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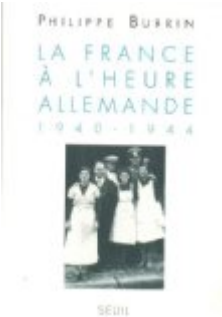
Philippe Burrin. *La France a l'heure allemande.* Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995. 560 pp.p paper, ISBN 978-2-02-018322-2.



Reviewed by Kathryn E. Amdur

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Vichy France's adaptation to a German-imposed summer timetable (daylight savings time) offers Philippe Burrin an apt metaphor for French life under German occupation. The French title of his book is thus more evocative than the English-language version (dubbed *Living with Defeat* in England or *France Under the Germans* in the United States). The translation makes the book usable for advanced graduate seminars, but the original has other rewards for those able to persist through a thick volume of tightly packed but always compelling French prose.

Burrin's study focuses on the varied forms of French "adaptation" or "accommodation" (beyond simple collaboration) to German hegemony, including behaviors by government leaders, sectors of civil society, and partisan groups of assorted persuasions. A Swiss scholar, Burrin takes as a given Vichy's share of responsibility for collaboration, a view often still contested in France (see for example Francois Dreyfus's *Histoire de Vichy* [Perrin, 1990]). But Burrin refuses to characterize the French as either a nation of collaborators or a nation of resisters--or to label those in the middle "functional collaborators" or "functional resisters," the respective terms used by Robert Paxton and John Sweets (see, in addition to their books, Sweets' essay "Hold that Pendulum: Redefining Fascism, Collaborationism, and Resistance," in *French Historical Studies*, Fall 1988). As Burrin concludes: "To be a hero is honorable; not to be one is not necessarily dishonorable" (p. 471). In short, the dominant tone of "the black years" of Vichy is instead rendered in varied shades of gray (pp. 8-9).

>From the start, the word ***collaboration*** in French parlance rang with both positive and pejorative meanings. Philippe Petain's speech (30 Oct. 1940) after his meeting with Hitler at Montoire, which launched the state policy of collaboration, surely gave it a positive spin. But already, especially on the left, the word smacked of treason, as in "class collaboration." And French leaders aimed less for a true harmony of interests than to block the internal unrest they associated with warfare, both from the distant example of the Commune and from more recent memories of strikes and mutinies in 1917. Still, the "correct" behavior of

German troops, the lingering Locarno spirit of reconciliation and even the residue of French Anglophobia (both still alive, say Burrin, in 1940) all magnified the positive image of collaboration. Novels from the late 1930s, ostensibly about World War I, imagined welcoming a German protectorate; the later defeat was not needed for inspiration. Many French admired Nazism's aura of order and discipline (even if not idealizing Hitler's Germany) or feared war and feared Bolshevism even more.

Burrin's brief survey of official policy (Part I, "Reasons of State") confirms the familiar portraits of Laval as cagey manipulator, Admiral F.-X. Darlan as naive technocrat, and Petain as remote elder statesman--though not the witless old man of Jean Marboeuf's film (***Petain***, 1993). The "myth" of the "double game" is shown to be partially true (like most myths), given Vichy's secret negotiations with England--but the overtures came from England, and France reported them to the Germans, who even welcomed the idea as a way to ease England's blockade and thus boost German access to French goods. Economic collaboration with Germany offered more than mere survival (or profits) for French industry: technical exchanges could "tutor" French companies in standardization of parts and the use of synthetic materials, while sending workers to Germany would dismember the communist menace at home.

