

“Mindless” and “hopelessly naive” were the words used to describe the theories of Francis Fukuyama at a recent meeting of the Constitutional Club here in London. The characterizations were unfair, of course, but it has to be said that Fukuyama invited his fair share of invective when he published his seminal article “The End of History?” suggesting that democratic capitalism, as a motivating idea, had won a permanent victory over all forms of mass enthusiasm and organized evil. Such triumphalism, almost Marxist in character, was bound to offend conservatives, for it goes against the deepest instincts of Tory pessimism. The article was superb, in both senses of the word, but it was flawed because it did not explain convincingly why History should, necessarily, be going anywhere, why there should be progress, direction, or improvement of any kind, instead of the usual cyclical relapse into violence and nastiness.

Fukuyama’s great mentor, Hegel, also had difficulty answering this question, but supplemented argument with religious faith. Ultimately, Hegel always fell back on his metaphysical premise that History was the life of God, that God realized Himself through man’s journey from slave to self-conscious moral being. Fukuyama, by contrast, does not rely on God to carry him through. He uses hard empirical reasoning, without recourse to faith, to advance his claim that History is going somewhere. It is a more difficult challenge than Hegel’s theodicy, and Fukuyama did not quite pull it off in his 1989 article in the *National Interest*. He offered a snapshot of the world taken at a moment when the liberal idea was enjoying a second wind after an interlude of de-

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, former Washington correspondent of the London Spectator, is an editorial writer at the London Daily Telegraph.

THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN

Francis Fukuyama

The Free Press/418 pages/\$24.95

reviewed by AMBROSE EVANS-PRITCHARD

featism. He failed to supply a motive force of Universal History.

Two years later, Fukuyama has produced a work of magisterial breadth that cannot be dismissed so easily. I must confess that I suspected the book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, would be a padded amplification of his 1989 article, an attempt to cash in on celebrity. In fact, it is a whole new departure. His article merely asked the question whether or not History had come to an end. His book, on the other hand, includes no question mark in the title. It tries to explain *why* History has ended and *why* liberal democracy was ultimately destined to prevail. He does it with great skill. Indeed, to my Anglo-Saxon taste, he does it better than Hegel himself.

Above all, Fukuyama has identified the motive force of History. It is the ever-growing body of scientific knowledge, the product of Man’s irrepressible desire to fashion his natural surroundings to his advantage. Earlier civilizations, notably the Roman Empire, may have lost their science and technology, regressing to a more primitive state as a result of incursions and conquest by warlike tribes. But Fukuyama argues that this cannot happen again. The cyclical chain, if it ever really existed, has been broken forever. The knowledge accumulated without interruption over the last 600 years is now vast, easily accessible, and widely understood. Not even a cataclysmic war could destroy it permanently, unless all humanity were destroyed with it. Nor are there any barbarians at the gates in the late twentieth century. Virtually the entire world be-

longs to a single scientific community. Those that choose to reject it, perhaps for obscurantist religious reasons, necessarily forfeit the military capability required to annihilate it. History, therefore, cannot revert. Science has imposed a direction on Mankind.

The question is what direction. Fukuyama argues that the progress of science leads ineluctably to the free-market economy. Apart from the obvious point that Communism stifles innovation, saps the work ethic, invites corruption on a colossal scale, and drives everybody to drink and despair, the system cannot sustain a high-tech economy, which requires a large chunk of the population, as opposed to a tiny elite, to think for itself. Even if it could work culturally, it could not work economically because there is no price mechanism to send signals to producers and consumers. The state sets the price of everything, arbitrarily, without understanding the cost of anything, and twists itself into ever greater knots as production moves from a few dinosaur industries like iron and steel to the diversified production of consumer goods. Eventually, the whole system chokes in the tangled thicket of price distortion.

Fukuyama is surely correct in claiming, at this particular moment, that only a system of free prices is flexible enough to regulate the millions of different kinds of transactions of goods and services that take place daily in a modern, rich, high-tech society. But things can change with remarkable speed. In the middle of this century political scientists were still assuming that mass communications, which could be used for the purposes of propaganda and mind control, worked to the advantage of totalitarian regimes. At the time, perhaps, they were right. But events have since turned the argument upside down. It was the communications revolution that finished off the Stalinists. One wonders whether technology might not prove a fickle ally in the future as the

pendulum swings back again. It does not seem farfetched to imagine that computer software could come to the rescue of dirigiste ideology one day. It would be folly for conservatives to suppose that statisticians, thick on the ground and ever zealous, have resigned themselves to permanent defeat. Alas, the planning urge is irrepressible.

