

Estranged Bedfellows: Britain And France In The Middle East During The Second World War

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of the Labour M.P.s in the House of Commons, as indeed were most members of the Liberal government.

The upshot was that in 1918 Lloyd George expected little danger from the Labour party. Basil Thomson's prediction that Labour wives, going to the polls and enjoying their first ride in an automobile, provided by a Tory, would likely vote Tory, was probably correct. However, this book is far less about the challenge of labor in the House of Commons than about the British trade union movement's response to the prosperity provided by the war. Essentially, Mr. Wrigley tells the story of the government's handling of the challenges posed by the police strikes of 1918-19, the unrest in the National Union of Railwaymen, the miners' fight for the nationalization of the coal industry, and labor's resistance to the Lloyd George government's attempts to interfere in Poland and Russia. It all ends rather abruptly with the disastrous miners' strike of April 1921.

Within these limits, Mr. Wrigley has done an excellent job. The research is exhaustive; the accounts of the negotiations, of what the government knew from secret reports (many provided by Basil Thomson, who is, alas not introduced to the reader), and of the double game played by J. H. Thomas of the N.U.R., are excellently handled. But this really is all. The words of the title, "The Challenge of Labour" define the study precisely, no doubt by design. In no sense is this an account of post-war labor policy. Nor indeed does Mr. Wrigley mention the horrible effect on world fuel prices caused by the German reparations in coal, which in fact were at the bottom of British mining's distress. It is a little like describing the Battle of Britain and leaving out the *Luftwaffe*.

Volumes I and II remain a well-crafted and useful, if narrow, set of books. Volume II will be a resource for historians. This reviewer is delighted that the second volume has appeared.

University of Illinois at Chicago

BENTLEY BRINKERHOFF GILBERT

Aviel Roshwald. *Estranged Bedfellows: Britain and France in the Middle East during the Second World War.* (Studies in Middle Eastern History.) New York: Oxford University Press. 1990. Pp. xii, 315. \$45.00.

This book is a carefully unravelled diplomatic study of Franco-British relations in the Levant, the territory of Syria and Lebanon as defined by the 1922 League of Nations Mandate. The author uses material from the Public Record Office in London and the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, supplemented by the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem. In spite of the inaccessibility of some sensitive files, like those of the Beirut High Commission under Vichy and those of the SOE in Britain, the documents have yielded a rich harvest. The only point of view weakly represented in this analysis is the Arab nationalist one in Syria and Lebanon. It would at least have been worthwhile stating the problems of this source material, even if it is unavailable.

Hostility between France and Britain in the area dated from the eighteenth century, and their differences of approach were accentuated by the Mandate arrangements after the First World War. Britain in Iraq, and in its non-Mandate Egypt, had granted treaties in 1932 and 1936, with a measure of independence while keeping control of military affairs. France, apart from a brief flirtation under the Popular Front government in 1936, rejected this approach and was determined to avoid the devolution of power. The Armistice in June 1940 brought deeper tensions. Britain was committed to keeping the Levant from the Germans and anxious too to preserve the fragile balance in Palestine. The result was, as Professor Roshwald

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