

The French Resistance

Olivier Wieviorka

Jane Marie Todd, Translator

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The new English translation of Oliver Wieviorka's *The French Resistance* is a hefty, commodious volume allowing for the full breadth of the author's sophisticated scholarship.

This is not a one-sided account of the French resistance during World War II, when France was divided between the Nazi-occupied north and the collaborationist Vichy regime of the south. The book goes to great lengths to evince the limitations of Charles de Gaulle's Free France campaign. Though de Gaulle and the Allies played an important role in the resistance from the outside, the extensive and expertly chronicled chapters here focus on resistance efforts within the country itself that included underground communications, reconnaissance, and acts of sabotage.

Political alliances were never as clear as other historians have made out, the book maintains. On an ideological level, groups as diverse as Christian democrats, nationalist republicans, communists, and socialists found themselves strangely aligned in a common struggle against fascism. Furthermore, the spirit of resistance changed from individual to individual depending on one's nationalistic and humanistic ideals, resulting in a collective movement that was protean and multifaceted rather than simply idealistic and heroic. A chapter on the treatment of Jews during the occupation, for instance, shows that some resistance groups accommodated anti-Semitism for strategic purposes.

The book's layered perspectives stem from the author's nuanced style and the intricate translation by Jane Marie Todd. The prose is often meta-historical, philosophizing on the nature of historiography while concurrently relaying historical facts. Wieviorka exhibits the sharp, penetrating mind of a social theorist, calling any cursory classification of the resistance arbitrary, and warning that even "the same doctrinal foundations could lead to opposing engagements." Informative as well as intellectually stimulating, *The French Resistance* is a must-read for Francophiles and history buffs.

SCOTT NEUFFER (Summer 2016)

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