MARK MAZOWER. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1999. Pp. xvi, 487. $30.00.

The chief merit of this outstanding book is that it is both an informative account of Europe's twentieth century and a stimulating and original interpretation of it. It sharply demarcates itself from a traditional conception of European history that sees the values of democracy, progress, and freedom as the foundation of Europe's history and its essence. These values, so the story goes, although occasionally dormant or repressed, are always present. Modern authoritarian regimes, be they fascist or communist, are temporary aberrations, a mere parenthesis—to use Benedetto Croce's term—in the long march of progressive liberalism. Sooner or later, Europe gets back onto the right track and moves forward.

Such views, of course, have long been challenged by historians, but they still prevail in popular history and are constantly repackaged by the media and purveyed by politicians. Historians occasionally fight back, but their struggle suffers from the usual handicaps: a lack of access to the wider cultural circuit, the profession's exaggerated emphasis on narrow-focused monographs, qualms about popularization, and less than compelling prose. Mark Mazower has few such problems. His book is an exciting read, even for those who are familiar with the subject matter and the debates surrounding it. If the historian's duty is to remind people of a past they prefer to forget and to show them that, quite often, what is peddled as new is old and what is revered as consecrated by tradition has been recently invented, then Mazower fulfills such duty admirably.

The first half of his twentieth-century Europe is dominated by violence, deep hatred, and cruelty until democracy is "re-invented" in the second half, but this was by no means an inevitable outcome. Democracy was detested by conservatives because it sought to give power to the people, by fascists because it was controlled by the old parliamentary elites, and by communists because it was a bourgeois facade. Fascism arose because, like all truly modern movements, it had a foot in the past and "followed on quite smoothly from its Liberal predecessors" (p. 15). But it also introduced novelties or used instruments that had recently become available: mass politics, an interventionist state, some aspects of a welfare system. The Nazi obsession with racial hygiene is put in its proper context: believers in eugenics span a broad spectrum, from social democrats and liberal reformers to conservatives and right-wing authoritarians. Laws urging and facilitating the voluntary sterilization of fast-breeding "inferior people" were passed in California, Sweden, and Switzerland well before they were enacted in Germany.

This illustrates the dominant theme of the book: the extent to which those who triumphed in the complex political struggles that have marred the life of the continent did so because the terrain was prepared for them, often quite accidentally, by others, including their opponents. Thus the Nuremberg rallies are juxtaposed, without cheap polemical intentions, with British mass pageants like the 1924 Empire Festival. Nazi imperialism built on the example of European states in Asia and Africa and of the colonists' treatment of native populations in North and South America. No government, however, was as driven by racism as the Third Reich, which systematically allowed its racist ideology to prevail over economic self-interest.

The narrative is often enlivened by anecdotes and, perhaps too frequently, by comments from contemporary sources. A British magistrate in the 1950s, urging a youth to get rid of his teddy boy suit, is used to exemplify the persistence of Victorian values in a society "less shaken up by the war than anywhere else" (p. 317). Yet this overlooks the fact that teddy boys did not exist at all in the rest of the continent, where youth culture and fashion always lagged behind Britain and the U.S.

The economy is dealt with more perfunctorily than politics, culture, and ideas, although critics should not underestimate how difficult it is to encapsulate one hundred years in the history of a continent as diverse as Europe in five hundred pages. For this is not, as is sometime the case, the history of four or five large countries, consigning the remainder to oblivion. The book has apposite comments on countries ranging from Bulgaria and Romania to Finland and Denmark.

As the text turns to recent history, the narrative becomes a little journalistic, although at a high standard. This is, of course, somewhat inevitable: the literature on the first half of the century is enormous, while accounts of the last twenty years are often rapidly superseded by events, making a balanced history more problematic. Indeed, Mazower reminds us, with telling quotes, how general was the belief, in 1988, that the USSR would never relinquish its control of Eastern and Central Europe, and he remarks, I fear too optimistically, that "the almost universal failure to predict the collapse of communism drove a large nail into the coffin of Western political science" (p. 361).

I hope this text will be widely used: it will make its readers think critically and challenge their preconceptions.

DONALD SASSOON
Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London

JERZY W. BOREJSZA. *Schulen des Hasses: Faschistische Systeme in Europa*. Translated by BEATE KOSMALA (Europäische Geschichte.) Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch. 1999. Pp. 320. DM 28.90.

