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*H-France Review* Vol. 2 (November 2002), No. 113

William Hitchcock, *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944-54*. Foreword by John Lewis Gaddis. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 291 pp. Map, notes, bibliography. \$55.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-807-82428-3. \$19.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-807-84747-X.

Review by Irwin Wall, University of California, Riverside.

This book makes an important contribution to the growing literature on the immediate postwar era in two ways. First, it focuses on France's German policy, demonstrating that Germany lay at the center of French concerns throughout the period from 1945 to 1954. Although other writers have studied the general French diplomatic picture or France's relations with the United States, Hitchcock is forced to cover much of the same ground with a different, and hence welcome, emphasis.<sup>[1]</sup> Second, and more controversially, Hitchcock is concerned to rescue the reputation of the French Fourth Republic by demonstrating that despite its legendary constitutional weakness and political squabbling, it succeeded in forging a coherent strategy for French economic and diplomatic recovery in Europe, which it pursued consistently and successfully until 1954. By 1955, as a consequence, France had achieved a place of power and influence in Europe that it could be proud of, a position moreover, that given its weaknesses in 1945, it had seemed most unlikely to be capable of achieving for a long time to come.

At the center of French strategy lay a consensus about the need for economic recovery, the heart of which was the Monnet plan. The consensual and democratic features of the plan have been demonstrated by others and, despite the elimination of the Communists after 1947 from the early coalition that backed it, it did prove capable of providing the framework that France needed for rapid economic growth and modernization throughout the Fourth Republic and beyond.<sup>[2]</sup> Whether it was the cause of that growth is a less easy proposition to demonstrate, since France was hardly alone in Europe in achieving the untrammelled economic growth typical of the so-called *trente glorieuses*, the thirty years of unprecedented prosperity that characterized the period until 1973. The Germans and Italians did not have such a plan. But this is not a central concern of Hitchcock; that the consensus emerged around the plan and that it "worked" is enough for his purposes. At the same time as it achieved economic modernization, the Fourth Republic sought to control the economic power and diplomatic strength of Germany. Eventually a consensus emerged equally in France about the means of doing so: Germany would eventually be restored to a position of equality in Europe, but at the price of merging a crucial component of its economy, its coal and steel productive capacity, with those of its neighbors, allowing France a way of keeping some measure of control over the development of the German economy. More importantly, German rearmament would be controlled as Germany became integrated into Western Europe; restrictions must be placed on the size of the Wehrmacht, its command, which must be constrained under a European or Atlantic umbrella, and crucially, the ability of Germany to produce atomic, biological, or chemical weapons, all of which Germany did in fact forswear in the London-Paris agreements of 1954-55. By virtue of these happy results Hitchcock feels able to pronounce the diplomacy of the Fourth Republic for its first ten years an extraordinary success. He also feels able to support what Alan Milward has called a "state-centered" theory of European integration, at least in so far as the French are concerned. Europe did not emerge out of the humanitarian impulses of idealistic "founders," such as Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide de Gasperi, but rather out of the quite selfish realization on the part of the participants that they

could best achieve aspects of their national interests in concert rather than by themselves. France pursued integration in Europe in so far as it furthered French economic and security interests and no further.

Hitchcock's central thesis, however, that France pursued these goals with intelligence, purpose, and tenacity throughout ten years of complicated diplomatic maneuvering, seems much more difficult to sustain. Major obstacles stood in the way of the French, most of them stemming from the Americans, for whom, very early, Germany became the center of schemes to rebuild the European economy. Washington could conceive of no economic reconstruction of Europe that did not have Germany as its fulcrum. Moreover, after 1950 and the Korean war, it could equally imagine no effective European defense without German divisions. The French in fact fought with tenacity against both of these and lost. As they indeed had to lose, given American preponderance in the postwar era. Thus Hitchcock's real story might equally be depicted as one of how the French allegedly managed to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, or to put it less charitably, how they made the best of a bad situation. In 1955 it was clear that Germany, not France, would be the economic powerhouse of Europe and that the Wehrmacht would be restored, albeit under the cover of NATO's command. And it would seem arguable that such meager results as the French did achieve in mitigation of these unpleasant facts were the result of rapidly improvised solutions produced under duress. As Hitchcock himself all too often is obliged to quote belabored French officials, they always seemed to have their "backs to the wall" (p. 144).

