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The Origins of the Marshall Plan

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Gimbel, John. *The Origins of the Marshall Plan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976. 344pp.

This book could more accurately (though less succinctly) have been entitled *The Effect of French Germanophobia on the American Decision to Implement the Marshall Plan*. It is not, as its title implies, a comprehensive and balanced account of how that initiative came about. Both in this book and in his previous one—*The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military* (1968)—Gimbel has firmly maintained that France, not the Soviet Union, constituted the major obstacle to four-power agreement on the postwar treatment of Germany, and hence must bear substantial responsibility for what now appears to be the permanent partition of that country. Gimbel extends his analysis in this book to assert that the United States proposed the Marshall Plan in the spring of 1947 as a means of countering French objections to the rehabilitation of that part of Germany occupied by the British and the Americans.

Gimbel's argument revolves around the unwillingness of the French to accept any substantial revival of German industry for fear that it might later be used to start a new war. Hence, the French opposed efforts by British and American authorities to put their zones on a self-sufficient basis; French resistance took the form of a refusal to cooperate in the establishment of central four-power agencies for the administration of that defeated country. By 1947, Gimbel asserts, both the British and the Americans had agreed that they would have to allow a level of German industry roughly equal to what had existed in the mid-1930's; as a sop to France, though (and to prevent the possible collapse of the French Government), the Americans came up with the idea of a long-term aid plan for Europe as a whole which would "dove-tail" with their plan for the rehabilitation of Germany.

This is an intriguing argument, but a narrow one: What is missing from it is a sense of the larger context in which these decisions were made. French obstructionism over Germany would not have seemed so ominous to the Americans had it not been for fear that the Russians would benefit from it by seizing the opportunity to act unilaterally in their occupation zone. Nor does Gimbel's account convey the danger American officials saw in a general European economic collapse—a real possibility in the spring of 1947—which might tip the balance of power on the continent in the Russians' favor. Gimbel's emphasis on Franco-German issues is not inconsistent with these larger concerns, but it does tend to obscure the broader context in which the decision to implement the Marshall Plan was made.

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Griffith, Samuel B. II. *In Defense of the Public Liberty: Britain, America, and the Struggle for Independence—from 1760 to the Surrender at Yorktown in 1781*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976. 725pp.

This new history of the American Revolution has many merits, but two are most noteworthy. First, a great deal of attention is paid to the political events that from 1763 to 1775 marked a growing exasperation on both sides of the Atlantic. Second, there is a conscious pursuit of a balanced viewpoint. The result is a history that reveals the combination of logical reasoning and ignorance that led the British Government to persist in its American policy as well as the sense of righteousness felt by the Americans (who complained much of taxation but paid very little) as they confronted the ominous new trend of British policy. In the armed struggle that ensued, the belief of the Americans that their cause was just, whether seen