

Bronislaw Geremek. *Poverty: A History*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994. Pp. xi, 273. Cloth \$39.95; ISBN 0-631-15425-6.

Werner Rosener. *The Peasantry of Europe*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994. Pp. xiv, 235. Cloth \$24.95; ISBN 0-631-17503-2.

These two books are similar in several ways. Besides being published by Blackwell, both are by distinguished Central European scholars; both follow scholarly conventions but are aimed at a wider audience; both are surveys with a strong socio-economic theme; both are concise (under 300 pages).

Rosener's book is part of "The Making of Europe" series, which treats broad topics (Europe and the Sea, the Culture of Food, the European City, etc.) Cutting across standard historical classifications. Geremek's book is not part of the series, but is written with a similar charge in focus and approach. There are advantages and disadvantages to the concise chronological tour of a big topic, and some of the strengths and weaknesses of both books are similar. For one thing, they concentrate on the Medieval to Enlightenment eras and have little to say directly about the present (or even recent past). Examples are sketched quickly, explored for relevance, and then the author must move on. There is little in either book to entice the lover of narrative or of vivid historical personalities. They deal with monograph research in a scholarly manner, yet they aim to sum up a topic for an audience wider than just scholars.

Both start with excellent short introductions about what poverty and the European peasantry are. For my taste, Rosener writes a more fluid, accessible prose (or has a better translator). His book also features some helpful illustrations, maps, and charts. His index is better subtitled for easier access to material. But he is handicapped by the nature of his topic. The peasantry in Europe shrinks more and more as the author gets toward the present. The topic, you might say, dwindles away, and perhaps that accounts for the book getting less interesting as it goes on. Perhaps it is just a matter of different interests in the subject matter. But for a survey, I'd like to know more about the peasant revolts of Germany, England, and Russia and less about what gets a whole chapter: "Population, Settlement and Agrarian Zones in Early Modern Times."

I didn't find, either, that Rosener's discussion of the divergence of peasant life in Eastern and Western Europe after the Black Death added much to the standard textbook account I use with honors high school students. His concluding thought is homilistic: "Despite all the challenges they have faced, Europe's peasants have always managed to safeguard their way of life. Perhaps this fact allows us to be optimistic about the future." All in all, this is certainly a useful but not terribly interesting book.

By contrast, the further Geremek gets, the more connections between past and present (and possibly future) become stronger. He doesn't force the issue, but similarities in approaches to dealing with poverty in different places and in different historical eras emerge naturally in his discussions. His search for the reasons that efforts to eradicate or ameliorate poverty met with success or failure cut across cultural, geographical, and chronological barriers in a casually impressive way. His book is harder to approach, but more rewarding for teachers and public policy makers. There's lots to dig into here for serious college undergraduates too.

A leading figure in the Solidarity movement, Geremek has held prestigious teaching posts in Poland and France. His approach reflects a sound knowledge of the latest Western intellectual currents coupled with a more traditional Marxist concern with how theory and practice interact. Geremek moves in a straightforward chronological design: the middle ages, Reformation, Enlightenment. Because he has a solid grasp of detail and background, he can sketch them quickly, and lets comparisons arise naturally in a reader's mind. Some of his in-depth examples appear repetitious, but that is more a matter of pattern than the author's failure. His research is close and subtle, though at times I'm not sure he doesn't make too much out of small, tantalizing pieces of a picture, e.g. thirteenth-century documents that indicate a greater parceling out of land among various family members. He melds studies from Venice, Ypres, and Paris that combine acute social, cultural, economic, political, psychological, physiological, and ecological factors.

He indicates early that a study of poverty requires such disparate facets, and he is able to provide them. His main focus is not, as he explains, a history of poverty as such, but a history of attitudes towards poverty and how that influences social actions about it. He tersely suggests that the change from society seeing poverty as a necessary part of a moral landscape that was shaped by a religious world view to seeing the impoverished as inefficient at best and dangerous at worst started early in European history. His crypto-Marxian (Foucaultian?) conclusion is that "it was through attempts to combat vagrancy and ward off the social dangers of poverty that the state apparatus of repression was shaped." He does not follow up this conclusion with any doctrinaire hypothesis, though. It is, for him, just where his evidence takes him, and he is scrupulous about searching out and thinking about that evidence. The structure of his thinking is clear from chapter titles: e.g. Reformation and Repression: the 1520's, Prisons of Enlightenment.

It is easier to skim the surface of Rosener's book, and a teacher looking for some background for class lectures will be rewarded. A teacher or advanced student trying to come to grips with a persistent historical dilemma, though, will find more to contemplate in Geremek's.

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Peter Duignan & L. H. Gann. *The United States and the New Europe, 1945-1993*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994. Pp. x, 357. Paper, \$21.95. ISBN 1-55786-519-1.

Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann, both Senior Fellows at the Hoover Institute, have published numerous works concerning African, Hispanic, and European studies. This work represents historical coverage far greater than the title indicates. To prepare the reader, the authors include a concise and very readable introduction that is a synopsis of American-European relations from colonization of the New World until 1945. The bulk of the work is dedicated to support of the thesis: "European and American interests coincide in the long run."

Decidedly optimistic and "Atlanticist," the authors examine NATO, the European Community, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe. Contending that the post-World War II world order still dominates, the authors believe the United States must maintain its "special relationship" with Great Britain. The future of Europe, however, is Germany. The authors address the subliminal fear that Germany might once again dominate Europe. The "key to the continent," now tied to the reunification of Western and Eastern Germany, will require attention for at least ten years. Duignan and Gann predict that by the time reunification is completed, Germany will be bound to the European supranational organizations.

France, despite the policies of de Gaulle and disagreement with the United States on the Middle Eastern question, remains a cooperative player. Mitterand saw the United States as a "counterweight both against Germany within the EC, and against the former Soviet Union within the global context." Various members of the smaller European states, Holland, Belgium, Norway, and Denmark, have served as the precursors of Europe's economic union as well as founding members of NATO. None of these countries, though sporadic in their support of the United States, has ever relinquished ties to the United States. Postwar Italy, beset by terrorism and communist influence, eventually developed a "special relationship" with the West as the United States supplied massive aid and Italy became a geographically significant member of NATO. Spain, initially encumbered with the dictatorship of Franco, came closer to the West through a defense agreement and economic aid. By the mid-1970s, both Spain and Portugal had established parliamentary government and became part of the western coalition.

The chapters concerning the transformation of East-Central Europe and the Soviet Union are clear, interesting, and well-placed within the context of the years between 1945 and 1985. Beginning with the breakdown of the Warsaw Pact, the authors methodically describe the domino effect of the Soviet Union's decision to cease military support to their governments in Central and Eastern Europe. The 1989