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Evelyne Diebolt, *Matériaux pour l'histoire du mouvement jeunes femmes (1950-2010)*. Paris: Michel Houdiard Editeur, 2010. 452 pp. 38€ (cl). ISBN 978-2-35692-040-9.

Review by Gill Allwood, Nottingham Trent University.

The Mouvement Jeunes Femmes emerged as a protestant women's organisation from the 1946 Congress of Unions chrétiennes de jeunes femmes (UCJF) in Grenoble. It was composed mainly of married women with children, concerned with domestic responsibilities and daily tasks. Its early meetings addressed topics from contraception to political culture. In the process, it both broke taboos and took a form that much later would be referred to as consciousness-raising. During its long existence, it has played an important social and political role, co-founding the Mouvement français pour le planning familial (MFPF) in 1960 and the Collectif féministe contre le viol in 1986, and participating in key feminist debates and campaigns. It has been particularly active around reproductive rights and violence towards women. It is a member of CADAC (Coordination des Associations pour le Droit à l'Avortement et à la Contraception, created in 1990) and the Collectif national pour les droits des femmes (created in 1996). Since 1998, its statutes have declared the movement feminist and *laïque*.

On its website, the Mouvement Jeunes Femmes lists its current activities as supporting women victims of violence and representing them in civil actions when requested; training police and social services in supporting women victims of violence; and participating in national and international campaigns for women's rights. MJF has been involved in the major feminist campaigns and debates of the past few decades, including the campaign for parity, the continued pressure for reproductive rights and against violence towards women. There is a broad consensus within contemporary French feminism that prostitution is inherently a form of violence towards women, that there is no such thing as voluntary prostitution, and that prostitution should be abolished. MJF adheres to this position. It is also strongly opposed to the wearing of headscarves in schools, which it sees as a violation of the principle of *laïcité*.

Historian of women's and feminist associations, Evelyne Diebolt, has produced this volume in order to preserve the archives of the MJF and provide a resource for future research. It contains an introduction to the organisation and to its publication, known as *le Bulletin*. There are detailed descriptions of dates of publication, pagination, the price of subscription, and the authors and content for each issue between 1947 and 1981 (although in the early years, many of the articles were published anonymously). From December 1949 until the end of 1951, the bulletin was circulated monthly amongst members. From 1952 onwards, a printed version was distributed more widely, and it became increasingly professional in appearance. The first issue contained a lengthy critical review of Simone de Beauvoir's *Deuxième Sexe*.

The book presents the contents of the journal issue by issue, followed by tables listing all the articles by author, with separate tables for the book and film reviews. The next section contains tables showing all those who occupied posts within the association, all those who performed editorial functions, regional delegates and responsibilities by year. The wealth and detail of this information is indisputable. It is comprehensive and clearly presented. It is somewhat surprising, however, that this information has been published in book form, rather than in a fully searchable electronic database.

In the next section of the book, two articles about MJF previously published elsewhere are reproduced in full: Marianne Loupiac's "Jeunes femmes (1946-1984)" and Annie Alquier's "Le

Mouvement Jeunes Femmes. Diversité, écoute et tolérance, freins ou moteurs d'action?". [1] In the first of these two articles, we learn that, as early as 1954, the MJF stated in the Bulletin that "tout enfant venant au monde devrait être désiré." This was nearly twenty years before the MFPPF popularised the slogan "Un enfant si je veux, quand je veux" (pp. 275-276). One of the MJF's national officers (Madeleine Tric, then Simone Iff) was seconded to the Conseil d'administration de l'association pour la Maternité heureuse when it was constituted in 1957, and close links between the two organisations (la Maternité heureuse becoming MFPPF in 1960) have persisted since.

The final part of the book contains biographies of some of the key figures in the movement. Covering more than sixty activists in 154 pages, this is a substantial and important part of the book. Amongst them, we find, for example, Solange Fernex. A MJF activist, she created and ran the Nature Committee of the MJF from 1970, co-founded the political movement Ecologie et survie, and stood as parliamentary candidate in 1973, a year before René Dumont stood in the 1974 presidential election. She also headed the Europe-Ecologie list in the first European Parliament election in 1979, co-founded the Green Party in 1984, and was elected MEP in 1989. There is also an entry for Simone Iff, MJF activist, president of MFPPF (1973-1979), co-founder of MLAC in 1975, member of Yvette Roudy's Ministry for Women's Rights (1981-1983) and involved in the Collectif féministe contre le viol from its creation in 1986 onwards.

The fifty-year history of the MJF confirms the position which has long been held by feminist historians, which is that second wave feminism did not emerge out of nowhere in 1968-1970.[2] The material presented in this book contributes to an understanding of French feminist activism as a continuum, rather than isolated moments or "waves." It highlights the long-standing struggles for contraception and abortion, and the day-to-day support for women who have experienced violence. It also charts the changes within the movement in response to external factors, for example, the effects of the economic crisis of the 1970s, which resulted in a demobilisation and a severe decline in funding, leading to a proposal in 1981 for the dissolution of the movement which was subsequently rejected by its members.

The continuity of the MJF; its avant-gardism with respect to reproductive rights, to what would later be referred to as consciousness-raising, and to collective forms of organisation; and its gradual revision of its statutes, first to remove references to Jesus Christ in 1971, then to insert a commitment to feminism and *laïcité* in 1998, expressed politically as a strong opposition to the wearing of headscarves in schools, chart the relation between an autonomous women's organisation and fifty years of social change. This book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of this relation, and is an indispensable resource for those who wish to pursue research in this area.

NOTES

[1] Marianne Loupiac, "Jeunes femmes (1946-1984)," *Pénélope pour l'histoire des femmes*, 11(Autumn 1984): 55-61; Annie Alquir, "Le Mouvement Jeunes Femmes. Diversité, écoute et tolérance, freins ou moteurs d'action?" in Evelyne Diebolt and Christiane Douyère-Demeulanaere (eds.), *Un siècle de vie associative: quelles opportunités pour les femmes?* (Paris: Femmes et associations, 2001), pp. 83-92.

[2] Sylvie Chaperon describes the MJF as marking the transition between first and second wave feminism. Claire Duchon stressed the continuities between feminist groups and activities in the 1950s and 1960s, and those which took place as part of, or alongside, the MLF of the 1970s. Sian Reynolds also highlights the continuities of women's and feminist struggles. See: Sylvie Chaperon, *Les années Beauvoir (1945-1970)* (Paris: Fayard, 2000); Claire Duchon, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Sian Reynolds, *France Between the Wars: Gender and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996). Excellent feminist histories which extend this understanding back to the early twentieth century and forwards to the "movement years" include Christine Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne. Histoire des féminismes. 1914-1940* (Paris: Fayard, 1995) and Françoise Picq, *Libération des femmes: Les années-mouvement* (Paris: Seuil, 1993).

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