Review

Reviewed Work(s): Dark Continet: Europe's Twentieth Century by Mark Mazower

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MARK MAZOWER. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century.* London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1998. Pp. xv, 495. £20.00.

DESPITE THE CHRONOLOGICAL allusion in its subtitle, this penetrating and provocative study focuses on the period since the end of the First World War. The book is unabashedly selective rather than inclusive in its choice of topics, qualifying it as an extended essay rather than a comprehensive text or a reliable reference work. The absence of Ernest Bevin, Willy Brandt, Alexander Dubček, Pierre Mendès-France, Jean Monnet, Imre Nagy, Helmut Schmidt, or Lech Wałęsa from this story suggests that Mark Mazower is not interested in recounting the history of these eventful years in the conventional form of a chronological narrative. Instead, Mazower has organized the wealth of information that he has gleaned from a wide range of secondary sources around a set of general themes that, he believes, explain the transformation of European life since 1919.

The portrait of Europe that emerges is that of a continent torn apart and then split in two by the clash of incompatible ideologies. The demise of monarchical absolutism with the collapse of the Hohenzollern, Hapsburg, and Romanov empires left Europeans with a choice of three alternative models of political authority and economic development. The proponents of liberal democracy, Marxism, and Fascism each found adherents at different times and in different places until the advent of the Second World War, when the democratic alternative seemed doomed all across the continent. Mazower emphasizes that the disappearance of Fascism after 1945 did not leave the old continent with the stark choice between the market capitalism of the United States and Soviet-style Communism. The *étatisme*, economic planning, and social welfare policies of post-war France, Britain, Sweden, and other countries, was as much a reaction to the failed model of market capitalism in the 1930s as to the Communist model of total state control.

A striking feature of Mazower's analysis is his appreciative assessment of the economic successes of Communism after 1945. The Soviet Union was able to achieve hegemony over Eastern Europe not only through intimidation but also by capitalizing on widespread admiration for the remarkable Soviet achievement of forced industrialization organized by the state and financed by domestic savings rather than foreign capital. In a useful corrective to the universally critical evaluation of Eastern European economic policies, he reminds us that the peoples' democracies (with East Germany leading the pack) managed to achieve a respectable record of industrial development throughout the 1950s, despite the unavailability of American aid.

In his assessment of the origins of the cold war in Europe, Mazower rejects the conventional view of an epic confrontation between two incompatible, hostile blocs. Joseph Stalin did regard Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria as essential to Soviet security and therefore insisted on absolute control there. But elsewhere in the region he revived the old Popular Front strategy of building coalitions with

non-Communist parties to secure and retain power through parliamentary means. Even after the closure of this 'window of opportunity' for East-West reconciliation by 1947, Mazower observes, each superpower scrupulously honoured the informal spheres-of-influence bargain struck at the wartime conferences: both Moscow and Washington refrained from meddling directly in each other's sphere. Propaganda, espionage, and economic competition replaced military power as the means of waging the cold war in Europe. No border disputes would degenerate into interstate violence, as in 1914-45, a happy circumstance which afforded the war-ravaged continent a breathing space within which it could (and did) recover splendidly.

Mazower regards race and ethnicity, rather than political ideology or economics, as the motive force of Europe's tragic history since the end of the First World War. Adolf Hitler's obsession with expanding the living space of his chosen people at the expense of what he regarded as the Slavic and Jewish *Untermenschen* to the east set a precedent that would survive the demise of the Third Reich. The Red Army conducted an indiscriminate campaign of rape and murder of German civilians as it drove westwards at the end of the war, herding the survivors into detention camps where they were forced to wear swastikas as an ethnic stigma. Twelve million Germans were evicted from their ancestral homes in the east, some by the advancing Russians, the rest by the post-liberation regimes in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, all with the tacit approval of the very Western allies that had piously invoked the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination in their wartime pronouncements from the Atlantic Charter to the Declaration on Liberated Europe.

This is a book replete with pointed, pithy observations that occasionally lapse into exaggeration: evaluating the spread of democratic institutions to Eastern Europe after the First World War, Mazower concludes that 'because democracy was about the creation of national communities, it was generally anti-Semitic'; Hitler's henchman, Albert Speer, is characterized as 'a pioneer of the industrial arrangements that would lead to the European Coal and Steel Community and ultimately to the Common Market'. All in all, however, this trenchant essay on Europe's descent from the pinnacle of world power will provoke its readers to re-evaluate many of the received opinions about that central development in the history of the twentieth century.

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GUIDO MÜLLER, ed. *Deutschland und der Westen: Internationale Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert: Festschrift für Klaus Schwabe zum 65. Geburtstag.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998. Pp. 381. DM 138, paper.

IN ONE WAY or another, Germany has stood at the centre of European foreign relations throughout the twentieth century. In this collection of thirty-one articles honouring Klaus Schwabe on his sixty-fifth birthday, Guido Müller brings