REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR: IDEOLOGICAL CURRENTS IN FRENCH HISTORY-WRITING UNDER THE FOURTH REPUBLIC.

by

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ABSTRACT

The Vichy regime and the resistance stand out as central aspects of French history. In contemporary politics both are still frequently cited when debating the legacies of François Mitterrand, the intricacies of recent crimes against humanity legislation, or in the anti-racist campaigns fought against Jean-Marie Le Pen's resurgent Front National. However, behind the journalistic headlines lies a complex pattern of ideological manipulation of the Second World War. The thesis is a study of the first wave of political reinterpretations of the occupation, produced throughout the years of the Fourth Republic.

Taking well-known political memoirs, as well as neglected but equally significant historical accounts and biographies, it is shown that communists, Gaullists and extreme right-wingers produced highly sophisticated, mutually antagonistic, treatments of the années noires. The dissertation sheds new light on the role of the activist historian and his work. It is revealed that while their writings served political aims, they were not mere propagandists. Tracing the shape of ideological history-writing across the currents, significant similarities and differences are highlighted. Notwithstanding the obvious animosity which the politically committed writers showed towards one another, a critical re-reading of their publications suggests that the historians often employed comparable rhetorical devices and discursive strategies to present their case.

Adding to the research of scholars such as Henry Rousso, François Bédarida and Jean-Pierre Azéma, the thesis contributes to the continuing 'French historians' debate' on Vichy and its portrayal. Detailed examination of the publishing scene of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as nuanced analysis of selected historical writings, offers a refined view of how the French regarded their national record.
## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements v

Introduction 1

I Questions of Scope and Methodology 11
   Writing the History of the French War Experience 11
   A Typology of the ‘Histories or History’ 18
   A Synthetic Approach to Interpreting Ideological Historiography 33

II Ideological History-Writing 1944-1958 37
   Three Currents of Ideological History Writing 37
   Historiographic Rivalry and Response 64
   Concluding Discussion 80

III Portrayals of War 82
   Content 82
   War Mythology 92
   Concluding Discussion 102

IV Manipulating the Debacle 105
   Communist and Gaullist Accusations of Conspiracy and Subversion 105
   Stigmatising the Republic 117
   Structural Overlap in Interpretations of 1940 134

V Broadcasts, Appeals and Announcements 137
   ‘J’entrais dans l’aventure’ 137
   The Extreme Right-Wing on the 17 and 18 June Appeals 146
   Comparing the Thorez and Duclos Declarations with the 18 June Broadcast 154
   A Note on Cross-Current Influence 161
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td><strong>Perpetual Resistance</strong></td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Heroism</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Historic Virtues of Gaullism</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Résistance 'Vichyssoise'</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concluding Discussion: The Certainties of Ideological Interpretation</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td><strong>The Liberation</strong></td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Insurrection Nationale' or 'Libération Trahie'?</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovering National Honour or a Return to the Third Republic</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Purge: Suffering and Nobility</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concluding Discussion</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td><strong>Degrees of Neutrality</strong></td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing Ideological Alignments</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing Non-Ideologically-Coloured Accounts of the Occupation</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Appendix I</strong></td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Appel de Maurice Thorez et Jacques Duclos, August 1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Appendix II</strong></td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles de Gaulle’s 18 June 1940 broadcast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography of Works Cited</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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INTRODUCTION

In retrospect, times of national crisis become part of deeply held, conflicting views of historical events. Wars, revolutions, and other periods of trauma inspire ideologically marked writing and re-writing of history. The fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War and the bicentenary of the Revolution are two recent examples of the complex relationship which France has with its past. This study provides an interpretative analysis of ideologically coloured historical accounts of the last world war produced during the Fourth Republic (1944-1958).

The thesis examines political memoirs, biographies and historical texts which were written by communists, Gaullists and the grouping of authoritarian conservatives, royalists and neo-fascists who can be taken to constitute the extreme right wing. It provides a comparative analysis of representative writings from each of these ideological currents. It is neither a study of the lives and works of individual historians, nor does it focus on an editorial team or publishing house. Instead, it is my intention to present the detailed context and content of historical writings which interpreted the war to communicate sophisticated political messages about the present. Throughout the Fourth Republic this type of literature was widely circulated. It would have been unusual for a subject of the magnitude of the Second World War not to be a well used part of each political faction’s armoury. The manipulation of the past was an everyday activity. Key political figures such as Maurice Thorez and Charles de Gaulle each produced their versions of the war for national readerships. In 1949, Thorez reissued his memoirs, Fils du peuple, which included coverage of the occupation, whilst de Gaulle waited
until 1954 to release his own account of the period in the first volume of his war memoirs.¹ Although extreme right-wing historians could not compete directly with Thorez or de Gaulle in electoral politics, their numerous historiographic publications and range of focus were equal to those of their opponents. The purges had not destroyed the extreme right. The speed of their collective recovery was impressive, and especially so in the cultural-intellectual sphere. As early as in the spring of 1948, the weekly newspaper Carrefour underlined the presence of a growing number of pro-Vichy accounts. In an unsigned editorial, it protested against the return of those who had been associated with collaboration. The column warned:

Nous assistons, depuis quelques semaines, à une vaste entreprise de division nationale. Par le livre, par la parole, par d’obscurtes intrigues et d’étranges concours, des hommes, que leur attitude avant et pendant la guerre avait réduits au silence, prétendent refaire au sens inverse le procès que la libération a instruit contre eux.²

The return of the extreme right, now almost unified in defeat, had begun. War historiography would be as vital a weapon for this group as for any other.

The phrases political ideology and ideological current are used in the thesis to account for broad bodies of political ideas. Communist, Gaullist, liberal, conservative and extreme right-wing beliefs and organisations are considered equally ideological in nature. This definition is in line with the traditional humanities usage of the term. I interpret ideology through the truth-neutral, inclusive definition offered by the theorists Martin Seliger, Roger


² Unsigned, “Pas ça et pas vous!”, Carrefour, 18 February 1948: 1. For a comparable editorial see also Hubert Beuve-Méry writing as Sirius, “Heil Hitler”, Le Monde, 1 January 1949: 1.
Eatwell, Anthony Wright and others. Eatwell views political ideology as a 'relatively coherent set of empirical and normative beliefs and thought, focusing on the problems of human nature, the process of history, and socio-political arrangements'. The approach has several implications. It draws analysis away from a questioning of what is ideological, or what is not ideological, to a comparative discussion of a range of political beliefs and structures. Comparison implies a refined concern for the characteristics of ideology, including the content or function of each set of political beliefs. The non-pejorative perspective removes the popular view that ideologies are dangerous or pathological, expressed only by the dogmatic or the politically ambitious.

Closely related to ideology, the theory of political myth also underpins the study. It is defined as the narrative communication of political values, judgements and outlooks. Political myths are stories told in the service of ideology. The concept and term have again been employed in a neutral way, as suggested by Henry Tudor and Christopher Flood. This perspective points to the advantages of the detailed examination of ideological writings. Importantly, the casting of myth as an ideologically marked narrative allows for the analysis of variations in colouring. The interpretations of history produced by writers such as Maurice Thorez are taken to be mythopoeic. However, products which are not so strongly informed by ideology can also serve as vehicles for persuasion. Whilst avoiding the use of theoretical language in the body of the thesis, these definitions have shaped its parameters.

The dissertation has two theses. The first centres on a nuanced portrait of the three key


4 Roger Eatwell, "Ideologies: Approaches and Trends", in Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright (eds), Contemporary Political Ideologies, 9-10.

ideological currents ‘in action’ between 1944 and 1958. While many historians and political scientists have discussed the general profile of each of the three strands, very few scholars have offered either a comparative or text-based study of ideological confrontation under the Fourth Republic as conducted through the historical writings of the period. Building on the research of Courtois, Robrieux, Charlot, Touchard, Winock, Sirinelli and others, the examination of the *historiens engagés* and their work adds to our understanding of communism, Gaullism and the extreme right wing, and of the relationship between them.⁶ Comparative discussion of the core representations which the activist historians developed to portray the war reveals major differences and similarities in the writings. By shedding new light on the structures of writing, rhetorical devices and discursive patterns which the committed historians employed it is suggested that across the different political strands historians shared several interpretative strategies. Ideological interpretations overlapped and the portrayals of one ideological current influenced the presentation of history advocated in another. The didactic features which legitimated the historian’s voice as a commentator were also broadly common across the sources. Through the detailed analysis of texts one sees the complexity of how the writers manipulated history. In place of a traditional account of the thinking and political organisation of each ideological current, the thesis provides a new discussion of how the ideological actors operated through the production of historical interpretations. The result is a refined picture of politically committed historians.

Secondly, the thesis throws an informative sidelight on several issues raised in the now well-known study of the historical memory of the Vichy period, Henry Rousso’s *Le Syndrome de Vichy*. Using psychoanalytic analogies to explain the nation’s post-war relationship with Vichy, Rousso has suggested that the memory of the war divided the Fourth Republic into periods of ‘le deuil inachevé’ (1944-54) and ‘les refoulements’ (1954-1971). Rousso argued that in the former period the French repeatedly used the occupation as a weapon in political debate, while in the latter he suggests that a more consensual vision of the occupation formed around a glorification of the Gaullist resistance. In the light of evidence derived from the ideological publishing scene I support aspects of Rousso’s argument. Certainly, the activist historians, who are central to this study, perpetuated the divisions of the Franco-French civil war long into the 1940s and early 1950s. On the other hand, research on the ideological currents of interpretation does not always correspond precisely to Rousso’s explanations of the development of historical memory in France. I argue that complex works such as de Gaulle’s *Mémoires de guerre* do not wholly lend themselves to the model of collective memory developed by Rousso. Instead, it is more appropriate to view them as sophisticated cultural artefacts which reflect the period’s ideological battles.

The thesis is organised as follows. Firstly, discussion focuses on issues and factors which are external to the selected writings, but which have a significant bearing upon how I analyse their content. Chapter I, a discussion of method, provides an account of the major historiographic publications to have treated the occupation. To give recognition, and to critique, I delineate a typology of works which have been influential in my consideration of the ideologically marked histories of the Fourth Republic. The typology comprises four categorisations: traditional historiography, literary approaches, historical and political studies.

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of the three ideological currents and the literature of the Vichy syndrome. Even if the borderlines between these groups are subject to blurring, they form a helpful matrix which highlights the advantages and disadvantages of the existing literature. The evaluation is concluded with a discussion of how a synthesis of the four approaches underpins the thesis.

The subsequent chapter offers a detailed examination of the history of ideological production on the subject of the Second World War, as published between 1944 and 1958. Here I appraise the selected currents (communist, Gaullist and extreme right-wing). I demonstrate the range of factors which contributed to the continued interest in the Second World War throughout the Fourth Republic. By studying reaction to the publication of two histories, the extreme right-winger Pierre Taittinger's *Et Paris ne fut pas détruit* (1948) and the first volume of de Gaulle’s war memoirs (1954), I argue that inter-ideological debate was a key factor in the continuation of writing on the war, long after the initial period of contemporary interest had elapsed.

In Chapters III to VII, I analyse a range of ideological histories selected from the three currents of production. Chapter III begins with an illustration of the major mythopoeic stories which each ideological current used to represent the war as a single event. I argue that the material which the historians covered was more extensive than has been indicated in much of the secondary scholarly literature. It is shown that the war myths which the historians evoked offered compelling exemplary narratives which instructed and guided readers to the conclusions which could be drawn in the present political climate.

Moving from analysis of the function of war narratives to an examination of discursive structures, the subsequent chapter debates the issue of ideological overlap. I show that whilst the three ideological currents established different general portrayals of the occupation, the

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episode of the defeat of 1940 provided an example of sophisticated commonalities. Similarly, the examination of writing on the announcements of the 17, 18 June and the 10 July 1940 conducted in Chapter V introduces the phenomenon of cross-ideological influence. Here, we see that in writing on key historical documents communist and extreme right-wing historians were strongly influenced by the Gaullist historians’ portrayal of the 18 June speech.

Chapters VI and VII study the historians’ representation of resistance and the liberation. In highlighting writing on these episodes, I show that although the ideological historians held radically different views, they employed comparable structures of argument. That all the historians used their version of the resistance as a historical role model for contemporary political behaviour illustrates this characteristic. The creation of a didactic voice in the texts is shown to have underlined the significance of resistance throughout the Fourth Republic. The selected writers also shared comparable perspectives on the liberation. Specifically, I suggest why none of the historians depicted 1944 as either an uncomplicatedly positive or negative moment in the nation’s development.

The final chapter is situated slightly off-centre from the rest of the thesis. It uses the knowledge of the three dominant currents of writing to address four important scholarly works of the period. The classic histories of Aron, Elgey, Michel, Mirkine-Guetzévich and Siegfried are analysed.⁹ While these historians displayed affinities with the extreme right wing’s and the Gaullists’ interpretation, they cannot be simply aligned within these strands. Comparing the activist historians with their scholarly counterparts, I debate the fundamental difficulties associated with writing an ideology-free account.

The choice of texts for detailed analysis in the thesis was made on the basis of a series of factors. Henri Michel's *Bibliographie critique de la résistance* provides a graphic indication of the substantial volume of works being published on the Second World War in France in the period. The issue-by-issue bibliographies of the *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* confirm a similar picture of mass production. The *Institut Charles de Gaulle*’s bibliography provides further evidence of the large number of accounts written by Gaullists on de Gaulle, although there were also works on other aspects of the war.\(^{10}\) I have selected a representative corpus of nine texts for detailed analysis (other publications are discussed in the thesis when they are relevant or have a particular bearing on the currents of writing). My intention is that the sample should be sufficiently wide to allow meaningful conclusions, but not so broad that the writings cannot be considered in detail.

Text selection reflects the variety of genres which were used to portray the occupation. These included straightforward histories, biographies and political memoirs. For each current, one example of each type has been selected for detailed analysis. Nonetheless, the thesis does not offer a literary theory based discussion of genre related matters. Instead questions of genre are treated when they contribute to historical analysis.

The years 1944 to 1958 are important because they directly followed the occupation and thus form the first wave of its historiographic interpretation. At this time, communists, Gaullists and extreme right-wingers were almost exclusively portrayed to the public, and each other, in the light of the occupation. This was not always the case after 1958. Of course, the point is especially true for Charles de Gaulle, with his return to office and the foundation of the Fifth Republic signalling a new kind of representation of Gaullism from either the

liberation, the RPF period or his internal exile. On this basis, the first two volumes of his war memoirs, published in 1954 and 1956, are examined.

A further criterion of text-selection lies in my focus on the three ideological currents which were the major producers of works on the Second World War: communist; Gaullist and extreme right-wing. Naturally, other ideological formations wrote their versions of the war. Nevertheless, each of the ideological groups selected had the propensity to produce more historiographic material concerning the Second World War than adherents of other political ideologies, such as the socialists or the radicals. Communists, Gaullists and extreme right-wingers had been the major participants in the politics of the occupation. To this extent, they had more to say about the war, and equally had more to gain (or lose) from how they represented it. The war was an aspect of history which went to the core of Gaullism’s self-identification, and the same was true of both the PCF and the extreme right wing. For this reason the history of the war was a significant element in each grouping’s heritage and culture. The following nine titles, three for each current, have been chosen for the detailed reading which is presented in the thesis. They are:

**THE COMMUNIST CURRENT:**


THE GAULLIST CURRENT:


THE EXTREME RIGHT-WING CURRENT:


CHAPTER I
QUESTIONS OF SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will present an overview of the trends in French historiography of the Second World War. A typology of the major works which have been influential in my consideration of ideologically marked history-writing is offered. I analyse four typical approaches: traditional histories; literary studies; historical and political studies of the ideologies; and the Vichy Syndrome approach. In the final section of the chapter I show how a synthetic reading of this literature informs the thesis.

Writing the History of the French War Experience

Even in the early months of the liberation the creation of a history of the war was considered important to the nation. Repeatedly, in issues of Le Monde (1945-1946) one finds articles and faits divers which indicate the desire of both official resistance and governmental bodies to establish a record of the war years. For example, on the 24 January 1946, a journalist reported the creation of `une bibliographie de la litterature clandestine'. The reporter suggested to readers that they contribute their own documentation of the resistance to a planned repository.  

On the very same page of this issue of the newspaper, a correspondent representing the Syndicat d'initiative de Vichy requested that journalists and future historians refrain from labelling Pétain's regime after the Allier spa. He considered that this practice was a dangerous trend which jeopardised the tourist economy of his town. These episodes are symptomatic of

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1 Unsigned, "Une bibliographie de la litterature clandestine", Le Monde, 24 January 1946: 5. This initiative was supported by the Bibliothèque nationale. For similar civic projects see, Unsigned, "L'Histoire de la guerre", Le Monde, 10 May 1946: 5; J.L, "Pour l'Histoire de la libération de la France", Le Monde, 10 January 1945: 2; Maurice Chérié, "L'Exposition des crimes hitlériens", Le Monde, 10/11 June 1945: 2.

the wider national picture. They illustrate the desire for an immediate historical survey, whilst they also reveal the sensitive nature of the task. Darker reminders of the human cost of war and occupation were the regular ‘Recherches’ columns which were printed in the national press. Regularly, private advertisers called for information concerning the whereabouts of missing or displaced persons. For example, one such plea in *Le Monde* on 2 June 1945, requested: ‘Prière à toute personne pouvant donner nouvelles de Madame André Biltz, née Yvonne Neuberger, veuve du lieutenant-colonel André Biltz, mort pour la France, déportée de Drancy, le 20 janvier 1944, direction présumée Auschwitz, d’écrire à M. Alfred Lambert, banque Lambert-Biltz, 119, boulevard Haussmann, Paris’.  

Publishers quickly responded to public demand for more general historical information. They offered all manner of works on the wider topic of the war, with French editions of books by Italian, American, and British personalities, for example Count Ciano’s, Dwight Eisenhower’s, and Winston Churchill’s memoirs, complementing the initial surge in domestic production. In addition to this type of international publishing event, two patterns emerge in the first wave of historiography. A significant number of ideologically coloured accounts were in circulation from the late 1940s. These came from both the French left and right. Works devoted to Vichy were often highly sympathetic towards their subject. These included accounts by Jean Tracou, Louis-Dominique Girard and Pierre Taittinger, and one of the selected writers

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which this thesis considers at length, Professor Louis Rougier. In the case of the resistance, a mirror image of the extreme right-wing accounts of Vichy developed. The Gaullists, such as Rémy, de Bénouville, Soustelle and de Gaulle himself, contributed their memoirs of the Free French group, whilst communists also quickly developed their own literature, for example in the relatively sophisticated journal, the *Cahiers du communisme*. Detailed discussion of these currents of interpretation is given in Chapter II.

Less dramatically, a comparatively limited number of academics considered the history of the war. In general, historical scholarship did not view contemporary history as a fully legitimate field of research. Nevertheless, Marc Bloch’s account of the debacle, *L’Etrange défaite*, was published posthumously. Building institutional footholds, the work of the Comité d’histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale (CHDGM), supported and legitimated by the state, followed rather more slowly. As Henry Rousso has noted, in 1944 a Commission d’Histoire de l’Occupation et de la Libération de la France was established under the wing of the Provisional Government and six years later this body merged with a second state-sponsored group of historians, the Comité d’Histoire de la Guerre, establishing the aforementioned CHDGM. By 1954 the major series of publications, *Esprit de la Résistance* had been launched by Henri Michel and Boris Mirkine-Guetzévich. The project’s first publications were Michel and Mirkine-Guetzévich’s own *Les Idées politiques et sociales de la résistance* and André Truchet’s *L’Armistice de juin 1940*. Of-long term academic importance, particularly in

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promoting the field as an appropriate area of discussion, was the group’s journal, the Revue d’histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale.

Another kind of historical institution, the publishing house Arthème Fayard, had found two more moderate historians, Robert Aron and Georgette Elgey, to co-author an account of the Vichy regime. Their work was a major synthesis of the many accounts, memoirs and histories which had already been in circulation. For the time of publication, Histoire de Vichy represented a considerably more nuanced work than many of its contemporaries. When it is compared with those texts which were published by the historians who were more closely associated with the extreme right-wing current, the book can be seen to have been highly informative. In terms of its historiographic value, notwithstanding later revisions, it provided an articulate and detailed picture of the internal machinations of Vichy governance, as well as the ideological variety within successive cabinets and their coteries. This was oriented by emphasising the differences which existed between the policies of Pétain and Laval. Indeed, the political scientist, André Siegfried’s review of contemporary history, De la IIIe à la IVe République (1956) adopted a comparable argument to that already developed in Aron’s work.

Finally, when detailing academic research, it is important to credit a fourth organisation which was beginning to dissect the history of the war, the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine. A clandestine group, formed in 1943, its members sought to perpetuate the history of the nazi genocide, collecting and archiving source material pertaining to this subject. As has been correctly noted by Rousso, its historical production has been consistently impressive, albeit somewhat ignored by the Parisian intellectual, university and press community. Rousso summarises:
En 1955, un de ses animateurs, Joseph Billig, publiait le premier volume d’une étude très complète sur le Commissariat général aux Questions juives (Editions du Centre, 1955-1960): vingt-trois ans avant l’effet Darquier, l’ampleur de la participation française à la solution finale était mise au jour, sans provoquer d’émotion, le livre étant resté plus ou moins confidentiel. Les animateurs du CDJC, dont Georges Wellers, Serge Klarsfeld, etc., vont inlassablement poursuivre la publication d’études sur les chambres à gaz, les criminels nazis, les camps, même s’il faut attendre les années 1970 pour recueillir un large écho.9

By the 1960s the two poles of ideological manipulation and academic production appear to have been set. For example, Marc Ferro has illustrated the continuity of extreme right-wing publishing on Marshal Pétain.10 Similarly, in 1964, the PCF produced its Manuel d’histoire, through which its members could reinterpret their contemporary struggles in relation to those of the past.11 Scholarly publishing also continued, most notably under the guiding influence of Henri Michel. By 1967, he had published four standard works on the war experience, including studies of the resistance, the Free French, the debacle and, in 1964, a rich bibliography of the state of the field.12 Indeed his contributions expanded, with further reviews of the drôle de guerre, Pétain and, more generally, the course of the Second World War.

As is now commonly asserted, the work of two non-French nationals, the German Eberhard Jäckel, and the American, Robert Paxton, relaunched French and international

9 Henry Rousso, Le Syndrome de Vichy, 278.
12 For example, Michel, Les Courants de pensée de la résistance (Paris: PUF, 1962); Vichy, année 40 (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1966); Bibliographie critique de la résistance.
interest in the occupation. Both scholars re-framed and revised Aron’s work. Notably, *La France dans l’Europe de Hitler* and *Vichy France, Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* returned to the question of the precise relationship which had existed between the Vichy regime and the Nazi state. Although the works are in many respects different, both emphasised the role of Pétain as a more enthusiastic collaborator than had been originally suggested. Equally, Paxton did not focus on the arcane internal politics of the Marshal’s circle but instead addressed issues such as Vichy’s foreign policy role, or its economic and rural life, as well as the continuities which he suggested had influenced the post-war period. A number of these trends were subsequently taken up in Jean-Pierre Azéma’s *De Munich à la libération*, a contributing volume to the scholarly ‘Histoire de France’ series, published by the prestige house, Editions du Seuil. However, support for Aron’s more sympathetic thesis was recycled in the numerous works of the popular historian Henri Amouroux.

Meanwhile, the resistance field appears to have progressed as has been detailed in a recent article on this specific topic of historiography. Participants in the writing of the history of France at war, Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, accurately narrate the major scholarly developments:

Dans le même temps [...] paraissent à la fois une chronique mensuelle de la

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By the early 1980s, the Second World War was not only a classic site of ideological interpretation but also one of academic excellence. Publications too numerous to mention in this contextualising review continue to provide both scholarly and ideologically marked interpretations of the war and, on occasions, both. As has been the case since Adrien Dansette’s early contribution, the sub-topics of the purge and the liberation have also attracted their own literature. 18 On the whole, examples of war history have either nudged scholarship forwards, or provoked further ideological readings. Of course, at times, these two sub-fields of production have mercilessly used and manipulated each other. Typically this was the case in the wake of the Klaus Barbie and Paul Touvier trials. Attempts by the state to foster increased historical awareness through ‘pedagogical justice’ also served to produce a plethora


of counter-publications from the extreme right wing. Conversely, in 1994, the media scandals which centred on President François Mitterrand’s personal history, his service to the Vichy regime, and his friendship with René Bousquet, culminated in professional historians and reputable journalists repeating a number of pseudo-revelations which had been previously aired in extreme right-wing journals and magazines. From time to time, exchanges have also developed over the question of Holocaust denial literature, as well as the accusation that the resistance hero Jean Moulin was a communist spy. This is the wider context in which the thesis has been written.

A Typology of the ‘Histories of History’

Traditional Historiographical Approaches

Since at least the 1960s historiographers have monitored the growth of works on the Second World War in France. Generally, this approach has been to provide a summary or survey of the central participants in the field, and to classify their work in relation to past and anticipated trends in interpretation. In this light scholars have contributed accounts of the historiography of the resistance and Vichy. The work of Henri Michel, Jean-Pierre Azéma, François Bédarida, Pierre Ayçoberry, Olivier Wieviorka, Bernard Laguerre, Olivier Dumoulin, David Caute, Stéphane Courtois, R.J.B. Bosworth, Hilary Footitt, John Simmonds and to some extent

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20 The accusation that the young Mitterrand had enthusiastically supported Pétain had been a widely circulated claim in the extreme right-wing press. A point which is highlighted in Richard J. Golsan, “Reflections on Mitterrand’s Années Noires”, Contemporary French Civilization, 19.2 (1995): 297-298.

Robert Gildea, can be classified in this group. Each of these historians provide general literature surveys of historiography in the area of the Second World War, or of writings from within the three ideological currents, or parts thereof. In general, their approach has been one of producing thorough summaries of the key publications, accompanied by interpretative comment. In *The Past in French History* Gildea discusses examples of historical writings and employs carefully chosen textual references as supporting evidence to his analysis of political culture. 22

An examination of the first work which is broadly representative of this approach suggests a number of its strengths and weaknesses. This early practitioner of a traditional approach to war historiography was Henri Michel, as demonstrated in his *Bibliographie critique de la résistance*. 23 His critical bibliography established a major review of the state of French and international publishing on the war. In so doing, Michel discovered the mass of Fourth Republic publications which were of apparently little academic value but which sought to explain the war in a highly ideologically marked style. He recognised the existence of a significant number of biassed accounts and sought to categorise them. In an original manner for 1964, he claimed that a Franco-French civil war had taken up the interpretation of the resistance as a central vehicle for its quarrels. The topic was therefore part of a ‘climat passionné’ in which much of the history writing continued to possess ‘une actualité vivante’. 24 This was a political phenomenon. According to Michel, the general survey of works in the field had demonstrated that the wartime past had been almost constantly mobilised by ideological commentators.

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23 Henri Michel, *Bibliographie critique*.

24 Ibid., 27 and 202.
The Bibliographie was informative, highly detailed and apposite. Michel’s knowledge had led to a number of general conclusions which foreshadowed later interest in the guerre franco-française, and as we will see, to an extent Rousso’s Vichy syndrome argument on the Fourth Republic period. The majority of the studies within the traditional historiographic approach demonstrate similar qualities. These practitioners are efficient, often revealing, and always stimulating. For example, several of the essays of Azéma and Bédarida neatly delineate the general developments in resistance and Vichy historiography. Works which focus on a single ideological current also provide helpful background information, as well as a more thorough political consideration. In the sub-topic of French Communist Party historiography, this is the case in the work of David Caute and Stéphane Courtois. Like Michel, their studies typify much that is good about this approach towards understanding war historiography. These historians are precise and use interesting and valid source material to illustrate communist historical publishing. In terms of right-wing historiography, the field is somewhat less developed with Robert Gildea and Olivier Dumoulin recently offering review summaries. Prior to this Stephen Wilson’s work on the inter-war historians of the Action Française remains an exemplary source. Although his study focuses on an earlier period it is relevant as a model of the traditional approach as applied to the careers of Bainville, Gaxotte, Funck-Brentano and


others. Surprisingly, on a less positive note, the traditional historiographers have not substantially addressed the complex role of Gaullist historiography, its concerns and interests. Nevertheless, François Bédarida has discussed the role of History in the political thought and action of de Gaulle. Equally, Footitt and Simmonds' essay examined examples of Gaullist historiographic treatments of the debacle.

The advantages of the traditional historiographic approach can also be limiting, however. More often than not, its advocates are satisfied with the identification of ideologically marked accounts, or specific interpretative controversies. Representative samples of historical texts are rarely discussed in detail. Frequently history writing is not illustrated as being the result of a complex political and cultural process. Whilst books, their authors and publishers are listed and outlined it is less usual that they are examined as illustrations of a particular style of writing or structure of argument. Considerations of narrative technique, characterisation and rhetorical strategy are overlooked. For example, this tends to be the case in the work of Azéma, Bédarida, Wieviorka, Bosworth and to a lesser extent Laguerre.

In the more sophisticated examples of the type most of these problems can be overlooked. For example, both Michel’s and Gildea’s work are important sources. Notably, Gildea’s impressive review of history writing since the Revolution, and of its impact on the nation’s political culture is a major contribution. In its detail and encyclopaedic depth, the


work is a vital reference point, being particularly helpful in terms of its longer time frame which illustrates continuities in ideological interpretation across time and subject matter. The detailed historical background of the ideological currents, presented in Chapter II below, owes much to the principles of enquiry and investigation manifest in Gildea’s broader brush examination of comparable issues.

The Literary Approach

The second methodological approach taken by those interested in ideological history succeeds where the traditional historiography has sometimes proved problematic. Predominantly literary specialists and some political scientists, for example Georges Lavau, Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, François Quesnoy, Bernard Alluin, Joseph Boly, Jean Marie-Paris, Robert Pickering and Alan Pedley, have examined the ‘factual’ writings of the PCF, Maurice Thorez and Charles de Gaulle as literary texts. This second approach towards ideologically marked historiography can be broadly labelled as developing within the paradigm of literary studies. In so doing, a range of different techniques have been applied to the study of two of the central ideological historians in whom I am interested: Maurice Thorez and Charles de Gaulle. They include formal structural and semiotic criticism, as executed by Lavau and Chanfrault-Duchet, as well as the more traditional style of literary appreciation adopted by Quesnoy, Alluin, Pickering and Pedley. The literary approach to the subject redresses a number of the general

criticisms which can be levelled at the more traditional historiographers. They have all focused on historiography as writing, they consider their texts often in the utmost detail, and furthermore they are, although not exclusively, interested in issues of style, structure and techniques of characterisation.

Many of those working within this sub-field are uniquely interested in single authors or individual texts. The disproportionate number of monographs devoted to de Gaulle as a literary personality is noteworthy. This specialisation has proved narrow in scope, with Lavau and Chanfrault-Duchet proving to be the exceptions who have discussed PCF writings. At best, the work of one literary figure is often discussed in the light of another, de Gaulle being famously compared with Chateaubriand and Charles Péguy, amongst others. Whilst this kind of literary allusion is of interest, when considering the constellations of ideological historiography of the Fourth Republic one needs to employ a wider survey of writings. On the whole, this group of scholars fail to contextualise de Gaulle in relation to other Gaullist historians, and to a lesser extent Thorez in relation to the comparable activities of the PCF.

In addition, specifically in regard to the studies of de Gaulle, 'the writer', there has been a warping tendency. More often than not, his historical or military writings, are considered as belle littérature. The consequence of this tends to be a disregard for the political on the part of the critic. Ignoring the implications of the wider political context is a tendency which marks elements of Alan Pedley's otherwise informative study, As Mighty as the Sword. For instance, the following passage describes two post-war commentaries which were made on de Gaulle's Vers l'armée de métier. Using the work of Jacques Laurent and Alfred Fabre-Luce, Pedley discussed their criticism. He writes,

A less conventional view of the work is offered by Jacques Laurent, who considers that the dominant theme of the book is the need for a professional army. [...] For Laurent, 'Vers l'armée de métier ne contient que quatre pages consacrées à définir techniquement la nature et l'emploi de l'armée blindée. En outre, leur originalité est nulle'. Indubitably, the importance of tank warfare had already been demonstrated by the writings of Generals Estienne, Fuller, Von Seeckt and Guderian, along with Liddell Hart, and de Gaulle acknowledges them in his Mémoires de guerre. The notion that de Gaulle had 'discovered' the enormous potential of tanks is of course merely a popular and naive misconception. [...]  

Finally, the issue of air power has also proved controversial. Did de Gaulle underestimate the role of fighter aircraft in his recommended strategy? Hitler certainly did not when he planned his attack on France in 1940. An embarrassing interpolation in the 1944 edition of the book was detected by Alfred Fabre-Luce in 1960. The sentence (which magnified the importance of air power) did not reappear in subsequent editions but did re-open the controversy. This blatant piece of Gaullist hagiology should not however obscure the fact that a close reading of Vers l'armée de métier reveals three forceful references to the importance of air power in the 'Comment' section of the book.  

Although Pedley appears to defend de Gaulle against Laurent's and Fabre-Luce's criticism he omits to mention the ideological nature of the wider dispute. What we are not told is that Fabre-Luce's Le Plus Illustre des Français and Laurent's Mauriac sous de Gaulle, which he cites, are both examples of a long current of extreme right-wing attacks on de Gaulle. This interpretative evidence is necessary if we are to assess either Laurent, Fabre-Luce or indeed the inter-ideological impact of Vers l'armée de métier. Not only does it reveal the potential motivation of de Gaulle's detractors but it also indicates the cultural milieu in which all of his works were published. Of course, Jacques Laurent was not sympathetic to de Gaulle, but on the other hand, his interpretation was highly conventional when compared with other extreme right-wing writings. Writers such as Laurent and Fabre-Luce have spent much of their careers

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34 Alan Pedley, As Mighty as the Sword, 21.
criticising de Gaulle. Indeed, the source from which Pedley quotes, *Mauriac sous de Gaulle*, ultimately led to Laurent’s prosecution and to the censoring of the book. Instead of noting these important considerations, Pedley perceives the work of the two anti-Gaullists as almost neutral sources which are to be evaluated. The specific example is helpful in that it shows the sometimes confined focus of the literary mode, and more importantly its relatively limited concern for the political environment in which all of the ideological historians were writing.

**Historical and Political Studies of the Ideologies**

Several major works have discussed Gaullist, extreme right-wing and French Communist Party activities throughout the Fourth Republic. Research across the three currents includes monographs, theses and collections produced by René Rémond, Michel Winock, Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia, Jean-François Sirinelli, Jean Charlot, Jean Touchard, Philippe Robrieux, Georges Lavau, Marie-Claire Lavabre and others. The sources are more valuable than simple background material because they sometimes specifically address the ideological interpretation of history. For example, in his contribution to Winock’s collection on the extreme right, Jean-Pierre Rioux suggested that a defence of the Marshal’s honour was vital to the current throughout the post-liberation period. Comparable discussion has focused on Gaullism or communism and their use of the resistance heritage. As one would expect, it is almost universally recognised that both groups exploited the positive legacies of having mobilised

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against the Vichy regime and the Nazi occupiers. 37

Scholars of the history of each current underline the resonance of 1940-1944 under the Fourth Republic. In varying degrees of detail they note that ideological values associated with each political grouping were promoted through coloured interpretations of the war. In the more sophisticated examples of the literature they have introduced a cross-current comparison. This is the case in several of the contributions to the collection edited by Courtois and Lazar, *Cinquante ans d'une passion française. De Gaulle et les communistes*. The essays provided by Serge Berstein and Nicole Racine-Furland contrast the Gaullist and communist manipulations of the resistance record. 38 Marie-Claire Lavabre’s doctoral study of the PCF includes a nuanced treatment of the influence of Gaullist portrayals of the resistance on communist writings and popular memory. 39 It is a significant work because it combines the methods of oral history with a more general text-based analysis of communist sources, the result of which is a comprehensive account.

