

Eat it, Europe

By Bruce Bawer

Are you old enough to recognize the name of James Taylor? He's a singer-songwriter, now 76 years old. Among his hits are "Fire and Rain" (1970) and "Carolina in My Mind" (1968). During and after the Vietnam War he wrote and recorded his share of antiwar songs. "Soldiers" (1971) paints a horrific picture of nine GIs, out of an original twenty, who've made it "Through the night / Half of them wounded / And barely alive." "Native Son" (1991) asks veterans who are "Brothers in arms no more" whether they've "been to hell."

Taylor composed other antiwar anthems. You get the idea. War is hell. The soldier's life is a nightmare. And veterans of combat are scarred forever.

But that was then. Now James Taylor is singing a different tune. The other day, he took to X to [praise](#) "Zelensky, the hero of Ukraine," to celebrate the Ukrainian soldiers' "righteous resistance," and to maintain that we've all felt a "thrill" when some of those soldiers have "paid the price in patriots' blood."

How, he goes on to ask,

do we now turn away? To stand by, mute and cowed, as the men who would be king[,] Putin, Trump and Musk, huddle in their fortress and decide the fate of nations, shutting out the people they betray?

Is this what has become of the cradle of liberty,...and the home of the brave..? That we slide the hidden dagger in the back of those who were our champions? While our allies in the defeat of Hitler and Stalin witness our betrayal in disbelief...

Okay, a couple of problems here. Let's get this howler out of the way first: the U.S. and its allies, of course, didn't defeat Stalin – Stalin (ahem) was one of those allies.

Second, could the contrast between the horrid vision of war in Taylor's Vietnam songs and the war-glorifying rhetoric of his post on X be any more striking? It's as if the harshly realistic World War I poet Wilfred Owen ("What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?") had turned into his romantic counterpart Rupert Brooke ("If I should die, think only this of me: / That there's some corner of a foreign field / That is for ever England").

Third, how sick is it to "thrill" to the spectacle of young Ukrainian men bleeding to death on a battlefield?

Fourth, and this is what I want to expatiate upon, the notion that Ukrainians and other Europeans were ever America's "champions" is absurd – as is the claim that Trump's determination to end the bloodshed in Ukraine amounts to a "betrayal."

It's not just James Taylor who's been pushing this fantasy. Writing in the *Guardian*, Noah Rothman of *National Review* fretted that Trump, by failing to take into account European pride and sensitivity in his pursuit of a peace agreement in Ukraine, is "needlessly antagonising" our "partners." Rothman approvingly quoted the assertion by Singapore's defense minister, Ng Eng Hen, that "America's 'image' abroad has 'changed from liberator to great disruptor to a landlord seeking rent.'"

There's been a lot of this sort of rhetoric lately. It is, as they say, to laugh. Among European elites, in any case, America's post-World War II image as "liberator" didn't last very long. For heaven's sake, the French began resenting us the moment the waters off Normandy began turning red. Yes, there are still occasions – such as wreath-layings at U.S.

military cemeteries on the anniversary of V-E Day – when at least some Europeans gratefully recall their liberation. But the idea of European leaders as our “partners” or “champions” is quite a stretch.

On the contrary, to those leaders and their legacy-media puppets, America has long been the generous and indulgent parent whom they take for granted and treat with brat-like disrespect. As far as they’re concerned, America can do nothing right – certainly not when there’s a Republican in the White House. When George W. Bush invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, he was the moral equivalent of Saddam Hussein; when Trump seeks to stop the killing in Ukraine, he’s Hitler.



Trump has characterized America’s transatlantic relationship – and our relationship with much of the rest of the world, including Canada – as, in

many senses, a one-way street. He’s right. They can impose tariffs on us, but if we reciprocate, we’re being mean. They expect us to keep the UN afloat, even if they use it as a platform from which to betray and berate us. They expect us to fund NATO to a far greater extent than they do, but if we ask them to pay more – or actually act the part of the senior member – they throw a fit.

Rothman even chided J.D. Vance for criticizing European governments’ rejection of liberal values. “The speech inflamed European passions,” contended Rothman, who added that Trump & co. “appear to derive some psychological gratification from gratuitously needling America’s friends.” First, what’s

gratuitous about calling Europe out on its abandonment of Enlightenment values? Second, when “America’s friends” leave freedom behind, are their regimes still worth defending with young American lives?

Third, Trump’s “needling” is nothing compared to the amount of abuse that’s been directed by Europe at America for centuries.

It started in colonial times, when anti-American abuse was an expression of aristocratic condescension toward a republic governed of, by, and for the uncouth masses. Even after America had created the modern era, become the planet’s scientific and technological powerhouse, settled two world wars, and put men on the moon, even after the U.S. dollar had become the international reserve currency and the U.S. Navy the guarantor of global trade and American universities the gold standard, even after many European countries had formed democratic governments based in large part on the American system, European political and media elites continued to portray Americans as knuckle-dragging morons.

It never made sense. It never added up. But people in Europe believed it. Or at least enjoyed pretending to believe it.

A 2018 scandal illuminated this sorry state of affairs. In December of that year, it emerged that a dozen or so eye-popping reports from America written by one Claas Relotius for Germany’s biggest magazine, *Der Spiegel*, had been pure fiction. The running theme of the articles, which professed to report recent events in flyover country, was that middle America is populated by bigots, hicks, rubes.

As James Kirchick [pointed out](#) in a January 2019 examination of the case for *The Atlantic*, the reason why Relotius had gotten away with his fabrications for so long was that he had given his editors “what they wanted – what they expected – to hear about America.” Indeed, Relotius’s lies were of a piece with almost all of *Der Spiegel*’s so-called America coverage, which

Kirchick rightly described as “crude and sensational anti-Americanism” – a characterization that could be applied to the great majority of the European legacy media’s coverage of America.

During George W. Bush’s 2004 election campaign, *Der Spiegel* ran a headline asking: “Will America Be Democratic Again?” It’s a question that European politicians and media love to pose every time a Republican’s in power across the pond. And never has the phony hand-wringing about dictatorship coming to America been more hysterical than it has been since the advent of Trump 2.0. Yet these fools were still outraged when Trump’s vice president gently but firmly pointed out, in Munich, that it’s *Europe* that is abandoning democracy.

The dirty little secret, of course, is that European leaders have never really been entirely on board with democracy anyway. We rescued their countries from the Nazi German empire only to see them putting together what gradually developed into an undemocratic superstate with its power center in – where else? – Germany.

Two decades ago I reviewed a book called *A Declaration of Interdependence: Why America Should Join the World* by a British columnist named Will Hutton, who was only voicing the elitist European consensus when he deplored the “American belief in the primacy of the individual” and scorned the individualist-oriented American Revolution – even as he championed the European “belief in the primacy of society” and the communalist-oriented French Revolution. It was precisely this attitude, I noted in my review, that “made possible the rise of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism” and “obliged the U.S. to step in and save the Continent from itself in World War II.”

And it’s precisely this attitude that makes Trump’s return to power – and the rise in Europe of politicians like Georgia Meloni, who said at this year’s CPAC, “We serve the people, we

do not rule over them” – strike terror in Europe’s corridors of power. For Trump and MAGA Americans are showing the European masses how it’s done. True, as Daniel Greenfield [wrote](#) the other day, the way in which European parliamentary systems are structured may well “make it impossible for Europe to vote its way out of the Islamization crisis.” Still, the elites’ hold on power is becoming more and more precarious. And they are plainly trembling in fear that the European masses may yet awaken in numbers large enough to send those elites, at long last, to the dustbin of history.

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