Stengers is best known for his study of the role of the Belgian King Leopold III during the Second World War, *Leopold and the Government*. When I asked him for his considered verdict on Leopold's conduct, he replied, "My view is that no criticism can be directed against him for any lack of patriotism, nor for any lack of intelligent analysis of the events. Leopold thought that, on the continent, Germany was the victor and

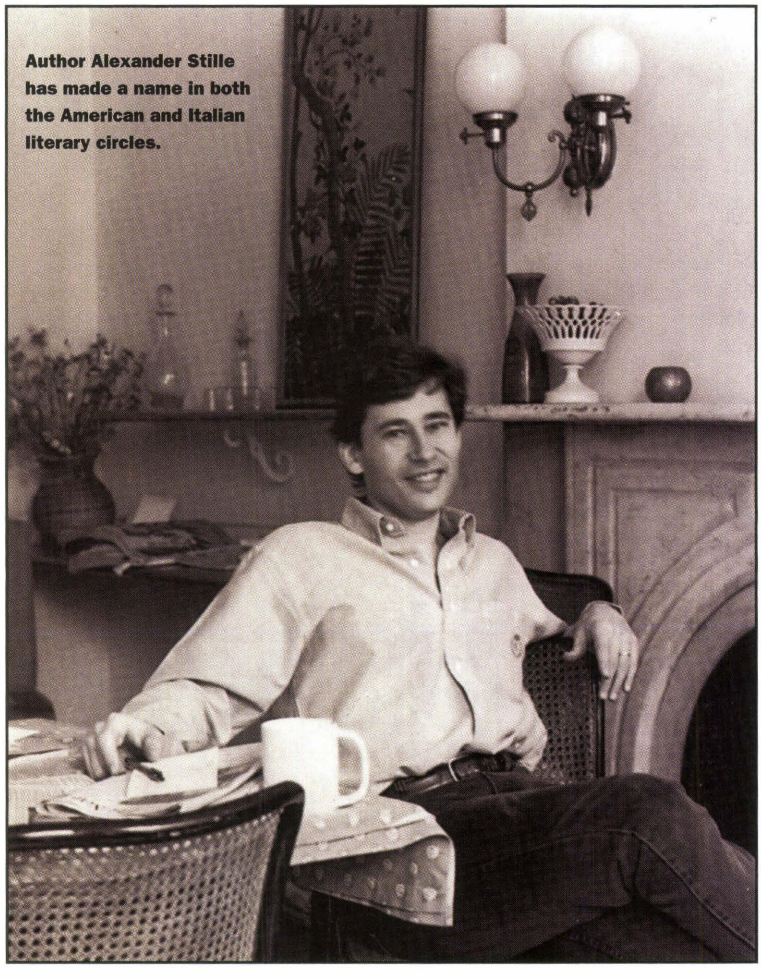
would be the master of Europe for many years to come. If things had been rational—if Hitler had not committed the folly of attacking Russia—we would still be under German rule now, and Leopold's judgment would be vindicated."

Leopold's errors, in Stengers' view, consisted of ignoring his ministers after they had disagreed with him ("bad politics"), and in agreeing to meet Hitler in Berchtesgaden. Even so, these were not the decisive factors in his loss of the throne Stengers decided, after carrying out a Gallup-style survey some years ago. "If Leopold had not remarried, he would have remained king of the Belgians," he said without hesitation, identifying the key factor in the postwar referendum that provoked his abdication.

Stengers has continued his study of the Belgian monarchy by producing his monumental work *The Actions of the King in Belgium since 1831*, a detailed study of every constitutionally significant act of the six kings and one regent who have ruled Belgium since it became independent.

Stengers writes in French, and all his books have been translated into Dutch but unfortunately not into English. This is a great loss for potential Anglo-Saxon readers, but it is compensated to some extent by the willingness of the Belgian historian to spend long hours patiently explaining the idiosyncrasies of Belgian history in good idiomatic English to journalists and other curious inquirers like myself.

—Dick Leonard



Author Alexander Stille has made a name in both the American and Italian literary circles.

ROME

ALEXANDER STILLE

Alexander Stille might just be the perfect writer to explain to American readers what's been happening in Italy over the last few years. Possessing an insider's knowledge of both the Italian and American culture, Stille pursues stories with zestful determination, presenting clear informed accounts. It probably doesn't hurt that the writing business is in his blood.