However, like the traditional historiographic methodology discussed earlier, very few scholars who have studied the extreme right, Gaullism or communism have treated the practice of writing history. How ideological texts were written is a question which is only rarely posed. The techniques used by activists to either glorify or debunk have not been closely examined. Whereas scholars from the literary school have been concerned with rhetoric, and other strategic devices in the writings of de Gaulle and Thorez, historians of communism and


Gaullism have not analysed the respective currents’ production. Political scientists like Jean Touchard provide detailed thematic reviews of the content of the ideological material which they study, but they have not analysed the structures of historical writing which were frequently employed to communicate the belief systems.40

There has also been a propensity to focus on core political values instead of recognising the diversity of views held within an ideological school. It has often been only highly politically charged writings and interpretations which analysts have cited as examples of any given current’s viewpoint. However, in reality, ideologies are composed of varying shades of opinion. An emphasis on central political leaders and thinkers has meant that those writers or historians who only partially intersect with a given ideological sphere have been under-researched. Comprehensive projects like Jean-François Sirinelli’s monumental three-volume edited collection on the right, have not clearly tracked politically slippery figures, for instance, one of the first scholars of Vichy, Robert Aron.

Finally, as Jeannine Verdes-Leroux suggested, the approach can be expanded by moving beyond its traditional charting of doctrines or philosophies. She writes: ‘une longue observation de cet univers chaotique qu’on appelle la politique, nous a persuadé que ce ne sont pas des idées qui poussent à agir, à droite comme à gauche, ce sont des passions, pulsions, émotions, rêves, fuites, envies, ressentiments, ambitions...’.41 Without abandoning ‘idées’ altogether this is a helpful advance. Whereas the work of Robrieux or Rémond has been restricted to outlining major groups, a renewed emphasis on emotions and passions will help the scholar understand day-to-day ideological confrontations in more human terms.


The Vichy Syndrome

In the mid-1980s a very different angle on the role of ideologically marked historiography, politics and society developed. Influenced in varying degrees by each of the other approaches which I have discussed, the study of collective memory questioned how the French have passed through different stages of understanding the occupation. As is reflected in the label which I have used to classify those who have adopted this perspective, the leading scholar to have developed this approach has been Henry Rousso. Indeed, his interpretation has become an orthodoxy. The monograph, Le Syndrome de Vichy, is generally taken to be a ground-breaking treatment of the wider subject. For instance, writing in the collection Les Lieux de mémoire Philippe Burrin has described Rousso’s research as, ‘un ouvrage remarquablement novateur’, whilst its arguments are now becoming noted by those who are interested in analysing the social and cultural impact of the Second World War in Britain and Germany.

Le Syndrome de Vichy and Rousso’s second major work in this field, written with the

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journalist Eric Conan and dealing exclusively with the contemporary period, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, have prompted a range of critical literature which addresses this field as an area of academic interest in its own right. For example, recent commentaries on the issues which have been raised by Rousso’s thinking have included essays or books by Tzvetan Todorov, Paul Thibaud, Pierre Nora, Olivier Mongin, Sonia Combe, Marie-Claire Lavabre, Bertram Gordon, Sarah Fishman, Christopher Flood, Hugo Frey and Nancy Wood. The time spent re-reading Rousso’s work is a testimony to its value.

Rousso’s primary aim is to establish an interpretative analysis of fifty years of the French relationship with the legacies of Vichy. Ideological history writing is considered as one vector of memory within a more extensive pattern which also covers literary, filmic, overtly political and journalistic portrayals of the war. In his preface to the English language edition of *The Vichy Syndrome*, Stanley Hoffmann has conveniently summarised Rousso’s argument. This is worth citing at length. He writes,

What he [Rousso] shows, explicitly and vividly, is how the French chose to believe that Vichy had been the creation of a small group of rather wicked (but still more misguided than evil) men, that the crimes committed were crimes of the Germans and of very small bands of collaborationists, and that most of the population had resisted the occupation in some degree. The resistance represented French continuity - the continuity of the republican regime and of a patriotic nation - saved France’s honor, played a major role in the liberation,

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and was the secular arm of the saviour Charles de Gaulle. [...] 

But the myth could not last forever. May'68 saw young people challenging all the established verities and taboos of their elders... Instead of a (false) version in black and white, there now prevailed a picture in uniformly dirty grays. For a while, myth and countermyth coexisted[...] Rousso’s book provides a subtle answer to those who still accuse the French of not having confronted their past or not having faced their crimes and prejudices as deeply as the West German’s have. This certainly has not been the case for the past twenty years and Rousso documents the confrontation just as he unsparingly indicts the earlier avoidance of the truth.45

Across Rousso’s many publications, his study of the legacy of the war is founded on two opposing periods: the pre-1968 myth of the resistance and the post-1968 counter-myth of Vichy and collaboration. Thus, although sometimes misunderstood, the Vichy syndrome argument was about representations of the resistance and collaboration, not exclusively the Vichy regime. To paraphrase, Rousso suggests that during the Fourth and early Fifth Republics, the unpleasant facts about the war were replaced with reassuring images of the resistance and of a generally anti-German France. In the aftermath of the événements of May’68 the past was re-conceptualised. Now it was the turn of collaboration to be obsessively scrutinised.

In Le Syndrome de Vichy this chronology is reconstructed through a more detailed periodisation which runs from a decade of ‘Le deuil inachevé’ (1944-1954) through ‘Les refoulements’ (1954-1971) and ‘Le miroir brisé’ (1971-1974) to the present era of ‘l’obsession’ (after 1974). This four-stage model suggests that in the first instance the French were unable to come to terms with the recent past, that they then sought to repress its problematic aspects but, by the 1970s, witnessed the mode rétro obsession with Vichy. Importantly in relation to our interest, Rousso divided the Fourth Republic into two early stages of different

representations. In the first period, ‘le deuil inachevé’, he describes a nation so traumatised by the war that the legacies of the occupation appear to have been a political constant. He claims that, from the liberation until the mid-1950s, the past was an unresolved, and ever-present societal problem. Thus, in terms of ideological history writing, Rousso describes the ways in which the war heritage was used to score ideological points. In a phrase which is reminiscent of Henri Michel’s earlier emphasis on the role of the Franco-French ideological conflict, he notes: ‘De la Libération à 1954, les protagonistes de la guerre franco-française dominent la scène éditoriale, en un concert de voix discordantes’. However, following the purge-amnesty debates, and the European Defence Community controversy, Rousso suggests that the legacies of Vichy receded. This remission in the syndrome is associated with the images of the war presented in De Gaulle’s Mémoires de guerre and Aron’s Histoire de Vichy.

Although a highly original work, Le Syndrome de Vichy reflects the earlier research of Pascal Ory, Colin Nettelbeck and Saul Friedländer who had previously suggested that the nazi period, including the occupation, had moved from a state of under-representation in European culture, to become a dominant theme which was the subject of high art and kitsch advertising culture. Equally, the syndrome argument has been taken up by a number of those who have re-articulated or referred to Rousso’s work. For example one can mention the studies of Alan

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46 Henry Rousso, Le Syndrome de Vichy, 276.

47 For Rousso’s assertion that de Gaulle and Aron each served in their own way to quieting the issue of Vichy, see ibid., 280; 283.

Morris, Tony Judt, Lawrence D. Kritzman, Anne Grynberg, Dimitri Nicolaïdis, Jean-Pierre Azéma and Lucette Valensi, whilst Benjamin Stora has employed a version of the paradigm in order to examine the impact of the memory of the Algerian war on post-colonial France.  

What are the key methodological lessons of the Vichy Syndrome? Notably, it is a helpful guide because Rousso combined several of the positive features of the three other approaches which have been reviewed in this chapter. As has been noted, the scholar’s specific treatment of the activist historians of the Fourth Republic is in line with the approach used by a number of traditional historiographers. Rousso’s discussion of the topic is informative. In addition, his depiction of Fourth Republic politics provides detailed publishing information and an elegant account of the milieu of ideological engagement in the 1940s and 1950s. Unlike Michel, or more recently Azéma and Bédarida, Rousso shows awareness of how representations of history were constructed as texts. Albeit in a less rigorous manner than, for example, Alan Pedley or Georges Lavau, his work draws on insights from the literary school. Rousso is concerned with the details of representation, as well as the content of historical literature. However, perhaps Le Syndrome de Vichy’s most significant contribution is as a work in the field of political history. Notwithstanding recent criticisms of Rousso’s thesis, I draw


50 Henry Rousso, Le Syndrome de Vichy, 276-278.

51 Ibid., 29-85.
on the interdisciplinary dynamism of Rousso’s research.  

As a postscript it is worth underlining that as well as those who have closely followed Vichy syndrome arguments, Rousso’s work has stimulated wider interest in comparable areas of research. The publications of, for example, Annette Wieviorka on French Jewish memory and the recent contributions of Alain Brossat on the liberation have added to the field.  

Although working within a similar historico-political tradition to Rousso, these studies consider either a specific group’s view of the occupation or a more tightly focused corpus of literature or symbolic events. For example, Brossat’s work is especially original in the manner in which it analyses both the historical events of 1944, as well as the meaning of their commemoration, fifty years on. Brossat compares at least two levels of historical representation: the original symbolic recovery of France from German occupation and the more recent rituals associated with remembering it. Whilst this means the examination of different forms of representations and communication, the focus offers a sharp critical edge, with Brossat knowingly exploring the multiple levels of discourse which are embedded in the liberation.

A Synthetic Approach to Interpreting Ideological Historiography

The thesis draws on the work of each of the four approaches. It can be more or less classified as being a combination of traditional historiography, a cultural-literary study of interpretation, a consideration of how political ideologies have more generally shaped the meaning of the past and an extension of the Vichy syndrome school.


It follows an eminent line of traditional historiographic reviews which are important
general accounts in their own right. The detailed work which I have conducted on the Fourth
Republic owes much to those working in this sub-field. The history of ideological
historiography charted in the next chapter develops on this method. However, I have sought
to address the issue of history-writing, reviewing and publishing in a more precise way than
has sometimes been afforded in the past. This has meant consulting a wide range of
contemporary publications as well as numerous daily and weekly newspapers associated with
each current of production. Through examining the pages of faits divers reports, judicial
notices of defamation cases, popular advertising, reviews, letters and the droit de réponse, I
aim to shed new light on the milieu of the activist historians. It is hoped that Chapter II will
bring the reader nearer to their world.

Moving away from the traditional historiographic works which precede it, the thesis
is also focused on the technical strategies involved in rewriting the war. It has been the literary
approach which has provided a general perspective on interpreting and discussing
historiography in this way. Throughout the body of the thesis, I retain its concern for how texts
are constructed and decoded. However, unlike many of those who already use literary methods
in the study of historiography, I have avoided the limited single-historian approach. Instead,
the individual publications of important writers, such as Thorez or the extreme right-winger,
Benoist-Méchin, are dealt with as examples of key producers within the wider currents of
representation. Later this comparative dimension has been extended to consider more neutral
contemporary interpretations in the light of the ideological currents.54

As a study of political writings, the thesis has drawn extensively from the many works

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54 See Chapter VIII.
which have discussed the history of each of the ideological currents. Rather than focus on the
well-known issue that the wartime past was a subject for ideological manipulation, the thesis
is concerned with examining how this process occurred in textual examples. A presentation of
content, narrative portrayals, and rhetorical devices in ideological historiography is developed.
To an extent this corresponds with Verdès-Leroux’s belief in the importance of a cultural
history of politics. However, rather than a rejection of the traditional history of ideologies
approach, this is a complementary addition.

The final key methodology with which the thesis engages and which it combines with
the other approaches is that of Rousso’s *Le Syndrome de Vichy*. His work, and the wider
literature which has surrounded it, is central for a number of reasons. It has refocused attention
on the entire area of historiography as being a public and political discourse. For instance, a
number of works which have been cited as examples of the three other methodologies appear
to have been in part inspired by Rousso’s contributions. Nonetheless, the thesis offers a more
precise focus than in Rousso’s publications. It works with a shorter time-frame and concerns
the more defined cultural product: ideological history-writing. It is intended that this method
will result in an increased level of detail and a sharper clarity of interpretation.

Beyond the more general influence which *Le Syndrome de Vichy* has brought to my
work, its role in the thesis has been as an account which requires further testing and
comparison. In part, I have used the study of ideological historiography of the Fourth Republic
as a way of confirming or modifying several of Rousso’s claims. When appropriate I discuss
whether the three currents of ideological production I have read can be seen to support or
revise Rousso’s assertions. His specific claim that two texts - de Gaulle’s *Mémoires de guerre*
and Robert Aron’s and Georgette Elgey’s *Histoire de Vichy* - were part of a process of national
repression is examined (see Chapter II below). However, that is not to say that the thesis is only an exercise in revision, or an interjection in an academic debate. Rather, in combination with the principal study of ideological history writing, I have used the Vichy syndrome as a platform from which to discuss wider issues, such as the internal variation of representation within the three ideological currents; the ways in which historians, although working from different ideological standpoints, created interpretations which overlapped; and the relationship between ideologically coloured texts and more neutral histories.
The present chapter outlines the history of ideological production within each of the three identified currents. It is argued that historical publication was not conducted in isolation but was part of a volatile confrontation over how the war was to be represented. After considering each current, two case studies of ideological combat through historical publishing are explored: the Taittinger affair and reaction to the publication of the first volume of de Gaulle's war memoirs.

Three Currents of Ideological History-Writing

The French Communist Party was the best and worst producer of ideological reconstructions of history. Its tight organisation, its affiliated press and its publishing house, Editions Sociales, made it ideally placed to produce and disseminate all types of printed material. A strict hierarchical structure marked the production of its war historiography. The head of the Party, Maurice Thorez was acclaimed for his ability as a historian. This fact, it was argued, was demonstrated in his political memoirs, *Fils du peuple*. Furthermore, the Party increasingly sought to promote Thorez's life-story through hagiographic worship. Since Thorez was not only eulogised as a communist but also as a member of the resistance, biographical writing also had a significant role to play.

The first post-war edition of *Fils du peuple* was published in 1949. This was a major reworking of the original 1937 imprint. The new edition encompassed the Second World War period and emphasised the Soviet Union's and the PCF's separate but associated roles in

defeating nazism and liberating Europe. In effect, this theme marks the entire memoir. Specifically it is treated in over one hundred pages of writing, from ‘Chapitre V. La France devant le danger’ to ‘Chapitre VII. Notre bataille pour la renaissance de la France …’. The reception given to it by communist reviewers demonstrates the extent to which the book was taken to be the most factually accurate account of the period. Often excluded from accounts of communist historiography because of its autobiographical form, at the time of its publication the work was presented as being far more than a political memoir. Between 1949 and 1951 it was officially recommended as being of vital importance to the PCF’s cause. In total the Cahiers du communisme (henceforth Cahiers) devoted four separate commentaries to highlighting its value. These reviews represented Fils du peuple as history writing and did not discuss it in terms of the genres of political memoir or autobiography, even though this is what it was. For instance, the following extract from an early communist commentary underlines how the text’s genre was constructed around being both a PCF and a national history. Victor Joannès noted:


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*Fils du peuple* was held to be a work of history, and, by implication, Thorez was taken to be a historian. However, the cult of Thorez stretched beyond the relatively common rhetorical switch of genres from political memoir to factual history. The text was also classified as an example of a new form of proletarian historiography. Jean Bruhat presented Thorez’s writing as a code from which all communist historians could learn. He suggested that in Thorez’s work, supported by that of the veteran communist André Marty, one could distinguish a new communist methodology in historical study. This included a privileged access to the workers’ psyche which had been previously untouched by bourgeois historians. Through a new, realistic language Thorez had depicted hitherto concealed aspects of the class struggle. It was claimed that the new Thorezian historiography relied on an authentically proletarian source of documentation: personal reminiscences, parliamentary conflict, the workers’ thoughts, writings and so on. Thereby Thorez and Marty had developed an approach which was ‘loin du formalisme qui domine l’histoire bourgeoise’. Their writing was also an effective ‘instrument de lutte’ which depicted the PCF’s glorious past and defined its future role. Bruhat concluded his analysis with a stark *autocritique* of the communist professional historians. He confessed,

Les historiens communistes ont fait, avec l’aide de la section de travail idéologique du Comité central, l’autocritique de leur activité. Cette autocritique qui nous a permis de découvrir nos faiblesses: travail trop académique, repliement sur soi, manque de vigilance quant à la propagande de l’ennemi et au renforcement du caractère de classe de l’Université a tous les degrés.

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7 Ibid., 107.
Fils du peuple had become the example of communist history writing. Author and text were symbols which were to be respected and praised. If the communist professional historians of 1789 (Soboul and Agulhon) could learn from its technique and political edge, as Bruhat had implied, the memoir was also marketed for the ordinary card carrying members of the PCF. By 1951 the work was recommended as a pedagogical aid for all militants. A self-learning scheme was suggested around the contents of its first chapter, ‘L’Eveil’. This was to be an introduction to further enlightened study. The PCF’s Programme d’étude individuelle suggested that Thorez’s masterpiece should be studied as instructed. It advocated:

Trois heures d’étude pourraient être consacrées pendant la première semaine à la lecture attentive d’un ou des deux chapitres. La plume à la main, l’étudiant individuel notera sur son cahier, dans trois colonnes, de la page de gauche, les faits qui retiennent son attention, - les notions théoriques qui s’en dégagent, - les références correspondantes et, sur la page de droite, ses réflexions personnelles.⁸

The awe in which Fils du peuple was held by the French Communist Party as a whole was one aspect of the cult which had come to surround Thorez. By the late 1940s, this had developed to such an extent that the more easily influenced communists had begun to emulate Thorez’s now elevated lifestyle. For example, many young supporters allegedly copied his early morning study of literature or Marxist theory, as well as starting to share his passion for alpine walking. Epitomising this era was Jean Fréville’s hagiography of the leader, which was simply entitled Avec Maurice Thorez.⁹ In this work a focus on the personal and the national were combined in an ideological blend which went to rhetorical lengths to portray Thorez as an

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intellectual, a resistance-fighter, and a patriotic worker. *Avec Maurice Thorez* was much praised by the PCF’s press and it remains an important example of the more ephemeral reportage which focused on Thorez’s life and thus portrayed contemporary France through the leader’s contribution to its history.\(^\text{10}\)

*Fils du peuple* and *Avec Maurice Thorez* have more in common than their shared subject and ideological slant. Intriguingly, it has been suggested that it was in fact Fréville who had written much of the 1937 first edition of *Fils du peuple*. However, the historian Philippe Robrieux has explained that although Fréville was assigned the task of writing the autobiography, he found it too labourious a task and passed it to a second ghost-writer, his anarchist friend, the Russian émigré Viersboloviez. In turn Viersboloviez, possibly with an eye to future blackmail opportunities, encoded the text with the acrostic: ‘FREVILLE A ECRIT CE LIVRE’.\(^\text{11}\) Given its bizarre origins, it is all the more remarkable that by the post-war period the second edition of *Fils du peuple* had become the communists’ key historical source and that one of its earlier ghost-writers had subsequently produced a biographical work on Thorez. The suspicion of burlesque comedy which surrounds this history is equally evident when Fréville’s life is scrutinised. Alias Eugène Schkaff, the son of a Russian émigré, Fréville appears to have led a double political career. In the 1930s, ‘by day’ Schkaff was employed by the government minister Anatole de Monzie to translate copies of *Pravda*, from Russian to French. In a second guise, ‘by night’, Fréville established an equally successful profile as a PCF intellectual and propagandist. By the beginning of the Fourth Republic, remarkably, he

\(^{10}\) For example, extracts from *Avec Maurice Thorez* were serialised in the communist literary review *France Nouvelle* (1949-1950) cited in Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, *Au service du Parti* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 195.


41
was at the heart of the PCF's power-structure: positioned as the *chef-adjoint* in Thorez's private cabinet.\(^{12}\)

Subsidiary to Thorez's contribution and the personality cult surrounding him, communist intellectuals provided numerous essays about the war years. These treatments were published alongside other political and cultural pieces in the PCF's academically styled journal, the *Cahiers*. It was in the *Cahiers* that a consistent communist interpretation of the war was developed. In marked contrast with the other ideological traditions, instead of book length accounts, official communist writing preferred to utilise shorter, scholarly articles. The exceptions - books such as André Simone's *Les Hommes qui ont trahi la France*; Ferdinand Bonte's *Le Chemin de l'honneur* and Gacon and Bouvier's *La Verité sur 1939* - were themselves favourably reviewed and recommended in the *Cahiers*.\(^{13}\)

The journal was the forum for presenting the party line on political, cultural and historical issues. In the period between 1945 and 1958 the *Cahiers* published thirty-six historical pieces (excluding book reviews) which addressed aspects of the Second World War. On average this meant that one major historical essay was published each quarter. However, in reality the war-history articles featured more regularly over the decade 1945-1955, with only one relevant example being published after this date.\(^{14}\) Appropriately, it was Thorez himself

\(^{12}\) Philippe Robrieux, *Histoire intérieure du Parti communiste*, Vol.4, 243-246. Schkaff-Fréville is one of the genuinely unique enigmas of the PCF. His life and writings merit further research. Robrieux implies that only the employ of the Soviet secret services could explain his type of trajectory.


who signed the largest proportion of the historical articles to appear in the periodical, a total of four. Other major producers were Florimond Bonte, Victor Joannès and Roger Garaudy, each of whom wrote three major essays on Second World War history. Garaudy and Joannès have been especially recognised for their proximity to Thorez and his personal power-base.\(^{15}\) On the other hand, Bonte’s contributions were probably derived from his official responsibility for international affairs.

Cumulatively, the ten years of regular historical discourse in the *Cahiers* provided the core of the Party’s writing on the Second World War. In addition, as Stéphane Courtois has argued, the material covered by the *Cahiers* charts the demise of the resistance generation of the PCF and thus resistance-centred historiography.\(^{16}\) This shift in relative influence is evidenced in the slow decline of publications which were devoted to examples of communist resistance. In their place, the *Cahiers* concentrated on presenting explanations of why the war had occurred, and to repeatedly justifying the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. For example, between 1948 and 1950 the *Cahiers* printed seven articles which emphasised the ‘1939-41’ period. In comparison, during the same period of publication only one article was dedicated to resistance activities. Whilst this material supports Stéphane Courtois’ well-documented reading of events, it should be noted that the subject of the resistance continued to be evoked by Thorez and the official communist discourse. The content of *Fils du peuple* (1949 and 1955 editions) included passages which glorified the internal communist resistance, as did Fréville’s biography of Thorez. Furthermore, as the internal purge was beginning, the communist mainstream writers,


Jean Dautry and Louis Pastor, published a co-authored pamphlet account of the resistance. Major treatments of the resistance by dissident communists were suppressed by the Thorezians, but they also continued to use their resistance and anti-fascist credentials when the Central Committee saw fit.

In short, the communist historiographic core was based on the symbolic importance which was attributed to Thorez and his writing. The PCF employed one political memoir, *Fils du peuple*, from which to an extent all else followed. Given the personality cult which surrounded Thorez, this was an understandable development. At the same time, whilst the other ideological strands often used their associated press networks, the academic-article style of the *Cahiers*’ historians was unique.

Turning to Gaullist historiography, it is evident that two types of writing dominated its interpretation of the war: political memoirs and biographies of General de Gaulle. Like the PCF’s emphasis on Thorez, much of Gaullist history was read through the life of its leader. However, the number of Gaullists who wrote political memoirs was far greater, and politically more diverse, than the tightly controlled examples identified in the communist strand of interpretation. The third type of writing - non-autobiographical and non-biographical history - was comparatively rare within the Gaullists’ current. A comprehensive survey of Emilien Amaury’s weekly newspaper, the generally pro-Gaullist *Carrefour* (1944-1958), and the Rassemblement’s cultural review, *Liberté de l’esprit* (1949-53, edited by Claude Mauriac)


suggests a limited employment of this style of writing. The occasional examples which appeared were idiosyncratic. For instance, André Frossard’s satirical account, *Histoire paradoxale de la Quatrième République.*\(^{19}\) Without doubt the most significant example was the edited collection, *Trente ans d’histoire,* which was published in 1949.\(^{20}\)

From about 1946 onwards prominent Gaullist personalities began to write about the war through the form of their political memoirs. A high proportion of the authors were, at the time of writing, also influential members of the *Comité Exécutif/Conseil de direction du RPF,* the steering group of the Rassemblement ‘movement’. Amongst those attending its first executive committee, on 17 July 1947, three of the thirteen present, excluding de Gaulle, had established, or were in the process of establishing, themselves as significant authors of political memoirs. Guilain de Bénouville and Colonel Rémy were already known for their vivid accounts of life in the resistance. Rémy has alluded to the fact that de Gaulle was especially impressed by the success of his first tome, *Mémoires d’un agent secret de la France libre.*\(^{21}\)

The political scientist Jean Charlot, quoting Rémy, has described a dinner party given by de Gaulle for Rémy and his wife in the spring of 1946:

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Au printemps, Gaston de Bonneval, son second aide de camp, fait savoir au colonel Rémy que le général serait heureux qu’Edith, sa femme, l’invite à déjeuner avec Mme de Gaulle, en leur moulin de Villy, dans l’Eure ... Un désir que les Rémy s’empressent de satisfaire. L’essentiel de la conversation porte sur le succès imprévu des *Mémoires d’un agent secret de la France libre* dont Rémy a publié le premier tome au moment même où de Gaulle quittait le pouvoir. ‘Un livre sur la Résistance - avaient pourtant dit les grands éditeurs - mais, cher monsieur, c’est périmé (...) la résistance n’intéresse plus personne!’ De Gaulle se montre enchanté de l’histoire de ce livre et complimente Rémy : ‘C’est bien
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As a portrait of the mood within the inner circles of Gaullism the scene is a fascinating one, for it highlights the fact that memoir writing was perceived to be a legitimate means of protecting de Gaulle’s political heritage. Whether or not as a consequence of Rémy’s popularity, or of a more general spirit of the times, publishers were soon willing to produce personal histories of the war from a wide range of ideological perspectives, including Gaullist ones. In the wake of Rémy’s success, de Bénouville’s *Le Sacrifice du matin* (1946) was also highly praised. This book was especially trumpeted in *Carrefour*, and even three years after its first publication it was still being advertised in the RPF’s journal *Liberté de l’esprit*. The Gaullist political memoirs appear to have been broadly popular. Rémy’s and de Bénouville’s books were highly placed in a survey of best-selling titles for fiction and non-fiction published in 1946. The third RPF committee member to have gained notoriety as a memorialist/historian under the Fourth Republic was its administrative director, Jacques Soustelle. His two-volume account of the war, *Envers et contre tout*, added to the ever-growing list of texts produced by Gaullists who were in the General’s circle. Therefore one should not overlook the creation of something of a tradition of ideologically marked political memoirs prior to de Gaulle’s own *Mémoires de guerre*.

Whilst de Bénouville’s, Rémy’s and Soustelle’s books were written before and during


the RPF era, de Gaulle’s writing, which began on the occasion of his first retirement in 1946, was published considerably later in the Fourth Republic in 1954 and 1956. The final volume appeared in 1959 after his return to office. Issued separately in three volumes, with unedited documentary-based appendices, they served, content aside, to maintain de Gaulle’s presence in public life. In addition to their serialisation in *Paris-Match, Mémoires de guerre* (volumes one and two) were extensively reviewed by all of the major elements of the press. Frequently, in sympathetic newspapers the journalists assigned to the task of writing about the books were themselves of a strong Gaullist pedigree. For example, it was General Billotte, a member of the RPF executive (1949 to 1951) who introduced Volume One, *L’Appel*, to *Carrefour* readers under the following headline, ‘L’Histoire écrite par celui qui l’a faite’. 26 Writings from pro-Gaullists permeated papers with less sympathetic inclinations, for instance *Le Monde* printed the opinions of the activist, Louis Vallon. 27 In their creation of two media extravaganzas column space became available for compagnons to express their adulation of the General and to repeat and popularise the messages found within the book itself. Similarly, the international reception given to the English language translations of the first two volumes, in 1955 and 1957, created another opening for sympathetic comment. On this basis the *Mémoires de guerre* should not be understood as being only advantageous to de Gaulle personally. Through their creation of review space and the stimulation of editorial comment and reaction, they were also of a wider political significance.

Political memoirs provided a major outlet for Gaullist reconstructions of history, a place in the press, and a chance to maintain a discursive presence vis-a-vis the growing number of communist and extreme right-wing accounts of the war. Following the pattern identified in


the communist literature, Gaullist reviews of the political memoirs tended to classify them all as being 'history writing'. They perceived that the past could be legitimately interpreted through essentially personal experiences, as long as they were Gaullist ones. Politically, the milieu of production, criticism, journalistic review and more general popularisation was a major field of Gaullist activity. It is also important to recognise that in terms of sales quantity alone Charles de Gaulle's memoirs were triumphant. In 1961 a French 'best sellers of the century' list indicated that they had sold 449,000 copies since their publication. This figure was comparable to Marcel Proust's classic, *Du coté de chez Swann*, and, more importantly, was also level with the sales figures of the competing French communist leader's equivalent text, *Fils du peuple*.28

Pro-Gaullist biographies of de Gaulle form an almost constant backdrop to the intermittent publication of Gaullist political memoirs. A review of publishing details, derived from the *Bibliographie internationale sur Charles de Gaulle*, suggests that the production rate of this type of treatment far exceeded the other potential means of talking about the war from a Gaullist perspective.29 Several interlinking factors go some way towards explaining the phenomenon. De Gaulle's triumph over Vichyite collaboration and the German occupation, had without doubt stimulated a genuine interest in the man who had hitherto existed only on the edges of political life. To many people, at the time of the liberation, de Gaulle was known only as a voice transmitting messages of hope - or propaganda depending on your political bias - from London to France. In addition to public demand, a number of biographies which had been published in the English language for the benefit of the Allies and the French exile


48
communities in London and the United States during the war awaited their first Paris editions. From 1944 onwards ideologically marked biographies which had previously only been in circulation amongst the Free French were available to the wider reading public for the first time. Furthermore, within the Gaullist camp itself, which was momentarily a very broad church, the establishment of de Gaulle as the new head of state could only be reinforced by the publication of the frequently hagiographic accounts. The combination of these forces clearly influenced the speed of publication of a number of works which proceeded in spite of the economic privations which beset France during the winter months of 1944-1945.

One good example of the processes involved in the publication of the early biographies is the history of Philippe Barrès’s *Charles de Gaulle.* This short pro-Gaullist book was sold in France for the first time in the autumn of 1944 by the publishing house, Editions MUR, but was then quickly reprinted the following year by the establishment Editions Plon company. However, both of these editions were translations from the original English language version which Barrès, the son of the nationalist Maurice Barrès, had written in exile whilst he served with the Free French. As with many of the other biographies which date from the era of the Provisional Government, de Gaulle’s life story was presented as a means of ‘getting to know’ the new national hero. The biographical approach to the recent past was generally well received by the press. A reviewer in *Le Monde*’s literary column praised the authors of several of the biographies for their contribution to contemporary historical understanding. The article explained,

L’histoire de cette guerre et des temps qui l’ont précédé est à apprendre tout entière, et minitieusement. Nous n’en savons à peu près rien, soit que l’esprit

Therefore one widely acceptable means of learning about and explaining the recent past was through the study of de Gaulle's life. This method, the privileging of the leader, was far more likely to be sympathetic than critical towards its subject. Biographical propaganda was developed as part of the Rassemblement's 1947 brief, as a result of which the RPF produced a work which was written by the already successful memorialist Remy. His *De Gaulle cet inconnu* was a natural extension of the, by now, typically Gaullist form.  

Quantitatively the biographies were a success. In one year, 1945, over ten sympathetic 'lives of de Gaulle' were published for the first time in France. No single company held a monopoly, and several regionally published editions added to the growing number which emanated from Paris. The large number of biographies set a trend in writing patterns. Many of those who had written accounts of the General's life which were published during the liberation period, continued their interest by republishing new versions which corresponded with de Gaulle's changing career. Typical of the propensity for continued devotion was the biographer Georges Cattaui. In 1944 Cattaui published his first treatment of de Gaulle's life. Over ten years later the original text was then reprised and modified in a second work, the 1956 *Charles de Gaulle*. The process did not falter, and by 1960 a new biography was

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published to incarnate a Fifth Republic version of the General. The 1956 edition demonstrates Cattaui’s loyalty to de Gaulle. At this point in time his subject was certainly not as eminent a figure as he had been in 1944, or would become again in 1960.

In comparison with the high number of pro-de Gaulle biographies and the Gaullist political memoirs of the era, only relatively few examples of ideologically marked history writing in the scholarly sense have been found from within this current. The exception is the major collaborative project which was edited in 1949 by Louis-Henri Parias, entitled *Trente ans d’histoire: De Clemenceau à de Gaulle* (henceforth *Trente ans*). This collection of historical writing was divided into two substantial sections written by Jacques Boudet and Jacques Madaule but in addition included shorter chapters from Winston Churchill; General de Monsabert; Colonel l’Hopital; Pasteur Vallery-Radot; Michel Habib; Geneviève de Gaulle; André le Troquer; René Cassin; Jacques Soustelle; Adrien Dansette; General Ingold; Raymond Aron; Jean de Fabrègues; Pierre Alleray; Albert Ollivier; Edmond Michelet; Louis Vallon; J.A.Godin; Henri Rollet; P.O.Lapie; René Pinon; Edouard Dudon; Georges Cattaui; Stanislas Fumet and Rémy. The contributors are an almost perfect reflection of the range of intellectuals and others who were drawn to de Gaulle at this time. On the socialist left of Gaullism we have the *Combat* journalist, Pierre Oliver Lapie. He was joined by a number of left-leaning Christian democrats, including the one-time MRP members Madaule and Michelet. French Catholic thought was also present: in the form of the editor Parias, de Gaulle’s biographer Cattaui, Stanislas Fumet, Jean de Fabrègues and General Leclerc’s brother-in-law, the professional historian Adrien Dansette. To the centre-right Godin has been noted to have been on the ‘radicalisant’ wing of the group. Furthermore, *Trente ans* included writing from the

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high-ranking Gaullists who were active in the politics of the RPF: Pasteur Vallery-Radot, General de Monsabert (a future RPF deputy) Soustelle, Vallon, Albert Ollivier (from André Malraux’s personal coterie), and the maverick Rémy. The Rassemblement’s ‘non-aligned’ think-tank, the Comité national d’études was represented by Raymond Aron. As if to demonstrate that Trente ans was a Gaullist team publication it was favourably reviewed by two of its own contributors, Edmond Michelet and Adrien Dansette. Writing in the sympathetic weeklies, Carrefour and La France catholique they immodestly considered the collection to be a rewarding example of contemporary historiography. Michelet promoted the volume in the following terms, reporting: ‘Tel qu’il se présente, ce livre a sa place dans toutes les bibliothèques françaises’.

