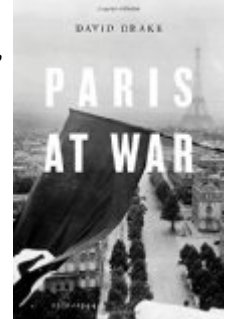


**David Drake.** *Paris at War: 1939-1944*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2015. 592 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-50481-3.



**Reviewed by** Kelly Palmer

**Published on** H-War (August, 2016)

**Commissioned by** Margaret Sankey (Air University)

David Drake's *Paris at War, 1939-1944* examines life in occupied Paris through the lens of resisters, collaborators, and everyday people. His impetus for the book came from a photo exhibit of wartime Paris; he was struck by the different experiences of those in Britain and France. Drake's goal is to contribute to the growing historiography of what war was like for everyday people in Paris "in a national context" (p. 5). Those in the occupied zone were subject to both German and Vichy laws. Like Shannon Fogg's excellent *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* (2009), Drake's work gives readers a comprehensive window into wartime Paris.

*Paris at War* is a sweeping book that is organized chronologically and thematically. As Drake moves through the war, each chapter examines a wide range of issues, including mass protests, anti-Semitism, Jewish deportations, and resistance movements. Sources such as diaries, witness testimonies, police reports, and newspaper articles provide a solid foundation for Drake's ac-

count. His narrative is compellingly readable as the sources are used to vividly portray everyday life in wartime. Drake begins in the Paris of the Phony War to show how the eventual German occupation changed daily lives as material privation and Jewish persecution became realities. The testimonies Drake draws from show the "ambiguities" rather than a monolithic story of Nazi triumph followed by liberation (p. 4). The book concludes with an epilogue that examines the post-war fate of each of the individuals studied.

Since the publication of Robert Paxton's seminal *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (1972), scholars have attempted to show the varying complexities of French resistance and collaboration. A lot of scholarship has focused on the decisions made by Vichy officials particularly in regard to Jews in France. While Drake includes Vichy into his narrative, his examination of German officials and their interactions with the French is noteworthy. He examines the diversity of collaborationist France, which is often treated as a monolith, in addition to putting a

spotlight on the diversity of Resistance movements. In terms of collaboration, there are several sections devoted to the conflicts between pro-Nazi French activists and the Vichy government. Drake describes the pro-Nazi French press in its attempts to discredit Vichy while, at the same time, trying to find common ground with German Nazis who had no interest in their support. Otto Abetz, German ambassador to Paris, worked closely with the collaborationist press to show that "Vichy is betraying France's national interests" (p. 181). His goal was to try to reinstate Pierre Laval to power after Philippe Pétain fired him. Parisian collaborationists, such as Marcel Déat, were loudly anti-Vichy as they hoped to establish a Nazi-style party in France which no Nazi, including Abetz, endorsed. At the same time, there was mutual distrust among Charles DeGaulle's Free French and emerging resistance groups in France, many of which were underpinned by Communist ideology.

Drake devotes several sections of chapters to the plight of naturalized and non-naturalized Jews in Paris. Scholars have focused on the Vel d'Hiv roundups over two days on July 16 and 17, 1942. The arrests of over thirteen thousand Jews including four thousand children carried out by French police on Nazi orders is examined. In addition, Drake adds new insight into the work of the SS in Paris and in the internment camp Drancy, outside of Paris. He describes the brutal treatment doled out by Alois Brunner, an SS captain, appointed by Reinhard Heydrich to run the camp. Under Brunner, the camp was run in a similar fashion to those in eastern Europe in which he "cynically and cruelly exploited the demoralization, despair and fear that permeated the camp" (p. 341). As difficult as these passages are to read, they are important contributions in the historiography of French Holocaust history.

Many of the more fascinating stories come from the diaries of school child Micheline Bood and Free French supporter Liliane Jameson. Drake shows how conflicted everyday people such

as Bood felt about Germans in their city. She had to "reconcile the polite young man with the cruel and treacherous barbarians" (p. 185). Ultimately, she chose the latter feeling in dealing with the Germans. Drake digs into the everyday lives of Parisian women by exploring the dynamics of waiting in lines for food and other supplies. The lines could be places of gossip but also denunciations. It is noteworthy that Drake includes gender and class into the narrative as much as possible given the scarcity of sources from demographics such as factory workers.

*Paris at War* is a comprehensive, captivating, and well-researched book. It expands the historiography of wartime France to include not only the stories of everyday people in Paris but also the complicated and thorny relationships among French collaborators and resisters.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at  
<https://networks.h-net.org/h-war>

**Citation:** Kelly Palmer. Review of Drake, David. *Paris at War: 1939-1944*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. August, 2016.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=46600>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.