



Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation

John Sweets

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Post-World War II scholarship and films like *The Sorrow and the Pity* have frequently replaced the old Gaullist notion of widespread resistance, and cultivated the impression that the French may well have been a "nation of collaborators," embracing the dream of a new authoritarian order in France as embodied by the puppet Vichy regime of Marshall Petain, and hindering the network of the French Underground. From evidence gathered in France, Germany, and England, John F. Sweets has produced an insightful reappraisal of French life during the war at Clermont-Ferrand, the largest town near the occupational capital of Vichy, and the very setting of *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Having thoroughly examined town archives, records, and manuscripts, the author reconstructs occupational commerce, education, media, and attitudes, maintaining that, contrary to popular opinion, the vast majority of French were far from collaborationist. *Choices in Vichy France* details the effects upon society of war, oppression, internment, rationing, aryianization, and propaganda, painting a portrait of the wartime French that lies somewhere between the extremes of outright resistance and enthusiastic collaborationism. With illustrative examples of what day-to-day life was like in the region for the German, the Jew, the Communist, and the fascist, as well as the French masses, this provocative book opens a remarkably clear window onto an era of history often fraught with misunderstanding and suspicion.

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