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Introduction by Martin Thomas

Eric Jennings. ***La France libre fut africaine*****.** Paris: Perrin, 2014. ISBN: 9782262032470 (paperback, €23.00).

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Introduction by Martin Thomas, University of Exeter

It is a pleasure to introduce the roundtable review of an important French-language work, the English-language version of which will, I understand, appear in the near future. The book concerns that portion of the French colonial empire, its four Equatorial African colonies of Chad, French Congo, Gabon, and Oubangui-Chari (now the Central African Republic), plus the Mandate Territory of French Cameroon, that by the winter of 1940 were under Free French – or Gaullist - political control. A study of this wartime 'Free French Africa', *La France libre fut africaine* fills in major gaps in our historical knowledge of the French Empire's fate during World War II. Its conclusions, as we shall see, are equally significant.

Thinly populated, substantially without white settlers, and less strategically pivotal than other regions of France's Empire, the Equatorial belt of francophone colonies lying north and north-west of the immense Belgian Congo has been substantially overlooked in scholarship on French colonialism before, during, and immediately after the Second World War. This fact alone makes the current study welcome, as each of our reviewers points out. They all agree on much more than that. For one thing, the three reviews rightly praise the book for its clear three-part structure and multi-faceted approach. Moving from the high political transitions of the Franco-French colonial civil war between the Vichy state and its Gaullist opponents to the low social realities of a punitively extractive war effort, this is a work that defies simple categorization. There is enough about Gaullist colonial policy as conceived and enacted to demonstrate that, in colonial terms, 'Free' France was anything but. There is enough about campaigning and colonial army composition to keep the military historian enthralled. Perhaps, though, it is the local registers of political and social life under Free French rule that emerge most strongly. The book, then, is as close to a total history of Equatorial Africa's wartime experience as we are likely to see.

Reflecting on the book's multiple dimensions, our reviewers acknowledge the archival breadth and consequent analytical depth that Eric Jennings brings to his subject. Written in breezy, convivial French – one of our reviewers aptly describes it as having the free flow of a novel – this is a work that carries its erudition lightly. It shifts our analytical perspective nonetheless. Above all, our reviewers concur, it places the local populations of Equatorial Africa and Cameroon at the heart of things. The dichotomies of wartime colonial existence figure large. Issues of consent versus coercion, of imperial patriotism versus immediate self-interest, of martial remembrance versus elision of sacrifice, are all investigated at length. Here, too, our reviewers conclude that Jennings has produced a study packed with insight.

None of this will surprise those readers already familiar with Eric Jennings's work. By way of introduction for those who have not encountered his scholarship before, a brief summary seems worthwhile. Jennings has built a formidable reputation as an original and insightful scholar of French colonialism in its early to mid-twentieth century incarnations. His first book, *Vichy in the Tropics*, set a high standard in its analysis of Vichy's National Revolution as exported and reconfigured to serve French imperialist purposes in

Indochina, Madagascar, and the French Caribbean.[1] Comparative in approach, meticulously researched, and determined to recover local experiences of colonial discrimination, this first work set the tone for Jennings's later publications in at least three ways.[2] First is the care with which he teases out the doctrinal orthodoxies of French imperialist thought – and the inevitable complications that attended their transmission to colonial practice. Jennings is never unduly dismissive of the rhetorical arguments variously advanced by French politicians, administrators, educators, social scientists, and countless others who identified their colonial intentions as qualitatively different to those of rival imperial powers.[3] His preference has been to test the substance of such claims the better to reveal their hollowness. His point, it seems to me, is neither that imperialist decision-makers were instrumentally self-serving nor that they were hopelessly over-ambitious. It is, rather, that the performance gap between the French colonial empire as an enduring global presence and its more complicated actuality as an intrinsically precarious administrative system was never closed. Why? In part, because the Empire's internal contradictions were simply too great. In part, because its foremost protagonists, whether dressed in republican, Vichyite, or in Free French colours, were bedeviled by restrictive cultural codes that set narrow parameters to socio-political inclusion.

A second feature common to Jennings's work from *Vichy in the Tropics* to *La France libre fut africaine* is the use of decisive, supposedly transformative projects to explain the broader dynamics of French colonialism. From Vichy's National Revolution and the use of hydrotherapy in tropical colonial climes to the partial construction of French Indochina's putative summer capital at the Dalat hill station and, now, the advent of Free French Africa, Jennings has shown us that the connections between metropolitan France and various dependent territories were rarely as they appeared. From ideologies to cultural trends, he has demonstrated that the rulers of empire consistently over-estimated their capacity to refashion societies, social relationships, even environments, to their liking. So it is with the cluster of Equatorial African territories, which are the subject of the book under review.

[1] Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[2] I confine myself here to Jennings's single-author, book-length studies, although a number of landmark articles could be added to this list: *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology, and French Colonial Spas* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006); *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

[3] He shares here an engagement with the critical shifts in cultural thinking about French and imperial identities that characterizes much of the best recent work in French imperial history. A comprehensive list of such work would be inappropriate here, but outstanding examples published in the past year or so include: Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013); Marie-Paule Ha, *French Women and the Empire: The Case of Indochina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014); Amzat Boukari-Yabara, *Africa Unite! Une Histoire du panafricanisme* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2014).

This brings me to the third refrain in Jennings's work. It is his enduring commitment to look beyond the obvious stratifications, ethnic, political, or social, that divided French from non-French within colonial territories. Without being unduly fixated on issues of colonial agency and recovering hidden voices, his work is exemplary in its attention to local impacts, popular reactions, and lives changed unalterably by imperial actions. This returns us to *La France libre fut africaine*, whose three reviewers are uniformly impressed by this rare combination of high politics and colonial micro-history.

Our reviewers also raise several useful questions. Samir Saul looks to the comparative angle, asking how far the experience of life under Gaullist colonial authority was much the same as that under Vichy or, indeed, other colonial flags. Ruth Ginio raises similar points, wondering what or if anything set wartime experiences in Equatorial Africa apart, either at the time, or in the memorialization of the so-called *ralliements* to Free France. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch shares with Saul and Ginio a deep interest in the socio-economic consequences of the exactions imposed on African families by Free French military recruitment and war effort 'export drives.' The story that Jennings tells so well, in other words, is one in which political economy – in this case, the stringencies of a mobilized war economy – registered more directly in daily existence than any other facet of government policy.[4] Jennings, in turn, sheds further light on his ideas, on his sources, and on his conclusions in his measured response to the reviews. It all makes for a stimulating read – and a powerful appetizer for an excellent book.

Participants:

Eric Jennings is a professor of history at Victoria University at the University of Toronto, specializing in modern French colonialism. His books include *Vichy in the Tropics* (Stanford University Press, translated into French with Grasset in 2004 under the title *Vichy sous les tropiques*); *Curing the Colonizers* (Duke University Press, 2006, translated into French as *A la Cure les Coloniaux!* PUR, 2011); *Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (University of California Press, 2011, translated into French as *La ville de l'éternel printemps,* Payot, 2013); *La France libre fut africaine*, (Perrin, 2014). His other publications include an edited volume with Jacques Cantier, *L'Empire colonial sous Vichy* (Odile Jacob, 2004), as well as many articles and chapters straddling the histories of France, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, Africa, and the Caribbean. His current project examines the exodus of refugees from Vichy France to Martinique in 1940 and 1941, and the myriad encounters that ensued.

