

# **HISTORY 208—Europe in the Age of Total War**

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## **EXAM #3 Study Guide**

### **Key questions, themes, examples**

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The format for Exam #3 will be the same as the previous exam, with three sections: Part 1: Very Short Answer, Part 2: Short Answer, and Part 3: Mini-Essay. The exam will cover material from Monday, October 17 through Monday, November 21 (from Sarah Ann Frank through Alternative Sources).

I've posted copies of class presentations to Moodle.

### **QUESTIONS FOR PART 3**

*Questions for Part 3, Mini-Essay. I will give you two of these three questions. I may ask a simpler version of one on Part 2.*

1. How can the work of historians – for example, Sarah Frank's book on colonial POWs – help us to understand the history of Europe? How can they help us complicate the story told by Ian Kershaw?
2. How can primary sources – for example, George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) – help us to understand the history of Europe? How can they help us complicate the story told by Ian Kershaw?
3. How can primary sources – for example, the film *Liberty For Us* (1931) – help us to understand the history of Europe? How can they help us complicate the story told by Ian Kershaw?

### **KEY THEMES AND EXAMPLES**

#### *Concepts of Historical Analysis*

What are the central concepts of historical analysis?

- The Five C's of Historical Analysis
- Change and continuity. What changes? What stays the same?
- Context. What was the historical context of the time?
- Causality. What are the forces of change?
- Contingency. How might events have turned out differently?
- Complexity. Events are often shaped by multiple events. Experiences vary dramatically by time and place. The same event may be experienced very differently by individuals from different positions.

#### *Historical Research*

What are the steps of historical research? Identify a topic, develop an interesting historical question or research question, understand the historiography on the topic, analyze primary sources, present an argument, examine evidence to support the argument, explain the significance of your work.

#### *Working with Primary Sources*

What is a primary source? Documents that provide first-hand evidence of the topic at hand. These primary sources include documents that are contemporary with the events under study, such as newspaper articles, trial transcripts, diaries, letters, reports, legislative documents, etc. They also include first-hand accounts at a distance to the past, such as memoirs and oral history interview transcripts. They include imaginative works, such as novels and poems, visual works, such as photographs and paintings, complex creative works, such as films and music, material culture, such as jewelry and pottery, and more.

How should you analyze a primary source? First answer some basic questions: Who is the author? When and where was it produced? Who was it produced for? What does it purport to be? What story does it tell?

And then develop your own perspective. Some questions that might follow: How does the source work? How is it constructed? What is its internal logic? What views or assumptions are revealed here? What is missing here? Are there important silences? Or obfuscations? What does the source reveal about its author? What does the source reveal about the context in which it was written? What do historians say about the source? Do you see something different in it? What?

### *Working with Secondary Sources*

What is a secondary source? The term is used differently by different people. For our purposes, it is a scholarly book or article.

Historiography refers to the body of secondary sources by historians on a topic – or, more generally, to the ways in which historians have approached a particular topic.

What is a historical monograph? A book by a historian devoted to a particular topic, presenting an argument. We can distinguish it from articles, textbooks and surveys (which are secondary sources but not monographs).

How should a historian read a historical monograph to understand the argument? Read the introduction very carefully. Here is where the author will lay out the topic and the argument. Read book reviews from historical journals (this is not cheating).

How do historians create new histories? They ask research questions. They look to overlooked sources or events. They look at these sources or events in new ways. They respond to previous arguments and develop new arguments.

### *Sarah Ann Frank and Colonial Prisoners of War in Vichy France*

Sarah Ann Frank, *Hostages of Empire: Colonial Prisoners of War in Vichy France* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021)

A historian at University of Sheffield. Monograph based on her 2015 dissertation at Trinity College (Dublin). She asks: What was the experience of colonial prisoners of war in France?