The Soviet Empire has crumbled away, the Berlin Wall has been broken up into souvenirs, the hammers and sickles of Eurocommunist parties have turned to oak leaves and olive branches. Nevertheless, in academia the communist mindset lingers surreally like the disembodied smile of a Cheshire Cat. The publisher's blurb reassuring us that Jerzy W. Borejsza is "the best

Polish expert on fascist systems in Europe" should already put readers on their guard, since the names of other Polish experts in this area do not exactly assail the memory, and the phrase "fascist systems" suggests that a key term is being used as a blunt instrument rather than a scalpel. Nor does the title, *Schools of Hatred*, suggest that we are going to be treated with a sophisticated understanding of the ideological dynamics of life under authoritarian regimes. The book's contents duly confirm the worst fears.

Borejsza, who was ten years old when the Russians "liberated" his country from the twin scourges of Nazism and capitalism, makes it all too apparent that he was exposed to nearly half a century of Comintern orthodoxy that reduced fascism to what the 13th Plenum on "Fascism, The War Danger, and the Tasks of Communist Parties," held in the December 1933, defined as the "open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist, and most imperialist elements of finance capital." As a result, the book resembles a monument built in the Stalinist period of Eastern-bloc culture given a face lift to make it look less forbidding and now awaiting removal to a theme park of dead paradigms. Five sixths of it consist of a potted history of interwar authoritarianism: fascism and Nazism merit three chapters, followed by a whistle-stop tour through the illiberal state systems of Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, then a brief sojourn in France, Portugal, Spain, and Belgium, with a glance at countries where parliamentary democracy held out, such as Britain, Switzerland, Ireland, and Scandinavia. Were this not purporting to be a book on "fascist systems," it would at least provide German-reading students of modern history with a useful pan-European synopsis of the country-by-country process in which the lights of liberalism went out all over the continent, even if the lack of any postscript on the radical right since 1945 gives a curiously truncated feel to the whole narrative. It is in the first fifty pages and the last five, where Borejsza strays from empiricism into theory, that the structural weakness of the analysis is revealed.

Certainly he has done some homework to adapt his expertise to the New World Order, but the intellectual dilemma he has faced in recycling himself as a Western-style academic is clear from the opening paragraphs, which are studded with rudimentary questions about his topic that the subsequent text never even attempts to answer. When he says that the "definitional traits of fascism are in flux and will certainly remain so" (p. 10) or that its ideology is "apparently amorphous, eclectic, ever-changing, with no historical roots" (p. 15), it says more about the mind of the researcher than its object. However, there is one flash of light in the interpretive gloom. In the brief concluding chapter on "Fascination and Destruction," Borejsza suddenly glimpses the fact that in the context of the catastrophic social and psychological consequences of World War I in Europe, fascism offered every stratum of society "the vision of a new political and social order, the new alternative of an ordered world," its ritual politics providing an ersatz faith and experience of salvation for millions whose lives and sense of reality had been shattered. Without realizing it, he has hit on the increasingly accepted definition of fascism as a revolutionary form of nationalism driven by the myth of the imminent rebirth of the country's political culture in a "new order."

Had Borejsza applied this approach consistently to his subject matter, he would have been in a position to make perceptive judgments about the relationship between fascist movements and regimes, fascist and non-fascist forms of authoritarianism, and the deeper ideological rationale behind fascist "totalitarianism." A translation from the Polish original into English may then have been worth the trouble. As it is, after the flash of sunlight the clouds gather once more. The book concludes in wild journalistic speculation about whether the perpetuation of totalitarianism in various parts of the world might make the twenty-first century the "century of destruction." It is another symptom of Soviet miseducation to be oblivious of the potentially catastrophic impact that the economic system of the "Free World" is currently having on the ecosystem, one that far overshadows the destructive potential of authoritarian political systems.

ROGER GRIFFIN
Oxford Brookes University

MARIA DOWLING. *Fisher of Men: A Life of John Fisher, 1469–1535*. New York: St Martin's. 1999. Pp. 218. $65.00.

There has been renewed interest in the community of English humanists active before Henry VIII's reformation of the church divided their company and changed the nature of their enterprise from plans of Erasmian reform to debates over the royal supremacy. Maria Dowling addressed this issue *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (1986). She now furthers that discussion in her biography of the scholarly and saintly bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, whose uncompromising position resulted in his suffering martyrdom with that much more widely studied figure, Sir Thomas More.

There are good reasons why Fisher has not enjoyed the same degree of attention as has More. Dowling herself notes that Fisher, as a canonized martyr, has often been the object more of Catholic hagiography than scholarship; also, she reminds her readers that the whig interpretation of history placed the reformation of the church and the supremacy in the category of important moments of progress on the road to freedom and modernity, supported by an independent Anglican confession. In this view, then, Fisher represents the past, medieval communion with Rome; he is part of the problem, not the solution, so he does not merit much attention. Finally, there is not the kind of documentation on Fisher's life that there is on More's. There is little of anything before 1520, and what comes