
OTHER NATIONS

cians to agree on the specifics of “regionalization.” And they were able to do so only by excluding Brussels from the plan.

Today, the plan is being only gradually implemented, and most policymaking power still remains with the central government; hence, says Covell, although there is relative quiet for the moment, the “regionalization” debate—and ethnic discord—are likely to continue.

Did French Reds Resist Nazis?

“The French Communist Party and the Beginnings of Resistance: September 1939–June 1941” by J. C. Simmonds, in *European Studies Review* (Oct. 1981), 275
South Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212.

Immediately after the fall of France in June 1940, did the French Communist Party (PCF) resist the Nazi occupiers—as party historians boast—or collaborate with them, as others have charged? Simmonds, a senior lecturer in European history at Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, weighs the evidence.

On June 22, 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, France’s Communists issued a clear, unwavering summons to arms; they waged a valiant guerrilla resistance against the Nazis thereafter. But their conduct before that date has been criticized.

After France declared war on Germany (September 3, 1939), French Communists served in their country’s army, despite their party’s praise of Stalin’s separate peace with Hitler. But with the banning of the PCF by Prime Minister Edouard Daladier on September 26, 1939, the party’s anti-war tone became more strident. Charges that the war was a capitalist-imperialist ploy, another opportunity for the rich to milk the poor, intensified when members perceived that Daladier was more interested in persecuting Communists than in prosecuting the war.

After the fall of France, the record is confusing. The party denounced Vichy, the government of the Third Republic, British imperialism, and London capitalists even as it called for fraternization with the ordinary German soldier (“within the framework of international working-class solidarity”). Party members, writes Simmonds, “like other Frenchmen, first sought someone to blame and only then began to think about the future.” Some Communists did resist, especially in the provinces; but sometimes—as in a miners’ strike in May 1941—they met criticism from PCF leaders. Meanwhile, the party clearly saw a chance to shed its outlaw status and rejoin the world of French politics. PCF leaders petitioned the Nazis to allow them to publish their journals, hoping that the 1939 German-Soviet pact would argue in their favor. They also called for a neutralist popular government to replace Vichy.

Despite Charles de Gaulle’s radio broadcasts from London, there was little organized resistance in France during that early period, writes Simmonds. The Communists, he concludes, contested the German occupation then as much as any other group did. Their struggle to keep their party alive made possible their strong response after June 1941.