

Book Review – Europe, America and the Intellectual Cold Wars

V. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy and Diplomacy* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, Oxford 2001) pp 373 + xx; Cloth \$65.00 – ISBN: 0-691-07479-8 / Paper \$21.95 -- ISBN: 0-691-10256-2.

By John A Harrington*

A. The Present of the Past

Two years ago Carlo Giuliani was shot dead while protesting against global capitalism during the G8 summit in Genoa. The period since then has seen the first attack on the mainland of the United States for nearly two hundred years and the greatest deployment of US military power since the end of the Vietnam War. It has also seen the largest political demonstrations in post-Second World War Europe. Terror struck America and America is striking back. A multitude rallied for peace, but it failed.

Under pressure of imminent war, and prodded by the Pentagon, ruling elites in the rich world divided. The opinion columns of newspapers, the airwaves and the “blogosphere” of the Internet were the scene of bitter contest. Struggles between the war party and its opponents were commonly articulated in national and continental terms. The bulls of the American right contrasted a vital, neo-liberal United States with a tired and decadent Europe. Not only were Americans from Mars, they were increasing in number and in prosperity. Gibes about cheese eating and wine drinking were tokens of protestant America’s worldly asceticism; a hardness which set its face against the unreformed concupiscence of the French Venus. Britain and the newly liberated and liberalised Eastern Europeans were willing satellites of Mars. The comet Berlusconi too was drawn into its orbit.

The coalition of the unwilling often expressed itself in a familiar anti-American style. Waging war was naive; an understandable though deplorable response to

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grievous injury. A nation in shock was being led by its child-President to further, avoidable traumas. The figure of the frontier served as an alternative trope. Fired up on the Old Testament, the original settler nation would wreak vengeance on the ingrate natives. Metropolitan Europe, distant parent to the frontiersmen, knew better. It had ruled the dark world for longer. It had learned the lessons of its own twentieth century darkness. War had been ousted by culture and law, the absence of which was the very definition of the frontier. The lacerations of Spring 2003 may have healed. It is more probable that, merely bandaged, they remain prone to spasmodic eruption. They are not simply the wounds of diplomatic skirmish. They are also the tokens of a cultural struggle between Europe and America that dates back at least a hundred years.

B. The Cold War Career of Shephard Stone

For Antonio Negri the Bush administration has inverted the old maxim of Clausewitz: politics is now war by other means.¹ If culture is politics then, it too is war by other means. As much is borne out in Volker R. Berghahn's intriguing book, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*. The book charts the politics of culture in Western Europe from 1945 to the early 1970s. It follows the early battles between pro- and anti-Stalinist intellectuals, through to the rise of the European New Left in the late 1960s. This history is refracted through the career of Shepard Stone who worked as a cultural *impresario* on behalf of American political interests in these years. As such Professor Berghahn profitably diverts our gaze away from the substance of high cultural debate and on to the quotidian efforts of the loyal brokers and networkers who sought to determine this struggle in America's favour.

Born of Russian Jewish parents in New Hampshire in 1908 Shepard Stone graduated from Dartmouth College in 1929. He moved to Berlin and wrote a doctoral thesis on recent German history and foreign policy at the University there. Witness to the terminal crisis of Weimar and the rise of Nazism, Stone nonetheless developed a deep affinity with German high culture. He remained a Germanophile throughout his life. The murder of his European relatives by the Nazis and the perils faced by his German Jewish in-laws failed to extinguish his belief in another, "decent Germany" obscured by fascism. Indeed, after a stint at the *New York Times*, he returned with the US Army in 1945 and was charged by the military high command with remoulding German journalism and newspaper publishing in the American manner. Contacts made during this period proved invaluable in his later work at the Ford Foundation and the International Association for Cultural Freedom, with which Professor Berghahn is chiefly concerned in his book.

¹ A NEGRI, IL RITORNO. QUASI UN' AUTOBIOGRAFIA 229 (2003).

