course at Vandalia, the old capital of Illinois. But it did not happen all at once. The original enabling act for the road was passed by Congress in 1806; the first contract let in 1811; Wheeling reached in 1818; westward extension authorized in 1824; and the incompletely final section to Vandalia opened in 1839.

As a result of development of the steamboat and the railroad, the National Road almost lost its importance before its completion. By 1850, rails had reached the Ohio River. For the next half-century the road deteriorated to a "travel at your own risk" category, later to be rescued in our century by the bicycle and the automobile. The road gained additional, though temporary, glory by being extended across the country as U.S. 40. Today, however, Interstate 70 once again is relegating the Old Pike to a local road status.

Too much cannot be told, of course, in a short history of the National Road. The nostalgia of taverns and wagon stands and of coaches and wagons that drips from the pages of Thomas Searight's *The Old Pike* is absent. But present is an informative account of the reasons for the road, of political considerations in its routing, of the vexatious constitutional problem of federal financing, and enough hint of the road's days of glory to tempt a visit to the National Road Museum, ten miles east of Zanesville, Ohio, on U.S. 40.

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In his opening statement W. W. Rostow says that *How It All Began* "is a preliminary chapter to a larger work that burst its bounds." His original objective was to tell the story of how the world's economy evolved during the past two centuries of industrialization, but first he found it necessary to say where the global economy stood in the late eighteenth century, the time he considers the beginning of the industrial revolution in Great Britain. And so *How It All Began* became an extended essay on the world's economy from ancient times to the late eighteenth century, although the emphasis is clearly upon events in early modern Europe.

The monograph is based largely on Rostow's view of economic development most succinctly articulated in a prior study, *The Stages
of *Economic Growth* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1960). In that work Rostow contends that there are five periods of growth: a traditional society based largely on agriculture; a pre-industrial era; the take-off; the drive to maturity; and the age of high mass consumption. In this schema the crucial time is the so-called take-off, a relatively short span in which the concentrated mobilization of resources thrusts a traditional society from an agricultural orientation to an industrial one.

*How It All Began* deals largely with the traditional society and the preindustrial era, the first two stages of Rostow's model. He seeks to answer two closely related questions. Why did the first take-off appear in northwestern Europe, specifically Great Britain, in the late eighteenth century? And what distinguished that time and place from all previous eras?

His analysis begins with an examination of why traditional societies did not generate self-sustained growth. He concludes that the major reason lay in a conceptual failure. The prevailing fatalistic views of mankind's condition precluded the emergence of any idea of economic development. In turn entrepreneurs could not adapt scientific advances to transform the environment. Rostow then considers what he calls the politics of modernization. There he discusses European political conditions that over the course of three centuries set the stage for the British take-off in the 1780s. Although he sees little difference between those 300 years and all previous time, he notes three subtle changes that contributed to the initial take-off. Military adventures required increased production, the idea that public welfare and larger output were acceptable policies for the state acquired a degree of legitimacy, and the assumption that the economic gain of one state meant a loss to another lost credence.

Two more significant changes, however, occurred in early modern Europe and set the conditions for the British take-off. First was the commercial revolution that Rostow claims began in 1488 when Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Second, and far more important, was the scientific revolution that emerged in the work of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. It was the thinking of the latter which distinguished early modern Europe from all previous eras, and that is the central theme of *How It All Began*. According to Rostow it was the scientific revolution and its profound ramifications interacting with the commercial revolution and the mercantile system that carried northwestern Europe to the point of take-off in the 1780s.

Despite the book jacket's assertion that Rostow offers "original
and brilliant insights," How It All Began adds little that is new. The idea that science was the most important element in fostering industrialization is hardly novel. The same can be said for the view that the industrial revolution began in Britain during the 1780s. Even the latter concept is questionable. 

How It All Began is based almost entirely on secondary sources well known to historians. As an interpretive account it adds nothing drawn from original research, although Rostow does incorporate recent findings by other investigators. He also employs graphs and tables to bulwark his arguments. From a literary standpoint the book reads well — unlike the work of many economic historians. The frequent use of large block quotations, however, is distractive, and some might take exception to the smugness of the title. 

Ultimately, How It All Began must be judged in the context of Rostow’s more seminal work, The Stages of Economic Growth. Rostow’s schema, particularly the crucial take-off phase, has never received much support in learned circles. At best, his interpretation remains controversial, and because of its subtitle, A Non-Communist Manifesto, Stages might even be seen more as a polemic of the Cold War than a serious interpretation of industrialization. In short, How It All Began is a distinctly secondary work. Its acceptance will vary directly with that of Rostow’s more important study, The Stages of Economic Growth.

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