

petitions for business but for justice, particularly after the House of Lords took up active judicature in the 1620s.

All of this would seem to betoken a lively and flourishing institution, and so for the most part Kyle describes it. But it was also an embattled and arguably a dysfunctional one. The Crown's chief interest in it was the granting of taxes; these were grudgingly given, and from the royal perspective, inadequate. On the other hand, public business—new laws and the redress of grievances—was increasingly encumbered by procedural and constitutional debate, or buried in an overburdened committee system. The impeachment of public officers, revived in 1621, added to the estrangement of Crown and Parliament, and it too encroached on the dispatch of business. Parliaments that broke up in dispute with the Crown, as most did from 1610 on, resulted in no new laws at all. A legislature that failed to legislate was a dying body, as R. W. K. Hinton argued in a 1957 article that proved influential on a generation of parliamentary historians.

The cycle has turned again, and the picture of Parliament that emerges from Kyle's study is one of a robust institution taking on new functions and responsibilities, and despite (or because of) conflict with the Crown, deeply engaged with a public that eagerly followed its affairs. What is lacking, however, both in this and other works on the discursive practices of the nation's assembly, is a fresh sense of the great issues that had brought the political system to crisis by the late 1620s, and would plunge it into civil war a decade and a half later. It is a little like discussing the scenery and costumes of *Hamlet* without getting at the script. It is time again for the play.

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Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. Pp. 474. \$42.00 (ISBN 978-0-691-14297-5).

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With the publication in 1979 of his book *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Fayard, 1979), Jean Fourastié coined the expression that is so widely used to characterize the postwar years in Europe. Seldom does history see a period in which social and economic change has been so rapid. As Philip Nord, author of a number of studies on the cultural and political history of France and professor of European modern and contemporary History at Princeton, claims in the title of this, his latest

book, this was not only a period of rapid modernization but also of France's equivalent of the New Deal. In this book, Nord allies himself with that 40-year old tradition of historiography that has sought to explore the continuities between the Third Republic and the postwar years, a period in which Vichy was more than the simple parenthesis that some French historians would have us believe. Nord makes no secret of his ambitions: to treat the liberation as Robert Paxton treated Vichy France in his study of 1972; to write a revisionist account of the liberation. Just as Paxton described Vichy's ambiguities, a reactionary regime but one that aspired to realize a program of modernization conceived in conservative terms, so Philip Nord emphasizes the complexities of movements such as the resistance, identified with *La France Libre*, and moments such as the liberation. Adopting this approach, he seeks to avoid writing a linear history offering only simplistic answers, and to explore instead those "gray areas" that figure prominently in the work of the French historian Pierre Laborie.

To make his case, Nord divides his book into two parts. Starting from the premise that the immediate postwar years offered the crucial opportunity for recasting the very structure of the state, the first part of the book examines the "French model" based on an amalgam of liberalism, tinged with an admiration for America and an active distaste for any form of state intervention, and based on a deep attachment to policies of centralization and regulation. He then goes on to describe the careers of key civil servants or technocrats of the new state, men such as Michel Debré, Alfred Sauvy, Pierre Laroque, and Jean Monnet. As he points out, "the new elite at the Liberation was not so new" (22); most of them were the "nonconformists" of the thirties. Some were quite close to the Vichy Regime, before rallying to the cause of *La France Libre*. For Nord, de Gaulle too was a man of the establishment, "a general who liked command and hierarchy" (5).

The second part of the book is devoted entirely to the consideration of cultural questions, an emphasis that Nord justifies on the grounds that "no state in Europe devotes a greater proportion of its resources to the promotion of the arts than France" (217). This section describes the construction of "*l'état culturel*", focusing on three key moments: the *Front Populaire* of Léon Blum, which elevated state intervention in the arts into a coherent public policy; the achievements of André Malraux as minister for cultural affairs during the Fifth Republic from 1959 to 1969; and, finally, the decision by President Mitterand to "set aside an unprecedented 1 percent of the nation's budget for cultural affairs" (217).

Both parts of the book examine the central ideas, institutions and figures—men, not women—for the same key periods: the crisis of the 1930s, together with the Popular Front; the war years, seen both from the perspective of Vichy and *France Libre*; and, finally, the liberation that gives birth to the Fourth Republic. At each step, Nord tries carefully to explain how tiny and

irrelevant are the difference between Left and Right. If he does not embrace wholeheartedly Gérard Noiriel's thesis on the republican origins of Vichy, he does insist on the proximity between the world of Vichy and the values of many resisters, which eased the transfer of allegiance from one to the other.

Nord's book provides a selective view of the period, devoted to the small circles of the elite and, quite logically, he is therefore interested in the places where this elite was educated, and his account privileges the role of institutions like Sciences Po and the École nationale d'administration (ENA) that the Left hoped might take on the prestige of the former.

This synthesis is based on research that ranges across the period from 1930 to 1960 and will be of most value to nonspecialists. It highlights those crucial questions of continuity and rupture that figured so centrally in the approach of Professor René Rémond during his long years of teaching history at Sciences Po. However, this approach paid scant regard to social history, to questions of gender, and to the study of consumerism and publicity that have come to replace the former focus on the ambiguous attitudes of an elite. Instead, we now seek a wider understanding of the social and political process that seeks to address the larger questions that influence the choice of government, and the support for this or that policy. To understand the past and our present, we need something richer than an account of the group of technocrats described here.

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Magda Teter, *Sinners on Trial: Jews and Sacrilege after the Reformation*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011. Pp. 358. \$39.95 (ISBN: 978-0-674-05297-0).

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Magda Teter's *Sinners on Trial: Jews and Sacrilege after the Reformation* aims to discuss the trials for sacrilege that took place in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. The book gives detailed account of several cases, in which Christians or Jews were charged with stealing, mishandling, or abusing Christian ritual objects. Particular attention is given to the charge of the Host desecration, whereby the Jews were accused of performing rituals defiling the consecrated wafer. The charge, first launched in Western Europe in the Middle Ages, did not appear in Poland-Lithuania until the sixteenth century. Teter persuasively shows that its appearance in the Commonwealth was spurred not so much