Excluding the recognised Gaullists, it is interesting to note that the book’s principal contributors, Parias, Madaule and Boudet were not active in the inner circles of RPF politics. Parias is perhaps best known within the publishing community of Paris. From 1964 to 1975 he held the post of director of historical publications at Arthème Fayard. During the Fourth Republic, he edited the newspaper La France catholique (1945-1948), wrote for it under the pseudonym Louis Crozier, and had written a theological essay on the subject of crime and punishment, Justice n’est pas faite. In a further publishing venture, which began in 1950, he founded the popular history journal Miroir de l’histoire. Examples of writing from this periodical suggest that Parias had rather more traditionalist tendencies than classic Gaullist ones. For example, at least as many extreme right-wing historians wrote for the journal as did


those who were closer to Gaullism.\footnote{Articles in \textit{Miroir} were regularly written by the extreme right-wingers Pierre Dominique and Frederic-Yves Jaffré. From the Gaullist current occasional pieces were contributed by General de Monsabert and René Cassin.} A case can be made for depicting Parias as essentially a conservative as opposed to an intimate of the RPF. Of course, these ideological positions were not mutually exclusive. Although Parias edited the history journal, he did not contribute articles to it. A clear connection can be established between his editorship of \textit{La France catholique} and \textit{Trente ans}. Four of the contributors to the book had also written for the newspaper during Parias's editorial control and it seems likely that he had encouraged these contacts. Michel Habib, Adrien Dansette, Jacques Madaule and Geneviève de Gaulle had all worked with Parias on \textit{La France catholique} and went on to contribute significant chapters to \textit{Trente ans}. Indeed, the task of narrating the war years fell to Madaule. Like Parias, at first glance, Jacques Madaule’s intellectual itinerary appears distanced from the RPF. His political origins were on the Christian democratic left. For instance, in the 1930s he had worked extensively with Emmanuel Mounier on the journal \textit{Esprit}.\footnote{For details of Madaule's long standing involvement with \textit{Esprit} see Michel Winock, \textit{Histoire politique de la revue Esprit} (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975); and the autobiography, Jacques Madaule, \textit{L'Absent} (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).} It has recently been confirmed that, during the war itself, Madaule followed Mounier and participated on the fringes of the \textit{Ecole des cadres} project which was created at Uriage.\footnote{For Madaule’s work with Uriage see, John Hellmann, \textit{The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage 1940-1945} (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 115; John Hellman, “Wounding Memories: Mitterrand, Moulin, Touvier, and the Divine Half-Lies of Resistance”, \textit{French Historical Studies}, 19.2 (1995): 467-468, note 27. Of course Madaule's wartime contribution to the ultra-Catholic, Pétainist, review \textit{Demain} was exposed with characteristic enthusiasm by the extreme right-winger Henry Coston, \textit{Dictionnaire de la politique française} (Paris: Diffusion librairie française, 1968), 656. After the war Madaule was elected as an MRP mayor (1949) and briefly served as a conseiller to Minister of State, Francisque Gay. A similar political portrait could be sketched for fellow contributor to \textit{Trente ans}, Jean de Fabrègues. However, from 1946 onwards Madaule was an MRP national and local politician, elected as Mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux}
on the basis of RPF support. It is here that he was most obviously within the Gaullist orbit.\(^{39}\)

The third major contributor to *Trente ans*, Jacques Boudet, also appears removed from the upper strata of Gaullist politics. Boudet was a popular historian who specialised in photographically illustrated collections of French history. A relatively unknown figure, he nevertheless provided a fascinating narration of the inter-war years in the *Trente ans* collection. In a subsequent work, also based on a combination of photographs and textual commentaries, *Histoire de Paris et des Parisiens*, he again displayed a Gaullist eye with an ideologically coloured treatment of the liberation of Paris.\(^ {40}\)

Regarding Adrien Dansette, the extent of his political commitment is harder to measure. His ‘Actes de libération’ chapter in the *Trente ans* collection certainly showed his Gaullist sympathies. Nevertheless, his earlier book, *Histoire de la libération de Paris*, had not been written in this mode. Although noticeably anti-communist, it is not readily classifiable as a highly ideologically coloured Gaullist text. However, as we will see below, Dansette’s free floating political status is somewhat undermined by his polemical attacks on the work of the extreme right-winger, Pierre Taittinger.

Although *Trente ans* was a major event in Gaullist historiography, it was the exception. Gaullists consistently portrayed and conceived the national past through biographies of the General and the political memoirs of his intimates. When de Gaulle’s own memoirs were published, these provided the ultimate layer of interpretation on which to draw. However, one should note that earlier Gaullist texts, written during the RPF years, had already constructed


the foundations of this tradition of writing.

Defeat can be a great mobiliser. This was the case in the development of a post-war extreme right-wing historiography of the occupation. From about 1947 onwards, political memoirs, biographies and histories were written and published which sought to defend reputations and past actions. The *épuration* had a major psychological impact on the extreme right, including the factions of authoritarian conservatives, royalists and fascists. In response to what was perceived to be a case of false history in the service of false justice, a welter of accounts of the war emerged from these broadly united extreme right-wing ideologies. As well as the three typical variations of writing, these publications included a fourth style which was derived from the post-war purges. For instance, M. Jacques Isorni published four books pertaining to the Pétain and Robert Brasillach trials.⁴¹ Similarly, the Laval case produced literature which focused on his trial but which was also of a broadly historical nature.⁴² This trial reportage, which also flowered from the cases of Charles Maurras, Jacques Benoist-Méchin, and Maurice Pujo amongst others, was significant. Accompanied by polemical essays such as those written by Alfred Fabre-Luce and Maurice Bardèche, it preceded the other versions of writing about history, brought the extreme right wing back into the public eye and can be seen to have influenced the current’s more general orientation towards revising the *épuration* judges’ interpretation of the war.⁴³

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Political memoirs from the extreme right-wing were common by the late 1940s. Discursively, these texts tended to occupy the space between the trial coverage and normal historical discourse. Examples of the type can be found from Louis Rougier, Yves Bouthillier, Pierre Taittinger, Jean Tracou and others. In order to rehabilitate Vichy each of these writers sought to combine personal insight and historical judgement.

Typical of the period and style was Rougier’s *Mission secrète à Londres*. Rougier, a professor of philosophy and political economy, had been actively involved in the early days of Vichy. However, by the late autumn of 1940, he obtained an exit visa to spend the rest of the war in New York. Here he worked as an assistant professor of philosophy at the New School for Social Research. Amongst the French exile community he continued to support a Pétainist interpretation of Vichy and in 1943 he preferred General Giraud to de Gaulle. At the end of the war, now living in Montreal, Canada, Rougier published the first edition of his memoirs, *Les Accords Pétain-Churchill*, the content of which legitimated the armistice and the Vichy regime. Primarily he advanced the thesis that Vichy had played a ‘double game’ and that in November 1940 he had negotiated an agreement between Churchill and Pétain against the German occupiers. One year later these revelations were published in Europe. The Geneva based Editions du Cheval Ailé house retitled them as *Mission secrète à Londres*.


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The Editions du Cheval Aile had been founded in 1944 by the Swiss businessman Constant Bourquin. He disseminated titles which might otherwise not have obtained publication in France. A wide spectrum of authoritarian conservative, Pétainist and neo-fascist writers found an outlet for their works which were produced in Switzerland and then imported into the Hexagon. As well as Rougier, the Cheval Aile published books written by Alfred Fabre-Luce, Pierre Dominique, Raymond Abellio, Paul Morand, René and Josée de Chambrun, André Thérive and the Belgian economist Henri de Man. Influential in the success of this project was Bourquin's French colleague Jean Jardin.

It is evident that Rougier's aim to rewrite the past was not conducted in isolation. From the time of the liberation onwards the extreme right wing had re-equipped itself as best it could. In addition to the formidable Cheval Aile group, a number of Paris based publishers such as Nouvelles Editions Latines, L'Elan, La Table Ronde, André Bonne, Grasset, Flammarion and Plon worked with its memorialists, and later its biographers and historians. Furthermore, the extreme right-wing producers were also supported by a growing press. A journalistic career in one of its newspapers was frequently the day to day employment for the current's prolific writers.

Once more Rougier's path is a good example. As the 1948 French edition of his war memoirs was being published, he wrote a series of essays for Ecrits de Paris, the main extreme right-wing journal of the early post-liberation period. Here Rougier repeated the claims which he made in his book. In addition to this occasional journalism he also presented a series of lectures. In 1948, under the auspices of the Ecrits de Paris and its Centre d'Etudes des Questions Actuelles, Rougier informed audiences of his secret mission, the Pétain-Churchill

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accords and the dangers of Gaullism. 48

By 1954 Rougier had moved to a different strand within the extreme right-wing press. Now he contributed to the royalist weekly newspaper *Aspects de la France*. As in the case of many other extreme right-wing intellectuals, the doctrinal differences which existed between royalism and hard nationalism did not deter Rougier from working for various currents within the broad ideological church. In fact, by the 1970s, he had become a guru of the French Nouvelle droite, who in turn valued his philosophical writing over his historiography. 49 For *Aspects de la France*, in the role of a prestigious historian, he reviewed the first volume of de Gaulle’s *Mémoires de guerre*. This enterprise ran through a series of seven articles which commenced in November 1954 and concluded in January 1955. Rougier’s style and the anti-Gaullist substance of his argument had not changed from his earlier work. Meanwhile, by the end of the Fourth Republic, Rougier was appointed as a Professor of the Arts Faculty of the University of Caen. His extreme right-wing intellectual agenda had not apparently hampered the dissemination of his work or the continuation of his pre-war career in higher education.

As the early political memorialists found a marketplace, a large number of pro-Pétainist biographies of Marshal Pétain were published. These treatments have been recently contextualised by Bernard Laguerre’s short study and Henry Roussø’s authoritative account


49 Rougier is one of the few intellectuals to have influenced both the anti-liberal French Nouvelle droite and the ultra-liberal Anglo-American New Right. For his inter-war liberalism see, Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983* (London: Fontana, 1995), 9-12, 86. For his Nouvelle droite paganism see, his *Celse contre les chrétiens* advertised in, *Votre bibliothèque pour le XXe siècle - Eléments* (Paris: Editions du Labyrinthe, 1997).
of the Association nationale pour défendre la mémoire du Maréchal Pétain (ADMP).\textsuperscript{50} For the most part biographies of Pétain came from within the ADMP group. Rousso’s description of it as a rightist ‘laboratory of ideas’ is supported by my research. A brief profile of those involved in defending Pétain and sympathetically writing about his life suggest that the point can be extended. A review of the intellectual trajectories of those who sat on the Association’s Comité d’honneur demonstrates the hybrid mixture of extreme rights. On the one hand members included figures who personified the literary and military conservative establishment: General Weygand, Henry Bordeaux, Jerôme Carcopino, Claude Farrère, P.E. Flandin, and Louis Madelin, for instance. Conversely, elements of the radical extreme right-wing press also formed an influential part of the group. Representative figures of this stratum are Pierre Dominique, the aforementioned Louis Rougier, Jean Mazé, Pierre Taittinger, Louis Dominique Girard and Jean Tracou. General Hering, the ADMP’s first active, rather than honorary President, was perhaps the quintessential biographer of Pétain. Before writing \textit{La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain} (1956) Hering had pursued an upper-bourgeois military career but after the war he had seen fit to write this treatment and to contribute to the hard nationalist press.\textsuperscript{51} Just as the ADMP’s committee balanced shades of extreme right-wing activity so too Héring’s intellectual trajectory crossed the many internal borders of the right.

The extreme right wing’s production levels were so intense and sub-divided that biographical focus was never limited to Pétain in the way in which Gaullist or communist biographies were strongly associated with de Gaulle or Thorez. Extreme-right publications also


covered the lives of Robert Brasillach, Pierre Laval, Charles Maurras and to a lesser extent Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Thereby the literary biography was itself a prolific sub-field within the wider school. These works are not discussed at length in this thesis. Nevertheless they are additional evidence of the post-war cultural recovery of the extreme right wing, and would prove an interesting area for further research.

In the 1950s the third category of writing, ‘history’ was a common medium for the extreme right-wing, more so than we have seen in the Gaullist current’s record of production. The extreme right’s historiographic activities were impressive in terms of diversity and volume. In general, those who had initially written political memoirs recast their work as histories, producing edition after edition. Histories included books by the ever active Rougier, Girard, Henry Coston, and Jacques Benoist-Méchin. Importantly, production was stimulated by the ‘purge-amnesty’ debate of 1950-51 and did not decline substantially afterwards. Indeed, if anything, extreme right-wing production and organisation were not tamed by the gift of amnesty, instead they were invigorated by the release of many activists from prison. Jacques Benoist-Méchin is a classic example of the later extreme right-wing historians. Let us consider him in detail.

Jacques Benoist-Méchin, man of letters, diplomat and political activist, had been fully committed to the *Etat français*, having spent part of the war representing Vichy in Berlin and Paris. His right-wing credentials are immaculate. He had been a Germanophile par excellence, a member of Doriot’s Parti Populaire Français, a supporter of Hitler, and during the occupation was introduced into Admiral Darlan’s cabinet. He also accepted the Presidency of the Légion Tricolore. His memoirs of the defeat of France, *La Moisson de quarante*, became an occupation bestseller. Despite having been part of what Marc Ferro has called Vichy’s ‘parti Allemand’ and having advocated French participation in the war against Britain, Benoist-
Méchin survived the liberation and its purges. Sentenced to death, pardoned and then imprisoned, by the mid-1950s he had returned to the Parisian literary scene. For example, in the final volume of his post-war memoirs, *A l'épreuve du temps*, he recollects dinners with the publishing team at Albin Michel and the Pétainist novelist Pierre Benoît. It was at this point that he recommenced writing about French military history, and in 1956 published a three-volume account of the 1940 collapse and the creation of the Vichy regime. Entitled *Soixante jours qui ébranlèrent l'Occident* (henceforth *Soixante jours*) the body of the work had been written during his imprisonment. The text ran to over 1500 pages: *La Bataille du Nord, La Bataille de France* and *La Fin du régime*.

The trilogy's scope was impressive and for the extreme right wing, at least, its publication was a cultural event. In this milieu Benoist-Méchin's work was soon considered to be the definitive text published on the war period. For instance, *Rivarol*, the weekly newspaper which had developed from *Ecrits de Paris*, devoted three separate reviews to it. The first of these was an extended essay by the notorious antisemitic novelist, Lucien Rebatet. Enthusiastically, Rebatet announced:

> On a lu, on lira sur le printemps 1940, d'autres textes. Mais voici, après le recul de seize ans normal et même nécessaire pour un tel travail, le livre qui sera dorénavant indispensable, qui demeurera le plus complet et le plus

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52 Marc Ferro, *Pétain*, 306.


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terriblement éloquent.\textsuperscript{55}

For the novelist it seemed that at last ‘notre plus grand historien’ had set the record straight. In return for this publicity Benoist-Méchin and Albin Michel authorised \textit{Rivarol} to reprint two short extracts from his work. Somewhat forgotten by today’s extreme right-wing community, who often look to others for inspiration, Benoist-Méchin represented the Fourth Republic’s leading hard-right historian. However, it was not only \textit{Rivarol} which enjoyed his work. For example, Louis-Henri Parias’s periodical \textit{Miroir de l’histoire} gave all three volumes very positive reviews. Although Parias had been associated with Gaullist historiography at the time of the RPF, his reviewer, G. M. Tracy, favourably compared Benoist-Méchin’s version of history with de Gaulle’s \textit{Mémoires de guerre}.\textsuperscript{56}

Publications from this current, supported by mainstream publishers, are a feature of the period. Works such as Benoist-Méchin’s give the lie to claims that the war was predominantly a site for Gaullo-communist myth-making. As I have charted, throughout the Fourth Republic, historians such as Rougier (published by Cheval Aîlé and Grasset), Isorni, Weygand, and Gaxotte (with Flammarion), Paul Sérant (Plon) and Thierry Maulnier (with Gallimard), and several others, presented extreme right-wing perspectives with the collaboration of the


publishing establishment.\textsuperscript{57} Whilst it has often been claimed that, 'jusqu'à l'élégante prestation de l’ancien SS français Christian de la Mazière dans \textit{Français si vous saviez}..., la mémoire des vaincus est demeurée imprésentable et inaudible, réduite aux marges, culpabilisée,' that assertion is irreconcilable with the evidence.\textsuperscript{58}

The deluge of extreme right-wing historiography of Vichy was an important feature of the ideology's wider survival strategies. Any type of publication which absolved or revised the Vichy past was of immediate political assistance. Functionally, the topic of the Second World War became of huge importance. The ability to publish on contemporary history was a further step in the rehabilitation of authoritarian conservative, royalist and neo-fascistic thought. Factual writing on the war can be identified as being comparable to the fictional revival pursued by the prominent literary \textit{Hussard} group: Roger Nimier, Michel Déon, Antoine Blondin and Jacques Laurent.

For communists, Gaullists and the extreme right-wingers, writing about the Second World War was a vital part of constructing ideological identities and creating an interpretative grid through which to comprehend the contemporary political world. Much of this world was perceived through the past. Common to each of the three ideological communities was an almost obsessive desire to exhume as many lessons of history as were sustainable at any one time. That is to say, contemporary political debate was never entirely distant from issues which could be located in a representation of the war. On the other hand, as I will argue below, the continued production of ideological history was also as much the result of inter-ideological rivalries as it was of any individual wish to portray one's own past advantageously.


\textsuperscript{58} Alain Brossat, \textit{Libération, fête folle}, 60-61.
Historiographic Rivalry and Response

Historians belonging to the three dominant ideological currents read and considered each other’s work. More often than not history writing proved to be an area of rivalry and animosity. With so many actors producing slanted versions of the past, many of these publications were stimulated through profound disagreements with accounts which had emerged from the other currents. Polemical exchanges, poisonous letters to the press and the traditional droit de réponse were common. From time to time journalistic tempers rose to develop into pamphlet campaigns. Entire interpretative counter-arguments were produced and even personal defamation cases brought to bear. In the daily routine of writing, politicking, providing book reviews for the press, and in some cases teaching or giving public talks, aggressive exchanges with the ‘enemy’ were vital. Confrontation provided much needed publicity, and equally the reassurance that ‘they’ were wrong, and by implication that one’s own side was right. Two detailed examples illustrate the dynamics of contestation which accompanied the publication of many of the politically motivated accounts of the war. The events of the ‘Taittinger Affair’ (1948-1958) and reactions to the publication of de Gaulle’s Mémoires de guerre – L’Appel (1954-1955) demonstrate the inter-ideological nature of the historiographic production process. Communists, Gaullists and extreme right-wingers tracked each other’s publications and conceptions of the war. Both of the cases underline the benefits in terms of publicity, press space and notoriety which controversy and public debate offered. They raise a paradox which appears to be the core of ideological history production. On the one hand, disagreement and debate were necessarily violent, and potentially dangerous, whilst conversely, over time, this very animosity could become a relatively mundane business in which all those involved appear to have been cynically entrenched in their views and to have
enjoyed ‘going through the motions’ of disputation.

The Taittinger Affair

In the autumn of 1948, Pierre Taittinger, the ex-Jeunesses patriotes demagogue and champagne baron, published a defence of his wartime record, and thereby an account of the liberation of Paris. Having served as the President of the Paris Municipal Council from May 1943 until August 1944, Taittinger felt that he was uniquely positioned to depict this period. In *Et Paris ne fut pas détruit* (henceforth *Et Paris*) Taittinger claimed to have played a pivotal role in the protection of Paris during the German withdrawal and the city’s pending liberation. He argued that his negotiations had helped secure the ‘peaceful’ German retreat and that this had been obscured by propagandistic accounts of 1944. Taittinger argued that false legends had been generated by a French Communist Party which needed to exaggerate its patriotic resistance record. At the beginning of the work, he stated, ‘J’ai écrit ces lignes à l’intention particulière des Parisiens, pour les informer des efforts qui ont contribué, en août 1944, à la sauvegarde de leur ville et sa libération. Et afin qu’ils sachent pourquoi Paris ne fut pas détruit’.\(^{59}\)

Taittinger’s publishers, Les Editions de l’Elan, were also explicit about the purposes of the series in which the account was distributed. Their ‘Témoignages Contemporains’ collection had included titles by the extreme right-wingers Albert Paraz and Claude Jamet as well as Abbé Desgranges’ *Les Crimes demasqués du résistantialisme*.\(^{60}\) The publishers, headed by Edmond Marie, sought to revise the perceived injustices of the *épuration* and what they identified as the subsequent Gaullo-communist false representation of the war which had justified it. The

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60 By the time *Et Paris* had gone to press, *L’Elan*’s catalogue included titles from Sacha Guitry, Albert Paraz, and Abbé Desgranges.
Taittinger and the Elan house were part of the extreme right-wing revival of the late 1940s (comparable to the case of Louis Rougier outlined above). However, the reaction with which *Et Paris* was greeted was both exceptional and exemplary. The controversy which came to surround the account justifies the label ‘affair’. Historiographical dispute and debate were sparked by the book and its author. Taittinger’s writing caused enmity from both of the other ideological currents for much of the lifetime of the Fourth Republic. Typical of its time, *Et Paris* stimulated conflict after conflict: from direct street protest, through legal sanction to furious public debate, with the former marking the 1948-1951 period and the latter continuing almost until the production of the book’s re-edition, in mid-1958.

On its first publication even the display of copies of *Et Paris* was provocative. For example, on 25 September 1948, a group identified as ex-resistance fighters gathered outside the ‘La Reine Christine’ bookshop, on the Boulevard Raspail, to protest against the presentation of Taittinger’s work in its window. This was an inauspicious welcome to Taittinger’s career as an historian. Indeed, this demonstration was unusual. Nevertheless, a similar encounter was to be repeated in 1950 between General Weygand and a group of👇

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protesters who wished to stop the sale of his historical writings. These events highlight the sensitivity of the earlier extreme right-wing publications on the war and indicate the depth of feeling which continued to exist on all sides when a prominent figure sought to publish historiography.

A second reaction to *Et Paris* came in the form of an attempted legal sanction. A number of weeks after the Boulevard Raspail demonstration, a group of ex-FFI officers (possibly already involved in the street-protest) petitioned the local Prefect of Police to ban Taittinger’s book. This strategy was partially successful. *Le Monde* reported that, ‘M. Léonard [the Prefect] a répondu qu’il prendrait les mesures nécessaires pour empêcher l’exposition en vitrine de l’ouvrage mais que son interdiction dépendait du ministère de l’Intérieur’. The localised communist reaction against the book continued. On the 13 December 1948, a PCF member of the Paris Municipal Council, M. Ouzoulia, demanded that its members condemn *Et Paris* on behalf of the capital. This motion was favoured unanimously and was carried. In response, Taittinger took up what he saw as an injustice - writing an appeal to the head of the Municipal Council, Pierre de Gaulle. Naturally, a copy of this letter was also printed in the extreme right-wing press, the royalist *Aspects de la France*. In it Taittinger waggishly concluded his defence by alluding to the Municipal Council's complicity with the PCF's agenda. He claimed that he had been one of those Frenchmen who had merely ‘fait son devoir de son mieux’. The following extract captures the tone and spirit of the letter.

Le Bulletin Municipal officiel du 20 décembre 1948 m'apprend qu’au cours de la séance du 13 décembre 1948, j’ai été mis en cause par le représentant du

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groupe communiste, M. Ouzoulias. Celui-ci, en se servant de textes tronqués de mon livre, *Et Paris ne fut pas détruit*, a surpris la bonne foi de l’Assemblée municipale et obtenu, en fin de compte, un vote d’unanimité condamnant mon ouvrage comme portant atteinte à la dignité de la nation [...] En résumé, on comprend parfaitement l’intérêt du parti communiste de maintenir à tout prix, contre toute vérité et contre toute justice, les légendes qui font de lui le seul parti vraiment patriote de France.  

Through the FFI-Pierre de Gaulle incident Taittinger gained access to the royalist press, and had the rhetorical pleasure of chastising Pierre de Gaulle and the other Municipal Councillors. The debate highlights how quickly a range of ideological players became involved in a localised dispute. The anti-communist version of the liberation had drawn retaliation from the PCF, but it had equally led to the Gaullist mayor of Paris condemning *Et Paris*. This initial scandal meant that Taittinger could answer his critics and repeat his accusation that they were relying on a false, communist, interpretation of the war.

The Taittinger affair illustrates that ideological histories of the war were not simply published, then forgotten. Historians kept their work in the public eye, whilst their ideological opponents debunked their work, or, as in this case, censored it. More often than not the impression of war historiography derived from the work of Jean-Pierre Azéma, François Bédarida, R.J.B. Bosworth, Stéphane Courtois and several others ignores the role of inter-ideological dynamics. In reality, the production of ideological history was far more complex a cultural phenomenon than has been presented. Intellectuals who believed their versions of the past to be the most plausible did not only produce their own texts, but also intervened and

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counter-attacked one another. Being an ideological historian did not only mean the writing of
history for one's own supporters and press. Instead, it was often a case of defending one's
position against the latest aggressor.

The Taittinger affair was not resolved in 1948. Almost one year later, the FFI group
which had originally sought to restrict the display of Taittinger's writings continued their
campaign by bringing a defamation action against the author and his publishers. In addition,
two private cases were filed against Taittinger and Elan by Roger Worms and the Lepercq
family, on behalf of the deceased ex-Minister M. Lepercq. As Le Monde reports, the first
hearing of the FFI case involved sympathisers from both camps, including the PCF's resistance
hero, Colonel Rol-Tanguy. The incident appears to have been as much to Taittinger's
advantage as to anyone else's. Accompanied by the director of Editions Elan, and his barrister
M. Maurice Ribet, Taittinger was given the opportunity to restate his case. Le Monde's
reporter emphasised Taittinger's confidence. He commented:

M. Taittinger, vêtu de bleu marine, satisfait et abondant comme à son habitude,
prend tout d'abord la parole pour une déclaration liminaire, dont le ton n'est pas
sans rappeler celui des réunions des Jeunesses patriotes d'antan. Il évoque avec
complaisance "ces Français qui, ne possédant pas de compte de banque à
l'étranger n'ont pas voulu au moment de l'épreuve quitter le sol national". 67

The direct attack on Thorez and de Gaulle was a tried formula which had been established in
Vichy propaganda. Pleading that the ex-resistance group which had brought the case, the
Union Nationale des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur, were largely ineligible applicants, M. Ribet
seems to have avoided the FFI case. No further press coverage clarified the result.

67 Unsigned, "Dernières nouvelles - cet après midi les FFI assignent M. Taittinger pour son livre Et Paris", Le
Nevertheless, Taittinger was less fortunate in the subsequent private actions which he faced. To Roger Worms's charge, Taittinger and Elan were found guilty of a 'délit d'injure' and were forced to pay a fine of 10,000 francs. 68 In the case brought by the Lepercq family the outcome also proved to be an expensive one. At the centre of his defence against Lepercq, Ribet argued that Taittinger's book was technically an example of journalism and that his client was only a 'historien partiel'. 69 This would have meant that under the Press Law of July 1881 Taittinger's defamation hearings were now prescribed. The manipulation of the legal status of Et Paris, as a text, failed. Taittinger and Edmond Marie, the director of Elan, were condemned to pay a further fine of 100,000 francs to each of Lepercq's surviving children.

The legal conflicts exemplified in the Taittinger affair were repeated in other cases. The early extreme right-wing historiographers were the ones who were the most frequently prosecuted. However, with the exception of the French state's actions against Maurice Bardèche, legal action was brought on the basis of one individual versus another. 70 In the late 1940s, and early 1950s, Jean Tracou, Louis-Dominique Girard, Albert Paraz, the Ecrits de Paris and Aspects de la France all faced similar cases to those which were brought against

68 Unsigned, "M. Taittinger n'est pas diffamé mais injure", Le Monde, 2 March 1950: 12.

69 For the Lepercq case, Unsigned, "Un jugement du procès Leperq", Le Monde, 3 March 1951: 5; Unsigned, "M. Taittinger versera 100,000 francs...", Le Monde, 16 March 1951: 12.

70 In 1948 Bardèche was prosecuted for his Nuremberg ou la Terre Promise under Article 24 of the Law of 29 July 1881 which considered the offence of 'apologie du crime de meurtre'. A number of accounts detail the case which marks the first attempt to combat a form of Holocaust denial literature. An extreme right-wing interpretation, as framed by Bardèche's barrister, can be found in Jacques Isorni, Mémoires 2, 199-206; whilst an impartial treatment is given in Nicholas Hewitt, Literature and the Right in Post-War France, 62-68. For Bardèche as a forerunner of the Holocaust denial literature of the 1970s, see Gill Seidel, The Holocaust Denial (Leeds: Beyond the Pale collective, 1986), 95-96; Ian Barnes, "Fascism and Technocratic Elitism: the case of Maurice Bardèche", The Wiener Library Bulletin, NS34.53/54 (1981): 36-40. The overtly antisemitic character of Bardèche's essay was atypical of the wider historiographic milieu in which I am interested.
As with the Taittinger affair, these attempted sanctions only confirmed the extreme right's view of the épuration, and in turn, stimulated further publications against both the communist and Gaullist interpretations of the war. Of course, by their very nature, fictional accounts of the war such as Marcel Aymé's *Le Chemin des écoliers* (1946), which subverted and questioned both Gaullist and communist assumptions in similar ways to the ideological histories, did not result in comparable court cases.

The legal aspect of the affair is of interest in the questions which it raises about the status of Taittinger's text. By his own terms, Taittinger had claimed to be writing a 'history' of the liberation of Paris. However, in an ideological conflict language is infinitely malleable and interpretation is frequently founded on expediency. When M' Ribet sought to defend Taittinger and use the press laws to his advantage, he did not hesitate to describe his client's work as 'journalism'. Now, Taittinger was to be considered a 'historien partiel'. In this example, legal considerations had suddenly changed the genre claims which author and text had hitherto implied. Similarly, when it was rhetorically convenient to Taittinger, he also argued that his personal role in the administration of Paris meant that his was a more accurate insight into events than that of a mere 'historien'.

Alongside the three defamation cases, and for some time afterwards, Pierre Taittinger and *Et Paris* caused excitement in the press. From the first reviews of the book, a long-lasting acrimony developed between the historian, Adrien Dansette, and Taittinger. The latter's

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treatment of the liberation of Paris was at odds with Dansette’s in *Histoire de la libération de Paris* and *Trente ans*, and both men sought to defend their positions, whilst in so doing Dansette further revealed his Gaullist political sympathies. The debate was far from academic and was quickly reduced to the level of trading personal insults. This enmity was played out in a series of reviews and counter-reviews which were printed in *Le Monde* and in the pages of the conservative history review, *Miroir de l’histoire*. Consistently both men sought to discredit the other’s work. Typical was the following interchange from their dispute. In 1953, Dansette had written a summary of his views on the liberation of Paris. The article passed without note, but a reader’s letter in 1954 asked for further information about the events of 1944 and it was this missive which stirred Taittinger, providing him with the opportunity to write to the journal. His letter offered a critique of Dansette’s work. Here then was a chance to respond in kind to the poor reviews *Et Paris* had originally received from Dansette in *Le Monde*. Taittinger wrote,

Dix ans passent vite. Une œuvre de réhabilitation s’impose[ ...]Dans le concert d’éloges qui ont été adressés aux uns et aux autres, on a oublié de rendre hommage à ceux qui dans les Assemblées Municipales [i.e.Taittinger], et les Mairies de Paris et de banlieue, se sont consacrés, jusqu’au bout, à la défense de leurs cités, et à la sauvegarde de leurs habitants.73

Instead of choosing to ignore the slight, Dansette replied. This was a relatively easy choice as he could rely on his original critique (1949) of Taittinger’s work in *Le Monde*. Explicitly he presented Taittinger as an unreliable witness, who was motivated by bitterness and political frustration. The history of the liberation had already been written in Dansette’s own work. Any

further revision, it was argued, would lead to an excessively right-wing treatment of events.\textsuperscript{74} The argument did not stop after one exchange. Over the next eighteen months Taittinger and Dansette vigorously attempted to debunk each others respective interpretations.\textsuperscript{75} In what was turning into a classic \textit{dialogue de sourds} Taittinger claimed that Dansette was writing without any personal experience, whilst on the other hand, Dansette repeated that Taittinger did not have the required distance to accurately represent August 1944.

On the level of extended polemical debate, the Taittinger-Dansette case is an extreme example of a common feature of ideological production. For both of the central protagonists confrontation brought the opportunity to air their views on the liberation. Similarly, by the time of the \textit{Miroir} exchanges, both historians had already good reason to dislike each other, an obvious legacy of the earlier reviews and responses. This final element of the affair reveals the role of pride. Neither Dansette nor Taittinger appear to have been able to tolerate the challenges which the other historian’s work presented. Locked in ideological and probably personal dispute, their campaigns against each other were likely to continue. In this detailed example, it is evident that the more accounts of the war an historian, or current of interpretation, produced, the more likely it was that rival historians who believed in a different version of the past would counter-attack in kind. In the case of the Taittinger-Dansette example, and others, there is little evidence of a psychological preoccupation with the collective memory of the war in the manner that Rousso would suggest. It simply was an unresolvable argument between authors of two conflicting interpretations of a symbolically important set of events.


Opposition and Reaction to De Gaulle’s Mémoires de Guerre.

The reaction of the PCF and the extreme right-wing to the publication of de Gaulle’s Mémoires de guerre reinforces a number of the conclusions which I have drawn from the Taittinger affair. De Gaulle’s first volume of war memoirs represented a landmark in both the career of the General and in French historiography of the war. As has been noted above, this was also a major political opportunity for Gaullists to praise de Gaulle’s skills as a historian and to suggest his continued importance to the nation. However, the publication of a major account of the war by the leading French protagonist within it was not ignored by anti-Gaullists. Instead, from all quarters, it was a signal to renew efforts to counter de Gaulle’s claims. A brief survey of the reaction of both the communist left and the extreme right illustrates how the production of committed history from one current produced a series of reinterpretations from the other two. As witnessed in the Taittinger affair, the publication of ideologically marked history writing did not put an end to debate, it exacerbated it. The interjection from de Gaulle served only to widen the surface divisions which already existed between the three currents.

The French Communist Party had deployed the ‘political memoir from above’ strategy for several years before the publication of de Gaulle’s book. Maurice Thorez’s Fils du peuple had already explained the war years, and the appearance of de Gaulle’s account would not alter this fact. Gaullist historiography did not pass without communist challenge. The first volume of the Mémoires de guerre was reviewed and criticised in the Cahiers by Roger Garaudy. Indeed no other non-communist account of the war received an equal amount of coverage.76 The PCF had responded: de Gaulle was a bourgeois and his version of the war was a bourgeois one. Furthermore, it was surely not a coincidence that by the spring of 1955, a second edition

of the 1949 version of *Fils du peuple* was republished. On this occasion the Central Committee’s second-in-command, Jacques Duclos, promoted Thorez in the *Cahiers*. Although emphasis was placed on Thorez’s working class origins and his leadership of the PCF, Duclos’ essay also underlined communist war history. Concerning 1940, Duclos stated,

> Notre Parti avait, dès les premiers jours de l’occupation, appelé à la Résistance, et l’*Humanité* clandestine publia, au début de juillet 1940, un appel du Comité central de notre Parti, appel que j’eus l’honneur de signer avec Maurice Thorez. [...] Cet appel devait être entendu par d’innombrables travailleurs et patriotes français à qui notre Parti montrait la voie du combat, du sacrifice, de la victoire, et on ne peut lire sans ressentir une vive émotion les pages de *Fils du peuple* consacrées à l’évocation de quelques-uns de ceux qui sont morts pour la France et pour le communisme.77

The release of de Gaulle’s war memoirs had provoked this response from the left. Gaullist historiography was not read solely by Gaullists, but had an immediate impact on the production cycles of the other two currents of interpretation. For the PCF, hostile reviews of de Gaulle’s writing and the republication of *Fils du peuple* were to follow. Instead of engaging in a full-scale debate with de Gaulle they chose to continue to publish their own material on the topics which they considered to be of both contemporary and historical relevance.

It was on the Pétainist extreme right that de Gaulle’s writing stimulated major reflection and then increased antagonism. The de Gaulle-Pétain issue was not a new rivalry but a continuation of a wartime and post-liberation argument. Extreme right-wing reaction to the first volume of *Mémoires de guerre* came in a wide variety of forms: satirical anticipation of their publication, a press campaign against their veracity, the recuperation of Robert Aron’s *Histoire de Vichy*, which was published at the same time as *L’Appel*, as well as more direct

attempts to delegitimise de Gaulle’s interpretation.

Initially, even before de Gaulle’s account had been published the opportunity to criticise his version of events had been anticipated with glee. De Gaulle’s writing would provide a further opportunity to present the extreme right wing’s own account of the war, and potentially re-invigorate its separate campaigns: the rehabilitation of Pétain, or the dissemination of its interpretation of Vichy. First and foremost, the occasion would provide a chance to re-open hostilities against de Gaulle. This almost pathological hatred of de Gaulle was evident in Rivarol’s parody of the forthcoming work. The following citation is a brief example of the paper’s satirical anticipation. Published for April Fool’s Day, 1954, the quote pretends to be from the as yet unpublished de Gaulle memoirs:

Quelques gros poissons ... d’avril! Exclusif Mémoires inédits du Général de Gaulle : De Bordeaux à Londres (juin 1940).
‘...En montant dans l’avion du général Spears, un petit accident m’arriva: je me heurtai durement à la tête à la porte de la carlingue, prévue pour des passagers de moindre taille. Et Spears s’écria: - Je ne vous croyais pas si grand ! [...] L’avion passait justement au-dessus des riantes campagnes de la Sarthe. A gauche (je suis assez fort en géographie, comme me le dit souvent mon ami l’amiral Muzelier) s’étendait la péninsule armoricaine. Je lançai un regard vers cet inexpugnable promontoire de l’occident. Un bon mur fortifié, un wall comme fut le mur d’Hadrien aux confins de l’Écosse - et voilà la Bretagne préservée pendant des siècles de l’invasion teutonne. Les traîtres de Bordeaux n’avaient donc pas lu l’histoire romaine comme moi !’

