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FRANCE AND MODERNITY

The French Republic, 1879–1992. By Maurice Agulhon. Translated by Antonia Nevill. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993. Pp. 500. £45.00.

The republic of De Gaulle, 1958–1969. By Serge Berstein. Translated by Peter Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. 281. £30.00.

Louis Loucheur and the shaping of modern France, 1916–1931. By Stephen D. Carls. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993. Pp. 416. £42.75.

The French secret services. By Martyn Cornick and Peter Morris. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1993. Pp. 136. £31.50.

De Gaulle and twentieth-century France. Edited by Hugh Gough and John Horne. London: Edward Arnold, 1994. Pp. 192. £13.99 pbk.

The ways in which France entered into modern civilization have long been at the centre of scholarship, both inside France and outside. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries factions in France struggled politically for national integration, international acceptance, and the stability required in order to modernize politically and economically as well as militarily. Each subsequent regime sought, through reorganization, to remedy what it saw as French backwardness which hampered national greatness. Indeed, an important theme in the overthrow of regimes was that they were rooted in an outdated vision, not suited to modern times, and did not respond well to modern problems. Each regime in its own way hoped to claim credit for modernizing France.

At first little unites each of the books under review. Written in different styles with different purposes for different audiences, this diverse selection, from bibliography to biography, introduction to monograph, covers various periods of contemporary France. However, each deals with this transformation of France and its adaptation to modern times or modernity.

In the book by Stephen D. Carls, it is quite explicit in the title that we are talking about the shaping of the economy in modern France in the period during and following the First World War, which saw the government take control over war production and hence certain aspects of the economy, and then try to cope with the changes after the war was over. Faced with shortages in essential raw materials which limited industrial production, France sought to overcome these problems and increase production levels through management of resources and improvement in techniques.

The problems of economic modernization and adaptation to war and post-war conditions are investigated through the format of a biography. The subject is Louis Loucheur, a little-known industrialist who became minister of armaments during the war and remained in politics for the rest of his life. He went on to hold several cabinet posts in the post-war period, including that of minister for industrial reconstruction, labour and finance. He was a key economic adviser of Clemenceau, participated in international negotiations at Versailles and in the years following dealt with German war reparations and contributed to many of the economic and political controversies of the time. Because of his background as an industrialist, he was a politician who was

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interested in efficiency, and getting things done. Loucheur found himself in the centre of changes in economic structure and policy, as the lessons of the war were applied in the years that followed.

Although Carls has drawn upon a number of original sources, the book contains a number of fundamental weaknesses. The first is simply a problem of evidence available. On several occasions, it is quite obvious that he has used all the evidence that exists, but from which it is difficult to build a convincing story. We are told, for example, that Loucheur at one point met with Churchill, but that we do not know what was said, only that 'Loucheur's overall efforts must have had some effect' (p. 100). While not the fault of the author, this nevertheless leaves the reader unsatisfied.

A second problem is in the structure of the book. Carls has organized the chapters chronologically, and sub-divided each chapter thematically. The difficulty lies in the large sweeps of often more than a year covered by each chapter, and the fact that we go back and forth in time with each of the themes. The result is that at one moment, Loucheur leaves the ministry, and the next he is back in it, giving rise to confusion on several occasions. While this style can work in situations where the material is very familiar to the reader or given to thematic treatment, the narrative lacks clarity and is difficult to follow.

The thematic nature of the substructure means that some information is not made available until quite a long time after it occurred. In the context of a discussion of an international conference, it transpires that Loucheur had for some years been the president of the French section of the Paneuropean Union. This would have perhaps been useful to mention earlier in the book, so that we could have seen the relevance to Loucheur's other ideas and policies at that time. In general, if Carls had followed a more strictly chronological sequence, the picture of Loucheur and the development of his political ideas in their context would have been clearer.

Finally, while Loucheur is the common thread throughout, this work lacks the truly personal history one expects of a biography. It is centred on economic conditions, policies and progress during the fifteen-year period, and Loucheur's role in them, rather than giving an account of his life, per se. At the end of the book, one would like an evaluation or an assessment of Loucheur's political life which goes beyond the mere fact that he participated and had an impact on a series of particular policies or events.

This book does make a useful contribution to scholarship by providing new material and by highlighting a lesser-known figure, but is not without its drawbacks.