This was evident on a number of occasions. Hitchcock is most effective in demonstrating that during 1948 and 1949 saner voices in the Quai d'Orsay were recognizing that France could not maintain its sterile opposition to German unity and the reconstruction of the Western portion as the Federal Republic forever. In consequence various enterprising officials counseled their political leadership, still mesmerized by the Gaullist vision of a dismembered Germany, to give up their vain ambitions and accept American plans so as to be able to influence them the better. But in the end it was a series of Anglo-American *faits accomplis*, plus the hostility of the Russians themselves to French designs, that forced the French to come to terms. Hitchcock, along the way, seems determined to turn French defeats into victories the French did not recognize themselves. The Blum-Byrnes agreements of 1946, for example, he terms a success, when virtually nobody in France thought them that. To be sure the government put its best face on the billion dollars it received, most of which France had already been promised before Blum went to Washington, but Monnet had wanted the equivalent of the British loan of \$3.75 billion that Keynes negotiated earlier. The amount received was a measure of the diminished status of France in Washington's eyes. And this is to say nothing of the flack the government took for promising free trade and its admission of American films, which far from the worst part of the agreement, nevertheless brought the government the worst of its propaganda defeats. Similarly the Marshall Plan itself revealed itself to the French as a *pis aller*, a bribe for agreeing to the reconstruction of Germany. Hitchcock terms the Washington administration simply maladroit for the "poor timing" of its clumsy linkage of essential economic aid and German reconstruction, but the Americans knew exactly what they were doing, considering the Plan and the rebuilding of Germany "two aspects of one problem." After Bidault's angry remonstrances revealed themselves as vain posturing, the French settled for a vague form of international control of the Ruhr, only to be shocked later when the Anglo-Americans, without consulting them, gave the Germans carte blanche to decide how and by whom the mines would be owned. This was in the end a defeat for the British too. The Labor government would have preferred nationalization to the restoration of traditional German business elites to their prewar positions of power and influence.

With his narrative of the Schuman plan Hitchcock tries to diminish the importance of Monnet and elevate the visionaries in the Quai who had conceived of much the same thing earlier as the best that France could get in view of the preponderance of Washington. He succeeds in this to a degree: anonymous papers in the Quai and clever diplomats such as François Seydoux, René Massigli, and Jacques Tarbé de Saint-Hardouin receive their due in his treatment. Yet it was only following

Washington's prodding, and mutual French-American understanding that the recalcitrant British would not take the lead in building Europe, that the French acted. There is a tendency today to celebrate the Schuman plan in Europe as entirely European if not French in conception. But Monnet got his ideas for a regulatory agency or "High Authority" from Washington's New Deal examples, and in the end it was American championing of the idea and willingness to force the separation of the ownership of the coal mines from the steel mills down the throats of the Germans that enabled the signing to take place. Hitchcock himself admits that the French, in devising a constructive alternative to unfettered German growth, drew not only on ideas drawn from the Monnet Plan, to which the Schuman Plan was a logical sequel, but on notions of international control and supranational oversight drawn from the Marshall Plan.

The Schuman Plan almost fell victim to the Korean war and the consequent shift in Europe from peacetime reconstruction to putting economies on a war footing. Again it was the Americans who intervened in Korea, shifted the emphasis of Marshall Plan aid from economic growth to military readiness, and forced the Europeans to rearm. The French knew the rearmament of Germany was coming, and Hitchcock is at his best in analyzing the origins of the ideas for a European Defense Community (EDC) as they percolated in the French bureaucracy, even as individual French politicians were trumpeting their undying opposition to the reconstruction of the Wehrmacht. The EDC thus properly emerges in his account as the French means of salvaging the Schuman Plan, for the achievement of which the French made it the prerequisite, before they inelegantly killed it off themselves. It is easy in retrospect, as Hitchcock does, to portray the sorry tale of the struggle over the EDC as a French victory in the end. After all, the fertile brain of Monnet managed to ward off the immediate threat of German rearmament which was postponed for four years, during which Stalin died, the Soviets proposed new and embarrassing ideas for the neutralization and unification of Germany, and both the Korean and Indochina wars were settled. Only after all this had happened could Paris kill off the EDC and accept the rearmament of Germany and its admission to NATO.