The passage speaks for itself. Clearly, amongst the Rivarol team, the publication of L’Appel was perceived to be an occasion to remind readers of de Gaulle’s personal faults, allude to his reputation for arrogance, as well as his alleged strategic blunders, for instance the Brittany retreat plan. This type of article illustrates a deep ideological fascination with the General and

78 Unsigned, “Quelques gros poissons...d’avril”, Rivarol, 1 April 1954: 10.
with what he would say about the war. Henry Rousso has commented that ‘A leurs manières respectives, de Gaulle et Robert Aron ont donc incité à calmer le jeu des séquelles, l'un en offrant (avec contreparties) un honneur rétrospectif inventé, l'autre en minorant le rôle néfaste de Vichy’. 79 The calming of Vichy-related controversy is unlikely. Instead, the extreme right sought to manipulate the publication of de Gaulle’s memoirs to their advantage. The media extravaganza of de Gaulle’s first major post-war publication presented the opportunity to return to the mainstream arena and to defend very publicly the Maréchal and Vichy’s heritage. De Gaulle’s publication had acted as a stimulant to those working within this current of production.

During the months which followed the publication of L’Appel, in October and November 1954, there appears to have been a semi-organised response to de Gaulle. This came from two closely related sources, the committee of the ADMP and General Weygand. On the one hand, Weygand reacted against the Mémoires de guerre on the basis of a personal slight. Conversely, the ADMP members set about defending Pétain’s place in history. Both campaigns were conducted in the mainstream press. Here then was a chance to find a wider audience for views which were normally voiced in the political press of the extreme right wing. On behalf of the ADMP, Jacques Isorni wrote about de Gaulle’s memoirs in Paris-Presse, whilst Loustanau-Lacau contributed to Le Monde and General Héring expressed his views in the pages of the weekly Paris-Match. Shortly afterwards, each of the letters was published in a collected

79 Henry Rousso, Le Syndrome de Vichy, 283. Although the phrase ‘honneur rétrospectif’ may refer more widely than to only de Gaulle’s war memoirs to include the transfer of Jean Moulin’s ashes to the Panthéon, I take it that Rousso is implying that the publications of 1954 and 1956 somehow served to reduce interest in collaboration and Vichy. For instance, when again writing on historiography, he states: ‘Le Général ne pouvait à lui seul, dans son isolement, faire passer l’histoire de Vichy à la trappe et abriter sous son aile celle de quarante millions de Français restés malgré eux en métropole. D’ou l’importance historiographique du premier livre de Robert Aron.’ cited ibid., 280-281.
pamphlet entitled *Réponse à Charles de Gaulle*. What is important in the context of this chapter is not the detailed content of the letters and pamphlet, but rather the fact that de Gaulle’s writing had stimulated increased production from the extreme right-wing historians. Indeed, in Héring’s (1956) *La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain* the issue of de Gaulle’s war memoirs was re-evoked. Pointedly at the beginning of his biography, Héring cited Pétain’s consideration of political memoirs. He wrote,

> Le Maréchal Pétain n’a pas écrit ses mémoires et, trés spirituellement, il en a donné la raison: “Je ne laisse pas de mémoires personnelles, car j’ai toujours constaté que leurs auteurs, trop enclins à se justifier de leurs erreurs, ont, avec la vérité, des accommodements qui les rendent pleins d’indulgence pour eux-mêmes, et de sévérité pour les autres”.

This citation was often repeated by extreme right-wingers. Again it illustrates the continued influence of de Gaulle’s writing on the ideological group, and their responsive need to de-legitimise it.

Further extreme right-wing reaction to de Gaulle’s historiography is also exemplified in the series of interventions pursued by General Weygand. In October 1954 this began with a complaint to *Paris-Presse* about the manner in which he had been portrayed by de Gaulle. However, revenge was not complete and the following year Weygand produced a detailed volume of historical writing which countered de Gaulle’s perspective in further detail. Published by the establishment house Flammarion, Weygand’s *En lisant les mémoires de guerre du général de Gaulle* provided a complete counter-reading of de Gaulle’s argument.

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Reaction had developed from the level of the popular press to that of Weygand’s monograph.\(^8^2\)

Once more, this type of escalation is hardly indicative of the *Mémoires de guerre*’s alleged capacity to quieten controversy or to repress debate about the Vichy past. Indeed, in the light of the evidence one wonders precisely what Alan Morris meant when, repeating aspects of Rousso’s interpretation, he described the publication of the war memoirs in the following terms: ‘when all three volumes were published in the 1950s, few unappreciative voices could be heard’\(^8^3\).

Supplementary to the extensive press criticism and the publications mentioned above, the extreme right quickly capitalised on the coincidence that Robert Aron’s and Georgette Elgey’s *Histoire de Vichy* had been published at approximately the same time as de Gaulle’s first volume of memoirs (in the autumn of 1954). The coincidence of publication was manipulated. In the first instance, Robert Aron’s work received ambivalent reviews from *Rivarol* and *Aspects de la France*. On a more positive note it was already seen as a stick with which to beat de Gaulle. The extreme right wing’s recuperation of Aron’s work had commenced. For instance, *Rivarol* directly compared the early sales figures for the two books.

This article championed Robert Aron against de Gaulle. The short notice read:

Les *Mémoires* du général de Gaulle ont eu un gros tirage initial: 100,000 exemplaires. Jusqu’à présent il n’y en a guère que les deux tiers qui aient été demandés malgré la très considerable publicité faite par la maison Plon et la publication préalable de certains fragments dans des journaux à fort tirage. En revanche, l’*Histoire de Vichy* de Robert Aron s’est déjà vendus à plus de 50,000 et sur le simple vu du titre.\(^8^4\)

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\(^8^3\) Alan Morris, *Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed*, 30.

In reality, Aron’s writing was neither explicitly sympathetic to Gaullism nor to the extreme right wing. Nevertheless, it is evident in the reporting of the extreme right-wing press that Aron’s work was manipulated in order to undermine de Gaulle’s interpretation. Finally, one should note that by 1956 Robert Aron was also prepared to use his links with the extreme right to his commercial advantage. For instance, at this time he was willing to participate in a book signing colloquium with the *Rivarol* journalist, Pierre Dominique, and the star historian of the extreme-right Jacques Benoist-Méchin. This event exposes the degree of complicity between the recuperated and the recuperators.

**Concluding Discussion**

To review, the three main currents of interpretation produced accounts of the war from the immediate *après-guerre* to the fall of the Fourth Republic. The history of their production illustrates the contained nature of communist writing and publishing, whilst at the same time it points to a number of hitherto unrecognised intersections between the Gaullist, conservative and extreme right-wing arenas of publishing, journalism and politics. Evidence suggests that one should not underestimate the extreme right’s recovery. The Taittinger affair and reaction to de Gaulle’s writing shows that production was part of a cycle of provocation. Counter-arguments and counter-interpretations were produced with the clear aim of debunking the opposing currents. We have seen that what Rousso called the ‘voix discordantes’ of the ideological historians were rarely silent, and then only when pausing before the next

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encounter. 86 The portrayal which has been sketched confirms and advances Michel's suspicion that the subject of the occupation was more often than not possessed by contemporary politics. 87

Evidence from the world of journalistic history writing, the three currents of production, and political publishing such as the communist journal *Cahiers* does not indicate a sudden repression of interest in the war. Certainly, de Gaulle's war memoirs and Aron's and Elgey's history did not have the impact ascribed to them in the popular Vichy syndrome model. On the contrary, there was already a vibrant culture of committed historiography in which the extreme right appears to have been disproportionately powerful when compared with its parliamentary status.

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CHAPTER III
PORTRAYALS OF WAR

This chapter begins the detailed consideration of the nine selected ideological texts. It shows that they were far more complex than has been suggested in much of the secondary literature. The starting-point is a discussion of the content which the historians covered. This is followed by a comparison of the three mythopeic portrayals which they developed to represent the war as a single event. A concluding review will consider the political function of the three interpretations of the war.

Content

The activist historians, supported by journalists, claimed to have produced the definitive history of the occupation. In reality all of the writers were selective. We know that the communist and Gaullist historians had a propensity to focus on their respective contributions to the resistance while their extreme right-wing counterparts established versions of what it had meant to collaborate. This corresponds to the picture of post-war historical writing offered by Rousso, Olivier Wieviorka, Courtois, Azéma, François Bédarida and others.¹

The pattern can be sharpened. The content of the communist current went beyond the topic areas for which it is known today. As well as writing on the resistance, its historians included passages on the nature of Vichy and collaboration. This subject was presented as a critique of the regime's authoritarian social policies. Gaullism was also examined; Thorez, Dautry and Pastor argued that de Gaulle was a member of the bourgeoisie who represented his

class. He was compared with the Marshal Pétain. The PCF historians not only aimed to support the Party but also to highlight the weaknesses of its challengers. Furthermore, all of the communist historians portrayed the communists’ resistance activities in the light of the politics of the inter-war years. The 1934-1939 era was central to the PCF’s view of the war. The communists examined the period which immediately preceded it in considerable detail. The conflict between anti-fascists and fascists was used to anticipate the division between resistance and collaboration. Material referring to the riots of 1934, the Spanish Civil War, and the Popular Front was included to indicate that communist resistance to fascism had been a long-term policy.

Like the communists, the second ideological current, the Gaullists covered ground which went beyond the stereotypical aspects of resistance. Jean-Pierre Rioux’s survey summarises much of their position. The historian reported:

it was by constantly harping back to the historic events of 1940 and to the triumphant events of August 1944 that de Gaulle intended to preserve his own stature as a leader and convince France of the need to return to the path of her great historical and moral destiny. ²

However, while 1940 and 1944 were of course important, a wide range of other topics were also confronted. All of the selected Gaullist historians focused on the early colonial support for the Free French movement and de Gaulle’s victory over the ex-Vichyite General Giraud, in Algiers in 1943. The acts of resistance in the Empire were used to presage those that followed in metropolitan France. Often played down in traditional historiographic reviews, or even in more specialised literary accounts, de Gaulle’s intransigence towards the Anglo-Saxon

Allies (notably the United States) over colonial rights of possession was highlighted in the Gaullist accounts.

The Gaullist historians contrasted de Gaulle's trajectory with that of the Vichy regime. The movement to resist the occupation was personified in de Gaulle's actions, whilst the choice to collaborate was identified with Philippe Pétain. The two courses which emerged on the 17 and 18 June 1940 were examined and presented in a sophisticated fashion. Several of the historians differentiated between collaboration which emanated from Vichy and that pursued by the fascistic milieu of Paris. They did not overlook the history of collaboration. Naomi Greene's view that 'De Gaulle carefully avoided any mention of the fratricidal ideological struggles which had marked the period of the occupation and liberation' is an exaggeration of how the subject was handled by the General and the wider current of historiography.  

Nevertheless, the balance of coverage given by the Gaullists naturally favoured their own movement. For instance, in Trente ans the Vichy regime was discussed in one substantial section of the book, whilst resistance was afforded an equivalent section as well as three thematic chapters: 'La France libre', 'La France combattante' and the 'Actes de la libération'.

The extreme right-wing historians wrote on a selection of topics centred on the Vichy regime, although not exclusively so. The material which they incorporated into their writings varied. The key text, Rougier's Mission secrète à Londres described life among Vichy's competing ministries, Churchill's London and the exiled French community in New York. Examining Rougier's career as an informal Vichyite diplomat, the work compared French and British foreign policy, Gaullists and Pétainists. Normally, the secondary literature has not associated all of these topics with the extreme right-wing's accounts. Even Robert Frank's

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The often forgotten trilogy, Benoist-Méchin’s *Soixante jours*, was idiosyncratic in its focus. The historian’s profile of the collapse of the Republic and the birth of the new regime provided a detailed ideological commentary on the major questions of the occupation and purge, while in so doing it avoided having to make a point by point defence of Vichy. Héring’s biography *La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain* was the most predictable of the three books from within this current. Like the many other biographies of Pétain studied by Bernard Laguerre, it presented the Marshal’s life story from the First World War to his imprisonment and death. Its central part entitled ‘Chef d’état’ reviewed Pétain’s role in June and July 1940 and what Héring felt were the positive effects of this decision.

A number of general topic areas were explored by all of the historians. Notably, considerable coverage was devoted to international history. They gave significant text-space to present the progression of the war around the world. The historians combined military and political history to form synthetic overviews of the major battles. International politics was conscripted to the respective ideological camps, notably with the communist and extreme right-wing historians looking to the Soviet Union and the Third Reich. The communists argued the case in favour of the former’s actions between 1939-41. As Kedward and Courtois have shown, this topic produced its own significant literature and debates. More surprisingly given

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the shame associated with nazism in the early post-war period, the extreme right-winger, Benoist-Méchin, implicitly contrasted the weaknesses of the Republic in 1940 with the discipline, efficiency and prowess of Hitler’s Germany. Communists and extreme right-wingers looked outside France in order to understand the significance of the war. Rhetorically, the two totalitarian regimes to the East of the Rhine served equivalent functions: they provided models to compare with domestic politics. Gaullist historians, who celebrated French nationalism, did not select a foreign power to fulfill an equivalent role. Often they denigrated De Gaulle’s international allies.

Traditional historiographic, Vichy syndrome and other commentaries have tended to ignore the biographical or autobiographical content of several of the publications. This is a major oversight. In each of the currents the lives of Thorez, Pétain and de Gaulle were presented. They gave the reader an accessible introduction to complex economic, social and political events and showed him, or her, an intimate portrait of a key personality. Michelle Perrot has emphasised the importance of Fils du peuple. Writing on working class culture, she underlined:

Tel quel, ce texte a fasciné: les ouvriers, les intellectuels aussi. Les futurs adhérents ou compagnons de route de la Résistance et de l’après guerre ont souvent lu Fils du peuple plus que Marx. Leader charismatique des foules du Front populaire, Thorez a incarné pour eux la figure virile de la classe ouvrière montante, héritière de toute une tradition.7

There is little doubt that de Gaulle’s war memoirs and the many autobiographical works of the extreme right fulfilled a comparable role for their supporters. Moreover, straightforward histories often included a high proportion of biographical information. This is the case in the

Trente ans collection, which reviewed the lives of Clemenceau and de Gaulle.

History was personalised and content marked accordingly. The decision to include or exclude historical material was balanced with the biographical objective of narrating the subject’s career. Descriptions detailing Thorez’s childhood in the mining fields of the North, or Pétain’s or de Gaulle’s military careers, were offered at length. Politically sensitive information, such as Thorez’s period in Moscow, or the realities of Pétain’s health, was astutely disregarded by those historians who were sympathetic to the respective figures.

All the texts had their omissions. Communists did not write at length about the American forces of liberation. To do so would have diminished the role of the Soviet Union and given succour to Cold War adversaries. Similarly, extreme right-wing historians whitewashed many aspects of the Vichy regime. Providing a favourable account of the Etat français meant that many of its actions were overlooked. Selectivity was less obvious in the Gaullist current. They wrote commentaries on all of the major topics of the occupation. Nonetheless, some areas, like the Free French resistance, received proportionally more space than episodes like the purge.

Commonly, it has been argued that historiography did not provide an adequate account of the persecution of the French Jewish community. Many of the essays which form Lawrence D. Kritzman’s collection, Auschwitz and After, imply that for twenty years after the war the French had not confronted the topic. Aspects of this premise are repeated in numerous other works including Conan’s and Rousso’s Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas. The content of the

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8 Maurice Thorez, Fils du peuple, 7-40; Pierre Héring, La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain, 15-60; Georges Cattaui, Charles de Gaulle, 11-41.

ideological histories partially supports this perspective. However, the activist historians were not completely silent on the Vichy government’s antisemitism and the nazi Holocaust.

In Trente ans the subject is discussed in the light of another issue, or classified as a sub-topic. Geneviève de Gaulle wrote a chapter entitled ‘La France prisonnière’ in which she examined the treatment of French prisoners in Germany. She framed the extermination of the Jews through the national perspective of the history of the Republic’s prisoners. Her comparison of racial victims with resistance deportees and STO workers meant that the specificity of Jewish suffering was relativised. On the other hand, in the same chapter the historian frankly addressed the issue of France’s collective response to these events. She underlined that many citizens had been aware of the plight of the Jewish community but that antisemitism had blunted their response to the atrocities. She confessed:

Le sort des Juifs paraissait plus inquiétant. Mais l’arrestation de centaines de milliers d’hommes, de femmes et d’enfants s’était faite progressivement, en commençant par les étrangers. Et comme disait certain honorable bourgeoisie, élit de sa paroisse: ‘C’est triste, évidemment, mais ce ne sont que des Juifs’.

The quotation is significant because it shows Geneviève de Gaulle’s knowledge of the ‘honorable bourgeoisie’ and their attitude towards the Jews. While it does not provide a step by step account of Vichy’s complicity in genocide it points to the nation’s apathy at ‘le sort des Juifs’. Paradoxically, by underlining the view that French public opinion had turned away from the horrors of deportation, the author recognised the scale of what had occurred between 1940 and 1944. One can speculate that even this limited allusion to the Holocaust would have registered with Geneviève de Gaulle’s readership.

An equally ambiguous treatment of the topic was presented in another part of the Trente

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ans collection. Jacques Madaule’s account of Vichy included a sophisticated analysis of antisemitism.\footnote{Jacques Madaule, “Au lendemain de l’armistice”, in Parias (ed.), \textit{Trente ans}, 232-233.} Evidence from his writing does not support Anne Grynberg’s simplification that, ‘dans ces années de l’immédait après-guerre, il faut, pour que puisse accomplir le travail de deuil, considérer l’antisémitisme comme un monstrosité historique fondamentalement étrangère à l’histoire et aux mentalités françaises’.\footnote{Anne Grynberg, “Les Camps français, des non-lieux de mémoire”, in Dimitri Nicolaïdis (ed.), \textit{Oublier nos crimes} (Paris: Autrement, 1994): 61.} Madaule explained that France had created its own brand of antisemitism and that during the occupation this tradition had thrived. He reported that French antisemitism had welcomed nazism to the hexagon. The historian denounced the attitude of a number of his compatriots. Solemnly, he admitted:

Il existait un antisémitisme français, mais on aurait pu espérer que le spectacle même des pogroms hitleriens, qui avaient soulevé de dégout le monde civilisé, qui avaient amené le pape Pie XI à s’écrier un jour: ‘Spirituellement, nous sommes des Sémites’ aurait détourné les antisémites français de céder à leur haine sous la botte allemande. C’est tout le contraire qui arriva. [...] Accepter, en France, une législation d’exception contre les Juifs, c’est prendre à notre compte, que nous le voulions ou non, l’essentiel du national-socialisme. Il ne sert à rien de dire qu’il existe aussi en France des traditions antisémites. Les problèmes n’ont pas toujours le même aspect. Aucun comparaison n’est possible entre l’atmosphère de l’Europe et du monde en 1890 ou en 1900 et cette même atmosphère en 1940. Que les antisémites français ne l’aient point alors compris, rien ne montre mieux le funeste aveuglement de leur haine.\footnote{Jacques Madaule, “Au lendemain de l’armistice”, in Parias (ed.), \textit{Trente ans}, 232-233.}

There is little doubt that Madaule recognised the influence of endemic antisemitism. He associated its rise with the period of the Dreyfus affair which predated Hitler. By stating that French and nazi antisemitism were not comparable, Madaule was implicitly making a comparison. He did not spell out Pétain’s legislative programme or Laval’s role in the
deportation of children. Nonetheless, pointing the way to these revelations, he wrote: ‘l’antisémitisme était une des significations profondes et secrètes du conflit mondial’.\textsuperscript{14} He and Geneviève de Gaulle offered at least a limited discussion of what has been sometimes thought to be a taboo subject.

Unlike the samples from the Gaullist current, the communists rarely mentioned the horrors of the nazi regime. Not one article in the Cahiers was devoted to it. When the Holocaust was referred to, as in Dautry’s and Pastor’s Histoire de la résistance, it was in the context of describing the barbarity of nazism.\textsuperscript{15} Under the heading ‘Les Camps de la Mort Lente’, they argued that the key victims of the occupation had been members of the resistance. Little was offered which provided a history of Jewry under the occupation. Simply, as analysed in the sample texts, this subject did not fit into the PCF’s discourse.

The same can be said of the extreme right-wing’s writings. Generally, the historians omitted the subject from their work.\textsuperscript{16} Nevertheless, rather like the examples of Geneviève de Gaulle and Jacques Madaule, they did not all overlook the issue in the straightforward manner which some scholars have recently argued. In Mission secrète à Londres Louis Rougier gave a cogent summary of the point that Vichy antisemitism was a product of the Etat français and not a result of external nazi encouragement. The philospher-historian considered the shameful aspect of its governance:

Le gouvernement de Vichy, au lieu de se considérer comme un conseil de gérance chargé d’expédier les affaires courantes, prétendit opérer une Révolution nationale assortie d’une Réforme intellectuelle et morale qui, quelles

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 232.

\textsuperscript{15} Jean Dautry and Louis Pastor, Histoire de la résistance, 33-34.

\textsuperscript{16} The exceptions are the unrepresentative cases of Holocaust denial writing in which nazi atrocities were debated. See Maurice Bardeche, Nuremberg ou la terre promise; Paul Rassinier, Le Mensonge d’Ulysses (Paris: Editions Bressanes, 1950, collected edition L’Amité Par le Livre, 1955).
qu’en eussent pu être les intentions, étaient compromises à l’avance en portant les stigmates de la défaite et l’indignité de l’occupation étrangère. Chose plus grave, il endossa des lois incompatibles avec l’honneur, comme les lois racistes, au lieu d’en laisser l’odieux à l’occupant s’il n’était pas en mesure de les empêcher.17

The soft condemnation of Vichy’s execution of the race laws, produced by an extreme right-wing writer, highlights the complexity of the material covered in all of the texts. As we have seen, the selection of content was not always a crude process. Albeit abruptly, an extreme right-wing historian acknowledged the Vichy regime’s failings. Professor Rougier knew that the best way to handle an uncomfortable issue was to partially accept it, and then to quickly progress on to different ground. Neither Benoist-Méchin or General Héring were as open. As one would expect they did not mention this topic. The Rougier case is a rare example of writing from the extreme right-wing which, in a limited fashion, confronted rather than avoided questions of race or antisemitism under the Vichy regime.

The patterns of coverage in the histories were a matter of proportion rather than outright inclusion or exclusion. Several of the texts were not as limited in scope as is implied in the secondary literature. The act of writing history meant that a broad range of topics had to be considered for the work to gain a minimal authority. Even a loyal reader would not be impressed by a weak argument or a restricted focus. Soixante jours, Trente ans and several of the articles in the Cahiers were substantial works. It was not that a single writer provided a conclusive history but rather that, despite their ideological colouring, many historians offered a great deal more than straightforward images d’Epinal. Ideological colouring did not prescribe the historians’ scope or their desire to delineate what they believed to be a comprehensive survey that would be acceptable to the public. Long, sophisticated, histories were the vehicles

17 Louis Rougier, Mission secrète à Londres, 18.
for persuasion.

**War Mythology**

The three sets of historians created different mythopeic narratives to represent the war. It will be shown that writing on the occupation provided a significant opportunity to communicate the historians' ideological values. The following pages compare the interpretations of the 1940-1944 period, as seen from the perspective of each political group.

**The Myth of Communist Anti-fascism**

We know that Thorez, Dautry, Pastor, Fréville and the many historians writing in the *Cahiers* supported their party's track record and enhanced its claim to be the *parti des fusillés*. As Jeannine Verdès-Leroux has noted, their historiography was often made up of 'falsifications, trucage des textes par coupures et additions, réinterprétations des faits, destruction des documents, fabrication de document, multiplication des versions' and so on.¹⁸ What has been less apparent is that the historians communicated their versions of the war through a comprehensive story. Central to the communist current was the myth of anti-fascism. Consistently, the historians presented the war through a narrative of heroic opposition to fascism in which they portrayed the PCF as the eternal protector of France. The key claims were that the resistance was a continuation of the Party's inter-war activities; that the Party had always represented a moral force for good and that its resistance was only one example of this role. For instance, Thorez summarised the successful stages of the Party's record:

La clairvoyance du Parti, dans les années d'avant guerre, sa lutte incessante

contre la politique dite de ‘non-intervention’, contre la trahison de Munich, contre les agissements de la Ve colonne, qui frayaient la voie à la guerre et à l’hitlérisme;

L’attitude exemplaire du Parti dans la guerre contre l’envahisseur allemand et contre les traîtres de Vichy; le courage, l’abnégation de ses militants, se sacrifiant par dizaines de milliers, pour le salut de la patrie et pour le triomphe de leur idéal communiste.19

The passage shows that history writing was not merely an opportunity to promote separate issues but to present a series of themes in a narrative sequence. The anti-fascist story was not exclusively about the resistance, instead it linked the maquis to a much wider network of communist actions, including, for example, its attacks on the Munich agreement, and its inter-war politics, which they describe as having been based on fighting Fifth Columnists.

In the context of the Cold War, when communism was taken by non-communists to be a dangerously subversive idea, the anti-fascist view of the previous twenty years proved the contrary. In their interpretation of history, the French Communist Party was portrayed as always speaking for the nation: they had fought against fascism in 1934, led the Popular Front, attacked appeasement and resisted Vichy and Hitler. Their Soviet counterparts had been responsible for the destruction of nazism in Berlin in 1945. The mythopeic construction asked ‘what justification could there be in any accusation which claimed that the PCF had collaborated or was now a threat to France?’

A central message of the myth was that Thorez and the PCF had dedicated themselves to France. Correctly, specialists on communist politics have underlined the significance of this theme in the Party’s intellectual life The anti-fascist myth was about a working class defence of the nation. David Caute’s succinct judgement on the post-war period is germane: ‘the more senior of the Party intellectuals emerged from the resistance speaking of family, religion.


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morality and Patrie'. The anti-fascist myth of the war provided a key element in the communication and dissemination of the new patriotism.

Of course, anti-fascist patriotism did not rely on the nationalism of a de Gaulle or a Maurras. The mythic view echoed a classic Marxist-Leninist dialectical theory of history. Thorez explained that progress towards social revolution was propelled by the fascist/anti-fascist confrontation. He wrote:

Une pensée maître de Marx s'imprima dans mon esprit: le mouvement dialectique emporte la révolution et la contre-révolution dans un combat incessant; la révolution rend la contre-révolution toujours plus acharnée, toujours plus entreprenante; a son tour, la contre-révolution fait progresser la révolution et l'oblige à se donner un Parti véritablement révolutionnaire.

Je devais en éprouver la profonde justesse plus tard, quand à partir de l'agression fasciste du 6 février 1934, les masses laborieuses s'organisèrent en vue d'une résistance croissante et passèrent à la contre-offensive.

The PCF-leader and historian took the anti-fascist era as an element in the longer struggle between revolution and counter-revolution. The dialectic movement caused by the battle would ultimately produce a socialist revolution. This was a distinctively PCF perspective which balanced the lessons of 1789 and 1917. As Gildea and Hazareesingh have explained, resistance and the Jacobin heritage were blurred together. In the anti-fascist myth the resistance formed part of the Republican revolutionary tradition. However, as the passage from Thorez indicates,

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21 Although as Marie-Claire Lavabre has shown this did not stop the recuperation of Joan of Arc as an historical reference in the communist *Almanach* (1950). See, "La Collection des almanachs édités par le Parti communiste français: un exemple de tradition", *Pouvoirs*, 42 (1987): 112.


it was framed through a Marxist philosophy of history in which the Party’s actions acted as a dialectical motor in the inevitable progression to communism. Whilst the key actors - the anti-fascists - were profiled within a French cultural paradigm, their behaviour and meaning were classified through the typical Marxisant understanding of history. Moreover, rhetorically, the historical determinism evident in Thorez’s view was advantageous. As Christopher Flood has suggested, it enabled the historian to ‘affect an Olympian detachment by claiming that it is history which passes judgment’. It also meant that inevitable post-war conflicts could be placed in a well-established interpretative grid. Just as the forces of revolution and counter-revolution had been represented by anti-fascist and fascist, in the future they would be replaced by new actors, playing comparable roles. As Thorez remarked elsewhere, ‘aujourd’hui, comme hier…’.

The PCF historians’ narrative of the war as a continuation of an anti-fascist conflict marks this current apart from the other historians’ interpretations. Of course, Gaullists were concerned with the history of the resistance, but they did not construct it in this manner. Moreover, as might be expected, only the PCF historians understood historical progression through an explicitly dialectical perspective.

**The Gaullist Rise-Fall Myth**

Gaullists were also fascinated by nationalism. As Jean Touchard’s analysis of the ideology suggests, they emphasised the values of patriotism, national independence, leadership and unity. The typical Gaullist portrayal of the war, as a whole event, is captured in the

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25 Maurice Thorez, *Fils du peuple*, 22

From this outline one can quickly identify how Parias portrayed history as a passage through periods of spectacular national glory and equally dramatic national decline. In the three selected texts the Gaullist historians identify the Second World War as having been profoundly marked by two stages: first, the degradation of inter-war politics and the defeat leading to further collapse via the Vichy regime, while simultaneously, there is the incessant rallying of the Gaullist resistance.

In this representation the historians deny Pétain all possibility of creating the necessary conditions of recovery through the collaborating regime. The line is repeated in Madaule’s contributions to Trente ans, de Gaulle’s memoirs and in Georges Cattaui’s biography. Cattaui mused that France could not possibly recover from the humiliation of defeat ‘sous le joug même de l’occupant’. De Gaulle’s memoirs work around a similar approach. Commenting on the Vichy forces’ defeat in the Levant campaign against the British, de Gaulle waspishly

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writes: 'En signant cette capitulation, Vichy se montrait fidèle à sa triste vocation'. 29 Decline is shown to follow inevitably from the very origin and nature of Vichy.

In contrast with Vichy's development, de Gaulle and Gaullism are represented as having personified a trajectory of national recovery, or as de Gaulle expressed it: 'A mesure que déclinaient la pompe et les oeuvres de Vichy, se formaient, de-ci, de-là, dans la Métropole, des noyaux de résistance'. 30 In all three examples of the current, they narrate the development of the Free French movement as a course of magnificent rise, the origin of which is 18 June 1940. It is de Gaulle's first 'Appel' which is located as the signal of national recovery after the battle of France. They show this process continuing throughout the war up to and including de Gaulle's famous victory parade through the streets of Paris.

Philippe Burrin, Pierre Nora and Christopher Flood have each noted the presence of the rise-fall myth in de Gaulle's speech-making or in the composition of Gaullist ideology. 31 Its dominant presence in the historiographic texts which I have reviewed confirms its centrality within this political strand. In re-interpreting the Second World War the rise-fall construction of history allowed the historians to talk about traditional Gaullist beliefs while also producing a credible overview of historical events. This was because, on the one hand, the course of national recovery could be associated with positive Gaullist virtues whereas, on the other hand, the historians linked the process of national decline to what they perceived to be political sins. For instance, all the accounts, clearly imply that politics, corruption and the weak constitutional order of the Third Republic were responsible for decline in 1940. Conversely,

30 Ibid., 227.
the historians argue that when France has witnessed periods of greatness this has been because of strong leadership, unity and patriotism. So, without explicitly listing the benefits of Gaullist values, the historiography uses the rise-fall myth to symbolically test their effectiveness in given historical contexts. On the political level, the interpretation works as an injunction for the present to bring back the last successful guardian of national triumph, Charles de Gaulle.

François Bédarida highlighted the didactic nature of the General's view of history. He noted that, 'Dans l'esprit de Charles de Gaulle, l'histoire, tout à la fois pensée et verbe [...] a pour fonction de servir de leçon tant pour l'intelligibilité du temps présent que pour la construction de l'avenir'. It was the rise-fall myth which was used to instruct the French. This was a significantly different construction of the national past from either the communists' or extreme right-wingers' interpretations. Although Gaullists and communists shared a belief in the sanctity of the resistance, the perspectives which they offered were radically different. Contrary to the claims of contemporary extreme right-wing and conservative intellectuals, there is no evidence of a single Gaullo-communist vision of the past. Comparing the two narratives reveals the groups' marked difference of view on the meaning of the war. Actually, in its focus on decadence and national regeneration, the rise-fall construction recalls Roger Griffin's study of the palingenetic myth of fascism. He writes:

the mythic core that forms the basis of my ideal type of fascism is the vision of


the (perceived) crisis of the nation as betokening the birth-pangs of a new order. It crystallises in the image of the national community, once purged and rejuvenated, rising phoenix-like from the ashes of a morally bankrupt state system and the decadent culture associated with it.\textsuperscript{35}

The rise-fall narrative is about the national community, its rejuvenation through the resistance struggle, and the decline of the bankrupt Vichy state. As Griffin suggested ultra-nationalists and fascists share the palingenetic representation. The Gaullist rise-fall account shows that a variety of ideologues have used palingenetic myths without being fascist. Equally, as we will see below, extreme right-wingers who were close to the fascist tradition, such as Jacques Benoist-Méchin, did not always employ this perspective.

\textit{Revisionist Myths}

The extreme right wing’s portrayal underlines the diversity of interpretations which were in circulation under the Fourth Republic. At the heart of its narrative was the claim that the history of the war had been misinterpreted during the \textit{épuration}. Its historians suggested that communist and Gaullist politicians, judges and historians had deliberately perpetrated a lie about the war years. The historians argued that they were providing the truth: that Vichy had been a necessary and at times successful strategy. For this reason this current’s general interpretation can be called revisionist. The essence of the writing exemplified across the selected texts is reflected in the following passage which forms part of the preface to \textit{Soixante jours}:

\begin{quote}
Si la signature de l’armistice et la liquidation de la IIIe République ont suscité de part et d’autre des prises de position aussi contradictoires, c’est qu’ils ont été à la fois la conclusion d’un drame militaire et le point de départ d’un drame
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35} Roger Griffin, \textit{Fascism}, 3.
politique. La Libération a effacé ce qu’elle a pu des vestiges du premier, mais elle a considérablement envenimé les conséquences du second. En invitant le peuple français à flétrir comme un crime, en 1944, ce qu’il avait accueilli comme un acte sauveur en 1940, les successeurs du Maréchal ont rendu un bien mauvais service à la Patrie. Ils ont encore aggravé le désarroi des esprits, et ont amené les Français à se déchirer eux-mêmes. Ils ont introduit dans notre Histoire une sorte de prisme qui en détruit l’unité, en nous faisant apparaître les mêmes faits sous des couleurs inconciliables. Comment n’ont-ils pas vu qu’en brisant l’unité de notre Histoire, ils comprenaient dangereusement l’unité morale de la nation et dressaient un obstacle supplémentaire sur sa route? Il est temps d’en finir. 36

The simple perspective which the quotation illustrates, and which can be found repeatedly in the sources, is a revisionist myth of the war. Here, the dominant framing of the occupation stands on the claim that history has been misrepresented by other schools of thought and that through the extreme right’s own publications the truth has emerged. The extreme right-wing story is about history-writing itself, documentation, allegations of political bias, and the national historical record. The writings of Jacques Benoist-Méchin, Louis Rougier and General Héring are self-consciously corrections, produced to contradict and revise other, ‘false’ accounts of the war.

Margaret Atack has described fictional narratives of the war which emerged from the extreme right (i.e those of Marcel Aymé, Roger Nimier and Drieu La Rochelle) as ‘novels of ambiguity’. She concludes that these writers produced accounts which ‘encode the values of the resistance as hopelessly simplistic or simply unrealisable’. 37 Indeed, many extreme right-wing writings, fictional and non-fictional, sought to undermine the legitimacy of the resistance past. This was an important part of the revisionist strategy.

However, the historians were not producing equivalent ‘histories of ambiguity’. Instead


each of the historians promoted himself as the rectifier of the injustices of 1944. This reading directly contested the foundations of the post-war order. For the extreme right wing Vichy was not a past to be ashamed of, but rather to be recognised as a heroic protection of the nation. In order for this 'truth' to be revealed the need for a major revision of interpretation was stressed. The myth-makers' interest in falsifications, concealment and injustices avoided a direct confrontation with what actually occurred under Vichy, or through its laws. At the heart of the discourse is a foregrounding of the purge and the claim that it promoted lies about the Vichy heritage. For this current, criticism of the perceived deceptions perpetrated by the authors of other historical representations was an easier task than asserting original claims about the Vichy regime's actions.