Martin Thomas is Professor of European Imperial History and Director of the Centre for War, State, and Society at the University of Exeter. He has written extensively on colonial politics and patterns of dissent, including *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Control after 1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) and, with Bob

[4] This use of political economy to evaluate the impact of colonial change is also evident in my *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Moore and L.J. Butler, *Crises of Empire. Decolonization and Europe's Imperial States, 1918-1975* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008) His latest book is a comparative study of French and British decolonisation, *Fight or Flight: France, Britain and their Roads from Empire* by Oxford University Press in 2014.

Ruth Ginio is a senior lecturer in the Department of History at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. She had served as the Vice-President of the French Colonial Historical Society (2008-2010) and then as its President (2010-2012). Her book *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* was published in 2006 by Nebraska University Press (paperback edition in 2008). Her second book (published in Hebrew) is titled: *European Colonialism: Ideology, Policy and Resistance*. She edited two volumes: *Violence and non-Violence in Africa* (with Pal Ahluwalia and Louise Bethlehem) published by Routledge in 2007 and *Shadows of War: A History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (with Efrat Ben Ze'ev and Jay Winter) published by Cambridge University Press in 2010. She is currently working on a manuscript titled: *The French Army, Its African Soldiers and the Decolonization of French West Africa, 1945-1964.*

Samir Saul received his *doctorat d'État* (Paris) and is Associate Professor of History at the Université de Montréal. His major publications include *La France et l'Égypte de 1882 à 1914. Intérêts économiques et implications politiques* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, Imprimerie nationale, 1997) and Co-editor, *Méditerranée, Moyen-Orient : deux siècles de relations* internationales (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003). He has a forthcoming book on French economic interests and the decolonization of North Africa.

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (ancienne élève ENS, agrégée de l'université) is Professor emerita of modern African History at l'Université Paris Diderot. She also taught part-time at SUNY, Binghamton (NY) (1981-2005). Coquery Vidrovitch trained a hundred African historians. Four of her books are translated in English: *Africa South of the Sahara, Endurance and Change* (1987); *African Women, a Modern History* (1998); *A History of African cities from the origins to colonization* (2005); and *Africa and Africans in the 19th century. A turbulent History* (2009). Recent books include *Des oubliés du nazisme, les Allemands noirs dans la première moitié du XXe siècle* (2007) ; *Enjeux politiques de l'histoire coloniale* (2009) ; *Petite histoire de l'Afrique de la préhistoire à nos jours* (2011) ; *Être esclave. Afrique Amériques 16e-19e siècle* (2013) ; and *Le rapport Brazza. Mission d'enquête du Congo (1905-1907)*, 2014. She received the ASA (African Studies Association) Distinguished Africanist Award (1999).

Compte-rendu par Catherine Coquery-Vidorovitch, l'Université Paris Diderot, Emerita

Cet excellent spécialiste de la France de Vichy s'est lancé cette fois-ci du côté de la France libre. Son livre est important et novateur : il démontre que le général de Gaulle fut aussi présent en Afrique équatoriale, notamment auprès de Leclerc, qu'à Londres, et que le rôle de l'AEF fut dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale fondamental, non seulement par le ralliement des Français libres sous la conduite du gouverneur du Tchad Félix Eboué, mais aussi et peut-être surtout par l'effort de guerre formidable réalisé par les troupes noires parties de Douala et de Pointe Noire. La place prise entre 1940 et 1943 par l'Afrique équatoriale fut essentielle pour la construction même de la France libre, dont elle constituait alors quasiment le seul territoire. C'est, de façon surprenante, un sujet peu abordé par les historiens français, alors qu'une somme fondamentale et déjà ancienne existe sur la Première Guerre mondiale.[1]

C'est un travail superbement documenté, nourri des archives les plus diverses, militaires et coloniales, de France et d'Afrique, de nombreux ouvrages de témoignages et, bien entendu, d'une riche bibliographie bilingue (on ne peut que regretter que, conformément à une habitude fâcheuse des éditeurs français, il n'y ait pas d'index). Les soldats noirs d'AEF et du Cameroun, probablement 20 000 environ en 1940, constituaient, à l'été 1943, à peu près la moitié du total des forces françaises libres (30 000 soldats coloniaux, évaluation basse, contre 39 000 citoyens français, 11).

L'intérêt du livre est de centrer toute l'histoire en Afrique. La métropole apparaît peu, et pour cause puisqu'elle était aux mains du gouvernement de Vichy et des nazis. C'est une histoire complexe, à la fois politique, militaire et sociale.

Politique d'abord, car la première partie est consacrée à la prise de pouvoir difficile des Français ralliés à la France libre face à leurs adversaires, civils et militaires, colons ou non, plutôt majoritairement vichystes. On suit quasi au jour le jour les débats sur place, voire les combats entre Français de l'un et l'autre bord. Il fallut plusieurs mois pour voir triompher le choix gaulliste de Félix Eboué : Brazzaville ne cède que fin août, et le Gabon seulement en novembre ; son ralliement n'est obtenu qu'au prix d'une guerre civile sérieuse entre Français, où colons et missionnaires s'opposent à la tentation de ralliement de l'administration (une centaine de morts). Le tout est nourri d'archives, qui font découvrir la complexité des atermoiements et des incertitudes, des problèmes et des rivalités, le tout nourri d'une solide défiance envers les Africains qui demeurent, pour les uns comme pour les autres, avant tout des « indigènes » sur lesquels les uns et les autres posent un regard raciste. Leclerc l'emporte finalement en remportant en mars 1941, par un véritable coup de main, à l'aide de 300 « tirailleurs », le poste de Koufra (Libye) pris aux Italiens.

La deuxième partie est consacrée aux opérations de guerre, mais vues dans leur totalité : non seulement les opérations, mais toutes les questions posées par le recrutement, la

[1] Marc Michel. *L'appel à l'Afrique. Contributions et réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F. (1914-1919).* Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982.

formation, l'équipement et le ravitaillement des troupes. La cadence de recrutement devint frénétique entre 1940 et 1943. Militaires et surtout administrateurs coloniaux étaient coutumiers de méthodes autoritaires, et les engagements ne furent pas tous volontaires. Les dérapages furent parfois érigés en système. Le recrutement des auxiliaires, comme les porteurs, se faisait de façon souvent expéditive. Si les tirailleurs devaient signer un contrat, celui-ci n'était pas toujours volontaire, aussi bien au Cameroun qu'en AEF, malgré dans certains cas une prime d'engagement de 50 francs. En fait, le recrutement reposait, comme dans les décennies précédentes, sur la désignation d'un contingent de recrues par l'administration, auprès des chefs coutumiers ou des notables élus chargés de l'exécution. On parla en 1943 d'organiser un recrutement obligatoire, ce qui aurait été illégal au Cameroun sous mandat international. Néanmoins le recrutement volontaire existait surtout dans les villes, pour échapper au travail obligatoire, par patriotisme, ou bien pour acquérir une qualification (comme chauffeur par exemple). On continuait de recruter sur critères « ethniques », certaines populations (surtout tchadiennes) étant supposées plus guerrières que d'autres. Surtout, l'entretien des troupes pesa d'un poids très lourd sur l'économie de colonies dépourvues de tout : la vie renchérit ; colons comme « indigènes » n'étaient pas convaincus par une politique locale qui leur paraissait faire empirer plutôt que d'améliorer les conditions de vie. Bref Leclerc et ses compagnons s'inquiétaient d'une impopularité préoccupante. Enfin, autant Leclerc appréciait les soldats Maghrébins qu'il qualifie en 1942 de « combattants superbes » (132), autant il avait a priori les préjugés de son époque et de sa classe sur les noirs. Ses commentaires auprès du général De Gaulle, dès décembre1940, sont explicites : une « troupe noire ne possède une réelle valeur que moyennant un Européen pour dix indigènes ». Il récidive en 1942 : les tirailleurs de l'AEF sont « peu aptes à cette forme de combat moderne » (131). Un ancien combattant camerounais rapporte : « Leclerc était mauvais pour les Camerounais, [déclarant que] quel que soit le mérite du noir, il ne peut dépasser le grade d'adjudant-chef » (131). Ce n'est qu'en 1942 que les Africains commencent à accéder au grade de sous–officier. L'argument selon lequel ce sont les Américains qui auraient obtenu de Leclerc qu'il « blanchisse » ses troupes est valable en 1943, mais gageons que celui-ci n'a pas eu trop de mal à accéder à leur demande.[2] C'est à son corps défendant qu'il fit grand usage des troupes issues du Cameroun et d'AEF (132).

