

*H-France Review* Vol. 9 (August 2009), No. 111

Patrick Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews during the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007. xxii + 192 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography and index. \$59.95 U.S. (cl.) ISBN 978-0-8132-1493-1.

Raymond-Raoul Lambert, *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1943*. Edited with an introduction by Richard I. Cohen. Translated from the French by Isabel Best. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007. lxvi + 221 pp. Map, illustrations, notes and index. \$27.50 U.S. (cl.) ISBN 13-978-1-56663-740-4.

Review by Donna F. Ryan, Gallaudet University.

As historians constantly reexamine the past in the light of new theories and information, the Holocaust remains at the center of ever more nuanced efforts to understand one of the most troubling and tragic events in modern history. In particular, the Holocaust in France, and the role of French men and women in either protecting or delivering Jews to the death camps of Eastern Europe, remains a compelling and fluid area for evaluation. Simply put, we still struggle to comprehend the choices individuals made about their daily actions under occupation and, more importantly, why people made those decisions. Whether in the studies of Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, who saw the French as passive collaborators, the writings of John Sweets, who saw France as neither entirely collaborationist nor fully resistant, or the work of Ian Ousby, who saw most of the French simply trying to get by in their daily lives (le système D), the interpretation of what motivated opposition, and what forms it actually took, remains controversial.[1] Two new books revisit this familiar terrain: Patrick Henry's *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews during the Holocaust* and Raymond-Raoul Lambert's *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1943*, a translation of an earlier edition, published in French in 1985, with updated annotation by Richard I. Cohen.

Patrick Henry has set out to reconsider the story of the rescue of endangered Jews on the plateau of Vivarais-Lignon between 1939 and 1944. Using previously unpublished writings of the rescuers, Henry seeks to reevaluate the story of rescuers from the village of Chambon-sur-Lignon, as told by Philip Hallie in *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*. [2] In that book, the philosopher Hallie tried to determine how goodness happened in Chambon-sur-Lignon through the actions of the Huguenot minister André Trocmé, his wife Magda, and most of the villagers. By reviewing the research done in the twenty-five years since Hallie wrote in light of additional primary sources, Henry offers an evenhanded view of Hallie's work and a corrective to the misconception that Chambon-sur-Lignon was the only example of righteous activity in the region.

Henry offers a more ecumenical view of the events, including Jewish and Catholic participation, as well as the courageous acts of members of the many of the diverse Protestant sects living in the region. He argues that this cooperation marked a unique occurrence, for he sees no similar ecumenical event ever having taken place on French soil (p.10). Challenging again the largely debunked notion of Jewish passivity in the Holocaust, Henry focuses on the rescue activities of Madeleine Dreyfus, a Jewish mother of three, whose actions on behalf of OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants, the Children's Rescue Network) sent her to Bergen-Belsen, an ordeal she survived. When asked to explain her motivation,

Dreyfus said she had never really made a choice but found herself in a perilous situation without fully recognizing it. (p. 96). The author, however, sees her actions as the culmination of a lifetime of service, part of a behavioral pattern that she simply continued in dangerous circumstances.

Finally, Henry turns to the work of Albert Camus for insight. Though not a rescuer, Camus lived near Chambon-sur-Lignon in 1942 and 1943 while he wrote *The Plague*. Henry posits that Camus observed both violent and non-violent forms of resistance to the Germans and that he faithfully represented both on the plateau. Summarizing the impact of what Camus observed as it appeared in *The Plague*, Henry concludes:

At the end of the narrative, Rieux claims that what we learn at a time of pestilence is that “there are more things to admire in men than to despise” (1471; 278). Most people who lived in Occupied Europe during the Nazi plague probably would not agree, but most of them did not spend fourteen or fifteen months of that time, as Camus did, on the plateau Vivarais-Lignon. (p. 136)

Trained as a philosopher, Patrick Henry closes his study with several conclusions about the rescuers and their actions (pp. 160-170). While altruism may contain elements of self interest, he argues that it could not be the primary motivation in this case because the potential threats were simply too great. Oscar Schindler aside, most rescuers were not engaging in behavior aberrant from their normal actions. Many of the rescuers here learned altruism from their parents and caretakers. Likewise, for many their view of others was not centered on human differences, the core of Nazism, but on commonness of experience and humanity. The reward for rescuers, he believes, was a profound sense of inner peace.

While the retrospection of Patrick Henry is a useful way to correct and enhance our knowledge of historical reality, we are equally drawn to those sources that are contemporaneous to the events and untainted by the weaknesses of memory. Such a work is Raymond-Raoul Lambert's *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1943*. First published in French in 1985, also with comments and annotations by Richard Cohen, this version is a welcome addition to the literature of Holocaust testimony in English. It incorporates updated secondary literature on the Holocaust in France, especially as it took place in the Unoccupied Zone, where Vichy officials enjoyed greater autonomy.