His father, the late Hugo Stille, made a name for himself as a political correspondent in the United States and went on to become the editor of the highly respected Milan daily, *Corriere della Sera*. The senior Stille was born in Russia to Jewish parents before fleeing to Italy in the early part of the century. Hugo and his family endured a second exile when the rise of fascism forced them to flee to New York.

Having grown up in the US, Alexander has been "commuting" to Italy as his father once did to the United States. From 1992 to 1993, he reported from Italy for US newspapers and magazines. His first book, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, about the fate of five Jewish families during the fascist years, won him the *Los Angeles Times* book award for history.

After having immersed himself in his Jewish background in New York, Stille went to Italy to answer questions posed by his Italian roots. His second book, *Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Italian Republic*, published two years ago asks questions that are highly relevant for the future of the Italian state.

The "excellent cadavers" of the title refer to two Italian prosecutors, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, who fought the Mafia with unprecedented fervor and discovered its connections with some elements of the Christian Democratic-led government. The two were eventually murdered. Their brutal assassinations acted as a catalyst (along with the subsequent massive nationwide investigation into corruption known as the "Clean Hands Operation") for the fall of the so-called Italian First Republic.

Stille writes that after World War II the Christian Democrats were kept in power in Italy out of fear of the country's powerful Communist Party. Four decades were more than sufficient time, Stille maintains, for the Christian Democrats to pass from "patronage to corruption and from corruption to Mafia." Stille believes that much of the Mafia has been broken but that the organization is not dead. Mafia murders continue, although the rate is down.

The question, he concludes, is whether the new political parties that have risen from the old will have the strength to reject the "help" offered by organized crime. This is a question not to be underestimated now that some leaders of the old Christian Democrats—currently split into three small parties—are making efforts to reunite.

Stille has not limited himself just to Italian subjects. In a February issue of the *New Yorker*, he wrote about the Ganges River, the religious importance it continues to hold for Indians, and its looming environmental crisis.

He may also enjoy a higher profile when HBO broadcasts the film version of *Excellent Cadavers*, currently in pro-

duction with actors Chazz Palminteri and F. Murray Abraham.

—Niccolò d'Aquino

DUBLIN

MARIAN KEYES

The bookjacket note is very brief: "Marian Keyes lives in Dublin after nine years of working in London. She began writing short stories in September, 1993. Her first novel, *Watermelon*, was published in 1995 and her second, *Lucy Sullivan is Getting Married*, in 1996. *Rachel's Holiday* is her third novel. Marian Keyes married in 1995 and is now a full-time writer."

The bare bones. No hype, no flamboyant prose to describe the third-biggest selling Irish writer, who is already snapping at the heels of Maeve Binchy and Roddy Doyle.

Her books are popular in the widest sense of the word, up there among the bestsellers in every bookstore and in every airport terminal.

Keyes writing style is quick-witted, funny, perceptive, and has made her a new publishing phenomenon.

Interviewers have been beating a path to her door in recent times and always remark that she looks much younger than her thirty-four years, surprisingly so when one considers her down-and-up life experience.

Marion McKeone of the Irish *Sunday Business Post* says it's difficult to know where Marian Keyes' life begins and fiction ends. "She is the stuff of her books; the books are the stuff of her experience."

True? Yes. Less than four years ago she was stomach-pumped after taking a cocktail of paracetamol and sleeping tablets in London. After that botched suicide attempt, she checked into a Dublin rehabilitation center for a six-week drying-out program. Sober, and back in London, she found time on her hands and began writing.

Today, the University College Dublin graduate, who comes from a middle-class background, is a teetotaler, successful, wealthy, and working on her fourth novel.

Her devoted husband, Toby, is described by Keyes as "my best friend, soundboard, psychiatrist, lexicon, and punching bag" and "an Irishman trapped in an Englishman's body."

From a London bed-sit, the couple moved to an apartment overlooking Dublin's St. Stephen's Green and recently acquired a large house in the seaside suburban town of Dun Laoghaire.

Success came swiftly for Marian Keyes. After that first novel, *Watermelon*, she negotiated a $700,000 three-book contract.