Stone moved to the Ford Foundation in 1952 where he was in charge of the section on International Affairs (US and Europe). The Foundation, its coffers swollen by the post-war consumer boom, was at the time preoccupied with supporting educational efforts within the United States. If there was an interest in matters foreign it was directed toward the de-colonising territories of Asia and Africa, rather than Europe. Stone's great success within Ford lay in channelling tens of millions of dollars toward European activities. The chief object of this beneficence was the *Congress for Cultural Freedom* (CCF). Founded in 1950, the CCF was an extensive network of anti-communists including such luminaries as Raymond Aron, Stephen Spender, AJ Ayer, Ignazio Silone and Karl Jaspers. Many of their number were former communists shocked by the work of Stalin's henchmen in Spain and by growing revelations of murder and persecution in the Soviet Union. On the whole they can be divided into two groups. First, true Atlanticists who embraced American values as those of the free world. More commonly British or American, these intellectuals promoted a post-ideological, technocratic liberalism in the manner of JK Galbraith and Daniel Bell. Second, conservatives who, while sceptical of American mass culture, turned to the US as the only defence against the wanton totalitarianism of the East. These were more commonly continental Europeans, such as Aron and Isaiah Berlin, able in their own minds to see a darker side of the human soul invisible to the relentlessly optimistic Americans. The CCF organised regular conferences, initially on themes in the humanities, with especial emphasis on political philosophy. Later gatherings were concerned with the idea of a free science, under the particular influence of the exiled Hungarian philosopher Michael Polanyi. The Congress for Cultural Freedom also supported highbrow reviews such as *Preuves* (Paris), *Encounter* (London) and *Tempo Presente* (Rome). Gramscians of the right, they sought through a long war of position to dislodge Soviet Communism from its exalted place in the minds of many Western European intellectuals. Jean Paul Sartre was a noted target, but so too was the more diffuse and organic programme of the Italian Communist Party.

In his work with and on behalf of the CCF Shepard Stone can at a stretch be seen as a Cold War Madame de Staël. He helped to establish a cultural space in which creators and thinkers could flourish without interference from the state. As such it was intended to mimic the bourgeois cultural sphere of the eighteenth century English coffee houses or the salons of nineteenth century Paris. In form as well as content the CCF was a standing reproach to Soviet cultural tyranny. It served to protect the intellectual from the state. But it also insulated him from the iron law of the market and the demands of the despised masses. There was one significant and fatal difference however. Stone dispensed not his own bounty, but that of the US government and the wealthy private foundations that supported its cold war objectives.

These sources of CCF patronage went unquestioned in the fervid atmosphere of the early 1950s. By the mid-1960s, however, the contradiction between government money and the free artist, which it was meant to support, became unsupportable. Revelations in the American press in 1966 and 1967 showed that the CCF and its associated publications had been supported not only by the Ford Foundation, but also by the CIA. Many formerly willing writers and artists felt compromised by these revelations. Ford itself feared that it would become known as a front for the CIA's clandestine cultural programmes. The Congress was wound up in 1967 and replaced by the *International Association for Cultural Freedom* with Stone at its head. That organisation also failed to prosper. European conservatives could not agree with Anglo-American liberals. Funding dried up. By 1974 at the invitation of Willy Brandt and other German politicians, Stone had moved to take up directorship of the *Aspen Institute* in Berlin. Funded by American philanthropy and the German taxpayer this was a similar, if more modest forum for intellectual exchange. Stone seems to have seen out his career happily in Berlin, his "zweiter Heimat" (second home). Indeed, towards the end of the book Professor Berghahn reproduces a jolly picture of Stone and his wife with Dr Henry Kissinger at an Aspen Institute dinner in 1978; reminding us perhaps of the role of hard as well as soft power in Cold War politics.

C. The Real Intellectual Cold Wars

As the book makes clear the intellectual Cold War with the Soviets was won by the mid-1950s. The true and enduring Cold War was that between pro-and anti-American intellectuals in Western Europe. Professor Berghahn provides a useful genealogy of this conflict, which, as we have seen above, continues to this day. Many European intellectuals of left and right in the post war period shared a view of America as almost wholly lacking in culture. At the time, of course, culture was taken to mean high culture, of the sort reproduced and transmitted by the "gebildete Schichten" (educated class) in Germany and France. This snobbery was reflected in a sense of cultural inferiority widespread among the East Coast elite of the United States itself. America was identified with trashy, mass produced, low culture: Hollywood, Elvis, and bubble gum. To the European right, America was identified with the crass and ungovernable masses. Fordist patterns of production and consumption created an uncultured mob easily incited to take power and trample the cultural achievement of centuries. To the left, Hollywood bred an apolitical false consciousness, robbing the European proletariat of its revolutionary potential.

