

# THE EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVE

Volume 1 | June 2008

## A Future for Conservatism in Europe

Introduction to the first issue of *the European Conservative*

*I am often reminded of the story Andras Lanczi told us at the last Vanenburg Meeting about what it would take for conservatism to fail. He had been to a conference in Krakow where the participants (from both Europe and the USA) were considering the characteristic features of the contemporary Left.*

**Andreas Kinningg**

They seem to have agreed that the Left is superior to the Right, or conservatives, in that the Left is against exclusion of any sort, and is organized internationally. The conservatives are separated by boundaries such as nation, culture, religion, tradition. While this is a criticism that we European conservatives should not take lightly, it should be noted that if it were fully correct, then this anecdote would not have reached you, and this newsletter would not be in existence.

The *Center for European Renewal* and our *Vanenburg Meetings* are doing something that has not been done well before, but it is not a conservative revolution. By force of circumstance and the accidents of history, we are compelled to temper the more exclusive and local of our commitments for the sake of what binds us in the West together. As they would say in America, "This ain't your parents' conservatism." Some 'conservatisms' of the past have been too locally-minded. Contrarily, the conservatism in America, at least on the popular level, aspires toward a universal idealism at the expense of the local. But our

unity in this conservative cause, and the ideas that bind us, are not a negation of those ligaments of local and national bodies. They are in fact a recapitulation of the very stuff out of which each great European culture is formed. We are merely re-presenting it. In the best sense of the word we are conservationists here to conserve and hand on our nations' and civilization's patrimony to posterity.

In the *Center for European Renewal (CER)* I have invested my hope for the international gathering and cooperation of European conservatives (and all those from elsewhere who are sympathetic to their cause). Our summer conference is our great annual event that should serve as the capstone of each year's activities. This year in Madrid we will address the greatest rupture in the settled institutions of Europe in recent history: the Cultural Revolution of 1968. Being forty years removed from this singular event and its consequences has allowed time for thought and assessment. Much is in print about the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, it is rare that a critical assessment of the "Spirit of '68" is heard. CER intends to work with our American friends at ISI Books to publish an edited volume containing European conservative perspectives on the "Spirit of '68" and the future of Europe.

*The European Conservative* will arrive in your inbox a few times a year. Within its pages we will publish country reports and book reviews; introduce you to institutes, conferences, and publications germane to conservatism; and update you on forthcoming CER events.



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RENEWAL

[www.europeanrenewal.org](http://www.europeanrenewal.org)  
[info@europeanrenewal.org](mailto:info@europeanrenewal.org)

I ask you to contribute your knowledge of conservatism in your own country, to send book reviews, and to keep in touch. And do send this newsletter to your conservative—or potentially conservative—friends.

Yours Sincerely,  
Andreas Kinningg  
Chairman, CER

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# Konservativt Forum in Sweden

[www.konservativtforum.org](http://www.konservativtforum.org)

*The Konservativt Forum (KF) is both a center for classical conservatives in Sweden and a platform for conservative thinking and networking. With an internet community as its base, KF stands independent of party politics. It gathers participants from the established center-right parties as well as other organizations and associations relating to conservatism or conservative issues in Sweden.*

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## Jakob E:son Söderbaum

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KF was founded in 2002 by three students: Johan Carlson, Anton Lindberg and Jakob E:son Söderbaum. The initial membership was chosen from conservatives within their personal networks. To avoid being associated with right-wing extremism of any kind, KF has been very restrictive in registering new participants. It has focused on associating only those who have already demonstrated a distinguished capability of, and belief in, classical conservative analysis of culture and politics. Today KF has about 100 participants from all over Sweden, ranging from seventeen to sixty years of age.