The publisher's faith was rapidly rewarded. Her second novel, *Lucy Sullivan is Getting Married*, was the top seller in Ireland for ten weeks and third in Britain.

And *Rachel's Holiday*, a 700-page account of a bright young Irish woman who is one day living the high life in New York and finds herself locked-up in a Wicklow rehabilitation clinic the next, has been on the Irish bestseller lists for several months and is also doing well abroad.

The heroine's addiction, rehabilitation, and self-obsession read like chapters from Keyes' own tortured life. "Yeah, that was me," she says.

And Keyes readily admits she has drawn heavily on her personal experience. "I knew I had to write it. I didn't care. But it was so painful, rehashing certain aspects that I'd rather forget."

The scar tissue of her previous lifestyle runs through all her books to date. Her fourth novel, she says, will be about "other people's lives." But the subject—a tale of two women from County Clare and their homosexual friend—sounds like another bestseller in the making.

—Mike Burns

BERLIN

SIEGFRIED LENZ

The impact of Germany's twelve years of Nazi dictatorship has been a recurrent theme of Siegfried Lenz's novels, short stories, and plays. When West Germany arose from the rubble of World War II to prosperity, a new literature came into being. It is linked indelibly with the works of three writers: Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, and Siegfried Lenz. For years they embodied a triumvirate of German conscience—voices of remembrance, humanity, morality, integrity, and admonition. Lenz's literary work won him numerous awards. In 1988, he received the German book trade's peace prize for his contribution to coming to terms with the recent German past and the problem of German identity.

Lenz's most important novel *The German Lesson* strikingly deals with this problem. The 700-page book exhibits the same virtues that readers admire in his short stories—tact, precision, understatement, and a keen sense for the effective use of pathos and emotion. Perhaps most importantly, the book revolves around a powerful theme. The central character, Siggi Jepsen, is a juvenile delinquent serving time in a reformatory for a series of art thefts. He is ordered to write an essay about "duty and responsibility" in which he relates his criminal behavior to his childhood experience during the Third Reich. He tells of the persecution of an avant-garde, anti-Nazi painter, Nansen, who lived in his small village of Rugbüll. Siggi's father was the village policeman who had to enforce the Nazi ban on the artist, whom Siggi loved like a grandfather. He helped the painter hide his non-conformist paintings from the authorities. Siggi's postwar thefts of art from museums are not only a subconscious attempt to protect the works of his childhood idol, but also an expression of revolt against a father who was the local incarnation of Nazi injustice and dictatorship.

The novel became an immediate bestseller and established Lenz's reputation as one of the most important and influential of the postwar German writers, one who dealt with the problems of duty, obedience, xenophobia, democracy, war and peace, and morality.

Lenz was born in 1926 in the town of Lyck in Masuria, East Prussia, the son of a customs inspector. He was drafted into the German Navy in 1943 and served as an ordinary seaman on a heavy cruiser. He deserted shortly before the end of the war and was hidden by Danish peasants. In 1945, he enrolled at Hamburg University where he majored in philosophy and English language and literature with the aim of becoming a schoolteacher. But he dropped out in 1948 to become a trainee at the daily newspaper *Die Welt* and eventually became one of its cultural editors. He left the paper after the publication of his first novel in 1951 and has been a fiction writer and essayist ever since.

Of his influences, he said in a recent interview that after World War II "young German writers were influenced by Hemingway and others—Faulkner, Sartre, Camus—whom we were unable to read before. They represented entirely new worlds to us. They were our

eye-openers. They determined the problems and conflicts that we accepted as our own and influenced our perspectives. But we also distilled all this with the specific experience of a writer in Germany for we were influenced by what we heard, saw, and read in Germany and about Germany and about what had happened in the world as a result of the war started by Germany." He added that he was resolved from the outset not to go far afield or seek exotic situations in distant lands to write about but rather to deal with what interested and concerned him in his immediate surroundings. A decision that is summed up in his motto: "Write what you intend to know."

—Wanda Menke-Glückert

ATHENS

PHAIDON TAMVAKAKIS

Recent years have seen a publishing boom in Greece. Novels are appearing by the hundred, and for the first time, a handful of Greek writers can hope to earn a living from their work. Readers' growing appetite for fiction is also fueled by increasing numbers of Greek translations of novels which have acquired an international reputation.

