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Olivier Wieviorka, *Orphans of the Republic: The Nation's Legislators in Vichy France*. Trans. George Holoch. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2009. 436pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$55 U.S. (cl.) ISBN 978-0-674-03261-3

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On July 9-10, 1940, the Third Republic disintegrated. With German soldiers in Paris and the armistice signed, members of the French parliament gathered in Vichy to determine the government's fate. They first called for a revision of the discredited 1875 constitution on July 9, by a margin of 624 to four. The following day, by a vote of 570 to eighty, with seventeen abstentions, they granted full powers to then-premier Marshal Philippe Pétain to create a new founding document for the state.[1]

The basic facts of the Third Republic's demise are well known, but Olivier Wieviorka's *Orphans of the Republic* is the first book to examine in detail the lives and careers of the men who, in the end, eliminated the parliament for the duration of the German occupation, allowing Pétain to consolidate an authoritarian and increasingly repressive regime. In postwar myths about the July 10 vote, the 570 men who voted yes were the founding collaborators of the Vichy regime, and the eighty who voted no, the first resisters. Yet the reality, as Wieviorka convincingly argues, is much more complicated.

Presenting a detailed analysis of the careers of several hundred men based on painstaking research, Wieviorka "seeks to understand the choices these politicians made, by describing the paths members of parliament followed from July 10, 1940, to the Liberation." (p. 1) As suggested by the subtitle of the original French edition, *Orphélins de la République: Destinées des députés et sénateurs français (1940-1945)*,[2] the analysis actually extends through the purge and the election of the Constituent Assembly on October 21, 1945, in which 80 percent of members were newcomers. Wieviorka seeks to answer a few key questions: did the Third Republic crumble primarily as a result of long-term parliamentary dysfunction, or in response to the dramatic events of May-June 1940? Did the July 10 vote stem more from ideas or from circumstances? What choices did members of parliament make over the next four years, in response to Vichy policy and wartime events?

This study contains a wealth of new information, largely thanks to Wieviorka's use of previously untapped public and private archives. Particularly important are fifty-seven boxes of documents previously held by the Conseil d'Etat related to postwar activities of the *jury d'honneur*. Beginning in April 1945, this panel of three appointed jurors--all former Resistance members--reviewed the cases of parliamentarians who had voted to grant Pétain full powers or had later joined the Vichy government. The jury assessed the members' level of support for the Vichy regime and collaboration, as well as their commitment to the Resistance, and determined whether they were eligible for reelection in the postwar government. Complete files contain a biographical summary, a police report, recommendations by prefects and departmental Committees of Liberation, attestations of resistance, and an explanation of the jury's decision. These documents, unavailable in the 1960s when Peter Novick published the first detailed analysis of the jury [3], allow Wieviorka to provide the most complete picture yet of parliament members' activities during the Occupation, as well as their later justifications for the choices they made. He also draws upon private correspondence between senators and their sitting president up

to July 10, Jules Jeanneney. The president's grandson, historian and political figure Jean-Noël Jeanneney, provided the letters to Wieviorka, along with documents related to the senate in 1940-42. To these important archival sources, Wieviorka adds source material from dozens of memoirs and diaries written by the parliamentarians themselves.

Wieviorka organizes the analysis chronologically, from the transfer of civilian to military leadership in June 1940 through the post-Liberation purge, devoting two chapters to the short- and long-term causes of parliament's abdication. In Wieviorka's view, failure in civilian leadership leading up to the votes of July 1940 "signaled the derailment of the republican system." (pp. 28-29) Following the signing of the armistice, parliament leaders provided no significant opposition to the maneuvers of then-deputy premier Pierre Laval, who largely engineered the votes of July 9-10. Moreover, the return to France of lawmakers who had sailed to Casablanca on the *Massilia* reflected "the legalism that governed members of parliament" and their sense of "duty to respect the norm." (p. 26) The British attack against the French fleet at Mers-el-Kébir on July 3 further convinced lawmakers and the French public that it was impossible to resume combat alongside their former ally. (p. 31)

The July 10 vote that followed a week later thus was a response to the short-term circumstances of defeat and occupation, as well as longer-term parliamentary dysfunction. The National Assembly, the joint body of senators and deputies with a total of some nine hundred members at the time, was only partially represented in Vichy. Those who voted "yes" fell into categories of hopeful reformers, enthusiastic collaborationists, and "temporizers"—"*temporisateurs*" in the original French, or those who remained compliant while waiting for events to unfold. According to Wieviorka, the vote on July 10 served three functions: militarily, it ratified the armistice signed on June 22, 1940; diplomatically, it enabled France to pursue a policy of collaboration with the Third Reich; and domestically, it promised reform and "national restoration." (p. 82) He dissects the vote by region and party affiliation, and presents various statistical calculations in numerous tables. In geographic terms, the regions most affected by combat generally supported the granting of full powers: in the Nord the ratio of "yes" to "no" was twenty-eight to one, in Picardie fourteen to one, in Ile-de-France, thirty-eight to four. In contrast, the ratio in Rhône-Alpes was fifty-three to sixteen, in Aquitaine twenty-nine to ten, and in Languedoc twenty-two to eleven. (map and table, pp. 32-33)