*Mr. Per Ericson of the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet and Prof. Claes G. Ryn, at the winter seminar of 2007*

In the summer of 2005, KF arranged a conference of more than forty personally-invited conservatives from all over Sweden. It was not only geographically diverse but also represented different generations of Swedish conservatives. Most of the attendees—as well as those at subsequent Summer conferences—were members of either of the center-right parties, Moderata Samlingspartiet (the Moderate party) and Kristdemokraterna (the Christian democrats), or the old conservative student organization Heimdal in Uppsala. This first

conference is still the forum's most well-known event, discussed in three Swedish magazines during the Autumn of 2005. These included the Christian democrat magazine *Kristdemokraten*, the anti-communist magazine *Contra*, and the magazine for conservative students *Tidskriften Heimdal*. This conference lasted for two days during which four prominent conservatives spoke.

Subjects of KF lectures through the years have been: "Feminism and the Sexualization of the Public Square", "Traditionalism vs. Radical Conservatism", "Conservatism in the History of Sweden", "Conservatism in the USA", "The Ideas of 1914: the Young Right and the Political and Literary Debate", "Oscarian Idealism and Its View of Man", "How Can We Save the Swedish Cultural Heritage?", "The Crisis of Conservatism in the USA", "What Have Conservatives in Sweden Done Wrong?", "The Moderate party and the Conservative Heritage", and "Working as a Political Secretary in the Swedish Parliament." During the forum's conferences, KF's development has also been discussed, both in terms of what we now have to work with and what the possibilities are for the future of Swedish conservatism.

The initial summer conference was the first national gathering of classical conservatives in Sweden in more than two decades. This is partly due to the fact that until about fifteen years ago Moderata Samlingspartiet has been the reliable homestead of conservatives. Moreover, several earlier attempts at organizing Swedish conservatism have failed to keep the right-wing extremists out, and thus never have achieved enough legitimacy to hold a large-scale conservative gathering. Since the beginning, confidence and legitimacy have been the guiding stars for KF. In addition to annual conferences, since 2005 KF has been holding seminars.



*The KF summer conference of 2007*



One of KF's main purposes is to present classic conservatism in its entire spectrum—a spectrum that is completely unknown in Sweden outside of a small circle of academics. The basic conservative values that the forum wants to shed light on are that:

- \* Historical and cultural contexts are the necessary starting-points for the understanding of oneself and of ones fellow human beings.
- \* Natural communities must be the foundation of a civilized social order, as continuity is fundamental for social development and any desirable advancement.
- \* Family is and must be considered to be the cornerstone of society and social life.
- \* Individual citizens have the right to freedom guided and secured by responsibility and duties.
- \* State power is necessary for safeguarding order, democracy, and personal freedom.
- \* Subsidiarity is of vital importance to a healthy society—a higher level decision-making body shall not deal with questions that can be better decided on a lower level.

On the homepage ([www.konservativtforum.org](http://www.konservativtforum.org)), KF has collected a large number of articles by well-known Swedish conservatives. It is the largest open electronic library of modern day Swedish conservative thinking. And it is published with permissions of the authors.

KF has recently become part of the conservative think-tank Empron, which was founded in 2006 by Anton Lindberg, Christian Swedberg and Jakob E:son Söderbaum. Apart from KF and its events, Empron has published a book with critical views on Swedish social democracy and is currently planning a conservative E-zine. ■

# A Revival of Conservative Ideas in Europe?

## Review: Johann Baptist Müller's *Konservatismus – Konturen einer Ordnungsvorstellung*

*The annual Vanenburg Meetings began in 2006 in Putten, the Netherlands. Out of the first two meetings came the Center for European Renewal. Its goal is to be a coordinator for conservative groups in Europe. With such a network it is of great importance that debate on conservative ideas is fostered.*

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**Bertil Häggman**

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Last year a valuable book on conservative ideas was published in Germany: Johann Baptist Müller's *Konservatismus – Konturen einer Ordnungsvorstellung* (Conservatism: Outlines of an Idea of Order. Band 146 in Beiträge zur Politischen Wissenschaft, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007, 217 pages). The author treats mainly American, German, British, and French conservatives. The basic tenor of the book is that conservatism is as legitimate an ideology as European liberalism and socialism. In order to legitimate conservatism's place among the great European doctrines, this valuable volume asks and answers the question whether there really is a group of ideas and thinkers that can in good faith be called conservative. Can for instance the works of Nobel prize winner F.A. von Hayek, with his strong market orientation, be counted as a conservative? After all, Hayek once wrote that he was not a conservative. What are the qualifications for including a writer in the conservative camp?

