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Mona L. Siegel. *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. vii + 317 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-83900-6.

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Pacifists and Patriots: Irreconcilable Differences or Myth versus Reality?

Mona L. Siegel has written an excellent book on the complex relationship between pacifist activism and commitment to the ideals of internationalism and patriotism. It has been a widely held view by contemporary critics and subsequent scholars that interwar French pacifism–in this case the anti-war agitation of French primary schoolteachers–was largely responsible for France's devastating defeat against the German Wehrmacht in 1940 by enervating the will of the French people. Conversely, Siegel argues that interwar pacifist schoolteachers preached a type of pacifism firmly anchored in French republican patriotism. As a result, pacifist instruction in classrooms across France actually solidified rather than undermined loyalty to the nation.

Beyond convincingly proving her thesis, Siegel has done much more that makes her monograph impressive. Firstly, the book treats several topics of historical interest with complexity and nuance such as the shifting French national memory of World War I and the impact of gender on political ideology. As such, there is much in this book of value for scholars whose interest may not reside in French history, the history of pacifism, or the history of education. Secondly, Siegel's methodology combines the best of social and cultural historical approaches. On the one hand, Siegel provides the reader with detailed information about French primary schoolteachers, their male-dominated union, the curriculum, and actual examples of classroom lessons and student assignments. On the other hand, Siegel enters the realm of publishing and public reception, discourse and visual analysis, and the political culture of war. For the last, Siegel writes that it was the aim of pacifist instruction "to destroy the mental arsenal of concepts and beliefs that had made war imaginable and, ultimately acceptable" (p. 3). Thirdly, the author draws upon a rich treasure trove of primary sources like history textbooks, national pedagogical journals, teacher lesson plans, children's school essays, and interviews with former schoolteachers. In addition, the author integrates superbly the most recent scholarship in French history. The overall result is a book of impeccable scholarship with a wide appeal.

The historical setting of Siegel's research is the war-torn and divisive society of interwar France (1918-1940), a country that ostensibly emerged victorious from the catastrophe of the Great War but in reality remained scarred by the conflict until World War II and beyond. In the introduction, Siegel establishes the overarching goal of pacifist instruction of the interwar period: the moral disarmament of France. The author explains that moral disarmament "insisted that no amount of international arbitration or economic cooperation would effectively prevent the return of war unless the peoples of the world first abandoned their chauvinistic impulses and embraced cross-national understanding as the keystone of global stability" (p. 3). Siegel points out that her objective is not merely to investigate the leaders of teacher pacifism as embodied in the leftist and pacifist-leaning National Teachers Union (SN), but rather to enter into the classroom where the message of moral disarmament was disseminated to French pupils. In order to make her claims relevant for all of France, the author incorporates three local case studies–the departments of the Somme, Dordogne, and the Seine, respectively.

The first two chapters orient the reader to the response of teachers to the Great War and the shaping of collective memory in the form of commemorative rituals and the writing of chauvinistic textbooks until the mid-1920s. Siegel reiterates the argument popularized by Eugen Weber that republican education played a crucial role in turning "peasants into Frenchmen" prior to World War I. As a result, with few exceptions and a *cause c?©l?®bre* trial involving pacifist union leader H?©l?®ne Brion, French schoolteachers embraced the 1914 Sacred Union or the voluntary suspension of all domestic political conflict in the defense of the French nation. As a result, schoolteachers actively propagated

the government-inspired anti-German discourse in their classrooms throughout the war. The content of school textbooks changed little in the immediate postwar era. Siegel wonderfully deconstructs the representations of the Great War and concludes that they offered "a chauvinistic, militaristic, and romanticized picture of the war" (p. 69). Equally important as the actual content of textbooks was whether primary schoolteachers adopted them in their classes. Siegel tells us that many teachers (especially in the Seine region) did use them, but their widespread dissemination across France is inconclusive. Moreover, teachers shaped their pupils' memory of the war in classroom commemorative lessons and rituals such as the anniversary of Armistice Day. The emphasis here was on loss and grief, which undermined the heroic view of war depicted in postwar textbooks. The turning point toward pacifist education came in 1923-1924, when the 1924 SN conference resolved that history instruction "will be resolutely pacifist and will reject anything that, by its nature, inspires hatred of foreigners 'Ä it will thus prepare the child for a greater, international society" (pp. 89-90).

Chapter 3 explores the process of forging an ideological consensus among French schoolteachers in the decade from the mid-1920s into the 1930s. Siegel first explains how the SN came to be the dominant teachers union in France (by 1938 it had 108,000 members or 82 percent of all public primary schoolteachers). Women constituted nearly two-thirds of the union membership in the interwar years. The road of most teachers toward pacifism started with the experience of World War I, causing them to reassess their views toward war and peace. Upon this fertile terrain, Siegel argues, socialist internationalism and feminist/feminine pacifism took root. The SN leadership promoted socialist internationalism, while female schoolteachers were also influenced by feminine and feminist pacifist organizations such as the French Union for Women's Suffrage and the International League for Mothers and Educators for Peace. Consistent with French feminist traditions, *institutrice*s embraced their "innate" nature based in motherhood and domesticity to present "a resolutely gender-based vision of pacifism, rooted in essentialist and maternalist understandings of war and peace" (p. 113).