From the shaky premise that the free market is inevitable, Fukuyama goes on to argue that this in turn ensures evolution toward liberal democracy. The diffusion of economic power deprives the ruling party of economic patronage—the control over access to jobs, trading licenses, houses, cars, and even food—that has always been the mainstay of party power, not only in the Soviet bloc but

also in scores of Third World regimes of the mercantilist or monopoly variety. Further, free-market development, whether in Chile, South Korea, or Turkey, creates an educated middle class that tends to demand political representation. For a while this pressure can be resisted, but in the end the political elite itself begins to question its own legitimacy and loses the will to maintain power by repressive means.

All this is highly persuasive *at the moment*, but again Fukuyama is relying too much on his snapshot of the world in 1991. Certainly, the number of countries joining the democratic club is increasing all the time, and it has spread well beyond Christendom, debunking the hoary notion of the left that free-market democracy is a “Western” phenomenon of little relevance to other cultures, that it would be “ethnocentric” to try to export it. Nor is there any rival to the liberal idea in the world today. There are particularist ideologies, such as Islamic fundamentalism, which may arouse tremendous passion, but they do not have universal appeal. Whether they like it or

not, authoritarian regimes have to pay lip-service to the principles of liberal democracy because they are unable to find any other credible source of legitimacy. No other idea will wash these days.

But will this continue to be the case? I suspect that fascism will return to curse the world again. Fukuyama dismisses the totalitarian nightmare of the mid-twentieth century as a disease of transition, or as he puts it, “a pathological condition arising out of the special political and social requirements of countries at a certain stage of socio-economic development.” This is the most cavalier passage in the book. The German infatua-

commit the worst crimes in the annals of history, there can be no such thing as moral progress.

Yet Fukuyama skates through this question with a few loose observations about European history, noting at one point that “the two Western European countries to invent fascist ultranationalism, Italy and Germany, were also the last to industrialize and to unify politically.” In fact, parts of Germany were already industrialized by the mid-nineteenth century. He also advances the half-truth that nationalism is a nineteenth-century aberration without deep roots in the human psyche. One only has to read Shakespeare—“Now all the youth of England are on fire”—or Petrarch on Italy, or indeed Julius Caesar



on the Alemani, to appreciate the antiquity of nationalist fervor in Europe, or look at the ascendant neo-fascist youth movements on the same soil today, to appreciate its eternal appeal. Clearly, people have always felt a sense of loyalty to some kind of community. It may be religious, ideological, or strictly national, but the willingness to fight and kill for it has been one of the constants of history. Even if the European Community succeeds in overcoming rivalries between European states, which is extremely doubtful (indeed, it may aggravate tensions, because it provides no airspace between the tribes), it would not prevent the development of

continental cultural blocs in opposition to each other, say Europe against East Asia, which could prove equally dangerous in the long run.

I suspect that, deep down, Fukuyama does not really trust History. He knows it can strike with lightning speed, when we least expect it, and demolish sanity. That is why he turns to Hegelian philo-babble instead. Drawing on Hegel’s dialectical

tion with Hitler is surely the paramount invalidation of his whole thesis, for Germany was perhaps the best educated country in the world in the inter-war years and it had enjoyed a considerable tradition of democracy, partial under the Kaisers and total under Weimar. The Germans voted for Nazism, knowing full well that it was a movement of hate. If they could go berserk, and

continent cultural blocs in opposition to each other, say Europe against East Asia, which could prove equally dangerous in the long run.

process, he argues that all forms of hierarchical government have inherent contradictions, or defects, and therefore contain the seeds of their own destruction. Liberal democracy, on the other hand, resolves all contradictions, and though it may not yet be perfectly implemented, it cannot be improved upon as an idea. This is fine if you happen to believe that the dialectical process is a sacred doctrine. For those of us who are not Hegelians, that is to say for those of us who never succumbed to the charms of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis schema, it all sounds very silly indeed. In any case, there is an inconsistency in the Hegelian argument that Fukuyama employs. According to Hegel, man's willingness to risk his life for the sake of honor—or "recognition," as he puts it—is what distinguishes us from animals. Only liberal democracy can satisfy this passion for recognition, for it is the only system that respects the intrinsic worth of each man. But as Fukuyama himself acknowledges, the passion for exalted honor and status can easily get out of hand. There is nothing democratic about it. On the contrary, it is more likely to feed the ambitions of a tyrant, and as a matter of historical fact it frequently does.

