

# CURRENT BOOKS

## FELLOWS' CHOICE

*Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center*

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### **THE FIFTH REPUBLIC AT TWENTY**

edited by William G.  
Andrews and Stanley  
Hoffmann  
State Univ. of N.Y., 1981  
521 pp. \$34

### **THE RELUCTANT ALLY: France and Atlantic Security**

by Michael M. Harrison  
Johns Hopkins, 1981  
304 pp. \$24

Having installed its first Socialist President, François Mitterrand, last summer, France is again the object of intense American interest. These two volumes provide a timely reminder of both the maverick pose that the French have long held in foreign affairs and the pattern of cooperation with NATO and the West that they have largely followed. Americans have tended to view Charles de Gaulle (President from 1945 to 1946 and 1959 to 1969) unfavorably. Seeking to expand his own authority and France's power, he was accused of undermining NATO and blocking European economic unity. Yet de Gaulle's vision was clearer and his policies were less damaging than many have supposed. Contributors to *The Fifth Republic at Twenty* examine the Constitution of 1958, which de Gaulle engineered, as well as developments in politics, economics, and foreign affairs over the decades of essentially Gaullist rule that followed. De Gaulle *did* insist on achieving French political unity and economic revitalization before moving toward European integration. But under the centralized powers of the executive, he and his successors were able to secure the highest economic growth rate in the European Economic Community between 1958 and the late 1970s.

Harrison's *The Reluctant Ally* focuses on France's development of a defense policy based on a separate nuclear force. When the United States repeatedly rejected his proposals to include France with Britain in the leadership of the Atlantic Alliance, de Gaulle set off on his own, ultimately withdrawing from the military arm of NATO in 1966. Since then,

all shades of the French political spectrum—including the Socialists—have come to accept his policy of commitment to alliance goals combined with flexible military obligations dictated by national needs. Overall, argues Harrison, a professor of European studies at Johns Hopkins, the independent behavior of France has made the Atlantic Alliance more responsive to the needs of member nations and more pluralistic—and therefore stronger in an age of international instability.

—Samuel F. Wells ('77)

**OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH** (2 vols.)

by Shi Nai'an and Luo Guanzhong; translated by Sidney Shapiro  
Ind. Univ., 1981  
1,605 pp. \$37.50



Song Jiang, desperado chief of a gang of thousands, led only one of many rebellions in Chinese history, but the exploits of this 12th-century oriental Robin Hood became the favorite subject of medieval legendry. Song's subordinate chiefs acquired colorful sobriquets (e.g., Iron Ox), carried distinctive weapons, and boasted special skills (control over clouds). Crude and bloodthirsty, they were also generous to a fault. Their goal: to right the wrongs of oppressors "in Heaven's behalf." Faced by this daunting assemblage, the Emperor finally had but one recourse: to grant amnesty and employ the gang in his service. In the 14th century, two gifted writers, Shi Nai'an and Luo Guanzhong, crafted *Outlaws* out of the Song legends. From this popular classic, Mao Zedong gleaned tips on guerrilla warfare—though he denounced Song as a capitulator. Pearl Buck's *All Men Are Brothers* brought parts of *Outlaws* to the West. But Shapiro's effort represents a three-fold improvement: His knowledge of Chinese makes this version more accurate, his straightforward English proves more graceful than Buck's Sinicized patois, and his reliance on earlier editions of the original produces a more comprehensive text. With its clash of blades and touch of fantasy, *Outlaws* is at least as engrossing as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. A saga of medieval derring-do, it has the advantage of being the genuine article.

—Cyril Birch ('81)