Some background on France and the Second World War. We discussed:

- The Phony War (1939-1940) and Armistice, June 22, 1940
- Marshal Philippe Pétain. The Vichy State (note, not a Republic). Vichy, “The National Revolution,” “Work, Family, Fatherland”
- Deep rifts in French culture and politics (in the ‘30s, many said “Better Hitler than Blum”)
- After Armistice, France divided into northern occupied zone, southern unoccupied zone, and eastern forbidden zone
- Policy of Collaboration. Active policy to work with Nazi Germany and gain an advantage for France in a Nazi-dominated Europe
- The alternative: Charles De Gaulle and the Free French, the French Resistance

- Félix Eboué, Governor General of Chad, and supporter of De Gaulle
- The importance of the colonies for the war effort

#### On France and the Holocaust

- Memories of Vichy – first amnesia, then a flood of films and studies after 1968. Recently a lot of interest in the experience of colonial soldiers in WW2
- Vichy and the Holocaust. More than 75,000 Jews sent to their death from France, with collaboration of French administration and police
- Justice for crimes against humanity slow in coming. Maurice Papon put on trial in 1997, for example

#### On French empire

- In 1930s, the height of the French empire – France ruled over more than 150 million subjects (almost four times the population of France in 1930, 40 million)
- France long spoke a language of *assimilation* (the idea that colonial subjects would become French citizens). Gave way in 1930s to language of *association*
- 1931 Colonial Exposition – celebration of colonialism – millions of visitors – recreation of colonies in Paris – colonial subjects on display
- At the same time, met with anti-colonial opposition, from Communists and from colonial subjects who sought autonomy and independence
- The great wave of decolonization was yet to come (1950s and '60s) – but seeds of collapse of empire were sown in WW1, interwar period, and WW2

#### The subject of Frank's book:

- Colonial prisoners of war held in France
- How did they experience the war? How were they treated? What can their stories tell us about Vichy, empire, prisoners of war, or global humanitarianism?

#### From the Introduction

- Tells the story of Ginette Éboué, seeking her brother Henry in the POW camp in the forbidden zone of eastern France
- 85,000 colonial prisoners held in POW camps by French authorities – out of 1.8m French POWs total
- Distinction between white prisoners and colonial prisoners. Germans insisted that French colonial prisoners be interned in camps in France. White prisoners held in Germany
- Note the great variety of these colonial prisoners. They came from different parts of the world with different cultures and legal status
- “[W]hen war was declared, imperial “solidarity” meant conscripting men from the colonies to fight in Europe for lower pay, a smaller pension, and fewer rights than white soldiers.” (5)
- Her sources are several: capture cards from the Red Cross, varied archival sources, written accounts from a few prisoners, and Vichy records on POWs
- She argues for the need to go beyond existing historiography: to see the changing experience of colonial POWs in different phases of the war, to put colonial POWs – and their experiences – at the heart of the study of captivity, to see the treatment of colonial POWs as an expression of French imperialism, and to see the ways in which colonial POWs were touched by global humanitarianism

#### The arguments of the book:

- Vichy regime treated colonial POWs relatively well – for they saw that the future of France depended on the empire
- The relatively positive treatment of colonial prisoners coexisted with Vichy and Free French racism – and with the Vichy regime’s complicity in the Holocaust
- The treatment of prisoners created new expectations among colonial subjects – expectations for more autonomy for the colonies. Those expectations would not be met. And colonial POWs would go on to take a leading role in challenging French imperial practices after the war

#### Organization

- Chapters organized chronologically, moving from background on the role of colonial subjects in the French military, through the various phases of the war, examining the experience of colonial POWs, ending with the stories of colonial POWs returning home

#### Conclusion

- Reiterates these larger arguments – and explains their significance for the historiography of Vichy France, colonial POWs, French propaganda, empire, global humanitarianism, forced labor, and racism
- One outcome of this experience was that many colonial POWs would go on to become leaders in the movements for independence. As Frank puts it, they had changed, but the French empire had not
- Frank ends with the story of the Éboué family reuniting in Brazzaville, capital of French Equatorial Africa, where they would work to challenge the French Empire

#### *George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (orig. 1938). Names and Details*

Orwell’s background: lower middle class, scholarship student, policeman in Burma, anti-totalitarian writer. Famous for *Animal Farm* (1944), *1984* (1949), and for his “Rules for Writers”

