

phrase, Judt describes post-1989 Germany as “a muscle-bound state with no sense of national purpose.”

Recent upheavals make this leadership vacuum all the more troubling. With the crisis of the welfare state and the continuing influx of immigrants—many of them Muslims who do not assimilate easily into modern Europe—neofascism is rearing its ugly head. Likewise, the collapse of communism has allowed Europe’s trademark nationalism to revive, reaching tragic extremes in the former

Yugoslavia. Regrettably, Europe’s leaders and intellectuals remain wedded to the notion of union as a cure-all.

Does Judt consider himself a skeptic on European unity? Not really. While he argues that local problems need local solutions, he holds no illusions about the “embattled, mutually antagonistic circle of suspicious and introverted nations” that once made up Europe. He would like to split the difference. “Europe,” he writes, “is more than a geographical notion but less than an answer.” Union may be desirable in some respects, but it’s not the Holy Grail. “We must remind ourselves not just that real gains have been made, but that the European community which helped to make them was a means, not an end.”

—Michael Brus

ORIGINS OF A CATASTROPHE: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers.

By Warren Zimmerman. Times Books.
256 pp. \$35

Ever since Yugoslavia fell apart in 1991, there has been much hand-wringing about how the United States and the European Community could have prevented the breakup—or, failing that, stopped the brutal war that led to the “ethnic cleansing” of Bosnian Muslims by a Bosnian Serb military backed by the “Yugoslav” (in name only) government of Slobodan Milosevic. In this fluently written memoir of his four years as U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia (1989–92), Zimmerman argues that the breakup was inevitable but that the West could have contained the slaughter by the timely application of limited military force. “The failure of the Bush administration to commit

American power early in the Bosnia war,” he writes, “was our greatest mistake of the entire Yugoslav crisis.”

Ending in May 1992, when Zimmerman was recalled by the Bush administration to protest against Serbian aggression in Bosnia, the memoir describes the ambassador’s efforts to persuade Milosevic and the Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman to abandon their expansionist policies. He got nowhere. Milosevic, with “habitual mendacity,” denied that he was backing the Bosnian Serbs. Tudjman bragged that Serbia and Croatia had every right to carve up Bosnia. And the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (whom Zimmerman likens to Heinrich Himmler) painted the Bosnian Muslims as fundamentalist fanatics crazed with enmity toward the West. Zimmerman recounts the many quarrels between the United States and the European Community over diplomatic policy, judging them finally a waste. “Short of a credible threat of force,” he reiterates, “the United States and its allies lacked decisive leverage.”

On the question of how Milosevic and Tudjman—two former Communists—could stir up such a witches’ brew of ultranationalism, Zimmerman spurns the myth of Yugoslavia as a land of ancient hatreds. There has been no strong evidence of anti-Muslim feeling for several centuries. And though Serbs and Croats massacred each other during World War II, postwar Yugoslavia saw an intermarriage rate—among all groups—of roughly 20 percent. Embers of ultranationalism had long smoldered in Serbia, but to fan them into conflagration took the bellows of state-controlled television. Once Milosevic made the “rational calculation” that ultranationalism was the path to power, the next step was to fill the airwaves with images of mutilated corpses and other horrors, all neatly blamed on the Croats or Bosnian Muslims. (The same bloody fare was offered on Croatian TV.) As one Yugoslav journalist remarked, “You Americans would become nationalists and racists too if your media were totally in the hands of the Ku Klux Klan.”

In Zimmerman’s view, Marshal Tito was partly responsible for the rise of ultranationalism, because his long-lived communist regime forbade any democratic venting of ethnic concerns. Yet Zimmerman is also soft on Tito’s regime, playing up its economic



successes and playing down its brutality. Equally puzzling is Zimmerman's comment that the Slovenes "bear considerable responsibility for the bloodbath that followed their secession"; elsewhere, he implies that Milosevic and Tudjman would have gone on their rampage regardless of what Slovenia did. These are minor distractions, however, in a book that is required reading for anyone concerned about America's future role in the Balkans—and in the larger world.

—Stephen Miller

**HOME FROM NOWHERE:
*Remaking Our Everyday World for the
Twenty-First Century.***

By James Howard Kunstler. Simon & Schuster. 318 pp. \$24

No one who is concerned about the spread of suburban sprawl in the United States can avoid paying serious attention to the New Urbanist movement—and to this manifesto by one of its leading publicists. Everyone complains about sprawl, but only these architects and planners know what to do about it: build main streets (not malls), with adjoining residential streets organized in something like a grid, houses placed close together and close to the street, and plenty of green spaces. In a word, towns.

Kunstler, the author of eight novels and one previous nonfiction book, has a weakness for bombast—is it really true that “we have become, by sheer inertia, a nation of overfed clowns, crybabies, slackers, deadbeats, sadists, cads, whores, and crooks”? But he is also clever and persuasive, never more so than when explaining why the contemporary American suburb breeds such a strong, if vague, “dis-ease.” Simply allowing people to walk to their destinations rather than

drive, he argues, would be “spiritually elevating. . . . When neighborhoods are used by pedestrians, a much finer scale of detailing inevitably occurs. Building facades become more richly ornamented and interesting. Little gardens and windowboxes appear. . . . In such a setting, we feel more completely human.”

We need not share Kunstler's conviction that bad design is the chief cause of eroding American communities to recognize that it is *one* of the causes—and one of the few we have the power to influence directly through law. The community zoning ordinance is the genetic code of the modern suburb, making it virtually impossible to build the kinds of towns we once erected as a matter of course. As Kunstler points out, today's zoning codes leave no alternative to the one-story strip mall, with its huge setbacks from the street, forbidding parking lots, and absence of apartments over stores. Financing is another impediment: banks are reluctant to back anything but conventional sprawl development. Forget about building a new Main Street; it's both illegal and prohibitively expensive.

Kunstler does not seem to expect the New Urbanism to succeed on its own merits. But he does suggest that a return to towns and cities may eventually be forced by the end of cheap gasoline. Ironically, the Disney Corporation, which comes in for some abuse in this book, exhibits more faith than Kunstler in the possibility of selling the idea to the American public. The much-hyped new town of Celebration that Disney is building in Orlando, Florida, is practically a textbook example of New Urbanist construction.

—Steven Lagerfeld

Religion & Philosophy

**MARY THROUGH THE
CENTURIES:
*Her Place in the History of Culture.***

By Jaroslav Pelikan. Yale University Press. 240 pp. \$25

Vestiges of Mary, the mother of Jesus, are not as ubiquitous as those of her son, from whose birth (approximately) we date our checks and our letters. But traces of Mary's prominence are not hard to find: witness this

past summer's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* or, in high culture, the recordings of medieval Marian music by the Anonymous 4, which have repeatedly gone to the top of the classical charts.

Do only vestiges remain? Not according to the distinguished Yale religions historian Jaroslav Pelikan. His new book—a short, suitable companion to his earlier *Jesus through the Centuries* (1985)—concludes by