But let us assume that the great nations all establish enduring democracies: Can we therefore conclude that the world will be a peaceful place, safely beyond the reach of History? Fukuyama says we can. But hitherto, the democracies have tended to fight on the same side because they were facing a threat from fascism or Communism. Will they show the same cohesion when there is no external threat? Not enough democracies have been around long enough to test that proposition. Furthermore, it needs to be repeated that Germany was not an autocracy in 1914. There were democratic elements in Wilhelmian society, and they were far from pacifist.

Ultimately, though, if all else fails to prevent the end of History, we can be sure that liberal society itself, rotting from within, will keep the process going. The evidence of decay is all around us: in a depraved urban subculture, encouraged by state subsidies to behave in a self-destructive way and to reproduce itself at a faster rate than better adjusted, more productive members of society. This modern phenomenon of the underclass is not to be confused with poverty. No such thing exists, or could exist, in the cities of poor countries. Calcutta,



Mexico City, and Cairo may have destitute quarters where life is rough, but they do not harbor castes in which moral values have collapsed. It takes affluence to provide the resources needed to create a large, dependent, alienated underclass.

The bourgeoisie, too, shows signs of decay. It does not breed enough. In countries like France and Italy, where the population is falling, the gene pool of tal-

ent is literally extinguishing itself. In America, the middle classes have lost their reverence for education, whatever they may say to the contrary. The evidence is simple: they are willing to tolerate schools that do not raise children to a standard sufficient to maintain an advanced liberal democracy in the long run. Nor are they free from general moral collapse. It is extremely doubtful that a society once held together by custom, conscience, prejudice, and religious values can be regulated by government alone. But this is the trend in America and increasingly in Europe. Litigation is out of control. It has reached the point where it seriously hampers the functioning of a market economy. Commercial contracts, which used to be upheld by codes of honor and trust, are now enforced by little more than law. It is a system that is not only cumbersome and expensive, but does not even work. The ignominious fraud-ridden collapse of Lloyds of London, a venerable institution that has traded profitably for more than 300 years, is a triumph of lawyers over gentlemen.

Perhaps the Western world will recover from its moral disease. After all, there have been bad times before. The fomenters of vexatious litigation took over the government of France in 1789, inspiring Burke, tearful, nostalgic, soaked in claret, to write the words we all know so well: "The age of chivalry is gone, and that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever." In hindsight, he was premature. But not, I think, wrong. Today his prophecy is correct in every particular. Chivalry is in short supply. So is virtue. So is respect. So is loyalty. It is an arid place, this liberal world of ours, where families form and break according to convenience, where the elderly are sent away to end their years in nursing homes. Arid, desiccated, and brittle. □

EDWINA MOUNTBATTEN:
A LIFE OF HER OWN

Janet Morgan

Charles Scribner's Sons/489 pages/\$22.95

reviewed by ARAM BAKSHIAN, JR.

The idle rich are bad enough, but they pale by comparison to the hyperactive rich. Even aside from their insufferable obtrusiveness, the hyperactive rich do a hell of a lot more harm than their quiescent cousins. Consider Edwina Mountbatten: had she spent the balance of her adult life as she began it—as a spoiled, self-indulgent society beauty with a few minor neuroses and a keen appetite for adultery—no one would have been the worse for it. Certainly no one outside her own circle of equally spoiled Jazz Age sybarites, none of whom would have been missed. Instead, driven perhaps by the boredom inherent in marriage to one of the most self-absorbed, oblivious stuffed-shirts of the century, Edwina reached out and tried to live a meaningful life. She really should have stayed in bed . . . where she was so much more at home.