Stone's Ivy League education and his experiences in Germany bred in him a firm belief in the value of American ways. He was supported in this by scholars such as Bell and Galbraith. The United States, they held, could be ranked without qualifica-

tion alongside the “older” cultures of Western Europe. Stone’s work with Ford and the CCF/ IACF, argues Professor Berghahn, was also devoted to promoting a different vision of America as a land of freedom, enterprise and artistic achievement. American music, literature and painting were promoted in Europe through concerts, exhibitions and readings. The *Amerika Häuser* in Germany offered a point of contact for locals interested in American culture.

The book’s conclusion, however, is that Stone and his allies largely failed in this task of cultural “re-branding.” As has been noted, his dream of a pan-Atlantic cultural sphere, based on shared values and devoted to free expression, failed to reach eastwards across the English Channel. European conservatives never embraced Stone’s vision of America. At the same time, in the 1960s the European left was reborn in the student protest movement. The US was no longer seen as saviour of Europe, but as oppressor of the poor world. It must have been a bitter irony for Stone that one of the opening moments in the campaign of the German SDS was a march to the *Amerika Haus* in Berlin to protest against the Vietnam War. The rise of the new left and the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s and 70s was as much to blame for the demise of Stone’s projects as the withdrawal of funding by Ford and other philanthropic bodies. And yet...

In truth Shepard Stone’s struggle with European anti-Americans was not so much defeated as superseded. Growing prosperity and the rise of the Western European consumer were the material determinants of a broad shift in consciousness and a realignment of cultural preferences. As Professor Berghahn rightly points out the great revolt of 1968 can be interpreted as a cry for the emancipation of self-determining individuals in the face of a social authoritarianism that had survived the defeat of fascism. It is arguable that the enduring effect of new left radicalism was to complete the Americanisation of Europe. With time many of the protagonists of the 1968 movement settled into tenured contemplation. Their critical efforts were important in capsizing the distinction between high and low culture: “Madonna studies” joined the curriculum of several European universities in the 1990s.

The rhetoric, songs and the iconography of protest movements in Western Europe in the 1960s and subsequently, have been extensively borrowed from those of its American peers. To list Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X is not merely superficial incantation. It also testifies to a shared weave of subaltern protest culture which bound both sides of the Atlantic more closely than the openly elitist strategies of Stone and his colleagues, and which dates back to the career of Tom Paine at least. The multitudinous protests on the streets of Europe in February 2003 in their turn drew on American idioms to express their discontent with US intentions. Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Michael Moore furnish not only arguments but

also effective modes of expression. The lesson, if there is one, is that Americanisation is an ambivalent, uncontrollable force. Polarisation of elites, US neo-cons versus French anti-Americans, is not reflected on the street. When the European multitude wishes to speak truth to power it does so in an American idiom.

D. Conclusion

Professor Berghahn has laboured long among Stone's papers and in the archives of the Ford Foundation. His careful research is not always matched by an adequate apparatus of footnotes and references however. Among others, many participants in CCF committees are mentioned in the text but not referenced in the index. The non-specialist reader will no doubt be disappointed when unable to follow up here and in other sources on the careers of "Freynday," "Labin" and "Emmet (p.131) or of "Sheila McLean" (p.258). The Italian Christian Democrat leader of the 1940 and 50s was Alcide de Gasperi, not "Aristide." But these are the mere quibbles of an academic reviewer. This is a thoroughly researched and fluently written account, which illuminates a corner of the Cold War dark in more ways than one. It also gives stuff to the deliberations of cultural theorists and historians of culture. It can aid, too, our reflections on the polemics of spring 2003.