FOURTH EDITION

Europe Since 1945

A Concise History

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A Concise History

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Preface

Momentous changes have occurred in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the third edition of *Europe Since 1945: A Concise History*. These changes have necessitated some major revisions in this edition. We treat the recent reforms throughout the former Soviet bloc as part of a long-term opposition to the Stalinist and Leninist economic and political systems within each country, not merely as a response to Gorbachev's initiatives between 1985 and 1991. Also of great significance has been the retreat from nationalization and extensive welfare systems in the West. Another change in this edition is the enhanced coverage of events. An increasing number of historical monographs treating the postwar period have provided a wealth of detail and interpretation that was not available when the earlier editions were written. Although the fourth edition is not as concise as the earlier editions, it now has a richness of detail that many readers desired. While the fourth edition is primarily an updating of the last edition, the events of the nineties have added important new perspectives.

Europe Since 1945 is organized both chronologically and thematically. While the chapters on politics provide the basic chronological structure, other chapters, primarily thematic, are located at points where they will enhance the understanding of the chapters that follow. For example, the first two chapters (on a bipolar world and on the Cold War and the Sovietization of Eastern Europe) are fundamental to an understanding of the third chapter (on European politics from 1945 to 1948). The chapters on politics are tied to the other chapters by an underlying socioeconomic theme that is viewed as the major determinant of political change or continuity.

We view developments in postwar Europe as the culmination of a chain of events stretching back to the turn of the century. However, we have not overlooked the enormous impact of World War II in shaping the postwar

world. For example, we explain the Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States as resulting in part from the growth of non-European power centers, beginning with the emergence of Japan and the United States in the late-nineteenth century, and from the struggle between communism and capitalism that had been at work in domestic and international politics since 1917. The incorporation of Europe within a bipolar world after 1945 is, according to this interpretation, primarily the result of the attainment of superpower status by the United States and the former USSR during this century. But we do not neglect the importance of the lessening of German power, which created a power vacuum in Central Europe that could only be filled by the two superpowers. The analysis of the end of European empire moves outside the European-centered interpretive framework to explain the emergence of independent Third World countries in the postwar period as a three-stage revolutionary pattern stretching over nearly a century. When the impact of decolonization has had an extensive domestic impact on a colonial power, as in the case of French Algeria, it is also dealt with in the chapters on domestic politics.

In the chapters on economic and social developments, demographic and statistical data are interwoven with theories that have been advanced to explain postwar European society. Such phenomena as changing occupational structures, the spread of affluence, and the persistence of distinct social classes and governing elites are treated in depth. In dealing with these themes, we have given special attention to the smaller European states, as they have often been forerunners in the development of the postwar welfare state. It is, for example, to Scandinavia that one must look in order to understand the impact of socioeconomic policies that have been pursued by most Western European states since World War II. We have also examined the effect of economic modernization and communism on former Soviet and Eastern European societies.

Throughout the study, we have favored conciseness over excessive attention to detail in order to highlight significant patterns and theses. Much of the statistical material is incorporated in the many tables located throughout the book. Seven maps help students grasp the full significance of political and economic developments. An annotated list of selected readings at the end of each chapter guides students in research and further study.

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