Serge Berstein's introduction to the Fifth Republic, *The republic of de Gaulle* is the most recent volume in the Cambridge History of Modern France series. Like the other volumes in the series, this work is a serious introduction to the period, providing a solid outline of the major events and themes during the eleven years that de Gaulle was in power, intended for those students or general readers seeking to familiarize themselves with the period.

Berstein begins with an account of the circumstances which led to de Gaulle's return to power. He covers the many facets of the Algerian crisis, and de Gaulle's handling of it. The establishment of the Fifth Republic receives a thorough treatment, demonstrating de Gaulle's reasoning and the process which led him to bring about the political 'modernization' which he considered necessary to adapt French political institutions to the realities of the twentieth century. This meant re-introducing a stronger executive which was in some ways limited by, but freed from, the grip of what he saw as fundamental parliamentary instability. De Gaulle's politics are put into the context of the political movements of the end of the Fourth Republic, and we are given

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a good indication of the rise, fall and the relative weights of the many political shades present in the early years of de Gaulle's republic.

Berstein goes on to discuss the economic and social changes of the period: the tremendous growth coupled with the rising threat of inflation, the birth of the consumer society and the golden age of the salaried middle class. He also provides a clear introduction to de Gaulle's foreign policy of grandeur. The motivations, and the successes and failures of de Gaulle's nuclear policy, his withdrawal from the integrated command of NATO, his attitudes towards the newly formed European community, and his fierce assertion of French independence of action, especially with respect to the United States, are shown to form an integral part of de Gaulle's vision for France.

The final section of the book deals with the decline of de Gaulle's republic, describing the new political landscape and the partly re-organized opposition. He explains the causes of the disturbances during May 1968, and details the events leading up to the departure of de Gaulle. Although de Gaulle is clearly the primary figure, this is not a biography, and the thematic treatment works well in providing a complete history of the eleven-year period.

In his conclusion, Berstein claims that de Gaulle's republic was unique, and stands out as a special period in French history. This conclusion seems a bit awkward, since he has shown that events in France coincided with general world trends, and that a great deal of continuity existed between the Fourth Republic and the Fifth, as well as from de Gaulle's presidency to Pompidou's. He claims that there were not merely ephemeral political differences, yet it is not clear exactly what they were. This remains, however, a minor criticism, and does not detract from what is a clear, thorough introduction to the modernization of France's politics, economy and society, 1958–69.

De Gaulle and twentieth-century France is also an introduction to the period, a multi-author work edited by Hugh Gough and John Horne. Unlike the Berstein book, this series of contributions from some of the leading French historians of the twentieth century centres more on de Gaulle himself. While providing a good general introduction to the period for students, it also contains some interesting work on themes not always found in introductory works of this nature.

In this latter category, Robert Pickering has written a good piece about 'The writing of action in de Gaulle's war memoirs'. He discusses form, style, the choice of vocabulary, de Gaulle's motivations for writing and the links between vision and the writing itself. Jean-Marie Mayeur has contributed a chapter on 'De Gaulle as politician and christian', which details the nature of de Gaulle's catholic faith, and the ways in which he conceived of church–state relations as a politician. He shows that de Gaulle's deep faith was not contradictory to believing in a secular state, and that through a concerted effort he was able to keep his faith private and separate from his public life.

The book begins with René Rémond's look at de Gaulle and Pétain, discussing the ways in which the lives of these two prominent figures were linked and the development of their relationship over the years. Contact between the two men dates from before the First World War, and it was not until well into the inter-war period that their views began to diverge. Rémond scrutinizes the fundamental differences between pétainism and gaullism signified by the complete split in June 1940, which was more significant than a mere parting of the ways of former friends and colleagues.

In a chapter devoted to de Gaulle and the resistance, François Bédarida covers thoroughly what most French citizens agree was de Gaulle's greatest achievement, the ways in which he negotiated with the allies, and organized and tried to coordinate and hold the resistance together. Following a discussion of 'De Gaulle in waiting' while he

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was out of power, two good chapters on de Gaulle and Algeria, and de Gaulle's foreign policy provide an overview of de Gaulle and two driving aspects of his policies in the Fifth Republic. Julian Jackson's excellent chapter on May 1968 is a comprehensive survey and includes several contemporaneous commentaries by men who have gone on to become more famous in the later Fifth Republic, such as Edouard Balladur and François Mitterrand.

