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David Drake, *Paris at War 1939-1944*. Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015. xi + 545 pp. 40 halftones, 3 maps, bibliography, and index. \$35.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-674-50481-3.

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Seventy years and more after the end of the Second World War, the history of Europe's drive to catastrophic violence continues to draw new research and readers. In the past year, Cambridge University Press and Gallimard have published hefty new collections of essays exploring the military, political, economic and cultural dimensions of the war on a global scale.[1] New research continues to improve our understanding of the politics, policies, diplomacy, and the organization and experience of violence that culminated in "hell on earth" in "Europe's era of self-destruction." [2]

Paris under German occupation is the focus of David Drake's new work. He provides a careful chronological account of how "ordinary Parisians" lived through these dark times. He draws vivid personal details from published diaries in which Parisians recorded their day-by-day adaptations to Nazi conquest, their observations of French collaboration and resistance, and their increasing difficulties finding sufficient food, clothing and sources of heat. The range and the quality of the diaries make them an exceptional resource, and Drake synthesizes many of their most interesting observations into a compelling narrative of life in Occupied Paris. He situates the variety of individual experiences effectively in the context of new research by historians working on politics, policing, and daily life. *Paris at War* offers a well-informed history of Paris and Parisians, recording the hopes, the fears, the uncertainties and the obsessions that filled daily life under German occupation. He has written *Paris at War* for a general audience without detailed knowledge of Occupied France, and has done so with a clarity of exposition and a selection of fine-grained detail that can be appreciated by historians well-versed in the period and familiar with the diaries.

Drake sets the stage with an introduction covering Parisian reactions to the Munich Agreement in 1938 and the threat of imminent war, and a first chapter on the Phoney War from September 1939 to May 1940. These explain the initial fears of the potential German attacks using aerial bombing and poison gas, the evacuation of children, the flight of half a million Parisians in September 1939, and the moving of art masterpieces to places of safety. From the outset, the unreliability of censored media and the thirst for information fostered distrust of official sources and a willingness to pass on alarmist rumors. In May 1940, the German attack brought confusion and then panic as Parisians tried to understand what was happening from the irregular and unreliable official bulletins, the refugees streaming through Paris from the front, the rapidity of the German *Blitzkrieg*, and the inconsistent messages and seeming incompetence of the government led by Paul Reynaud. In this rising panic as the Germans advanced, Parisians greeted the news on 13 June that Paris had been declared an open city with relief. Chapters three through fifteen chronicle Parisian experience in chronological and thematic steps, with close attention to the relations between French and Germans in Paris, the development of collaboration and

resistance, the anti-Jewish and anti-Communist policies, and the challenges of survival for ordinary Parisians.

The book is more about Paris under Occupation than Paris “at war,” an important distinction, given the increasingly antagonistic relations that developed in the context of the suspension of hostilities as framed by the armistice. Jean Guéhenno wrote repeatedly of Parisians in his diary as prisoners under guard, and of their condition as one of servitude. The armistice established a temporary phase of accommodation to defeat and domination. Its supporters expected that a German victory would allow them to establish France as an autonomous power in a German-controlled Europe. But rather than a phase leading to greater stability, the French administration and the civilian population found themselves in a phase of constant evolution, in a state run in the interests of a Germany not only still at war, but ever more needy of resources and intolerant of resistance. The armistice proved to be a transitional stage, not to peace under German dominion, but to a reversal of the German victory in 1940 accomplished by the Third Republic’s allies and friends.

