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Paul Sonnino, *Mazarin's Quest: The Congress of Westphalia and the Coming of the Fronde*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2008. iii + 307 pp. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$49.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-674-03182-1.

Review by Thomas C. Sosnowski, Kent State University Stark Campus.

Paul Sonnino has triumphed in his quest to unmask Cardinal Jules Mazarin's five years of diplomatic activity in securing the Peace of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War. Not only does the personality of Mazarin dominate this work, but also those of his plenipotentiaries and the major diplomats of Europe. As he states forcefully at the beginning of his magisterial study: "I have chosen in this book to concentrate on the intentions and interactions of Cardinal Mazarin and his entourage as they attempted to achieve a peace" (p. 5). But the reader will notice easily that the Cardinal wanted peace only on his terms and he desired the most possible territory. This goal Sonnino demonstrates ably was not attainable by 1648 when the domestic scene in France was undercut by financial shortfalls leading to the five-year Fronde.

In his introduction, Sonnino emphasizes that he wanted "to establish contact with the author and the recipient at the most direct level of their experience"(p. 6). This becomes evident when one examines carefully his ninety-four pages of endnotes and twenty-one pages of bibliography. The vast majority demonstrate his dedication to using the original documents so that he could understand better the correspondence itself, even with the revisions usually evident in these sources. As it reminds one of historian-poet Bette Oliver in "The Music of His Words": I can hear him clearly now/his voice determined to be heard; can see his slender fingers/ racing across the clean white pages/ pausing now and then/ to cross out neatly/ the occasional misspelled word/ for there is not time/ to make a perfect copy.[1] Sonnino states strongly and follows his assertion to avoid historical anachronisms about the nation-state and questions if the Westphalia accords were the beginning of a new era of diplomacy since entrenched traditional thought still motivated the diplomats of the mid-seventeenth century.

Chapter one, entitled "The Legacies," is a brilliant synopsis of the Thirty Years War in twenty pages. He was able to unravel the complexities of the conflict so that the reader is able to understand the rigorous demands placed on the diplomats meeting in Osnabrück and Münster. How he was able to distill the elaborate studies of C.V. Wedgwood and others into so few pages is remarkable. But I am sure that if Ron Love[2] were alive he would have disagreed with the following characterization of Henry IV: "a Catholic of convenience if there ever was one." Throughout the first few chapters, he introduces carefully each one of the principals from Cardinal Mazarin and Anne of Austria to diplomats like the Count d'Avaux and Servien.

In order to set the tone of the regency in France and the base of Mazarin's support, Sonnino carefully examines the relationship between him and the Queen Mother in chapter two entitled "The Queen's Beloved." He refers to this as "the battle for Anne's heart" which culminated in the following manner: "It was a bizarre relationship, built upon sexual frustration and moral exhortation, and one wonders how the queen could possibly have found pleasure in it, but apparently she did so and so did he. After proudly recording this unequal exchange in his *Carnet*" . . . they were in love." (pp. 34-35) A

demonstration of this special relationship could be seen in the efforts of court intrigues against Mazarin involving the Vendôme family and the Duke de Beaufort. Their opposition became apparent in several incidents at the end of August and early September 1643. At this point Anne of Austria quickly undercut the opposition with their imprisonment at Vincennes or exile to their respective estates. They faced what Sonnino calls another Day of Dupes and in this one, Richelieu's chosen successor was also vindicated.

Mazarin's Quest significantly adds much background information which helps to make the problems of negotiations more understandable. From the linguistic standpoint, we discover that Mazarin still thought in Italian, dictated his missives in his native language, and required the assistance of a translator to prepare his public statements in French. Even protocol played an important role not only in Westphalia but also during a French mission to The Hague. And finally, during that same mission, D'Avaux faced the dilemma of French support of Protestants in the War by calling on the Dutch to become more tolerant of Catholics in their domains: "Do you want to turn disaffected men into good citizens? . . . Diminish the severity of your ordinances!" (p. 45) These were stunning words from a French diplomat obviously meant to placate opinion in the French government in this struggle to reduce Catholic Hapsburg power in the Holy Roman Empire.

Sonnino takes us through the last five years of the War and each one had its own challenges—and for Mazarin aspirations of success. Nonetheless, we see that Mazarin's own diplomats, D'Avaux and Servien, did not always agree on the course of action despite correspondence from Mazarin. Their extreme differences made negotiations with their allies difficult at best. Throughout these discussions, Sonnino tells us that Mazarin "instructed them not to stick their necks out on the matter of religion,"(p.56) but rather to let the Emperor turn over willingly or not large parts of Germany to the Protestants. That would not be fault of the King of France. By this time, it was obvious that Mazarin was the undisputed master of France and no longer a creature of Richelieu. With the resurgence of Protestant power in the north of the Empire, the Emperor had no choice but to capitulate and recognize the obvious. However, the negotiations still dragged on.

