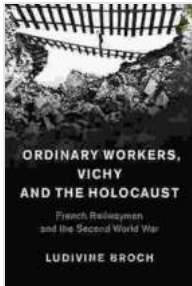


French Railwaymen and the Second World War: Studies in the Social and Cultural



Ordinary Workers, Vichy and the Holocaust: French Railwaymen and the Second World War (Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare Book 44)

by Sheryl Lee

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The Second World War had a profound impact on the lives of French railwaymen. During the Occupation, they were forced to work for the German occupiers, transporting troops and supplies to the front lines. Many railwaymen also engaged in acts of resistance, sabotaging trains and tracks, and helping to smuggle food and supplies to the Resistance. After the war, railwaymen played a key role in the reconstruction of France, rebuilding the country's shattered infrastructure and restoring essential services.

This article explores the experiences of French railwaymen during the Second World War, drawing on a range of sources, including oral histories, personal accounts, and archival documents. It examines their experiences of occupation, resistance, and collaboration, and provides a nuanced and

comprehensive account of the experiences of this important group of workers.

The Occupation

On June 14, 1940, German troops entered Paris, and France was forced to surrender. The country was divided into two zones: the Occupied Zone in the north and west, and the Free Zone in the south. The Occupied Zone was under direct German control, while the Free Zone was nominally independent, but subject to German influence.

For railwaymen, the Occupation meant a new set of challenges. They were forced to work for the German occupiers, transporting troops and supplies to the front lines. Many railwaymen also engaged in acts of resistance, sabotaging trains and tracks, and helping to smuggle food and supplies to the Resistance.

One of the most common forms of resistance was sabotage. Railwaymen would often delay trains, damage tracks, and even derail trains carrying German troops and supplies. These acts of sabotage were often carried out at great personal risk, and many railwaymen were arrested and executed by the Germans.

In addition to sabotage, railwaymen also helped to smuggle food and supplies to the Resistance. This was a dangerous undertaking, as the Germans were on the lookout for any sign of resistance. However, railwaymen were able to use their knowledge of the railway network to smuggle goods past German checkpoints.

The Resistance

The Resistance was a network of underground organizations that fought against the German occupation. The Resistance was made up of people from all walks of life, including railwaymen. Railwaymen played a vital role in the Resistance, using their knowledge of the railway network to transport weapons and supplies, and to smuggle people out of the country.

One of the most famous examples of railwaymen's involvement in the Resistance was the "Train of Liberty." The Train of Liberty was a train that was used to transport Jewish children out of France to safety. The train was organized by railwaymen, who used their knowledge of the railway network to avoid German checkpoints. The Train of Liberty saved the lives of over 1,000 Jewish children.

Railwaymen also played a key role in the liberation of France. In August 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy and began to push back the German forces. Railwaymen played a vital role in the Allied advance, transporting troops and supplies to the front lines. They also helped to repair bridges and tracks that had been damaged by the Germans.

The Collaboration

Not all railwaymen resisted the German occupation. Some railwaymen chose to collaborate with the Germans, for a variety of reasons. Some railwaymen were motivated by ideological sympathy with the Nazi regime, while others were simply trying to protect their jobs or their families. Whatever their reasons, railwaymen who collaborated with the Germans played a significant role in the Occupation.

Railwaymen who collaborated with the Germans were often involved in transporting German troops and supplies to the front lines. They also

helped to round up Jews and other minorities for deportation to concentration camps. Some railwaymen even participated in executions and other atrocities.

The collaboration of some railwaymen with the Germans has been a source of controversy in postwar France. After the war, many railwaymen who had collaborated with the Germans were arrested and charged with treason. However, some railwaymen who had collaborated with the Germans were able to escape punishment, and some even continued to work for the French railway system after the war.

The Reconstruction

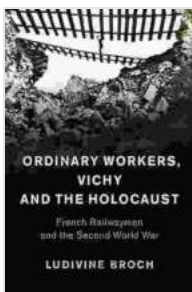
After the war, railwaymen played a key role in the reconstruction of France. They rebuilt the country's shattered infrastructure and restored essential services. Railwaymen also helped to transport people and goods around the country, helping to revive the French economy.

The reconstruction of France was a difficult and challenging process, but railwaymen played a vital role in the country's recovery. They helped to rebuild the country's infrastructure, restore essential services, and transport people and goods around the country. Railwaymen also played a key role in the repatriation of prisoners of war and displaced persons

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played a key role in the reconstruction of France, rebuilding the country's shattered infrastructure and restoring essential services.

The experiences of French railwaymen during the Second World War are a reminder of the importance of resistance and collaboration. Railwaymen who resisted the German occupation played a vital role in the liberation of France. However, railwaymen who collaborated with the Germans played a significant role in the Occupation, and their actions have been a source of controversy in postwar France.



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