

Mega-trends Europe: 1999-2004

The years which bridge the 20th and 21st centuries mark a turning point in global relations. Mass communication, the wide-spread influence of multinational company money, unprecedented acts of terror and new movements of immigrants are all part of the changing way in which we think about ourselves as civilizations, as nations, as communities and as individuals. The slow and constant transformation of how we see ourselves affects the patterns of communication with others, and the metamorphosis of our communication patterns impacts the concept we have of ourselves.

Not unlike its role as the birthplace of Reformation and Renaissance, Europe plays an integral part in these waves of change. Due to the impact of globalization, that intertwined effect of social change and financial markets which permeates porous national borders, many influences affecting the European continent are similar to those found in other Western cultures and, in a lesser way, (Ester et al. 1993:110, in Robinson 1999:5) in many other cultures around the globe. (For the purpose of this discussion, the "West" will be defined by the national boundaries and cultures of North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and partially, South Africa; the West is basically a "European-American civilization.") (Huntington 1996:47)

Though, in part, many populations of youth in other nations including Japan, India, Brazil and Argentina, are taking on the trappings of a globalized culture of music and fashion, the deep-rooted values of these "non-Western" societies are not yet taking part in the great upheavals felt rippling through the societies of the West.

Among the striking global influences which are reshaping Western society and value systems, we find the following:

- individualization (Ester et al. 1993, in Robinson 1999:2)
- an increasingly fragmented and lonely society (Ester 1993:165, in Robinson 1999:5) (Whelan 1994:6, in Robinson 1999:1)
- the myriad of personalized choices for individuals (though "[i]n a society wherein the individual is so valued, the individualism that really characterizes us is of a very standardized and impersonal character.") (Giorgi, Liana. "Constructing the xenophobic subject," in Pohoryles 1994:235)
- the privatization/individualization of religion, with the individual choosing from a smorgasbord of options (Dobbelaere 1993:26) (Hervieu-Leger 1998, in Robinson 2000:13)(Sandstrom and Herberts 2000, in Robinson 2001:30)
- a consistent appreciation of, and interest in, the supernatural (though church attendance is down in major, traditional denominations) (Bryant 2002, in Robinson 2004:65) (Chu 2003, in Robinson 2003:57) (Bruni 2003, in Robinson 2003:60)
- a move by governments toward secularization (Whelan 1994:31) (though civilizations tend to group around religious affiliations as they define their unique identities) (Huntington 1996)
- a tendency by these same leaders toward nationalism (though ideals of regional cooperation are encouraged) (Naim, Gonzalez and Moisi 1999, in Robinson 1999:6)
- a belief that there are no longer moral absolutes linked with a post-modern pluralism of values (Young 1997:480, in Robinson 1999:3)
- the liberalization of laws controlling medical-ethical issues (such as a lifting of the ban on human cloning, the legalization and "redefining" of euthanasia)

- and lowering the legal age limit for a girl having an abortion) (Gorman 2000, in Robinson 2000:21)(Daley 2000, in Robinson 2001:29)(Bryant 2003, in Robinson 2003:59)
- the disintegration of respect for the institution of marriage (Ester et al. 1993:98, in Robinson 1999:5)
 - acceptance of same-sex unions (Graff 2004, in Robinson 2004:72)
 - the redefining of the work place through more "by contract," short-term positions, offices at home and the wide use of long-distance collaboration by way of the Internet (The Irish Times 1999, in Robinson 2000:15)
 - increased urbanization (Burtenshaw 1991 and Quilley 1999, in Robinson 2000:8)(Pile et al. 1999, in Robinson 2000:14) (though a plague of "shrinking-city syndrome" is projected to sweep the world as urban birthrates continue to drop) (Theil 2004:58)
 - inter-generational conflict partially due to the rapid rate of societal and technological change (Szokolczai and Fustos 1998, in Robinson 2000:8)
 - a "West versus the rest" global polarization (with the U.S. playing a perceived "unilateral" role) (Huntington 1996:36)

These influences are striking at the heart of Western civilization across the globe and effectively remolding the contours of its mores. Europe, originator of this particular brand of civilizational ideals and an active member in the group which currently is on the give and take of Western societal values – as both initiator and imitator – is in a unique position.

