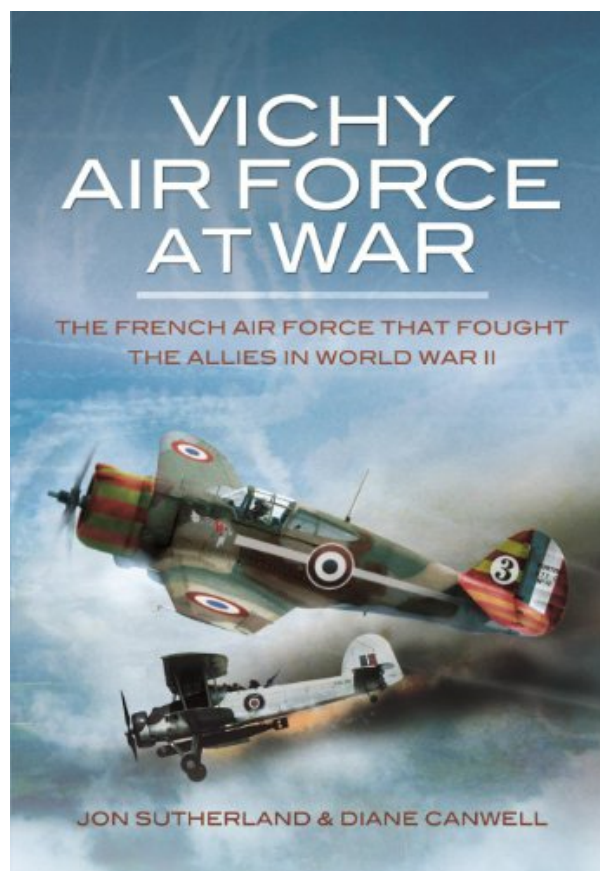


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At the beginning of World War II the French faced the German invasion with 4,360 modern combat aircraft and 790 new machines currently arriving from French and American factories each month. When the phony war finally ended, some 119 of 210 squadrons were ready for action on the north-eastern front. The others were reequipping or stationed in the French colonies. Of the 119 squadrons France could bring into action only one-fourth of the aircraft were battle-ready.

With France overrun by June 1940, what remained of the French air force was either concentrated in the unoccupied zone or had been hastily redeployed to the colonies. Nonetheless, in retaliation for the British attack on the French fleet in Oran, French bombers, based in French Morocco, carried out retaliatory air raids over Gibraltar. The Armée de l'Air de Vichy was born and would fight to the best of its ability against the Free French's allies in theatres as distant as north-west Africa, Syria, Lebanon, Madagascar and the Far East. Not only would they take to the skies against the British and later the Americans, they would also willingly take part in aerial duels against Free French pilots.

Only a handful of books have been written on French aircraft, but never has there been a complete history of the operations of the Vichy Air Force and its fratricidal war. This title literally spans the globe, examining forgotten air combats. It is also important to note that many of the Vichy pilots that survived the air combats later volunteered to join the Free French and would fight with great courage and distinction alongside the very pilots that they had been trying to kill. This book describes all major theatres of combat, examines the aircraft flown and lengthy appendices cover operational units, victory credits and the Aéronautique Navale.

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Vichy French Air Force At War

By james seeley

A poor piece of work by two authors who write one book (on very different subjects!) every few weeks and have no expertise. The photographs here are dark, "flat" and evidently taken from other books, instead of from, say a French historical archive or an original source. The commentary is shakey, with peculiar French-language and French-history errors, like "the l'etat". The authors have little conception of what Vichy France actually was, and how it fits into the history of the wider war. Factual errors abound, and I have even found several grammatical ones too.

I wonder if Pen and Sword Books proofread it. I am curious to know why they publish almost everythig

Sutherland and Canwell write, and at this amazing rate. How can a rather obscure topic like this be researched, and a text written and edited, in about three weeks, since they did their last book?

I am afraid I am very sceptical.

Buying this particular Vichy French Air Force would be a waste of money. I am pleased that I only have to check free library or review copies!

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

third-rate

By a Flynn

These authors write at far too rapid a rate, and on too many subjects, to have any level of insight or expertise. I count 200 books by them in 14 years, on 27 different topics, including musical theatre, cooking, engineering, politics, farming and leisure. I also see that even if not copied straight, much of their text is a paraphrase or precis of other authors'. The large number of factual and even spelling errors is also striking. Not recommended.

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Uneven Take on a Fascinating Subject!

By Mike O'Connor

To my mind, the Vichy Air Force has always been one of those 'missing pieces' of 20th Century military aviation history, a subject begging for a well-researched, insightful account of the the men, units and aircraft that served the Vichy regime. Unfortunately, VICHY AIR FORCE AT WAR, a 2011 Pen & Sword Books release, isn't that book!

After an opening chapter on the Armee de l'Air and its pre-war development and 1940 combat ops, authors Jonathan Sutherland and Diane Canwell shift the focus to the September 1940 Royal Navy strike on the French fleet at Dakar followed by chapters on the 1941 air action over Somaliland, Operation Exporter, Operation Torch, Frenchmen flying for the Luftwaffe and Vichy Air Force pilots/aircraft. Also included are several appendices on the Armee de l'Air in 1940, the Vichy Air Force circa 1940, Vichy Air Force Credits, the Vichy Air Force in Indochina, etc.

At first glance, there's a lot of good information in Sutherland and Canwell's book. However, the book squanders that material by its hodge-podge arrangement. Much of the material found in the Appendices, for example, should have been included in the book's opening chapters. The authors also insert material that has little to do with the Vichy Air Force theme. Not only does the book lack a clear-through narrative, the writing is clunky at best. 'Assembled' seems a better description of the book as the book has a slapped-together feel.

Unfortunately, English-language books on the Vichy Air Force are almost non-existent. Van Haute's PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE FRENCH AIR FORCE, Paul Camelio's ARMEE DE L'AIR and Barry Ketley's FRENCH ACES OF WORLD WAR 2 provide some Vichy Air Force material but a comprehensive history has yet to be written. As far as the Sutherland/Canwell book goes, all I can say is: great topic; lousy execution. Pass on this one, folks.

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