Phaidon Tamvakakis, whose family moved from Alexandria, Egypt to Athens when he was a child, is among the young writers reaping the benefits of Greece's brighter literary environment. He was just twenty-two when his first novel was published. "We—myself and a small group—were in at the start. Publishers were looking for fresh blood. Before that, we felt, you had to be older than seventy and have spent years in jail because of your political beliefs before a publisher was interested," he says.

Tamvakakis won recognition with his second novel. *Ta Topia Tis Philomelas*, about a boy growing up in the Athens suburb of Kifissia with an adopted sister—a mute pianist who becomes internationally acclaimed—and a mysterious friend involved in drug smuggling. It is loosely autobiographical, he says.

Tamvakakis escaped the isolation from US and European influences felt by many Greek writers by living among foreigners and studying at Greece's American college. "Kifissia was a place where expatriate families lived. I had, still have friends from all over the world. They brought a piece of their own culture with them to Greece."

Though he knew he would stick to writing, Tamvakakis studied finance in the UK and started an investment company in Athens with two friends in the late 1980s. Now he manages Alpha Trust, a leading Greek investment company which specializes in equities listed on the Athens stock exchange.

Tamvakakis works in an upstairs office in a 1920s mansion belonging to a Greek shipowning family from Alexandria, with spectacular views of the Acropolis, but he writes at home after work and on weekends.

This mix of finance and literature, he says, fits neatly into the traditions of Greece's mercantile intelligentsia.

"Many Greek writers have been merchants, and it gave them valuable experience to draw from. In this job, you learn a lot about people's psychology. When they take decisions about money, they're revealing themselves."

But finding time for writing has become more difficult as Alpha Trust has grown. It took Tamvakakis six years to finish his fourth novel. *I Navagi tis Pasiphae*, published late last year. "I thought of giving up everything and writing it full time. It's a much more ambitious book," about three travelers on a yacht headed for Tahiti who land on a little-known South Sea island. "In a way it's a traveling in time story, about how people react to present situations and how they deal with their pasts."

Tamvakakis is also the translator into Greek of John Fowles, the British author of *The Magus,* a 1970s bestseller set on a Greek island. His connection with Fowles has helped his own writing. "I get a lot out of talking to him. We discuss ways of dealing with characters, handling situations. If someone's been there before you, it helps."

Tamvakakis's work has not yet been translated into English; although he speaks fluent English, he says it would be impossible. *Philomela* was to be translated into French, he says, but the project fell through "because Jane Campion's award-winning film "The Piano," about a mute pianist living in New Zealand in the nineteenth century, had come out, so there wouldn't be any chance of selling film rights. It was an odd coincidence."

—Kerin Hope

HELSINKI

MÄRTA TIKKANEN

I write for myself," says Märta Tikkanen, who at sixty-two is one of Finland's most popular authors. "At least that's the basis, but then you reach a deeper level inside yourself and you simply cannot stop. I really don't know who's writing then," she adds.

Tikkanen has a background as a philologist, teacher, and journalist. She started writing seriously in her thirties. Womanhood is a central theme in her work, but the protagonists can also be men. "Yes, I'm a feminist," she says, "but in the real and original meaning of the word. It simply stands for the obvious, that any person has the same rights and responsibilities regardless of sex. To this day, I have not met one single Scandinavian or Nordic soul who would disagree. Getting further south, one tends to be forced to add argumentation behind this view," she adds with a shadow of a contempt in her smile.

Märta Tikkanen is a person who wants to have influence. Her writing is a fruit of that desire—at least to some extent. Her international breakthrough, *Man Rape*, is a clear statement of that kind. The book (and later movie) describes the cruel solitude one rape victim has to deal with. Since she cannot count on any real help in getting justice, she decides to execute her own revenge—by raping a man. The story, which is spiced with sometimes even grotesque humor, is far from being biased. It is rich in nuances and quite healthy reading for both sexes.

"It is not enough to tolerate your fellow man. You must respect him or her too," she states.

She backs up her words with action, serving as chairwoman of the Finnish Salman Rushdie Committee, which supports freedom of speech and human rights causes and is named for the British author who was "sentenced" to death by the late Iranian Ayatolla Khomeni for writing *The Satanic Verses.*

Märta Tikkanen is among the three most translated Finnish authors ever. She is published in twenty-three languages and two of her books have been issued in the United States. A remarkable achievement considering that she writes in Swedish, a minority language in her own country.