Drake samples Parisian experience for the arrangements made at every level to deal with a defeat for which France was unprepared, and a German presence that was domineering, exploitive, increasingly brutal, and by mid-1942, ever less likely to endure. Drake moves effectively between the Parisian struggles with basic provisioning that made daily life a challenge, German policies and practice in trying to undermine the potential for and then to crush the reality of French resistance, and the powerful trends in French policing of a state losing popular support. The tracking of individual views from the diaries shows the rapid alienation of many Parisians as a result of the inequalities and injustices fostered by German control, as well as Vichy’s efforts to maintain an illusory autonomy and undertake a “National Revolution” that was a project of French defeat, rather than national will. The policing dimension is fundamental. Force was essential: to contain growing discontents, to administer the French economy in the service of German interests, to suppress communist activity and the growth of Resistance from within and inspired from abroad, to implement the Vichy regime’s anti-Semitic agenda, and to conscript unwilling French workers for employment in Germany.[3]

The diarists provide a broad swathe of experience in terms of their age, location in Paris, economic circumstances and political experience. Schoolgirl Micheline Bood was fourteen years old in 1940, recording food shortages, the cold, rumors, and schoolgirl efforts to annoy the Germans, writing in late December, “Nous vivons des heures terribles et j’écris énormément parce que j’en ai besoin.”[4] Retired school teacher Berthe Auroy kept detailed notes on her life in Montmartre beginning in June 1940, which she elaborated into a narrative for a close friend in the United States after the Liberation.[5] Charles Braibant, an archivist and novelist employed in the Ministry of the Marine’s archive and library, kept track of political attitudes and expectations around him, as well as his own frustrations with shortages of food and clothing.[6] Two of the best diarists, interesting for their professional connections and their observations of Occupation policies and politics, have had their diaries newly published in English translations since Drake completed his book: Charles Rist, a governor of the Bank of France (1926-1928) and leading economist advising interwar governments; and Jean Guéhenno, author and literary critic, collaborator in the clandestine *Lettres françaises*, teaching in Paris during the war and one of the few established writers who refused to publish in legal venues.[7] Drake’s work went to press before the publication of another remarkable Parisian diary, that of jurist Maurice Garçon, who kept a detailed daily record of his professional life in Paris and the perversion of the justice system under Vichy.[8] The diaries almost all come from middle-class experience. The daily lives of ordinary workers, of housewives trying to manage families without their husbands, and of convinced collaborators in positions of privilege, are harder to document. Anyone with Resistance connections could not record their involvement, and many of the diaries were kept hidden or disguised. But the diaries, with their expectations, frustrations, hopes and anger under occupation, make remarkable reading. Drake draws on their detailed observations of daily life to create a captivating synthesis depicting Parisian life under Occupation.

Drake uses the diaries, the Parisian press and the weekly reports of the Paris police to produce an account of the Occupation based on the current knowledge of Parisians and their day-to-day concerns and frustrations, giving immediacy to their experience that makes compelling reading. Even knowing the history of what will happen next, the book is a page-turner, engaging the Occupation at the level of the view from the street, in the moment. The shock of defeat, the growth of dissatisfaction with the new regime, the changing views of the Germans as the nature of their control became clear, and the growth of resistance sentiments and subversive activity are all relayed here with a keen sense of suspense and imminent danger. The diarists' limited knowledge, observing from their own experience and what they can learn from rumors, relays the apprehensions and the improvisations of Parisians coping with defeat and an Occupation of unknown duration. The importance of rumors, of restoring or developing new connections among family and friends for information and food supplies, and the importance of Resistance leaflets and the BBC for real news of the war and hope for liberation are well established.

But the immediacy of the diaries and the individual perceptions that make *Paris at War* fascinating to read in the moment come at a cost. This approach stresses the claustrophobic, prison-like character of Occupation experience, without the broader connections, exchanges and understanding that shape an individual's knowledge of the surrounding social and political world. This immediacy allows little analysis or broader explanation for the major developments as time passed: the logic for the development of opposition to Vichy and of Resistance to the Germans; the clear failures of the Vichy regime's policy agenda; the profoundly mistaken beliefs of those who favored collaboration with the Nazis and a stronger French state to play a role in the Nazi New Order. German policy is covered well, drawing on recent historical works on the German administration in France.[9] There are occasional minor errors of detail, which should be corrected for a paperback edition that makes the book affordable for students. The PCF was not the largest party in France in 1939 (p. 11).[10] Some of the details on French rationing are inexact (pp. 138, 157, 332). The failed attempt to end bread rationing came in November-December 1945, not 1944 (p. 413). Truffaut is mentioned several times but, in one case, as Pierre Truffaut (p. 486, n14). There is no discussion of how historical interpretation of the Vichy period has developed over time. A reader new to the field, interested in reconstructing the historiography, might be misled by the notes and bibliography that give reprint dates for key works without their original dates of publication. Some of the diaries were published immediately after the war, and field-changing contributions such as Robert O. Paxton's *Vichy France* (1972) and Marrus and Paxton's *Vichy France and the Jews* (1981), without their original dates of publication, could be mistaken as later additions to the field.

