



Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family, Fatherland and Vichy France

Carmen Callil

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"Bad Faith" tells the story of one of history's most despicable villains and con men--Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, Nazi collaborator and "Commissioner for Jewish Affairs," who managed the Vichy government's dirty work, "controlling" its Jewish population.

Though he is one of the less remembered figures of the Vichy government, Darquier (the aristocratic "de Pellepoix" was appropriated) was one of its most hideously effective officials. Already a notorious Nazi-supported rabble-rouser when he was appointed commissioner, he set about to eliminate the Jews with particularly brutal efficiency. Darquier was in charge of the Vel' d'Hiv' round-up in Paris in which nearly 13,000 Jews were dispatched to death camps. Most of the French who died in Auschwitz were sent there during his tenure. Almost all of the 11,400 French children sent to Auschwitz--the majority of whom did not survive--were deported in his time. In all, he delivered 75,000 French to the Nazis and, at the same time, accelerated the confiscation of Jewish property, which he then used for his own financial gain. Never brought to justice, he lived out his life comfortably in Spain, denying his involvement in the Holocaust until his last days.

Where did Louis Darquier come from? How did this man--a chronic fantasist and hypocrite, gambler and cheat--come to control the fates of thousands? What made him what he was? These are the questions at the center of this extraordinary book. In answering them, Carmen Callil gives us a superlatively detailed and revealing tapestry of individuals and ideologies, of small lives and great events, the forces of government and of personalities--in France and across the European continent--that made Vichy possible, and turned Darquier into its "dark essence."

A tour de force of memory, accountability, and acknowledgment, "Bad Faith" is a brilliant meld of grand inquisitive sweep and delicate psychological insight, a story of how past choices and actions echo down to the present day, and an invaluable addition to the literature and history of the Holocaust.

Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family, Fatherland and Vichy France Details

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From Reader Review **Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family, Fatherland and Vichy France** for online ebook

John says

This book was a revelation about the degree of anti-semitism in France.

Elizabeth says

I'm still at the beginning and I am already so impressed by the breadth of Callil's research. **Bad Faith** is the result of years of intense scholarship, and is a fascinating read.

David Ryan says

Some powerful insights into period but often bewildered by the detail.

Aoife Kinsella says

This chronicle has a very interesting format. It intertwines the life of the Commissioner of Jewish Affairs in Vichy (and later Holocaust denier) who enjoyed a cushy life in the pocket of the Nazis, and the life of his child who he and his equally crazed wife abandoned to a much more grim upbringing in war torn London and Essex.

Louis Darquier de Pollopoix' life was full of bizarre meanders, fantasies, backhanders, infuriating acts and demands, and blatant lies. It's a fascinating and frustrating ride, especially considering how it all worked out for him.

Carmen Callil is indefatigable in her detail, and I really enjoyed how she drew comparisons of the lives of Louis, his wife Myrtle (and her equally disillusioned family) and that of Anne's, their daughter. Her (understandable) derision of Louis is palpable between the lines, both for the atrocities he performed and got away with, and the injustices in her dear friend's life.

Her motivations are sound, and what resulted was a really well thought out and thought provoking book. Much enjoyed.

Frumenty says

This book is at times fascinating and at others rather dull. It is the burden of the biographer to follow the subject's trajectory through life without deviating from the facts, whether those facts make diverting reading or not. The self-styled Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, born simply Louis Darquier, was an unscrupulous self-

serving opportunist who, having failed at everything else, made a career of antisemitism and presided over the extermination of thousands of French jews. His laziness, incompetence and venality lost him the respect even of his associates in villainy, and only a succession of fortuitous circumstances and a certain instinctive cunning kept him in office for so long.

This is a curious book. The biography of this thoroughly wicked man is bookended by another biography, that of his wronged but admirable daughter Dr Anne Darquier, to whom the author professes a debt of gratitude. Reading the early chapters was uncomfortable for me because the storyline felt contrived, distorted by an emphasis on someone who, while having personal importance for the author, appears not to be otherwise very significant. I had a strong suspicion that Callil would have done better to have written a biography exclusively about Louis Darquier "de Pellepoix", and to have left her friend quite out of it. I need not have worried. Anne's life justifies her place in the book. It rounds out her father's story by bringing the reader close to one who he hurt firstly through neglect and latterly by the horror which she was to learn to be his legacy.

