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United States Army. *Instructions to American Servicemen in France during World War II.* Introduction by Rick Atkinson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 84 pp. \$12.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-226-84172-4.

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Through a Tiny Window

The usual focus for military historians is, of course, the military at work on the battlefield. However, it is often forgotten that soldiers are involved with more than just their weapons and the enemy. Behind the front lines, soldiers and civilians are interacting at a wide variety of levels. Often not considered or discussed, this civilian-military experience has a huge impact on how soldiers are seen by the local population, the cooperation they may or may not have, and the perception held by the soldiers of the places they have been.

During the Second World War, the U.S. government put out a series of pocket sized handbooks on the various countries that their soldiers would be fighting through. The goal of the project was to provide the average GI with some understanding of the peoples and cultures they would encounter. Hopefully, it would help them to have a strong and positive relationship with the local populations and avoid trouble. One example of this has now been reprinted under the title *Instructions for American Servicemen in France during World War II* by the University of Chicago Press. Complete with a new introduction by Rick Atkinson (which explains how the material was produced, and how important Dwight Eisenhower and the American leadership saw it), this little volume opens up an interesting window into the past.

Obviously, it reveals a great deal about the thinking of the American leadership with regard to civilian-military relations within France, but it also provides an

interesting look into the United States and its views of the time. Written like a guide book, these instructions place the soldiers into the unique position of both visitor and public relations officer. As a visitor, the soldier received a wealth of small details that would make his or her life easier in France—everything from a small phrase book to insights on French history, culture, and the monetary system, through an understanding of the various districts and the regional differences within France. As a public relations tool, the instructions show the deep concerns that the U.S. government had regarding the conditions of the local populace, as well as the dangers that American soldiers could create by acting without thinking. For example, the simple fact that most of France suffered severely under the Germans, and that the local people often did not have enough food or even daily necessities was a potential problem. Careful to warn the reader about this, the instructions cautioned soldiers against taking from the families they met as the repercussions of this could have been severe. The concept that the average soldier would impact the local populace and therefore should be cautious of how they behave is significant. Usually associated with counter-insurgency doctrine and civil-military relations issues, the fact that this was a concern sixty-four years ago indicates that this is an issue that transcends the current crisis.

Interestingly, the instructions also reflect backwards on the United States. Their views of the French, shaped

by wartime propaganda as well as a great deal of myth making since the American Revolution, reveals interesting insights into the United States of the 1940s. As such, this little guide book is a small window into two worlds, and is an interesting addition to anyone's collection. Educators might find the text a bit more useful in this regard. Courses that deal with social and cultural impacts of conflict might find this small text manageable for assignments or even tutorial discussions; whenever primary materials are brought into the classroom it im-

proves the quality of the class. It would be interesting to see the other volumes in the original series to compare the ideas put forward and the cultural stereotypes and perceptions.

While an interesting read, this small work does not fundamentally change our understanding of the Second World War. Rather, it shines a bit of light into a small area that is very rarely discussed. As such, it is a positive addition to most scholar's collections.

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