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Lindsey Dodd and David Lees, eds. *Vichy France and Everyday Life: Confronting the Challenges of Wartime, 1939-1945*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. ix+253 pp. Select bibliography. \$114.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-3500-1159-5.

Review by Valerie Deacon, NYU Shanghai.

A 2016 conference held at the University of Warwick, on the subject of “Vichy and the everyday” was the inspiration for this edited collection of essays. Using the theoretical underpinnings offered by Henri Lefebvre, W.H. Auden, Michel de Certeau, and Hegel, the editors persuasively argue for the importance of examining everyday life, particularly in a period that is too often dominated by studies focused on the grand narratives of resistance and collaboration. While not ignoring those narratives entirely, the editors and contributors do not make them the organizing principle of the collection. Instead, they focus on interpersonal relationships, emotional lives, and the material concerns of everyday life in Vichy France. Although these subjects have, in past work, been united by methodological approaches (microhistory, *Alltagsgeschichte*), this is not the case for this volume. The authors approach their subjects using a variety of methodologies, though for most essays the source base is similar; a combination of institutional/governmental records and oral histories seem to ground the conclusions in most contributions.

The collection is loosely divided into two main sections. The first, “Coping and helping,” focuses mostly on restrictions and challenges of living in wartime and how those were dealt with by individuals and institutions. The second section, “Confrontation and challenge,” deals with encounters between people, between ideas and practices, and between the war and the everyday. The range of essays that fall into these two sections is fairly broad and this categorization can’t possibly capture the variety of subjects a reader will encounter. There are, however, certain topics that dominate the collection. These, roughly speaking, are food, childhood, charity, and emotional lives. While this is not an exhaustive categorization, especially given that some essays fall outside those lines entirely, these four subjects are present either on their own, or overlapping one another, in most of the contributions.

Food is naturally a regular concern for people living in war. As the editors are careful to note, French civilians were not living in a country *at* war, but they were most certainly living *in* war. Acquiring food in the changing environment of the 1939-1945 period was an uneven struggle, with rural dwellers better able to find sources of food than urban citizens. Nonetheless, hunger was a common preoccupation in France. Sarah Frank’s excellent essay on colonial prisoners of war notes that although their contact with local populations was regulated, they formed

unexpected relationships with them, often cemented by the bond of food. The everyday experience of these CPOWs was improved by locals who tried to ameliorate their living conditions. Similarly, Matthieu Devigne's piece about education highlights the "everyday endurance" of schoolteachers and administrators who struggled to make sure children had sufficient food. This challenging task, particularly in ensuring quantity and diversity of food, exhausted those in charge and was definitely a source of everyday anxiety.

While Devigne's piece focuses on the concern adults had for children and the effect of war on childhood, some of the other pieces focus on children themselves. The opening essay, by Camille Mahé, directs readers to the preoccupations of French children—what toys they played with, what games they made up—and whether those preoccupations changed because of the war. To re-focus our gaze on the lives of children requires stepping away from a traditional "top-down" analysis and, in most cases, requires moving away from relying on municipal or state archives. Lindsey Dodd's contribution tackles the issue of urban children who were evacuated to the countryside: a subject that has long been present in British historiography of the period, but is surprisingly absent from many studies of Vichy France. Dodd challenges the narrative that suggests the French experience of evacuation was less traumatic than the British one and argues that while there were certainly many success stories, there are also stories of "social confrontation, psychological disturbance and lasting, everyday distress" (p. 132). Readers are reminded that the concerns of French officials were not necessarily the concerns of people themselves and that the presence or absence of official records should not lead us to draw fast conclusions about the lived experience of people.

One wartime experience shared by many people, though not one that was always publicly acknowledged, was charity. The everyday lives of both children and adults were influenced by various charitable organizations that supplemented food, finances, and material goods. Although previous studies of aid during this period have tended to focus on the most needy, Shannon Fogg reminds us that the very circumstances of the war meant the need for assistance was much wider than usual and middle-class families, though having started off in relative comfort, did not end the war that way. The importance of helping improve the lives of people affected by the German occupation was so great that, as Jean-Pierre Le Crom notes, the *Secours National* became something of a state within a state. An organization designed to alleviate the suffering of civilians in the First World War was mobilized by the Vichy government to rationalize emergency aid in the Second. As Le Crom rightly argues, we cannot ignore the political dimensions of everyday life, particularly when looking at charitable organizations and associations.

The final recurring theme in the collection is the emotional and domestic lives of French people during the war. Most of the articles speak to this theme, but a few pay particularly close attention to the emotional history of this period. Wendy Michallat's article, which deals with the wartime diary of Madeleine Blaess, highlights the disconnect between people's emotional response to the Liberation and the official commemorative narratives. Blaess' emotional state ranged from fearful to horrified and she did not experience the Liberation in the moment as a hopeful event. The diary that details this pessimism, Michallat argues, represents an "alternative historical record" (p. 180). Other pieces that focus on family life or daily experiences similarly move the focus away from the grand narratives and allow readers to better understand the dynamics of the 1939-1945 period at the micro level.

Overall, this collection is a welcome addition to a growing literature about everyday life in wartime France and, as the editors point out, should be read alongside those works. The messiness of the everyday and the various contexts in which we find everyday histories are reflected in this book, which might be vexing for somebody who is looking for a wholeness or unity of this history. However, to force an overall logic to a history that had so many different regional, generational, gendered, occupational, social, and economic contexts would be doing a disservice to the richness of those lived experiences. One of the most promising elements of this collection is that it opens up the possibility of comparative studies for these subjects across geographic lines. Finally, the editors should be praised for their dedication to bringing together scholars who work in both English and French and for ensuring the French scholarship was translated into English. This feature makes the collection particularly valuable for people who teach in English, but want to include contemporary French scholarship.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

Lindsey Dodd and David Lees, "Introduction"

Camille Mahé, "Children and Play in Occupied France"

Matthieu Devigne, "Coping in the Classroom: Adapting Schools to Wartime"

Isabelle von Buelzingsloewen, "Reconstructing the Daily Life of a Lyonnaise Family"

Sylvère Aït Amour, "The Daily Lives of French Railway Workers"

Jean-Pierre Le Crom, "Helping the Most Needy: The Role of the Secours National"

Shannon L. Fogg, "The American Friends Service Committee and Wartime Aid to Families"

Lindsey Dodd, "Urban Lives, Rural Lives and Children's Evacuation"

Sarah Frank, "Colonial Prisoners of War and French Civilians"

Byron Schirbock, "Wehrmacht Brothels, Prostitution and Venereal Desire"

Wendy Michallat, "Madeleine Blaess: An Emotional History of a Long Liberation"

Mason Norton, "Counter-Revolution? Resisting Vichy and the National Revolution"

Steve Wharton, "Vichy Cinema and the Everyday"

David Lees, "Defining Everyday Frenchness under Vichy"

Valerie Deacon  
NYU Shanghai  
[valerie.deacon@nyu.edu](mailto:valerie.deacon@nyu.edu)

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