Callil's research is very impressive, and it is not hard to forgive her a couple of dubious generalisations about Australian life and mores (Anne's mother was Australian). Her grasp of French political actors and events, particularly on the antisemitic right, is nothing short of compendious. I think I could not have read this book without frequent reference to wikipedia in French, for the actors, ideas, movements, parties and events are just too bewilderingly numerous to make sense of without the necessary background information. Given the sheer complexity of the story which Callil has to tell, it is a blessing that her written expression is so very clear. I don't think I found a single typo or non-sequitur in the entire 400+ pages of the book, which is further enriched with photographs, family trees, maps, appendices, index and bibliography.

I would recommend this book to anyone with a strong interest in French antisemitism, the Occupation, the Vichy government or the rather lackadaisical post-war pursuit of French war criminals. Callil makes clear the important distinctions between French and Nazi antisemitism and between Roman Catholic and secular dictatorships. I was also quite struck by one particular remark, and it may one day serve me as point of departure for my honours dissertation in French, if I should ever go so far:

"In one sense the years 1940 to 1944, for the French people, had little to do with the world war raging outside their occupied territory, but much to do with what the French did to the French, and how they ended the long civil war which had begun with the Revolution in 1789" (p. 373)

This is an admirable book about a despicable but centrally placed mid-level actor at a very dark time in French history.

Olwen says

I picked up this book after listening to an interview with the author (an interesting woman herself) as I wanted to know more about the subject's abandoned daughter. It's a thick, heavy tome which would be most of interest to scholars of history, I think.

Michael Selvin says

A terrific encyclopedic summary of anti-Semitic behavior in France during WWII in the form of a biography of Louis Darquier (de Pellepoix), a figure without redemption who made a living for years, not that good, on his hatred of Jews. In great detail, the author take us through the minutiae of anti-Semitism during his entire life and his mindless wife's life. No question on the French participation wholesale in the slaughter of both foreign and French Jews, although some efforts were made to slow down the transportation of French citizens to extermination camps. Vichy never had a second thought, kowtowing to the insane Germans, sometimes going farther than they were required. Also, the moving story of Darquier's children, one illegitimate, and his direct family. Must read for anyone with doubts on the holocaust who has a bit of a brain.

Mikey B. says

A very readable, and personal examination of an individual family experience before, and during the German occupation of France. It focuses primarily on Louis Darquier and his spouse Myrtle Jones – about as loathsome a couple as can be found. There is really not much one can say that is remotely positive about these two.

The author examines the historical genealogy of both. Louis's origins are from Cahors in France and Myrtle from Tasmania (the island at the bottom of Australia). What is so striking is they are both the bad apples of their families (who said opposites attract?). The other family member's became self-sufficient and successful in their respective societies. Admittedly Louis's family had a difficult time during the occupation and his brother Jean collaborated too closely with the Vichy regime. Louis Darquier was a complete "loser".

Louis was never able to support himself; he constantly borrowed large sums of money from his family which he never returned. For him, and his wife Myrtle, lying was not second nature – it was their way of life. From this perspective they were soul-mates. They only knew how to spend money extravagantly – they constantly lived in hotels and ate out. They had a child which they promptly abandoned.

During the 1930's after Hitler came to power – Louis found his calling and became involved with right-wing anti-Semitic groups. He published a great deal of repulsive hate literature propaganda – anti-Semitic and repetitive. He established many contacts in this under-world. At this stage much of his money was coming directly from Nazi Germany, so at least he was not so dependent on his family. He and Myrtle continued living the high life in hotels and restaurants. After the fall of France in the summer of 1940 this underworld ascended to real political power and Louis pontificated at the head of several anti-Semitic organizations. These were involved in the deportation of Jews to Germany – most were killed in concentration camps. There were many children among the victims.

Even though this is a dismal story it is extremely well told and illuminating. It puts a human face on a particular person who did horrible crimes. To his dying day in Spain this anti-Semitism was very alive in Louis Darquier.

It would be interesting to speculate on why anti-Semitism became such an important part of Louis life during the 1930's. Prior to this, it was not a significant focal point in his life. It is possible that Louis simply latched onto this as a money-getting scheme – being the opportunist that he was.

A very sad aspect of this story is the daughter they abandoned in England. She became a psychiatrist and helped many of her patients – one of them being the author of this book. Unfortunately she self-destructed

and died at the age of forty. She was morbidly disillusioned with both her parents.