Raymond-Raoul Lambert embodied the lived dilemma of the native French Jewish population. Assimilated, well-educated, a decorated veteran of World War I, who served again before the humiliating defeat of 1940, Lambert wrote frequently with allusions to French literature and culture, especially the writings of Maurice Barrès and Charles Péguy. An entry in his diary on 15 July 1940 sums up his connection to France:

French Jewry is enduring a particular kind of anguish. It accepts suffering along with everyone else but dreads the discrimination the enemy may demand. This fear makes me particularly dread the future, for myself and for my sons. But I still have confidence France cannot accept just anything, and it is not for nothing that the bones of my family have mingled with its soil for more than a century—and that I have served in two wars. For my wife, my sons, and myself, I cannot imagine life in another climate; pulling up these roots would be worse than an amputation. (p. 9)

But Lambert's identity remained equally Jewish. He had worked with Jewish refugee organizations in the interwar years, when many French Jews considered the refugees to be impossible to assimilate and themselves a cause of growing anti-Semitism in France. Wishing to intervene on behalf of Jews with the French government, he agreed to head the Union Générale des Israélites de France (UGIF) in the southern zone. The UGIF provided material aid to Jews deprived of their livelihood as a result of Vichy anti-Jewish legislation, negotiated with the Vichy government, and, unfortunately, helped to keep tabs

on Jews whom the Nazis would arrest at will in 1943 and 1944. In this respect the UGIF served as a kind of French *Judenrat*, although Lambert's diary reveals that he had profound faith in the ideals he believed the French republican tradition guaranteed, a distinct departure from the situation of the leaders of the *Judenräte* in the ghettos of Eastern Europe.

With his decision to accept this post, Lambert clearly showed the dilemma of the thoroughly French Jew. He perhaps fooled himself into thinking that Pétain and Xavier Vallat, head of the Commissariat Générale aux Questions Juives, were so determined to protect France against *German* excesses that he could not clearly see their roles as architects of French anti-Semitic policies and laws. In 1942, when Laval came to power a second time, and Darquier de Pellepoix succeeded Vallat, it was nearly impossible to excise French actions from German plans.

Yet it is here that Lambert's diary becomes an excellent companion piece to Patrick Henry's study. Richard Cohen suggests that Lambert was quietly involved in the Resistance, based on conversations he had with Lambert's cousin, Maurice Brenner. There is probably little concrete evidence that Lambert participated in the Resistance, yet there is also precious little reason to consider him a sell-out or traitor as some earlier critiques of the UGIF have suggested.<sup>[3]</sup> The choice and the methods to resist, especially for a highly visible Jewish leader, were extremely limited. Lambert certainly had character flaws, including a haughty disregard for the opinions of other Jewish leaders such as Jacques Heilbronner, president of the Consistory, whom he accused of being Jewish princes. (p.76) He was perhaps deluded in his unshakable faith in France, yet he lived his belief. He never tried to leave France and never deserted the Jewish community. He remained convinced he was ameliorating conditions for impoverished Jews, many of them foreign refugees. Indeed, he witnessed the deportations from the Les Milles camp in 1942, occasionally succeeding in gaining exemptions for individuals, but without acknowledging that every Jew spared condemned another to fill Nazi quotas. In 1943 Raymond Raoul Lambert, his wife Simone and their four children, Lionel (fourteen), Marc (eleven), Tony (four), and Marie-France (nearly two) were sent to Drancy, where they languished for several months, finally dying at Auschwitz in December.

A recent exhibit at the New York Public Library, "Between Collaboration and Resistance: French Literary Life under Nazi Occupation," showcased unpublished manuscripts, letters and diaries of French writers who ran the gamut from outright collaborators to famous resisters. As from Lambert's diary, we can learn much from such contemporary perceptions, less colored than those recorded years later by the benefits and liabilities of historical hindsight. No doubt, choices seemed very different then than they do to the modern reader. For many of the citizens of the Plateau of Vivarais-Lignon, the decision to help strangers came naturally. For Raymond-Raoul Lambert, the choice to trust in France was just as instinctive.

## NOTES

[1] Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France, 1940-1944* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

[2] Philip Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Village of le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There* (New York: Harper & Row, 1994, originally published in 1985).

[3] For criticism of the UGIF and its leadership, see Maurice Rajsfus, *Des juifs dans la collaboration: l'UGIF (1941-1944)* (Paris: Études et documentation internationales, 1980-[1989]); Jacques Ravine, *La*

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*résistance organisée des juifs en France, 1940-1944* (Paris: Julliard, 1973); and Cynthia Haft, *The Bargain and the Bridle: The General Union of Israelites of France, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Dialog, 1983).

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ISSN 1553-9172