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- 1 Over the last few years, and in conjunction with the Service historique de la Gendarmerie nationale, Professor Jean-Noël Luc has transformed the history of the French Gendarmerie. These books are among the first to emerge from this transformation. Anyone interested in the history of policing can only look on with envy at the enthusiasm with which *la grande muette* has embraced its past, warts and all, to encourage the project. London's Metropolitan Police, for all the boastfulness about being the first civilian police institution and a model for others, is light years behind in this respect.
- 2 Anyone planning research on a topic has to start with some kind of literature search. The *Guide de Recherche* published under Luc's direction is a model of what any researcher's guide to the history of an institution should be. It begins by providing basic historical information about the Gendarmerie and its predecessor, the Maréchaussée. From here it moves to a detailed presentation of bibliographical material both published books and articles and a survey of the primary documentation held in archives ranging from the obvious, such as the Archives Nationales and the Gendarmerie's own holdings, to the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine. In addition there is a filmography, a guide to photographs and other images and a historical dictionary of various bodies and ranks that have existed within the institution. This is a source book that will be of value, not only to historians of crime, criminal justice and policing but, indeed, to anyone interested modern and contemporary French history.
- 3 The Gendarmerie nationale is a military institution with responsibilities for policing in both civilian and military affairs. The books under consideration here deal principally with military affairs and military policing, but in so doing they raise some important issues about the way that the history of crime, criminal justice and policing has been considered over the last few years. All of the evidence points to young men as that part of the population most likely to commit crime. In wartime it is these same young men who form the major part of the fighting forces of a state. While history books tend to describe young servicemen on campaign and in battle, few have ventured to explore the less glorious elements of campaigning such as assaults on senior officers and on

civilians, pillage and various other forms of criminal offending. Moreover, it seems often to be forgotten that, if in a civilian, peacetime setting, police are required to direct traffic and to sort out accidents and traffic jams, this is equally the case in wartime when the smooth movement of men and munitions can, literally, be a matter of life and death for very large numbers.

- 4 Médard Bonnart's memoirs divide neatly into two. A volunteer of 1791 he fought as an infantryman in a succession of campaigns. After a decade he sought to better himself by enlisting in the Gendarmerie. For the next ten years he served in the company of Maine-et-Loire but his abilities excused him from the wearisome round of daily patrols, the occasional clashes with the remains of the Vendéan insurrections and the pursuit of the cruel *chauffeurs* who tortured their victims into revealing and handing over their property. Bonnart rapidly acquired a rank and served as secretary to the company's colonel. In 1812 he was transferred to the command section of the new Gendarmerie corps established for Spain where he had first hand experience of the vicious guerrilla conflict. Bonnart survived the two restorations and the Hundred Days, though at different times he was suspected by both Bonapartists and Bourbons. He retired in 1816, receiving the rank of honorary captain and entitled to both the *légion d'honneur* and the *croix de Saint-Louis*. His memoirs first appeared in 1828. The rarity of works of this sort makes this reissue, with a useful introduction by Édouard Ebel and Gildas Lepetit, most welcome.
- 5 Buchbinder's and Roy's volumes focus on the First World War. The former concentrates on the role of the Gendarmerie on the Western Front. During the First World War, for the only time in its existence, the Gendarmerie did not have its own regiments in the front line. The only deployment of members of the corps in the theatre of operations was as the enforcers of the military provosts. Gendarmes ensured that men and munitions got to the front and that bivouac fires on the way to the front were concealed from artillery. They checked that men were not out of bounds in cabarets or worse. They sought to stop men who were fleeing from battle. They arrested deserters and men accused of self-inflicted wounds. Only accidentally did they cross bayonets with the enemy. The *poilu* joked that the front line ended where you met the first gendarme.
- 6 Buchbinder's volume is solidly researched and the argument is presented in a workmanlike fashion. It is a good guide to the regulations and their enforcement though it is sometimes difficult to get a feel of how the gendarmes themselves perceived of their tasks. Buchbinder shows some of them to have acted in narrow-minded and officious ways even to soldiers who technically outranked them. Others, at least on occasions, were sympathetic to the soldiery and bent the rules in their favour. Buchbinder puts his emphasis on the institution and the institution's rules rather than with the men. And from the perspective of the historian of crime and policing, it would be interesting to explore in some detail the scale of criminality among the armies and the role of the Gendarmerie in dealing with it.
- 7 Roy's topic is the Gendarmerie deployed with the French expeditionary force to Macedonia. These men were confronted with the same problems of policing the army that their comrades faced on the Western Front. But their situation was aggravated by being stuck in an alien land, caught up in civil strife as well as the international war, directed to maintain order among the local population and to police not only French forces but also some allied troops whose languages they did not understand and who

could behave in a cavalier fashion towards the locals. Again this is a well-researched and well-argued volume. It ranges widely over the political and diplomatic problems of the *l'Armée de l'Orient* as well as focussing down on to the tasks and experiences of the Gendarmerie. Roy concludes with a list of questions that she regrets she has not touched upon. Who were the gendarmes sent with the expedition? How were they lodged and supplied, especially those stationed in outlying posts? Were they better off than the ordinary soldiers, or than their counterparts at home? It is to be hoped that she will return to these questions or that someone else will take up the challenge.

- 8 Haberbusch's study involves a different war and, like Roy, it is a study of the Gendarmerie beyond the metropole. This volume is much bigger than the other two monographs discussed here and is based on Haberbusch's doctoral thesis. Addressing both the departmental Gendarmerie, spread in the traditional way in small brigades across the colony, and the mobile, public order units, he follows two broad threads. First, there is the experience of the two corps from the 1930s, through war, the Vichy state, the Anglo-American landings and a more immediate experience of war as the centre of Free France and so on to the end of the conflict. Here he elucidates the role and shifting tasks of the Gendarmerie as it was thrown into a hectic bustle by the declaration of war, then required to enforce the Vichy revolution with its anti-Semitic, anti-Freemason, anti-Bolshevik policies, then confronted a tense relationship with new allies. The second thread running through the volume concerns the impact of the different stages of the war on the indigenous Muslim population. The departmental gendarmes appear to have been well aware of the growing, nationalist unrest but their reports appear to have been set to one side while the struggle against the Axis powers was the priority. To most the violent outbreaks of the early summer of 1945 appear to have come as a shock, though almost certainly the shock was not shared by many gendarmes. Haberbusch's volume is noted as being the first of a series addressing the Gendarmerie during the Second World War. He has set an impressive standard for those who follow and historians of the period can only await with baited breath for the appearance of volumes looking at the experience and activity of the Gendarmerie in France itself under Vichy and under occupation.
- 9 A review of this length can do little more than briefly survey the content of the volumes. But it is worth emphasising again that these books are merely the beginning of what promises to be an exciting and productive period of research and publication on the history of the Gendarmerie. If there is one general criticism that might be levelled it is the concentration of the monographs here on the Gendarmerie during wartime. It is fair to say that remarkably little of the research into crime and policing over the last three or four decades has looked at such issues in wartime. But it is also to be hoped that the military experiences of the 'soldier of the law' will not swamp his career in peacetime. If the editors of the series are looking for a volume that would make a start in filling this gap, perhaps they could arrange for the publication of the three-volume doctorate of Louis Saurel, 'La Gendarmerie dans la société de la Deuxième République et du Second Empire'. Although some forty years old now, this surely is a work that deserves to be more widely read and more widely available.

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