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Philip Nord, *France's New Deal from the Thirties to the Postwar Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. xi + 474 pp. Notes and index. \$39.50 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 978-0691-14297-5.

Review Essay by Herrick Chapman, New York University

In his previous major monograph, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France*, Philip Nord tracked “republicanism’s slow march through the institutions” by analyzing how elites of democratic conviction gathered strength in the waning years of the Second Empire and then consolidated their authority through a new political culture that made the Third Republic a durable regime. Now in his new book, likely also to become a classic, Nord offers a superb account of the country’s next tumultuous era of regime change—from the final decade of the Third Republic, through Vichy, to the “Liberation Moment” of the fledgling Fourth Republic.[1] If *The Republican Moment* focused principally on masonic lodges, the Paris bar, and other settings in civil society where democratic habits and republican values took hold, *France’s New Deal* concentrates on institutions within or closely linked to the state. And well it should. For as Nord argues, the transformation of France in the 1930s and 40s took place mainly by overhauling the state and expanding its reach. The new book, too, is less the story of triumphant republicans and radicals of the Left. On the contrary, Nord gives greatest attention to the survival, adaptation, and often under-acknowledged impact of conservative and centrist elites who navigated through the war years to become key architects of the new postwar France.

Six well-chosen case studies enable Nord to follow the journeys of these elites from their formative experiences in the interwar years through their institution-building efforts in the 1940s. In Part One of the book, “The French Model,” Nord focuses on the cases of economic planning, social welfare policy, and the survival of Sciences Po as the pivot point in elite education for the high civil service. Part Two, “A Culture of Quality,” traces the emergence of a “Culture State” via renovations in the state’s management of theater, cinema, and radio. Nord gives the peculiarities of each of these domains their due, and he takes care not to overlook the significance of rupture and reversals of fortune. But continuity is Nord’s watchword, and in each of his case studies he makes a convincing argument for highlighting the success of conservative and centrist reformers in absorbing policy agendas created by the Left and turning them to their own advantage during the conservative retrenchments of the Daladier government of 1938-40, the Vichy regime, and the Liberation era.

Historical accounts emphasizing continuity across the regime boundaries of 1940 and 1944 are hardly new, of course, as Nord himself makes perfectly clear. Forty years ago, Stanley Hoffmann drew attention to the hidden commonalities that Vichy and the Resistance shared in terms of personalities, ideas, and policies, as well as their roots in the 1930s and their lasting impact.[2] Nord’s own teacher, Robert Paxton, also stressed Vichy’s connections of personnel and policy both backward and forward in time.[3] Much of the recent literature on this period gives ample attention to continuity.[4] What makes Nord’s account so original is, to begin with, the deftness with which he weaves together the personal and ideological itineraries his people traversed, on the one hand, and the institution-building roles they played, on the other. This close attention to individuals and their back-channel politics and institutional infighting reveals much more than we have seen before about *how* men and women of conservative and technocratic bent out-manuevered their more left-wing rivals. Nord breaks ground, too, in emphasizing the influence that Catholic Action and other confessional movements in the 1930s had on many of the elites he studies. A lay

Catholic subculture gathered strength in these years that drew up-and-coming leaders into contact with one another and inspired them to re-Christianize the country through the domains of public policy or cultural activity in which they served. This theme is important in Nord's book because it gives us a deeper understanding of why elite men and women of faith came to feel more invested in the Fourth Republic than they had in the Third.

