
**Reviewed by** Lohr Miller

**Published on** H-W-Civ (May, 1997)

Derek Urwin's *The Community of Europe* provides an examination of the idea of European integration from the Second World War, through the establishment of the European Community (during the Treaty of Rome in 1957), and to the formal establishment of the European Union in November 1993— from the heyday of early federalist sentiment to the arrival of the EU, albeit in its slightly frayed post-Maastricht form. The present edition of *The Community of Europe* is a revision of the original 1991 release, taking into account the high hopes of the Maastricht Conference and the more chastened attitudes of the later 1990s.

Urwin begins his treatment of European federalist sentiment by treating the postwar hope of a united Europe put forth by a wide array of Resistance activists during World War II—a dream born of a wartime unity of purpose, and one which, even in the post-1945 return to "traditional" parliamentary and political life, still enjoyed support from a number of public figures. Wartime hopes for a federal, democratic Europe, stretching from the Atlantic to the Soviet borders, may have been relegated by the high-minded sentiments of various private organizations in the immediate postwar years; but integrationist sentiment on a "functional," economic level gave a minimal version of unity, and Urwin argues that the necessity of economic cooperation during reconstruction gave pro-unity advocates a selling point. The work of re-building the European economy could lead—however slowly—to the goal of a federalized Europe.

Urwin's discussion of the early Cold War era and the early days of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) correctly identifies the crucial role played by US support during the first steps toward European integration. He notes that while neither NATO nor the Marshall Plan would provide a real basis for West European federation, taken together they provided both an economic breathing space and a defensive cordon within which the European states could experiment with institutions for cooperation and attitudes towards integration. NATO, Urwin notes, may have made Europe an armed camp, but in a Europe of seemingly permanent divisions, the states of the Atlantic alliance had ev-
ery incentive to link stability and integration. The
discussion of the NATO link, though, is not bal-
anced by a discussion of Leftist attitudes toward
European cooperation, and Urwin's political anal-
ysis remains oddly blind to changes in both US
and Soviet attitudes toward the European Union.

Urwin's handling of both the proposed Euro-
pean Defense Community fiasco of 1954, and of
DeGaulle's rejection of British membership in the
Common Market in 1963 is deft, concise, and
laced with keen insight into the nature of Gaullist
sentiment. Urwin's account of the "crisis of 1965"—
the attempt by France to make acceptance of a
common agricultural policy contingent on deny-
ing the European Commission its own supranas-
tional sources of revenue—is no less well-crafted,
though the focus on French attitudes does slight
the role of Italy as France's chief opponent in the
affair.

A full chapter here is devoted to the European
Free Trade Association (EFTA), or the "Seven," who were officially founded in 1960 as a counter-
weight to the EEC. The EFTA has been too often
neglected in histories of European integration,
and Urwin sketches out EFTA as a rival vision to
the EEC, one based on Nordic and British desire
for a low-tariff zone without the supranational
complications and strategic entanglements of the
EEC. Urwin follows the story of EFTA through its
first steps toward cooperation with the EEC in
1977 and the Nordic-led move towards a joint Eu-
ropean Economic Area in 1989, a move rendered
irrelevant by the grand events of that year. He
points out that after 1989, with eastern Europe
opening up and the date for a unified internal
market looming under the Single European Act,
the EFTA states had little option but to plan for
membership in the European Community.

Urwin devotes considerable space to the in-
ternal policies worked out within the EC in the
1980s and provides excellent discussions of both
the Single European Act and the Social Charter.
Nonetheless, he does discuss the events leading
up to 1992 without offering any real treatment of
either the shifting Soviet attitudes toward the EC
during the Gorbachev era or the effect that the
sudden collapse of the east European regimes had
on EC planning. This is characteristic of Urwin's
work, which has a strong focus on internal policy.
The great events of the last quarter-century—the
oil shocks of 1973 and 1978, glasnost, the revolu-
tions of 1989, the end of the Soviet Union—happen
largely off-stage, and the reader is given little idea
of European reactions. Indeed, even the massive
shifts in opinion and planning which took place
during Germany's re-unification are only lightly
touched on. The US appears only in the wings, and
there is no real discussion of the EC as a trade ri-
val of an economically hard-pressed US, or of
post-Cold War US attitudes towards the new Euro-
pean Union.

The book's final chapter—written for this edi-
tion—follows the course of events up to 1994, in
the uncertain post-Maastricht era, with Britain
opting out of the Social Charter, negotiations for
the European Monetary Union in disarray, and
the Bosnian war bringing genocide to southeast
Europe. Urwin offers the thought that the great
days of "European" sentiment may be over, but
that European unity will develop via "a layering
of experiences, a series of accretions" (p. 262), a
slow and sometimes erratic development which
will build the EU into a daily fact of life for Euro-
pean populations. The EU itself will certainly sur-
vive its current air of confusion, and no one now
doubts the idea of a "common European home."

Urwin's work is very much a work of internal
policy analysis, and one wishes he had devoted
more space to placing Europe in context and had
delved more into the evolution of policies and
ideas. Nonetheless, The Community of Europe pro-
vides a valuable overview of European integra-
tion and a readable and insightful introduction to
the history of the European Community and Euro-
pean Union.