In conjunction with these forces, but particular to Europe, are two major trends which have become its hovering giants, squeezing the population and its organizations from two sides. These two major players are, primarily, the unprecedented scope of immigration of non-European Muslims, and, secondly, the demographic reality of a shrinking population. (Pipes 2004, in Robinson 2004:68)

The influx of peoples is not new, but the realization that the flood will greatly affect the population mix is a more recent phenomenon. In France, where the second religion in the country is now Islam,

"The problem of a French Islam only started being posed in the late 80s," says sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar. "Until then, Muslims were geographically part of France but in every other respect they remained foreign." (Le Quesne 2000, in Robinson 2001:23)

There are an estimated 12 million Muslims living in the greater Europe area today: ("EuroIslam" 2004, in Robinson 2004:66) 2.5 million in Germany, 5 million in France and 1 million in the Netherlands. There is no question that the balance of the population in Europe is shifting slowly but surely away from one traditionally of European heritage and toward a majority of those who are of non-European descent.

As we discuss the issue of a changing demographic in Europe, the dividing quality of religion must be mentioned. This element of societal value systems cannot be ignored as we talk about immigration, enlargement of the European Union and the success or failure of integration within the peoples of Europe.

As this process unfolds, the inexorable link between culture and religion is one of the elements which makes this population shift and the arrival of thousands of non-Christian immigrants so volatile. (The thesis of this paper does not ignore that hundreds of immigrants from Europe's former colonies are bringing back with them a Christian fervor and revitalization of the Church.) Though Europe, as a whole, seems to have rejected its Christian roots, even the "religion" of

secularism adhered to by European governments and populations is not compatible with an arriving people group which does not, traditionally, recognize any separation of Church and State. (Ford 2005, in Robinson 2005:74) This collision of political expectations will be particularly explosive in France, where the right to practice secularism and religious neutrality is historically "sacred." (Sabatini 2003, in Robinson 2004:65)

The degree to which Europe succeeds or fails to deal with the challenge of integration of its variant peoples will define its future. There are hundreds pouring into Europe, literally packed into boats, some embarking on fatal voyages in an effort to reach its shores. (Ratnesar 2000, in Robinson 2001:28) Though not all of these newest immigrants are from a Muslim heritage, those multitudes who are, and the second- and third-generation Muslim families already settled in European countries, will create Europe's greatest societal upheaval in the coming decades. (Huntington 1996:36)

These streams and waves of immigrants, both legal and illegal, can be divided into several unique groups, but are typically seen to flow from east to west and from south to north. Those coming from the former Soviet Union arrive in Eastern Europe. Sometimes they stay; more often they keep moving west. Schlesinger writes, "nervous eyes are cast to the Southern Mediterranean and towards the east of the German frontiers..." in reaction to "Europe's current demographic panic." (Schlesinger, Philip. "'Europeaness' – A new cultural battlefield?" Pohoryles 1994:47)

Granted, the arrival of non-European, Muslim peoples is much more evident in Western Europe, but will continue, as well, to impact the ten newest members of the EU to the east (as of May 1, 2004). Central and Eastern European countries will not experience the pressures of immigration in the same fashion as the West. In fact, at times, events and population shifts within these mostly former-communist countries may actually be the source of pressure exerted on Western Europe. (Power 2001, in Robinson 2001:25)

The new eastern border of the EU, falling between the Baltic countries and Russia, between Poland and Belarus, between Slovakia and Ukraine, between Hungary and Romania, between Serbia & Montenegro and Bulgaria and between Greece and Turkey, lies down what Huntington calls "The Eastern Boundary of Western Civilization," dictated by "the logic of civilizations," those invisible borders stemming from affiliation with one of the world's major religions. (Huntington, 1996:161) National boundaries decided upon at the conclusion of the First and Second World Wars sometimes cut right through the middle of a cultural people group. At times, and especially in former Eastern Europe, artificial, geographic, national borders have been outlined on a map, creating a new conglomerate of people groups from very different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Immigration, the major transforming factor affecting Europe today, is complicated by another factor: that of falling birthrates among typically European families. The arrival of immigrant workers has been suggested by some to be the "answer" to the problem of a declining European population by filling the employment void. But, at the same time, it becomes the great "problem" without a ready answer. Existing European peoples, though they may not want to fill the job vacancies which the mass of immigrants are filling, also may not care to live side-by-side with those of non-European origin who do not learn the local language and are clearly not assimilating into the mainstream of a traditionally European society.