The year 1646 seemed to be the high point for Mazarin during the negotiations. He had separated the Hapsburgs, i.e. the Spanish king from the Emperor. Territorial gains, especially the Spanish Netherlands, seemed to be in his grasp. But the more successful he was, the more wary the Dutch became since a stronger and larger France with borders adjacent to theirs would be a danger to their sovereignty and freedom of action. At the same time, the Emperor's position continued to falter—he wanted peace and offered a wide variety of concessions. But with French success, the Dutch alliance continued to falter and the strength of the Swedes, or at least their demands, continued to grow once again. Of course, included in these demands was to move forward the required date for the restitution of Catholic Church lands and bishoprics. Added to the problems of negotiations was the status of Lorraine whose duplicitous duke placed the duchy in an awkward position: should it become a part of the French kingdom or should it remain within the Empire but with the French king assuming the title—and therefore a voice in the cumbersome government apparatus of the Empire.

In chapters six and seven, "The Defection of the Dutch" and "Playing the Blame Game," Sonnino emphasizes the ambitions of the Cardinal, especially in the Low Countries. His missives to his plenipotentiaries underscore that he was willing to use more time in negotiations so as to gain additional strongholds in the region. At the same time, pessimism reigned in Spain with the death of the heir apparent, Balthazar Carlos, and the emergence of new political "bait" in the person of the eight-year old Infanta, Maria Theresa whose hand in marriage was "sought" by several of the adversaries in the conflict. At the same time, the Protestants did not present a united front and the French ministers found themselves acting as mediators among the Dutch, Brandenburgers, and Swedes. By the beginning of 1647, the Dutch signed independently from the others "provisional articles" with the Spanish. Nevertheless, throughout the first five months of that year, "Mazarin could not have been

feeling very comfortable, but his capacity for daydreaming was undiminished” (p. 130). However, in June the reverie had to end with the success of Austrian arms in several locations in the Low Countries. Ominously, “after twenty-nine years of fighting, nothing could have better illustrated the elusiveness . . . of either total victory or total defeat” (p. 133).

Throughout the rest of 1647, one notices a change in attitude in Mazarin. He became more deferential as he realized that he could not grab all that he wanted. He worried over the resurgence of the Swedes whose gains could give them hegemony over the Empire. This was complicated with the financial problems in France. The maintenance of armies on a number of fronts, with the additional burden of providing large subsidies to the allies, undermined the financial system of France. Already the government had spent the expected tax revenues for the next two years in securing loans from various creditors. These problems were to continue into 1648 when the Spanish and the Dutch agreed to a separate peace and their plenipotentiaries returned home. The Swedes were more problematic and Mazarin’s diplomats tried keep them somewhat isolated from various German princes so as to restore their dependence on the French and therefore willingness to seek peace on French terms. At the same time, the financial problems in France reached a climax with the beginning of the Fronde of the Parlement who refused to register financial edicts. After much diplomatic posturing by the major powers in the early autumn, they agreed to the long-negotiated articles on 24 October 1648—ending the war in the empire, but leaving to the future a peace settlement between France and Spain.

In conclusion, Sonnino contrasts the diplomacy and aspirations of Richelieu and Mazarin. Although the latter began his career as a creature of the former, Mazarin “was of a different stripe. He believed he was the only man who could save the state.” Sonnino affirms that these actions of Mazarin would provide an example for his godson and protégé Louis XIV. He “not only holds the key to himself. He, much more distinctly than Cardinal Richelieu, holds the key to the character and policies of Louis XIV” (p. 171). His four major wars could easily be interpreted in this manner.

Mazarin’s Quest is a penetrating analysis both of the diplomacy of the Cardinal and his appointees but also of the convoluted nature of negotiations at Münster and Osnabrück. This study, supported strongly by his use of primary sources, should be attractive to scholars of European diplomacy and politics of the seventeenth century. Not a work for dilettantes, it is a serious monograph that graduate students and scholars should notice and study carefully. The enigmatic Mazarin becomes a forceful figure here, i.e. a political leader with his own agenda that separates him from his mentor. A plus for the book is the eleven-page section featuring prints with contemporary images of the book’s principals. But, although there are several useful maps, the numerous recitals of negotiable towns, bishoprics, battle sites, etc. that could not be located on the maps, could make such lists a bit tedious for those unacquainted place names of the Empire and the Low Countries. But that is a minor problem. What Sonnino created was a masterpiece of analysis which demonstrates a thorough understanding of the complexities of a most complicated era. This was not really nation-state diplomacy, but in reality a variety tied to its Renaissance and medieval roots. Two more centuries would be necessary for the evolution of “modern” diplomacy based on the concept of the nation, but no longer would religion remain as a primary element in these considerations.

NOTES

[1] Elizabeth W. Oliver, “The Music of His Words” in *Confluences* (Austin, Texas: [n.p.], 2005).

[2] Ronald S. Love, *Blood and Religion: The Conscience of Henry IV, 1553-1593* (Montréal & Ithaca: McGill University Press, 2001).

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