La dernière partie est passionnante, car elle met en scène de façon plus directe les Africains, vus surtout jusqu'alors sous l'angle de la France libre. C'est une étude économique et sociale qui se poursuit en marge des combats, car les pénuries exigent du pays un effort épuisant. En même temps que des troupes, on demande aux paysans africains de produire toujours plus. Les impératifs de guerre exigent le travail forcé, pour construire les routes, et pousser la production du caoutchouc et de l'or, car l'AEF a toujours besoin de plus de financement. Pour éclairer la pensée des Africains, Eric Jennings fait

[2] Selon Christine Levisse-Touzé, historienne directrice du musée Jean Moulin, « En 1943, c'est un fait, les Américains ont envoyé à la division Leclerc des directives ségrégationnistes. Il faut toutefois préciser que lorsque Leclerc crée cette division près de Casablanca, c'est un rebelle. Il rompt le sacro-saint principe d'obéissance à l'armée française et se retrouve dans l'obligation d'appliquer les directives américaines, puisque ce sont les Etats-Unis qui équipent et instruisent la 2e DB ». *Libération*, 20 août 2014.

appel à de nombreux témoignages, et rend compte des résistances, des désertions et des révoltes. Il montre aussi le rôle difficile du gouverneur général Eboué auprès duquel ses administrés font appel pour les protéger. Il est hostile aux abus mais retenu par son patriotisme. Le livre apparaît enfin ce qu'il est : non seulement une histoire de la France libre en Afrique française, mais aussi une histoire des Africains sous la France libre.

Ce qui frappe, dans l'ouvrage, c'est la qualité de l'érudition et aussi l'art du conteur qui sait expliquer au lecteur toute la complexité des problèmes posés, avec une abondance de détails précis, exposés de façon suffisamment claire pour ne pas entraver la compréhension de l'ensemble. Ce que l'on souhaiterait désormais, c'est pouvoir comparer avec ce que fut, à la même époque, la politique britannique dans les pays voisins.

Review by Catherine Coquery-Vidorovitch, l'université Paris Diderot, Emerita
Translated for H-Diplo by Diane Labrosse

This excellent specialist of Vichy France has this time engaged with the Free French. His book is important and innovative: it demonstrates that that General Charles de Gaulle was as present in equatorial Africa, notably with General Philippe Leclerc, as in London, and that the role of French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique équatoriale française*; AEF) was fundamental in the Second World War, not only for the rallying of the Free French under the leadership of Felix Eboué, Governor of Tchad, but also and perhaps above all by the formidable war effort achieved by the black troops from Doula and Pointe Noire. The place taken between 1940 and 1943 by equatorial Africa was essential for the construction of Free France itself, of which it comprised virtually the only territory. Surprisingly, this has been a subject little studied by French historians, even though a large and already established amount of literature already exists on the First World War.[1]

This is a superbly documented work, based on the most diverse array of archives, both military and colonial, of France and Africa, as well as numerous works of testimony/memoir, and, as would be expected, a rich bilingual bibliography (we can only regret that, conforming to the maddening custom of French editors, there is no index). The black soldiers of AEF and of Cameroun, which probably consisted of around 20,000 in 1940, constituted, in the summer of 1943, almost half of the total of the Free French forces [30,000 colonial soldiers, at a lowest estimate, against 39,000 French citizens (11)].

The aim of the book is to focus/centralize all of the history in Africa. The metropole appears infrequently, and with good reason since it was in the hands of Vichy and the Nazis. This is a complex history, at once political, military, and social.

It is political above all, since the first part is devoted to the difficult seizure of power of the French who rallied to Free France when faced with their adversaries, civil and military, colonists or not, who were mostly Vichyites. We follow the debates almost day to day, indeed the full range of arguments among the French from one side to the other. It took many months before the Gaullist choice of Eboué triumphed; Brazzaville did not succeed until August; Gabon only in November, and its adhesion was only accomplished at the price of a serious civil war between the French, where colonists and missionaries resisted the temptation of the rallying of the administration (with a hundred deaths). The story is based on/grounded on the archives, which reveal the complexity of fear and uncertainty, the problems and rivalries, all of which nourished a solid defiance among the Africans who remained, for all, above all the "indigenous" over whom many cast a racist regard. In March 1941 Leclerc finally made the case in taking, by a veritable miracle, and with the aid of 300 "tirailleurs" (soldiers), the post of Koufra in Libya that had been captured by the Italians.

The second part it dedicated to war operations, but seen in their totality; not only the

[1] Marc Michel. *L'appel à l'Afrique. Contributions et réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F. (1914-1919).* Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982.

operations, but all of the questions posed by recruitment, training, the equipping, and the provisioning of the troops. The rhythm/speed of recruitment became frenetic between 1940 and 1943. Military officers and above all colonial administrators were accustomed to authoritarian methods, and the enlistments were not always voluntary. The blunders were sometimes erected in the system. The recruitment of auxiliary troops, such as porters, was often undertaken in an expeditious fashion. If the soldiers had to sign a contract, these were not always done on a voluntary basis, as much in Cameroon as in AEF, despite in certain cases a signing bonus of 50 francs. In fact, the recruitment rested, as in the preceding decades, on the designation of a contingent of recruits by the administration, with the help of customary leaders or elected notables who were charged with its execution. We speak in 1943 of the organization of a voluntary recruitment, that which would have been illegal in Cameroon under international mandate. Nevertheless voluntary enlistment existed above all in the cities, in order to escape mandatory work, for reasons of patriotism, or even as a means acquire a skill (as a driver, for example). The French continued to recruit on "ethnic" criteria, with certain populations (above all Chadians) presumed more warlike than others. Above all, the provisioning of troops placed a heavy demand on the colonial economies which had been deprived of all, life became expensive; colonists like "indigenous" were not convinced by a local politics that appeared to them to worsen rather than improve living conditions. In effect/short, Leclerc and his companions were worried about a worrying unpopularity. Finally, Leclerc appreciated the Maghrebian soldiers whom he qualified in 1942 as "superb fighters (132), even if he had *a priori* the prejudices towards blacks of his time period and of his class. His comments to de Gaulle, from December 1940, are explicit: a « black troop is worth only half that of one European for ten indigenous troops. He repeated this again in 1942: the soldiers of the AEF were "little suited to this form of modern combat" (131). A former Cameroon soldier reported that "Leclerc was bad for the Cameroonais, [declaring that] whatever the merit of blacks, they could not exceed the rank of adjutant chef" (131). It was only in 1942 that Africans began to rise to the grade of sub-officer. The argument according to which it was the Americans who demanded of Leclerc that he « whiten » his troops is valid in 1943, but based on the assumption that Leclerc would not have much difficulty in acceding to their request.[2] It was in his defense corps that he found a large role for troops from Cameroun and AEF (132).

