

Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945 by Tony Judt. Penguin Group (USA), Inc., 2005, 896 pp., \$37.95.

This first-class history spans over 50 years of European developments. It traces the economic hardships that ultimately formed the two blocs in Europe—Western-based capitalism and Eastern-run communism. But unlike other works, Professor Judt has been able to weave a far more comprehensive and readable text about this critical period in world history. By merging economic, cultural, and social histories into one, the reader can clearly grasp why the Marshall Plan was started, who benefited in an economic and political sense, and how developments and policies on one side of the Iron Curtain led to reactions on the other side. While historians can find this information in other texts, Professor Judt's narrative style makes this account far more valuable as a reference for European history surveys and for understanding how policy decisions can and will be influenced by nonlinear events.

The ability of this text to examine such diverse topics as the introduction of democracy in Spain, the Portuguese struggle to decolonize, and the social upheaval within Italy's economic miracle make this a most valuable contribution to history and policy formulation texts. The book opens with the end of the war in Europe and the struggles faced not only by the Germans but by all European states as they sought to rebuild a devastated continent. Countries like Belgium and Bulgaria are covered so that the reader can compare and contrast these beginnings. France and Great Britain, attempting to keep the United States engaged in the continent, had to try a variety of policies as the United States looked for ways to end the expensive postwar occupation and return to domestic American issues.

Also explored is the influence of American culture on the European film industry, for instance, and other concepts that 20 years later would spark a wave of anti-Americanism on the continent. Soviet influences and goals are explained, and it is amazing to see where the West may have deliberately or accidentally miscalculated policies. Professor Judt then lays out something that is rarely found in American texts of the period—the methods and motivations behind Western European adoption of left-wing socialist welfare state policies. By looking at 34 nations, this book provides more than just a sweeping overview; rather, it gives the reader details to understand the underlying and less visible issues that influence how and when policies are made and implemented.

American and Soviet policies and actions are addressed only as they influence the continent, making the text easier to understand. The shortcoming of the book may be that there are as yet few histories of post-1989 events. However, Professor Judt, who has studied Europe for over 40 years and authored numerous publications, is no stranger to the history of these events and has laid out the problems, policies, and issues that occurred, starting with Poland. The economic shell that was the communist Eastern European bloc showed signs of melting in the late eighties, and as polices and practices mostly in the economic field could not be maintained, strike and dissatisfaction started. Soviet internal collapse only hastened the process. The author also examines earlier upheavals in East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, followed by Solidarity, the Velvet Revolution, and the complete collapse of East Germany. What the book does not answer is why the West understood the East's economy so poorly and therefore could not anticipate the dramatic events that led to the end of the Cold War in Europe.

The breakup of states is another segment. Belgium had to adopt a federal system when the country became almost ungovernable due to its two antagonistic linguistic groups, the Flemings and Walloons. The author recounts in depth the numerous European political missteps and the frustrations of an American president during the implosion of Yugoslavia that brought back World War II images of camps, starving people, and wanton killings. Nationalism, a concept post-World War II Europe tried to discard, was back in 1989, and Western European (French and German) hopes for a superstate (European Union) have yet to occur. The myth of European unification—as well as the realities of new state accession and absorption in an economic and cultural sense—forms cornerstones of the book's final chapters.

British decolonization and the Dutch loss of Indonesia, in a socio-cultural as well as an economic sense, allow the reader to see why states' policies after decolonization moved in the directions they did. The influx of foreign labor into France, Germany, and Britain are clearly spelled out, and these short-term, limited-stay policies now influence an entire continent that is rapidly succumbing to non-Christian, non-European influences. This, in turn, is leading to problems that Europe is in the midst of grappling with, so there can be no closure here. However, to policy students this example allows the author to show how time, needs, and speed can ultimately undermine a policy that is well laid out and designed, a lesson not lost in the first half of the 21st century.

I recommend this book to students of postwar Europe as an overview text for graduate or service schools. It is compact and easy enough to read, and it can serve as the basis of many interesting courses. Professor Judt is to be congratulated for producing a readable text covering more than just general history and examining the underlying cultural, social, and economic events that Europeans have shared for the past 60 years.

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