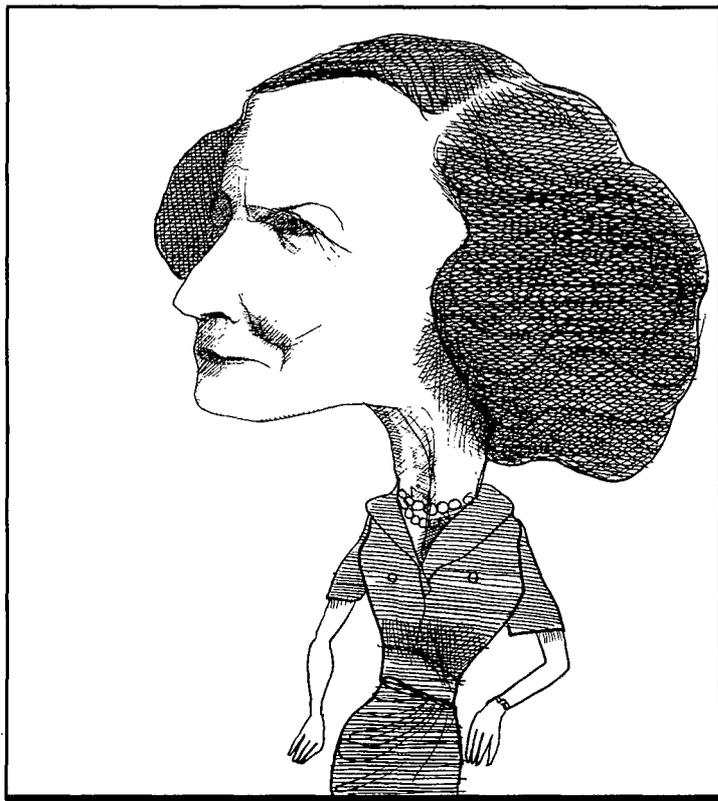
True, in her attempts to raise her own civic consciousness, Edwina Mountbatten did perform a few genuinely good works, especially in volunteer nursing and refugee assistance. But one must remember that her husband's dubious handiwork as a commander during World War II, and as imperial tribune afterwards, kept her well supplied with wounded and displaced persons.

Aram Bakshian, Jr., an aide to three U.S. Presidents, writes frequently on British history and biography in History Today and other publications.

Whatever Edwina's good works, they were more than overbalanced by her own and her husband's incredibly smug, bungled performance as the last Viceroy and Vicereine of British India. With the cool command and steady self-assurance of those to the manor born, the Mountbattens managed to make a bad situation even worse. But they did so with such aplomb that they exited, albeit over a carpet of corpses, to nearly universal applause. If any proof were needed of Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee's political cunning, the choice of this fashionable aristocratic couple to cover Britain's headlong retreat from Empire provides it. The fact that it added to the suffering of the ruled and further stained

the honor of the rulers is a matter of history; in no way does it diminish the political astuteness of the move.

At times, statesmanship spills over into soap opera. Edwina's headlong infatuation with Jawaharlal Nehru was the talk of British India while it was going on and has since been substantiated by published diaries, correspondence, and the recollections of eyewitnesses. Whether it was carnal or merely gooey, this affair hopelessly prejudiced the atmosphere of the talks that led up to partition. Edwina's enthusiasm for Nehru and her sway over her husband further convinced Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the prickly leader of the Muslim League, that justice was not to be had and that a separate homeland, Pakistan, was the only answer for Indian Muslims. Whether or not he was right at the time, most of India's surviving Muslim minority has indeed been consigned to second-class political and economic status in an India dominated by the Congress party. The party, in turn, remains the virtual monopoly of upper-caste Hindus who, even when not religious, often harbor lingering resentment against a Muslim minority that conquered India under the Moghuls and played a role disproportionate to its numbers in the British Indian Army.



But never fear: readers will not be troubled unduly with discussions of such issues in Janet Morgan's new biography of Edwina Mountbatten. Affairs of the boudoir take precedence over affairs of state; parties, weddings, wardrobes, and royal and society gossip predominate. Still, there is the occasional revelation. For the sort of person interested in learning that the young Dickie Mountbatten nicknamed his future wife's breasts "Mutt and Jeff"—not, one hopes, due to disparate dimensions—Miss Morgan's lengthy but rather trivial book should prove rewarding reading.

It's all here . . . what there is of it, that is. Despite the subtitle "A Life of Her Own," Edwina Mountbatten's life was led very much in tandem