editorial

Recent months have seen the deaths of two outstanding English historians whose work will be familiar to many political scientists. The first to go was Tony Judt, who among other things started as an historian of Europe's public intellectuals and ended up as one himself. He wrote a series of reflective and moving memoirs in the New York Review of Books (NYR) before succumbing to a rapid decline. However, his last communication to the NYR was reproduced in the letters column shortly before his death on 6 August when a correspondent who had the temerity to question his grasp of English and of the difference between 'inchoate' and 'chaotic', finished his letter with: 'Didn't Professor Judt learn Latin at the fancy school he went to?' (Evidently in the academic Republic of Letters, vicinity to death's door brings no relief from inverted snobbery.) Judt's reply, having dealt with the linguistic issue, ends as follows (Judt, 2010):

> *At the 'fancy school' I attended (my education cost precisely nothing from the age of five to twenty-four: what about yours?) I was taught Latin, but also how to distinguish between knowledge and pedantry. I am glad to say that forty years later I can still smell the difference at fifty yards.*

No less feisty, but less of a public intellectual because of the specialised nature of his research, was the economic and political historian, Alan Milward, who effectively debunked the myth that post-war processes of European integration had much to do with the triumph of a European ideal previously trammelled by cynical politicians and outright fascists. Milward and his collaborators trawled the archives of major and minor European states, as well as the USA, to produce a precise and detailed picture of what, in reality, had happened. Instead of describing an inspiring progress of national self-renunciation and European edification accompanied by the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Milward had this to say in his chapter 'The lives and teachings of the European saints' (Milward, 1992: 318–319):

> *Widely held though it is, this is a view which entirely misrepresents the historical significance of the early fathers. Far from renouncing the nation-state as the foundation of a better European order, they achieved prominence and success because they were among those who developed an accurate perception of the positive role it would play in the post-war order and who also recognised or stumbled upon the need for those limited surrenders of national sovereignty through which the nation-state and western Europe were jointly strengthened, not as separate and opposed entities, but within a process of mutual reinforcement.*

In 2006, Milward agreed to review Judt's 'Postwar' (Judt, 2005) for *EPS*, surely the perfect match of book and reviewer, but his illness was already beginning to take hold and the review was never delivered. However, like Judt he has left behind a corpus of writings that will endure and continue to influence all scholars interested in Europe. Raymond Aron's last words could legitimately be attributed to either of them: *J'ai dit l'essentiel*.

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