



Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945

By Tony Judt

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Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize

Winner of the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Book Award

One of the *New York Times*' Ten Best Books of the Year

Almost a decade in the making, this much-anticipated grand history of postwar Europe from one of the world's most esteemed historians and intellectuals is a singular achievement. *Postwar* is the first modern history that covers all of Europe, both east and west, drawing on research in six languages to sweep readers through thirty-four nations and sixty years of political and cultural change—all in one integrated, enthralling narrative. Both intellectually ambitious and compelling to read, thrilling in its scope and delightful in its small details, *Postwar* is a rare joy.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

World War II may have ended in 1945, but according to historian Tony Judt, the conflict's epilogue lasted for nearly the rest of the century. Calling 1945-1989 "an interim age," Judt examines what happened on each side of the Iron Curtain, with the West nervously inching forward while the East endured the "peace of the prison yard" until the fall of Communism in 1989 signaled their chance to progress. Though he proposes no grand, overarching theory of the postwar period, Judt's massive work covers the broad strokes as well as the fine details of the years 1945 to 2005. No one book (even at nearly a thousand pages) could fully encompass this complex period, but *Postwar* comes close, and is impressive for its scope, synthesis, clarity, and narrative cohesion.

Judt treats the entire continent as a whole, providing equal coverage of social changes, economic forces, and cultural shifts in western and eastern Europe. He offers a county-by-county analysis of how each Eastern nation shed Communism and traces the rise of the European Union, looking at what it represents both economically and ideologically. Along with the dealings between European nations, he also covers Europe's conflicted relationship with the United States, which learned much different lessons from World War II than did Europe. In particular, he studies the success of the Marshall Plan and the way the West both appreciated and resented the help, for acceptance of it reminded them of their diminished place in the world. No impartial observer, Judt offers his judgments and opinions throughout the book in an attempt to instruct as well as inform. If a moral lesson is to come from World War II, Judt writes, "then it will have to be *taught* afresh with each passing generation. 'European Union' may be an answer to history, but it can never be a substitute." This book would be an excellent place to start that lesson. --Shawn Carkonen

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. This is the best history we have of Europe in the postwar period and not likely to be surpassed for many years. Judt, director of New York University's Remarque Institute, is an academic historian of repute and, more recently, a keen observer of European affairs whose powerfully written articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books* and elsewhere. Here he combines deep knowledge with a sharply honed style and an eye for the expressive detail. *Postwar* is a hefty volume, and there are places where the details might overwhelm some readers. But the reward is always there: after pages on cabinet shuffles in some small country, or endless diplomatic negotiations concerning the fate of Germany or moves toward the European Union, the reader is snapped back to attention by insightful analysis and excellent writing. Judt shows that the dire human and economic costs of WWII shadowed Europe for a very long time afterward. Europeans and Americans recall the economic miracle, but it didn't really transform people's lives until the late 1950s, when a new, more individualized, consumer-oriented society began to appear in the West. But *Postwar* is not just a history of Western Europe. One of its great virtues is that it fully integrates the history of Eastern and Western Europe, and covers the small countries as well as the large and powerful ones. Judt is judicious, even a bit uncritical, in his appraisal of American involvement in Europe in the early postwar years, and he's scathing about Western intellectuals' accommodation to communism. His book focuses on cultural and intellectual life rather than the social experiences of factory workers or peasants, but it would probably be impossible to encompass all of it in one volume. Overall, this is history writing at its very best.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

The unassuming, almost provocatively direct title belies an almost 1,000-page exhaustive survey of

European history since the end of World War II. Yet this book isn't meant just to look impressive on the bookshelf; Judt is an astute thinker and polished writer who brings extensive cultural knowledge about film, music, and literature to bear on his daunting subjects: the Holocaust, the Stalinized East, the tide-changing 1960s, the implosion of the Iron Curtain, the policies of the European Union, and the new European way of life. Some critics attribute his clear-headed approach to almost two decades in America, where he founded New York University's Remarque Institute "to support and promote the study and discussion of Europe." Trans-Atlantic biases and assumptions aside, it's clear that Judt has written *the* book on Europe, for the moment at least.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Yvonne Terrell:

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