More pathbreaking still is Nord's ambitious effort to analyze the late 1930s and the 1940s as a pivotal moment in the rise of the Culture State. Histories of state expansion in cultural policy usually focus on the Blum government's initiatives to democratize access to theater, art, film, and other forms of culture during the Popular Front, followed much later by the work of cultural ministers André Malraux in the 1960s and Jack Lang in the 1980s. Nord makes a powerful case for regarding Vichy and the Liberation as equally pivotal. In all three realms of his attention (theater, cinema, and radio) Nord sees emerge in the thirties an insurgent discourse of "quality" against "commerce"—efforts to promote high-toned, cultivated forms of aesthetic innovation in opposition to the boulevard theaters, the Hollywood onslaught, and the music-hall influences on the radio. Advocates of "quality" came from both the Left and Right, and with Vichy the latter in particular got their chance. State administrators in charge of theater promoted the work of directors associated with the "quality" movement, and they subsidized Jeune France, Pierre Schaeffer's ambitious organization to spawn artistic productions with young people across the country in the spirit of the regime's National Revolution. No less assiduously, the state purged the stage of Jews in the name of "cleansing" the theater of its un-French and commercial taint. In the realm of cinema Vichy "lavished attention and money on productions as the Third Republic had not," winning the cooperation and gratitude of many a director of "quality film" who may have nonetheless been politically hostile to the regime (p. 277). By centralizing state control over financing and establishing a corporatist organization for the industry, Vichy created a protective structure for French filmmaking that would long outlast the war. The radio story, on the other hand, was nakedly one of state control. Vichy competed with the Germans and the Resistance for control over the air waves, and in the process accelerated an effort, begun under Edouard Daladier's government in 1938-39, to bring public radio directly under the thumb of the Secrétariat-Général d'Information and hence under the command of the prime minister himself. Vichy squelched, without fully eliminating, private commercial radio.

Vichy initiatives in cultural policy established the institutional context in which tough competition over control of these sectors took place at the Liberation. The Resistance Left, and not least the Communists, appeared positioned to acquire tremendous influence in cinema and radio in particular. In both these industries, Communists hoped that corporate oversight bodies would become vehicles for sharing power and giving unions and leftists an important say over funding, projects, and programming. And in both industries, more conservative insiders maneuvered adroitly to centralize state administrative authority to minimize Communist influence. A number of Vichy movie officials who had quietly established connections to the Gaullist Resistance late in the war reemerged with positions of authority after the Liberation to aid this effort to check the Left. As a consequence, the postwar purge of Vichy insiders proved light indeed. Moreover, by 1946, Gaullists and Christian Democrats managed to eliminate the corporate-body alternative that the Left wanted and to concentrate authority instead in a new Centre national de la cinématographie (CNC) with a government-appointed director and board. The result, as Nord puts it, was "a new deal for cinema, statist in design, which owed more than a little to Vichy precedents" (p. 325). True, government administrators and the moviemaking Left—and the cinema profession was mostly left-wing—continued to share a commitment to the quality aesthetic that had made such headway during the war. They shared, too, a common animus to Hollywood's reinvasion of the continent after 1945. But "the movie Left worked within an institutional and aesthetic framework not altogether of its own making" (338).

Combat with Communists also weighs heavily in Nord's account for why French radio failed to take the form of the BBC—national public radio, that is, with a significant degree of independence from state authority. Communists and Socialists, not least Jean Guignebert, the first post-Liberation head of Radio National, had a BBC-like model in mind. But Gaullists and Christian Democrats, who controlled the Information Ministry, maneuvered Guignebert to the margins, reaffirmed the

centralization of control over public radio directly under the prime minister, and in 1947 fought off one last legislative attempt to put public radio on more independent footing. De Gaulle's Provisional Government had already banned what little remained of private radio under Vichy. Radio, and the "quality" aesthetic it enshrined, would henceforth remain a state-controlled public monopoly—albeit one violated by cross-boarder competitors such as Radio Luxembourg—until the 1980s. The French were to pay a big price for radio policy makers' determination to insulate the medium (and later television) from outside influences. Censorship most obviously and immediately: newscasts had little to say about the massive strike insurgencies of 1947-48. But stultifying narrowness too: not for nothing would an innovation like Radio Beur only emerge with the return of commercial radio in the 1980s.

