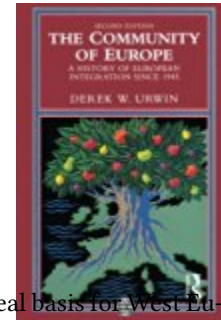


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Derek W. Urwin. *The Community of Europe: A History of European Integration Since 1945*. London and New York: Longman, 1995. xii + 283 pp. \$25.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-23199-3.

Reviewed by Lohr Miller (Louisiana State University)
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 every incentive to link stability and integration. The discussion of the NATO link, though, is not balanced by a discussion of Leftist attitudes toward European cooperation, and Urwin's political analysis remains oddly blind to changes in both US and Soviet attitudes toward the European Union.

Urwin's handling of both the proposed European 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 denying the European Commission its own supranational 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 counterweight 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 European 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 internal 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 revolutions 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 rival of an economically hard-pressed US, or of post-Cold War US attitudes towards the new European Union.

The book's final chapter—written for this edition—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 European populations. The EU itself will certainly survive 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* provides a valuable overview of European integration and a readable and insightful introduction to the history of the European Community and European Union.

Copyright (c) 1997 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact h-net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-w-civ>

Citation: Lohr Miller. Review of Urwin, Derek W., *The Community of Europe: A History of European Integration Since 1945*. H-W-Civ, H-Net Reviews. May, 1997.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=985>

Copyright © 1997 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.