

Laurent Joly. *L'Antisémitisme de bureau*. Paris: B. Grasset, 2011. 444 pp. \$47.95, paper, ISBN 978-2-246-73691-2.



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Laurent Joly's detailed study of the commissariat général aux Questions juives (CGQJ--Commissariat General for Jewish Affairs) and the préfecture de Police de Paris (PP--Paris Police Prefecture) offers a comparative view of the two public organizations primarily responsible for carrying out antisemitic persecution in France under the Vichy regime. By examining these two organizations, Joly is able to address several issues including the institutional motivation for anti-Jewish policies and the administrative functioning of the French State. He argues that studying anti-Jewish policies as put into practice by these two branches of the administration provides an ideal perspective for examining the functioning and practical processes of the Vichy regime. Following a "micro-sociohistorical" approach, Joly examines the differences and similarities between an established bureaucracy (the PP) and a new ideologically driven institution (the CGQJ) (p. 15). Focusing both on the individuals charged with applying anti-Jewish measures on a daily basis and on administration itself, Joly provides an important contribu-

tion to the historiography of antisemitism and the functioning of the Vichy regime.

Created in March 1941 by the Vichy government at the request of the German occupiers, the CGQJ was intended to centralize policies against Jews and oversee the implementation of anti-Jewish laws. It was also responsible for administering the regime's economic Aryanization policies. At its height, the CGQJ had 1,000 employees with its leadership drawn from the antisemitic Right. The PP was a well-established organization with its own bureaucratic culture independent of the new French State. In 1940, a "Jewish service" was established within the PP to locate, control, and label Jews in the Paris region. With 150 agents, the PP registered 150,000 Jews (of the 300,000 in France) and organized the infamous Vél d'Hiv roundup of foreign Jews in July 1942. Choosing these two administrations allows Joly to compare their functioning: a new, partisan organization with a large number of employees responsible for coordinating persecution at a national level (CGQJ) versus a long-standing, formerly republi-

can institution with limited manpower carrying out the laws on a local level (PP). While they were administrative rivals, the CGQJ and the PP were also interdependent partners in Vichy's exclusionary politics.

The differences between the two organizations extend to the sources Joly employs in his study. The archives of the CGQJ consist of thousands of dossiers while the PP purged its records after the liberation of France as the country transitioned back to republican government. Joly examines the 2,250 administrative dossiers of the CGQJ's personnel files, supplementing them with personal papers and interviews with a dozen former employees. He is extremely familiar with the sources, having used them for his dissertation and an earlier book on the CGQJ.[1] Reconstructing the wartime personnel of the Jewish service of the PP required more creative archival work, but Joly's persistence led to rich sources including the PP's purge commission files and interviews with half a dozen employees. The sources available to Joly inspired a sociological approach to examining the ways in which Vichy's anti-Jewish policies were applied by its administrative offices.

Joly's five chapters create a nuanced and layered view of the inner workings of the French bureaucracy charged with carrying out antisemitic policies. His examination is clearly embedded within the context of the constraints imposed by the German occupation, but he amply demonstrates how the French figured out their own solutions and practical logistics in ways that attempted to preserve French sovereignty and reflected French bureaucratic, political, and social culture. It is within this larger context that Joly examines individual considerations (disposition, political opinions, patriotism, professional ambition, etc.) and how they influenced the day-to-day implementation of exclusionary measures and the Final Solution in France.

The employees of the PP had direct contact with the Jewish victims of antisemitic laws and

measures, and Joly focuses on the work of "Office 91," which dealt with "questionable" cases. The office also served as a place where Jews went in search of information regarding interned or deported family members. Joly finds that the employees of Office 91 had a certain latitude for interpreting the laws, but they carried out their work in a rigorous and pragmatic manner. He describes a permeating culture of xenophobia (and antisemitism by extension) and obedience to rules despite the fact that the police force was an established institution charged with a "special" and exceptional task. It was precisely because there was a long-standing professional ethic that prevented disobedience that most agents participated in persecution. The CGQJ, in contrast, was created specifically to deal with the "Jewish problem." As a result, the organization attracted supporters of Marshal Pétain's National Revolution and committed anti-Semites. Joly calls the CGQJ an example of "bureaucratic antisemitism without Jews" as its employees had no contact with the victims of the government's policies and tasks were divided to the point that Jews became an abstraction (p. 223). There were other differences when compared to the PP: the CGQJ's employees were better paid, there were more advancement opportunities, a large number of its agents were women, personal connections mattered in personnel matters, and it was viewed as a temporary employer.

Joly also examines the purge and postwar justice procedures undertaken against the agents of the two organizations. Overall very few sanctions were imposed on the individuals in either institution. In their defense, both groups emphasized the "purely" bureaucratic and "objective" nature of their work and denied any ideological influences (p. 283). Only two men from the PP faced legal proceedings for their bureaucratic activities during the war for individual acts of brutality—not for the collective acts of persecution that led to deportation and genocide. In addition to examining the Liberation period, Joly carries his study into the more recent past to discuss the scandal created af-

ter the “discovery” of the infamous Jewish catalog (*fichier juif*) originally created by the PP in 1940-41. By doing so, Joly demonstrates the continuing effects of bureaucratic actions for politics and individuals.

While Joly treats some common themes, such as bureaucratic antisemitism, institutional competition, and French sovereignty under the German occupation, he does so with such detail, nuance, and careful archival work that it enhances our understanding of the Vichy period. This is not a work on the effects of the Jewish community, but it is not meant to be. Jews are not left out of the book, but Joly demonstrates that for many people working for Vichy’s anti-Jewish organizations was “just” a job. It serves as an important reminder of the effects of politics and its disconnect from the rest of society, but it is a book for an already well-informed and French-reading audience. Joly assumes the reader has knowledge of the Vichy regime and its tenets as well as a familiarity with French bureaucracy. For specialists, *L’Antisémitisme de bureau* offers an important comparative administrative history of the key organizations responsible for carrying out the Final Solution in France.

Note

[1]. Joly has spent enough time with the sources to be able to recognize the handwriting of certain employees in the marginalia. His earlier works on related subjects include a 1,410-page dissertation, “Vichy et le commissariat général aux Questions juives: Contribution à l’histoire de la Shoah en France (1941-1944)” (PhD diss., l’université de Paris I, 2004); and the book, *Vichy dans la “Solution finale”: Histoire du commissariat général aux Questions juives (1941-1944)* (Paris: Grasset, 2006).

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