

Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *L'armée des ombres* by Joseph Kessel

Review by: Sidney B. Fay

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Books in French

(For other Books in French, see "Head-Liners")

- ✎ Joseph Kessel. *L'armée des ombres*. Alger. Charlot. 1943. 280 pages.—This remarkable picture of the clandestine work of the French Resistance movement is, the author assures us, an authentic account based on what was told him by his friends. Fictitious only are the names, localities and other alterations necessary to protect the secrecy of the illegal movement at a time—1943—when the Gestapo and Vichy agents were still all-powerful in France. It records how Resistance leaders escaped from a concentration camp; how they condemned and strangled one of their own members who through weakness had betrayed them; how they smuggled British soldiers out of France to Algiers; how they listened to and spread the B.B.C. broadcasts; how they maintained secret contact with London by clandestine radio senders and secret couriers; and scores of other thrilling and well-told episodes. Here indeed truth seems stranger than fiction, if we accept the author's statement that he reported only what actually took place. It was the courage, confidence, self-sacrifice and ingenuity of these men and women of the French Underground which kept alive the patriotic hopes of a section of the French people during the dark days of the Vichy regime.—*Sidney B. Fay*. Harvard University.
- ✎ André Mutter. *Face à la Gestapo*. Paris. Champion. 1945. 189 pages. 40 fr.—These memoirs of an underground combatant start with his arrest and imprisonment, including six months of solitary confinement, in German prison and concentration camps. He relates with studied objectivity the sadistic bestiality of the Gestapo. Released in 1942 for lack of evidence—he had never been tried—he became director of *Ceux de la Libération-Vengeance* and gives a vivid account of the activities of various patriotic groups. He ends with the capture of Paris by the Allies. His purpose is first to formulate a judicial indictment of the atrocities perpetrated by the German authorities and their satellites on civilians, and second to offer to future historians what he had observed of the Resistance movement.—*B. M. W.*
- ✎ A. Poliakov. *Sur les arrières de l'ennemi*. Alger. Charlot. 1944. 122 pages.—A war correspondent for a Moscow journal has set down vividly what he saw and did during the first thirty days of the German invasion in 1941. His division fought ferociously to check the Nazis, but was outflanked and found itself behind the German front. The Russians therefore took up guerrilla warfare from the forests and swamps of White Russia. They captured German supply dumps; wrecked a German ammunition train; killed German parachutists who descended to capture them; and upset German motorcyclists by stretching a wire across the road. From captured Nazis they learned and turned to good account German war plans. They were finally able to communicate with Moscow and the Russian army by means of a secret radio whose aerial was camouflaged as a wire on which a Russian girl hung out her washing. By means of this radio they were able to fight their way back to the Russian lines within a month from the day of the German invasion. If the confident spirit, ingenuity, and heroic successes which M. Poliakov describes are largely genuine and not the product of clever journalistic imagination, this interesting little volume goes far to explain the success of the Russian Partisan forces.—*Sidney B. Fay*. Harvard University.