

A look at Nazi Germany by Jeremy Noakes opens the focus on Germany, subtly dissecting the Nazis' rise to power on the basis of a crisis and—shades of Orwell's *1984*—maintaining power by maintaining a state of permanent crisis.

The two articles examining the most recent events in Europe, focusing primarily on Germany, explore a variety of similar elements, but reach different conclusions. Jonathan Osmond argues that 1989–90 was a revolutionary situation because popular discontent felled governments and fueled the following changes. Richard Sakwa looks at events with a more skeptical eye, suggesting that what we were seeing was, in fact, an anti-revolutionary uprising.

A quick summary of the main points of these essays, though, does not do justice to the careful, fair examination of issues that too often are seen through rigid ideological prisms. Each piece is rewarding on its own for how it enlarges the way readers view the specific events and revolution in general. Conclusions matter less than the reasoning behind them, and the insightful way authors sift through evidence and frame concepts can serve as a model for budding historians.

The concluding essay, by Krishan Kumar, pulls the main themes of the book together brilliantly. He examines the continuities and discontinuities between revolutions past and present and the divergences and convergences of revolution in the developed versus the developing world. Kumar concludes that while the revolutionary tradition we know from the Great French Revolution through the various revolutionary doctrines and uprisings of the twentieth century has certainly changed dramatically, the one thing we can count on about political dissent in the future is surprise.

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Link Hullar & Scott Nelson. *The United States: A Brief Narrative History*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2001. Pp. xii, 211. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 0-88295-959-X.

The United States: A Brief Narrative History is accurately titled. In fifteen compact chapters and 177 pages, professors Hullar and Nelson have covered the essentials of American history from Leif Ericson through the presidential campaign (but not the result) of 2000. Unlike most texts written by scholars, Hullar and Nelson are not household names among professional historians. They are teachers first and scholars second. Their text is based upon "fifty years of combined teaching experience from middle school through graduate seminars in history."

As a community college teacher for 32 years, this reviewer agrees with the authors that traditional texts overwhelm the student by their sheer size. Even so-called "brief" texts often run over 1,000 pages. Therefore, a real short American history text is badly needed.

In addition, the authors claim that their text stresses "big ideas, major themes, important events and basic facts ... arranged in a chronological narrative that tells a lively story without 'talking down' to the reader." Such an approach is important for several reasons. Today a number of states no longer require that high school students complete a full year of American history, much less European history. Therefore, the students who take college history courses do not have the background to understand a sophisticated college text. Also, many college students take the second half of American history without having taken part one. This text fills such a void by providing a quick review of America's history before the Civil War.

While Hullar and Nelson have given us "the big picture" of United States history, some major holes exist. The framework is anachronistic. With the exception of the last 50 pages, the book could have been written in 1965. Its structure is built around a traditional accounting of political and military events. After 1789 the presidential synthesis determines the flow of the story. This reviewer reexamined the 1961 editions of the Barnes & Noble College Outline Series on the *United States Before 1865* and the *United States After 1865* written by John A. Krout and found a similar framework covering many of the same events.

What's missing from this text is any incorporation of recent historiography on issues of race, class, and sex. The authors claim to eschew historiographical controversies. Even so, students should be aware of such events as Indian-white relations in colonial America; differences between seventeenth-century Chesapeake and New England families; the class conflicts of the American Revolutionary era; political party systems; ethno-cultural politics; the development of a slave culture; the market revolution; the (old-fashioned) transportation revolution; the business organizational revolution in the late nineteenth century; and the cultural and economic contributions of American immigrants throughout our history, to name just a few. This reviewer also wants to quibble over some omissions and interpretations of the traditional story. In Chapter 9 on the West, why is so much attention given to the "Plains War" and not enough to the mining and agricultural frontiers? Also, the Second New Deal started in 1935, not in 1937. Why do the military battles of World War II overshadow the military and diplomatic strategies of the era? Why no mention of "unconditional surrender"?

In spite of the traditional framework, *The United States: A Brief Narrative History* is a good starting point for today's college students. The price is also right at \$14.95. That is, unless you want to go to your nearest Barnes & Noble and pick up a copy of the updated version of the Nevins & Commager *Pocket History of the United States* for \$9.95.