Goes to Spain to write about it but joins in the fight because “it seemed the only conceivable thing to do.” Joins the POUM militia, fights on the Aragon front, participates in the May Events in Barcelona in 1937, back at the front he is wounded, returns to Barcelona, under threat of arrest, returns to England

A short stay in Spain, 6 or 7 months – (December 1936 to June 1937)

Wider context of the 1930s – democracy under siege, international powers respond very differently to events in Spain

Backdrop: The Spanish Second Republic, 1931-1936 (instability, the “black years” of 33-34, CEDA)

The Popular Front Government, an alliance of anarchists, socialists, communists, and liberals  
Nationalists, a loose association of monarchists, army officers, fascists, and conservatives

General Mola and General Francisco Franco

Catalonia

Barcelona in December 1936 (what does it look like? Socialism in practice...)

What is socialism, according to Orwell? Not state ownership of means of production, but equality, an end to class society...

P.O.U.M. militia. Anti-Stalinist Communist militia. Motto: war and revolution are intertwined

Orwell brings English perspectives (on time, military training, railway schedules, money, and more...)

C.N.T./F.A.I. (Anarchist trade unions)

P.S.U.C. (the Communists of Catalonia). Supported by Stalin. Motto: win the war first; revolution can come later

The *Generalitat* – the Catalan government, increasingly controlled by the PSUC

The international context: the arms embargo of Britain and France, the role of Germany and Italy the Soviet Union and the Comintern

The Popular Army, organized on traditional military lines, destined to incorporate all of the militias

What does Orwell's experience of war look like?

How was Orwell's unit's first casualty taken?

What does Orwell want to do?

How well can Orwell speak Spanish? Catalan?

Propaganda in wartime... Includes propaganda by megaphone at the front (the "real weapon of war" on the Aragon front)

The May Events of Barcelona in 1937. 400 d. in fighting between the government and the militias. What are these events about? The Communist party and the government of Catalonia wanted to take control of the city and limit the role of the POUM

Distortions of the international press. For the London press – the *London Times*, the *Daily Worker* – the POUM was a front for the fascists

What is on the inside of a goatskin wine bottle?

What are Orwell's last days in Barcelona like? He's on the run, subject to arrest as a member of the POUM, sleeping outside at night, trying to help friends (such as Georges Kopp) and preparing to leave.

When (acc. to Orwell in 1937) will the English awake from "the deep, deep sleep of England"?

How might we interpret Orwell's memoir? I suggested three approaches:

- Portrait of an international crisis of the left
- A political coming of age story
- An innocent abroad

*Liberty for Us* (released 1931)

A film by René Clair, a popular filmmaker who made film from the era of silent films in the 1920s until the 1960s. His films are noted for their comedy and with and embrace of the common people.

*Liberty* was made in 1931, before the effects of the depression hit hard in France. It is a film that celebrates friendship and leisure. Work is a Taylorized nightmare, akin to prison.

In early 1931 in France, unemployment was just 5 to 7%. This would not last for long. Within a few years unemployment in France would reach 20%.

The central characters:

- Emile, who helps his friend escape from prison – can't fit into the world of work
- Louis, who becomes rich selling phonographs
- Jeanne, who wants to escape the strictures of her protective uncle
- Others: other workers, Paul, Louis' wife, the criminal band, the police, the government speaker at the opening of the factory, etc.

What does work look like in the film?

What does the film say about wealth in France in 1931?

What does the film say about men and women and friendship?

What does it have to say about happiness?

What is the fantasy that ends the film?

How does any of this resonate with the history of the interwar period and the coming of the Depression?

What can this particular film, the product of one filmmaker, tell us about the values of France in 1931?

### *Alternative Sources*

What other kinds of themes and sources can we use to make sense of the history of Europe from 1890 to 1945? How might they complicate the stories we have told so far?

Consider:

- The long life of colonialism – see the British Empire, for example
- Cultural history – see fin de siècle Vienna, for example
- History of sexuality – see Weimar Germany, for example
- Visual culture – see the surrealism of “Andalusian Dog,” for example
- History of emotions – see grief in WW2 Britain, for example
- Eastern Europe – see the story of Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands*, for example