The final part is exciting, since it more directly engages with the Africans, who have been viewed until now from the perspective of Free France. It is an economic and social study which goes to the margins of combat, because the price demanded from the country a crushing effort. At the same time as it demanded troops, the French demanded that African peasants continually produce more. The imperatives of war demanded forced labour to construct roads, and pushed up the production of rubber and of gold since AEF always had

[2] According to Christine Levisse-Touzé, the historian and director of the Musée Jean Moulin, "It is a fact that in 1943, the Americans sent segregationist orders to to the Leclerc division. It is nonetheless necessary to clarify that when Leclerc created this division near Casablanca, it was an act of rebellion. He broke the sacrosanct principle of obedience in the French army and found himself under the obligation to apply American directives, since it was the United States which quipped and commanded the second DB." *Libération*, 20 août 2014.

need of more financing. To highlight the thoughts of the Africans, Jennings calls on numerous testimonies, and discusses their resistance, desertions, and revolts. He demonstrates as well the difficult role of Governor-General Eboué, whose administrators made an appeal to protect them. He was hostile to abuses but restrained by his patriotism. The book finally reveals itself to be not only a history of Free France in French Africa, but also a history of Africans under Free France.

What is striking in this work is the quality of the erudition and also the art of narration which knows how to explain to the reader the full complexity of the questions asked, with an abundance of precise details which are explained in a sufficiently clear manner that they do not weigh down/diminish the comprehension of the text as a whole. What we can wish for in the future, is to be able to compare this work with what was, at the same time, British policy in neighbouring countries.

Review by Ruth Ginio, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

It is difficult to believe that just over a decade ago so little was actually known about the French Empire during World War II. While the significance of the war was widely discussed in many of the studies about the gradual disintegration of this empire in the postwar years, few scholars looked specifically at the French colonies during the war.[1] This lacuna was largely filled since then and Eric Jennings was one of the first scholars who examined the Vichy regime in several regions of the empire – Indochina, Madagascar, and the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.[2] The picture of the Second World War in the French empire was further clarified by Jacques Cantier who wrote about North Africa,[3] and my own book about the Vichy regime in French West Africa.[4] But there was still one important piece missing in this puzzle and which was surprisingly ignored until now in spite of the growing interest regarding the empire's contribution to the Allied victory. The story of the Free French in Equatorial French Africa, the only colonial territory that responded to General Charles De Gaulle's call to continue the struggle from the empire, was yet to be told, and without it the picture was not complete.

Eric Jennings's excellent book finally allows us a better and fuller understanding of World War II in the French Empire and gives us the opportunity to compare both types of the competing colonial regimes that emerged due to the circumstances of the war– the Free French and Vichy. The book, therefore, not only contributes to our knowledge about French participation in the war but also enhances our understanding of the nature of French colonialism in Africa and its ramifications both on the *metropole* and on the African populations living in the colonies. Jennings's goal, as it is stated in the introduction, is not only to measure the importance of French Equatorial Africa for the Free French movement, but also to expose the actions, roles, and voices of those African soldiers, workers, and farmers who were part of the war effort and to determine how they perceived the war and what it meant for them (13).

The book is based on a wide range of primary sources collected from archives in France, Britain, Germany, and United States, as well as in African archives in Congo, Cameroon and Senegal. It is divided into three parts. The first introduces us to the struggle between Vichy and Free French supporters over French Equatorial Africa (FEA) and the initial attempts of the Free French to legitimize their rule over the federation following their grasp of power.

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[1] A major exception to this rule is Martin Thomas' *The French Empire at War, 1940-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

[2] Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe and Indochina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). Jennings also published articles regarding the Vichy period in Martinique.

[3] Jacques Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le Régime de Vichy* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002).

[4] Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2006).

One way of acquiring legitimacy was by presenting the unfamiliar French leader, de Gaulle,to Africans through the use of propaganda. Jennings offers us a fascinating glimpse here to the African reception of this image by quoting an African legend distributed at the time according to which de Gaulle had been dead for five years and had come out of his grave to save France (65). The question of legitimacy was so important for the Free French that in spite of their financial difficulties they insisted on introducing new monetary bills bearing the inscription *Afrique française libre* (74). In this part of the book we also learn about the ideological and practical conflicts within the newly established regime.

The second part of the book deals with the military participation of French Equatorial Africa in the war. Unlike Vichy-ruled French West Africa (FWA) which stayed out of the war until the end of 1942, French Equatorial Africa took an active military part in it. Here Jennings does not retell known stories about important battles on the African continent but rather completes these stories by putting them in their African and colonial context. Thus in the first chapter of this part he concentrates on the role of African soldiers in the battles and their relations with General Philippe Leclerc, the military commander of Free French in Africa, and in the second he focuses on the policies of recruitment and the everyday lives of African soldiers stationed in the federation. We learn about discontent among soldiers who resented the racist attitudes of their commanders and also that the first "whitening" of the Free French units actually occurred during the fighting in the city of Algiers a year before the more famous one of the liberation (168-169).

In the third part of the book Jennings leaves the military domain and deals with the everyday reality of Africans who were forced to work for the military effort. Using complaint letters African farmers and workers submitted to colonial administrators, Jennings manages to expose the harsh reality in which Africans lived during the war and the racist attitudes they encountered. This part of the book reveals the incredible measure of colonial repression and extortion of resources that the Free French exercised in French Equatorial Africa. The conditions of forced labor, which were severe enough before the war, became even worse due to the pressure to produce more to support the war effort. Jennings thus demonstrates how the Free French turned the federation into a war machine.

Finally, in his epilogue Jennings discusses the ways in which the Free French episode in Africa was later remembered. Especially fascinating is the pathetic struggle of Jean-Bedel Bokassa, President (1965) and then Emperor (1977) of the Central African Republic against a fallen African officer for the title of the "African soldier who had liberated France." (268-273) The choice of adding this epilogue is an excellent one as it can help us evaluate better the current 'politics of remembrance' in France with relation to the role French-ruled Africa and African soldiers played in the its liberation and the eventual Allied victory.

The discussion of the ways in which the war was remembered in Africa is especially useful thanks to the author's ability not to fall into the trap of the current 'wars of remembrance' in France with regard to the African role in World War II. In his introduction Jennings emphasizes that his book has no political agenda and objectives but was rather written to better understand the history of Africans who lived through the war in French Equatorial Africa (14). The author's choice to examine the participation of Africans in the war only to

better understand their agency and perceptions at the time of the events helps the reader to appreciate the colonial situation with all its complexities.

This rich account of the Free French rule in Africa raises a number of important and interesting questions. For the purpose of this round table I would like to point to two that seem the most crucial to me. The first regards the lessons that can be drawn from the comparison between the Free French rule of French Equatorial Africa during the war and the Vichy rule in the neighboring federation of West Africa. The second question, which is related to the first, regards the extent to which the war years in both federations marked a shift from the former colonial reality. It was impossible to discuss these issues in length in the framework of Jennings's book, but it seems to me that they derive from the book's conclusions and can be integrated into a wider context.

