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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Paul Sonnino. *Mazarin's Quest: The Congress of Westphalia and the Coming of the Fronde.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008. 330 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-03182-1.

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Published on H-HRE (June, 2010)
Commissioned by Tryntje Helfferich

Mazarin's Peace

France has often seemed one of the principal winners of the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). By the Peace of Westphalia which brought the fighting to an end, it secured full sovereignty over the three Lorraine bishoprics (Metz, Toul, and Verdun), which it had occupied for almost a century, together with control over large parts of Alsace and the important, if intangible, position as guarantor of the constitution of the Reich. Its most important ally, Sweden, also secured this status and made significant territorial gains in north Germany, where another ally, Brandenburg-Prussia, received new lands. The settlement as a whole appeared a decisive check to the overweening power of the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, which had been the major issue throughout the fighting, and, as such, a prelude to France's subsequent rise. This gained for the French minister, Cardinal Jules Mazarin, a secure place in history as the architect of the final settlement, together with the reputation of being a master diplomatist.

These familiar developments, once more highlighted in the abundant publications inspired by the settlement's 350th anniversary in 1998, are reexamined in a detailed new study by a leading scholar of seventeenth-century French foreign policy, Paul Sonnino. His latest book rests on a quite remarkable range of manuscript authorities, in all the major European languages, located in archives stretching from Portugal and Spain to Italy, Austria, Germany, and Sweden as well as France, where all the leading repositories and several minor ones have been consulted. The footnotes are particularly abundant, extending to one-third of the book. The extent of the research underpinning this study is deeply impressive, though the claims advanced for the new sources and information discovered are not all fully borne out (pp. 6ff.).

Command of the manuscript authorities is not accompanied by sufficient reading in secondary studies, however, and this leads to a series of slips and questionable judgments, which are individually not particularly serious but cumulatively weaken confidence in the whole enterprise. France is declared to have had no fewer than "180,000 men under arms in 1637" (p. 23), though David Parrott's fine study of *Richelieu's Army: War, Government, and Society in France, 1624-1642* (2001) has demonstrated the inadvisability and even the impossibility of giving such headline figures, and has suggested that the actual number of effectives at any one time was around half that total. Sonnino's footnotes reveal that the higher estimate was Cardinal Richelieu's own, which is uncritically accepted rather than modified in light of recent scholarship (p. 184). While Parrott's book does not feature in the bibliography, Richard Bonney's *The King's Debts: Finance and Politics in France 1589-1661* (1981) is included, though not his earlier *Political Change in France under Richelieu and Mazarin, 1624-1661* (1978). Yet this does not prevent the claim that, in 1640, French tax revenues had reached eighty million *livres*, which once again seems to be a significant exaggeration (pp. 25-26).

The sketchy, slackly written background chapter ("The Legacies") is particularly problematical in this respect. Bohemia's religious complexion before 1618 was far more complex than here indicated (p. 11), while Hungary was not a Habsburg hereditary land during the Thirty Years' War, as map 2 suggests: it did not become so until 1687. A curious passage suggests that Marie de Médici had greater political achievements than Richelieu, while it is puzzling that the author regards Mazarin as first minister from 1643 onward (pp. 31, 1, 10ff., 29). This is especially odd in view of his own clear evidence that the cardinal's remit at first extended only to foreign policy and his demonstration of the important political roles played by Gaston d'Orléans and the prince de Condé during the 1640s (e.g., p. 32). Indeed, Mazarin's political vulnerability at that time is rightly noted (pp. 36, 39). By contrast, most recent historians have concluded that

it took the cardinal several years to secure dominance within the regency and even that it may have been the 1650s before his position was fully established.

Another obstacle to the reader's appreciation of this study is the author's informal style: few books published by such a distinguished academic press will have as many exclamation marks or as much slack composition and, indeed, slang. Such phrases as "bunch of hypocrites," the "pesky" Gaston d'Orléans, or the "prankish Duke of Lorraine" have escaped the vigilance of Harvard's copy-editor, while the reader learns on successive pages first that "Mazarin had all the hubris and fate held all the cards" and then that the cardinal's "eyes were as usual bigger than his stomach" (pp. 18, 15, 27, 47, 48). The author's preference, never explained, for seventeenth-century French spelling of proper names rather than their established modern equivalents is also curious and a further source of potential difficulties: such as "Egra" for "Eger" in Bohemia, and "Rakoscy" for "Rákóczi" (pp. 135, 48).

Sonnino's wider purpose is to question the established orthodoxy that Mazarin secured a diplomatic triumph in the terms of the Peace of Westphalia and to substitute the view that the cardinal was wrong to delay a settlement as long as he did and was ultimately outmaneuvered by the Spanish government, primarily due to his misplaced avidity for further territorial gain (e.g., pp. 88, 101, 104). To do this, Sonnino directs attention to the settlement on France's northern frontier with the Spanish Netherlands and away from Germany, where France's territorial and political gains were more obvious. While this is a valid and indeed salutary perspective, it is weakened and eventually undermined by the author's surprisingly limited understanding of how seventeenth-century diplomacy functioned (e.g., pp. 44, 54, 61-62). He is clearly puzzled that the terms initially offered by some of the parties appear to be inflated (e.g., p. 54), but this was to be expected in any negotiations: such demands were an opening bid, to be modified and scaled down during the detailed discussions that would follow. The diplomacy of the ancien régime was slow moving and achieved by compromise, particularly such a settlement as Westphalia where the issues were so complex and so many states were involved, and it was very unusual for initial aims to be precisely expressed, far less secured in their entirety. By the end of Sonnino's account, the reader remembers with some surprise that France actually made extensive gains in 1648.

Though the author acknowledges the potential importance of military events for the diplomatic outcome (p. 135), he fails to integrate this into his analysis in the way that was done so impressively by Derek Croxton, in his well-researched study, *Peacemaking in Early Modern Europe: Cardinal Mazarin and the Congress of Westphalia, 1643-1648* (1999). Croxton makes clear how Mazarin sought for two years after autumn 1646 to bring both branches of the House of Habsburg to terms, but failed to do so because of the military failures of France and its Dutch and Swedish allies. Sonnino informs the reader that he disagrees with this recent work on an identical theme, but disappointingly he never explains *why* he does so (p. 178n7). This is symptomatic of the author's unwillingness to relate his own conclusions more effectively to earlier scholarship and to relate his own impressive archival research to existing studies.

Over half a century ago, the Russian historian Boris Porschnev suggested that Mazarin may have been contemplating intervention in the English Revolution on the side of the defeated Charles I and so concluded a peace settlement earlier than otherwise might have been done, while Paul Knachel subsequently produced a fuller account of the links between events in France and England at this time: neither work appears in the bibliography of this present study, nor are their arguments directly considered. Indeed, despite the subtitle, there is disappointingly little until the final chapter, and then very briefly, about the links between the Fronde and the Peace of Westphalia (p. 170). Sonnino's ability as a mind reader and what he himself characterizes as his "existential approach" are poor substitutes for rigorous scholarship (pp. 9, 170). His study provides a close reading of the diplomatic correspondence, full of questionable value judgments and obiter dicta, and lacks sufficient awareness of the wider context. Most scholars will regret that so much evident industry should have yielded such meager results, and will direct their students toward Croxton's study, which is in every respect far superior.

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Citation: Hamish Scott. Review of Sonnino, Paul, *Mazarin's Quest: The Congress of Westphalia and the Coming of the Fronde.* H-HRE, H-Net Reviews. June, 2010.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=26389

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