However, none of this could be foreseen in 1950. And in the meantime the EDC, under the influence of clever German negotiators and American urging, had turned into something quite different than the French had proposed. The French wanted German soldiers as cannon fodder for a European—read French—chain of command. What they got in the treaty as finally proposed were German-officered "regimental combat teams" that easily allowed the EDC to fall victim to the argument that under its terms Germany gained an army while France lost one. Hitchcock gives an excellent account of Mendès France's initial effort to alter and then his decision to kill the EDC after the Americans and France's partners humiliated him at Brussels in 1954. Perhaps in the end he acted more in continuity with the designs of his predecessors than historians have made it seem, an observation that Hitchcock also rightly observes applies to de Gaulle. But the continuity was lost on observers at the time, and in Washington Mendès France was regarded as little better than a Communist, a point Hitchcock might have taken into account. Indeed the linkage between American military aid to France and the resulting squabbles, and the extent to which the Indochina war and the EDC were tied together, as shown in an excellent study by Jasmine Aimaq, not to mention American schemes actually to topple Mendès France who put an end to all that, are essential backdrop and perhaps an antidote to the notion that even in the case of Mendès there is nothing new under the sun. I will stop here because it is all too easy and wrong, moreover, to criticize an author for not writing a different book than the one he actually wrote.

I will allow myself a personal indulgence as the reviewer of a book that goes over much of the same ground as my own. It is with some surprise that I found myself, in the introduction, linked with historians who allegedly failed to allow for the considerable margin of maneuver the French enjoyed despite American postwar hegemony. I am indeed the author of the offending sentence, quoted by Hitchcock, that "there was little the French could do to emancipate themselves from American tutelage during the period of the Marshall Plan, from 1948 to 1950" (p. 7). But the sentence is not my general conclusion; it is limited to two years and is meant to apply to the wrangling over French economic

reconstruction and the American release of counterpart funds, subjects with which Hitchcock does not deal, and I think it accurate as far as it goes. I never meant it to characterize the entire period or subject matter dealt with in a book that covers 1945 to 1954, nor has any other reviewer interpreted me in that way. On the contrary I thought I had clearly indicated that I was interested in the constraints under which the Americans operated in France, and my more general conclusion was that while American influence was pervasive, it was also generally ineffective. I was more interested in refuting more extreme French portrayals of France as an American “colony” or “protectorate” during the period under review (the book was initially written for a French audience), but in eschewing labels I meant also to reject, as Hitchcock does, Lundstad’s notion of an American “empire by invitation,” even if I left it unmentioned.

I do not agree with Hitchcock that the France that emerged was one so carefully crafted by insightful and visionary planners in the Foreign Ministry who knew what they wanted and achieved it. On the contrary I rather regard American and French politicians as more often ineffective bunglers who found themselves struggling against unintended consequences of their ill-considered actions. That is the only way I can interpret the incredible, and I think American-inspired, bungling of Dien Bien Phu that nobody foresaw, but that spelled the death knell of the EDC among its other disastrous unintended consequences. In this sense I think Mendès France did have more vision and insight than the others in forcing an end to the Indochina war, but even he proved unimaginative in dealing with Algeria. And now having written a book about that most mismanaged of French crises of the century, I have come, regretfully, to believe the same about de Gaulle.[3] Having analyzed in detail the Fourth Republic’s ignominious end in that book, perhaps it is now impossible for me to believe that it gave as much leeway as Hitchcock allows to men of strategic vision who cleverly crafted the best of all possible international frameworks within which France could flourish. I believe that de Gaulle continued the policies of the Fourth Republic, by which I mean to say not that its politicians were as good as he was, but rather that he was as bad as they. But I agree with Hitchcock, and most other astute observers of the question, that the France we now know (and love) was made by the French.

## NOTES

[1] John W. Young, *France, the Cold War, and the Western Alliance: French Foreign Policy and Post-War Europe, 1944-1949* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990); Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and the magisterial Gérard Bossuat, *La France, l’aide américaine, et la construction européenne* (Paris: Comité pour l’Histoire Économique et Financière de la France, 1992).

[2] Philip Mioche, *Le Plan Monnet: Genèse et élaboration, 1941-1947* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1987); Richard Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[3] Irwin M. Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Reviewed on H-France, Vol. 2 (March 2002), No. 30. <http://www3.uakron.edu/hfrance/vol2reviews/souillac.html>.

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ISSN 1553-9172