At some points in the book Jennings notes the surprising similarities between the policy of Félix Éboué, the black Governor-General of FEA under the Free French who originated in French Guiana and therefore held French citizenship, and that of Pierre Boisson, the pro-Vichy Governor-General of FWA (85; 229). Indeed, in spite of his republicanism, Éboué rejected the notion of assimilation and thought that the 'real' Africans were those who lived in a so-called traditional way while Africans who lived in the cities and acquired Western-education had lost their 'authenticity' and sense of belonging. He therefore gave preference to Africans from the traditional elites and encouraged the agricultural sector in the colonies. The idea that African traditions must be maintained and that assimilation should be avoided was also adopted by the Vichy colonial administration in French West Africa. Boisson encouraged the diffusion of the 'National Revolution' in the federation because he believed that its values better suited African society and colonial hierarchy. Éboué did not have a 'National Revolution' to diffuse, and his republicanism was more difficult to reconcile with these ideas, but this did not prevent him from implementing his policy in French Equatorial African during the war. Similarities between the two regimes existed in other areas as well, such as the personality cult of Marshal Philippe Pétain and de Gaulle and the harsh enforcement of forced labor. In fact, forced labor was even harsher in French Equatorial Africa because the British blockade on FWA limited the Federation's ability to export its commodities and therefore reduced the need for workers. The question I would like to raise for discussion is, therefore, what we can learn from these similarities. In what way were the huge ideological differences between Vichy supporters and Gaullists blurred or even erased in the colonial context?

Following that, if indeed the ideological division between the Vichy and the Free French was irrelevant in the colonial situation, how did the war mark a shift from the former colonial reality as Africans had experienced it? It is obvious that the war influenced the Western-educated elites and reshaped their perceptions of French colonialism. In both federations African politicians knew how to take advantage of the postwar atmosphere in France and the wish to establish republicanism as the 'true French identity'. During the years of decolonization, African elites accepted the idea of the 'two Frances' and attributed every racist or discriminatory policy or action to the so-called 'Vichy spirit.' As Jennings's book demonstrates, there were no 'two Frances' in the colonial sphere – but only one which saw the colonies as a reservoir of human and material resources which it had the right to

use as it wished. After all, that was the essence of colonialism – the ability to exploit colonial subjects for the interests of the *metropole* while totally ignoring their own interests (or claiming that they were identical to those of the colonizers). The question is then in what way (if at all) was the war significant to Africans who did not belong to the elite and were not directly involved in the war effort? Did it affect their lives and did they accept the African political discourse that was developed after the war?

By completing the picture of WWII in the French empire, Jennings opens the door for a wide array of questions that can teach us not only about the specific subject of the book but about the French colonial experience in general. More than anything, Jennings reminds us that while it is important to remember the contribution of the empire and its peoples to the war effort, we should not forget that this contribution was usually not voluntary. It was part of a long tradition of colonial repression. The striking similarities in the colonial context between two regimes with two opposing ideologies should not be blurred by the myths African politicians helped to encourage after the war and which they doubtfully believed themselves. Current French and African celebrations of the loyal empire and its part in the victory over Nazi Germany should therefore not obscure the fact that even the anti-fascist regime of the Free French was part of a repressive colonial system based on the same values it supposedly rejected.

Review by Samir Saul, Université de Montréal

As German forces occupied France in 1940, the notion of continuing hostilities overseas was entertained in some Empire-minded quarters within the French establishment. Nothing came of the idea. North Africa was an obvious location, but General Charles Noguès opted for loyalty to Vichy and kept the considerable forces under his command out of the war. In that respect, his position was consistent with Marshal Philippe Pétain's outlook that the war, to all intents and purposes, was over, and Britain's capitulation only a matter of time. Charles De Gaulle's dissidence rested wholly on the prognosis that the war would spread and that the conflict in Europe was only the first phase of a second world war.

De Gaulle's Free French movement lost no time in acting accordingly. Shut out of France and confined to London with barely more than symbolic military means, de Gaulle had little choice but to seek a territorial base in the Empire. Colonel Philippe (Leclerc) de Hauteclocque, accompanied by René Pleven and others, was dispatched to gain the support of Cameroon for Free France, success coming on 27 August. With Felix Éboué, the governor of Chad, coming out in favor of de Gaulle the day before and the Congo joining the movement on 28 August, French Equatorial Africa (AEF) switched to the side of Free France. The AEF and Cameroon, restyled 'Free French Africa,' became from 1940 to 1943 the only territory de Gaulle's movement governed and the sole basis of its claim to be an authority tangibly ruling specific territories. For nearly three years, 'Free French Africa' was the only geographical space Free France held under its sway. It represented a vital asset in the struggle to gain legitimacy and recognition, as well as a much-needed shield to fend off aspersions that Free France was no more than an outfit of stooges beholden to and operating on behalf of *Perfide Albion*.

Despite the battle of Koufra and Leclerc's epic oath, the Equatorial African phase is less prominent and less well known than other overseas moments of the war, such as the unsuccessful Dakar expedition of September 1940 aiming at gaining West African adherence to Free France, the campaign in Syria against Vichy forces in June 1941, and the North African period following the Allied landing in November 1942. When French West Africa (AOF), North Africa, Madagascar, and the Caribbean region joined Free France in 1943, the original Equatorial African starting point was overlooked. Eric Jennings endeavors to draw attention to it. His book is a salutary reminder that Free France was originally African, as the title, quoting Free French National Information Commissioner Jacques Soustelle's 1940 pronouncement, boldly asserts, and that its first capital was Brazzaville. Jennings is the first historian to produce a full-length study of 'Free French Africa.' The result is a pioneering piece of research that is skillfully crafted and engagingly written. From cover to cover, it reads like a novel. Critical but fair, the narrative focuses on the French while striving to give Africans as much attention as the records permit. Jennings mined France's colonial archives that are housed in Aix-en-Provence. Alongside this principal source, he used the archives of French diplomatic missions available in Nantes, military papers, and a variety of private holdings. In Africa, he worked in the national archives of the Cameroons in Yaoundé, of the Congo in Brazzaville, and of Senegal in Dakar.

He even consulted British, German, and American archives. It is a little puzzling that the French Foreign Affairs archives were not checked for references to French Equatorial Africa in interaction with Britain and the United States. That said, Jennings does warn that "he always gave preference to the African and colonial dimensions of the subject, strictly speaking" (119). He makes good on that commitment.

Part I is devoted to the emergence of 'Free French Africa,' in other words to the detachment of one part of the Empire (the AEF and Cameroon) from the rest during the 'Trois Glorieuses' (26-28 August 1940). The main question here is how the 'swing' (*basculement*) came about. The story of Chad governor Félix Éboué's transfer of allegiance to Free France following de Gaulle's speech of 18 June 1940 is well known. It was the first and it occurred during France's darkest hour. Éboué's loyalty earned him a place in the Panthéon, alongside France's other immortals. The next day, Leclerc declared Cameroon's 'political and economic independence.' Jennings explains these events as a convergence between local circumstances and de Gaulle's prompting (35), which is a sensible assessment. An even better insight would have been gained had the author investigated local circumstances in French West Africa (AOF) with a view to highlighting the specificity of the AEF. Was the more important presence of Vichy military personnel in the AOF the sole difference? In any case, both in the AOF and in the AEF, the decision-making process was confined to French colonial officialdom. Another question that comes to mind is why Vichy did not attempt to squelch the incipient secession. Is there evidence that it entertained such a plan? Was possible British intervention the only deterrent? Was "Free French Africa" considered too extraneous to be worth the effort and the risk?