Serge Berstein outlines the differences between de Gaulle's own politics and those of his followers, in an attempt to describe what gaullism might mean apart from loyalty to de Gaulle. He concludes with the observation that it is only now, thirty years later, that one can give credit to de Gaulle for founding a republic which has led to the first consensus on fundamental principles of a regime in French history.

Through this excellent introductory set of essays, de Gaulle emerges as an influential contributor to the modernization of France. His guiding vision of France as a great power helped bring about required institutional reform and brought France out of the colonial period at a time of significant material progress and economic development.

The book on the French secret services is an annotated bibliography, the sixth volume in the International organizations series, edited by Martyn Cornick and Peter Morris. It includes collections of primary sources, as well as articles and books in both French and English, covering the period from the ancien régime to the present. Each entry contains a brief description of the work cited, including an assessment of its value, and an indication of extra features such as illustrations or a good bibliography. The work is organized chronologically, with a good index of authors, titles and subjects at the end. It is easy to use and provides useful information for the student of foreign policy, spying and secret services throughout French history, with greater emphasis on the modern period.

The final book to be discussed is Maurice Agulhon's *The French Republic, 1879–1992*, a worthy final volume in the 'A History of France' series. This is the masterful work of a prominent French historian as he nears the end of a long career in which he has studied many facets of republican imagery and history. Spanning the Third, Fourth and Fifth Republics as well as Vichy France, this is not an introduction to French history intended for the student, but a scholar's analysis of the last century after many years of work.

Presented through an analysis of the concept of the republic and the evolution of its interpretation by the numerous political forces, this is a unique approach to the history of modern France. The author dispenses with belabouring the conventions of classical theme, chronology and historical interpretation, although he does provide a complete chronology of the major political events from 1879 to 1983 and of the Dreyfus affair at the end of the book. He is therefore able deliberately to select his material and to draw upon references to events and people not strictly in their historical context. While this could prove confusing to the uninitiated, it enables him to provide a depth of analysis which reveals his superior grasp of the material.

He begins with the republic of the republicans, and traces the development of French political thought and how it was shaped by different understandings of the concept of the republic, from that of an uncertain regime to be defended to that of a generally accepted form of government. Short biographical sketches of many of the main figures punctuate the text, which add to his discussion of the origins of particular political viewpoints through the backgrounds of the individuals behind them.

The real strength of the work lies in the author's ability to make it clear to the reader exactly what each particular political movement represented, as well as how it evolved. He begins with the general contrast between the political left and right as dependent

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upon what the individual considers to be the supreme political value: justice (in the case of the left) or the state (in the case of the right). Within that general framework, Agulhon pin-points the exact nature of their values, how they were arrived at, and the subtleties between the various shades of left and right.

He also endeavours to analyse and explain ideologies in their historical contexts. In his chapter entitled 'Belle Epoque or pre-war? 1906–1914' he separates the retrospective examination of the period from what the contemporaries had at their disposal as they formed their opinions. It is in this chapter that we first meet Charles de Gaulle, dissecting and describing the world from which his future political attitudes emerged. Agulhon also explains the thought process which led to the attitudes of the right, now completely inadmissible, in what was to them the post-war (retrospectively the inter-war).

Agulhon brings his thorough analysis of the transformations and adaptations of the republic and republican tradition up to 1983, two years after Mitterrand's socialist presidency began. In a final chapter in which he deals with politics and the present, he comments upon the pacification of the philosophical civil war which had raged in France over the question of the republic. Taking a step back, he poses numerous probing, challenging questions about France's role in the world, and the ways in which France continues to be viewed by the French now that it has modernized.

While this book does not aim to provide original research, it is an excellent example of historical synthesis, well-argued and clear, demonstrating how the republic came to be accepted by all segments of French society and how France was brought into modernity.

France has successfully gained internal and external acceptance of the republic and become a nationally integrated, economically and politically modernized state. Now that the long battles for the credit for, as well as imposition of, particular ideologies and historical interpretations have diminished, we can understand these works of scholarship as a quest for comprehension of what France has become, and in the case of the Agulhon book, where to go from here.

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