

Symposium

that we grotesquely describe as the “mainstream.” It thinks nothing of lying to the American public in the service of its foreign ambitions. (These are mere “mistakes” to be mildly regretted after the fact.) It cheers military campaigns that create widows and orphans in unimaginable numbers, all dissenters from this policy being, of course, America haters. Do I want to see an alliance against this horror show? More than anything in the world.

THOMAS E. WOODS JR. *is the author of nine books and co-editor of We Who Dared to Say No to War: American Antiwar Writing from 1812 to Now.*

John V. Walsh For too long we have all been Sunni and Shia. We in opposition to war and empire have been defeated because we have been divided. The deepest fissure is loyalty to the political parties of empire, Democrat or Republican, in place of a unifying commitment to the principle of nonintervention. As long as this crippling rupture persists, we shall have empire and its necessary acolyte, war, with all the death and destruction the latter entails.

When Bush II was in charge, the progressive wing of the Democrat Party properly railed against him for his war on Iraq. But with the Obama regime, these same critics have fallen silent or have muffled their criticism, turning it into an impotent, reverential plea to do the right thing.

There is an urgency to forge a unified antiwar program for at least two reasons. First, the march of technology is such that war in the future may well threaten the human species and perhaps all of life, a truth to which Einstein long ago called our attention. Certainly it can bring suffering of untold magnitude, greater by far than that of World War II. Second, the main target of the empire’s activities now and a large part of the rationale for its depredations in Central Asia is China. America’s policy is to allow no other country to approach it as the world’s number one economic and military power. But if China is to emerge from poverty, given its huge population, it will necessarily stand on an equal footing with the U.S. or even eclipse it in output and wealth. Conflict with China, especially using India as a U.S. proxy, would mean untold death and destruction, and no one knows where such a conflict would lead. It must not happen.

What then does it take to bring Left and Right together? First, a maturity that allows one to form alliances based on certain goals without regard to others. This is, after all, politics not theology. Second, confidence. If one feels that one’s views will not stand up to contact with those of differing philosophies, then nothing is possible. The third requirement is mutual respect

instead of stereotypes. If these can be achieved, there is no reason for failure.

JOHN V. WALSH *writes for CounterPunch.com and Antiwar.com.*

John Lukacs When the Soviet empire collapsed in 1989, the reactions of most Americans were commendable. They did not gloat over the troubles of their adversary. The few exceptions to this overall benevolence were the nationalist “conservatives” and so-called neoconservatives. The former kept shouting, “We won!”—meaning, of course, the Republican Party. The latter, on the ascendant, declared that the time had come for many things, including the rubbing of Russia’s nose in the dust. Yet the great majority of the American people were indifferent to those sentiments. Even the first Bush’s victory in the Gulf War left them largely unmoved. So in 1992, most voted for a Democrat to become their president.

Throughout the 40 or more years of the Cold War, the Democrats had seldom, or perhaps never, proposed a foreign policy markedly different from the Republicans. The main reason was their fear of not seeming nationalist enough. Meanwhile, the Republicans completed their transformation into a nationalist and populist party. As early as 1956, their platform called for “the establishment of American air and naval bases all around the Soviet Union.” (This was the party that liberals still called “isolationist.”)

Then in 1992, this country acquired a president who was almost entirely uninterested in foreign affairs. He appointed Madeleine Albright as secretary of state, and she committed what was probably the gravest mistake in the foreign policy of the Republic in more than 200 years—the extension of the American military alliance system after 1997 to a dozen countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Lithuania, many of them abutting the very frontiers of Russia.

This was part of a foreign policy that has by now established more than 700 bases across the globe and that an entire American generation—liberals and conservatives alike—has come to take for granted. This mental condition constrains even the current president.

So my melancholy answer to the question of whether Left and Right together can change our foreign policy is no. But I conclude with one of Rochefoucauld’s great maxims—things are never quite as bad, or as good, as they seem. In other words, history remains unpredictable. Not much comfort that, but there it is.