Among the virtues of Nord's account of the rise of the Culture State in the 1940s is the attention he gives to cultural activity itself. We see what effects the men and women in charge of cultural policy actually had on the kinds of plays, films, and radio programming that were created under their watch. Nord has much to say, in particular, about the quality and content of films and plays during the Occupation, and he explores too how writers and directors pursued the "quality aesthetic" with the political agility the times seemed to require. His subtle assessment, for example, of Jean-Louis Barrault's staging of *Soulier de Satin* and Jean Anouilh's pre-Liberation production of *Antigone* conveys how readily these works could satisfy Vichyites and resisters at the same time, despite the claims made later that this was Resistance art pure and simple.

This effort to connect policy making to its cultural effects has its parallel in Nord's illuminating account of how Sciences Po managed to preserve its preeminence by transforming itself. Drawing on the school's archives, Nord reveals a great deal about how the school's directors lobbied the government and cultivated allies, Michel Debré chief among them, to fend off the Left's attempts to replace it with a more democratically conceived *École nationale d'administration*. (What finally emerged in 1945 was an ENA alright, but one for which Sciences Po remained by far and away the leading feeder school.) But what fully rounds out Nord's analysis of Sciences Po is his investigation of how the school remade its image—from outmoded bastion of economic liberalism to a cutting-edge training ground for the new *dirigisme*. By changing the curriculum, by building new connections to the budding research institutes and statistical bureaus of a modernizing state, and by inviting the avatars of the new statism into its part-time teaching corps, Sciences Po's leaders refashioned the intellectual climate of the school.

If we get a well-developed picture of the consequences of institution-building in the realms of aesthetics and civil service training, Nord provides much less of an analysis of the ground-level effects of policy in the realms of economic planning and social welfare. Here he restricts his brief to his central question—how technocratic, nonconformist, and Christian Democratic elites did so well shaping the new institutional arrangements of the 1940s. To be fair, he could hardly do more than this; it would take another volume, extending well beyond the Liberation moment, to tackle the subject of policy consequences in the economy and social welfare. Still, taking the full measure of France's New Deal will require just that kind of research, and in this regard Christophe Capuano's recent book on Vichy family policy is a sobering reminder that policy-making and institution-building in Paris need not have the consequences we assume they had on the ground, especially in the realms of industrial and welfare policy.^[5] As Capuano argues, Vichy made pronatalism and conventional notions of the family a centerpiece of the National Revolution, but the regime lacked the financing, the support from the Finance Ministry, and administrative capacity to implement a coherent family policy at the local level. The postwar era begs for similar research on policy consequences.

Nord's emphasis on continuity and the political prowess of conservative and centrist elites tends to relegate the Left to an ironic, often secondary role in the Liberation moment: ironic, because the Left was crucial in initially envisioning the *dirigiste*, state-centered strategies that its opponents to the right managed to harness to advantage; secondary, because in Nord's account the Left was time and again out-manuevered by opponents like Jean Monnet and Alfred Sauvy, institution-builders who proved to be "better infighters" (p. 373). Out-manuever they surely did, and the winners are

necessarily Nord's leading protagonists in his story. But more, it seems to me, could be said about how the Left's particular character in the Liberation era—its weaknesses and divisions as well as its strengths—played a vital role in shaping the kind of New Deal that emerged after the war.

Nord describes the fundamental contest of the era as a struggle between the conservative and centrist New Deal that prevailed and the "social democratic" alternative the Left had hoped for. But the French Left of the 1940s had nothing like the kind of consensus around "social democracy" that unified their left-wing counterparts in Britain and most of northern Europe. True, the CNR program that finally, after bitter negotiation, provided a "charter" to unify the Resistance in the spring of 1944 did resemble the standard-issue platforms of social democrats around Europe at the end of the war. But that document also papered over deep differences, not only between the Left and Right in the Resistance, but also within the Left itself. Communists and Socialists were enemies as much as allies, and Socialists themselves came in many ideological hues. Only a minority of them at the time would identify themselves unambiguously as social democrats. The labor movement and the armed Resistance—the most influential popular support bases for the Left—were similarly divided. An ideologically diversified Left made it easier for more moderate and conservative elites to seize the opportunities that de Gaulle's preeminence as head of the Provisional Government of 1944-45 afforded them.