The tension created by the presence of large groups of immigrants whose own birthrates tend to be high, usually choosing to live in cultural enclaves amongst themselves, certainly fuels anxiety and anger in the existing, more traditionally European population, and adds urgency to the finding of solutions to the challenge of integration in Europe. Data show Muslim families are growing at a much faster rate than are existing, European families. In fact, excluding all

immigrant numbers, Europe's birthrate figures, on the average, are in the negative. (Drozdiak 2000, in Robinson 2000:7)

A natural consequence of negative population growth in an era in which life expectancy is rising, is the general shift away from a youth-dominated society to one which is "top heavy," with increasing numbers in the over-65 slice of the population. Chisholm writes, "By about 2010, those aged over 60 will outnumber those aged under 20[...]" (Chisholm 1998:153, in Robinson 1999:2) This, of course, is causing shortfalls in the pension coffers, tightening the screws on the continent's national social systems and increasing the sense of tension felt amongst the continent's peoples.

The movements of people onto the continent of Europe from without is also affected by other political changes from within. The issue of integration of non-European Muslims into traditional European society is related to that of European Union enlargement to the east and the integration of the "new 10": Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus (Greek portion). Muslim populations within the enlarged "Europe 25" will also shift and influence each other in new ways not experienced before.

European enlargement is causing and will continue to cause ripples in employment distribution and unemployment, waves of dissension over farm subsidies and an outright tsunami of discussion over just how these 25 historically and culturally disparate nations will decide on a common future.

Following the acceptance and signing of a European Union constitution (which has yet to be ratified by the various populations and governments), upcoming, European Commission agenda items include: the power of the presidency, national sovereignty, a common security force and/or foreign policy, economic cohesion, tax reform and the viability of continent-wide, EU services directives. (Schmid 2000, in Robinson 2000:19) (Carter 2005)

Treading water in this transitional sea which is Europe, how can we cull out what are some of the complicating factors involved in the challenge of integration and multiculturalism? Is Europe's experiment at multiculturalism bubbling out of the confines of the original structures within which it was meant to stay? Some have come to the conclusion that the task is too complicated and that the experiment is a failure: that multiple cultures cannot coexist. (Kubosova 2005)

In his essay on "Constructing the xenophobic subject," Giorgi comments that,

"...the process of unification [within the EU] keeps stalling as a result of the diversity of views and approaches." And in the same way, he says, "multiculturalism...is proving problematic." (Giorgi in Pohoryles 1994:228)

The primary factor stalling unification and integration (and at times a debilitating one) is the fact that two major world religions, that of Islam and Christianity, along with their conflicting ideologies, are coming head-to-head. (Sancton 2000, in Robinson 2001:23) Michel writes that religion,

[s]erving especially as the most indicative feature of the presence of tensions at work in society, appears as a formidable vector of re-ideologization. (Michel, Patrick. "Religion, democracy and change," Pohoryles 1994:117)

In view of this wide variance in world views and accompanying tensions between these two historical enemies, whose "indicative feature" is religion, a relevant question is, "Are Europe and Islam compatible?" (Whether Europe sees itself as basically secular or Christian, the question is

still applicable, as the affect of Christian traditions and values are engrained in the laws of the land, including those basic values of democracy, freedom of speech and human rights for all.)

A current discussion which highlights some of the issues related to this question of whether Europe and Islam are compatible, is that of the possibility of Turkey joining the EU. Though accession talks have begun for Turkey, controversy is raging in the Union. "The unacceptability of Turkey for EC [EU] membership because of its Muslim character periodically resurfaces" in the context of discussions on the "assimilability of Muslims." "This," Schlesinger says,

links into the much broader issue of the position of Islamic minorities in Europe and obviously poses the question of the relations between being Muslim and being European. (Schlesinger in Pohoryles 1994:45)

Cardinal Ratzinger, the Pope's trusted spokesman, says in an interview with *Le Figaro* magazine, that Europe is a continent bound by both culture and geography and, in this sense, is representative of a continent which is completely "other" to that of Turkey. What reasons are given by the Vatican? The wars and facts of history, alone, should point to the fact that "melding the two continents would be a mistake," says Ratzinger. Turkey, he says, thinks of itself as a secular country, but still "rests on Islamic foundations" and should consider coalescing with other, neighboring nations in their own region with whom they would be compatible in the foundations of their identity. (de Ravinel 2004, in Robinson 2005:74)

History speaks to fundamental differences between Islam and all other religions, not unlike the conflicts between Christendom and all other religions. This meeting of people groups within the geographical boundaries of Europe is not only a collision of religions and cultures (both heralding claims of exclusivity), but is also a confrontation of religious fundamentalism found within Islam butting up against the rise of secularism in the West. This confrontation, acted out in many ways, is at the heart of the challenge of multiculturalism in Europe.

