

Husson, Édouard: *Une autre Allemagne*. Paris: Édition Gallimard 2005. ISBN: 2-07-075666-1; 395 S.

Rezensiert von: Farha Brahmi, Centre for European Studies, University College London

For some of the European political and intellectual elite, traditional fears of the German power and 'model' were gradually combined with admiration. In fact, the course of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) towards unification was perceived by most of its partners and observers as a success story. After the defeat in 1945, this European state evolved multilaterally to regain its position among Western democracies, and to finally reach the fearsome status of 'Economic Giant'. Lecturer at University Paris IV-Sorbonne, Édouard Husson worked within the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, and he knows that the FRG's accomplishments also induced high costs which let the German El Dorado lose its sparkle. In his book *Une Autre Allemagne*, the French 'Germanophile' attempts to differentiate actual German troubles from quaint postulations about the most feared European fellow.

Writer of several works on Franco-German relations such as *L'Europe contre l'amitié franco-allemande: Des malentendus à la discorde* (Guibert, 1998), Husson is particularly renowned among intellectuals and researchers for his book *Comprendre Hitler et la Shoah: Les historiens de la République fédérale d'Allemagne et l'identité allemande depuis 1949* published by Presses Universitaires de France (Paris) with a preface of Ian Kershaw in 2000. His reputable erudition in the field of German history and politics enables the author to provide in his most recent book an excellent depiction of a so-called 'old French inferiority complex' which still stirs present fears as well as fascinations for the German neighbour. Leading to a lack of comprehension of West German diplomacy and economic patterns, such a stance persisted after unification through a 'euro-Atlantic' and a 'Néobainville' lens. In fact, Husson prefaced a joined re-edition of John Maynard Keynes, *Les conséquences économiques de la paix* (1919) and of Jacques Bainville, *Les conséquences politi-*

ques de la paix (1920) by Gallimard in 2002; but what the historian probably knows best and put at the readers, disposal in his latest work, are not only explanations of French perceptions, but more specifically, the actual and tangible political history of the German models since 1945, the evolution of economic circumstances, as well as contemporary national identity.

Still attached to conventional readings of German political history, Husson's approach is articulated along the two traditional notions of 'power' and 'model', and like the Franco-German historian Alfred Grosser, he speaks of a certain ignorance of the French who do not know their neighbours. But his latest work has a vocation for the eradication of false ideas, for providing a pertinent assessment of the FRG's power and model alteration; '*Une Autre Allemagne*' is an attempt to shake long-established beliefs along an innovative investigation of the successes and failures of the FRG. Consequently, his work is a major contribution to the field of German politics and history representing not only an informative account, but also a highly stimulating analysis of excellent and entertaining quality.

In a first part dedicated to the return of power along domestic patterns, importance is given to the re-emergence of extreme-right movements after unification. This convincing study is articulated around forceful arguments which let Husson scatter a suspicious re-emergence of xenophobic political factions in the FRG. The author reveals in a persuasive manner that the actual domestic unrest, as well as the violence of the extreme-right, is rooted in economic and social problems after unification rather than the rebirth of nationalist forces.

But when considering the FRG on the international scene, the author falls in the trap of typical preconceptions, which claim the greatest responsibility of German political leaders in the worsening of the Yugoslav crisis due to their foreign policy move towards the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. He correspondingly enunciates the German return of power following its '*Alleingang*' (solo effort) inducing the end of its pacifist diplomacy. In fact, Husson mainly focuses on foreign dis-

cernments of the FRG's role, namely French ones, and he neglects external realities of the European continent in the 1990s, or the consequences of the emergence of new threats when Germany could act only within multilateral settings of security and defence policy. Therefore, his argument that foreign policy is the field in which, 'during the 1990s, a prospective extreme-right movement developed along an institutional form rather than an electoral one', sets a controversial viewpoint.

Touching upon such drastic changes in the German diplomatic style and its traditional duty of memory, Husson's allusion to a pragmatism à la Schröder contributes to the author's genuine depiction of the FRG's realities cutting off French fascinations for the 'modèle Rhenan'. Along the description of a 'new model', the hard reality of unification, and the rational pacifism of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, he smashes the tale of the Rhineland model based on economic and diplomatic principles dating from the Adenauer-Erhard and Brandt-Schmidt eras, to finally dismantle perceptions wobbling between admiration for the Germany of Kohl and Adenauer, and fears of a IV Reich after unification.

Husson's points of views, along themes that he covers in an exhaustive fashion, are always well-informed and often divisive. In *Une Autre Allemagne*, he unquestionably manages to break an established myth of the German power in the middle of Europe among French intellectuals and practitioners. The book introduces original issues corresponding to a new German model, too long neglected within the Hexagon and most likely elsewhere in Europe. The result is a major contribution to the settlement of new patterns for an innovative intellectual debate on the politics and history of the FRG, which will determine prospective outlooks on new German and European realities.

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