Take the case of planning. Most histories of planning, including Nord's, rightly highlight the pivotal moment when Pierre Mendès France lost his battle in the winter of 1944-45 with René Pleven for control over economic strategy in the Provisional Government. Mendès France wanted to combine prompt nationalizations with a rigorous austerity policy to check inflation and the creation of strong planning authority within his own Ministry of National Economy. De Gaulle sided instead with Finance Minister Pleven's more inflationary, less *dirigiste* approach to national recovery, and this decision in turn created the opportunity for Monnet to consolidate his more neo-liberal approach to planning a year later. In a sense, yes, Monnet out-maneuvered Mendès France, but the latter was undercut as much by the Left as by the Right. Socialist ministers, such as Robert Lacoste, opposed his idea of centralizing planning in Mendès's own ministry, and the Communist party fought hard and openly against the proposed austerity policy that provided the rationale for his planning authority.[6] The kind of planning Mendès France and Socialist André Philip hoped to see failed to unify the Left in 1945, and hence it lacked the kind of popular, mobilized support that might have given de Gaulle pause in opting for Pleven's approach.

Left-wing strengths and divisions also played a role in shaping the outcome in social welfare policy. On the one hand, the extraordinary, albeit temporary, political strength of the Communists, Socialists, and left-wing Catholics in 1944-45 gave Pierre Laroque the opportunity to propose democratizing the administration of social security, unifying the welter of separate insurance and mutual aid programs into a single system, and amalgamating the separate child support funds (*allocations familiales*) into the new system as well. Although the effort to unify and amalgamate failed in the face of ferocious interest group lobbying, the immense expansion of the public system of social security and its new governance system of localized managing boards with majority employee representation were understandably seen at the time as a left-wing achievement. Nor was the strong pronatalist orientation of social welfare policy regarded as a victory solely for the Right. Left-wingers, including Communists, were pronatalists too in the Liberation era. By the same token, some left-wing groups also played a role in hampering Laroque's efforts at unifying the social security system. Miners, electrical workers, railway workers, merchant seamen—some of the most important battalions in the trade-union Left—had well-established separate insurance funds for their members. Initially they were ambivalent about sacrificing these assets to the unification project. Once the latter project faltered, these unions fought as hard, and as successfully, as white-collar professionals and other more right-leaning interest groups to preserve their privileged arrangement. The Left then, in its complexity, both supported and undercut the Laroque plan. Nord makes a convincing case for seeing social welfare and the pronatalist project as crucial arenas where conservative and moderate elites exerted important influence as institution-builders in the 1940s. But the policy arrangements that shaped the social welfare system, and the pronatalist commitments that underpinned a lot of it, owed a great deal to the Left as well.[7]

Nord points out astutely in his conclusion that had he chosen nationalizations as one of his cases he would have had to adjust the book's argument to accommodate a greater left-wing role in the making of France's New Deal. And indeed, the great sweep of nationalizations between 1944 and 1948 that cut across crucial sectors of the economy—energy, transport, insurance, banking, and more—united the Left more than any other domain of public policy, and it drew on a huge wave of popular support. Even Communist managers and engineers acquired important positions of authority in many nationalized firms, and the creation of legally mandated works committees (*comités d'entreprise*) across nearly the entire economy gave the trade union movement power it could hardly have imagined possible in the 1930s. Left-wing leverage of this kind also extended beyond the workplace into the state's expanding administrative machinery for regulating the labor market—into hiring bureaus, immigrant recruitment agencies, and the social services associated with the welfare state. All these avenues of what one might call the left-wing institutional insurgency of 1944-46 careened into crisis in 1947 when the Cold War broke up the coalition of the Left. Socialists then sided unambiguously with moderates to diminish Communist gains across the board.[8] In that respect, these areas of left-wing achievement during the Liberation era can be seen to conform by the early 1950s to the narrative of conservative and moderate reconquest that Nord describes as the core dynamic in the making of France's New Deal. Communist rollback came a good deal later to the Renault factories and other nationalized firms than to radio and film, but come it did.