In a first chapter, Müller investigates the question of how old conservatism is. In the view of F.J.C. Hearnshaw it originated already in paradise: „Conservatism in the sense of a spirit opposed to radicalism...can be traced right back to the Garden of Eden itself....Adam...was the person who represented the conservative qualities of contentment and stability.” Eve was the radical figure of innovation. Raymond English places the origins of conservatism in classical antiquity: “The core of political thought is old and complex; formed of strands which lead back unbroken through... St. Thomas Aquinas, Cicero, and Aristotle...Conservatism is able to turn to these classic sources because it rejects the notion that the central elements of the human predicament change with political and economic revolutions.” Interestingly, another prominent conservative thinker, Kenneth Minogue, also counts the first conservative thinkers to be St. Thomas Aquinas, Plato, and Aristotle. In the modern age, authors usually

describe conservatism as a reaction against the ideas of the French Revolution of 1789.

In a second chapter (“Die Geschichte der Moderne in konservativer Perspektive”), Müller treats modernity from a conservative perspective. He focuses on French conservative critics of the Revolution. Joseph de Maistre is one of the main figures of French conservatism. He was a believer in God as the origin of legitimate power, and believed that institutions and conditions which had stood the test of time had a divine sanction. The second French conservative that Müller presents is Charles Maurras. He then discusses the German Conservative Revolution's main figures in the Weimar Republic. They are described as being enemies of reform. Although Müller does a fine job discussing German conservatives, Armin Mohler's *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932* (Ein Handbuch, fifth edition, 1999), is still the best work by far on this conservative movement. Müller then moves to Edmund Burke, whose conservatism is described as moderate, seeking slow progress based on tradition. And Burke's influence on German conservatism was extensive and recognized as such by Müller.

What is lacking in the new book is a presentation of the later Burke--the man who fought often lonely battles against Jacobinism. In his “Letter to a Member of the National Assembly”, the condemnation of the Revolution went beyond *Reflections*. In his *Thoughts on French Affairs* (December, 1791), he noted that something had to be done to prevent the conquest of Europe by fanaticism. When King Louis XVI was executed by the Jacobins in 1793 this fulfilled the predictions of Burke of the Jacobines' limitless ferocity. The concluding condemnation of the Revolution can be found in this great thinker and orator's *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1797 and later posthumously). The Revolution had ravaged Europe. It had devoured many of its own children. Should Britain come to terms with murderers and brigands? In its spirit, and for its objects, it was a civil war. It was a war between the partisans of the ancient civil, moral, and political order of Europe against a sect of fanatical and ambitious atheists which meant to change them all. Burke and his ilk did succeed in defending European civilization, although long after his death (and indirectly) when Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815. Russel Kirk, in his fine

one-volume biography of Burke (*Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered*, 1967) noted that communism is the counterpart, still more terrible, of the French Revolution. The tyranny in Moscow (which ended in 1991) and Communist China even today are the full realization of Burke's prophecies.

In an informative chapter Müller discusses the relation between conservatism and Christianity. A fine description of the risks of conservatism without Christian doctrine can be found in Adam Röder: “Der Konservatismus ohne das Christentum läuft Gefahr, zu einer Variante des aufgeklärten Absolutismus zu entarten oder zur Oligarchie, in der einzelne Schichte oder Geschlechter wahllos herrschen”.

Before closing, a few additional words should be said about what is apropos to a European conservative revival. This concerns modern free enterprise, the New Deal in America, and certain observations of Edmund Burke concerning state power.

Although some have attempted criticism of capitalism within American and European conservatism, free enterprise is the major economic basis of modern conservative thought. In spite of this fact, conservative intellectuals have not always found it easy to obtain commercial support for cultural projects. Frustration during the Cold War was also widespread among conservatives when businessmen proved eager to deal commercially with communist countries, even when it harmed Western policies and competition. Many positive comments from conservatives could however be found for entrepreneurs who acted like virtuous statesmanlike in business and politics.

