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Patrick Finney. *Remembering the Road to World War Two: International History, National Identity, Collective Memory.* New York: Routledge, 2010. vii + 325 pp. $150.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-23017-9; $42.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-23018-6.

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Remembering the Road to World War Two: International History, National Identity, Collective Memory

Remembering the Road to World War Two deals with several interconnected issues. Using case studies, Patrick Finney analyzes the historical interpretations of the beginning of World War Two. While he concentrates on professional historiography, his focus on national identity makes it necessary to include other types of collective memory. In his chapter headings, Finney tries to condense the respective national discourses of his case studies into a single defining concept: virtue (Russia), guilt (Germany), complicity (Italy), decadence (France), folly (Great Britain), liberty (United States), and tragedy (Japan). Using Finneyâs own words, each chapter represents âa critical reading of some key debates about the road to the Second World War of each major combatant countryâ (p. 27). The book does not try to give a full overview over the respective areas of interacademic discourse. The chapters are meant to allow the reader to quickly grasp the politics of these postwar discussions, especially in regard to how memory and historiography have interacted and are still interacting regarding World War Two. Finney tries to walk the fine line between Pierre Noraâs harsh critique of academic historians and their effect on memory, and the classic dream of the historiographical profession to reach (or at least approach) true authenticity of memory. He finds his middle ground by acknowledging that politicization is ingrained into every discourse about memory, regardless if it happens among professional historians or in a pan-national context. Each chapter tries to analyze these interactions, using both chronological and causal approaches.

In most cases, Finney is able to identify strong strands of continuity woven into the historiography of the different countries. A good example is his chapter on the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The two main interpretations (defensive realpolitik or aggressive thrust against imperialist threats in Europe) have survived the decades since the war nearly unchanged. As long as the concept of the Great Patriotic War or the current leadership were not attacked, many variations were acceptable in the historical community of the Soviet Union. They survived even its disintegration, mainly because the intellectual space between the two radical viewpoints could be utilized by

a wide range of political and intellectual actors. As in most of the other countries, the view back to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War meant deciding what the core ideal of the country was in the past, and how the nation should be viewed today.

Finney notes that his conclusion paraphrases âhow international history writing on its origins has been imbricated with wider discourses of national identity and collective memoryâ (p. 304). Even if many details of the cases are different, there are some striking similarities in how the main participating countries of the war have dealt with their past. In the defeated nations, on the one hand, historiography helped to create the necessary intellectual space for the return of a traditional, conservative national identity. The soon-to-be superpowers, on the other hand, strengthened their respective ideologies by revisiting their actions in WWII and reconstructing the conflict as a proud point in their history (Great Patriotic War in Russia vs. Good War in the United States). France and Britain used the memory in their long attempt to deal with the loss of their prewar colonial empires, and with their much-reduced international influence. While the start of the conflict was not the most controversial topic about World War Two, it is an important building block for many national identities that developed after the war ended. Following his concluding arguments, Finney reminds the professional academic community that often âunderstandings of how historiographical change happens are deficient, even misleadingâ (p. 310). More case studies are needed to discover similar interconnected instances of history, historiographical writing, national identity, and collective memory. Finneyâs book is an excellent example of how such case studies should be structured.

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