As an account of contemporary politics and history, the revisionist stance functions through a similar dynamic to Raoul Girardet's portrait of 'conspiracy' as a form of political myth. The extreme right-wing sources construct reality around the claim that a secret source of power had malignantly tarnished the popularity of Vichy and Pétain, post-1944. This argument is based on the view that the occupation had been demonised by Gaullo-communist conspirators at the time of the liberation. Conversely, the historians present themselves as a counter-group dedicated to asserting the truth. As we will see later, themes of conspiracy colour aspects of the other two currents' explanations of the 1940 defeat. Nonetheless, only in the revisionist narrative is a conspiracy theory deployed in order to underpin the longer reading of the war.

Concluding Discussion

To recapitulate, all the activist historians presented detailed accounts of the Second World War. Their work was sophisticated and far richer than is often acknowledged. Fundamental differences existed among the three currents’ representations of war and occupation. As one would expect, and as has been suggested by many others working in the field, interpreting the entire war in the same way as a Gaullist or an extreme right-winger would have been remarkable for a communist, and vice versa.39

As myth-makers the activist historians acted in similar roles to each other, regardless of which set of political views their publications supported. Despite the many differences of interpretation between the currents, the narratives distilled a record of the war which served the ideological needs of the present. In the context of the Fourth Republic the myths functioned as assertive/defensive accounts. On the one hand, in varying degrees, each of the stories strongly promoted the politics of the ideological current in question. For example, the anti-fascist myth articulated the patriotism of the PCF. Similarly, the rise-fall myth outlined the Gaullist rise to recovery. To a lesser degree, through their rehabilitation of Vichy, the extreme right-wing historians proclaimed the importance of their ideological tradition. In each case militant claims to have acted in the national interest, formed a central element of the narratives.

Nonetheless, a strong defensive function also marked each of the accounts. Instead of popularising a range of new ideological values, the historians portrayed the past in terms which combatted potential criticism, rejection or condemnation by opponents. This is self-evident in the communist and extreme right-wing currents whose anti-fascist and revisionist stories defended group and personal reputations. Much of their interpretation of the history of the war sought to defend the ideology from any blame. Of the three representations, the defensive

39 The general position is evident in the publications of Azéma and Bédarida, Wieviorka, Gildea and others.
aspect is less marked in the Gaullists' writings which provided a more open vision, which did not necessarily shield past iniquities from view. However, its strong association of the Vichy regime with decline suggests a fear of conservative scorn for de Gaulle's actions. Removing any credibility from the Pétain government was one way of limiting its supporters' future political role.

Analysis clarifies several issues raised in the literature of the Vichy syndrome. To an extent the evidence from the ideological histories is compatible with aspects of Rousso's broader claims. That the stories served to avoid, conceal or reject what was politically embarrassing to each ideological group supports the popular view that the French were unable in any real sense to confront the past in this period. As Jean-Pierre Rioux's account of the Fourth Republic underlined: 'what is really striking is the obstinacy [...] with which France refused to look herself squarely in the face'.

However, it would be difficult to imagine that the existence of three competing ideological versions of a recent period of history functioned as Lucette Valensi has suggested. Providing the introduction to a special issue of *Annales ESC*, she writes:

La part de l'histoire: on a mis longtemps, en France, à consentir à faire l'étude de Vichy. Les motifs de cette réticence et de ce retard sont maintenant connus: il faut rappeler, après Gérard Namer et Henry Rousso notamment, qu'un accord tacite s'est conclu, dès la Libération, entre divers courants de l'opinion française, pour faire le silence sur la défaite de 1940 et sur le régime de Vichy. Mus par des intérêts différents, gaullistes, communistes, Juifs, anciens collaborateurs ou citoyens ordinaires, tous s'emploient cependant à la construction du mythe d'une résistance massive et victorieuse et d'une mémoire nationale héroïque.


Even when considering the shared assertive/defensive function of the mythopoeic accounts, evidence does not support Valensi's interpretation. It has been clearly documented that there was no silencing of discussion on the topic of the defeat or the Vichy regime. Research has not shown that a single heroic myth of the resistance was triumphant, either by the late 1940s or in the mid-1950s. Communists, Gaullists and 'anciens collaborateurs' did not portray the war in a strictly compatible light. The works which have been analysed did not collectively favour a united 'mythe d'une résistance massive et victorieuse et d'une mémoire nationale héroïque'. Instead, the activist historians offered three different claims to patriotic honour, articulated through distinctive and competing narrative constructions. The continuation of political conflict through historical interpretation consistently acted against the creation of a uniform reading of the occupation. Even if by the mid-1950s the wider public wanted to believe in a harmonious view of the resistance, the ideological historians did not provide it in their publications.

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42 See Chapter II.
CHAPTER IV
MANIPULATING THE DEBACLE

While the previous chapter explored the political function of writing on the entire war experience, the following four chapters will take episodes from the occupation to discuss structural aspects of the ideological writings. Here, I focus on how the historians wrote about the debacle. I demonstrate that at least two overlapping accounts emerged: first I compare communist and Gaullist explanations, and secondly, Gaullist and extreme right-wing versions. It is argued that writings which depicted 1940 reveal similarities across the currents.

Communist and Gaullist Accusations of Conspiracy and Subversion

Communists analysed the debacle as a middle class attack on the proletariat and its political representative, the Party. From non-intervention in the Abyssinian crisis through the Spanish Civil War to the Munich agreement, capitalism and its class allies were shown to have taken a pro-fascist and anti-communist line. Referring to the heritage of the Paris Commune, Thorez sketched the class dynamics which he perceived to have been at play prior to the defeat:

L'effondrement moral de la bourgeoisie française s'est traduit par une lassitude, une paralysie et une frayeur croissantes. La bourgeoisie ne pense qu'à ses intérêts de classe, qu'à ses profits menacés. Ses gouvernements, comme celui des Thiers et des Trochu en 1870, ne sont que des gouvernements de la 'déflection nationale'. Désormais, c'est seulement la classe ouvrière qui a le souci du pays, et qui veille à sa sécurité et à son indépendance.¹

In most of the texts the economically defined group of the 'bourgeoisie' were characterised as having betrayed their fellow Frenchmen in favour of, as Thorez noted, 'ses profits menacées'. A series of different, interchangeable labels were used to denote the culpability of the anti-

¹ Maurice Thorez, Fils du peuple, 135.
national group. These included: ‘les trusts cosmopolites’, the ‘bourgeoisie réactionnaire’, ‘cosmopolitisme du capital’ and the sinister ‘classes dirigeantes’. This set of anonymous but highly significant actors was held responsible for the defeat.

The communist historians also identified a pro-German conspiratorial faction, or fifth column, which had emerged from the bourgeoisie and acted for it against the Republic. Unlike the broad categorisations used to implicate the general class based groupings, this cabal was pictured as a small network of politicians, industrialists and opinion formers. They portrayed them as preparing the way for Hitler. The communist historians suggested that parliamentary ministers manipulated and organised the armistice and the collapse of the Republic. This body was associated with having banned the Party (1939) and subsequently persecuted its députés and membership. They showed that high ranking ministers from all of the non-communist political parties had used the drôle de guerre to plan a war against the Soviet Union instead of the Third Reich. Customarily, the historians cited General Weygand’s military campaign in the Bakou region as an example of this course.

This was a depiction of a bourgeois coup d’état against the Republic. Defeat at the hands of nazi Germany and the creation of the Vichy regime followed. However, the sources are inconsistent in their attribution of responsibility for the defeat to an entire social class, as well as to the supposedly conspiratorial actions taken by government ministers. The imagery employed by the PCF historians linked, blurred and conflated the two parties. A second example from Fils du peuple illustrates the emphasis which was placed on the interpenetration between business interests and the political-military elite. The Chairman of the Party explained,

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2 Respectively, Jean Dautry and Louis Pastor, Histoire de la résistance, 8; Jean Fréville, Avec Maurice Thorez, 22; Maurice Thorez, Fils du peuple, 127.

3 Maurice Thorez, Fils du peuple, 163.
Les hommes des deux cents familles, les futurs collaborateurs, n'espéraient pas seulement s'entendre avec Hitler, ils commençaient déjà avec lui. Comme le révéla une revue américaine, *Harpers Magazine*, en mars 1940, des industriels français vendaient aux Allemands les matériaux qui servaient à fabriquer les obus et les canons, destinés à tuer les soldats français.  

Thorez was advocating a deeply conspiratorial interpretation in his evocation of the infamous *deux cents familles* of capitalists who, so the story went, had managed the economic and political affairs of France since at least the Revolution. Ironically, he referred to the profoundly middle class *Harpers Magazine* to prove his case. He melodramatically claimed that instead of providing the much needed ammunition for the defence of the Republic, in 1939-1940, profit motives led industrialists. This meant selling equipment, explosives and armaments to Germany. These very weapons were soon to be trained on the innocent men of the French army. The images and associations that Thorez made between 'big business', capitalism, and the defeat are typical of the selected texts' approach to the subject.

Conspiracy myths of the right and left are a deeply ingrained part of French political culture. This was another variation on the theme, reflecting the many classic elements which Girardet has outlined as forming one of his four ideal myth types. Now a conspiracy was used to present the critical 1939/1940 scene from the war. Many of the lessons which were drawn from the communist historians' reading of 1940 focused on the nature of the class system and the propensity of the bourgeoisie to follow its own interests, no matter what the national consequences. This conspiracy placed social groups, and the notion of collective class responsibility, at the centre of its explanation. The historians perceived that the occupation was

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4 Ibid., 164.

the direct consequence of the thoughts and actions of the middle class and their shadowy activities.

Writing on ‘myths of the debacle’, Hilary Footitt and John Simmonds have argued that accounting for the defeat was critical to several ideological groups, both during and after the war. However, they do not comment on the anti-bourgeois manipulation carried out by the communist writers. The perspective was not marginal, however. It was used to exemplify more general conclusions about the position of the class in, and its influence on, society. An explicit example was an article produced by Florimond Bonte, and published in the Cahiers (1951). Tellingly it was entitled ‘Trahison nationale et cosmopolitisme de la grande bourgeoisie, patriotisme et internationalisme de la classe ouvrière’. He prefaced his historical essay with a citation from Karl Marx’s writing on the Paris Commune which stated: ‘C’est une vieille histoire. Les classes supérieures se mettent toujours d’accord pour tenir sous leur talon la classe ouvrière’. He continued to argue that the history of the debacle was emblematic of the grande bourgeoisie’s historical role. Despite the liberation, Bonte suggested that the politics of the Fourth Republic remained threatened by middle class interests which had not changed from those which were evident during the inter-war period. The historian drew analogies between the Franco-Prussian War, the Second World War and the Cold War. He rhetorically compared the three dates:

En 1871, des gouvernants dits français livraient la France au roi de Prusse, pour étouffer la Commune. En 1940, des gouvernants dits français livraient la France au führer Hitler, pour étrangler la démocratie. En 1951, des gouvernants dits français livrent la France au potentat Truman pour maintenir

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7 Florimond Bonte, “Trahison nationale et cosmopolitisme…”, Cahiers, 3 (1951): 293.
la domination du grand capital.⁸

The moral is easily decoded. Bonte's contention, derived from his reading of 1870 and 1940, was that on any given occasion the bourgeoisie would place their own interests above those of the nation. The history of the debacle, and that of the Commune, highlighted the constant unreliability of middle class politics.

The reasoning illustrated above marked several of the communist histories. In another Cahiers article, François Billoux stressed how this social group had been consistently anti-national. He taught that the collapse of the Republic offered 'quelques enseignements' to his post-war readership. Billoux claimed that in 1939,

La grande bourgeoisie française se montre sous son vrai jour en tant que classe, n'ayant plus rien de commun avec la Nation, prête à se jeter dans les bras de l'étranger plutôt que de céder une partie de ses privilèges.⁹

Jean Fréville's biographical portrait, Avec Maurice Thorez, raised a similar point. In the context of describing a conversation between the author and Thorez, he remarked that having abandoned the nation in 1940 the middle class had lost their mandate to govern the people.¹⁰

The historiography reinforced what Georges Lavau rightly identified as one of the Party's key strategies: the symbolic portrayal of the bourgeoisie as bearing responsibility for 'la violence du capitalisme'.¹¹ This was a vital strand of PCF rhetoric. Whilst journalism and speech-making addressed similar themes, historiography of the defeat provided concrete

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⁸ Ibid., 293.
¹⁰ Jean Fréville, Avec Maurice Thorez, 58.
examples of middle class betrayal and brutality. The historians recycled the formula to smear an array of the bourgeoisie’s contemporary actions. In the previously cited article, Bonte indicated that one could witness a comparable treason in René Pleven’s rapprochement with the West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. Deliberately rephrasing the earlier passage, he declared, ‘En 1940, Pétain était avec Hitler. En 1951, Pleven est avec Adenauer’.

The communist account was also a means of coming to terms with how nazi Germany had defeated the Party and the people. It underlined that it was not that Hitler or his French allies were intrinsically stronger than their opponents, rather that they had captured the running of the state. The historians presented their Party and its ideological ally, the Soviet Union, as having been the innocent victims of the bourgeoisie’s machinations. This contributed to the wider attempt to legitimate the role of the Soviet Union during the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. They alleged that whilst the middle classes had prepared their own nation’s collapse, their diplomats had sought to turn the Third Reich to war against the flourishing Soviet Union. Repeatedly, communist historians suggested that the inter-war foreign policy of the Western powers, ‘dit de non-intervention’, had intended to facilitate a Nazi-Soviet skirmish, with the West financially sponsoring Hitler. By 1939, post-Munich, they depicted Stalin escaping from an anti-communist entrapment. Dautry and Pastor, in their history of the resistance, explained,

Désireuse d’échapper au piège que lui tendent des alliés félons, amplement renseignée sur leur intention qui est de faire retomber sur elle tout le poids du Wehrmacht, l’URRS, parant au plus pressé, assure sa propre sécurité et se donne par le pacte de non-agression germano-soviétique le répit nécessaire à l’achèvement de sa préparation militaire (23 août 1939).

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13 Jean Dautry and Louis Pastor, Histoire de la résistance, 10.
The historians depicted the Soviet Union as having been gradually forced into a policy of containment to negate a potential fascist attack. The image of victimage which resulted was helpful because it removed all responsibility from the USSR for its actions. The PCF historians portrayed the Soviet Union as the innocent party in world affairs.

Victimage was also a significant notion in describing domestic politics. The historians represented the Party as the prey of the Daladier government’s anti-communism. Thorez justified his own flight into clandestinity in these terms. He noted,

[...] la direction du Parti prit la décision juste de me faire passer à l’activité clandestine. Le Parti et sa direction avaient le devoir de prendre les mesures permettant de faire échec au complot des hitlériens, qui visaient à l’invasion et à l’anéantissement de la France.  

Instead of confronting the reality of the PCF’s disarray in 1940, the historians emphasised their unity. They pictured its position as akin to that of the Soviet Union. They retrospectively portrayed both the USSR and the PCF as the victims of the capitalist world.

The class-conspiracy and victimage dimension of the communist account was often exchanged for a polemical enquiry into the role of the other political parties during the 1939/1940 period. Wrongly, much of the secondary literature on historical memory and the PCF has ignored the importance of history-writing in day to day political conflict. Communist historiography was not exclusively a matter of theoretical enquiry, or self-commemoration. Inquisitorial probing into the socialist left’s actions was a common theme. In *Fils du peuple*

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14 166. This is one of the few albeit oblique references from *Fils du peuple* which reminds the reader that Thorez had spent much of the occupation in Moscow. Equally it could be interpreted as signaling Thorez’s career as a resistance fugitive.
Thorez gradually argued that socialist deputies had ignored the communists’ plight and sided with their middle-class allies. The historians often made this dimension of the manipulation of 1940 as an aside, or as a passing judgement. Specifically, they ascribed guilt for the defeat onto the socialist left, more often than not personified by Léon Blum. A forceful example of the rhetoric is found in a short article written by Roger Garaudy, entitled, ‘Silhouettes, Léon Blum, Paul Reynaud’ (1948). Fulfilling David Caute’s characteristic role of the communist intellectual, ‘political agitation’, the historian turned elements of the wider conspiracy explanation of the debacle against Blum. He portrayed the Jewish SFIO leader as having abandoned the Popular Front to capitalism and fascism. It was implied that in so doing Blum had been one of the many bourgeois politicians who had prepared the way for the defeat. Garaudy addressed Blum’s nefarious record:

La réaction contre-attaque. Des ouvriers sont frappés à Clichy par la police que Blum laisse protéger les provocateurs Croix de Feu. Les masses populaires grondent contre les entreprises de la Cagoule. Blum est contraint d’arrêter Deloncle et Dusseigneur pour empêcher que l’enquête ne révèle les liaisons de Weygand et de Pétain avec les conspirateurs […] Blum ferme les yeux.

La réaction passe à l’offensive avec ses armes secrètes: un milliard de francs passe chaque mois hors de nos frontières. Le peuple exige que l’on mette fin à la désertion des capitaux; la City de Londres demande à Blum de laisser faire. Blum suit les ordres de la banque anglaise et non ceux des travailleurs français: c’est au peuple et non aux trusts qu’il demande de faire ‘la pause’.

La réaction a atteint son premier objectif: grâce à Léon Blum l’élan du Front Populaire est brisé: au dehors par la farce sanglante de la prétendue ‘non-intervention’; au dedans par le mensonge de la ‘pause’.

15 For example, Maurice Thorez, *Fils du peuple*, 174, where Thorez reminds his readers that in 1940, ‘un ministre socialiste, Sérol, décréta la peine de mort contre les Français suspects de propagande communiste, tandis que traitres et espions hitlériens avaient le champ libre’.


The allegation that Blum was negligent in his attitude towards the rise of fascism is strangely similar in tone to the extreme right-wing antisemitism which he had faced during the Popular Front years. Without identifying his race, Garaudy characterised Blum through a vector of coded antisemitic references. ‘La City de Londres’, ‘la banque’, and ‘les trusts’ were all well known watchwords used to indicate the presence of a global network of Jewish influence.18 Immediately after the liberation, this rhetoric was unusual. However, by the time the PCF had been excluded from tripartite government, fault-finding with Blum and the socialist left, specifically for their behaviour leading up to the debacle, was increasing.

To recap, communists mobilised the historical explanation of the defeat to serve several political ambitions. These encompassed the unremitting exposition of middle-class treason, and a portrayal of the innocent victimage of the Soviet Union and the Party. This bolstered a key element in communist propaganda, the accusation that social elites were either ‘traitre’ or ‘ennemi’. Capitalism was associated with one the nation’s darkest episodes. Equally, the selection of individual politicians for questioning because of their perceived complicity in the debacle was a normal feature. It was not only Pétain, Laval or the literary stars of collaborationist Paris who were questioned after the war. On the contrary, this was an opportunity to connect the non-communist left, the SFIO, with the shame of the defeat.

Communist historiography on 1940 supports the claim that the wider post-war intellectual milieu was pre-occupied with the notion of treason.19 As I have already suggested, the evidence is equally in accord with the general issues raised in Girardet’s description of conspiracy myths. Within the orbit of the PCF this contributed to the creation of a political

18 The example of Garaudy’s soft antisemitic style is entirely consistent with Winock’s analysis of the post-liberation period’s left antisemitism. See Michel Winock, Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France, 186-217.

19 Tony Judt, Past Imperfect, 51-52.
culture which was willing to believe these types of account of history and thus also of
contemporary politics.

Conspiracy was also a strong theme in Gaullist historiography. In accounting for the
debacle the two currents overlap. Whereas the middle classes were not blamed by the Gaullist
historians, the military hierarchy of the armed services and specific individuals were seen to
be culpable of pursuing policies which had led to the armistice. The Gaullist historians saw the
final humiliation of military defeat as treason. They hinted at evil machinations in high office,
specifically manipulated by the Marshal and his henchmen. De Gaulle even wryly noted the
misjudgments of the upper classes before 1940. He wrote, in the context of the general
rejection of his plans for a professional army: ‘Premier épisode d’une longue série
d’événements, où une part de l’élite française, condamnant chacun des buts que je serais amené
à poursuivre, […]’. 20 This was perhaps the nearest de Gaulle came to the communist discourse.

The Gaullist representation of politics in 1939 was consistently divided between those
who favoured war against the Reich and the conspiratorial ‘parti de la paix’ headed by Pierre
Laval. 21 The historians contended that a small, but influential, sect appeased Germany and Italy
and thereby sought self-aggrandisement. To reinforce the point, they described the politics of
the time as an intrigue. For instance, Jacques Madaule wrote,

Au Sénat, ce fut Pierre Laval, sortant de l’ombre, qui mena la bataille.
L’objectif en était fort clair: il s’agissait, sous prétexte de reprocher au
ministère son impuissance dans l’affaire de Finlande, de ramener au pouvoir le
parti de la paix: 60 voix se prononcèrent contre le gouvernement. 22

22 Ibid., 211.
The historian portrayed Laval secretly plotting his own objectives. Note how Madaule's language and his choice of vocabulary highlighted his sinister agenda. He was pictured 'en sortant de l'ombre' planning 'sous prétexte' his ambitions of peace with Germany. Later in a similar mode of writing, the historian implied that the speed with which Pétain had formed his first Bordeaux cabinet was evidence that his assumption of power had been the result of suspicious forward planning.

Cattaui's treatment illustrates a comparable conspiracy. Throughout 1939, he noted that secret groups and factions had worked within the parliament to transfer authority away from Paris towards Berlin. De Gaulle was similarly forthright in his allegations. He declared, without explaining in detail, 'les intrigues bruissaient dans les coulisses'. De Gaulle linked Pétain and Laval as partners who were, it was rumoured, willing to take power and to offer an armistice. In the wider background a grouping of politicians, 'certains milieux', comparable to Madaule's 'le Parti de la paix', were also implicated in undermining France. All the Gaullist historians repeated the word 'jeu' to describe the chaotic period prior to the debacle and the armistice. The word was advantageous in that its ambiguous meaning suggested malevolent intrigue and the inability of the Third Republic to do anything other than play political games.

As in the communist historiography, the conspiracy theory simplified the highly complex web of factors which had resulted in defeat and the creation of the Vichy regime.

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24 Ibid., 26.
Generally, both sets of historians condemned figures from within the extreme right-wing for having sabotaged the nation. The language of conspiracy which they used also makes their work appear similar. To an extent they had common targets. Moreover, both groups needed to validate the claims of the épuration courts that the nation had been betrayed in 1940 and that the crimes of treason and indignité nationale were the appropriate device through which to condemn collaboration. The two currents of historiography intersected in a more complex way than has been recognised in the traditional historiographic reviews or the Vichy syndrome analysis. Whilst there was not direct collusion between communist and Gaullist historians, who fundamentally disagreed about other aspects of the war, the two accounts of subversion in 1940 partially reinforced each other.

Nonetheless, despite the similarities with the communist account, the Gaullist disposition was significantly different. Their belief that a small group of conspirators had betrayed France provided an explanation which minimised what had occurred and thus also the range of social groups who could be held responsible for it. This contradicted the communist outlook. Instead of alleging that a class was to blame, they expanded on the war broadcasts of de Gaulle and the Free French, in which Pétain alone had been damned as ‘Père la Désaite’. The post-war accounts both drew on, and re-legitimated, the Gaullist war propaganda.

On this episode, the extreme right’s traditional argument that communists and Gaullists misinterpreted the war in a similar light is almost vindicated. There was an overlap between the two currents. The Gaullist and communist historians shared the premise that the armistice had been planned by those who had most to gain from it. However, as a number of differences have also been distinguished, this was far from a collective illustration of events. The

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relationships which existed across the three currents were more complicated than a straightforward Gaullo-communist symmetry. As we will see below, just as an aspect of the Gaullist account formed a bridge to the communist interpretation, the Gaullist interpretation presented further explanations of 1940 which touched on themes which can be closely associated with extreme right-wing thinking.

**Stigmatising The Republic**

In addition to the conspiracy view of defeat, Gaullist historians emphasised a series of fatal flaws in the governance of the Third Republic. It had failed to intervene successfully in international relations, and there was an absence of political leadership to steer the nation towards victory. I will show that this was a deeply traditionalist attitude towards governance which was echoed in extreme right-wing writing.

At the beginning of the first volume of his war memoirs, de Gaulle criticised the Republican system for how it had operated in the inter-war period. Recalling his secondment to the Sécretariat général de la défense nationale (1932-1937) he recollected:

Car c’est l’inconsistance du pouvoir qui s’étalait en ce domaine. Non, certes, que les hommes qui y figuraient manquaient d’intelligence ou de patriotisme. Au contraire, je voyais passer à la tête des ministères d’indiscutables valeurs et, parfois, de grands talents. Mais le jeu du régime les consumait et les paralysait. Témoin réservé, mais passionné, des affaires publiques, j’assistais à la répétition continuelle du même scénario. A peine en fonction, le Président du Conseil était aux prises avec d’innombrables exigences, critiques et surenchères, que tout son activité s’employait à dérouter sans pouvoir les maîtriser. Le Parlement, loin de le soutenir, ne lui offrait qu’embûches et défacements. Ses ministres étaient ses rivaux. L’opinion, la presse, les intérêts, le tenaient pour une cible désignée à tous les griefs. Chacun, d’ailleurs, - lui-même tout le premier, - savait qu’il n’était là que pour une courte durée. De fait, après quelques mois, il lui fallait céder la place. En matière de défense nationale, de telles conditions interdisaient aux responsables cet ensemble de desseins continus, de décision mûries, de mesures menées à leur terme, qu’on
As is well known De Gaulle contended that the machinery of state which he had encountered between 1932 and 1937 had produced an environment which was incapable of guaranteeing national security. He suggested that a number of features of the Third Republic had impinged on the efficiency of its executive offices. Firstly, he identified specific characteristics as having contributed to this condition, for instance, ‘le Parlement’, and ‘l’opinion, la presse, les intérêts.’ He argued that the constitution had created an ineffective and divisive system. Hence, instead of the Président du Conseil working with his cabinet, his fellow ministers were more often than not ‘ses rivaux’. Similarly, a reflexive knowledge of the regime amongst its politicians had produced a propensity for short-termism. De Gaulle suggested that everyone in office had been conscious that positions of power were quickly exchanged, typified in his dry condemnation, ‘après quelques mois, il lui fallait céder la place’. In the second volume of the memoirs de Gaulle’s view of the Third Republic was forthright. He claimed that the defeat had been caused by ‘les conséquences d’une longue infirmité de l’Etat’.

This was another version of the collapse which removed responsibility for it from the people or nation. Shortly after the cited passage from Appel, de Gaulle emphasised that, when the war swung in Germany’s favour, it was the state rather than the nation which was incapable of adopting the measures which were needed to guarantee its safety against enemy occupation. This implied that however heroic individual soldiers or citizens had been in the

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30 For example, De Gaulle wrote, ‘Il faut dire qu’au moment suprême le régime n’offrait aucun recours au chef du dernier gouvernement de la IIIe République’, in Mémoires de guerre, Vol.1, 66.
Battle of France, the governmental system’s perceived long-term paralysis had already sealed their fate. As Hilary Footitt and John Simmonds have underlined, this proved to be a reassuring nationalist image which served to inspire resistance. Instead of there having been an ethnic or endemic reason why Germany had devastated France in 1940, national humiliation became explainable through a quasi-scientific exposé of the Republican regime’s incapabilities.

Was de Gaulle arguing that the Third Republic had caused its own downfall? Was this a further example of anti-republicanism within the Gaullist current? The majority of Gaullist writers who criticised the Third Republic’s system of government did not ascribe blame for the defeat to the Republic as an ideal, but rather to the machinery of government which was in use at that time. Nevertheless, by implication this type of criticism was closer to a conservative understanding of the defeat than that of the Gaullists’ fellow resistance fighters, the French Communist Party. It seems likely that for the influential ex-Action Française Gaullists the problems of running the Republican system and rejection of the Republic, in principle, were probably only two sides of the same coin. As Henry Rousso has recognised: ‘De même, à l’origine héritier du gaullisme de guerre, le RPF devient dans ces années-là une sorte de creuset où s’opère un amalgame entre les gaullistes de stricte obédience et les démocrates chrétiens ralliés, avec une partie de l’électorat encore fidèle au maréchalisme’. Thus, the intersection with an orthodox right-wing interpretation of the debacle was politically valuable, especially in the task of attracting catholic conservative cohorts away from the MRP and the smaller right-wing parties. At the time of the RPF, the use of an implied anti-republicanism provided a device with which to stake out Gaullism’s more general right-leaning identity. This


was another demonstration of the pose.

The traditionalist slant to explaining the defeat was present in many of the Gaullist historians’ writings on the inter-war period. The popular historian Jacques Boudet, contributing to the *Trente ans* collection, chided the post-1918 Republic from this perspective. He provided a hard conservative portrayal of a morally sick Republic. As well as political and social commentary, which was akin to de Gaulle’s, he included the following description of the mood of the 1920s literary scene. He commented,

> Quel lecteur populaire se reconnaîtrait dans la mémoire proustienne, la négation gidienne, l’ironie giralducienne, la grandeur claudelienne, la pureté valéryenne, la libido freudienne, la douceâtrerie de Pierre Benoit? Ces adjectifs eux-mêmes, ces gros tirages sont faits par des bourgeois pour une civilisation bourgeoise; et le surréalisme qui, dans un suprême effort individualiste, rejette en bloc toutes les traditions et insulte l’armée n’en est en définitive qu’une effloraison, une déviation dernière. 33

As in de Gaulle’s account of the governmental system, Boudet’s brief treatment of cultural history assumed that there had been a potentially fatal subversion of military strength. Boudet concluded his list of literary woes with the implication that surrealism had presented an internal threat to national ‘traditions’ and had insulted, or undermined, the army. As we will see, this detailed reasoning was not unlike that employed by historians who were associated with the extreme right-wing. It is a further example of the conservatism which was evident in Gaullism’s explanation that the defeat had been the product of the Third Republic.

In addition to the frequently hard-right tone of the analysis, it is important to underline that many of the Gaullist historians’ discussions of governance in 1940 were rehearsals of their political movement’s view of the Fourth Republic. Their commentaries on the Third Republic’s 

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politichiens and its ‘ministrables’ acted as an implicit judgement on the current system.\(^{34}\) The passage from de Gaulle’s memoirs, cited above, was typical of the RPF’s propaganda which attacked the new constitutional arrangements of the Fourth Republic.\(^{35}\) Gaullist historical writing on the faults of the 1870-1940 constitution functioned as a coded critique of the newly framed Republic. Like the propagandists, the historians commonly attacked the political parties. They were seen to be incapable of placing the nation above their own ‘feudal’ interests. The historians’ understanding of the war and contemporary politics became conveniently blurred. For example, Albert Ollivier, one of de Gaulle’s preferred writers and the one-time director of the RPF’s broadsheet Le Rassemblement, summarised the history of the political parties in terms of their preference for self-preservation over national progress. Concluding his review essay, ‘Les Partis politiques’, published as part of the Trente ans anthology, he considered that the attitude of the parties had not changed from the time of the defeat to the present day. Implicitly this was an ominous judgement. In 1939 they had been a ‘faiblesse interne’ which had contributed to the debacle. Now, under the Fourth Republic little of their demeanour had changed. Ollivier remarked,

On retrouve pleinement la féodalité sous sa forme dégénérée des coalitions d’intérêts: les meilleures intentions politiques se trouvent compromises, stérilisées par les concessions tactiques; l’on se partage les postes administratifs, les avantages matériels et les honneurs, mais l’on n’envisage aucun avenir pour le pays, occupé que l’on est à défendre la bastille du régime.\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\) The term ‘Les Ministrables’ is used by Jacques Boudet as the title of the first book of the second part of the Trente ans collection, 134.

\(^{35}\) The RPF’s antagonistic relationship with the Fourth Republic is widely covered in Jean Chariot, Le Gaullisme d’opposition 1946-1958; and François-Georges Dreyfus, De Gaulle et le Gaullisme (Paris: PUF, 1982), 124.

The criticism is almost identical to de Gaulle’s 1954 analysis of the Third Republic. Ollivier implied that the Fourth Republic parties were a disappointing continuation of the 1940 system, hence, the opening remark ‘On retrouve’. A central ploy in Gaullist historiography was the indirect criticism of the post-war order. By the time de Gaulle’s political movement against the new regime had fallen, de Gaulle’s memoirs provided a second timely attack. Before their publication, the war in Indochina had been lost and once more the issue of governance was high on the political agenda. The Gaullist historiographical account of the weakness of the state in 1939/1940 supported the call for constitutional reform of the Fourth Republic, implicitly to avoid a repetition of the events which they perceived as having led to the occupation. As I have illustrated, in so doing it revealed the profoundly conservative aspect of Gaullist thinking towards the Third Republic.

If the state had been absent in 1940, so too were its natural leaders, the Gaullists claimed. The historians implied that had Charles de Gaulle already been in office in 1939, with his military modernisation programme under way, then the defeat would not have occurred. Consistent with the RPF’s political promotion of de Gaulle, its mass rallies and formal propaganda, historiography provided a further opportunity to establish myths of leadership, and its absence. The subtitle of the Parias collection carried much of this notion about it. De Clemenceau à de Gaulle: between the two ‘great’ war leaders, the title hinted that there had been a fatal leadership-gap during the inter-war period. The theme manifested itself primarily in two interdependent ways. On the one hand, the Gaullist texts emphasised the lack of authority displayed by the politicians and military elites of the inter-war period, whilst on the other hand, there was an equally elaborate portrayal of de Gaulle as the ‘prophet-leader’. Again

37 For the role of ‘de Gaulle’ in de Gaulle’s own propaganda pronouncements during the RPF era see Jean Touchard, Le Gaullisme 1940-1969, 129-131.
the historiography commented on Fourth Republic politics, at least as much as the Third.

In the Parias collection, Cattaui’s biography and de Gaulle’s own writings, there are frequent suggestions that the politicians of the Third Republic had been incapable of the task which was required of them: to defend the patrie. Whilst this was occasionally mitigated by the failings of the wider state system to provide leadership, the historians developed the explanation on the level of judging personal ability. This was especially true of Boudet’s account of the inter-war period (1918-1938). Repeatedly as he charted the rise and fall of presidents, ministers, and political figures, the popular historian questioned whether the given politician was capable of the leadership of France, post-Clemenceau. The inter-war period was constituted as a trough of ‘decline’ and could therefore, almost metaphysically, not produce a leader of the equivalent stature of a Clemenceau or retrospectively a de Gaulle. This corresponded to the wider Gaullist narrative of a national rise and fall (analysed in the previous chapter). In a helpful summary of the Gaullists’ belief that there had been a collective failure of inter-war political leadership, Boudet argued that all of the post-First World War political generation were incapable of the necessary patriotic will to govern. He wrote,

Vingt ans en 1900. [...]la génération qui vient, celle des Tardieu, des Flandin, des de Monzie, des Laval est celle de la facilité.

Elle a eu vingt ans en 1900, la belle époque; elle n’a connu que les échos affaiblis des grandes batailles d’idées de la fin du XIXe siècle, elle a trouvé la République fermement établie, l’Europe prospère. A l’école du dilettantisme politique elle a appris les méthodes de compromis ou de compromissions et a fourni toute une vaste équipe de techniciens, de ministères interchangeables selon les humeurs de Parlement, toujours prêts à simplifier les problèmes, à les jeter en pâture à une opinion non préparée à les recevoir.

Qui s’étonnerait si Henri Béraud remplace Péguy et trouve une audience incalculablement plus large?38

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The influence of cultural choices, such as the preference for Béraud’s work instead of Péguy’s, reflected a weakening of the political class. The men who thrived in this environment were invariably weak: for instance, Tardieu, Flandin, de Monzie and Laval. Their failure to know how to lead with honour was cast almost as an inevitability, a product of their ignorance of the great republican debates of the previous generation.