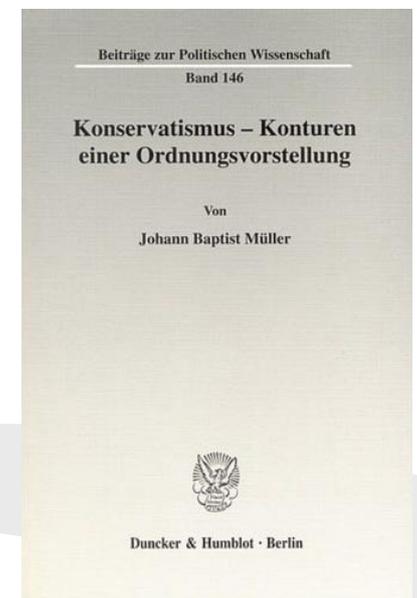
Some American conservatives defend the New Deal of President F.D. Roosevelt. In the words of Peter Viereck: “The Burkean conservative today, cherishes New Deal reforms in economics...one of the finest achievements of the New Deal era...in that it achieved many humanitarian ideals of the so-called left without the murderous police-state practices of the far left”. In general, however, it seems that conservatives in Europe are more prepared to accept welfare systems supported by taxes than is the case in America.

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Nevertheless, we must keep Edmund Burke's prophetic words in mind as we discuss the future of the expansive European states. He wrote that "The people have no interest in disorder". His moderate view of the state is one that most Western conservatives can agree on. Important are his criticisms of the misuse of power of the absolutists and the French revolutionaries. On the latter Burke wrote: "Individuality is left out of their scheme of government. The state is all in all. Everything is referred to the production of force: afterwards, everything is trusted to the use of it. It is military in its principle, in its maxims, in its spirit, and in all its movements. The state has dominion and conquest for its sole objects, dominion over minds by proselytism, over bodies by arms." And lastly, the American macrohistorian Samuel P. Huntington has called for both conservatives and liberals to defend the liberal state: "The greatest need is not so much the creation of more liberal institutions as the successful defense of those which already exist."

In an interesting final chapter Müller asks if there is a future for conservatism? Indeed conservatives have made a number of mistakes since the Second World War. Russell Kirk has pointed out one important aspect of this. Conservatives have with haste and without honor left the battlefield of ideas and culture. The enemy has the day. The radicals are the victors at least in Europe, while there has been a conservative revival in America.

Müller's last exhortation to conservatives in the book is that they have to present as much theoretical work as European liberals and socialists. This book is a valuable vademecum for all European conservatives. It signals an important call to revival of European conservative thinking in the public arena. ■



Müller, Johann Baptist:  
*Konservatismus -  
Konturen einer Ordnungsvorstellung.*  
Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt 2007

Available at [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de) (€ 58,-)

## The Third Annual “Vanenburg Meeting” of the Center for European Renewal

July 4th - 6th in Madrid, Spain: **Forty Years of the Spirit of '68: Is Europe in Crisis?**



Group picture of the first annual Vanenburg meeting in 2006

1968, the year of the Cultural Revolution, is forty years ago, yet we still live in the world the protesters created. Or, rather, we continue to experience the effects of the failures of their ideas. In the past four decades, the “Spirit of 1968” has contributed to a sense of malaise in Europe. The question is justified whether the continent is in crisis.

Our conference will address five potential crises: culture, family, religion, economics, and

education. Each will be addressed by a panel of prominent European conservatives.

In the past two years, our work at the Vanenburg meetings has attracted the attention of our American conservative friends. The *Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (ISI) is therefore interested in publishing an edited volume of essays with the working title, *Does Europe Have a Future? Europe's New Conservatives Confront a Continent in Crisis.*

As Mark Henrie puts it, the book would serve as a sort of ‘manifesto’, to answer the simple questions: What do European conservatives want? What sort of concrete changes in social and political life are we proposing, and how might those come about? In other words, in addition to diagnosis, there must be a prescription, a ‘cure’ proposed.

Further details: contact Jonathan Price, [price@europeanrenewal.org](mailto:price@europeanrenewal.org)

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