The full fruit of Siegel's research is harvested in chapters 4 and 5, where the reader learns about the content of French primary schoolteachers' pacifist instruction and how it solidified national identity. The SN took the lead to recast the chauvinistic narratives of the Great War in its 1926 campaign against "bellicose" textbooks. Soon thereafter, revised textbooks no longer vilified Germans or claimed Germany was solely responsible for the Great War. Moreover, the war itself was presented more as a national tragedy than a national triumph. The visual imagery shifted from scenes of heroic and confident French soldiers in combat to realistic and somber masses of infantrymen bogged down in the trenches wearing gas masks. Even while the war experience was being recast, French patriotism itself was reinforced. The textbooks continued to emphasize the devastation World War I had wrought on French territory and "French soldiers were duly praised for their determination and fortitude" (p. 144). Revised narratives imparted that war was horrific for all fatherlands, but especially for the French nation.

Beyond textbooks, teachers utilized other lessons–songs of peace, skits, transforming Armistice Day into a peace festival, celebrating the League of Nations, and so forth–to inculcate the message of pacifism and patriotism. The source of pacifist patriotism, Siegel explains, was rooted in the traditions of French republicanism extending back to the French Revolution, when the French "nation at arms" was compelled to defend its ideals of liberty and fraternity against the "tyranny" of European monarchs in 1792-1794. Thus, national symbols such as the *tricolor* and *Marseillaise* continued to be revered. Likewise, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century republican heroes such as Victor Hugo and Jean Jaurès figured prominently in historical and moral instruction. France was depicted as the *nation civilisatrice* in a larger fraternity of peace-loving countries, and as such, its colonial empire was noble and uplifting. French primary schoolteachers abhorred the idea of an arms race and military conflict, but they also emphasized in their instruction the necessity to serve in the army and justified the notion of a defensive war. In sum, Siegel tells us, "through moral and civic instruction lessons, as through revised historical narratives of the Great War, public primary schoolteachers continued to express their profound attachment to the territory, institutions, people, and ideals of France" (p. 189).

The last chapter of the book examines the unraveling of the consensus on moral disarmament among primary public schoolteachers against the constant threat of European war in the 1930s. Schoolteachers grappled with wrenching issues such as whether to support the republican cause in the Spanish Civil War, to embrace a policy of accommodation with Adolf Hitler, and the rearmament of France. Most instructors were not integral pacifists, even as the SN union leadership preached mainly an intransigent pacifism. Siegel explains: "The same values that led them to embrace pacifism at the end of the First World War–respect for liberty, democracy, and human

life as well as patriotic devotion to republican France–ultimately led them, a mere twenty years later, to reconcile themselves to the necessity of war" (pp. 193-194). When the French government called for a general mobilization for war in September 1939, primary schoolteachers rallied to the nation, albeit with a sense of resignation and disappointment, much akin to French society at large. After French military defeat and collaboration, many schoolteachers participated in the resistance to undermine Nazi occupation and the Vichy regime.

Even a book as impressive as Siegel's is not immune to minor criticism. The author could discuss further how French moral disarmament fits into the larger European peace movement debates of the interwar years. Likewise, the author could elaborate more on the two ideological roots of teacher pacifism she highlights: namely, socialist internationalism and feminine/feminist pacifism. For the latter, the reader could benefit from an overview of French pacifism prior to World War I. Moreover, the theme of competing understandings of pacifism among primary schoolteachers is mentioned but underdeveloped (pp. 120-121). Pertaining to socialist internationalism, Siegel does not discuss debates within the French Left on matters of war and peace, particularly in the SFIO, and how they might have influenced the socialist-leaning SN leadership and possibly the pacifist instruction of primary schoolteachers. Nor does the author refer to the Socialist International of the interwar years. The concept of socialist internationalism itself is viewed as uncontested and without national variants. Yet, the author actually provides evidence demonstrating that French socialist internationalism was anchored in French Revolution liberal humanism and universalism as well as French radical and socialist republicanism. Finally, the last chapter and conclusion are a bit anti-climactic. The author does not fully tease out the implications of her research on "French political culture" and on "the broader impact of education on French values and beliefs," as is promised in the introduction (p. 17).

The broader significance of Siegel's research is certainly not limited to the history of French pacifism. The so-called anti-patriotism of interwar French teachers is part of a larger historical and ongoing discourse in the Western world, which asserts that all left-wing movements are hostile to the interests of the nation, whether it be the stigma attached to the *vaterlandslose* socialists of Imperial Germany, the "treasonous" anti-war protesters of the Vietnam era, or the "unpatriotic" Democrats in recent U.S. congressional and presidential elections. Siegel has thus both rehabilitated the peace work of French primary schoolteachers and made an indispensable contribution toward dispelling politically motivated historical falsehoods.

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