This detailed story gives one a greater understanding of Vichy France and the agony of a country under occupation. Louis was but one of a large group that collaborated. France still copes and suffers from this debacle.

And to twist history – if France had successfully resisted the German invasion of 1940 – Louis would have remained a non-entity with his hundred or so dismal followers. Quite possibly he would have been arrested and imprisoned.

Margaret Sankey says

What kind of person would join the Action Francaise and parlay that into a career as Vichy stooge? Well, this guy--black sheep son, failed college student, alcoholic, spousal-abusing con-man with a bigamous Australian wife as batshit crazy as he was. He may have come late to Antisemitism, but once he found a cause willing to validate his ego and bankroll his lifestyle, Louis was the perfect collaborator. Painstaking reconstruction of the career path of just one bureaucratic jackass responsible for the deaths of hundreds of rounded-up Jewish children in occupied France.

Mikael says

Well researched and documented life of France's version of Eichmann. A great resource on France's Darkest Years, 1940-1944 and Vichy, France. A must read for everyone.

Heidi says

An interesting read. In a "may you live in interesting times" kind of way.

Last year we went to see the movie "La Rafle", about the Vel d'Hiv' "round up" of French Jews during the Second World War. I bought this book a couple of years ago (because of the title, and because it's about the German occupation of France during WWII, and WWII is one of those things I always want to be learning more about), but only picked it up this year. I will also admit that it got more sustained attention from me because it is by a female author who identifies as Australian.

Things I learned from this book:

- a lot more about the legalities and practicalities of Vichy France (and the fact that the town of Vichy is still trying - and failing - to live down the fact that its name is forever associated with the technically ongoing identity of the French nation during WWII)
- between my previous read (Fatal Silence), this one, and the one I just borrowed from the library today (Hunting Evil: The Nazi War Criminals Who Escaped and the Quest to Bring Them to Justice) I am in a really anti-Roman Catholic-Curia-during-WWII stage of existence
- not surprisingly, France under German occupation is a little more complex than 'Allo 'Allo. I certainly

hadn't previously realised that the Germans essentially re-took control of the whole of France in 1942 prior to reading this book.

- theodicy (the problem of evil) forms a lot of my thought processes at the moment. Not just because of my reading (recent sermons are also an influence)
- the ugliness of the "cultural cringe" of Australians who left here in the 60s and have never really returned is not limited to celebrities such as Germaine Greer, Robert Hughes, and Clive James.
- I **really** don't like generalisations about Tasmanians, even though I don't think I'd like the Jones family one little bit.

Downsides to the book:

- Callil generalises wildly about Australia. I object to this from someone who hasn't lived here since 1960.
- In a lot of ways its not enough about Anne. It's not even all that much about Anne's relationship with her father, or in fact about **family** at all. Which makes the title of the book rather misleading. I actually wish that the book had NOT been given the framing mechanism of Anne Darquier, because as interesting as it occasionally was, it meant that I wanted to know more of Anne's life, more of Anne's thoughts, than I had any chance to be given. I wish Callil had admitted from the beginning that this was a book almost entirely about Louis Darquier with only tangential references to his wife and daughter. If that had been the case, she might not have been so disparaging of Australia in general, into the bargain.

I really am trying not to be too mean about this book. After all, I learnt a lot from it, and I did finish it. I'm also trying not to react just to the clangers about Australia, but the problem was, they were in the first few chapters, and rang so false that they coloured my entire impression of the book.

Ultimately, I'm glad I only paid \$5 for this book. It will probably stay in my collection, but more because it's about WWII than because I have any real intention of re-reading it in the future.

Simon Thompson says

Found this whilst going through bookshelf and reminded of how much I enjoyed reading this a few years ago. It's such a well-researched and insightful book. I loved the author's style and sensitivity in describing the rogues and victims of this area of the 30s and war.

Stephen says

Meticulously researched but distinctly unscholarly, and for these reasons the most entertaining and interesting book on Vichy in years.

D. Ennis says

In depth and well documented study of French Anti-Semitism and the pitiful Vichy government.

Aaron says

I'm not a big fan of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, but when I read Callil's criticism of it I feel compelled to defend it. Because the author of such a mess as this really shouldn't throw stones. But I admire her intent in this book.
