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Madeleine Haehl, *Les Affaires étrangères au temps de Richelieu: Les secrétaires d'État, les agents diplomatiques (1624-1642)*. Diplomatie et histoire, 11. Brussels, Belgium, and New York: Peter Lang , 2006. 377 pp. Notes, bibliography, index, and illustrations. $34.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN-10: 9052012849; ISBN-13: 978-90-5201-284-1.

Review by Paul Sonnino, University of California, Santa Barbara.

The principal thesis of this book, as the author Madeleine Haehl states, is that the reign of Louis XIII and the ministry of Richelieu, just like the preceding reigns of Henry III and IV, mark "étapes décisives dans l'histoire des institutions où la détermination des hommes l'emporte sur une conjoncture incertaine, permettant de préserver l'essentiel, alors que des règlements plus ou moins dictés par les circonstances dessinent les contours d'une administration encore fragile" (p. 3). I quote it in French because I am not sure about the translation. What it seems to mean is that these reigns (and especially the ministry of Cardinal Richelieu on which the book concentrates) marked a "decisive stage" in the evolution of diplomatic institutions, containing a human imprint, which collaborated with an "essential," evolution which, while "dictated by circumstances," was also "fragile." That is the best I can do.

This same subject has already been treated by an entire tradition of distinguished historians, and notably by Orest Ranum in his classic *Richelieu and the Councillors of Louis XIII*, to which the author repeatedly appeals.[1] But Professor Haehl's research does not add much to that of her predecessors. Rather, as the above quote suggests, she confirms their findings with a certain evolutionary and metaphysical fervor.

In her analysis Professor Haehl seems to mix together three distinct issues. One is the accumulation of files, which in France clearly began during this period; the other is the impact of organizational changes, which is extremely difficult to assess; and the third is the influence of the file clerk, which, for a large part of the early modern period, seems to have nothing to do with any kind of evolutionary or metaphysical process.

Even in her research on the accumulation of files, however, the author tends to falter. Professor Haehl bases her findings primarily on the archives of the French ministry of foreign affairs. It would appear from a cursory examination of these archives (she barely touches upon the many diplomatic dispatches that ended up in the Bibliothèque nationale) that it was the secretaries of state under Richelieu who first began to preserve, in order of negotiating partner, the minutes of the correspondence that they sent and the correspondence they received, as well as memoranda and drafts of treaties relating to that particular partner.[2] What is odd, however, is that in canvassing the archives of the ministry of foreign affairs for the period of her book, the author has not observed a third component to its holdings: namely a large number of copies of basic documents, such as treaties, emanating from the entourage of Théodore Godefroy, archivist and indefatigable collector of such sources. How and when were these documents introduced into the files? I do not know, but I do know (as does Professor Haehl who cites one manuscript from it) that in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut, just a pleasant walk up the Seine from the Quai d'Orsay, there is an entire collection of Godefroy's papers, which might enlighten us on this process. Even more surprising is the author's inclination, whenever she refers to the diplomatic correspondence, to go directly to its published form in D'Avenel's *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'état du Cardinal de Richelieu*, when such considerations as original hands, corrections, and number of copies would seem to be indispensable in the process of analysis.[3]

As to the impact of organizational changes, which Professor Haehl, if I can understand her use of the term "essential," seems to privilege, it seems to me that faith in this process is more of a byproduct of our modern bureaucratic mentality than it is an iron law of history. Whenever there is a disaster in our own society, we rush to blame it on the lack of coordination between the agencies that were supposed to deal with it and proceed, so to speak, to rearrange or to add more deck chairs, in the hope that this will effect some sort of "progress." Sometimes this works; sometimes it does not. But in a rudimentary structure such as an early seventeenth-century state, where individual contacts often trump administrative assignments, it is easy to overemphasize the world historical significance of some periodic reshuffling.

As to the influence of the file clerk, even though the author admits that it vacillated considerably, she fails to dig more deeply into the issue. Yet there are still a lot of sources begging to be questioned. For one thing, since the French secretaries of state charged with foreign affairs had frequent and regular contacts with foreign envoys and ambassadors, even in Paris itself, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, there are transcripts from the Archivio di Stato di Venezia of the dispatches of Venetian ambassadors at the French court to their senate, and at the Archives Nationales, there is a nice run of microfilms of the *Nunziatura di Francia* from the Vatican archives. Neither of these has been consulted directly. And, aside from four volumes of correspondence from the Public Record Office and one volume from the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna listed in the bibliography, there is no consideration in this book of the myriad of reports from the French court available in Simancas, in other Archivi di Stato of Italy, in various Staatsarchiven of Germany, at the Riksarkiv in Stockholm, and at the Nationaal Archief in The Hague.

