



Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France after Napoleon

by Christine Haynes.

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Historian Christine Haynes¹ (Univ. of North Carolina–Charlotte) takes her book’s title from a contemporary song written between the Allied invasion of France in 1814 and the second invasion of 1815, after the battle of Waterloo. The second occupation, her prime focus, was prolonged beyond the French defeat, under the terms of the Second Treaty of Paris of 1815, though it was terminated in 1818 before the date stipulated in the Treaty. Haynes explores the occupation of France with a distinct stress on “daily life on the ground” (6) and its wider importance in contemporary France, something often neglected in standard accounts of the period. Her description of it as the “first modern occupation” and comments on the novelty of the “occupation of guarantee” overstate the case for her argument, though the significance and novelty of this multilateral occupation of a major European power is indisputable.

The book’s title provides the structure of the first two of its three parts. Part I, “Enemies,” concerns the relations between occupiers and occupied. The title of Part II, “Friends,” requires some qualification, for it was often more a matter of “accommodation and exchange” than true “friendship” (7). Part III, “Regeneration,” describes the economic and political situations in occupied France as well as the termination of the occupation itself.

Each Part comprises three chapters. In chapter 1, “Exiting War, Twice,” the author explains that the second occupation differed from the first not only in its length but also in the level of violence that stemmed from the Allies’ desire for revenge after being obliged to return to France a second time. There was also an element of cold calculation, apparent in a letter by George Caning: “France is our conquest, and we want to exhaust her so that she will no longer budge for ten years” (26). The chapter also clarifies a frequent element of occupations—a quasi-civil war in which hard-line royalists sought vengeance against their French enemies.

Chapter 2, “A Burden So Onerous,” concerns the experiences that, until recently, marked both the reality and the memory of occupations, namely requisitioning in its varied forms. It illustrates in detail the burden and disruption endured by ordinary French citizens despite the efforts of Wellington, the overall Commander of the Allied Forces, and French authorities to impose order and regularity, given the fact that the occupiers would be living off the land they occupied. The sheer quantity of foodstuffs, bedding, fuel, candles, horses, and much else demanded by the occupiers was striking.

Chapter 3, “Violation,” describes the crimes from robbery and rape to the theft of artwork by Napoleon and his generals during their conquests, all of which taught the French that they were still being treated as enemies. Here and elsewhere in her book, Haynes explicates the subtleties of the language of occupation. She notes that the term “excess” (*excès*) in reports by local authorities

1. Her previous work includes *Lost Illusion: The Politics of Publishing in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Pr, 2010).

denoted “violation of a norm. Involving outrage against a person or property, it ranged from pilage and waste, to cheating and theft, to property destruction and gratuitous violence, often mixed with drunkenness” (76). The language of “Insults and Rumors” was more varied:

Sometimes this took the form of personal *véxations*, or “insults.” Other times it took the form of a diffuse rumor, termed a *bruit*, meaning “noise” or “rumbling.” In both cases, it contributed to what French authorities termed *mauvaise intelligence*, or bad relations, between occupiers and occupied. Particularly troublesome in regions where occupiers and occupied spoke the same dialect, such as the Bas-Rhin and Saar, where Württemberger and Bavarian troops were stationed, these *véxations* and *bruits* often sparked physical conflict. (81)

These varied and richly illustrated forms remind the reader of the force that underlay even a “pacific” occupation, despite the absence of any uprising of the kind feared by the Duke of Wellington.

Chapter 4, “Peacekeeping,” concerns the inevitable tension between occupiers and occupied, owing to the fact that a France liberated from Napoleonic rule was supposed to be an ally. Haynes notes the absence of any international law to that effect and discusses the Allied and French attempts to share the administration and enforcement of justice and the attempts of individual subordinate officers to assert a more or less arbitrary military justice. As in other chapters, Haynes effectively blends her analysis of policies and trends with specific incidents—in this case, Wellington’s intervention in the court-martial of a British officer to prevent its devolving into a mockery of justice.

Chapters 5, “Accommodation,” and 6, “Cosmopolitanism,” deal with important but rather more diffuse aspects of the occupation. The author chooses the term “accommodation” to avoid the trap of speaking of “the simple dichotomy of collaboration versus resistance” (136). She specifically highlights formal occasions, celebrations, and banquets as venues where the process of accommodation could be negotiated. Indeed, modern occupiers could benefit from an awareness of the potential significance of such forms of accommodation.

Chapter 6 opens with an account of the *montagnes russes* (Russian mountains), which Haynes describes as an early form of roller coaster. They symbolized the cultural borrowing and mutual influences that typify multilateral occupation. The great diversity of troop units, including the exotic “English Cossacks” and “Scottish Highlanders”² (172), was but one element in a complex process. The sheer number of foreign civilians, including civilian tourists, was noted and sometimes lamented, at the time. These interminglings influenced the book trade, culinary borrowings, dance steps, and much more.

Chapters 7, “Reconstruction,” and 8, “Recuperation,” analyze the economic and political developments that brought an earlier than anticipated end to the occupation. Despite the severe economic burdens it imposed after the exhaustion of resources by decades of warfare and adverse weather conditions, the occupation also facilitated changes in economic policy that enabled the French to overcome the economic consequences of defeat and occupation.

Chapter 8 concentrates on two key subjects: first, the role of the Council of Allied Ambassadors, which oversaw the process of political reconstruction and sought to steer the French along a middle road between Jacobin sentiment and royalist reaction; and second, the difficulty of legitimizing the monarchy of Louis XVIII under conditions of military occupation. The irony, of course,

2. Depicted on the book’s dust jacket.

is that an occupation meant to ensure the viability of that monarchical government came, over time, to be seen as a threat to the legitimacy of the regime.

Chapter 9, "Liberation," tracks the process of negotiating an end of the occupation. It stresses the French regime's ability to persuade the occupiers of its stability and the complexity of the necessary settlement of accounts, including debts owed to private individuals and associations, as well as the simple logistics of terminating the occupation.

Haynes attributes the occupation's success not only to the Wellington's (and others') judicious leadership, but also to the efforts of countless Allied officers and soldiers as well as French authorities and the country's inhabitants, whose story is at the heart of her account.

Christine Haynes's welcome new study will engage and inform students of post-Napoleonic French history vis-à-vis either the Restoration or the Vienna settlement. It will also appeal strongly to anyone interested in the phenomenon of military occupation.