The mother of four is perhaps best known for her book, *The Love Story of the Century,* which deals with the struggles of loving an alcoholic. Of that book, Tikkanen says, "I simply wrote it for my late husband."

—Thomas Romantschuk

LISBON

RITA FERRO

The Portuguese like to describe themselves as a nation of poets, but that doesn't mean novels don't sell well when they hit the right chord. That seems to have happened with *Uma Mulher Não Chora* (Women Don't Cry), the latest work by Rita Ferro, which sold 17,000 copies in its first three months and has had to be reprinted six times. In tiny Portugal, whose literary market is tinier still, that's no mean feat.

Ferro, who has had four books published, focuses in her latest novel, on the pains and pleasures of life for Ana, a divorced woman of forty who divides her time between work, two children, friends, and lovers. Nothing unusual in that, you might say. But the book has been hailed by critics as an important one, for the almost clinical way that it dissects the myth of romantic love and suggests its near impossibility in that age where women often face a battle to survive while filling the traditional roles of mother, wife, and lover.

According to Ana, "they just didn't make true love any more, but the imitations were so good that most people could no longer tell the difference."

Like much of the book itself, the title is strongly ironic. Of course women do cry, Ferro seems to be saying, not least to wield one of the weapons they have used for centuries to entrench their influence over men. The trouble is, the weapon loses its effectiveness in a world when women and men find themselves fighting over the same turf.

Her travails echo the experience of middle-class women in a city—Lisbon—and country where the position of women is full of contradictions: Portugal has one of the highest rates of female employment in the EU, yet one of the lowest divorce rates, and the strong influence of the Catholic Church vies with the radical ideologies promoted by the 1974 revolution.

It's territory that Ferro, a forty-three-year-old, working mother of two must know well.

After the success of her novels, Ferro is branching out. She is currently working on a television film for the state broadcaster RTP, a work of fiction in the form of a series of letters jointly written with her daughter, a play, and a photo-biography of her parents.

—Alison Roberts

COPENHAGEN

JANE AAMUND

A Danish-American love story has topped the bestseller lists in Denmark for the past six months and sold more than 80,000 copies. Titled *Colorado Dreams*, it has been written by journalist and author Jane Aamund, sixty-one-years-old, praised by the critics and with a sales performance that has won her the Golden Laurels of the Danish book trade, which is thriving in the age of multimedia.

Though presented as fiction, no one doubts that the book is a thinly veiled autobiography describing the emotional climax of, in many respects, a charmed life. Ann, who is married a second time and responsible for five children of her own and her second husband's children from former marriages, lives in a plush suburb north of Copenhagen.

But while accompanying her veterinarian husband to a conference she meets an American veterinarian, Bob, also married and with children. They have an affair which turns into a consuming passion that is highly unusual for persons of mature age with large restraining family networks.

Four years later Ann moves to Colorado to live out her passion with Bob, but after a while she realizes that apart from the interior decorating and the outward trappings of religion there is little difference between upper middle class suburban life in Denmark and the United States. While a testimonial to the cultural affinities of Denmark and the US, this obviously signals that the plot has no happy end. That makes it different from most best-selling love stories.

What makes the book and its plot attractive to Danish readers, especially the female audience, is that it portrays a woman with a very strong personality and the will and means to act in a manner that is much more frequently associated with male behavior. Denmark has the highest rate of female participation in the labor force of any country of the European Union, and emancipation is now much less a matter of economics than social norms.

Colorado Dreams is another successful novel for Jane Aamund, who has been a prolific writer in the Copenhagen daily *Berlingske Tidende* for almost thirty years, specializing in lifestyle stories before that term became fashionable. In February, she was voted Woman of the Year in Denmark by the mostly female readers of the popular Danish weekly *Soendag*. The magazine cited her openness about her cancer as a major reason for this choice, and she donated the money that was part of the award to a cancer charity.

Jane Aamund has had cancer since she was thirty and has often written about her personal experience. The latest recurrence of the disease was last fall, when cancer was also diagnosed in her husband. But her fight to stay alive while raising her children and living her own life to the fullest has commanded general respect and admiration. But sympathy does not sell 80,000 books in a market of 5 million people. Perhaps her real accomplishment is to prove to herself and others that intellectual perseverance is an important element of physical survival.