Part II describes the years 1940 to 1943 in 'Free French Africa,' with due attention to Leclerc's foray into the Fezzan and the Koufra success. Jennings reckons that 'Free French Africa' contributed 27,000 fighters to the Free French Forces. Their day-to-day lives and living conditions are described at length. The subordinate status of African *tirailleurs* was much what the colonial order prescribed. Free French attitudes did not depart from standard conceptions toward the colonized. The book confirms that Free France was no more enlightened than Vichy or previous regimes. Forced labor continued unabated, even intensified because of wartime necessity. Free France's priority was waging war and hanging on to whatever territories it could claim as its own. Self-determination or political rights for the colonized were nowhere on the agenda. The status of Africans remained that of subjects; French citizenship was not extended to them between August 1940 and February 1943. Truth be said, Éboué himself had neither political emancipation nor social change on his mind. At best, his policy was one of promoting the rise of an upper stratum of *évolué* natives, a conservative elite of notables attached to French rule. He did not consider the abolition of forced labor to be possible in wartime.

Part III covers two themes. The first is the intensification of the effort to extract raw materials from 'Free French Africa,' in particular rubber and gold. Both the French and the British colonies in Africa were called upon to provide the rubber that was no longer available because of the loss of South-East Asia to Japan. Financing Free France induced a gold rush in Africa. The second theme elaborates on the social practices and consequences on the African population of the drive to extract resources. Forced labor persisted in the

shape of payment in kind, in other words, the *corvée* for those who could not pay taxes. Inmates were also put to work, mainly for building roads. Forced labor and the *code de l'indigénat* were finally banned at the Brazzaville conference of January-February 1944.

It is always gratifying to encounter studies of unjustly neglected subjects. Jennings' is a highly satisfactory investigation into the early phase of the Free France saga and, in its sober scholarly way, a tribute to its unsung African heroes. Two aspects deserve closer examination. It is not clear that, beyond Éboué, Africans adhered to Free France, any more than they did to previous French regimes or than they would have to Vichy. Free France was African, as the title states, only in the sense that it was located territorially in Africa, not that Africans espoused the cause of Free France, or any other French or European cause. At least, that is the assessment that the book seems to justify. The other issue concerns the impact of the African input to military victory during the war and to the liberation of France. Jennings rightly underlines that 100,000 soldiers from the AOF were mobilized between 1940 and 1944, nearly four times the number of Equatorial African troops. General Alphonse Juin's expeditionary force in Italy and the army General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny's landed in Provence comprised many African servicemen. What impression did the presence of so many colonial troops leave on French minds afterwards? Was it blanked out of French perception? Was it funneled into the established leitmotif of the usefulness of Empire? The book is admittedly 'Free French Africa'-centred. Widening the context can only enrich an already impressive contribution to our understanding of a unique moment.

Author's Response by Eric T. Jennings, University of Toronto

I wish to extend profound thanks to Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Samir Saul, and Ruth Ginio for their careful readings and insightful comments on my book on Free French Africa. Given their collective expertise spanning the history of Africa to international relations, gender, empire, urban studies, economic history, and decolonization, I am especially honored that they each found much with which to engage.

In this centennial year of the outset of the Great War, Coquery-Vidrovitch is correct in pointing out that much less work has been devoted to African forces in French uniform in the Second World War than the First. There are exceptions, to be sure: working from German records, Raffael Scheck has conducted excellent work on the massacre of African troops in 1940; Martin Thomas and Armelle Mabon have both written on French African troops interned after the defeat of May-June 1940. Julien Fargettas recently penned a broader study on Africans in the French military between 1940 and 1945 that does not, however, delve much into Free French ranks.[1] Thus, other than a dissertation on Cameroon and a book dealing with Gabon under Free French rule, surprisingly little attention had been paid to Fighting French Africa until now.[2] Coquery-Vidrovitch is also right to state that the French case invites comparisons with the British one. David Killingray's studies led me to contend that Free France's massive turn to forced labor and to requisitions mirrored British practices -- with the caveat that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill presented this colonial regression to parliament, while General Charles de Gaulle did not have to.[3] What is more, Cameroon and French Equatorial Africa (FEA) found themselves increasingly in economic lockstep with the British empire.

Coquery-Vidrovitch also touches upon an interesting and controversial point about the so-called "whitening" of Free French forces in 1943. She rightly discerns my repeated suggestion that from the outset General Philippe Leclerc disparaged troops from French Equatorial Africa and Cameroon, and looked forward to a time when his military effort would no longer rest squarely upon them. Here, she cites Christine Levisse-Touzé's line that the U.S., rather than Leclerc, insisted on the two racial purges in Free French ranks (the first in 1943, the second more famous, prior to the liberation of Paris in 1944). The question is

[1] Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Julien Fargettas, *Les Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012); Martin Thomas, "The Vichy Government and French Colonial Prisoners of War, 1940-1944" *French Historical Studies* 25:4 (Fall 2002), pp. 657-692; Armelle Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerre "indigènes"* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

[2] Léon Modeste Nnang Ndong, *L'effort de guerre de l'Afrique: le Gabon dans la deuxième guerre mondiale, 1939-1947*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011); Léonard Sah, "Le Cameroun sous mandat français dans la deuxième guerre mondiale," Ph.D. thesis, University of Provence, 1998.

[3] David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa and the Second World War* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1986); and David Killingray, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in the Second World War* (London: James Currey, 2010).

an interesting and a charged one. I do not wish to minimize either U.S. racism or influence at the time. Indeed, I devote several pages to the racist ramblings of the U.S. ambassador in Brazzaville during the war (251-252). This said, I remain persuaded that Free French leaders, starting with Leclerc, were equally bent on replacing Equatorial African and Cameroonian elements with North African ones in 1943. The telegram to this effect that I uncovered in the French military archives in Vincennes clearly emanated from Leclerc [which does not preclude U.S. pressure, of course, but the telegram does use the old bio-climactic colonial trope according to which sub-Saharan Africans were "less apt" for war in Europe] (169). Moreover, consideration of de Gaulle's turbulent relations with the U.S. might cast doubt on the sway Washington actually exerted over Free French priorities, ideologies, and troop composition. It seems reasonable to conclude that both Free French and U.S. authorities found reasons to orchestrate, encourage, or approve the racial purge in Fighting French ranks in the summer of 1943.

For his part, Samir Saul rightly remarks that this project took me to local repositories -- archives on location in Cameroon and in the Republic of Congo, as well as across Europe and the U.S. -- at the expense no doubt of the French Quai d'Orsay records. That said, as he observes, I privileged African voices as well as first-hand testimonies from foreigners present in Free French Africa. The latter include a set of remarkably useful visual and written accounts from American journalist Dudley Harmon, British photojournalist George Rodger, and avant-garde German photographer Germaine Krull.[4] Furthermore, the French Foreign Ministry records I did consult in Nantes proved invaluable: a large section of the papers of the High Commissioner to Free French Africa were deposited there, likely because at the moment of decolonization, they ended up in the French embassy in Brazzaville. This very rich collection offers a different vantage point from the records stored at the French colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence. The latter derive mostly from the *Gouvernement général de l'Afrique équatoriale française*. In a sense, the two sets of records materialize the conflict between Governor General Félix Eboué (the Guyanese Governor who brought Chad to de Gaulle's side, on the one hand, and Edgard de Larminat and Adolphe Sicé, the High Commissioners, on the other hand -- a conflict that I analyze in chapter three. Parenthetically, the Nantes High Commission records could and should be mined for many other themes, including the anticolonial activities of the so-called *mutualiste* movement founded by André Matsoua Grenard.