More information from these sources would complement nicely what we already know about the considerable variation in the influence of the French secretaries of state during the rest of the seventeenth century. Mazarin, who had to contend with a prestigious council and with Henri Auguste de Brienne, a secretary of state who was not a friend, found ways to circumvent both, so that during Mazarin's ministry the secretary for foreign affairs reverted mainly to a secretarial function. Louis XIV during the first years of his personal reign reestablished some balance between his ministers Le Tellier, Colbert, and the minister and secretary of state for foreign affairs, Hugues de Lionne. Nevertheless, with the rise of influence of Le Tellier's son Louvois, secretary and minister of war, the prestige of Lionne and his successor Pomponne considerably diminished, especially Pomponne's during the Dutch War, until such time as he was disgraced after its conclusion. His successor, Colbert de Croissy, worked under the shadow of Louvois, and after Louvois' death in 1691, Croissy worked in tandem with the reinstated Pomponne, who acted as a minister without portfolio. Pomponne, whose daughter married Croissy's son Torcy, survived Croissy, and seems to have directed French foreign policy, especially toward the secret treaties over the Spanish succession, even though Torcy was the official secretary of state for foreign affairs, until Pomponne's own death in 1699, when Torcy came into his own.[4]

We must also keep in mind that even a detailed understanding of the shifting relationships in the council of France during the seventeenth century leaves us very much in the dark about the evolution of diplomatic institutions in other European states. It is certain that the Holy See, the Italian states, and the Spanish monarchy got a head start on the French. It is also probable, as the author herself suggests, that the development and specialization of secretaries of state was closely connected to the development of regularly scheduled couriers. In either case, it may eventually be possible to argue that a single administrative reorganization at a certain point gave one state an advantage over another. But it might also turn out, on careful scrutiny, that those courts, like Poland, Muscovy, Transylvania, or the Ottoman Empire, which were not on the cutting edge of diplomatic practice, exploited their isolation to their advantage and let others come to them. Until, however, such questions are resolved--and resolved definitively in favor of a systems approach--it would appear that the ideas of rulers and their choices of ministers all over Europe had at least as much to do with the fortunes of the individual states than the archives and composition of their secretariats.

Nearly a third of the book consists of biographical listings of the principal French diplomatic agents: ambassadors, ministers, etc., in the years from 1624 to 1642, drawn largely from the standard biographical dictionaries. The net effect is to confirm an impression that one of the most characteristic developments in early modern history is the growth of bureaucracies; this at the cost of learning more about the individuals who were caught up in this process. It also perpetuates the idealization of French diplomacy in the seventeenth century at a time when there is increasing evidence that it was no more effective, and possibly less, than that of its homologues. The archives of the French ministry of foreign affairs are one of the treasures of the modern world, but Professor Haehl would need to raise her sights a bit in order to contribute substantially to their exploitation.

NOTES

[1] Orest Ranum, *Richelieu and the Councillors of Louis XIII: A study of the Secretaries of State and Superintendents of Finance in the Ministry of Richelieu, 1635-1642* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[2] See, for example, BN mss. fr. 4067-4076, correspondence of Coeuvres; 4113-4122, correspondence of Sainte-Catherine; 15920-15933, Relations diplomatiques; 15987-15990, Letters from French ambassadors in England; BN mss. Clairambault 373, correspondence received by various secretaries of state; 572-573, correspondence of D'Estrades; BN mss. Baluze 153-154, correspondence of Effiat ; 155-156, Sabran; and 163, 167-172, D'Avaux..

[3] Georges d'Avenel, ed., *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'état du Cardinal de Richelieu*, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France ser. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1853-77), 8 vols.

[4] For the ways in which Mazarin circumvented his council please see my, "Une documentation clé sur le congrès de Westphalie: Les papiers de Servien aux archives des Affaires étrangères" in *L'Europe des traités de Westphalie*, Lucien Bély and Isabelle Richefort, eds., (Paris: PUF, 2000), pp. 527-35. For the ministerial struggles preceding the Dutch War, please see my *Louis XIV and the Origins of the Dutch War* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For Pomponne's role during the war, please see my "Arnauld de Pomponne, Louis XIV's Minister for Foreign Affairs during the Dutch War," *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 1 (1974): 49-60. My late student, Duane Anderson, has left unfinished a promising study of Colbert de Croissy; and my old friend Richard Bingham once showed me, in the foreign affairs archives, some anonymous *mémoires* from the 1690s that proved to be in the hand of Pomponne, and which, if carefully analyzed, would illustrate his interaction with Croissy during this period See also John C. Rule's "The *commis* of the Department of Foreign Affairs, 1680-1715," and Douglas C. Baxter's " The Premier *commis* in the War Department in the Later Part of the Reign of Louis XIV," both in the *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 8 (1980): 69-89; as well as Rule's "The Secretary of State as *conseiller* and Advisor," in the same *Proceedings* 15 (1988): 84-92. For my own impressions of Pomponne's role in the treaties of partition, and Torcy's role in the council meetings over the will of Carlos II, please see my "The Origins of Louis XIV's Wars," in *The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe*, Jeremy Black, ed., (Edinburgh: Donald, 1987), 112-31.

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