French Law and Crimes against Humanity: 
The Crooked Path of Memory and Justice

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Over the years, the French have attempted to come to terms with the crimes and criminal moments in the nation’s past through highly-visible trials in the late 1980s and 1990s (such as of Nazi Klaus Barbie, or Vichy officials Paul Touvier and Maurice Papon), and through passage of the so-called “memorial laws” (beginning with the Gayssot Law in 1990). What began as an often problematic legal effort to do justice to unpunished perpetrators and accomplices of the Nazi Final Solution has expanded to become an indictment of events and practices on a global scale that, according critics, criminalize French and European history and endanger the historian seeking to establish historical truth.