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volume 2 and the lessons of experience**

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The Franco-German history manual: volume 2 and the lessons of experience

«Under the title 'Europe and the World from the Congress of Vienna to 1945,' this volume deals with a period shaped by three great wars that is particularly difficult for neighbors. When one considers this time of hostility and suspicion, the significance of the trust achieved today and the intensity of German-French relationships becomes particularly clear»[1].

As this press release issued by the Berlin senate emphasizes, the second volume of this common manual, which is addressed to students in Première (German eleventh and twelfth grades) was awaited with special interest because of the tragic nature of the period it covers. For a present-day Franco-German team, does dealing with three wars—one between France and Germany, while the other two were world wars—present a greater challenge than analyzing the bilateral process of rapprochement, reconciliation, cooperation, and the construction of Europe undertaken in the first volume of the manual that appeared in the spring of 2006? This second volume is consistent with the first. It has the same editors – Peter Geiss for the German part, Guillaume Le Quintrec and Daniel Henri for the French part – and draws on teams that are partly the same. To deal with these 130 years, the pool of authors, all teachers in secondary schools or in preparatory classes for the grandes écoles, has been expanded to include twelve historians (six of the ten on the earlier team and six new ones). The scholarly committee (Projektgruppe), which remains unchanged on the French side, has been only slightly changed on the German side in order to include the representative of the new plenipotentiary responsible for cultural relations with France (Klaus Wowereit of Berlin having succeeded the prime minister of the Saar, Peter Müller) and the historian Gerd Krumeich of the University of Düsseldorf.

This continuity does not mean that there is nothing new in the manual. Let us say at the outset that this new volume is in many respects more accomplished than the first. We have learned from our experiences in 2006. The authors have had more time and more freedom, for the simple fact that French students in Première do not have to take a rigorous baccalaureate or Abitur examination. The adaptations are of several kinds: some concern historiographic contributions and pedagogical practices, while others concern the self-generated discourse on the manual itself.

The Manual's Self-representation: the Emphasis on the Societal Project

«The unique, worldwide project of a common textbook for instruction in the history of two nations was born in Berlin, and for that reason, as the current mayor of Berlin, I am particularly happy to present the second volume of this

work to the public [...] in the heart of Berlin», Klaus Wowereit declared at the Deutsches Historisches Museum on 9 April 2008[2]. To counter the effect inherent in a double «official presentation» – first in Berlin and then in Paris on 23 April 2008 – that threatened to give the manual an «official» character, it was imperative to remind people of the project's origin. The idea of this manual was put forward in January 2003 by the Parlement franco-allemand des jeunes. There is nothing new about politicians emphasizing the societal origin of such an initiative. On the other hand, the presentation by the scholarly committee has considerably changed and a comparison of the prefaces to the two volumes is instructive. Now the scholarly committee highlights only the role of young people in the emergence of the project, whereas in 2006 the «steering committee» had initially mentioned «the degree of inter-governmental integration and cooperation» and the earlier experience of cooperation on manuals since the 1950s. This problematic organization of the work's objective, by giving priority to governmental action, had forced the committee to explain that «obviously» it was not an official manual. But didn't that denial itself arouse suspicions? This concern about political control was expressed in commentaries following the publication of the first volume. Clearly, it was never an «official account» that was «dictated» by politicians, the authors having always worked freely, and the decision to use this manual, which is in competition with numerous traditional manuals, was freely made by teachers. Of course, a reminder of the role played by the Parlement franco-allemand des jeunes did not suffice to put an end to the questions. Was it really an initiative proceeding from civil society? Some remarks made by ministerial officials since 2006, in both France and Germany, imply that it might have been suggested to the young people participating in the Parlement (and it would seem that the idea germinated at Genshagen with Brigitte Sauzay et Rudolf von Thadden)[3]. But when a project succeeds, doesn't always have several fathers, as the German proverb says?