In terms of party affiliation, those on the left provided 91 percent of the "no" votes and 80 percent of the abstentions, figures that confirm the legend of leftist opposition to the plan offered by Pétain and Laval. Yet this dissent should not be overestimated, according to Wieviorka, as nearly 65 percent of the members in the leftist parties voted "yes." Even Communist members cannot be exonerated from responsibility in the July 10 vote, despite the unseating of sixty-two Communist members on January 20, 1940. Fourteen dissident Communist deputies who had broken with the Soviet Union following Stalin's pact with Hitler on August 23, 1939, still sat in the parliament on July 10; eight voted "yes," three "no," two were absent, and one had sailed on the *Massilia* (Marcel Brout). (p. 86)

Although Socialists opposed full powers at a higher rate than did the Assembly as a whole—35.7 percent, compared to the general rate of 18.2 percent—ninety voted "yes." (p. 89) Among the temporizers, François Roux, SFIO (*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*) deputy from Saône-et-Loire, claimed in his defense memorandum for the *jury d'honneur* that his vote was meant to "gain time to organize by all appropriate means the actual resistance that would tend to reduce and then annihilate the occupying enemy." (cited p. 91) Reformer Albert Paulin, SFIO deputy from Puy-de-Dôme, claimed in a 1945 memoir that "no one—absolutely no one—thought that the regime could continue to function in the absence of profound transformations imposed by the circumstances: the Constitution had to be revised....And no one would have thought seriously of relying on Parliament to reform itself." (cited p. 92) Charles Spinasse, an anti-Communist SFIO deputy from Corrèze, hoped that authoritarianism in France would give way to Proudhonian Socialism; in the meantime, he supported collaboration. (p. 92)

Wieviorka confirms that parliament members from parties on the right overwhelmingly supported granting Pétain full powers, with an opposition rate of only 5.4 percent. Although these members coalesced into four separate parties in the Senate and nine in the Chamber, they were united by anticommunism and a desire to restore a French patriotism which, in their view, had been diminished by Communist internationalism and Socialist pacifism. (p. 98)

A great benefit of Wieviorka's study is that he tracks the paths of these men beyond July 10, 1940, and through the Liberation. Like the broader French population, they reacted to events of the war and the impact of Vichy policies, often switching loyalties as circumstances changed. Some who initially supported Pétain were prompted to resist after the return of Laval as head of government in April 1942. As the government became more repressive and intensified collaboration, delivering workers, raw materials, and Jews to the Nazis, more parliament members chose some form of resistance. Ideology, however, plays a relatively minor role in this portrait: "Marxist-Leninism, democratic socialism, and liberalism contributed little to the shaping of courses of conduct." (p. 338) We see various groupings defined less by doctrine than by concrete personal interests and the depth of one's desire to take some kind of action. There were "pro- and anti-German collaborators, pro- and anti-German Vichy supporters, Pétainists favorable or hostile to the Resistance, and, of course, resisters from the outset, whether or not they were Gaullists." (p. 262)

According to Wieviorka, "the great majority of parliament members were hostile to the Occupation forces throughout the period." (p. 263) He offers rough estimates for the number of parliament members in a few categories ranging from collaboration to resistance. He clarifies that the numbers reflect "orders of magnitude" rather than precise figures, owing to gaps in the available evidence. (p. 264) After 1942, between 100 and 120 members remained committed to collaboration. Some additional 150 members were more concerned with domestic reform and supported Pétain through the Liberation. Thus, around one-third of parliament members supported the regime in some way until the end. Some 20 percent remained passive, choosing neither the path of ardent collaboration nor that of active resistance. Wieviorka estimates that around 300 members, or roughly one-third, supported the resistance in various ways. Those who further put themselves in danger to oppose Vichy or Germany numbered around 120, or more than 10 percent. (p. 266) Dispelling any notion that parliamentarians remained only cautiously inactive during the Occupation, Wieviorka movingly describes the suffering endured by members who were imprisoned (Henri Martel, Pierre Mendès France), deported (Léon Blum, Yvon Delbos), and executed (Georges Mandel, François Beaudouin). (pp. 279-83)