—Leif Beck Fallesen

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NEWSMAKERS

He is being billed as a German **Tony Blair** or even a Teutonic **Bill Clinton**. He's **Gerhard Schroeder,** the opposition Social Democrat candidate challenging **Helmut Kohl** in next September's elections. He certainly has little in common with the German chancellor. Kohl takes his vacations in the Austrian Alps; Schroeder likes the chic Spanish island of Majorca. Schroeder's favorite dish is pasta arrabbiata; Kohl goes for pig's stomach. German voters may be ready for a change, say pollsters, who give the fifty-three-year-old Schroeder a good chance of defeating Kohl. But the Social Democrat remains an enigma to many.

"He is a man for all seasons," says Bonn political pundit **Thomas Kielinger**. In his youth Gerhard Schroeder was a left-wing activist, but since then he has steered a more moderate course, becoming the premier of the powerful state of Lower Saxony in 1990. Schroeder is a friend of business, serving on the board of directors of car giant Volkswagen. But he also appeals to the working class, backing the state purchase recently of a threatened steel firm.

On foreign affairs there is not much to distinguish Schroeder from rival Kohl. He says Germany should play a more important role in world affairs. If anything, his recent tour of US businesses showed him to be more America-friendly than the European-minded chancellor. While softening his formerly anti-euro line, Schroeder still wants to see a strict adherence to European Monetary Union criteria before Germany gives up its beloved deutschemark. But can Schroeder solve Germany's chronic unemployment problem? He says it is his number one task and calls for greater flexibility in the workplace. While some fear he will echo the make-work policies of the Social Democrat leadership, others think he will set the right tone for recovery. "He will change the atmosphere," says the editor of Berlin's *Tagesspiegel* newspaper, **Peter Stuetzel**.

Schroeder is certainly changing the way German politics operates. His telegenic good looks, modern appeal, and emphasis on image would fit right into an American or British election campaign. "I am ready" is the slogan of Schroeder campaign posters across Germany. And hungry for power, too, crack his critics.

The long-suffering Social Democrats, out of power since the early eighties, might just have a winner this time.

—Greg Palkot

• • •

Even before it was finished, the new European Parliament building in Brussels became known as *le Caprice des Dieux* (the Folly of the Gods). There were two reasons for the baptism: The huge glass structure is shaped like a popular French cheese of that name, and its construction costs, according to the latest estimates, have shot way past the original mark to a spectacular $1.66 billion.

The cheesy nickname is likely to stick. Workmen barely had time to move out before they were called back. Water has been leaking from the lofty ceiling of the atrium, transforming its shiny marble floor into a health hazard. One MEP (member of the European Parliament) has already taken a tumble on the slick surface.

The problem appears to stem from on high. It is believed that careless crows, who like to swallow pebbles, are dropping their stony snacks while flying over the parliament. Apparently, this bird buckshot has shattered several glass panes.

As if crow bombing runs were not bad enough, the parliament's human residents are not all behaving impeccably either. A linguistic "incident" threatened when French MEPs heard that the European Parliament's president, **José María Gil-Robles**, was planning to speak in English to the king of Belgium, **Alfred II**, for the official inauguration of the building. Señor Gil-Robles deftly calmed tempers by making his speech in French, German, Dutch, and his native Spanish. He praised the parliament for having evolved in the forty years of its existence from a purely consultative body into an assembly "which enjoys a large proportion of the powers required for it to make effective exercise of the vital function of democratic control over the activities of the Community." He cannily added, "The use of eleven languages in our daily business represents an asset which we have no desire to lose."

Gil-Robles has given further proof of his diplomatic talents by persuading the Brussels civic authorities to allow the construction of a 1,800-space parking lot for the parliament's 627 members. Originally, MEPs had been promised an overly generous 2,300 spaces, which the city then cut back to 900. Thanks to the parliamentary president's intervention, a compromise was reached that has no one feeling they have lost too much ground.

With parking outside the vast new parliament settled, one MEP has come up with an original way of getting around inside. Dutch MEP **Florus Wijsenbeek** rides his bike along the endless corridors of power and parks it in his office shower. He has received a stern letter telling him that "cycling inside the European Parliament will not be permitted in the interests of the dignity of the institution," but he has ignored the warning. Not only does he believe that his way of "going Dutch" is the best way to cover the interminable distances, he even plans to propose that "they install cycle lanes along the miles of corridor."