De Gaulle’s exploration of the theme was more impressionistic than the nationalistic delineation of the leadership question in Trente ans. Nevertheless, again authoritative leadership was depicted as having been decisively absent when the Third Republic had needed it most. As François Quesnoy and Bernard Alluin have shown, de Gaulle sketches the portraits of a number of politicians.\(^3^9\) As well as describing his own progress, as in Alluin’s terms as an ‘extraordinary hero’, he depicts a number of negative exemplars.\(^4^0\) Writing on General Weygand, he memorably deduced:

> Weygand était, en effet, par nature, un brillant second. [...] Prendre l’action à son compte, n’y vouloir de marque que la sienne, affronter seul le destin, passion âpre et exclusive qui caractérise le chef, Weygand n’y était, ni porté, ni préparé. D’ailleurs, qu’il y eût en cela l’effet de ses propres tendances ou d’un concours de circonstances, il n’avait, au cours de sa carrière, exercé aucun commandement. Nul régiment, nulle brigade, nulle division, nul corps d’armée, nulle armée, ne l’avaient vu à leur tête.\(^4^1\)

Alongside the contemptuous images of absent leadership, de Gaulle and his fellow-travellers asserted positive images. As noted above, the negative examples of leadership were


\(^4^0\) Bernard Alluin, “Éléments d’un autoportrait”, Nord, 37.

\(^4^1\) Charles de Gaulle, Mémoires de guerre, Vol. I, 40. As we know Weygand would respond in his own terms, see Chapter II.
taken as implicit contrasts with de Gaulle’s career. No better example of this strategy can be
found than in the writings of de Gaulle’s three-time biographer, Georges Cattaui. He
consistently highlighted the General’s ability to lead and represent the nation, even before the
outbreak of war. The chapters which chronologically preceded the 18 June decision indicated
de Gaulle’s strength vis-a-vis his contemporaries. In contrast with the view that de Gaulle’s
heroism was all the greater for his initial position of weakness, Cattaui’s favoured
characterisation was of de Gaulle ‘the prophet’. For example, had not de Gaulle predicted the
nature of mechanised warfare, but perhaps what is more important, also the requirements of
national leadership? Citing the General’s inter-war writings, Cattaui noted,

En vertu d’une sorte de vue prophétique, c’est son propre portrait que de Gaulle
avait déjà tracé lorsque, dans Le Fil de l’Épée, il campait la figure du chef:
L’homme de caractère incorpore à sa personne la rigueur propre à l’effort. Les
subordonnés l’éprouvent et, parfois, ils en gémissent...Mais dans l’action, plus
de censeurs! Les volontés, les espoirs, s’orientent vers lui, comme le fer vers
l’aimant. Vienne la crise, c’est lui que l’on suit... (italics in original)

De Gaulle had already displayed all the necessary qualities of military leadership and planning.
He had even written the outline of his own future. This was the Gaullian myth of de Gaulle at
one of its most lyrical moments. The historians had created a discursive polarisation which
worked to their ideological advantage. They illustrated that the inter-war period had witnessed
many failed attempts to lead the nation whilst de Gaulle was presented as the leader-in-waiting.
Again, there was a useful correspondence between the politics of the Fourth Republic and the
past. From January 1946, de Gaulle was once more a leader-in-waiting/prophet, a coincidence

42 For an outline of the alternative view that de Gaulle’s ‘Faiblesse initiale’ in June 1940 was part of his
43 Georges Cattaui, Charles de Gaulle, 45.
which meant that this aspect of the historiography remained resonant. The parallels which were implied between the late Third and early Fourth Republics underlined that it was possible, and desirable, that de Gaulle would once again lead France. That de Gaulle should continue to use this type of argument in 1954, after his failed leadership of the RPF, is a good example of his self-confidence and his profound belief in the importance of leadership.

This portrayal legitimated and popularised value judgements which were founded on personality politics rather than other political considerations. Much in the manner that the communist discourse had emphasised class as the defining lesson of the defeat, the Gaullist accounts positioned part of their evaluation of history and politics on the ground of strong leadership attributes. As we will see, a valorisation of leadership also formed a major element in the extreme right's portrayal, the primary difference being that they looked to Pétain instead of de Gaulle.

Like the Gaullist historians, the extreme right-wingers argued that the debacle illustrated the weaknesses of the Republic and an absence of leadership. Elements of the interpretation provided by General Héring and Louis Rougier intersected with the Gaullists' treatment in its portrayal of an ineffectual Republic which was unable to defend the nation in 1940. The extreme right-wing historians cited the political culture of the Third Republic as having been a decisive cause of the defeat. They claimed that it had not provided sufficient national strength or leadership to fight the Germans. General Héring argued that only Pétain had attempted to avert disaster prior to 1940. It was suggested that he had been stopped from doing so by the structures of Third Republic bureaucracy. This version of events was comparable to the Gaullist representation of de Gaulle's inter-war career. For example, Héring wrote,
Il [Pétain] s'occupe tout d'abord de renforcer la position de l'Armée dans la Nation, de former et d'entretenir l'esprit patriotique avant et après le service militaire, notamment en luttant contre la doctrine périlleuse d'objection de conscience et contre les tendances néfastes que certains propagandistes cherchent à faire pénétrer au sein du personnel enseignant… Jusque-là tout va bien, ou à peu près. Les difficultés vont commencer lorsqu'il s'agira de lutter contre la démagogie du Parlement, non seulement pour freiner les réductions de crédits, mais pour obtenir des crédits supplémentaires. 44

As we have seen, Georges Cattaui’s understanding of de Gaulle’s role in this period was very similar to this. The citation illustrates another lone military figure who was shown attempting to save France. Again the historians protested that the institutions of the Third Republic had weakened the nation and inspired disaster. As has been suggested by Robert Paxton, ‘De Gaulle and his former mentor and adversary Pétain resembled each other in many respects, but in none so closely as when they talked contemptuously of the regime of parties’. 45 Accordingly, the Gaullist’s and extreme right-wing’s retrospective portrayals were also close to each other on this issue. The important distinction in relation to the Gaullist account was that here it was Pétain, and not de Gaulle, who was struggling against the ‘démagogie du Parlement’. Nevertheless, the political purpose of the reading was akin to that suggested in the analogous Gaullist writings: to explain the defeat in terms of the failures of the state system rather than of the French or France. Héring’s criticism of the inter-war period demonstrated that decision-making had not sufficiently allowed for military considerations. A preference for committees and consultation had failed to establish firm leadership. Héring wrote:

Au lieu d’un simple Secrétariat, le Maréchal demande un véritable Etat-Major

44 Pierre Héring, La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain, 69-70.
45 Robert Paxton, Vichy France, 351.
de la Défense Nationale, ayant à sa tête un Chef de Etat Major de Guerre.
Mais les Gouvernements qui se succèdent préfèrent assurer la coordination des départements ministériels par des Conseils ou des Comités, procédé cher à nos Dirigeants, mais dont l'inconvénient majeur est de supprimer les responsabilité et d'exclure les décisions viriles. \(^{46}\)

Apart from the presence of Pétain, this is highly comparable with the Gaullist treatments. The Republican regime had emasculated the nation. As the phrase 'exclure les décisions viriles' indicates, Héring saw the Republican elite as a sterile caste. Although this language is typical of extreme right-wing writing, it is also reminiscent of the explanations offered by Jacques Boudet. His accusation of a 'génération de la facilité' had addressed a kindred desire to awaken national pride and to free the nation from the Republican apparatus which was felt to have imprisoned it. \(^{47}\)

Louis Rougier’s treatment underlines the intersections which I have located. For instance, his characterisation of Paul Reynaud as an unscrupulous politician, a product of the Third Republic, mirrored the Gaullist perspective. Rougier portrayed Reynaud as a selfish, proud man who had valued his own reputation over that of the nation. Explaining his resignation on 16 June 1940, and his alleged failure to inform the new Bordeaux cabinet of Britain’s acceptance of a separate French armistice with Germany, Rougier noted:

\[\text{Les mobiles de Reynaud sont clairs. Persuadé que l'armistice est inévitable, lui, le signataire de l'accord du 28 mars, il ne veut en porter la responsabilité ni devant le Gouvernement britannique ni devant le peuple français. Il pense s'en tirer élegamment par un tour de prestidigitation. Mais, ce qui n'est pour lui qu'un jeu de passe-passe ministériel pour sauver sa réputation va engendrer la}\]

\(^{46}\) Pierre Héring, \textit{La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain}, 68.

\(^{47}\) As we know, a comparable view of sapped national virility emerged within the conservative right to explain defeat in Indochina. It is best paraphrased by one of its exponents, Raoul Girardet, \textit{La Crise militaire française 1945-1962} (Paris: Cahiers de la FNSP/Armand Colin, 1964), 169-172.
tragedie. Sa mystification va faire couler le sang français et mettre son pays à deux doigts de la guerre avec l’Angleterre. 48

Whilst the Gaullists tended not to focus on Reynaud, this extreme right-wing description of another bankrupt politician reminded the reader of the tone of the Gaullists’ accounts of politicians in 1940.

The two right-wing currents wrote from a similar perspective and to a comparable effect. Their propensity to blame the Republican system and its lack of forceful leadership for the collapse is marked. To borrow from Fred Kupferman, this is a case of pétaino-gaulisme. 49

The discourse also forms a backcloth to the infamous Rémy affair in which the RPF chief of propaganda resigned after printing a pro-Pétain piece in Carrefour. 50 That RPF members regularly expressed historiographic opinions which approached the extreme right wing, made it easier for Rémy to take the interpretation a stage nearer to Pétainism. We know that de Gaulle did not accept the realignment. Nonetheless, he continued to express his critique of the Third Republic in a manner which was not dissimilar to the extreme right-wing historiography.

Jacques Benoist-Méchin’s gloss on the collapse moved away from the Gaullists’ concerns. The subtleties of their critique of the Fourth Republic, via a reading of the collapse of the Third, were altered significantly. For Benoist-Méchin the lesson of the Battle of France was the relative merits and weaknesses of the three main belligerent nations: France, Germany and Britain. His account suggested that it was because France was a Republican democracy that

48 Louis Rougier, Mission secrète à Londres, 27.
she had lost in 1940; as for the nazi system, it was credited with having forged an impressive military capacity. As a result of the NSDAP, Germany had been more successful than France. The vision of the Third Reich as a flourishing society in 1940 was not achieved through a neo-nazi tirade but by an ironic comparison with France’s readiness for war. The following passage is exemplary of Benoist-Méchin’s argument, and of his stylish execution of it. He wrote:

Through the mocking juxtaposition of a France which was pictured as being more interested in its dernières vacances with the Germans’ unified readiness for war it is not difficult to establish which society the historian felt was the better equipped of the two. On the one side of the Rhine, he characterised France as having literally fallen asleep, (lulled by its popular chansons?) whilst on the other bank Germany awaited the coming battle, confident of victory. In this light, Benoist-Méchin also uncritically cited the German High Command’s report on the invasion campaign, which had stated that: ‘les raisons des succès allemandes sont [...] profondes: il faut les chercher là où les ennemis de l’Allemagne croyaient voir une faiblesses,
dans le dynamisme révolutionnaire du IIIe Reich, et de sa direction national socialiste'.

The historian illustrated the state of neglect into which France had fallen due to its republicanism, and by implication suggested the advantages which the totalitarian state had created for Germany. This controversial picture was reinforced by Benoist-Méchin’s clever citation of a comment from the memoirs of the British General Spears. The historian employed his laconic style to support an argument about the nature of government and society in 1940. Quoting Spears, Benoist-Méchin emphasised France’s weakness:

‘La démocratie, a écrit le général Spears, est une conception splendide. Mais elle offre le désavantage, à certains moments, de hisser au pouvoir les hommes...qui acculeront une grande nation à la défaite, en l’espace de quelques jours’.

Benoist-Méchin completed his own case without having to spell it out in his own words. The use of the British source provided further legitimacy to the extreme right-winger’s argument. The ideologically marked point carried greater authenticity when it was delivered by a non-French commentator.

As well as comparing France with Germany, Benoist-Méchin also discussed British policy. Britain was cast as an external danger, only too willing to betray her ally. He depicted perfidious Albion as living up to her reputation and abandoning the French to their fate. Although Britain was a parliamentary democracy, its national will, embodied in the Machiavellian Churchill, was prepared to betray France to protect herself. The national trait

54 The classic examples of which, the Dunkirk episode and the Mers-el-Kebir raid, are described by Benoist-Méchin in detail.
of cunning was seen to have helped the British but to have been entirely absent from the naive French. Trapped between a treacherous ally and a virile enemy, France was shown to have been completely unable to defend herself against either side. As such, this interpretation was significantly different from the Gaullists’ critique of the Third Republic.

Apart from discrediting democratic republicanism, the attribution of the main responsibility of the defeat to the Republic justified the Vichy regime’s radical departure from parliamentarianism to authoritarian governance. This brings us to the third feature of the extreme right wing’s interpretation of the history of 1940: the rehabilitation of Pétain. All three representative historians demonstrated that Pétain’s assumption of office was based on his personal sacrifice. In the wake of the self-destruction of the Republic, Pétain’s leadership was interpreted as having been a heroic decision to protect France. The extreme right opposed the communist and Gaullist accusations of conspiracy. Typical of this legitimation of the Marshal’s actions was Héring’s depiction of a conversation which had allegedly taken place between General Franco and Pétain, who in 1940 had been Ambassador to Spain. It read:

[Franco] - N’y allez pas, Maréchal; allégez votre âge avancé. Que ceux qui ont perdu la guerre la liquident maintenant et signent l’Armistice...Vous êtes le Soldat Victorieux de Verdun; ne donnez pas votre nom à ce que d’autres ont perdu.

[Pétain] - Je le sais, mon Général; mais ma Patrie m’appelle et je me dois à elle. C’est peut-être, celui-ci, le dernier service que je pourrai lui rendre.\(^55\)

An image of innocent sacrifice rather than conspiratorial intrigue was constructed around the role of Pétain in 1940. Instead of having planned his future role, he showed Pétain taking office at a time when no other Frenchman had been prepared to do so. This view can be seen

\(^{55}\) Pierre Héring, *La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain*, 77.
to have been drawn from earlier, longstanding, interpretations of Pétain's career. It reflected both the propaganda efforts which elements of the extreme right had produced in the inter-war period, which had promoted Pétain as a potential national leader, as well as the orchestrated 'mythe de Pétain' which was constructed immediately after his assumption of office. The view was also reflected in well known wartime posters which proclaimed the Marshal’s fidelity to France, his personal sacrifices and symbolic virtues. In the context of post-war ideological historiography this was a counter-argument to the accusations of conspiracy which had been levelled by the communist and Gaullist historical traditions. The extreme right-wing historians replied to the anti-Pétainist currents. Benoist-Méchin tried to refute the Gaullist claim that the speed at which Pétain had formed his cabinet was evidence of there having been a prior conspiracy. He wrote,

Alors, tandis que le Président Reynaud se retire, accompagné de MM. Mandel, Louis Marin, Rio et Campinchi, M. Lebrun prend le Maréchal à part et lui dit:

- 'Voulez-vous constituer le gouvernement?'

Aussitôt le Maréchal sort une liste de son portefeuille, la tend au Président Lebrun, et lui dit:

- 'Le voici!'

Cette rapidité - dans laquelle on a voulu voir, par la suite, l'indice d'un complot - fait, sur le moment, une tout autre impression sur le Président.

56 For example one inter-war pro-Pétain journalist, writing in a style which anticipated Vichy’s own propaganda efforts, had noted, ‘Marshal you represent the French victory, and the most noble fusion there has ever been between the poilus and their leaders. There is in France no personality more symbolic than yours, to transmit to the men of today the sense of the sacrifice made by the men of yesterday’, cited by Richard Griffiths, Marshal Pétain (London: Constable, 1970), 185.

57 A selection of typical posters are reproduced in Dominique Rossignol, Histoire de la propagande en France de 1940 à 1944: l’utopie Pétain (Paris: PUF, 1991), 106-112. Similar themes were reflected in the moving image, a good range of examples of which are used in Claude Chabrol’s film, L’Oeil de Vichy, Scénario Jean Pierre Azéma and Robert Paxton, (Production: Fit Production, INA, TF1 Films, Production Sylicone, 1993).
The detailed 'fact' which the Gaullist historian Jacques Madaule had cited to imply a deliberate conspiracy was employed by Benoist-Méchin to suggest a very different course of events. In this case it was used to indicate the refreshing efficiency of Pétain's decision-making in comparison with the previous leaders of the Third Republic. Although this may have been coincidental, the example illustrates the extreme right-wing historians' tendency to position their work as a corrective to, or revision of, the other two schools. This was a denial of the conspiracy theory which, despite the noted overlap, distanced the current from the Gaullists' interpretation. Conveniently, this also excused all subsequent acts of collaboration, a view which again distinguished the extreme right from the other two currents of interpretation.

**Structural Overlap in Interpretations of 1940**

Gaullist writing on the debacle stands out because of its propensity to overlap with both extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing representations. Its historians noted that an internal conspiracy was the ultimate cause of the defeat. However, they also strongly criticised the Third Republic. It had lacked the conservative values of patriotism, governmental unity and leadership.

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This characteristic raises the neglected issue of how interpretations inter-sected with each other. The ideological historians did not produce a collective version of the war, as suggested by Pascal Ory, Valensi and others. Although all the historians were concerned with discussing the debacle around themes of conspiracy, their portrayals varied. Communists accused the middle class of being responsible for 1940, the Gaullists attributed blame to military leaders, whereas the extreme right-wing denied that there had been a conspiracy. However, some, but obviously not all, histories were in certain ways structurally alike. On this point, Azéma’s, Bédarida’s, Wieviorka’s, and Laguerre’s view that communists, Gaullists and extreme right-wingers produced neatly demarcated historical accounts is problematic. Evidence from writing on the debacle suggests that the historiography neither reflected a unified expression nor a series of completely separate views. The writings were more complex than either of these positions. They do not always map out as the secondary literature has anticipated.

The affinities between the currents of interpretation which I have illustrated occurred when shared beliefs brought the ideological groups together. For example, anti-Pétainist, and certainly anti-Lavalian, views were common to communists and Gaullists. On the other hand, opposition towards the Third and Fourth Republic was propagated by extreme right-wingers and Gaullists. Nonetheless, different voices from within all three sets of historians remain. Only communists ascribed blame for the defeat to the middle classes. Distinctively, the Gaullists believed in the historic role of the General, a view which was unanimously decried

by the other historians. As for the extreme right wing, its argument that Pétain had not conspired in 1940 failed to attract all but the most maverick of hard right Gaullists. So, whilst writing on the debacle overlapped it did not form a single uncontested interpretation.
CHAPTER V
BROADCASTS, APPEALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

This chapter examines how the activist historians wrote about the three key statements which signalled collaboration and resistance in June and July 1940. An examination of how writing in one current influenced that in another is offered. It is suggested that in the specific context of the interpretation of the major declarations on the occupation, the Gaullist historians’ writings on 18 June marked the treatments offered by their rivals.

`J'entrais dans l'aventure’

On 18 June 1945, Gaullists celebrated the anniversary of the General’s first resistance broadcast through a re-creation of the liberation parades from the Place de l’Etoile to Notre Dame. The following summer they repeated this when de Gaulle co-ordinated his own commemorative activities at Mont Valérien, independently from those organised by the state, from the headship of which he had recently resigned. It is therefore not surprising that the Gaullist historical texts provide a valuable source of writing on the speech.

The Parias collection’s manipulation of the 18 June speech was restrained but rhetorically significant. Potentially targeted towards a broadly conservative audience, the luxury publication cast de Gaulle’s act of rebellion as a logical, reasoned decision which had been vital to the nation. Parias included the speech as a rhetorical touchstone, which was repeated at different points in the book. Citation of it appeared twice in Madaule’s chapters on the war itself, but it was also considered in the thematic sections written by René Cassin,


137
Jacques Soustelle, Edmond Michelet and Raymond Aron.²

The subtlety of the manipulation, almost a subliminal use of de Gaulle’s decision to resist, is apparent in Madaule’s detailed writing on it. He presented it in comparison with Pétain’s 17 June broadcast. First, Madaule quoted the Marshal’s speech at length. Subsequently, he developed a critique of Pétain’s position. Two long sections of writing suggested why Pétain’s reaction to the defeat had been a misreading of the military situation. His tone was neither bitter nor recriminatory. Madaule developed a detailed discussion of why the Second World War had been a global conflict, in which the defeat of France had not signalled the conclusion of the war. This was a key element in the point-by-point refutation which was gradually made against Pétain. For instance, Madaule showed that the Marshal and his coterie had underestimated the determination of Britain to continue the war; similarly he contended that Pétain had been unable to understand the ‘portée mondiale du conflit’. The Marshal had not realised that national recovery could not occur under German control. Madaule explained why the strategy was false:

La France, dans son malheur, allait provisoirement se replier sur elle-même et se refaire une âme en même temps qu’un corps. C’était oublier simplement à quel ennemi nous avions affaire, et que l’Allemagne hitlérienne ne ressemblait pas beaucoup à celle de Guillaume II.³

This was a controlled argument which demonstrated why the armistice and collaboration had been wrong in 1940. The earlier conspiracy theory of the defeat, implied by Madaule, was


noticeably absent. Instead, there was a recognition that political errors, such as Pétain’s, were more often than not the result of circumstances.

Madaule’s comparison between the 17 and 18 June speeches has introduced the issue of cross-current influence. His writing was an example of a Gaullist response to Pétain and the Pétainist historians. The fact that Madaule felt it necessary to subtly undermine the Marshal before praising the General suggests the importance of the first speech. Aware of the symbolic status of Pétain’s broadcast, Madaule debunked its authority to support de Gaulle’s actions of the following day. To this extent, he framed his writing as a critique of the extreme right’s perspective.

Although the example indicates that an important Gaullist historian compared the 17 and 18 June speeches and engaged with the arguments of the extreme right-wing, this was not a dominant characteristic across the wider current of writing. As we will see it was more often the case that the Gaullist portrayal influenced the two other strands of interpretation, rather than vice versa. Thus, Madaule quickly turned to de Gaulle’s broadcast. Again, there was a marked simplicity of tone and an economy of style in his writing. For example, this speech was first introduced as ‘une autre voix de Londres’, the phrase explicitly making the further comparative link to Pétain’s ‘voice from Bordeaux’. Contrary to Alan Morris’s depiction of Gaullist and Gaullian discourse, in this example there is a relative absence of retrospective triumphalism or gloating. This was continued in Madaule’s second representation of the 18 June speech. Here, the theme of fidélité was added to the strategic reasons for which de Gaulle’s course had been the correct one. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to describe Madaule’s writing as dispassionate. The following extract was one of the most romantic in Madaule’s treatment of the topic. He declared,

4 Alan Morris, Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed, 8-9, 20, 30.
Si la France doit résister, c’est parce qu’il s’agit aussi bien de sauver son intégrité spirituelle que son patrimoine temporel. Les 1.300.000 Français qui sont morts de 1914 à 1918 ne sont pas morts en vain, aux côtés de 800.000 Britanniques qui reposent en terre de France. Tel est le sens des messages de Charles de Gaulle. […] Il pouvait n’être qu’un instrument aux mains de la propagande britannique. Il conçut d’être la France, ne reniant rien de son passé, rien de la grandeur. Le spectacle put paraître grotesque à certains politiciens chevronnés. Il était tel, en vérité, que rien de plus haut n’existe dans toute notre histoire.

Even so, Madaule continued to ground his representation in terms of military history. Note how he used the detailed figures of the First World War dead to recognise the affiliations which existed between Britain and France in 1940. The rhetorical acceptance that de Gaulle was at first ‘un instrument aux mains de la propagande britannique’ was a modest understanding of the topic. The admission was a reply to the common extreme right-wing claim that de Gaulle had been a tool of the British. Madaule felt that by confronting the situation which de Gaulle had faced in 1940 truthfully, the General’s actual actions, without over-embellishment, remained the most important decision in French history. The implication was that in 1940 it was clearly defensible to be in the Allied camp, as opposed to collaborating with nazism.

As a rhetorical device, the presentation of the speech in Trente ans worked by surprise. In a collection which addressed thirty years of history a son-et-lumière presentation of the 18 June would have been out of place. It would have had the potential to have made the ideological marking of the account too pronounced, and thereby to have diminished its persuasive qualities. In a sense, the Gaullists did not need to dramatise what was already a well-known and inherently dramatic act. What the strategy of subtle argumentation indicates is that, in the Trente ans collection, Gaullist writers desired to explain de Gaulle’s rebellion

as a rational act of government which had been more appropriate than the Marshal’s behaviour. In 1949, they intended this to attract those conservatives who might have otherwise been wary of de Gaulle as a maverick who had disobeyed his superiors. For instance, repeating the tone established by Madaule, even the romantic Rémy (at the time of writing he was the RPF’s head of propaganda activities) stressed de Gaulle’s intellectual capabilities as a decision-maker. He wrote:

Les décisions que formule le général de Gaulle surprennent le plus souvent. On serait tenté de croire, à l’entendre les exprimer d’une façon presque toujours foudroyante, ou même brutale, qu’elles ont été improvisées. Quiconque n’est pas des familiers du général ne peut manquer d’être tenté d’y trouver l’indice d’une nature impulsive et passionnée. Rien n’est plus faux, pour celui qui le connaît un peu. Cet homme d’action, et même de grandes actions, est d’abord un penseur, un méditatif et un philosophe. Cette décision dont la promptitude apparente étonne quelquefois jusqu’à ses intimes, est en réalité le fruit patiemment mûri d’un très long et très prudent cheminement de sa pensée. 6

The Gaullist historians used the 18 June decision as an example of controlled statesmanship. De Gaulle’s flight to London had been heroic, but it was also based on wisdom as well. The historical representation served as a logical illustration of why de Gaulle had been sure-footed in the past, which implied that he was capable of governing in the future.

Although Madaule’s depiction was comparative and restrained, many Gaullists were concerned with communicating the gravity of the 18 June, an incomparable episode. It is surely not a coincidence that the final pages of Trente ans returned to events surrounding the first BBC broadcast. Raymond Aron, concluding the work, examined the condition of the post-war world, its dangers and the continued threat of the ‘paix belliqueuse’ which was emerging between the USA and the Soviet Union. This was completed with the following statement on

the future:

A la longue, ce n’est pas le langage de la facilité qui assure la popularité et consacre le grandeur. Quelles sont les paroles qui retentissent encore à nos oreilles? ‘Je fais la guerre’. ‘Je n’ai rien à vous offrir que du sang, de la sueur, des efforts et des larmes’. ‘La France a perdu une bataille, elle n’a pas perdu la guerre’.

Les nations se reconnaissent à la longue, non dans ceux qui les flattent, mais dans ceux qui les conduisent vers le salut.7

The concluding use of the well-known phrase, ‘La France a perdu une bataille, elle n’a pas perdu la guerre’, reveals Aron’s view that de Gaulle was the leader best qualified to steer France in an uncertain world.8 Having referred to, or cited, the 18 June speech in three or more different contexts of Trente ans, this final remark was a reminder of de Gaulle’s decision. The phrase, and the speech which it echoed, were used by Aron and others as a cypher which denoted de Gaulle’s stature in comparison to those with pretensions to lead the nation. The reader was left in little doubt who Aron considered would best govern France in 1949, and


8 The phrase ‘La France a perdu une bataille, elle n’a pas perdu la guerre’ was referred to as being part of the 18 June speech by Jacques Madaule, “La Fin”, Trente ans, 219. Similarly it was included in a photographic illustration, entitled “L’affiche du 18 juin”, 220. It read as follows:

‘A tous les Français! La France a perdu une bataille! Mais la France n’a pas perdu la guerre! Des gouvernants de rencontre ont pu capituler, cédant à la panique, oubliant l’honneur, livrant le pays à la servitude. Cependant, rien n’est perdu! Rien n’est perdu, parce que cette guerre est une guerre mondiale. Dans l’univers libre, des forces immenses n’ont pas encore donné. Un jour, ces forces écraseroit l’ennemi. Il faut que la France, ce jour-là, soit présente à la victoire. Alors, elle retrouvera sa liberté et sa grandeur. Tel est mon but, mon seul but! Voilà pourquoi je convie tous les Français, où qu’ils trouvent, à s’unir à moi dans l’action, dans le sacrifice et dans l’espérance. Notre patrie est en péril de mort. Luttons tous pour la sauver! Vive la France!. Général de Gaulle.’

However, despite Madaule’s claim, it was not part of the BBC broadcast itself. It is difficult to infer whether Aron knew that he was citing the speech or the associated propaganda poster.
Unlike several of the portrayals included in the Parias collection Georges Cattaui focused his writing on the psychological and metaphysical meaning of de Gaulle’s decision to resist. The history of the speech formed the central two chapters of the biography. They were entitled, ‘L’épreuve des faits’ and ‘L’Appel du 18 juin’. De Gaulle’s words, thoughts and actions were framed in the mode of a biblical morality tale, the focal section of which described de Gaulle’s thoughts on the eve of his flight from Bordeaux to London. Cattaui wrote,

En cette nuit du 16 au 17 juin, à Bordeaux, de Gaulle ne dort pas. Longue nuit d’angoisse, où tout est pensé, pesé. Partir? Passer pour un transfuge, un dissident, un rebelle? Il entrevoit tout ce qu’il lui faudra souffrir: le mépris des uns; la haine des autres; la calomnie; l’injure... Il pressent le sort lamentable des émigrés: l’exil, les coteries... Il lui faudra tout quitter: son pays, ses soldats, sa mère - qu’il ne reverra pas. Il a près de cinquante ans. Il est au milieu du chemin. Heure irréversible, il se sent vivre dans le passé, dans le présent, dans le futur de cette France dont il assume l’Histoire. À l’aube, son choix est fait. À la tentation de rester, de consentir, il dit: non. Au sacrifice, il répond: oui. Il parie pour le combat. Tout est sauvé par un triple acte de foi: se fier à l’endurance de la Grande-Bretagne sous les bombes de l’ennemi; prévoir que les ambitions nazies provoqueront l’entrée en guerre des États-Unis et de la Russie; par-dessus tout, croire que le peuple de France n’acceptera pas la servitude et, sous le joug allemand, se redressera pour achever la guerre dans la victoire.10

Whereas Madaule had employed the events and speech of the 18 June as part of a detailed argument, Cattaui characterised the decision to resist as a quasi-religious event. As in the legend of Joan of Arc’s visions, de Gaulle was depicted amidst an array of Christian imagery

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9 Raymond Aron’s membership of the RPF and his later reactions to it are accounted for in his Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflection (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990), 164-173. See also, Jean-François Sirinelli, “Les Intellectuels français au temps de la guerre froide: entre communisme et gaullisme?”, in Courtois and Lazar (eds), Cinquante ans d’une passion française, 267.

10 Georges Cattaui, Charles de Gaulle, 54-55.
and language. In high Catholic tone, Cattaui talked of a ‘longue nuit d’angoisse’; ‘tout ce qu’il lui faudra souffrir’; ‘le mépris...la haine’ of those in authority; and finally, ‘l’aube’; ‘la tentation’, ‘sacrifice’ and de Gaulle’s ‘triple acte de foi’. The passage was laden with Christian or quasi-Christian symbolism. It formed a complete micro-narrative of redemption. Cattaui portrayed the lonely figure of de Gaulle as having sacrificed himself to save national honour. The quotation of the text of the speech was less important than the decision which had preceded it. Appropriately its content was felt to be eternally ‘en tous nos coeurs’.11

Cattaui’s introduction of de Gaulle’s rite of passage towards resistance was a cinematically styled reminder of the General’s defining moment. His language and tone provide further evidence of the continued influence of the work of Péguy, both on de Gaulle and a wider circle of Gaullists, a point which the literary critics Alan Pedley and Jean-Marie Paris, as well as the political historian François-Georges Dreyfus, have developed.12 Published after de Gaulle had retired from the failed RPF project, the biographer drew on the history of his leader’s ‘greatest moment’. The interpretation was a graphic reminder of what de Gaulle had achieved in the past. Moreover, because of the deeply ingrained religious symbolism which was used to describe the event, the passage was rather more than this. Its focus on de Gaulle as ‘every man’ who had been presented with a decision between temptation and sacrifice depoliticised and universalised the events of 18 June. Instead of casting de Gaulle’s decision as a rational act, Cattaui deliberately mystified it, and in so doing, constituted it as a deeply symbolic episode. This made 18 June a spiritual moment which all French men and women could appreciate, rather than only those who agreed with its logic based on strategy or politics.

11 Ibid., 56.

De Gaulle’s representation in the first volume of his *Mémoires de guerre* can be reinterpreted as a synthesis of the two different approaches found in the Parias and Cattaui texts. He developed a logical argument in favour of resistance, whilst also alluding to the sacred implications which the decision had brought with it. Concentrating on his own actions, the famous passage which de Gaulle used to describe his first broadcast carried something of both Madaule’s and Cattaui’s writings about it:

> Naufragé de la désolation sur les rivages de l’Angleterre, qu’aurais-je pu faire sans son concours [Churchill]. Il me le donna tout de suite et mit, pour commencer, la BBC à ma disposition. Nous convinmes que je l’utiliserais lorsque le gouvernement Pétain aurait demandé l’armistice. Or, dans la soirée même, on apprit qu’il l’avait fait. Le lendemain, à 18 heures, je lus au micro le texte que l’on connaît. A mesure que s’envolaient les mots irrévocables, je sentais en moi-même se terminer une vie, celle que j’avais menée dans le cadre d’une France solide et d’une indivisible armée. A quarante-neuf ans, j’entrais dans l’aventure, comme un homme que le destin jetait hors de toutes les séries.\(^{13}\)

De Gaulle’s explanation began with the matter-of-fact reasons why he had made the broadcast. The speech was not cited in the text, but only referred to in the simple phrase, ‘le texte que l’on connaît’. This evoked the national importance of the speech without repeating its content (since it was printed in the book’s appendix it was unnecessary for it to be cited). However, the tone of writing employed by de Gaulle changes from describing the historical record to a mode of private reflection. Suddenly, by the fifth sentence of the paragraph, the act of resistance was cast as a personal transformation in de Gaulle’s life, captured in the closing sentence of the passage, ‘A quarante-neuf ans, j’entrais dans l’aventure, comme un homme que le destin jetait hors de toutes les séries’. De Gaulle struck a balance between reasoned argument and poetic judgement. His portrayal was not a stream of lyrical prose and should not

always be analysed as such.\textsuperscript{14} Much of the writing in the \textit{Mémoires} forms a reasoned argumentation in favour of the decisions which he had taken during the war. Following the melodramatic conclusion to the passage cited above, de Gaulle employed four pages of explanatory discourse which demonstrated his unsuccessful search for someone of higher authority to lead the resistance in London.\textsuperscript{15} This alternation between argumentation and poetic narration, which de Gaulle’s writing on the 18 June produced, displayed two central qualities of leadership. It illustrated de Gaulle’s thoughtfulness, reason and control. Conversely, it also exemplified his passionate love of France, and a psychological belief in the greatness of the nation. Whereas, Madaule and Cattaui had emphasised the importance of the 18 June through differing styles, de Gaulle’s writing combined the former’s modesty with the latter’s enthusiasm.

\textbf{The Extreme Right-Wing on the 17 and 18 June Appeals}

The 17 June 1940 was important to the extreme right wing for two reasons. It signalled Pétain’s assumption of office, whilst in addition it also meant an end to the war in France and the search for an armistice. On both counts Rougier, Héring and Benoist-Méchin praised the speech. Sketching the general impact of the 17 June, Rougier summarised the state of the nation:

\textsuperscript{14} There has been a tendency to ignore de Gaulle’s more restrained rhetorical arguments in favour of his more obvious preoccupations and literary tropes. One cannot always agree with Morris’s view that ‘the work reads like the cult of de Gaulle’s personality’. \textit{Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed}, 30.

\textsuperscript{15} Charles de Gaulle, \textit{Mémoires de guerre}, Vol.1, 70-71. Where De Gaulle writes, ‘Pourtant, tout en faisant mes premiers pas dans cette carrière sans précédent, j’avais le devoir de vérifier qu’aucune autorité plus qualifiée que la mienne ne voudrait s’offrir à remettre la France et l’Empire dans la lutte’.
Peace and Pétain’s arrival in office had brought an air of calm, and even success. As Marc Ferro has noted the 17 June speech signalled the beginning of a period of gradual recovery, a view which the Pétainist historians maintained. However, it was also justified by a series of negative, rather than positive reasons. General Héring explained why Pétain’s decision had been the correct one. First, he argued that 17 June was not a capitulation because control of a limited army and navy had been maintained. Héring claimed that if the war had continued the 4 million prisoners who had fallen into captivity would have been its first bloody victims. He took resistance to have been impossible:

Pour lui [de Gaulle], comme pour Sir Winston Churchill, les Français n’avaient qu’à se débrouiller en prenant le ‘maquis’. C’eût été du joli, en face d’une Armée Allemande victorieuse, alors que ni les Anglais, ni les Américains ne se trouvaient en mesure de leur venir en aide!