After the Liberation, the Third Republic parliamentarians who had voted to grant full powers to Pétain went through a political purge in two phases. Through April 6, 1945, prefects exonerated members based on a demonstrated commitment to the Resistance, making them eligible to run for office or sit on provisional local councils. From then on, the *jury d'honneur* reviewed the cases of 436 individuals, exonerating 113 members and upholding electoral ineligibility in 321 cases. (In two cases, those of François de Wendel and André Mellenne, the jury reversed previous decisions of ineligibility. (p. 401, n. 132) Eighty percent of the members voted into the Constituent Assembly on October 21, 1945, were new to national elected office: "The bell tolling renewal had sounded." (p. 330)

Orphans of the Republic greatly enhances our understanding of the beliefs held and the paths chosen by the wartime members of the French Parliament.^[4] Perhaps Wieviorka's greatest contribution is the tracking of complex and shifting alliances, which overturn facile assumptions about these members' votes and actions. Some who voted "yes" on July 10 joined the Resistance (Jules Fourier), others who voted no or sailed on the *Massilia* (Marcel Brout) ended up collaborating, with a wide range of reactions in between.

Occasionally, the broader conclusions that Wieviorka draws from his research and his comments on method are less convincing. There is a natural temptation to read into the date of July 10, 1940, the

tragedies that followed, and Wieviorka does not entirely escape the anachronism. Responding to the notion that July 10 has been considered “the matrix of l’Etat français,” he argues that it is “important to understand the reasons that incited politicians who were by definition republicans and patriots to legitimate a government, indeed a regime, that explicitly denied the values to which these elected officials were apparently devoted.” (p. 8) Yet as Julian Jackson reminds us, on July 10, 1940, parliament members “were not voting for what we have come to know as ‘the Vichy regime.’”[4]

Regarding historical method, Wieviorka argues that his study signals the need for a reconsideration of the term “accommodation,” first elaborated by Philippe Burrin.[5] According to Wieviorka, the term inadequately addresses courses of action stemming from drastically different motives, such as the collaboration of Marcel Déat, compared to that of a mayor who under pressure applied the directive of a *Kommandantur*. (p. 335) The term also lacks explanatory power, in his view, because “accommodation—for the majority of politicians—was a provisional, transitory, and reversible state....” (p. 336) Yet neither argument effectively invalidates the concept. The notion of accommodation allows the historian to compare and nuance individuals’ actions, perceive degrees of voluntarism in the actions of the pressured mayor and Déat, and interpret changes in political allegiance over time. In fact, some readers may find that Wieviorka’s study confirms rather than disproves the term’s analytical value.

Wieviorka concludes his study with reflections on the return of parliamentary inefficiency during the Fourth Republic. Yet he omits a potentially fruitful comparison: the granting of full powers to De Gaulle in May 1958, again to create a new constitution. Though the Algerian crisis lacked the magnitude of the 1940 defeat, the 1958 vote is perhaps worth comparative reflections on the failings of French parliamentary government. In his final paragraph, Wieviorka suggests that his examination of paths taken by parliament members sheds light on the choices of the broader French public during the Occupation. “It must be recognized,” he concludes, “that the country, in the end, did not behave so badly.” (p. 342) While it is true that only a minority of French people actively supported Vichy and collaboration, some readers, having just reviewed the devastating policies implemented by Pierre Laval—the quintessential parliamentarian—may wonder if these are the most pertinent concluding thoughts.

Despite these reservations, *Orphans of the Republic* is a highly valuable new study of the Vichy regime, and the English translation is a welcome addition to the historiography. Based on thorough, rigorous research, it likely will long remain the definitive work on the last parliament members of the Third Republic. In the classroom, undergraduates may not fully appreciate the book’s detailed analyses, but it could generate constructive discussions in graduate seminars, particularly when paired with Burrin’s *France under the Germans*.

Some readers may find, moreover, that Wieviorka’s study is relevant to recent debates in the United States, as justifications for congressional authorization of the 2003 Iraq invasion seem to echo claims from postwar France that the leadership had abused the votes of parliament members in July 1940. *Orphans of the Republic* is essential reading for anyone who seeks to understand political compromises made in times of crisis—real and perceived—and, when those compromises later are widely denounced, the subsequent quest for exculpation. It is a fascinating collective portrait of French parliament members during the *années noires*, skillfully sketched in shades of grey.

NOTES

[1] Histories often cite 569 “yes” votes, the number also provided in the *Journal Officiel*. Wieviorka clarifies that one member, Jean Stuhl, asked for a correction in his vote, bringing the total to 570. Wieviorka retains the commonly cited total of eighty “no” votes.

[2] Originally published as *Les Orphelins de la République: Destinées des députés et sénateurs français (1940-1945)* (Paris: Seuil, 2001).

[3] Peter Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy: The Purge of Collaborators in Liberated France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

[4] Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 133.

[5] Philippe Burrin, *La France à l'Heure Allemande: 1940-1944* (Paris: Seuil, 1993); English translation by Janet Lloyd, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (New York: The New Press, 1996).

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