Nonetheless, *Paris at War* is a highly engaging introduction to the experience of Parisians during the Occupation. David Drake ably blends the histories of German aggression and exploitation, Vichy collaboration, French Resistance, and the challenges of everyday life in France. He includes a *dramatis personae*, a glossary of key terms, and a timeline for major events, as well as a brief summary of his diarists' postwar lives; an appropriate recognition of their importance in his work. *Paris at War* provides a dramatic panorama of Parisians' ordeal during the Occupation, an appreciation of their struggles, their compromises and confusions in daily life, and above all, a tribute to their courage.

NOTES

[1] Richard Bosworth, John Ferris, Michael Geyer, Joseph Maiolo and Adam Tooze, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, 3 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2015); Alya Aglan and Robert Frank, eds., *1937-1947: La guerre monde*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 2015).

[2] Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914-1949* (London: Allen Lane, 2015).

[3] Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton's *Vichy and the Jews* has just been published in a revised edition in France, incorporating the wealth of new research since the book was first published: *Vichy et les Juifs*, new ed., trans. Marguerite Delmotte (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2015).

[4] Micheline Bood, *Les années doubles: Journal d'une lycéenne sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1974), p. 62.

[5] Berthe Auroy, *Jours de guerre: Ma vie sous l'Occupation* (Montrouge: Bayard Éditions, 2008).

[6] Charles Braibant, *La guerre à Paris (9 Nov. 1942-27 Août 1944)* (Paris: Éditions Corrêa, 1945).

[7] Charles Rist, *Season of Infamy: A Diary of War and Occupation, 1939-1945*, trans. Michele McKay Aynesworth (Indiana University Press, 2016); Jean Guéhenno, *Diary of the Dark Years, 1940-1944: Collaboration, Resistance, and Daily Life in Occupied Paris*, trans. David Ball (Oxford University Press, 2014). Guéhenno prepared students for the entrance exams to the École Normale at Lakanal, Henri IV, and Louis-le-Grand until he was demoted for his political views in September 1943. Guéhenno wrote in his diary in November 1940 of the "man-of-letters species" as incapable of living without public attention: "he would sell his soul to see his name 'appear'." *Diary of the Dark Years*, p. 38. On French writers during the Occupation, see Gisèle Sapiro, *The French Writers' War 1940-1953*, trans. by Vanessa Doriott Anderson and Dorrit Cohn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014; original French version: *La Guerre des écrivains 1940-1953* [Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1999]).

[8] Maurice Garçon, *Journal 1939-1945* (Paris: Les Belles Lettes/Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2015).

[9] Mainly from Gaël Eismann, *Hôtel Majestic: Ordre et sécurité en France occupée, 1940-1944* (Paris: Tallandier, 2010); Barbara Lambauer, *Otto Abetz et les Français* (Paris: Fayard, 2001); and Allan Mitchell, *Nazi Paris: The History of an Occupation 1940-1944* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008).

[10] Drake bases this observation on voters and elected representatives in the 1936 elections. The PCF ranked third in the 1936 elections by percentage of the popular vote and by deputies elected. By 1939, the Parti Social Français had become the largest party in terms of membership. On the PSF, see Sean Kennedy, *Reconciling France against Democracy: The Croix de Feu and the Parti Social Français, 1927-1945* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007) and, most recently, Serge Berstein and Jean-Paul Thomas, eds., *Le PSF: Un parti de masse à droite* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016).

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