

provides a useful aid for readers in a glossary of military names and terms; an omission in the latter is any definition of “pioneer”, part of the complement of a battalion.

Being outside the chain of command and having special responsibility to assist the men in the ranks with personal problems gave the chaplain a different perspective on the war. This memoir does not provide a grand sweep of the war, but it does offer some insights on and vignettes of the men in the West Nova Scotia Regiment who played their small, but heroic, part in defeating the Axis forces in Europe.

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WOLF, Joan B. — *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004. Pp. 249.

With *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France*, Joan Wolf brings an innovative approach to a well-studied subject. She examines the holocaust as an object of memory and focuses on the debate to which it has given rise in France. Hers is a study of discourse. Following the evolution and the various manifestations of this discourse from the postwar period to the present, she demonstrates how it has been used by different groups. At issue in the debate is the place of Jews in France, the French concept of integration, and the relation of Jews of France to Israel.

Wolf based her study on printed material: books and the Parisian press. She justifies this selection by pointing out the importance of Paris in reflecting and shaping national discourse and opinion. Wolf complements this body of sources by including a number of films, namely *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, and a television series, *The Holocaust*. These also serve as chronological guide posts. Wolf organizes her material around a number of such guide posts, or significant events, which include the bomb attacks of the synagogue of the rue Copernic, the rise of the Front National in the mid-1980s, the trials of Klaus Barbie and of Maurice Papon.

For Wolf, the pivotal moment in the history of the discourse on the holocaust is the Six Day War. The threat to Israel and a hostile French Middle Eastern policy revived the psychological wounds dating from the period of the occupation. As of the spring of 1967, the holocaust was mentally revived and narrated as trauma, that is, as defined by Wolf, an event that marked a break in the normal course of events (pp. 6–12). Numerous Jews questioned the assumptions behind the French assimilation model going back to the revolution of 1789 and demanded the right to express their identity, a key feature of which was a connection to Israel and the heritage of victimization of the holocaust. But, as Wolf also shows, questioning the model of assimilation created some dissension, namely between older Ashkenazi leaders of Jewish organizations such as Guy de Rothschild (p. 35) and later the philosopher Finkelkraut, who was to denounce the “need for roots” as “the evil of this last quarter century” (p. 98), and Sephardic Jews from North Africa, who took a militant stance in favour of Jewish identity.

More striking was the appropriation of the holocaust narrative by groups other than Jews. Wolf points out that, in period following the Six Day war, the holocaust was thrown back against Israel, especially by the anti-colonial left. In a similar vein during the trial of Klaus Barbie in 1994, *maître* Vergès attempted to put the French colonial policies on trial in the place of his client (p. 121). In November 1967, De Gaulle himself had contributed to this reversal of accusations by denouncing Jews as “an elite people, sure of itself and domineering” (p. 46). And in 1974, when Simon Veil, minister of health and herself a survivor of Auschwitz, introduced her bill to legalize abortion, opponents to abortion equated her with the Nazi executioners (pp. 61–62).

The passage of time both attenuated and revived the sense of trauma resulting from the Six Day War as well as the debate over identity. *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, shown in 1971, and Paxton’s study of Vichy of 1973 showed the extent of collaboration within the population and the French state. As though to confirm these findings, Darquier de Pellpoix, former Vichy minister of Jewish affairs, gave an interview published in the *Express* in October 1978 in which he trivialized the holocaust. Less than a decade later Le Pen and the negationists would hold a similar discourse. The moderate rightist governments of the 1970s, pursuing a pro-Arab foreign policy, also contributed to this trivialization of holocaust memory. Wolf underlines President Giscard d’Estaing’s apparent indifference to the attacks made against Simone Veil in 1974 (p. 62). At the time of the bombing of rue Copernic, the prime minister, Raymond Barre, termed the victims “innocent” because they were not Jews (p. 84).

The question of the holocaust became an object of incomprehension between Jews and non-Jews. Even members of left-wing political parties who joined Jewish organizations in protesting the bomb attacks of rue Copernic neglected the narrative of trauma and addressed the questions of racism in general, fascism and capitalism, and even Zionism, presented as a form of racism (p. 93).

Confronted not only with incomprehension but also with rival claims to victimization, such as those formulated by former members of the resistance during the trial of Klaus Barbie, Jews involved in the debate over the holocaust strove to stress its uniqueness. Wolf claims that this attitude changed towards the end the twentieth century, as is demonstrated by the inclusion in the Jewish rhetoric of gypsies, along with Jews, as designated victims of the Nazi genocide (p. 166). Moreover, the focus of the debate changed to include the question of the place of Vichy within the framework of French history. This was one of the stakes of the trial of Maurice Papon, that perpetual servant of the state from the Third to the Fifth Republic. Contrary to De Gaulle and Mitterand, Chirac was to incorporate Vichy within this framework and to accept the responsibility of France for the deportation of Jews. But Jews stressed that France was not uniformly guilty of collaboration, that many French had taken steps during the occupation to save Jewish lives. The theme of the true versus the official France, developed in the postwar period, persisted.

Wolf’s book is not an easy one to deal with. As narrative based upon debate, or discourse, it remains somewhat abstract. One may question the representativeness of opinions. Wolf attempts to address the question by constituting a body of sources that is supposedly exhaustive. Yet the author is often obliged to use impressionistic

terms such as “most Jews”. Despite the vast range of sources consulted, some lacunae can be noted, such as Tim’s famous cartoon published in *Le Monde* in response to De Gaulle’s depiction of Jews as domineering in November 1967. Absent from the bibliography is René Moulinas’s work on the Jews of Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin. The lack of reference, other than oblique, to films by Louis Malle is also regrettable. Wolf might also have included the film *Louise l’insoumise*, which has much to say about the difference between North African and European Jews and the repressive nature of traditional religious cultures.

Lastly, a work dealing with the immediate past strains the ability to maintain scholarly detachment. Many terms of the debate such as those pertaining to identity, secularism, and communitarism still are discussed in contemporary newspapers and political forums. Indeed, the last chapter of this open-ended presentist history is still being written. New elements of the debate would have to include the rise of religious fundamentalism, including born-again Christianity and its impact on Israel, and new forms of anti-Semitism expressed by the youth of the disinherited suburban ghettos. In response to this situation and in a speech made before Jewish American delegates in July 2004, Ariel Sharon urged French Jews to emigrate to Israel. Spokesmen for French Jewish organizations reacted with indignation. Undoubtedly, the identification of French Jews with Israel continues, but is much less strong than identification with France.

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