

The Good Book Guide

STATE AND SOCIETY: A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF BRITAIN SINCE 1870 by Martin Pugh, Hodder Education, Third Edn, 2008. xii + 377pp. Index. £24.99 pbk

Professor Pugh's sweeping survey of modern and contemporary Britain has been around now for some 15 years. This edition brings his overview of the fitful progress of British social and political history more or less up to date with Tony Blair's announcement of his intention to retire as Prime Minister. As ever, Professor Pugh integrates the story of social change, whether fast, slow or conspicuously absent, with the political developments that by and large tended to lag behind it. Although the balance is still a little towards the first fifty years, strands as diverse as welfare, emancipation, education, the economy, war, empire and high politics are skilfully woven together across the whole period. The content remains very dense but is organised into chronological periods further broken down into chapters divided into very short, focused and useable sections. Almost every sentence repays close attention as each is packed with carefully selected, frequently unobvious, material to illustrate, and Pugh's forceful comment to interpret, the broad narrative. The statistics in Pugh's 63 charts and tables alone



tell the underlying and compelling story.

Philip Brindle

REPORTING THE WAR: FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION TO THE WAR ON TERRORISM by John Byrne Cooke. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, xi + 272pp. £14.99 hbk

The United States' Constitution, born out of a struggle for independence from Britain, attempted to create a delicate balance between the three branches of government; the executive, legislative and judicial powers. That balance alters

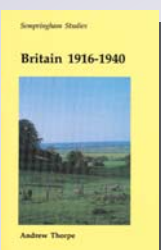
depending upon circumstances. But, in the opinion of John Byrne Cooke, it is most in danger in wartime when governments, trying to secure national unity, sometimes attempt to limit or even stifle opposition. Those are the times when a free and fearless press becomes a vital factor in preserving liberty.

The book looks at twelve conflicts involving the US, between the 1770s and the current 'war on terror'. Its heroes are those journalists prepared to call into question, and sometimes call to account, Presidents and administrations they consider a threat to the constitutional balance constructed by America's Founding Fathers. Some characters and incidents are well known, such as Walter Cronkite's role in changing attitudes to the Vietnam conflict. More surprisingly, Abraham Lincoln is called to task for limiting press freedom during the Civil War. The savagery of Cooke's assault on the Bush administration over the 'war on terror' is undisguised and convincing.

This book is dedicated to the author's father, the late Alistair Cooke, whose journalism over fifty years helped forge transatlantic ties and whose support for press freedom was unrelenting. It is a worthy tribute to his memory.

John Garland

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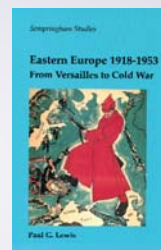
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Correction to Vol 14, No 2, December 2008

Working with sources. Germany 1848-9. There was an error on page 19 of this article. It is identified and a (printable) replacement page is available from www.history-ontheweb.co.uk/ Exam and study advice for AS/A2 Modern History with the URL http://www.history-ontheweb.co.uk/noticeboard/noticeboard_list.htm