Héring considered that Pétain’s nobility and his wisdom had been revealed in his decision to seek an armistice. The Marshal had remained in France to protect the nation.

What was the strategy behind this type of characterisation of the 17 June speech? Repeated reference to, and citation of, Pétain’s choice to seek an armistice illustrated the

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18 Pierre Héring, *La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain*, 86.
positive effects of his new position. For the extreme right-wing historians, even after the events of the liberation, the armistice decision remained a rallying point which illustrated Pétain's qualities. They always underlined that the decision encapsulated in the 17 June speech had garnered widespread popular support. It is not surprising that the historians repeatedly returned to the speech. In *Soixante jours*, Jacques Benoist-Méchin cited the 17 June broadcast in full, and framed it with the following reminder:

> C'est avec une émotion intense que les Français écoutent ces paroles. D'un bout à l'autre du pays, dans les villes et sur les routes, une longue clameur s'élève:

> - 'Fini! C'est fini! Le cauchemar est terminé!'

> La nouvelle vole de bouche en bouche et s'enfle comme une houle. Dans les villes, la foule des réfugiés massée devant les Préfectures acclame le Maréchal. Des gens pleurent sur le pas de leur porte, tandis qu'un grand élan de ferveur et de reconnaissance monte vers l'illustre vieillard qui a assumé sur ses épaules, bien plus que le pouvoir, toute la douleur de la patrie...\(^{19}\)

The extreme right interpreted public opinion, notoriously hard for the historian to judge in any circumstances, as having been completely supportive of the Marshal.\(^{20}\) Exposing the popular acclaim which Pétain had received at the beginning of the occupation, the historians emphasised the manner in which the French had treated him after the war.

The framing of the speech fulfilled many of the functions which Henry Rousso has ascribed to the lobby group, the *Association pour défendre la mémoire du maréchal Pétain* (ADMP), of which Rougier, Héring and Benoist-Méchin were prominent members. The claim

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\(^{20}\) We now know that Pétain was widely supported in June 1940. See, Robert Paxton, *Vichy France*, 20-38. On the other hand, H.R.Kedward has noted that the Southern Zone French were prepared to distrust the Bordeaux/Vichy government to the extent of obtaining information from Swiss radio stations, if not from the BBC. See, *Resistance in Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 210-212.
that the armistice had been the only possible outcome of the circumstances of 1940 served as vital evidence in the ADMP's goal to open a judicial review of Pétain's case. This reading of history always found the Marshal to be innocent. Parallels between the 1945 trial and Pétain's decision of the 17 June, as recounted by the historians, were encouraged. For instance, the concluding paragraph of the *Soixante jours* trilogy unquestioningly cited Pétain's trial plea.\(^{21}\)

After the Marshal's death, the ADMP's ambition to relocate his body to the World War One ossuary, at Douaumont, near Verdun, was also underpinned by the manipulations of the 17 June declaration. Jacques Benoist-Méchin's history taught that Pétain's actions had been above reproach and that there was no justification for the Marshal to remain buried on the humiliating Île d'Yeu. Henry Rousso has commented, 'il est important de souligner que la translation des cendres est en réalité une translation de mémoire. [...] il s'agit bien d'*oublier* le maréchal de 1940 au profit du général de 1916'.\(^{22}\) The historiographic manipulation was more nuanced than this interpretation of memory-politics suggests. In the selected histories, Pétain's actions in 1940 were not presented in order to be forgotten or ignored. The historians recorded the 17 June speech with the aim of defending and promoting its legitimacy. It was never a question of having to choose between either the Pétain of 1916 or 1940. Benoist-Méchin used both aspects of Pétain's career. For example, it was felt that:

Si le peuple français adresse, à ce moment [1940], un appel aussi ardent et aussi unanime au Maréchal, c'est qu'il sent en lui le seul homme capable de mettre fin à sa détresse. Vingt-quatre ans auparavant, tous les combattants de l'autre guerre ont obéi à ses ordres et se souviennent que son commandement fut ferme, mais paternel. [...] Cela, les survivants ne l'ont pas oublié. C'est pourquoi ils se tournent vers lui en 1940. Et cette fois-ci, à la voix des millions de combattants qu'il a déjà eus sous ses ordres, se joint celle de leurs mères et


\(^{22}\) Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 62.
In this version Pétain's contributions to 1916 and 1940 were intimately connected. The historians represented the Petain of 1940 as having continued to behave in the same heroic manner as he had during the First World War, with the memory of the battle of Verdun being identified as a critical factor in the people's faith in him at the time of the armistice. Taking into account this type of material, it seems likely that for the ADMP the removal of Pétain's remains to the national military cemetery at Verdun would have evoked both his career of 1916 and celebrated his later oblation. The interpretation connected both stages in Pétain's life story, with each demonstrating his popularity, courage and self-sacrifice. Again, by proving that Pétain's actions had been legitimate, the historians implied that his post-war punishment was not.

The glorious images which the extreme right created through the framing of the 17 June speech complimented a wider representation which included a vitriolic attack on de Gaulle. The ADMP's so called 'Legend of the Marshal' was supported by a dynamic, powerful, myth which was cast against the General. At the centre of the project to defend Pétain's reputation was a critique of de Gaulle's position, as illustrated in the 18 June broadcast. Several rhetorical strategies were used to achieve this effect. Probably the most powerful, and least recognised, device used in the portrayal was the harnessing of humour. This type of discourse was the complete opposite of the reverence with which Gaullist writers' treated the 18 June, as in Georges Cattaui's Charles de Gaulle. It also reveals how the extreme right-wing historians were influenced by the work of their Gaullist enemies.

For the historians the events surrounding 18 June afforded a satirical opportunity to

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mock both the content of de Gaulle’s speech and the way in which Gaullists had retrospectively presented it. The following passage on the period which preceded the speech comes from the second volume of Benoist-Méchin’s study. He employed a quotation from the war memoirs of the British General Spears to describe an incident which allegedly occurred during de Gaulle’s flight from Bordeaux to London. Tongue in cheek, Benoist-Méchin cited Spears’ account to describe the flight’s brief fuel-stop on the Channel Island of Jersey:

L’avion fait escale à Jersey. Il fait très frais. Tandis que les mécaniciens remplissent les réservoirs d’essence, de Gaulle et Spears se rendent à la cantine. De Gaulle commande un café.

‘En ayant bu une gorgée, écrit Spears, il déclare, sur le ton d’un homme qui ne veut faire de peine à personne, mais qui est tout de même obligé de proclamer la vérité:

- J’ai commandé un café; ceci est du thé.

C’était en effet le breuvage tiède qui, en Angleterre, est servi indifféremment pour l’un ou pour l’autre. Son martyre avait commencé’.

The point was that de Gaulle’s sacrifice had not begun with his famous BBC broadcast but was preceded by his insipid tea-drinking on Jersey the day before. This was a trivialisation of de Gaulle’s subsequent actions. Founded on the humour of cultural stereotyping, it positioned the General as a Frenchman abroad, whom Spears saw to be powerless and forced to accept English customs. This echoed the role that the extreme right historians contended de Gaulle

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25 In the original source General Spears wrote, ‘...we touched down at Jersey for petrol. It was chilly. No one was about save a few mechanics. [...] I asked de Gaulle if he wanted anything, and he said he would like a cup of coffee. I handed it to him, whereupon, taking a sip, he said, in a voice which indicated that without implying criticism he must nevertheless proclaim the truth, that this was tea and he had asked for coffee. It was his first introduction to the tepid liquid which, in England, passes for either one or the other. His martyrdom had begun’. Sir Edward Spears, *Assignment to Catastrophe*, Vol.2, *The Fall of France* (London: William Heineman, 1954), 323.
had played in relation to Churchill for the whole of the war. That is to say, de Gaulle’s claim to represent France was bogus because he had left the national territory and had compromised himself by assisting in the ambitious plans of the British Empire.26

As Nicholas Hewitt has noted of Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s antisemitic pamphleteering, the anti-Gaullist comedy was ‘dangerous precisely because it allows the propagandist to implant the seeds of hatred by disguising the serious as a joke’.27 This humour peppers the three volumes of *Soixante jours*. Benoist-Méchin consistently portrayed de Gaulle’s actions and motivations in an ironic mode. De Gaulle’s post-war writings and the Gaullian presentation of the ‘homme du 18 juin’ were mocked. The historian characterised the General as an arrogant but dangerous fool. For example, in volume three of *Soixante jours*, when summarising de Gaulle’s career, Benoist-Méchin asked rhetorically: ‘Et puis, pourquoi rappeler sans cesse qu’on est l’homme du Destin? Napoléon ne l’a dit qu’une fois. Cela suffit pour qu’on s’en souvienne’.28 It was suggested that de Gaulle’s leadership was at best comically shallow and at worst a threat to national unity. Furthermore, using a description of de Gaulle’s relationship with Churchill, Benoist-Méchin implied that the self-proclaimed national champion was incapable of comprehending the political world around him, except through the distorting lens of his haughtiness. Dryly, Benoist-Méchin writes:

- [Churchill] ‘Voilà le connétable!’ dit-il d’un ton cordial, en prenant congé de ses hôtes’. Le Connetable? De la part de Churchill ce n’est peut-être qu’une boutade. Mais qui nous dira comment ces mots ont retenti aux oreilles de celui

26 For example, Benoist-Méchin wtheringly summarised what he perceived to have been de Gaulle’s complete dependence on the British. In mock sympathy, he concluded, ‘Mais, encore une fois, que faire contre un gouvernement qui peut vous priver d’un instant à l’autre tout moyen d’expression - la presse et la radio - et qui règle vos soldes, vos traitements et jusqu’à vos moindres frais de bureau?’, *Soixante jours*, Vol. 3, 145.


à qui ils étaient destinés?²⁹

Wit, irony and an imaginative style subverted the Gaullist representation. However, the strategy was not only a feature of *Soixante jours* but also a frequent element in other forms of reactionary writing of the period. Humour was a common ploy in the extreme right-wing journalism of the post-war era, typified in the columns and political cartoons of the weekly *Rivarol*.³⁰ Often the intended effect was to mock, delegitimate and thereby revise Gaullist historical interpretation. The comic style lampooned the high seriousness of de Gaulle and his hagiographers. Sharp satire highlighted the potentially ridiculous aspect of Gaullism's continued reverence towards the 18 June speech. Moreover, it shows the scale to which the extreme right-wing was marked by a desire to counter Gaullist historiography.

General Héring was less subtle in his hatred of de Gaulle. In addition to discrediting his interpretation of the armistice as a capitulation, he simply stated that 'les Gaullistes' had proved an equal danger to national security from 1940, as 'le Gouvernement allemand', 'le Gouvernement britannique', 'les communistes', and the extreme collaborationist faction of 'le groupe des Français pro-Allemands'. He condemned them for their deception, and attempts to divide society. Héring wrote: 'Les Gaullistes, dont la campagne de propagande à base d'imposture, a eu pour effet de diviser les Français, alors que leur union s'imposait plus que jamais'.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., 397.
³⁰ For extreme right-wing satirical interpretations of the war and post-war politics, see for example, P.A.Cousteau, "Ça va! J'ai compris...", *Rivarol*, 8 July 1954: 1; Pierre Dominique, “Ugolin, le père système, la seule cloche des Deux-Eglises: Le Général a tout pour plaire”, *Rivarol*, 21 June 1956: 16. Note also the regular banner headings used by the paper which offered ironic statements such as “Un agent allemand publie ses Mémoires sur le Tout-Paris 'collaborateur'- Cocteau était plus chaud que Céline et Sacha passait pour juif”, *Rivarol*, 17 January 1953: 1.
By 1958, as we have seen, all manner of attempts to delegitimate the 18 June speech were grist to the extreme right-wing mill. Although Robert Gildea sees Maurice Bardèche and René Binet as the classic extreme right-wing historians of the period, the more subtle strategies I have delineated were common and more powerful than the limited work of the fascist fringe. The extreme right-wing historians were inevitably drawn to comment on their rivals. The 18 June speech represented a serious threat to the retrospective defence of Vichy. The historians' attempts to discredit the speech demonstrate its symbolic pull. Benoist-Méchin, Rougier and others were aware of its status and the reverence in which it was held by Gaullists. In reaction, it was countered. This is a significant example of cross-current influence. Like Madaule's treatment of the 17 June speech, the historians were profoundly aware of the opposing current's writing, and thus influenced by it. However, the extreme right's manipulation of the two speeches suggests that this was a more important factor in this current of historiography than it had been in the Gaullist strand. To a degree the extreme right's historical writings were shaped by the Gaullists' account.

Comparing the Thorez and Duclos Declaration with the 18 June Broadcast

In response to the 17 and 18 June speeches, the communist historiographical sources authenticated their Party's own call to resist: the L'Humanité article of 10 July. Sometimes known as the 'Appeal to the People of France', the 10 July article's historical veracity has been consistently attacked. From 1948 onwards, the anti-communist André Rossi (alias Angelo Tasca) suggested in his Physiologie du Parti communiste français that the text was a post-war

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forgery designed to bolster the PCF’s record. However, given Rossi’s well known motivations, a more authoritative discussion of the source is found in the work of Henri Noguères. Noguères’ research indicates that while one cannot categorically confirm or debunk the existence of a 10 July Appeal, one can locate a PCF tract of August 1940 in which passages of the former appeal are to be found.

Notwithstanding the above debate, in PCF ideological history-writing the ‘Appeal to the People of France’ is usually presented through the following passage:

La France connaît la défaite, l’occupation, l’humiliation. La France encore toute sanglante veut vivre libre et indépendante. Jamais un grand peuple comme le nôtre ne sera un peuple d’esclaves. La France ne deviendra pas une sorte de pays colonisé. La France au passé si glorieux ne s’agenouillera pas devant une équipe de valets prêts à toutes les besognes. Ce ne sont pas les généraux battus, ni les affairistes, ni les politiciens tarés qui peuvent relever la France. Ils ne sont bons qu’à la trahir et à la vendre. C’est dans le peuple que résident les grands espoirs de la libération nationale et sociale. Et c’est autour de la classe ouvrière, ardente, généreuse, pleine de confiance et de courage que peut se constituer le front de la liberté, de l’indépendance et de la renaissance de la France.

An identical version of the above passage was also cited in Fils du peuple. The communist historians described the document as evidence of the first case of organised resistance to have developed in occupied France. Fréville’s biography repeated the interpretation. Dautry and Pastor shortened the quotation and incorporated the final three sentences of the text as an


35 Maurice Thorez, “Pages d’histoire”, *Cahiers* 5 (1945): 22. For comparative purposes the original August 1940 ‘Appel de Maurice Thorez et Jacques Duclos’ is presented in Appendix I below.
example of the hopes of the nation in 1940.\textsuperscript{36}

It is less well known that a common secondary reference corroborated the validity of the Thorez/Duclos text. Unexpectedly, the communist historians cited an item from the British conservative newspaper,\textit{ The Daily Telegraph}, as further proof of the existence of the Thorez/Duclos appeal, and its impact. In\textit{ Fils du peuple} and\textit{ Histoire de la résistance}, they took the following quotation from an article which had appeared in the British press on the 20 December, 1940. They quoted the\textit{ Daily Telegraph}'s journalist as having written;

\begin{quote}
Le seul parti existant, quoique illégal, est le Parti communiste et plus de mille de ses militants ont été arrêtés le mois dernier. Ils distribuent des tracts antiallemands, qui font appel au sentiment patriotique des Français.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Whether or not the communists knew what values\textit{ The Daily Telegraph} represented, it seems fair to assume that they would have been aware that it was not a communist newspaper. The source was valuable because they did not derive it from a communist or fellow-traveller group but it nonetheless legitimated the Party’s interpretation. As Marie-Claire Lavabre has noted, a statement from the novelist, François Mauriac, was used to similar effect.\textsuperscript{38} Mauriac’s remark that ‘la classe ouvrière a été seule fidèle dans sa masse à la France profanée,’ was also quoted to imply that the Party had stimulated resistance.\textsuperscript{39} Again, that Mauriac was not a fellow traveller of the left made his opinion even more significant. Both\textit{ The Daily Telegraph} and the Mauriac citations confirmed the illusion of the widespread success of the 10 July statement.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] Marie-Claire Lavabre,\textit{ Histoire, mémoire, politique}, 474.
\end{footnotes}

156
Citation of the statement, and the corroborating material, defended the Party’s war record and formed the discursive basis on which its historians could legitimately claim that the communists had been the ‘first to resist’. The inclusion of the *L’Humanité* article in historiography functioned as a programmatic statement of communist values which remained applicable after the war. By repeatedly quoting the declaration, they identified a nationalistic defence of France as one of the Party’s historic goals. The speech highlighted Thorez’s and Duclos’s core beliefs about the role of communism. Specifically, they underlined the importance of sovereign independence in the phrases, ‘La France ne deviendra pas une sorte de pays colonisé’ and the important closing statement: ‘peut se constituer le front de la liberté, de l’indépendance et de la renaissance de la France’. Although included as a historical source, the declamatory article acted as an argument for the communists’ contemporary case. The statement recalled that the working class, and by implication the PCF, could defend French independence.

A passage from Fréville’s *Avec Maurice Thorez* adds to our understanding of the statement’s post-war role. The biographer’s reference to the 1940 appeal was employed to justify Thorez’s post-war opposition to American influence. Fréville deployed the *L’Humanité* article in the context of two other speeches which Thorez had delivered; an early anti-fascist speech which dated from 1936 and an appeal against US expansionism, given in 1947. In a comparative section of prose, which linked the three Thorez statements together, Fréville commented,

Quand Hitler et Pétain se partagent la France, l’appel de Maurice Thorez, lancé le 10 juillet 1940 sur le sol même de la patrie, invite les Français à ‘constituer autour de la classe ouvrière ardente et généreuse, pleine de confiance et de courage, le front de la liberté, de l’indépendance, de la renaissance de la France’.

157
A peine Hitler est-il abattu qu'un nouveau danger menace l'indépendance de notre pays. Dans cette ville de Strasbourg où il avait, en 1936, dénoncé les plans d'Hitler, Maurice Thorez, au congrès de juin 1947, dénonce l'expansionnisme des États-Unis.40

The citation of the familiar Thorez-Duclos document introduced the additional speeches. The reference to the founding moment of the resistance functioned as a commentary on the strength of communist patriotism against all threats to sovereignty, past and present. It blurred the history of the inter-war period, July 1940, and the Cold War into a complete, single, history. By implication, American expansionism was cast as a comparable scenario to nazism and the occupation. It showed heroic communist resistance in 1940 to have continued to the present day. Thorez was depicted poised to confront the new dangers.

Nonetheless, the communist historians did not treat the Thorez/Duclos statement in a vacuum. As in the examples from the other two currents, there was a comparative dimension. Nicole Racine-Furland correctly suggests that post-war communist writing on the statement consistently contrasted it with de Gaulle's 18 June broadcast.41 However, the communists did not cite the full text of de Gaulle's speech. More often than not, they edited it in a selective manner which omitted its lyrical highlights. This was the case in the writings of Thorez, Dautry, Pastor and also in the occasional Cahiers article which addressed the subject.42 They took de Gaulle's words to have been:

40 Jean Fréville, Avec Maurice Thorez, 24.

41 Nicole Racine-Furland, "18 juin 1940 ou 10 juillet 1940: bataille de mémoire", in Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar (eds), Cinquante ans d'une passion française. De Gaulle et les communistes, 197-215.

42 For example, see Etienne Fajon, "La Réaction au service de l'étranger", Cahiers, 5 (1947): 364-379.
Moi, général de Gaulle, actuellement à Londres, j’invite les officiers et les soldats français qui se trouvent en territoire britannique, ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver, avec leurs armes, ou sans leurs armes, j’invite les ingénieurs et les ouvriers spécialistes des industries d’armements qui se trouvent en territoire britannique ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver, à se mettre en rapport avec moi.\textsuperscript{43}

The comparison between the 18 June and 10 July announcements in communist historiography served a range of rhetorical functions. We can see that by strategically placing the communist claim alongside the Gaullist broadcast, the one text became discursively associated with the other. The authenticity of de Gaulle’s speech legitimated the communist document as a historical source of comparable, if not greater value. Thereby, the communist historians supported the Party’s claim that its members had been the true force within the resistance from 1940, rather than after the attempted nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. As with the similar strategies employed to this end, the discourse denied the possibility of communist neutrality or collaboration.

Apart from legitimating the historical authenticity of the 10 July article, the purpose of the communists’ citation of de Gaulle’s 18 June broadcast was to discredit post-war Gaullism. In a similar way to that developed by the extreme right-wing historians, they set the record straight. De Gaulle’s message was selectively quoted to imply that the scale and intent of Gaullist resistance had been limited. Instead of citing the whole of de Gaulle’s speech, or its rousing conclusion, the PCF historians portrayed it through its most banal section. His call for specialised workers and officers to join him in London only formed paragraph ten of the twelve-paragraph speech. The words which the communists’ selected suggested that de Gaulle had aimed to attract the bourgeoisie to his cause. They identified evidence of this in the phrase,

\textsuperscript{43}Maurice Thorez. \textit{Fils du peuple}, 180. For comparative purposes the full 18 June 1940 speech is presented in the thesis as Appendix II.
'j’invite les ingénieurs et les ouvriers spécialistes des industries d’armement qui se trouvent
en territoire britannique ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver, à se mettre en rapport avec moi’. The
speech displayed the nature of Gaullist resistance: it characterised it as an extra-French
movement which was uninterested in the possible contribution of the people to the liberation.
In so doing the PCF historians indicated that their own Party’s appeal had found a popular
response. For example, Etienne Fajon argued in the Cahiers:

L’appel du Parti communiste est conçu, rédigé et diffusé sur le sol même de la
patrie. Il s’adresse au peuple. […] L’appel du 18 juin, au contraire, est conçu
en terre alliée, mais étrangère. Il est lu à la radio de Londres. Il exprime déjà
le mépris et la haine du peuple par un silence glacial envers les masses qui vont
pourtant jouer un rôle décisif dans la lutte contre l’ennemi sur le territoire
national. Il concerne exclusivement…

‘…les officiers et les soldats français qui se trouvent en territoire
britannique ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver, ainsi que les ingénieurs et les
ouvriers spécialistes des industries d’armement qui se trouvent en territoire
britannique ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver’.

Ainsi, par son acte de naissance même, la résistance gaulliste se présente
comme une force volontairement étroite, détachée du peuple, liée à une grande
puissance capitaliste étrangère, entretenue par le gouvernement britannique.44

The essayist considered that resistance had been created in France and had been a meaningful
force in the lives of the community, ‘le peuple’. De Gaulle’s broadcast, the birth of Gaullism,
in London, was perceived to be a product of British capitalism. He considered that de Gaulle
had displayed a complete disregard for ordinary Frenchmen and women, only acting in favour
of the professional classes of officers, engineers and munitions specialists. Fajon deduced that
de Gaulle’s intentions in 1947 were of the same kind as in 1940, and vice versa. In the light
of the historical record, the implicit political point was that de Gaulle’s new effort, the

Rassemblement, was nothing but another middle class pressure group. The implication was that it was as unrepresentative and, probably, as unpatriotic as it had been in 1940.

For both the PCF and the extreme right wing Gaullism had to be combatted. The reputation of the 18 June ‘Appel’ meant that for the ideological messages of the two other currents to be communicated successfully, their historians had to discredit this source and its retrospective supporters. For the communist historians the emphasis on de Gaulle’s class position was the obvious criticism. The power of the Gaullist interpretation influenced the communists’s portrayal. For this reason Marie-Claire Lavabre is correct to describe de Gaulle as ‘un des moteurs de la mémoire communiste’.45 Since de Gaulle’s political capital was intimately linked with the status of the 18 June document, the extreme right-wing and communist historians denigrated the episode and the Gaullist accounts of it. In so doing they were often drawn onto Gaullist ground.

A Note on Cross-Current Influence

Many of the scholars who have discussed the three currents of history-writing present them through neatly demarcated categorisations. From this perspective each set of activist historians simply wrote their own accounts and then defended them. For example, Henry Rousso, Bertram Gordon, François Bédarida and Jean-Pierre Azéma present historiography in this way. Only the comparative perspectives developed by Serge Berstein, Pierre Nora and Marie-Claire Lavabre on Gaullism and communism have approached the issue of cross-current influence.46

Adding to the findings of the latter group of scholars, the manipulation of the speeches

45 Marie-Claire Lavabre, Histoire, mémoire, politique, 482.

of the summer of 1940 highlights a previously unacknowledged tension. It is evident that when extreme right-wing historians wrote about 17 June they were also confronted by de Gaulle’s speech of the following day. Moreover, evidence such as the satirical comments by Benoist-Méchin, as well as comparable examples from the extreme right-wing press, indicate that they were profoundly aware of how their rivals represented both of these sources. Similarly, communists knew that if their declaration of resistance was to be of political value then it had to be favourably compared with de Gaulle’s equivalent speech. For Gaullist’s themselves the rhetorical employment of the 18 June speech was open to improvisation. Always symbolically important, it exemplified de Gaulle’s strategic knowledge, or his willpower. To an extent its authority was bolstered as much by the criticism it attracted, as by the support it generated. Nonetheless, Madaule’s writings show that for some Gaullists Pétain’s speech of 17 June, and extreme right-wing accounts of it, remained influential.

The activist historians affected each other’s writing. This was an important feature because it moves our understanding away from a relatively one-dimensional perspective to the realisation that the historians produced accounts which coloured how their opponents portrayed events and sources. The ideological interpretation of the war was not a static encounter. It was dynamic and often founded on an awareness of, and opposition to, what the different groups of historians were claiming.

The evidence of intertextual overlap and cross-ideological influence discussed in Chapters IV and V sheds light on the activist historians and their writings. Historical interpretation of the occupation in the immediate post-liberation era was dependent on a number of factors which have been either overlooked or underestimated in the secondary literature of the Vichy syndrome as well as in more traditional discussions of the French ideological groupings. Figures such as Madaule, Benoist-Méchin and Fréville produced
accounts of the past which were shaped in a sophisticated fashion.
This chapter will examine how the topic of the resistance was used as a blueprint for post-war political life. It is emphasised that, for the most part, the writers established a didactic voice which they used to address their readership. Concluding discussion will address the meaning of this common investment in the past.

Social Heroism

The PCF historians viewed their Party’s opposition to Vichy as a quasi-revolutionary act. We know that they identified the life-blood of the fight with the proletariat, communist activists and the Francs Tireurs et Partisans (FTP). Courtois, Lavau, Lavabre and others have detailed this in their studies of communist historiography and historical memory. It has been less common to explore how the PCF historians used the history of the resistance movements to colour the communist perspective on the contemporary world, or to profile the figure of the résistant as the model communist.

Broadly speaking communist resistance was not simply depicted as a military activity. As Fréville explained, the battle was not only for the liberation of France, but the complete liberation of the people from all forms of tyranny. In this light Vichy was represented as a clique which protected the interests of big business. Conversely, communist historians labelled the resistance movements as social militants who were struggling for economic and political

1 Robert Gildea, The Past in French History, 55
3 Jean Fréville, Avec Maurice Thorez, 56.
liberty. This aspect is evident in the historians’ frequent accounts of the Pas-de-Calais miners’ strike, which took place between May and June 1941. Thorez, Dautry and Pastor focused on the event. In the Cahiers, ten years after the strike, Roger Pannequin devoted an historical essay to the theme. The title of his piece, ‘La Grève patriotique des mineurs du Nord et du Pas de Calais (1941)’, reveals its central message that the action had been taken in the national interest. In portraying the dispute, he linked traditional notions of military resistance with issues of class, workers’ rights and social conditions. Pannequin constituted industrial unrest as an act of significant resistance. The seven page history showed how the Vichy regime had become a cog in German imperialism’s economic machine, and that under these conditions Germany was exploiting the proletariat. In response the communist-led miners combated the tyrannical mine owners. Their success had been a victory against the bourgeoisie and the Third Reich. Pannequin underlined the fact that the protest had achieved more than a straightforward attack on the forces of fascism, for it had also produced an improvement in the treatment of the miners from their erstwhile employers.

This appraisal revealed the longer struggle for social change. Classifying resistance as a conflict between the classes, battled out between miners and pit-owners, drew on the heritage of previous confrontations: 1789 and 1871. Henry Rousso has rightly identified this feature of communist memory. He writes: ‘les communistes et bon nombre de résistants voient dans la résistance une guerre de libération nationale, donc une lutte insurrectionnelle à la fois politique et armée. Ils insistent sur les aspects révolutionnaires du combat résistant’. The historiographic evidence takes this point further. The writing on the Pas-de-Calais strike, and

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other social struggles under Vichy, emphasised the Party’s role as defender of the people. Stories of triumphant protection of the working class interest provided detailed examples of how the Party, trade unionism and the workers combined to overcome exploitation. For instance, Pannequin concluded his essay by explaining the advantages which the strikers had achieved. He recorded: ‘Compagnie par compagnie, des avantages de salaire et de sécurité dans le travail avaient été accordés. D’une manière générale, le ravitaillement pour les ouvriers mineurs avait été amélioré’. History was a paradigm for the Party’s post-war membership to follow. The accounts which the historians provided implicitly instructed their readers how to behave, differentiating between good and bad practice. The history of the grève patriotique was a warrant for future strike action against exploitation.

However, it was not only through the description of symbolically important events that the historians showed that the past was significant in the present. In fact, at appropriate points in their texts, they openly told readers that war history shed light on the present. For instance, in the aforementioned account of the patriotic strike, Pannequin used several rhetorical devices to underline the contemporary relevance of his subject. The article was framed as a commemorative essay, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the strike. Pannequin’s opening words suggested that the example of resistance remained important in 1951. He wrote, ‘il y a dix ans se déroulait la grande grève patriotique des mineurs du Pas-de-Calais et du Nord’. The gambit of beginning the essay through the theme of commemoration meant that although this was an historical piece, the reader was invited to look at the past from the vantage point of the present. An initial connection between the occupation and the post-war period had been established from the first sentence of the article. Moreover, in a rather more explicit move, the

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7 Ibid., 575.
author offered a series of interjections which spelt out the political value of his work, an example of which is found in the concluding paragraph of the essay. At this critical point, Pannequin explained that his historical review was to be understood as a lesson for the present. He stated:

Le mouvement des Francs-Tireurs et Partisans, surgi au coeur des villes et des centres prolétariens, allait s'étendre victorieusement. Tout cela malgré les efforts désespérés des agents gaullistes, des Mayer, des Pleven, des André Philip et des de Menthon, dont la seule préoccupation était de limiter et d'empécher l'intervention du peuple lui-même

Enseignement toujours actuel! La libération et la régénération de la France dépendent au premier chef, aujourd'hui comme hier, de l'unité de la classe ouvrière et de l'union de toutes les forces démocratiques et patriotiques autour d'elle.8

In addition to portrayals of general resistance activity, the historians suggested how the Party had related to the popular classes during the occupation. As the previous quotation from Pannequin asserted, unlike either Pétain or de Gaulle, they had guided the people towards a united uprising against the nazis. However, apart from the recuperation of the resistance by the PCF, the historians repeatedly stressed that it had been the Party which led, and the people who had followed. This illustrated the bonding which existed between the two groups. Thorez explained, 'la volonté de lutte des masses populaires est stimulée par la vaillance de nos héros et les exploits multiples des partisans'.9 The historians identified the Party as the vanguard of the people, steering and guiding their actions towards victory. Again, historiography was an evocation of how political life ought to be organised in the present. By implication the Party-mass relationship was the way contemporary struggles would also be fought. At a time when

8 Ibid., 586.

9 Maurice Thorez, Fils du peuple, 189.
ex-resistance activists were tempted away from following a disciplined party-line, the need to assert the PCF structure against the actions of individuals was vital. The assertion that all resistance had developed from the PCF’s leadership guarded against the dangers of personal egos and memories.

On occasions the historians took the mirror between the past and the present to extremes. For Fréville, the military tactics of guerrilla fighting revealed a significant lesson which extended to the political field. In support of the latter military strategy he noted that the cell structures of the guerilla unit were the reflection of a popular army. Whereas conservative generals consistently preferred a professional armed force, the people favoured troops which were drawn from across the community. Citing Thorez on the topic, he wrote,

La guérilla, telle que nous l’entendions, ne pouvait être menée qu’avec le concours des masses. Sans le soutien de la population, aucune résistance n’est possible. Rien de grand, rien d’efficace, ne peut se faire en dehors du peuple. Le peuple a ravitaillé, protégé, aidé, renseigné nos FTP, qui étaient les meilleurs de ses fils.[...] L’armée du peuple a vaincu à Valmy, l’armée de métier a été écrasée à Sedan.  

Fréville’s reference to the battles of Valmy (1792) and Sedan (1870) contextualised his argument in the history of revolutionary warfare. The issue falls within a longer political tradition of debate over the nature of state-military relations. Under the Third Republic, Gambetta had feared that the army had not accepted the Republic, and that it continued to pose a counter-revolutionary threat. Similar anxieties surfaced at the time of the Dreyfus affair, whilst in the inter-war period a comparable dispute had developed because of de Gaulle’s plans

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10 Jean Fréville, Avec Maurice Thorez, 57.

11 Robert Gildea, The Past in French History, 142.
for the establishment of an armée de métier. It is less well-known that the French left’s preference for a popular military capacity was underlined in resistance historiography. Now they cited the character of the resistance as further testimony against military elites and in favour of popular armies.

Statements, such as Fréville’s which were taken as historical facts, were explicitly connected to the present through the employment of didactic claims. For instance, in a popular Marxist fashion, he instructed that all History was meaningful in the contemporary period.\(^{12}\) As in the example drawn from Pannequin, the biographer spoke to his imagined public. He taught his readers that his account continued to illustrate truths about French politics. In fact, he went so far as to state that the past literally prefigured the future. For example, the Glières resistance was explicitly described as a model for future social organisation. Fréville claimed: ‘Glières fut plus qu’un fait d’armes: une préfiguration, l’image d’une France fraternelle, qui ne séparait pas l’indépendance du pays de la justice sociale’.\(^{13}\) Again, the historian was providing a prompt, or cue, to explain to his potential readership how his words were to be interpreted. The combination of these assertions with analytical commentaries such as those cited on military strategy, suggested that Avec Maurice Thorez contained vital lessons. However, it would be wrong to think that the communists excessively loaded their accounts with these types of claim. This was not the case. On the other hand, it would be true to say that the occasional meta-historical remark, offered by the writer, directed to the reader, explained how the past was to be decoded. The device lent authority to the otherwise descriptive prose.

\(^{12}\) Jean Fréville, Avec Maurice Thorez, 7. Indeed, the text opens with a poetic preface, entitled ‘Ce que dit Maurice Thorez’, the first lines of which state ‘La haine vous aveugle, ô forbans à l’affût! Avez-vous oublié si vite ce qui fut? L’histoire a ses leçons, le peuple a ses colères. Il maudit vos desseins, vos complots, vos noirceurs’.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 48.
It meant that passages which were not underlined as being of immediate political value were nevertheless presented as part of a wider didactic context.