To answer this question, a probing analysis of the constitution of the mechanisms of the Parlement des jeunes seems necessary.[4] To be sure, this Parlement, which was set up by the Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse[5]. has never claimed to be representative (it was constituted in a «pragmatic» manner with the lycées working in partnership with the Office). The young people, who were at first divided into fifteen subcommittees dealing with specific subjects, later debated and voted in full committee on each of the fifteen proposals and approved only twelve of them. Some of their demands were not in accord with what the political authorities wanted. For example, the demand that nuclear power be abandoned was contrary to Paris's policy, and thus testifies to the reality of the Parlement's autonomy. The young people themselves were eager to emphasize that all the proposals emerged from their own discussions. While that does not exhaust the question of possible influences, it would hardly be responsible to imagine that an assembly of 500 secondary school students aged between fifteen and nineteen could have been entirely manipulated!

The execution of the project had necessarily to be undertaken by the governments and administrations, since they alone were capable of doing so. The German Federal Republic's sixteen states, which are sovereign in educational and cultural matters, had to be convinced to consult together to

redraft their programs for teaching history, and then harmonize the programs in centralized France and federal Germany. Carrying out this project required a commitment on the part of both governments and historians.

Harmonious Cooperation Reflecting Recent Trends in Historiography

Does the period dealt with in this volume make cooperation between French and German authors more difficult? No, because the manual is not a tool in the service of Franco-German reconciliation. In this respect it is fundamentally different from other attempts at common publications between countries that are «exiting from conflicts.» The publication of this genuine school textbook is intended for use in classes and is far more than mere common teaching material. It was possible only because researchers, teachers, and public opinion have been working on the past for decades. As Pierre Monnet, a historian and a member of the scholarly committee, put it, «German and French historians agree regarding the causes that triggered the 1914-1918 war. The thesis of German militarism vs. France as a victim of aggression ceased to be current fifteen years ago»[6]. Much the same could be said about current views of World War II, the Third Reich, or Vichy. These tragic periods are no longer taboo.

Does that mean that scholarly controversies have come to an end and that we have arrived at a univocal interpretation of history? No, fortunately! But today the debates are no longer between «national» communities of historians. The battle lines now reflect differences between supporters of differing approaches: political, cultural, social, economic, etc. Within the collective of the authors and the members of the scholarly committee, the discussions focused chiefly on the consideration of the subjects dealt with. For instance, the historian Horst Möller, the director of the Institute for Contemporary History and a member of the scholarly committee, deplored the fact that «Picasso and his century» was given as much space as the culture of Weimar Germany and argued that too much emphasis was put on mass culture at the expense of classical culture. In response, the authors stressed the importance of this popular culture[7].

The sections on historiography are one of this manual's advantages. They constitute an innovation with respect to 2006, and show that recent developments in historical research have been better taken into account (cf. the work of Ian Kershaw). To be sure, the nineteenth century is neglected, all of these sections dealing with the twentieth century – »Was the Weimar Republic doomed to fail?»; «Fascism: a universal phenomenon?»; «The Role of Hitler as seen by historical research»; «Totalitarianism, a controversial model of analysis.» One would have liked to see other sections, on colonialism or the First World War, for instance. Such a section on «The Great War» would have made it possible to show that current controversies are not between French and German scholars, but divide French historians into those who emphasize the brutalization of societies and those who emphasize the constraints weighing on people, presenting them as victims.

Crossing French Pedagogical Practices with German Ones

Far more than the interpretation of events, pedagogical practices have always been very different in the two countries. This manual seeks to overcome these differences and to create favorable grounds for pedagogical transfers. The sections on historiography can sensitize students to the diversity of possible

interpretations. They reflect the clear influence of German teaching methods, in which students have to express an opinion regarding what historians write, whereas in France they comment on «source» texts. Inversely, the format with the lesson to be learned on the left-hand page and the pedagogical material on the right-hand page is in conformity with French practice, and so are the importance and quality of iconographic representations and maps. In comparison with the first volume, the sections on «method» are more numerous and are now integrated into specific chapters. One page systematically presents a general analytical scheme for the type of documents or exercises concerned, whereas the other develops an example. Some of these sections take up points already discussed (explicating a text, writing a composition, analyzing a historical map, statistical data, or a caricature). This attention to methodology was indispensable to compensate for having begun with the manual for Terminale (the final year of French secondary education, which concludes with the baccalaureate examination), and it will have to be pursued in the third volume intended for students in Seconde. Other sections are new and noteworthy, like the one dealing with the study of a photograph, through which students are made more wary of the possible manipulative uses of photography. The general presentation (p. 288) offers some information about history and the status of photography and offers technical explanations regarding the ways of photographing, reframing, or retouching images before proposing an analytical scheme that students can put into practice on the photos reproduced in the manual. In chapter 15, «From Bolshevik Russia to Stalin's Regime,» the example (p. 289) is judiciously chosen to show «the manipulation of photographs under Stalinism.» The section on «conducting interviews and analyzing testimony» refers to kinds of exercises that have up to now been practiced more in Germany than in France.