• • •

Probably only Santa Claus receives more mail than European Commission President **Jacques Santer** does. Every year, people throughout the EU and from outside it, too, send him an average of 8,000 personally addressed letters. Those figures do not include the torrent of formal EU correspondence that floods his desk, or the paper mountain of petitions, form letters, and preprinted cards sent by multitudinous lobby groups.

A crack team of official helpers sort, file, record, and cross-reference all the letters and pass many of them on to the particular Commission representative who specializes in whatever issue is being raised. As often as is humanly possible, Santer takes the time to answer letters himself, above all if they are from youngsters.

Last year, for example, a French schoolgirl sent him a handwritten note asking for help in finding a name for her school. It had to be a woman, no longer living, who had made a significant contribution to the European ideal. Santer wrote back, suggesting the former French author **Louise Weiss**, who had presided over the inaugural session of the first directly elected European Parliament in 1979. She had died in 1983, at ninety-years-old, as the oldest MEP of the time.

By the way, the largest number of letters from within the Union comes from the UK, where letter writing is something of a national hobby.

—Ester Laushway

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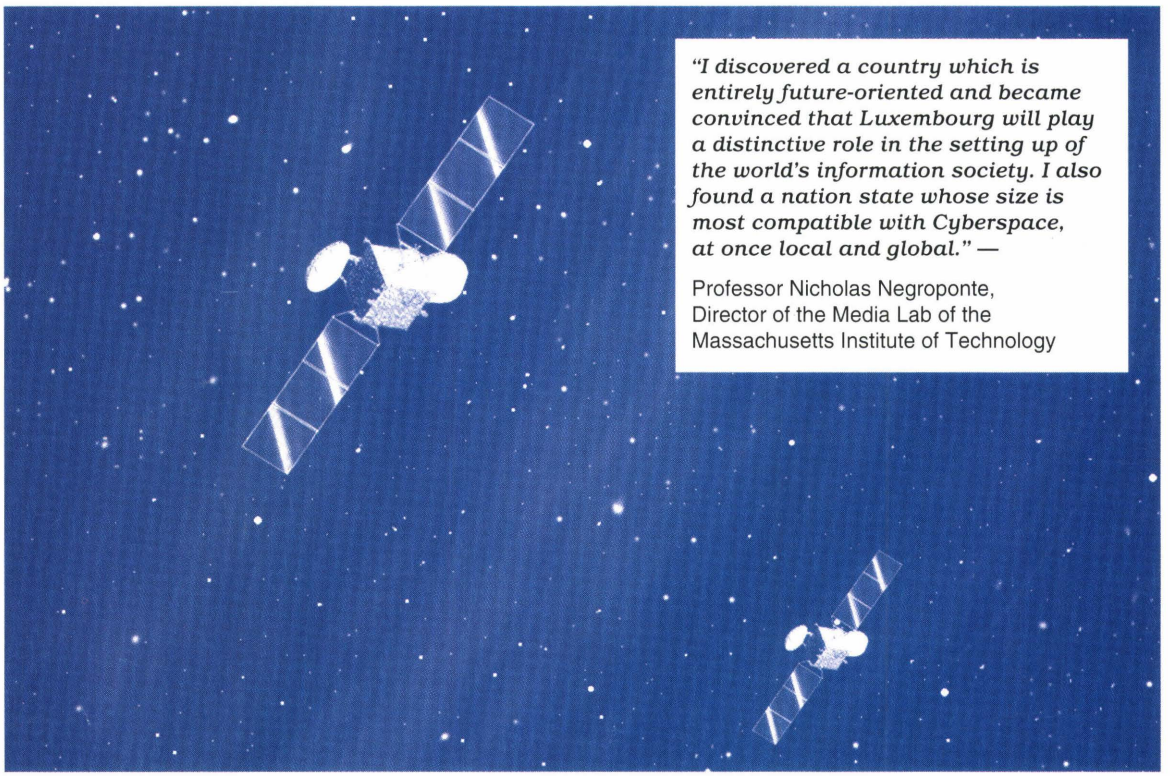

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