The Left's role in shaping nationalizations, labor regulation, and social welfare, even if eventually diminished or co-opted by more conservative elites, was nonetheless profound, and stirring enough to help account for why the Liberation would retain an aura of triumph for many people on the Left for decades afterward. A lot of mythmaking went into sustaining that aura, and as Nord shows, a lot of ignorance or forgetfulness as well about how much the Liberation was also a conservative triumph. State-centered institutions and policies associated with the Liberation era—from social security to public radio and protection for French film—would come to garner a remarkable degree of conservative support in the country. And that support had consequences: the neo-liberal turn of the past three decades has been notably milder in France than in Britain and the United States. Readers of Philip Nord's indispensable analysis of elites and their contribution to France's New Deal will now have a deeper understanding, not only of the wartime era Nord writes about, but also of why the country's postwar rebirth became a legacy both Right and Left would come to share.

NOTES

[1] Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 13.

[2] Stanley Hoffmann, "The Effects of World War II on French Society and Politics," *French Historical Studies* 2 (Spring 1961): 28-63; and "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," in Hoffmann et al., *In Search of France: The Economy, Society, and Political System in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 1-117.

[3] Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-44* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[4] Among a number of works that could be cited in this regard, Richard F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France: Renovation and Economic Management in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Michel Margairaz, *L'État, les finances et l'économie: Histoire d'une conversion, 1932-1952* 2 volumes (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1991); Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Gérard Noiriel, *Les Origines républicaines de Vichy* (Paris: Hachette, 1999); Herrick Chapman, *State Capitalism and Working-Class Radicalism in the French Aircraft Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); K. H. Adler, *Jews and Gender in Liberation France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Paul-André Rosental, *L'Intelligence démographique:*

Sciences et politiques des populations en France (1930-1960) (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2003); and Jean-Pierre Rioux, "A Changing of the Guard? Old and New Elites at the Liberation," in *Elites in France: Origins, Reproduction and Power*, ed. Jolyon Howorth and Philip G. Cerny (London: Frances Pinter, 1981), pp. 78-92.

[5] Christophe Capuano, *Vichy et la famille: Réalités et faux-semblants d'une politique publique* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009).

[6] On Mendès France's difficulties in 1944-45, see Kuisel, *Capitalism*, 187-202; Jean Bouvier, "Sur la politique économique en 1944-46," *La Libération de la France*, Comité d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale, actes du colloque, octobre 1974 (Paris, 1976); François Bloch-Lainé and Jean Bouvier, *La France restaurée, 1944-1954: Dialogue sur les choix d'une modernisation*, prologue by Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 84, and the interview with Jean-Marcel Jeanneney in Jean Daniel and Jean Lacouture, eds., *Le Citoyen Mendès France* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 30-32.

[7] On left-wing and trade union roles in the disputes over the postwar social security and child support systems, see Paul V. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chapter 6; Peter Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State, 1875-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 3; Herrick Chapman, "France's Liberation Era, 1944-47: A Social and Economic Settlement?" in *The Uncertain Foundation: France at the Liberation, 1944-47*, ed. Andrew Knapp (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 103-20.

[8] On the nationalized sector as a battleground, see Irwin M. Wall, "The French Social Contract: Conflict and Cooperation: *International Labor and Working-Class History* 50 (Fall 1996): 116-24; and Chapman, "A Social and Economic Settlement?"

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