

Response Page

The following is a response by the author to Irwin Wall's review of Antonin Cohen, *De Vichy À La Communauté Européenne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012).

H-France Review Vol. 13 (March 2013), No.36

The original review may be found on the H-France web page at:

<http://www.h-france.net/vol13reviews/vol13no36wall.pdf>

H-France Review Vol. 13 (March 2013), No. 36

Antonin Cohen, *De Vichy À La Communauté Européenne*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012.
427 pp. 25.00€. (cl). ISBN 978-2-13-059472-7.

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I first wish to express my deepest thanks to Professor Irwin Wall for having taken the time to review my book and to Chief Review Editor Michael Wolfe for inviting me to reply, as well as to Lynne Taylor.

One thing I am not claiming in this book is that today's European Union originates in Vichy or for that matter in the Resistance. Quite to the contrary, I argue that this kind of narrative is an obstacle in order to understand the intricacies of the Occupation and the Cold War. The starting point of the book is rather to point out that Euro-parliamentarians' longstanding claim that there was a "democratic deficit" in the European Community stems from the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly, originally called the Common Assembly, had no power to control the European Commission or, before that, the High Authority. This, I argue, originates in the Schuman Plan itself. Actually, none of today's institutions are even mentioned in the declaration, except for the High Authority that was in charge of regulating the coal and steel markets: no Court of Justice, no Council of Ministers, no Common Assembly...to the point that British Prime Minister Clement Attlee expressed strong reservations about the Plan: "We on this side are not prepared to accept the principle that the most vital economic forces of this country should be handed over to an authority that is utterly undemocratic and is responsible to nobody."^[1] The question raised in the book is therefore rather simple: Why was that so?

To answer this question, I go back into the intricacies of the Cold War and Occupation, and from there into the interwar period, so as to trace the Third Way ideas and networks that proved to be so influential in the sedimentation of a communitarian, corporatist and federalist ideology (I barely use the term "fascist"). Some of the frontrunners of the Third Way are quite well-known, like Emmanuel Mounier or Alexandre Marc. Some are less well-known, like François Perroux. This is rather paradoxical as he was then so prominent in French academia and a key to understanding how Third Way ideology travelled from the 1930s to the 1950s through the National Revolution. Now, I do not claim that Keynesianism and corporatism were entirely compatible. I, at best, argue that François Perroux and his students did a lot to present them as such. What fascist movements of the 1930s thought of Keynes's general theory is not really at stake here. What was at stake, on the other hand, is how the little milieu of the Law Faculty (then the locus of political economy), and within it François Perroux and his students, believed the regulation of the market should be in order not to relapse into the "twin fallacies" of liberalism and socialism. This is all the more important as, after the Occupation,

Jean Monnet heavily relied on Perroux's students in the Commissariat Général du Plan. Among these students was Pierre Uri.

It would no longer be fair to say that historians today are reluctant to address Vichy, considering that Vichy has become one of the major subjects in the historiography of France. On the other hand, it is true that the distinct division of labor between historians of the Cold War, World War II and the interwar period makes it sometimes difficult to reconstruct continuities through periods that seem worlds apart. What is quite striking in this regard is that, in the hundreds of thousands of pages that have been devoted to European integration, Vichy is hardly mentioned. In my view, these continuities are crucial to understanding the early movement towards the creation of supranational institutions in Europe. And yes, I indeed argue that the same people meant the same thing when using the same words, for instance at the *Journées du Mont-Dore* in 1943 and at The Hague Congress in 1948. Their beliefs were so persistently expressed that it would be biased not to give them the credit of consistency. But I also argue that corporatist and communitarian ideas were constantly rephrased to adjust to the context, sometimes to the point of misunderstanding what these people really meant. This is nowhere more apparent than in the debates about the creation of a European Assembly at The Hague, when the Members of national Parliaments suddenly realized that the core principles of democratic regimes were at stake: "I am not well aware of federalist doctrines, one of them burst out, but such a constitution--we have unfortunately experimented it in France, and also have many other countries--has always accompanied corporatist regimes. Among parliamentarians who, until further notice, represent national sovereignty, none will accept such a doctrine" (p. 325, my translation). One of the key issues of early European integration was indeed the fate of parliamentarianism at the supranational level.

And this brings us back to the beginning. The drafters of the Schuman Plan did not form a troika, but rather a quartet: Jean Monnet, Etienne Hirsch, Pierre Uri and Paul Reuter. Much has been written about Jean Monnet and his vision of Europe, much less about the others. I nevertheless think that what Pierre Uri wrote about the bilateral monopoly of coal and steel industries or what Paul Reuter wrote about the European community during the Occupation, while in Lyon or Uriage, is at least as relevant as what Jean Monnet wrote about a European state of heavy metallurgy, while in Algiers. Did they have all this in mind when drafting the Schuman Plan? It is quite consistent with the sources at hand. What was to be the institutional design of the High Authority? Why was no parliamentary assembly or even parliamentary control mentioned? Why did they decide to call this an Economic Community? To what extent was it perceived as an attempt to build a Third Way economy between liberalism and socialism? These are among the questions I endeavored to answer in the book, which is really an archeology of one political event. What happened after 9 May 1950 is yet another story, hopefully for another volume.

NOTE

[1] <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1950/jun/27/schuman-plan-1>.

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ISSN 1553-9172