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Nicolas Mariot and Claire Zalc, *Face à la persécution: 991 Juifs dans la guerre*. Paris: Odile Jacob, with the support of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, 2010. 302 pp. Maps, documents, tables, graphs, notes. 23.90€ (pb). ISBN 978-2-7381-2175-2.

Review by Shannon L. Fogg, Missouri University of Science and Technology.

Holocaust scholarship often deals with devastating numbers: at least 6 million Jews from across Europe were murdered during the Holocaust; 76,000 of the 330,000 Jews in France were deported to death camps; only 3 percent of people deported from France returned. Nicolas Mariot and Claire Zalc add another concrete number to the period's history: there were 991 Jews in Lens in 1939. While knowing all the numbers adds to our knowledge of the Holocaust, they only tell part of the story. In *Face à la persécution: 991 Juifs dans la guerre*, Mariot and Zalc set out to trace the trajectory of Lens' 991 Jews between 1940 and 1945. The authors lay out the numbers clearly from the beginning: 487 Jews from the city were arrested during the war years, 467 were then deported, and only 18 survived deportation (p. 7). Thus by the end of the war the Jewish community of Lens had been reduced to 528 members.^[1] This means that nearly half of Lens' Jews were deported as compared to 25 percent of Jews in France as a whole. The statistics are interesting in themselves, yet we must remember that each number represents a person who faced wrenching decisions and followed a unique path during the war years. Mariot and Zalc examine these statistics and the individual stories they represent within a broader social context in their quantitative study of the Jewish community in Lens during World War II.

Studies and memoirs have traced the fate of individual European Jews and their families, and many local studies have touched upon the fate of Jews in French communities.^[2] Mariot and Zalc add to this historiography by examining the decisions Jewish individuals in Lens made within the context of their families and embedded within the broader community and society in the attempt to provide explanations for their choices rather than determining if the choices were "good" or "bad." The book, however, is not a traditional social history but rather largely a statistical analysis of the community in each stage of the Holocaust.^[3] They follow individuals from their identification as Jews, their flight from Lens or their decision to stay, their dispossession, their marking with a star, their arrest and deportation, their extermination at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and for some, their return to Lens after the war. The authors explicitly aim to quantify information while emphasizing the heterogeneity of Jewish experiences in Lens (p. 256).

Mariot and Zalc's investigation reveals that the first Jewish immigrants to this mining region in northern France arrived from Eastern Europe in the 1920s. Sixty-eight percent of the Jews in Lens over the age of fifteen in 1940 were born in Poland and the community was overwhelmingly made up of recent immigrants. Most specialized in textiles and sold their goods to Polish miners. More than 80 percent of Jews lived in the center of Lens and all of them resided within 1300 meters of the train station. Yet we should not consider the *centre-ville* to have been a "ghetto," warn the authors. Jews made up only 3 percent of the city's population and most lived in highly mixed neighborhoods. It is this kind of detail, further reinforced through maps, graphs, and charts, that is one of the book's strong points. Furthermore, the authors are

careful throughout the book to analyze all their statistics from various angles and to put the numbers into context.

Close analysis of an entire community allows Mariot and Zalc to address many issues that are often discussed anecdotally in other works. They are especially interested in addressing how the Jewish population was identified for discriminatory purposes. Namely was identification made through detection or declaration? They are able to conclude that the majority of Jews in Lens (75 percent) self-identified themselves through declarations, challenging the idea that the identification of Jews under Vichy happened via detection and was a continuation of Third Republic policies aimed at foreigners (pp. 47-48). What did seem to filter down, however, were Vichy's notions about nationality and race. Letters related to declarations show the slippage between self-identifying as Jewish by religion and Jewish by "nationality," "origin" or "race."