Beyond official policy, the heart of Burrin's work (Part II, "Accommodations") surveys individual and collective behaviors, notably those of institutions or associations such as the Church and business groups. Postal censorship records reveal that Petain's Montoire speech elicited a mix of hope and scepticism, though little revulsion. Fear and constraint later took their toll, but much room remained for choices based on material interest or ideological complicity. The Catholic Church, favorable to Vichy's rural, family, and authoritarian ethos, expressed little dismay at its collaborationist policies, while also sharing their anti-communist and even anti-Semitic premises. Employers' organizations largely but not totally approved the new regime (Richard Vinen's ***The Politics of French Business, 1936-1945*** [Cambridge, 1991] is cited as "stimulating but debatable" [p. 234 n.]), even though these groups distanced themselves from Vichy once German pressures intensified. Most industrialists (as John Sweets agrees) were reluctant to recruit "volunteers" for labor in Germany, although some did facilitate Germany's task in the hope of offering workers less dismal conditions and perhaps preserving their own work forces for the future. Many businesses solicited (not just accepted) orders from Germany and advertised in German newspapers. Shopkeepers received German customers more cordially than simple good sense would require. Antique dealers made sales to Germany which violated laws to safeguard the national patrimony. Bankers invested in firms contracting with Germany and helped to fund collaborationist parties, but some also later aided the Resistance in what Burrin terms "a massive purchase of indulgence" (p. 282) once the war's end was in sight.

Social and cultural life likewise betrayed a broad range of accommodating behavior. Social or sexual contacts with Germans multiplied, to incur sweeping disfavor only after Liberation. German supplanted English as the favored foreign language to study--even for girls, in what Burrin deems acceptance by their parents of a possible future German son-in-law. The wartime vitality of French culture could be championed as an act of defiance against German hegemony; but German cultural policy, notes Burrin, was actually quite liberal, to promote the idea that France had a cultural future in Nazi Europe. The prevailing tone of normality encouraged authors to publish and even to alter texts to conform to censors' standards. Scientific and cultural exchanges continued: "By no means everybody regarded Nazism as a radical negation of all intellectual values" (p. 361). The ***College de France*** expelled Jews before

being legally required to do so. The historical journal *Annales* continued publication in Paris (under a different title) after its Jewish director Marc Bloch was removed; it later used Bloch's martyrdom to justify calling itself "one of the most vital centers of intellectual resistance against oppression" (p. 327). Such accommodation "boiled down," says Burrin, "to accepting the prospect of a future with no more Jews" (p. 328).

Many intellectuals and others went beyond mere accommodation to outright commitment, whether from ideological or more mundane motives. Burrin sharply distinguishes the two sets of behavior, given that most "accommodators" hedged their bets from late 1942 onward, while true partisans became more fanatical as German pressures increased. Burrin's survey (Part III, "Commitment") covers not just the far right but also leftists who took the "socialist" features of Nazism seriously, plus "liberals" eager to streamline capitalism and unify the European economy: those whom Pierre Drieu la Rochelle scorned as "liberal minds liberally open to the opposite of liberalism" (p. 406). More is said about the organized groups (including a socio- professional analysis of their memberships) than about the size of their audience, but police reports show they did not rant to empty houses. Thus, "the collaborationist parties grouped the activist elements of a far broader current of opinion" (p. 429). Burrin offers no parallel survey of Resistance networks, formal or informal. His point is not to compare the two sides, but instead to discern various modes of compliance or cohabitation and to show how the defeat let erstwhile "patriots" find in Nazism (as many conquered peoples had found in the French Revolution) a weapon against hated features of the "old regime."

In sum, this rich study presents much new material and adds depth and detail to familiar generalizations. It is thoroughly documented with primary and many lesser-known secondary sources, in both French and German. Culture and politics are more fruitfully blended than in some recent volumes, such as the edited collection by Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh, ***Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1944*** (Berg/St. Martin's, 1989). The cast of characters introduced (sometimes with too few helpful hints for a foreign audience) fills ten pages of a names-only index, but prominent figures like Lucien Febvre and Frederic Joliot-Curie are effectively spotlighted; the balance of particular and general is well maintained.

A final word on the English-language edition, recently reviewed in the *New York Times*, 26 March 1997: Like that reviewer (Richard Bernstein), I found Janet Lloyd's translation often clumsy and far too literal--although I admit to using some of her wording in the passages quoted here. Evocative idioms become merely obscure in English: "the French keyboard" for "le clavier francais" (to denote an array of political options to be played [pp. 361, 367 in the respective editions]). No editorial notes help sort out the myriad figures or explain such labels as "Anglo-Saxon" for the Atlantic alliance. Burrin packs a lot of punch into each of his sentences, but his rhythm is smooth, while the English text mechanically transposes his diction phrase by phrase. My advice: order the translation for your libraries, but stick with the original (if possible) for yourselves.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at http://www.uakron.edu/hfrance/

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