

Cécile Desprairies, L'Héritage allemand de l'Occupation. Ces 60 dispositions toujours en vigueur. Préface d'Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Paris (Armand Colin) 2019, 253 p., nombr. ill., ISBN 978-2-200-62446-0, EUR 22,90.

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»L'Héritage allemand de l'Occupation« examines the consequences of sustained interaction between French civilians and German soldiers and administrators between 1940 and 1944. Extending previous monographs entitled »L'héritage de Vichy. Ces 100 mesures toujours en vigueur« (Paris 2012), »Sous l'œil de l'occupant« (Paris 2010), and »Paris dans la Collaboration« (Paris 2009), Cécile Desprairies provides readers with a novel way to explore change and continuity in modern French, European, and perhaps world history. Eight chapters detail how Germans influenced, and in some cases transformed, agricultural practices, fashion, eating habits, and legal regulations in France during the Second World War. Sections on women's rights, for example, begin with a description of the legal rights of women in France and Germany before the Occupation, analyze how they changed during the War, note which regulations survived after the Liberation, and conclude with a summary of the legal status of women in both societies during the post-war era.

Many of the case studies analyzed by Desprairies can best be described as part of a modernization process. In the 19th century, German dairy farmers established a herd book and selectively bred cows to increase milk production. As a result, the black and white Holstein became the most common dairy cow in Germany by 1936. Working together, both German administrators and Vichy bureaucrats encouraged French dairy farmers to raise Holsteins at the expense of traditional Flemish and Breton breeds without mentioning the former's Germanic origins. After the war, the French government established its own herd book and supervised the selective breeding of cows. Recognizing the superior milk production of German cows, French dairy farmers used Holsteins to supply the majority of milk in France by 2013 (p. 185–188).

Along the same lines, both the Italian and German governments launched a »battle for wheat« to identify more hardy and productive strains of grain during the inter-war era, but the Third Republic did not follow suit. After signing the Armistice agreement and cut off from international markets, the Vichy regime began to ration wheat and seized control of the distribution of seeds. Using laws passed in 1941 and refined in 1943, Agricultural Minister Jacques Le Roy Ladurie forced French farmers to adopt hybrid strains of wheat in the spring of 1942. As a result, French grain production increased, but so did German requisitions, which jumped from 485 000 tons in 1941–1942 to 714 000 tons in 1942–1943. By encouraging French farmers to adopt hybrid strains of



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grain, French authorities helped feed Hitler's war machine and, according to the author, anticipated the Green Revolution in India and China in the post-war era (p. 178–181).

During the inter-war era, both France and Germany experimented with hydro-electric projects. French engineers designed dams in the departments Ain (Génissiat) and Corrèze (l'Aigle) along the Dordogne river while their German counterparts emphasized hydro-electric power in the Four-Year Plan in accordance with the Nazi regime's preference for large-scale projects and energy independence. During the Occupation, Germany provided technical support and access to raw materials while Vichy supplied labor from North Africa and prisons to build two major dams. Although interrupted by the Liberation, both projects came online by 1948 (p. 137–139).

A »fervent collaborator«, Robert Gibrat, designed a third hydroelectric project in the Rance river estuary (Brittany) that used tidal surges to generate electricity. After spending a year in prison for his wartime activities, Gibrat took charge of the Société hydrotechnique de France and completed his project by 1966. President de Gaulle hailed his work as »a masterpiece of French engineering«, but local fishermen continued to complain about Gibrat's dam because it did not allow migrating salmon to swim up the Rance river (p. 140–141). Without minimizing the use of forced labor or the environmental consequences of all three projects, Despairies illustrates the modernizing tendency of the Vichy regime and the long-term impact of German influence.

A lack of context undermines some of the analyses presented in »L'Héritage allemande de l'Occupation«. Although engineers designed large construction projects during the twenties and thirties, successive French governments cut spending and embraced deflation during the Great Depression. Short of funds, French governments could not afford to build dams or water treatment facilities. Bitter political divisions also hamstrung major public works projects. The Bridges and Roads Service (service des Ponts et Chaussées) recommended the construction of a suspension bridge over the Seine estuary near Tancarville, but local politicians and businessmen blocked the project in 1937. German occupiers broke the deadlock by voicing support for a new bridge in August 1940. One year later, a thousand workers began to lay the foundation (p. 142–143). Economic malaise may explain why few landlords or hoteliers installed modern bathrooms in residential, commercial, or business properties during the thirties, and prosperity of the Trente Glorieuses may account for modern hygienic facilities found throughout contemporary France. Political and economic conditions undoubtedly influenced French development, but they receive little attention in »L'Héritage allemande«.

The design and presentation of the printed book also deserve mention. Headers and page numbers are printed in light-gray on a white page. Chapter titles and chapter abstracts are printed in white on a light-gray page. All are extraordinarily difficult to read regardless of light or visual acuity. Such blunders are puzzling and inexcusable for a book designed for an academic audience, but



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they are less bothersome in the Kindle edition which includes dark-blue text and green titles on white pages.

In sum, Cécile Desprairies presents a fascinating account of Franco-German collaboration that links elements of the Occupation to long-term trends in France, Germany, and Europe. Setting aside typographic blunders, her account is richly illustrated with photographs and advertisements that support her text, and it is aptly introduced by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. Although lacking context, her monograph includes a wealth of details that, when viewed as a whole, enunciates some of the everyday consequences of the German occupation.



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