JOHN LUKACS *is the author of 30 books, including the recent Legacy of the Second World War.*

America First

By Louis Auchincloss

Louis Auchincloss died on Jan. 26 at age 92, having long outlived the world he chronicled. "The tragedy of American civilization is that it has swept away WASP morality and put nothing in its place," he wrote.

A Wall Street lawyer until 1987, Auchincloss produced 30 novels and 17 volumes of short stories. Scrawled in longhand from his Park Avenue apartment, they took place in what he called the "comfortable" world—not obscenely rich but able to send a son to Groton and Yale, to spend summers on Long Island and holidays abroad.

If Auchincloss's prose seemed upright, so were his subjects. The usual American hero is singular: a gunslinger, a gambler, a maverick making good against long odds. But Auchincloss's focus was on a whole class already arrived, and his approach wasn't mythic so much as anthropological.

"It is thought to be irrelevant, a faded and fading genteel-Gentile enclave," his cousin and legal client Gore Vidal wrote, "when, in actual fact, this little world comprises the altogether too-vigorous and self-renewing ruling class of the United States."

Since then, whether by shame over its privilege or desire to enjoy the good life, Auchincloss's establishment has surrendered the heights. Prominent names and private clubs remain, but the sense of social responsibility that once accompanied elite status has quietly gone out. The title of Auchincloss's final book—Last of the Old Guard—well described the author himself.

In his memory, we present this short story taken from the collection Skinny Island: More Tales From Manhattan.

TIME HAD BEEN HEAVY on the hands of Elaine Wagstaff ever since she had abandoned her lovely pink house on the Avenue Foch and scuttled back to New York before the Nazi hordes. She used the word "scuttle" only to herself, for only to herself was she obliged to admit its appropriateness. She could never quite overcome the feeling that she should have stayed on and joined the resistance, though the resistance of a septuagenarian American widow would hardly have saved her beloved France. But wasn't there always an element of scuttling in any self-removal in the face of danger, particularly when so many brave friends were left behind? Elaine had hardly relished seeing the Rolls-Royce of the Windsors on the road before her; it was hateful to be identified with the international trash rushing to safer harbors to pursue their *dolce far niente*. Privilege in defeat makes for unlovable bedfellows.

This sense of unjust exemption from peril and hardship continued even more intensely after she was settled in the comfortable third-floor bedroom of her daughter Suzannah's brownstone of East Seventy-third Street, from the bay window of which she could gaze west to Central Park as she sipped her coffee on chilly fall mornings in 1940. Certainly she had to concede that Suzannah was doing her best to take the blame for that exemption upon her own square shoulders. Never in a long lifetime of being

spoiled had Elaine felt quite so "nannied" as she did under her daughter's unceasing ministrations.

"But, Mother darling, no matter what you say, you've been under far greater strain than you can possibly realize. Oh, I've talked it over with Doctor Jennison! He quite agrees, and he has many refugees among his patients."

"I am not exactly a refugee, Suzie. I am still, after all, an American citizen, and not a poor one, either. It isn't as if I were costing anyone anything, and generous as you and Peyton have been—oh, generous to a fault!—I count on making it up to you."

"Oh, Mother! You know we'd never take a penny. Peyton would be mortally insulted."

"Well, we needn't dwell on it. After all, everything I have will soon enough be yours. It would be robbing Peter to pay Paul."

"Mother, don't talk that way! You're going to live to be a hundred. Anyway, you've got to take it easy until you have your strength back. Crossing the Atlantic through submarine packs has to take a toll on the nerves."

Suzannah looked as if it would not have taken much toll on her nerves. She was all Wagstaff, all her father's child, with a round flat face, a tiny mouth and owlish eyes under thick black brows. Elaine never ceased to wonder that her own family, which produced so many long-necked, slender beauties, so many "Boldinis," as the saying used to be, should have ended with Suzannah. But Suzannah, after all, was 50; she did not need allure. Would allure have even suited the wife of a lawyer as important