Ruth Ginio and Saul both invite a fuller comparison with French West Africa (FWA). It remained under Vichy control until late 1942, then stayed loyal to Admiral Darlan and General Giraud until mid-July 1943. While I do draw parallels and establish contrasts between them (82 to 89), there is certainly more to be done, for instance in the realm of productivity or censorship. I also show how Free French resource extraction spilled over

[4] Some promising leads of this sort turned out to be wild goose chases. The Swiss journalist and adventurer Annemarie Schwarzenbach went to Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) in hopes of crossing the river to join the Free French. It would seem that the Gaullists rejected her services, while accepting those of Germaine Krull. Still, Schwarzenbach managed to snap a few photographs of FEA under Gaullist rule. However, she took far more of the Belgian Congo and its war effort.

from FEA and former Vichy West Africa in 1943, with the run on wild rubber switching fronts precisely as the resource had become scarce because of over-exploitation (with its devastating social and medical consequences) in FEA and Cameroon.

What do the similarities in the outlooks of Free French Governor General Eboué and Vichy's proconsul Pierre Boisson ultimately reveal, wonders Ginio? First of all, I am certainly not the first to have remarked on this counter-intuitive confluence: Hubert Deschamps, Jean Suret-Canale, Frederick Cooper, James Lewis and Ginio herself did so before me.[5] The congruence speaks no doubt to a common essentialism, and a vaguely preservationist and nativist current derived from interwar colonial thought. This is what Frederick Cooper terms "a shared myth of the African traditional community."[6] It also speaks to common colonial training and to a shared fear of *déracinement*: the déclassé, the drunk, the uprooted, the urban, and the soulless were as much specters to leading Gaullists in Africa, like Sicé and Larminat, as they were to Vichyites like Boisson. Indeed, I would return to the point I make on page 100: many Gaullists held the Third Republic responsible for the defeat of 1940, as well as for a host of purportedly associated social ills, both in Africa and in France. Hence my analysis of internal disputes over whether African elites should be allowed to consume wine… (103). Debates over Frenchness and Africanness, as well as over modernity and tradition, were clearly being played out within both camps. One of my points is that men like Leclerc considered Free French Africa essential precisely because they saw it as a laboratory for postwar France.

None of this should be mistaken for moral relativism: ultimately although Free France adopted nearly identical native policies and deployed similar coercive instruments to Vichy's, it did so in the service of the allied cause, against Benito Mussolini's Italy and Adolf Hitler's Germany. The rubber and gold that Africans extracted at great human cost went towards allied tires and coffers, while rubber from Vichy-controlled French Indochina served the Japanese and German causes.[7] Most crucially, I argue that Africans themselves utilized the allied language of rights, of anti-racism and of anti-Nazism, as they challenged

[5] Hubert Deschamps, *Méthodes et doctrines coloniales de la France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), 177-178; Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique noire occidentale et centrale* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1964), 574 and 586; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society : The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146-7, 157-161. Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), p163-5. James I. Lewis, "Félix Eboué and Late French Colonial Ideology" *Itinerario*, 2002, 26:1 (2002). Martin Thomas and Nancy Lawler have likewise suggested that Free France outperformed Vichy in its use of forced labor in Africa. Martin Thomas, *The French Empire at War, 1940-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 230-231; Nancy Lawler, "Reform and Repression under the Free French: Economic and Political Tranformation in the Côte d'Ivoire, 1942-1945" *Journal of the International African Institute*, 60: 1 (1990), 88-110.

[6] Cooper, op. cit., 158.

[7] On Germans getting hold of Indochinese rubber, see Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 83, and Francis Koerner, "Le contrôle de l'industrie française du caoutchouc par l'Allemagne nazie (1940-1944)," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 240, 4, (2010), 43-61.

the arbitrariness and violence of colonial rule in FEA. In doing so they underscored the paradox of colonial brutality being exerted in the name of liberty and anti-fascism.

Why did Vichy not crush the Gaullist rebellion in French Equatorial Africa, asks Saul? The answer is that Philippe Pétain's regime tried to do so. Vichy repelled the Anglo-Gaullist attack on Dakar between September 23 and 25, 1940. A civil war raged between Gaullists and Pétainists in Gabon (September to November 1940). Both of these fratricidal conflicts betray an initial attempt by Vichy to trample Free France as it sought to establish its foothold in Africa. As I explain, de Gaulle saw the Vichy splinter in his side in Gabon as a threat to his movement's very existence. His having to fight Vichy first proved strategically necessary yet politically disastrous: it reinforced the perception that he was taking aim at Frenchmen rather than the Axis. Hence de Gaulle's insistence on opening a front against Mussolini's Libya as soon as Gabon was won.

Saul further wonders whether Vichy considered retaking Free French colonies. The book addresses the vulnerability of Free French Africa, but I shall provide a more specific answer here. In point of fact, the matter was debated at length, and was at various points given very serious consideration in the halls of Vichy, as Robert Paxton has shown.[8] Kim Munholland has chronicled Vichy's willingness to recapture New Caledonia from de Gaulle.[9] There was no unanimity at Vichy on the path to follow: certainly, some intended to display firmness against de Gaulle so as to convince Hitler of their sincerity in collaborating with the Third Reich.[10] Others proved more cautious. A November 23, 1940 internal Vichy note on colonial policy concluded that a drawn-out war with de Gaulle in Africa would serve only the cause of Germany or Britain, while weakening Pétain's domestic position. Instead, it advocated "a less brutal formula" involving "winning back the territories that have entered into dissidence by more discrete means."[11] This fifth-column strategy meshes with my discussion of Louis Tardy, the Bishop of Libreville who remained steadfastly loyal to Vichy, resisting the French *Résistance* in Africa. By May 1942, the Vichy regime's colonial bureau recognized that its empire was crumbling, taking stock of the loss of France's Pacific territories, of Equatorial Africa, and the Northern tip of Madagascar. It presciently predicted that French West Africa and Guiana would fall next. This 1942 document emanating from the Secretary of State to the Colonies Jules Brévié urged Vichy's military to press Germany for increased resources with which to protect Pétainist colonies. Rather than retaking Free French territories at that point, it floated the possibility of striking at British West Africa.[12] That very month, Brévié

[8] Paxton, op. cit., 86, 96-97.

[9] Kim Munholland, *Rock of Contention: Free French And Americans at War in New Caledonia, 1940-1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 66.

[10] Paxton, op. cit., 68, 73, 77, 81, 85.

[11] French Colonial Archives (hereafter ANOM), 1Affpol 2555, d. 9, « note sur l'orientation à donner à notre politique coloniale » 3.