Daniel Pipes writes in his *New York Times* article, "Muslim Europe: Ready or Not Here It Comes" in August, 2004. "As Christianity falters, Islam is robust, assertive, and ambitious," (Robinson 2004:68) (Spencer 2004, in Robinson 2004:71)

Part of the challenge, in practical terms, is the very concept of authority which a religion has over its adherents, whether or not they see themselves as being particularly religious. In fact, religion and cultural identity often become interrelated to the extent that one cannot be extricated from the other. For example, saying one is Catholic in Ireland does not necessarily mean he or she believes what the Church seated in Rome teaches; along with other values, it means that you are loyal to a united Ireland and that you are not pro-British (or Protestant).

One element of this authority which a religion can hold over those of a certain cultural background, is that of the concept of right and wrong: the enforcement of the statutes of the religion, otherwise stated, the law. In North America, as Canada prepared to enforce Islamic law, or Shari'a, in late 2003, Canadian judges planned to give legal sanction to disputes between Muslims. (Wente 2004) Among Muslims, the concept of a body of laws which governs the practical issues of life is an accepted reality. But theocracies do not exist in "Christian" Europe. (Flood and Frey 1998, in Robinson 2000:14)

The very negation of ties to Christianity at the governmental level in Europe, noticed in the blatant and controversial omission of any mention of Christian influences or roots in European history in the text of the new European Union constitution, sheds clear light on the fact that the impact of the meeting of two cultures is not only one of Christian vs Islam, but is rather one in which the very question of whether Europe sees itself as Christian has to be tackled.

In the "Christian West," Muslim leaders are horrified by the decadent, godless style of dress, advertising and male/female relations from which they want to protect their children and young people. They are clearly in favor of putting into practice Muslim standards of modesty. In the extreme, in some notable instances, male-dominated Islamic communities in low-income, high-rise buildings have become a law unto themselves, punishing girls who choose to wear Western clothing and associate with European boys through gang rape or immolation by burning. (Crumley and Smith 2002)

In light of recent tides turning to the political right, what will be Europe's continuing response to the growing challenge of dealing with the immigrants knocking at her doors and with those already living on the continent? Second- and third-generation immigrants now enjoy the right to vote and will certainly hold political sway in the coming elections.

After the brutal and dramatically pro-Islamic killing of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands late last year, this small but progressively influential country (with 6% of its population Muslim and with some 30,000 new Muslims arriving every year) hardened its soft line on entrance of non-European immigrants. (de Borchgrave 2004, in Robinson 2004:72)

But as some governments are tightening their borders, others, like Spain's new leadership, are granting amnesty to thousands, handing out legal residency and work status to those already living in the country. There is no consensus "across the board" in EU decision-making circles on how to handle the challenge of the immigrant wave. Not only are the numbers daunting, the not-so-simple logistics of processing the applications are a miniscule hurdle in comparison to the huge task of integration of these peoples into the European society. ("Spain's Amnesty Program" 2005, in Robinson 2005:74)

Some German politicians want to take the route of "tolerance," which, according to the Chief Executive of the huge German publisher Axel Springer AG, should be labeled "cowardice." In a recent commentary in *Die Welt*, Dapfner writes,

A substantial fraction of our (German) Government, and if the polls are to be believed, the German people, actually believe that creating an Official State "Muslim Holiday" will somehow spare us from the wrath of the fanatical Islamists. (Dapfner 2005, in Robinson 2005:73)

In an effort to allow unique cultures to flourish within the host culture, there has not been a push by European governments to demand that imams and other Muslim religious leaders learn the local language, which could help pave the way for open dialogue within their local communities. The impact on the host society of letting the minority, immigrant groups grow in parallel to the existing, traditional culture, looms large as the numbers of immigrants keep climbing and as the values of the "new majority" start to take precedence in certain police "no-go" areas in Europe's burgeoning, urban areas.