Developing «A Common Historical Consciousness»

How does this new manual respond to the hope expressed, in the specifications formulated in October 2004, that it might «help create the basis for a common historical consciousness among German and French young people in the process of European unification»?

As in volume 1, the manual proposes «Intersecting views,» inserts expressing a variety of perspectives. More than in the first volume, the overall structure reflects the priority given to a European approach. Thus the book opens with a chapter entitled «From the Europe of Princes to the Europe of Peoples? National and Liberal Movements, 1814-1852» and closes with one on «Europe and its Nations: Conflicts and Challenges, 1815–1945.» Devoted to the idea of Europe, this last chapter was introduced at the initiative of the authors. The general conception of the work reflects the concern to reduce as much as possible the juxtaposition of national points of view and replace them with transversal analyses. These «national» presentations are found in the first part («The Age of Nations: 1814-1914»), where the political approach is dominant. However, they are complemented by the chapter «Germany and France: Responses to the Challenges of the Nineteenth Century,» which is resolutely comparatist. To take only a single example, the chapters devoted to the First World War and the aftermath of the war offer a remarkable fresco of socio-cultural developments crossing all European societies.

This work obviously goes beyond the history of Europe to deal with other

continents and relations between Europe and the rest of the world (emigration, economic interdependencies, technological and cultural transfers, colonization, the globalization of conflicts, etc.). The chapter devoted to the Second World War locates the beginning of the movement toward war in Japan's occupation of Manchuria in 1931, thus going beyond a Eurocentric approach to the conflict and its origins.

The diversity of approaches is welcome, the work practicing in succession both comparative and «entangled» history, the history of perceptions and receptions (the section on «Germans and French: reciprocal perceptions,» devoted to the nineteenth century), relations and transfers. It adopts in turn political, social, and economic perspectives, though cultural and anthropological perspectives are the most frequent. When in 1930 the historians Fritz Kern and Jean de Pange envisaged a «manual of Franco-German relations» – a distant ancestor of the present project – to be written by both French and German scholars, they emphasized that the cultural and civilizational perspectives were best able to grasp the similarities, convergences, and exchanges between the two nations, whereas the political history then dominant led to excessive emphasis on divergences and conflicts. This remark is still valid, and almost eighty years later, it is by combining these diverse approaches that German and French historians and teachers have succeeded in making readers share a history that long divided European peoples.

[translated by Steven Rendall]

[1] «Wowereit und Darcos übergeben neues deutsch-französisches Geschichtsbuch druckfrisch der Öffentlichkeit,» <http://www.berlin.de/landespressestelle/archiv/2008/04/02/97346/>

[2] Ibid.

[3] Rainer Riemenschneider, «Un manuel scolaire peut-il être plurinational? L'exemple du manuel d'histoire franco-allemand», in: Michèle Verdelhan-Bourgade, Béatrice Bakhouché, Pierre Boutan, Richard Étienne, *Les manuels scolaires, miroirs de la nation?*, Paris, 2007, pp.75–86.

[4] Concerning the *Parlement franco-allemand des jeunes*, cf. Corine Defrance, «Le manuel franco-allemand d'histoire : clé de voûte de la coopération entre historiens français et allemands ?», *Ebisu* [biannual journal of the Maison franco-japonaise de Tokyo, special issue: «Écrire une histoire commune en Asie Orientale et en Europe,» ed. Lionel Babicz], to appear in Autumn 2008.

[5] Hans Manfred Bock, Corine Defrance, Gilbert Krebs and Ulrich Pfeil (eds.), *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales. L'Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse, 1963–2008*, Paris, 2008.

[6] Catherine Rollot, «Français et Allemands écrivent ensemble l'histoire des guerres,» *Le Monde*, 10 April 2008.

[7] Interviews conducted by the author with Horst Möller, Daniel Henri and Guillaume Le Quintrec, April and May 2008.