[12] ANOM, 1Affpol 928, d. 4, Note dated May 8, 1942.

evoked the same idea with German representative Roland Krug von Nidda. Brévié specifically suggested that Vichy might launch an attack on the British airfield at Takoradi (Gold Coast).[13]

Saul asks about the nature of African adhesion to the Free French cause. This is a fair and complex question. In Paris in January 1945 Henri Laurentie (Eboué's long-time right hand man in Brazzaville) declared that: "In their own way, black Africans were pure Gaullists" (284). The phrase "in their own way" remains subject to interpretation, and could certainly imply a kind of second-class status for Africans in Free French ranks. Yet it might also reveal Laurentie's understanding that Africans joined Free France under varied circumstances. Some, in urban centers for instance, volunteered to fight Nazism, out of idealism and patriotism (French? imperial? African? all three?), or to further careers and secure social advancement. Others, primarily in rural settings, were forcibly conscripted or enrolled in the army without fully understanding the commitment, sometimes because they spoke little French. Indeed, Jean-François Muraciolle has suggested that the lack of a formal consent form for most recruits in FEA and Cameroon might well explain why historians long underestimated the number of colonial subjects in the early Free French ranks.[14] Moreover, the question of adhesion to the Free French in Africa was posed anew in the postwar: did being in FEA in 1940 translate ipso facto into *résistant* status? Finally, there can be no doubt that some Africans appropriated or embraced the language of Gaullism for numerous ends.

Ginio asks what the war changed for non-elite Africans. I demonstrate that it dramatically affected standards of living, food supply, and exposure to forced labor as well as other forms of colonial coercion. I also trace the rise of various taxes. Some of the tectonic economic changes unleashed during the war would also have lasting consequences: I show how U.S. textiles streamed into FEA and Cameroon, and how the wild rubber rush implicated local populations in the global economy. The question then becomes whether this qualitative and quantitative change was any greater in FEA than in the Fighting Belgian Congo, for instance. More work needs to be conducted on the Belgian Congo in World War II before such a question can be answered. Certainly, the population movements that I observed from FEA and Cameroon towards colonies not involved in the war -- Spanish Guinea and Portuguese Congo (Cabinda) -- do suggest that some inhabitants of Free French Africa considered the grass greener on other, neutral sides.

Lastly, Saul wonders about the psychological impact of Africa having contributed to liberating the French mainland. The liberation of the motherland by the empire constituted a recurring theme in the postwar. A kind of perfect storm would occur as domestic awareness of the colonies peaked just as calls for imperial reform and outright independence did as well, in the name of African sacrifice. However, popular representations of these colonial troops often elided the specificity of FEA and Cameroon's contributions to the war. Consider a *protège-cahier* (figure 1, likely from the late 1940s), or

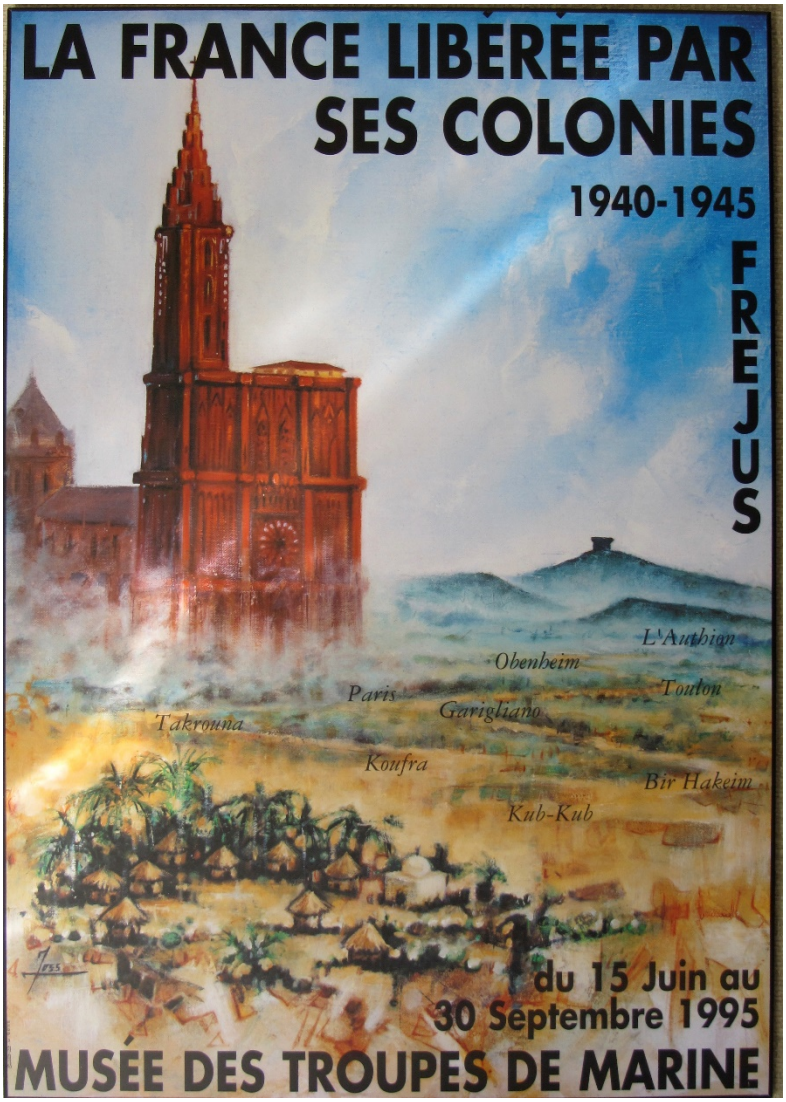
[13] French Foreign Ministry Archives (la Courneuve), Vichy Afrique, 86.

[14] Jean-François Muracciole, *Les Français Libres. L'autre Résistance* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009), 37.

cover, that French school children would have fastidiously used to wrap their notebooks in the postwar.

(Figure 1)

On a blue, white and red background featuring the allegory of victory on the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris, one discerns six types of colonial troops as well as a list of key battles. The former include the Indochinese infantry, which was essentially out of the war between its outset and March 9, 1945 when it experienced a resounding defeat at the hands of the Japanese. The Moroccan troops also shown here certainly fought valiantly for the Fighting French in Italy and France, but were not involved in the war between June 1940 and the summer of 1943, Morocco having experienced a long Vichy hiatus and then a Darlan and Giraud interregnum before ultimately siding with Fighting France. As for the list of battles, it runs from Murzuk and Kufra -- the early triumphs of a force that was two-thirds African at the time -- through to the liberation of Corsica and Alsace. Here the story of the 1943 and 1944 purges of a previously Sub-Saharan African army goes untold in a teleological narrative ascending from South to North in which the empire and France have become one. This last point is even more clearly articulated by a poster for a 1995 exhibit at the *Musée des troupes de Marines* in Fréjus. *(Figure 2, below)*



It shows the expression and realization of Philippe Leclerc's 1941 Kufra oath. After seizing the desert fortress from Mussolini's troops, Leclerc had vowed not to cease fighting until the French flag floated again over Strasbourg. The Mediterranean disappears completely in figure 2. The poster also shows the African dwellings where this story began, dwarfed by the cathedral of Strasbourg where it purportedly ended.

Perhaps a more fitting vignette with which to conclude involves the composition of Free French forces at the Battle of Bir-Hakeim. There, in May and June 1941, *Generalleutnant* Erwin Rommel's German Afrika Korps forces met the stiff resistance of the BM 2 (*2e Bataillon de Marche*), comprised of Free Frenchmen recruited in Oubangui-Chari (present-day Central African Republic). The Africans of the BM 2 fought side by side with Spanish Republicans and German Jews of the 13th demi-brigade of the French Foreign Legion, as well with the BP 1 (*Bataillon pacifique*) , hailing from the South Pacific. United in their Gaullist commitment as much as in their common demonization by Nazi ideology, they held up Rommel's advance at a critical point. The episode seems like a lesson in diversity, idealism, and commitment well worth retelling today. Yet it is largely elided in the popular imagination at the expense of nebulous clichés of the internal French Resistance, which was still in its infancy at the time of Bir-Hakeim.