The Moral Disarmament of France

While French schoolteachers of the late nineteenth century have been widely celebrated for converting ‘peasants into Frenchmen’, their interwar counterparts have enjoyed little such acclaim. Both contemporary critics and subsequent scholars have condemned French pacifist schoolteachers of the interwar decades for cultivating antipatriotism and facilitating the defeat of 1940. Mona L. Siegel challenges such equations of teachers’ pacifism with national betrayal. Drawn to pacifist ideals in the aftermath of World War I, schoolteachers sought to ‘morally disarm’ the nation by purging their classrooms of the militaristic images, symbols, narratives, and values that had led their generation to accept war without question in 1914. At the same time, however, their teaching remained rooted in longstanding patriotic and republican traditions. Siegel argues that interwar schoolteachers ultimately solidified French citizens’ patriotic loyalties in an era when economic hardship and political extremism threatened to undermine those very ideals.

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The Moral Disarmament of France

Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914–1940

MONA L. SIEGEL
For Steven
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Abbreviations

ADD Archives départementales de la Dordogne
ADN Archives départementales du Nord
ADP Archives du département et de la ville de Paris
ADS Archives départementales de la Somme
ADY Archives départementales de l’Yonne
AN Archives nationales
APP Archives de la Préfecture de Police
BMD Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand
CEP Certificat d'études primaires
CGT Confédération générale du travail
CGTU Confédération générale du travail unitaire
CHS Centre d’histoire sociale du XXe siècle
EM Ecole maternelle
EPE Ecole primaire élémentaire
EPS Ecole primaire supérieure
FFU Fédération féministe universitaire
FIAI Fédération internationale des associations d’instituteurs
FORR Fédération des officiers de réserve républicaine
GF Groupes féministes de l’enseignement laïque
INRP Institut national de recherche pédagogique
LIMEP Ligue internationale des mères et des éducatrices pour la paix
Manuel général Manuel général de l’instruction primaire
MNE Musée national de l’éducation
PCF Parti communiste français
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<tr>
<td>SFIO</td>
<td>Section française de l’internationale ouvrière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SN</td>
<td>Syndicat national des institutrices et des instituteurs de la France et des colonies</td>
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