Self-identification did not mean that the Jews of Lens felt safe or bound by legality. Many fled the region after reporting themselves to authorities, leading to some of the most interesting data in the book. Mariot and Zalc discovered that 610 Jews left Lens between September 1, 1939 and September 11, 1942 (the date of the major *rafle* and the deportation of the majority of Lens' Jews.) This was 62 percent of the prewar Jewish population. Two-thirds of the people who left for the war's duration did so before December 1940 (p. 65). The authors then set about reconstructing the trajectories of flight. They discover that some Jewish residents left and returned to the area multiple times, flight wasn't linear, French Jews left later than foreigners, and there was no simple causality in decisions to leave. They conclude there was no "good time" to leave and surprisingly, people who waited until 1942 to leave survived in greater numbers than those who left Lens during the *exode* of May 1940 (20 percent versus 34 percent arrested, respectively) (pp. 86-89). They suggest that the level of awareness of danger was greater in 1942 and therefore people were more likely to take more evasive measures. Destination as well as date also played a role in survival. Sixty-two percent of the Jews who remained in the occupied zone were arrested, while 25 percent who reached the unoccupied zone suffered the same fate (p. 91).

As these examples suggest, geography and location are important themes throughout the book. Mariot and Zalc chose Lens for the size of its Jewish community (not too large and not too small) and the fact that the area was administratively isolated through its attachment to the *Militärbefehlshaber* (MBF) in Brussels. This isolation made it easier for the researchers to trace bureaucratic events such as the identification of Jews in 1940. They also discovered certain trends through the careful examination of locations and statistics. For example, two-thirds of the Jewish households that were the only Jewish household on a particular street still lived in Lens in 1942. The proportion is almost the inverse if there were other Jewish families on the street (p. 130). Despoilment also had a geographic component: physical neighbors were often involved in purchasing, running, or managing Jewish enterprises.

While certainly illuminating, *Face à la persécution* has some weaknesses. One is sometimes left wondering how to incorporate all the facts. The authors examine an individual's sex, age, family situation, employment status, degree of isolation, and socio-economic background in the decision to stay in Lens, but how does one put all the statistics and trends together in order to understand how the factors played out in a person's decision-making process? The reader also discovers that the French officials responsible for identifying and deporting the Jews of Lens were experienced bureaucrats from the Third Republic. Why, then, do they work so effectively for Vichy and the Germans? Mariot and Zalc suggest these men were sent to the region to help exert Vichy's sovereignty (p. 157) and, out of indifference and habituation to routine, were able to efficiently rid the region of Jews in 1942 (p. 174). Such explanations appear a bit too simplistic. The question of why the Jews of Lens died in greater proportions than the national

average is not adequately explored either. The authors sometimes hazard guesses (the overwhelming number of foreigners in the population, for example), but this does leave additional areas to be examined by future research.

In the final analysis, we learn that in less than three months (July-September 1942), half of the Jewish population in the Lens basin disappeared (p. 182). Quantifying, tracing, and naming the victims and survivors provide insights that may be lost in other types of historical study. The amount of research that goes into such an endeavor is admirable, and the sources Mariot and Zalc used to reconstruct the fate of Lens' Jews are impressive. Over a period of six years, approximately ten researchers and students from various disciplines (including anthropology, sociology, economics, and history) explored private family archives, the departmental archives of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, and the National Archives in France as well as the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum with its material from the International Tracing Service, and Yad Vashem in Israel. Throughout the text, Mariot and Zalc explain the sources behind their statistics and they also provide an extended explanation of their methodology at the end of the book. For scholars interested in the war, the Holocaust, or quantitative studies, Mariot and Zalc remind us there are no simple explanations when people are involved, but there are certainly many avenues to explore and still much to be learned.

NOTES

[1] Of the 528 survivors, approximately 280 decided to return to Lens after the war (p. 219).

[2] See for example, Götz Aly, *Into the Tunnel: The Brief Life of Marion Samuel, 1931-1943* (New York: Metropolitan Books, published in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007); Isaac Lewendel, *Not the Germans Alone: A Son's Search for the Truth of Vichy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999); Donna F. Ryan, *The Holocaust & the Jews of Marseilles: The Enforcement of Anti-Semitic Policies in Vichy France* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation 1940-45* (London: Macmillan, 2002); John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Shannon L. Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at War: Religion, Politics, and Public Opinion in the Gard, 1938-1944* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

[3] Mariot and Zalc cite the work of Manix Croes and Peter Tammes on Jews in Holland as an example of this kind of quantitative study (p. 255). A more traditional social history of Jewish decision-making is Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

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