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Charles Potter, *The Resistance, 1940: An Anthology of Writings from the French Underground*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016. 262 pp. Timeline, glossary, bibliography, and index. \$35 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-8071-6392-4.

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Over the course of the past year, “resistance” has become a recurring motif in political discourses that seek to challenge the rise of fascism in North America and abroad. The widespread use of the hashtags #Resist or #Resistance on Twitter clearly signify opposition to Donald Trump’s presidency and the encouragement it (and he) provides for resurgent racism, misogyny, and fascism. But to what resistance do these hashtags point? Prominent historians—Jane Caplan, Richard Evans, Ruth Ben-Ghizat, and Timothy Snyder, among others—have noted alarming similarities between authoritarian regimes of the 1930s and the Trump administration. If Trump’s politics echo the 1930s, might we understand the contemporary resistance to similarly echo the anti-fascists of the interwar period? To understand whether historic examples of resistance, ones which are inscribed into specificities of time and space, might be useful for activism outside of those contexts requires us to understand both the actions and the motivations of past resisters.

It is here that Charles Potter’s *The Resistance, 1940*, shines. The book, an anthology of four texts written by prominent French resisters, allows English speaking students to delve into the mindset of these four people as they reflect on the collapse of the Third Republic, the creation of the Vichy regime, the decisions that led to resistance, and the evolution of various resistance organizations. Potter makes no claim to comprehensiveness in his choice of texts and explains in his introduction that he wanted texts that spoke clearly about the decision to break the law and to undertake a clandestine resistance to the Occupier. Using texts by Jean Moulin, Germaine Tillion, Henri Frenay, and Jean Garcin, Potter attempts to humanize the resistance; to remind students that resistance took place thanks to human connections, in day-to-day contexts, and was often motivated by emotions like empathy. To help students better understand the subject, he contextualizes the sources, usually with a short biographical introduction to the authors and the circumstances of their resistance engagement.

The most gripping of these accounts for students will surely be Potter’s translation of Jean Moulin’s *Premier Combat*, written in 1940, but published posthumously. Moulin vividly describes the chaos of the exodus in the face of the advancing German army and the struggles of trying to continue to serve his community as prefect, while all regular channels of communication and transport were cut off. His insubordination begins even before the Third Republic collapsed, when he refused orders to go south, and his stance, both moral and professional, in the circumstances of 1940 will illustrate for students why some historians argue that resistance was less a matter of behaving differently than a stubborn refusal to change.

The second text in the anthology is Germaine Tillion’s “Première Résistance en zone occupée”, which was first published in 1958 in the *Revue d’histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*. Tillion’s piece, valuable

in many ways, deals explicitly with the question “what were people in the Resistance thinking”, but also provides fascinating details about the nuts and bolts of getting a Resistance organization together. Students may struggle with Tillion’s commentary, though. The details she discusses will be without context for a student, although Potter’s annotations do help. Of greater significance is the fact that Tillion’s article, given both the date and place of publication, speaks more clearly in some ways to the postwar lives of resisters than to their wartime ones. Potter does link Tillion’s text to the events in Algeria and the return of Charles de Gaulle, but Henri Michel’s work and the editorial decisions of the *Revue* are fundamental for our understanding of how the history of the Resistance has been written and Tillion’s participation in that project remains unspoken in this collection. Potter misses a chance to speak to the emotionally and politically charged project that was (and is) Resistance history.

Potter’s third text, a piece written by Henri Frenay in the early years of the war, before Frenay had broken with Vichy, illustrates for students some of the contradictions of resistance. Frenay’s patriotism is beyond question, but his deep respect for Philippe Pétain and the project of the National Revolution (at least at this early stage) allows students to consider what resistance meant to some of the earliest resisters. A refusal to submit to the German occupation did not necessarily mean ideological distance from Vichy, as Frenay’s anti-semitism and xenophobia in this manifesto clearly demonstrate.

Finally, Jean Garcin’s republican perspective in an excerpt from *Nous étions des terroristes*, rounds out the collection. Garcin’s reminiscences deal with all kinds of questions students might have about why and how one became a resister and how the demands of the job changed over the course of the war. Especially valuable is Garcin’s explicit acknowledgement that there are challenges of perspective when former resisters try to tell the stories of their engagement. He writes that memory and periodization are skewed by the larger military events of the war, but also that the increasing intensity of action throughout the war alters the perception of previous events.

Potter’s anthology will be a helpful resource for students who lack the French language skills to use original primary sources. Used alongside other recently published English books on the Resistance, like Robert Gildea’s *Fighters in the Shadows* or Olivier Wieviorka’s *The French Resistance*, this collection will help students understand why some people risked everything in the fight to liberate France. Careful readers will note, however, that while the texts themselves speak to the diversity of the Resistance, the selection of these four texts doesn’t do the same. All four resisters, while representing different parts of France and different political perspectives (to a certain degree), are part of a very elite group of resisters. Moulin and Tillion are both national heroes, interred in the Pantheon in Paris. Garcin, even before he became an active politician in the postwar years, was certainly a member of the republican elite, whose family hosted the likes of Blum, Daladier, and Herriot. Frenay, while from a more humble background, attended Saint-Cyr and later entered the *École supérieure de guerre*. Potter notes that these four were chosen for their candor, but also for “their proven stature in the eyes of the French”(p. 2). Because of the social status of these four resisters, students should be offered some additional context about class, privilege, and accessing the voices of resisters who aren’t normally highlighted in the literature. This additional context is particularly warranted, given that Potter excludes communist voices in the anthology, explaining that he has not yet found a text from a communist that meets his selection criteria.

Of his decision to include Tillion’s piece among ones written by three men, Potter writes that this “may actually be generous to women in the statistics of participation in the Resistance”(p. 2). While he is right that it is impossible to note the exact number of women on the ground, scholars of the Resistance have long argued that women’s participation in resistance activities is much higher than any of the official statistics might suggest. But perhaps of even greater significance is not the question of how many women participated in resistance, but rather what effect gender had in motivating resistance and determining the form it took or how gender affected the experience of resistance and the return to

republicanism at war's end.[1] The chance to think about those questions is missed in this anthology, which seems a shame.

While these missed opportunities, and some historical inaccuracies, mean that historians will have to add some context and highlight some corrections for their students, in general, the publication of this collection represents a positive move forward. Until very recently, it has been difficult to teach the Resistance in Anglophone classrooms. Given the contemporary interest in resistance to authoritarian regimes, this anthology comes at just the right time.

NOTES

[1] See for example, Catherine Lacour-Astol, *Le genre de la Résistance. La Résistance féminine dans le nord de la France* (Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 2015).

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