



When the Facts Change: Essays, 1995-2010

Tony Judt

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In an age in which the lack of independent public intellectuals has often been sorely lamented, the historian Tony Judt played a rare and valuable role, bringing together history and current events, Europe and America, what was and what is with what should be. In *When the Facts Change*, Tony Judt's widow and fellow historian Jennifer Homans has assembled an essential collection of the most important and influential pieces written in the last fifteen years of Judt's life, the years in which he found his voice in the public sphere. Included are seminal essays on the full range of Judt's concerns, including Europe as an idea and in reality, before 1989 and thereafter; Israel, the Holocaust and the Jews; American hyperpower and the world after 9/11; and issues of social inclusion and social justice in an age of increasing inequality.

Judt was at once most at home and in a state of what he called internal exile from his native England, from Europe, and from America, and he finally settled in New York—between them all. He was a historian of the twentieth century acutely aware of the dangers of ethnic exceptionalism, and if he was shaped by anything, it was the Jewish past and his own secularism. His essays on Israel ignited a firestorm debate for their forthright criticisms of Israeli government policies relating to the Palestinians and the occupied territories. Those crucial pieces are published here in book form for the first time, including an essay, never previously published, called "What Is to Be Done?" These pieces are suffused with a deep compassion for the Israeli dilemma, a compassion that instilled in Judt a sense of responsibility to speak out and try to find a better path, away from what he saw as a road to ruin.

When the Facts Change also contains Judt's homages to the culture heroes who were some of his greatest inspirations: Amos Elon, François Furet, Leszek Kolakowski, and perhaps above all Albert Camus, who never accepted the complacent view that the problem of evil couldn't lie within us as well as outside us. Included here too is a magnificent two-part essay on the social and political importance of railway travel to our modern conception of a good society; as well as the urgent text of "What Is Living and What Is Dead in Social Democracy," the final public speech of his life, delivered from a wheelchair after he had been stricken with a terrible illness; and a tender and wise dialogue with his then-teenage son, Daniel, about the different outlooks and burdens of their two generations.

To read *When the Facts Change* is to miss Tony Judt's voice terribly, but to cherish it for what it was, and still is: a wise, human, deeply informed view on our most pressing concerns, delivered in good faith.

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