Though the populist reaction has generally, in the past, been a tolerant one, it is now characterized as one of rising dissatisfaction which feeds on isolated cases of outright discrimination and persecution. The reaction of a minority cross-section of the existing, traditional European population has swung wildly towards racism. A EuroBarometer survey reports that "41% of respondents are of the opinion that there are too many people from minority groups in terms of race, religion and culture living in their country." ("Racism and Xenophobia in Europe" 2001:44) Giorgi provides what he sees as the logical link: he writes that the rise in racism across the continent suggests an "incompatibility of life-styles and traditions." (Giorgi in Pohoryles 1994:230, quoting Balibar and Wallerstein 1991:92)

Right-wing, nationalistic political parties are gaining seats in the law-making bodies of the continent's nations. (Wallace 2000/2001, in Robinson 2001:25) Their xenophobic agendas reach past immigrants with non-European heritage into settled communities of Jews within their midst. (Cohen 2000, in Robinson 2000:16) There is a general feeling in many countries in Europe that "immigrant ethnic identities 'threaten' or 'challenge' national identity." (Rex, John. "Ethnic mobilization in a multicultural society," Pohoryles 1994:214) Those who are "other" – not like us – are to be contained, to be set aside as second-class citizens, if we let them be citizens at all.

This confusion over its own identity, then, is at the root of a general unease Europe has about the possibility of integrating those whose identity is radically "other." Ford says,

Buffeted by the crosscurrents of secularism, Christianity, and Islam – and mindful of a history of religious violence – they [Europeans] are wrestling with their values and identity as never before. (Ford 2005, in Robinson 2005:74)

As the inhabitants of Europe try to sort out their identities and nations attempt to define themselves in light of the influx of thousands of immigrants becoming citizens, the British prime minister Tony Blair,

has identified the extension of links between different religious communities as a priority for the next millennium...between Christians, Muslims and Jews in particular. (The Daily Telegraph 1999, in Robinson 1999:2)

One certain key to the outcome of the continent's dilemma has to do with dialogue. The ability to be in dialogue with those unlike ourselves, to try to see another way of thinking, to attempt to let the identity of "Europeaness" change, will be the key to whether integration and/or multiculturalism will work for Europe. Listening, taking the time and energy to clearly communicate opinions and points of view, reigning in racism and discovering national identity in the process, will all be paths on the road toward finding creative solutions to the immense task ahead. The steps we take in this direction of dialogue, as Evangelical leaders, will hopefully be bold and outspoken ones.

Islamic leaders in France are talking with French Jewish leadership. Racist attacks have plagued both communities. Perhaps they have more in common with each other these days than either group has with the existing French culture in which their peoples are trying to survive. But as was the case with European reaction to the invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003, the populace can be pulling in a diametrically opposed direction from those who create public policy, in that case specifically, the heads of state of Britain, Italy and Spain. Just because the leaders are talking does not mean the general population of either the Muslim or the Jewish (or the traditionally European community) will be willing to listen to a point of view other than their own.

The immigrant communities themselves are dealing in their own ways with the challenge of integration though, typically, immigrants from North Africa and Turkey arrive in disadvantaged circumstances. *World Pulse* reports that many in the Islamic community "suffer marginalization, unemployment and poverty." ("EuroIslam" 2004, in Robinson 2004:66)

It seems that a first priority on arrival, as is the tendency of many immigrants, is to find a sense of identity within a group that is most like themselves. Rex says, "...they are the better able to defend themselves collectively if their pre-migration identities are preserved." (Rex in Pohoryles 1994:215)

Reactions within the immigrant communities, more or less unorganized, range from the militant to the political with a middle ground attempting to be forged by a hybrid of "EuroIslam," a reaction to the radical fundamentalist response by some of Europe's Muslim leaders who feel the need to "distance themselves from militant Islam but not wanting to abandon their faith, a faith that supports Western democratic values but is less dependent on Middle Eastern doctrines." ("EuroIslam" 2004, in Robinson 2004:66)

Cardinal Ratzinger in his interview with *Le Figaro*, links the rise in fundamentalism among Muslims in Europe with the "unrelenting secularism" found on the continent: that Muslim fundamentalism is actually "provoked" by secularism. He says,

