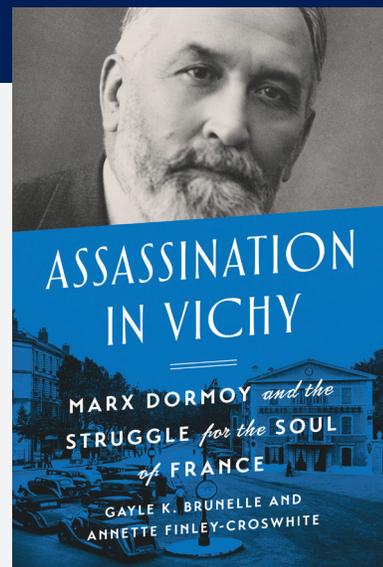


# Assassination in Vichy Marx Dormoy and the Struggle for the Soul of France

By Gayle K. Brunelle and Annette Finley-Croswhite

A combination of engrossing “whodunnit” and historical study of France’s deep political divisions and wartime choices, *Assassination in Vichy* explores the impact of right-wing extremism in wartime France.

During the night of 25 July 1941, assassins planted a time bomb in the bed of the former French Interior Minister, Marx Dormoy. Based on the meticulous examination of thousands of documents, *Assassination in Vichy* tells the story of Dormoy’s murder and the investigation that followed.



ISBN: 9781487588366

\$29.95

Available as an ebook

## Discussion Guide Questions

1. Who was Marx Dormoy? How did his family’s working-class status and Socialist politics shape his character and his life? Why did he refuse to vote dictatorial power to Philippe Pétain, in June of 1940, and how did this event shape Dormoy’s tragic fate?
2. What kind of challenges did Léon Blum, Marx Dormoy, and French people in general face during and immediately after the German invasion of France in May and June of 1940? Given the events of the summer and fall of 1940, does France seem to you to have been well prepared for war?
3. What was the Cagoule and how did it re-emerge as the *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire* (MSR) in 1940? What do the circumstances of the MSR’s creation suggest about the complicated politics in France in the autumn of 1940?
4. Discuss the police investigation of the Dormoy assassination. How did the police track down the assassins? How did Charles Chenevier and Georges Kubler come to the assumption that the Cagoule were the likely perpetrators? What evidence confirmed their theory?
5. Who planted the bomb in Marx Dormoy’s bed at the Relais, and why did they do it? If you could get inside their heads, what do you think made them tick? What can you determine about them from their mug shots in the book? Why did they feel no remorse?
6. What role did gender play in the story of Dormoy’s assassination, and especially in the recruitment of the killers? Even though the book is not ostensibly a work about class or gender, why are both central to the unfolding of Marx Dormoy’s life and death?
7. What was the “National Revolution” and why was it a cause that many in France, including Dormoy’s assassins, found deeply attractive? In what ways was it moulded around other authoritarian models, such as those in Spain, Italy, or Germany? In what ways was it uniquely French in its values and vision for the future of France?

# Assassination in Vichy Marx Dormoy and the Struggle for the Soul of France

By Gayle K. Brunelle and Annette Finley-Croswhite

8. All historical interpretations are just that – interpretations, that can be debated, confirmed, or refuted. This book offers an interpretation of who killed Dormoy and why, based on one analysis of the evidence. What do you think of this interpretation? Do you buy it? Why or why not? If not, what alternative reading of the evidence would you offer?
9. Think about the trajectories of the surviving assassins in the final years of the war and after. Where did they end up, and why? What do their post-war careers suggest about the continuity between the pre- and post-war political struggles in France and the rest of Europe? Was the war a disruption in those struggles, or simply a part of them?
10. Why was no one punished for Dormoy’s murder, during or after the war? What forces shaped this outcome, the post-war investigation, and the historical memory of Dormoy’s life and death?
11. Think about the peregrinations of Marx Dormoy’s statue in Montluçon. Why was it moved, and more than once? Why was its displacement so contentious, and what can be learned from the struggles over its placement regarding the history and memory of Marx Dormoy and the war in France?
12. Why are few people today aware of Marx Dormoy as a “first resister or first martyr” of the Second World War? Why has his story been largely forgotten by French people, and what does remembering him today signify? In other words, what can someone in the twenty-first century learn from studying the life, murder, and legacy of Marx Dormoy?