This is all about a certain rejection that this world has chosen, one which refuses God and respect of that which is holy, a world which feels totally autonomous and which no longer knows the innate laws applying to the individual human being, a world which has reconstructed man according to his own mental schema. This loss of a proper sense of the sacred and of the respect of others provokes an auto-defensive reaction in the heart of the Arab and Islamic world. A profound mistrust is expressed here in the face of such a loss of the supernatural, which is perceived as being a great decline for the human race. Forced secularism, therefore, is not the proper response to the terrible crisis and challenge of religious fundamentalism... (de Ravinel 2004, in Robinson 2005:74)

How do these divergent paths, these various expressions of Islam in Europe, cross or meet or veer off in completely differing directions? Are certain elements within the European, Islamic community, and in particular the more radical side of Islamist extremists, making use of their presence in "democratic" Europe? Some worry that the extreme elements and those purporting Islamic instruction in the public schools are taking advantage of the freedom of a democratic society to spread their ideologies. (Mulrine 2005, in Robinson 2005:73)

The bustling immigrant communities are rich in their own expressions of their inherited culture, mixing traditions, cuisine and clothing styles with their adopted ones. As second- and third-generation immigrants struggle to find new identities, some group together around what is familiar; many become religiously oriented in new ways in the face of a challenge to their sense of a cultural identity. Mosques are not only places of prayer but have also become cultural centers for the teaching of the Koran.

At times, in some quarters of Paris, cars are blocked as the narrow streets fill with prayer rugs, and hundreds of shoeless, Muslim men facing east touch their foreheads to the ground in the direction of Mecca. It is said when visiting the area surrounding the Sacré Coeur on one of Paris' prominent hilltops, that one could mistake the place and think they were in North Africa: no French heard spoken, no Western dress seen, fragrant spices and colorful cloth swirling in foreign mystery.

Muslim immigration, particularly originating in North Africa and Turkey, and the drizzling/aging of Europe's population are inextricably interrelated trends. We read that in order for Europe to sustain economic growth and fuel beleaguered pension packages, it must let thousands of immigrants into the work force. But, ultimately, it is this one issue, that of the integration of Muslim peoples into European society, felt as a "clash of civilizations," which has become, and will continue to be, the major spur prodding the continent into social upheaval. (Naim 1999, in Robinson 1999:6) (*The Wall Street Journal Europe* 2000, in Robinson 2000:7)

One thing is certain. The integration dilemma facing Europe is not going to disappear, and neither are all the non-European-looking faces which have become ubiquitous reminders.

Confronted with a volatile mix of cultures, religions and languages, those finding themselves living in Europe in the 21st century will need to be part of discovering what it means to be "European." Whether they take an active or passive role, each one will influence the road ahead. As Schlesinger writes, "Like it or not, Europeans are both observers and participants in the present transformation of their continent." (Schlesinger in Pohoryles 1994:33)

My thesis, then, is in keen agreement with Rex when he writes that,

Arguably the most important problem in the political sociology of Europe today is that of the relationship which develops between the various nation states and the immigrant communities which have settled within their boundaries. (Rex 1998:121, in Robinson 1999:2)

The two major trends, which will cause cataclysmic change in Europe (the two analogical giants) can be identified by these names: Muslim immigration and a declining European population.

Pressed between these giants of immigration and demographic decline, those born of European parentage may be overcome in the crush or, possibly, become some very good wine. Immigrants may be trodden under foot, may rise up and claim their rights through violence, or may flourish side-by-side with those whose roots lie in the soils of the continent.

The forces of societal upheaval and change will move forward without their consent.

In reaction to each other, they may be either like vegetables in a soup whose greens, reds and yellows get mashed into a rich, brown stew; like multi-colored threads in a rug with interwoven pieces of rug wool dipped in varying dyes; like beads on a necklace, beads whose hard edges keep separate any blending but which compliment each other; like an explosive, chemical reaction, the violent consequence of acidic attitudes of racism and xenophobia; or like pigments in a van Gogh self portrait whose distinct hues blend in subtle shading as one moves away from the subject...

Only in retrospect will we see what Europe has become.

Ruth Robinson, March 2005

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Vision verses: “We are therefore Christ’s **ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us.” 2 Corinthians 5:20

Men “who understood the times and knew what Israel should do”—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command”: these were the men of Issachar, volunteers armed for battle with David. 1 Chronicles 12:32