The martyrs to the French Communist Party’s cause completed the portrayal of the resistance as an unselfish, spirited, social struggle. The well-known and evocative phrase, ‘les lendemains qui chantent’ was an integral part of this discourse. The death of its author, Gabriel Péri, was commemorated in several *Cahiers* articles and was presented as a symbol of the Party’s sacrifices.\(^{14}\) As Marie-Claire Lavabre has noted, even when resistance history was no longer a dominant topic in the journal this type of commemoration continued.\(^{15}\) The historians used his final letter to exemplify the nature of the communist war effort: the dream of creating a new post-war society which turned its back on the errors of history. The image of the ‘lendemains qui chantent’ illustrated the fact that the war had been a conflict about the future of France, not only the resolution of the dilemmas produced by the events of 1940. The hagiography which surrounded Péri, and to a lesser extent Pierre Semard and Pierre Sampaix, vindicated all the Party’s decisions from the inter-war period to the Cold War. The life and death of Péri, and the vision he evoked in his final words, were a graphic demonstration that to be truly patriotic one had to be a communist and that to be truly communist one was always patriotic. Marcel Cachin displays the logic in the following testimony to the sacrifices of Péri and Sampaix. Like many other communist writers, he emphasised that the reason they had given their lives so freely for the nation was because this was the natural reaction of a communist. He wrote: ‘C’est parce qu’ils étaient communistes qu’ils acceptèrent de mourir


\(^{15}\) Marie-Claire Lavabre, *Histoire, mémoire, politique*, 479 footnote 101.
pour que vive la France dans la paix, dans l’indépendance et dans le respect réciproque des droits égaux pour tous les peuples’. 16 The martyrs were role models for the Party’s members to respect and aspire to. These details gilded the legend of the 75,000 fusillés. 17 The faces of Péri and Sampaix, often literally reproduced in photographs next to the historical texts, were perpetual examples of the communist ideal. The mythification of Péri’s life was far more controllable than the unwelcome creation of personality cults around the living (with the exception of Thorez). Unlike the healthy ex-resistance figure, Charles Tillon, Péri could no longer deviate from the party-line. They favourably compared his exploits and position as a secular saint with ex-communists whom they had expelled and denounced as fascists.

Once more, the construction of Péri as an exemplary life drew on passages of writing which explicitly underlined his importance. Writing on the martyr included a level of discourse which told the reader how Péri’s record remained significant in the present. This was the case when Fernand Fontenay published the essay ‘Péri: Toujours vivant’. In addition to the title of the piece, which implied the resistance hero’s continued relevance, Fontenay taught: ‘L’exemple de Gabriel Péri est un avertissement aux fauteurs de guerre: le Parti qu’il a incarné, jusqu’au sacrifice suprême, est comme hier au service de la France et de la paix’. 18 The reader was taught that history was a warning and that past sacrifices were worth repeating.

The circumstances of the occupation would not return. Nevertheless, in the turbulent 1940s and 1950s, the picture of the resistance hero showed the reader what the PCF expected in the present. Events moved on, but the lessons of 1940-1944 had to be upheld. To

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17 A culture which was also bolstered by publications such as, Lettres des fusillés, pref. Lucien Scheler (Paris: France d’Abord, 1946).

paraphrase, the Party had led the people, its actions were socially positive and its leaders patriotic and honest. More detailed than journalism, historical writing demonstrated what had been achieved, and thus what was desirable in the present. As we will see, PCF historians were not alone in employing this discourse. While all three currents claimed to have been the only genuine resisters, through a variety of techniques all the historians signalled the continued importance of the past.

The Historic Virtues of Gaullism

The Gaullist historians argued that from 18 June onwards the silent majority of citizens ardently supported de Gaulle’s cause. However, this current’s mobilisation of resistance history was more complex than this manoeuvre reveals. In relation to the RPF, we know the historians bolstered the Rassemblement’s self-identification as a continuation of the resistance, a unifying factor which was central to its otherwise diffuse membership.19 As Jacques Soustelle recollected, the upper ranks of Gaullism were presented as having protected the nation since 1940. Several years after his separation from de Gaulle, he remembered:

Deux ans à peine après la fin de la guerre, les souvenirs de la France Libre et de la Résistance dominaient nos esprits. Tous, et le général de Gaulle le premier, nous tendions tout naturellement à nous représenter la naissance du Rassemblement comme un second appel du 18 juin, la lutte que nous allions entreprendre comme une continuation d’une œuvre un moment interrompue.20

This was an understandable strategy. Many of the RPF’s team, not to mention de Gaulle, had

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19 A point which has been raised in Jean Charlot, Le Gaullisme d’opposition, 51-52 and throughout; François-Georges Dreyfus, De Gaulle et le Gaullisme, 115.

played heroic roles in the resistance. Historiography such as the *Trente ans* collection formally recorded the movement's heritage. It complemented the symbolic locations related to the resistance used in the series of speeches which preceded the foundation of the group. In several sources this was combined with a further allusion to the First World War. The heroism of 1914-1918 prefigured both the resistance and the RPF. For instance, Jacques Madaule stated that in the face of national renunciation in 1917 a dynamic minority, comparable to the Free French, had secured the victory of 1918. Jean Touchard correctly suggested the Rassemblement cast itself within a longer tradition of national triumph. Just as the PCF had drawn social conclusions from the resistance, the RPF wore a badge of patriotism.

It is less commonly asserted that after the Rassemblement, de Gaulle's memoirs played a new role. Fourteen years after its foundation, the legitimacy of the Free French continued to be a distinct model for the nation to reinterpret with pride. Without a formal political organisation or parliamentary party, the point was to promote what de Gaulle had achieved, and to compare this with the events that had occurred since his subsequent retirements from domestic politics. De Gaulle personified himself as the embodiment of the resistance. His memoirs established his career as a continuous struggle for the well-being of the nation. Michel Winock has correctly written of de Gaulle's aura in 1958:

Lui-même ne manqua pas de brandir à l'occasion le sceptre invisible que lui ont conféré l'Appel du 18 juin 1940 et son action à la tête de la France Libre. Ainsi, au cours de la fameuse 'semaine des barricades' d'Alger, à la fin de janvier 1960, il évoque à la télévision non seulement le mandat du peuple mais encore 'la légitimité nationale [qu'il] incarne depuis vingt ans'. Comme si la période allant de janvier 1946, quand il quitte son poste de président du

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21 In the spring of 1947 the RPF was launched through a series of speeches delivered on sites intimately associated with resistance and the war, notably at Bruneval and Strasbourg.

Conseil, à mi mai-juin 1958, date où il revient ‘aux affaires’, n'avait été qu'une parenthèse insignifiante. [...] Ainsi, le passé du Général était un certificat de garantie. Sa cause était celle de la France, et non la cause d'une faction: il en avait fait la preuve. 23

It is necessary to note that de Gaulle's ‘sceptre invisible’ was not exactly an invisible device. Rather, the reverse. As witnessed in the selected texts which this thesis addresses, numerous cultural products were in circulation throughout the Fourth Republic which staked out de Gaulle's place in history and assured his stature as a national figure. It was during the so called ‘parenthèse insignifiante’ period that Gaullists, coming from a variety of intellectual traditions, maintained the legitimacy of the Free French and guaranteed that the nation would not forget its legacy. Historians, intellectuals, journalists, and biographers shaped the General's historical warrant from 1945 onwards. When de Gaulle was in a political position in which myth-making proved to be empirically vital to his success, the ideological history from which a number of the myths originated did not suddenly appear out of thin air. Moreover, it is a simplification to consider that de Gaulle was the sole author of his myth. Although many loyal Gaullists would agree with Alan Pedley that ‘a man who dominates his contemporaries as de Gaulle did, achieves superiority, [...] by being himself’, reality is different. We must appreciate the energy of the General’s supporters, historians amongst them. 24

In a broadly comparable style to the PCF writers, the Gaullists claimed that their historical accounts of de Gaulle’s resistance continued to be meaningful and to hold political lessons. However, the didactic tone which was constructed was often more subtle than the techniques employed by non-Gaullists. Of course, entire texts, such as the Trente ans collection were presented as ‘leçons’ or ‘enseignements’ to the nation but often this reminder

23 Michel Winock, Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France, 417-419.
24 Alan Pedley. As Mighty as the Sword, 183-184.
was employed in a limited fashion, or restricted to an introductory comment.\textsuperscript{25} As well as this strategy, Gaullists told their readers that the General’s career was part of a longer mystical destiny. This was the case in both the \textit{Trente ans} collection and in Cattaui’s biography (1956). Moreover, it is well known that de Gaulle’s memoirs make frequent play on the author’s intimate relationship with national destiny, or History.\textsuperscript{26} The connection between past actions and present/future politics was established through the specific focus on the leader. For example, concluding his publication, Cattaui wrote: ‘Mais de Gaulle n’a pas dit son dernier mot: plus encore que sa propre destinée, il porte celle de son pays, de ce vieux peuple de France qui ne fut, lors de sa libération, qu’un seul peuple rassemblé’.\textsuperscript{27} The fact that the General’s life was nothing less than a critical moment in the destiny of the nation meant that readers were led to believe that the historical record was itself a vital explanation of the past, the present and the future. References to fate and de Gaulle’s role in French history served as a device which anticipated the General’s ultimate return to high office.

Nicolaidis, Bosworth, and others have suggested that much of post-war Gaullist myth-making was a simple matter of exaggerating the resistance’s contribution to the liberation of France. The current’s handling of the internal resistance was more varied. It was not only a case of showing that the nation had been, ‘unanimement résistante’.\textsuperscript{28} The first dominant theme

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\textsuperscript{26} The point has been frequently made, see for example, Alan Pedley, As Mighty as the Sword, 49.

\textsuperscript{27} Cattaui, Charles de Gaulle, 112. Comparable claims are made in Cattaui, “De Gaulle: le traditionaliste et le novateur”, in Parias (ed.), Trente ans, 413-414; Stanislas Fumet, “De Gaulle: le bâtieusseur”, in Parias (ed.), Trente ans, 418; Rémy, “L’Homme d’action”, in Parias (ed.), Trente ans, 419. For instance, Fumet highlighted de Gaulle’s ability to combine change with historic national traditions, ‘Mais s’il est révolutionnaire, il entend, comme Péguy, ne l’être qu’à condition que cette révolution ne soit pas une rupture insensée des racines, mais au contraire qu’elle renoue, et brutallement s’il est nécessaire, avec une tradition plus pure et plus profonde.’ Again the author’s language implied de Gaulle’s mystical powers and destiny.

was the recuperation of the internal resistance from any other ideological source, notably the Communist Party. All of the historians under review believed that the resistance had flowered from the 18 June broadcast. Cattaui reminded his readers that, ‘il [de Gaulle] a derrière lui les masses résistantes de la métropole’. 29 Lyrically, in the introduction to his biography the same author claimed: ‘Cette voix du 18 juin parlait le seul langage compatible avec l’honneur. Elle prenait possession de l’Histoire’. 30 In a more sophisticated counter-attack against the communist interpretation that the resistance had been a product of the proletariat, Madaule remarked that its social origins were diverse. He argued that no single class, social group, or political party had created the internal resistance. Nevertheless, Madaule was sure that similar values to de Gaulle’s had guided its spirit and that, furthermore, the Free French logistically supported it from London. He underlined the idea that ‘le contact ne manquera jamais entre la France libre de l’étranger et la France intérieure qui résiste’. 31

Paradoxically, despite the historians’ attempts to belittle the role of the PCF they also portrayed the gradual unification of the internal resistance under de Gaulle’s authority as an anti-communist contest. This was a recurrent theme in de Gaulle’s memoirs and is particularly evident throughout much of the second volume, L’Unité. 32 Introducing the 1956 publication, de Gaulle stated the tasks he had faced by the middle of the war. He wrote: ‘Voilà ma tâche! Regrouper la France dans la guerre; lui épargner la subversion, lui remettre au destin qui ne dépende que d’elle-même’. 33 He stressed that the communist elements within the internal

29 Georges Cattaui, Charles de Gaulle, 74.
30 Ibid., 7.
32 Correctly the detailed point is noted by Pedley in his work on the theme of ‘adversity’ in the memoirs, see As Mighty as the Sword, 106-108.
resistance had endangered unity and independence. The history of the unification of the resistance contained the detailed portrayal of de Gaulle’s successful protection of France from a communist-based revolution. It was implied that if the resistance movements had not been brought under Gaullist control, then the dominant force of the PCF would have threatened post-war life. The following explanation is a typical example of how de Gaulle assessed the issue.

Tant que les forces clandestines ont à agir spontanément, au hasard des occasions et par bandes séparées, il ne saurait être question de leur imposer une hiérarchie régulière, ni de leur fixer depuis Alger ou Londres des missions précisées dans le temps et sur le terrain. Mais il y aurait de graves inconvénients à les laisser à elles-mêmes sans les rattacher à l’autorité centrale. Car on risquerait alors, soit de les voir glisser à l’anarchie des ‘grandes compagnies’, soit de les livrer à l’emprise prépondérante des communistes. Ceux-ci, en effet, noyautent et, souvent, commandent les ‘Francs Tireurs et Partisans’ qui sont presque un tiers des maquis. Si de Gaulle ne tenait pas tout le monde sous son obéissance, cette fraction deviendrait une force à part dont disposerait, non le pouvoir, mais l’entreprise qui vise à le saisir. En outre, d’autres éléments, ne sachant à quoi se rattacher, subiraient l’attrait de cette organisation et passeraient sous sa coupe. C’est l’époque, d’ailleurs, où les communistes s’efforcent d’accaparer le Conseil national de la résistance.\(^{34}\)

De Gaulle was replying to his communist critics who had been equally uncharitable concerning his actions. Arguing that the PCF had been a major threat to the success of the resistance and France was his riposte. While we know that Charles de Gaulle was an anti-communist, the viewpoint was equally concerned with countering the extreme right-wing’s construction of history. It debunked critics like Louis Rougier who had accused de Gaulle of having collaborated with the PCF. Similarly, it countered the accusation that Gaullism and communism had spawned the Fourth Republic. In the atmosphere of the Cold War, de Gaulle

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 254.
used his chance to write about the internal resistance so as to put the record straight about his relationship with the PCF.

He expanded on the point in his writing on the Darlan/Giraud question. He contended that only he, as an authentic representative of the resistance, could have liberated France. Should another military figure, tainted by Vichy, have been used in his place then the people would have turned to communism. De Gaulle explained, citing a conversation between himself, Churchill and Sir Anthony Eden:

`Songez, leur dis-je, aux conséquences que cela risque d’entraîner. Si la France devait, un jour, constater que, du fait des Anglo-Saxons, sa libération c’est Darlan, vous pourriez peut-être gagner la guerre au point de vue militaire, vous la perdriez moralement et, en définitive, il n’y aurait qu’un seul vainqueur: Staline'.

De Gaulle was retrospectively proving his anti-communism. By linking US support for Darlan with a possible French slide to communism, he was also implying that his style of nationalist politics, had been, and continued to be, the only legitimate force to combat the ‘red threat’. Whereas much of the secondary literature’s approach to historical memory presents Gaullist representations as a consensual portrayal of the occupation, in which the entire nation had resisted, in reality the historians characterised de Gaulle as a skilful anti-communist. Portraying the General in this way did not heal the divisions of the period. Instead it restated them, showing that de Gaulle and his supporters knew how to control the PCF. Perhaps, the most adroit aspect was that history implied that non-Gaullist right-wingers, Darlan and Giraud, were incapable of this role. In addition to Rousso’s discussion of the impact of the Cold War on the rehabilitation of the extreme right wing, we can add that the climate of super-power

35 Ibid., 51.
confrontation marked Gaullist historiography to an extent which has not been registered in *Le Syndrome de Vichy*.\(^\text{36}\)

Exhibiting de Gaulle’s anti-communism was another example of historiographic argument by analogy. The political point was that Gaullism’s record was relevant in the present. De Gaulle’s actions were taken to have been authoritative in the past, and under a comparable communist challenge they would be commanding for a second time. It was not detrimental to de Gaulle’s political future to imply his skills as a Cold Warrior, *avant la lettre*. However, Gaullists did not always highlight the connections between past actions and contemporary activities in a straightforward didactic manner. Notably, the structure of argument which framed the second volume of the war memoirs meant that its conclusion implied the anti-communist theme. Long passages of description which presented de Gaulle as an anti-communist suggested that should France ever be threatened from this source, the General would act in a comparable manner to the 18 June decision. Moreover, the popular claim that de Gaulle’s destiny was to be a national historical force invested his entire record with symbolic meaning.

The third area which the Gaullist historians examined was the rallying of the French colonial territories to the flag of Lorraine. Many historical commentators have ignored the topic.\(^\text{37}\) Nevertheless, the role of the empire in the final victory was a repeated reference point in de Gaulle’s own writings and, for instance, those of Jacques Madaule. They outlined two seemingly contradictory themes. Proudly, the historians showed that the Free French had conducted a far more successful imperial policy than the Vichy regime, whilst on the other

\(^{36}\) Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 42.

\(^{37}\) The role of the Empire in Gaullist historiography is neglected in the major works of Rousso, Judt, Nora and Charlot. It is also overlooked in Guy Pervillé, “L’Algérie dans la mémoire des droites”, in Jean-François Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*. Vol.2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 621-656.
hand, they recognised that the very imperial territory, which they had protected during the war, should not necessarily remain under complete French authority. As in the previous examples from the Gaullist current, the lessons of this aspect of resistance history were rather more implied than overtly stated.

The historians reported that Gaullism had successfully protected the colonies. They cited episodes from across the war, from the Dakar raid to the anti-American battle over the small islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, as examples of de Gaulle’s independence and belief in the sovereign rights of French overseas territory. In his memoirs, the General described how he had fought a global campaign, influencing events in France from around the world. These confrontations highlighted his triumphant policy and its implementation. This was a straightforward nationalist version of events which reinforced pre-existing notions of the benefits of a united nation and empire. The representation implied the subtle reassurance that de Gaulle valued the colonial territories and was prepared to defend them.

The predictable patriotism of the Gaullist’s imperial record was only the first element in the historians’ portrayal of the topic. They also suggested that France’s traditional domination over her colonies would have to change in the future. Whilst the Gaullists explained that colonial territory had been defended against other European or North American powers, the claims of self-determination from within the colonies themselves were recognised as having been legitimate. De Gaulle did not hide this viewpoint, as he retrospectively portrayed it from the vantage point of 1956. For example, he categorically supported the overhaul of the French state in the Levant. Writing on its independence movement, he concluded:

Il y avait là un état d’esprit assez fort pour qu’il eût été absurde de s’y opposer.
Sans doute, fallait-il sauvegarder les intérêts, économiques, diplomatiques, culturels, qui étaient le lot de la France au Levant depuis maintes générations. Mais cela semblait conciliable avec l’indépendance des États.\(^{38}\)

This is a good illustration of de Gaulle, the nationalist, who respected the claims of other nationalists. Gaullists saw the loyalty of the Empire to the Free French as a reason for new post-colonial arrangements to be discussed. They perceived that the imperial territories’ support for de Gaulle in 1940 and their contribution to the liberation of the metropole had warranted the reward of a more flexible relationship between Paris and the periphery. This was the logic behind the Brazzaville conference of January 1944, and the subsequent *Union française* project, as well as the historical writings which outlined these developments. The following summary captures the interpretation.

Les territoires d’outre-mer sont désormais groupés au sein de cette communauté dénommée l’Union française. Il ne s’agit certes pas là d’un simple changement de formule, mais plutôt de l’aboutissement d’une évolution politique, économique et sociale dont les territoires d’outre-mer furent le théâtre depuis la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale, et que la dernière guerre, et en particulier les ralliements à la France libre accentua.\(^{39}\)

In a thematic essay devoted to the *Union française*, Lapie’s representation shows us the uneasy co-existence of the two aspects of the interpretation. His work is a good example of the recognition that a new relationship between the Empire and France had been won by the latter’s wartime role. Conversely, he also advocated that the metropole and periphery continued to be symbolically linked, or to share, ‘des destinées inséparables’. This was still akin to the integrationist policy encapsulated in the feeling that the territories would somehow

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gain a new role whilst also remaining *pleinement française*.

As would have been common at the time of publication, the accompanying iconography, consisting of photographs selected by Jacques Boudet, was deeply marked by the colonial mind set of the late 1940s. Alongside the text, a series of images depicted the glories of French colonial life. There was a photograph of an African youth in French army garb, simply entitled ‘Jeune soldat de l’Afrique Noire’. Similarly, a smiling young black woman, wearing an attractive summer dress, was described as a ‘Jeune beauté du Cameroun’. The montage was completed with a landscape photograph of Western European style architecture found in the capital of Algeria, entitled ‘Alger, la moderne’. The juxtaposition of the traditional images of imperial domination with Lapie’s partial discursive recognition of the need for a new, more democratic, colonial policy is symptomatic of the many paradoxes which are apparent in Gaullists’ treatments of the subject. Whether intentional or not, two contradictory views of how Gaullists' saw the future of the Empire could be drawn from the historians’ writing on the colonies.

In short, the aspects of resistance which the Gaullists emphasised provided lessons for the political arena of the Fourth Republic. In a generally comparable manner to the communists, the historians took the past as a commentary on the present. The rich variety of material which could be drawn upon meant that de Gaulle and his fellow-travellers were constantly able to characterise themselves as the inheritors of the Free French and a successful anti-communist tradition. The repeated claim that de Gaulle’s destiny had yet to run its course strongly implied that his previous actions could be taken as a model for his predicted future role. Although the lessons which were drawn in writing on the Empire formed a major part of the Gaullist account, they were always likely to contain contradictory signals. Ultimately, France could not maintain colonial possessions without violating the rights of their indigenous
people.

**Résistance ‘Vichyssoise’**

A central theme of the selected extreme right-wing historical writings was also resistance, but of a different kind from that which was established in the two alternative currents. Louis Rougier and General Pierre Héring perceived that Vichy had developed the most effective response to the occupation. Rougier revealed that ‘il y a une résistance ‘vichyssoise’ tout comme il y a une ‘trahison gaulliste’, et non pas seulement une trahison ‘vichyssoise’ et une résistance gaulliste’. This inversion of the standard Gaullist interpretation was the core of the extreme right-wing’s presentation. To paraphrase, the argument was that Pétain and several of his circle had secretly worked towards the liberation, whilst never fully accepting the logic of collaboration. They duped the Germans, and the small number of French who genuinely supported nazism, the latter group often being characterised through the figure of Pierre Laval and his allegedly dangerous machinations against Pétain.

Professor Louis Rougier was one of the first to advocate the ‘double game’ position. He published the first Canadian edition of his *Mission secrète à Londres* shortly after Pétain’s trial, in which a comparable thesis was presented. As this suggests, historiography and the épuration overlapped. Mme Jacques Isorni’s defence of Pétain was a major reference point, and primary source, in the extreme right-wing publications. Succinctly, Chebel d’Appollonia summarised Pétain’s explanation: ‘J’ai toujours résisté aux Allemands. Donc, je ne pouvais être que favorable à la Résistance’.

However, the historiographic current was subject to

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significant internal variation. A second version of events did not recognise the need to separate a good Vichy (Pétain) from a bad one (Laval). Jacques Benoist-Méchin’s approach was closer to the second interpretation than the first. I will argue that, although strong differences of historical analysis emerged, the two sub-currents were complementary.

As Azéma, Bédarida, and Ferro have indicated, Rougier and Héring claimed that the more conservative, rather than fascistic members of the Vichy government (Pétain, Weygand, Baudouin, and Rougier himself) had saved France from the rigours of a brutal occupation and prepared the ground for the liberationary army in North Africa. Whereas Gaullists and communists thought of the internal resistance as a force of open contestation against nazi authority, Rougier implied that the nazis’ progress had been most damaged through diplomatic guile and negotiation. The classic illustration was when Rougier described a meeting between himself and the Marshal, on 20 September 1940. He recorded both Pétain’s and Weygand’s hopes for his mission to London, as well as the formation of a new army outside France. He wrote,

Le Maréchal fut très intéressé par mon idée d’obtenir le desserement du blocus: ‘Le ravitaillement de la population est notre plus grande préoccupation, surtout aux approches de l’hiver. Nous vivons sur des stocks. Bientôt ces stocks seront épuisés. Mais, il y a une chose plus importante encore à dire aux Anglais: c’est de ne plus s’en prendre à notre flotte et à nos bases’. Et il reprit point par point l’argumentation de Weygand, presque dans les mêmes termes. ‘J’envoie Weygand en Afrique du Nord avec tout pouvoir, loin des orages du Conseil des ministres où il ne peut s’entendre avec Laval et hors des regards des Allemands. Sa mission sera de sauvegarder l’Afrique du Nord et de former une armée capable de la défendre. Un jour, cette armée nous servira, mais il est encore beaucoup trop tôt’. 42

Pétain, Weygand and Rougier were identified as having been part of a conspiracy against

42 Louis Rougier, Mission secrète à Londres, 64.
Laval, the aim of which was the gradual recovery of France from the occupation. Rougier reports that in and around the hotels and spas of the chic Allier resort, the 'résistance vichyssoise' was thought to have been successful until the invasion of the Southern zone, and the second Laval cabinet. Héring, who also reproduced the conversation cited above as an example of the milieu's activities, expanded on its implications. Combining themes already developed in the writings of Rougier, and to an extent those of Louis-Dominique Girard, Héring explained that Pétain's greatest achievement had been the Montoire negotiations. He concluded that the Marshal's strategic authority had outwitted the German delegation. He judged that at Montoire Pétain had saved French North Africa from a German-Spanish threat: territory which would later prove to be the key to the Allied victory. Summarising the balance-sheet of Pétain's period as chef d'état, Héring stated: 'Il a rendu la libération possible. En sauveguardant l'Afrique du Nord, tremplin de la libération, jusqu'à l'entrée en ligne des Alliées. En reconstituant l'Armée d'Afrique'.

Benoist-Méchin's treatment is less convoluted. In Soixante jours history proved that Pétain had been correct to seek an armistice and that Laval had been equally justified in sweeping aside the Third Republic and constructing a new authoritarian constitution in its place. The principal difference from the Rougier-Héring line was that Laval was not considered to have been anti-French and that Benoist-Mechin perceived that his reforms were nothing less than was needed at the time. In his concluding portrait of Laval he confronted the issue head on:


44 Pierre Héring, La Vie exemplaire de Philippe Pétain, 93.

45 Ibid., 112.
On a blâmé Laval de n'avoir pas fait sienne la formule de Weygand: ‘L’armistice, mais pas une virgule de plus!’ Formule altière, qui reflète bien le tempérament du commandant en chef. Mais formule dangereuse aussi, dont l’application aurait rapidement provoqué l’asphyxie du pays. [...] Le chômage menaçant, l’inexistence de moyens de travail, la paralysie des transports, la famine approchante, tout cela pose au gouvernement autant de problèmes qui ne peuvent se résoudre que par la négociation. En vidant les stocks, la France peut vivre encore deux mois, trois mois au maximum. Après cela, nul ne sait ce qui arrivera. Alors, - pas une virgule de plus?...

‘Il n’est pas sérieux, dira Laval au terme de son exposé, je parle comme un homme qui a eu souvent la responsabilité du pouvoir, de prétendre que la France ne devait pas, qu’elle n’était pas contrainte de négocier avec l’Allemagne, pour assurer aux Français un niveau de vie minimum, ne fût-ce qu’en raison de la situation économique que je viens de décrire’. 46

This portrayal countered the anti-Laval extreme-right position that his colleagues had developed. Nevertheless, one should not overestimate this difference of opinion. The political messages which all three of the extreme right-wing historians promoted were closer in kind than the Benoist-Méchin statement had indicated.

Whether supportive of Laval or not, the viewpoints of Rougier, Héring and Benoist-Méchin presented Vichy France as a legal government which had been fruitful. Rougier was one of the first to recognise that its task had, at least until 1942, been a necessary one. Héring was keen to promote Pétain’s personal triumph. From this foundation of general support for the principle of the Vichy regime, whatever its alleged secret resistance role, Benoist-Méchin defended the constitutional new order which went with it. After the collapse of the Republic a new authoritarianism had sought to revive the nation. Retrospectively, the positive aspects of such a state were already identifiable in the debates which had preceded the final vote against the Republic. Benoist-Méchin described the symbolic unity which suddenly existed between former political enemies. For example, of the support Pétain had derived from the

socialist parliamentarian, M. Spinasse, and the *Action Francaise* representative, Xavier Vallat, he recorded:

Cet accord entre le député de gauche et le député de droite ne manque pas de grandeur, et tous les parlementaires présents en saisissent la signification profonde. Si les partis enterrent leurs discordes stériles, s’ils font taire leurs querelles pour n’écouter que la voix du pays, quel avenir ne peut-on espérer pour la France? Pourquoi a-t-il fallu un tel désastre, pour en arriver là...? \(^{47}\)

Benoist-Méchin constructed an image of a new model of political interaction which transcended the divisions which had been a product of the Third Republic. He implied that under the dual leadership of Pétain and Laval a new period of reform had beckoned. That is to say the one brief period of extreme right-wing authoritarian governance since the Second Empire was viewed with the nostalgia of 'what might have been...' had the regime governed in normal peacetime circumstances.

All of the extreme right-wing writers intimated that France would be better off in the present if she were ruled by an analogous constitution to that of the Vichy regime. This aspect was as true of Rougier’s assessment of Pétain’s double game as it was of Benoist-Méchin’s more overt approach, in that both writers’ accepted the legitimacy of Pétain’s restorative powers. Again, as in the communist and Gaullist currents, the historical writing served as a paradigm for the contemporary period. The favourable evaluation of the Vichy regime was also a critical assessment of the Fourth Republic. Pétain was perceived to have broken away from the mistakes of republicanism. The extreme right-wing writers showed the nation to be renewed, confident, and for a fleeting moment, France had been proud to be France. Expressing the belief that 1940 had ameliorated the conditions which had been suffered under

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 159.
the Third Republic and the debacle, Benoist-Méchin introduced a quotation from Pétain’s 25 June 1940 radio broadcast, with the following judgement:

Mais qu’il s’agisse de Rabat, d’Alexandrie ou de Saïgon, au coeur de tous ces problèmes, il y a toujours la France, avec ses hommes et ses femmes, ses villes et ses champs, ses ports dévastés et ses moissons intactes, son passé prestigieux et son avenir incertain; c’est à cette France blessée mais confiante, que le Maréchal s’adresse ce soir-là,\(^48\)

The historians characterised Vichy as having been a significant advance on both the republican regime which, as we have seen in Chapter IV, they held responsible for the national shame of defeat, and the new post-war Republic which was equally tarnished by its role in the épuration. When Pétain had been installed in office, the historians described the nation as ‘blessee mais confiante’. Benoist-Méchin’s description of a rural France which had survived the ravages of republicanism contributed to the feeling that, for a short period, a new unity had been created. The historiography demonstrated the successes of the extreme right wing’s record, and thereby implied the importance of authoritarian government in the future. They described Pétain’s power in the following abstract terms:

Qu’est-ce donc que le pouvoir, cette force insaisissable sans laquelle les sociétés humaines ne pourraient pas subsister? Il est facile d’en décrire les manifestations dès lors qu’il existe. Mais comment nait-il? En quoi consiste son essence?

Mystérieux et irrationnel, le pouvoir jaillit du tréfonds des êtres. Il prend sa source dans l’élan d’un peuple vers un homme, entre les mains de qui ce peuple remet sa destinée. Il est fait d’une communion intime entre une nation et un individu, et la force dont celui-ci se trouve alors investi n’est que la somme incalculable d’amours accumulées sur sa tête. Cet élan - et lui seul - donne le pouvoir véritable. […] Ce n’est pas la monarchie, puisqu’il n’est pas acquis par héritage. Ce n’est pas la dictature, puisqu’il ne résulte pas de la


They took Vichy and Pétain as an alternative, near perfect, model of society. Once more, a didactic mode was used to underline the point that the past held meaningful lessons for the present. In addition to implied claims to this effect, like the PCF historians Benoist-Méchin used less subtle interjections to signal the contemporary relevance of history. For instance, he stated that his entire survey held significant national lessons on the nature of governance. Concluding the foreword to the \textit{Soixante jours} trilogy, this aspect was underlined. The historian argued:

\begin{quote}
Puisse ce livre, aussi imparfait qu'il soit, nous apporter une conception plus exacte des choses; puisse-t-il, en contribuant à déblayer le passé, nous aider à discerner les chemins de l'avenir; puisse-t-il surtout - c'est le voeu que l'auteur n'a cessé de formuler tout au long de son travail - nous faire toucher du doigt les malheurs qui assaillent un peuple lorsque l'Etat devient trop faible pour assurer sa défense et nous inspirer à tous la résolution farouche de ne jamais laisser des pages aussi sombres s'inscrire de nouveau dans notre Histoire.\footnote{Jacques Benoist-Méchin, \textit{Soixante jours}, Vol.1, 12.}
\end{quote}

Thus before offering passages which merely implied that the past demonstrated the benefits of authoritarian government, the historian had openly revealed his intentions. \textit{Soixante jours} worked as both an argument in favour of authoritarian government and as a lesson to help avoid a repetition of the Third Republic’s failings. Central to both claims was the perspective that history was a barometer for the future.

A second unifying feature of the two extreme right-wing sub-currents was the contempt shown for de Gaulle. This was nothing new, and as we have already seen, was a feature of
extreme right-wing writing on the entire period, as well as on the detailed episodes within it. When comparing the pro- and anti-Laval strands of interpretation one can see that even within the writings of Rougier and Héring, it was de Gaulle, not Laval, who was the primary target for polemical attack. Rougier criticised de Gaulle’s actions, whilst he limited his comments on Laval to the occasional cursory remark. Adopting a tone which was similar to the satirical style used by Benoist-Méchin, Rougier addressed the failings of the Gaullist exile community of New York. His account of their incessant propaganda equated Gaullism’s dominant control of public opinion with nazism. He described its hegemonic position as ‘une véritable Gestapo’, and coined the phrase ‘Gleichschaltung’ to account for its activities. Pierre Laval was never characterised in these terms. Dispassionately, he was described as the leader of ‘le parti de la guerre contre l’Angleterre’. Through this rhetoric Rougier highlighted who, more than anyone else, he considered to have betrayed France. Indeed the point was made more overtly through the use of statements which left the reader in little doubt what Rougier felt that history illustrated. For instance, in the concluding chapter to the 1948 edition of Mission secrète à Londres, he declared:

Telle est l’oeuvre du général de Gaulle. Pour avoir voulu jouer à l’apprenti-dictateur il a renouvelé l’histoire de l’apprenti-sorcier. Ayant tout en main, il a tout compromis, tout perdu. Il a déserté la grandeur de son destin pour la petitesse de son ambition. L’escroquerie faite à la France s’est achevée en banqueroute, après une gestion d’Ubu-Roi.

Rougier used historical writings to highlight what he felt had been the negative consequences of de Gaulle’s actions. The point is not simply that he was an anti-Gaullist writer, but rather

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51 Louis Rougier, Mission secrète à Londres, 121.

52 Ibid., 223.
that he explicitly claimed that his version of history proved his anti-Gaullism to be true.

To summarise, the extreme right-wing historians outlined an honourable record that they could repeat. This included implying that authoritarianism was more effective than republicanism or Gaullism, circa 1939 or 1945. In support of Pétain alone, or embracing him and Laval, the historians were never ashamed to return to the brief era of national governance in search of lessons. Like their counterparts in the communist current, extreme right-wing historians intercut passages of description with direct statements which showed how history was to be interpreted.

**Concluding Discussion: The Certainties of Ideological Interpretation**

The chapter has shown that all of the ideological historians openly claimed that the past was significant in the present. The manner in which this view was articulated varied. Communist and extreme right-wing historians made their interpretations of history count through clear didactic statements which told readers that history was a model to be either repeated or avoided. Gaullists also openly discussed the 'lessons' of French history. They focused on de Gaulle's place in the destiny of France. Apart from this variation, all three sets of activists placed equivalent value in the view that knowledge of contemporary history underpinned politics. As will be discussed in the following chapter, a comparable shared struture of argument is evident in the historians' writing on the liberation.

With the benefit of hindsight, the activist historians' didactic assertions and gambits illustrate two fundamental features of political engagement: self-confidence and certainty. Perhaps above all else, to be an activist historian required faith to instruct with conviction. The fact that activist historians publicly claimed the pedagogic or political value of their writing shows the period's almost constant faith in the view that the past provided insight, or even
foreshadowed future developments. To borrow from Conan and Rousso, this was another genuine moment when Vichy represented a ‘passé qui ne passe pas’.

In this chapter I analyse how the historians exploited the subject of the liberation. I examine how and why they ordered writings around a balance of positive and negative assessments. It is underlined that in accounting for this episode there was a propensity to use comparable structures of argument across the currents.

‘Insurrection Nationale’ or ‘Libération Trahie’?

The communist historians identified the capture of Paris through popular unrest and the withdrawal of labour as the long awaited insurrection nationale. However, a second interpretation marked their writings. This reading was pessimistic about 1944. The historians argued that despite the initial successes of the uprising, any hope of true post-war reform had been quickly dashed. As Pierre Hervé’s striking title described, the dénouement to the occupation was the ‘libération trahie’. The expulsion of the Party from tripartite government and the increase in US-Soviet international tensions confirmed this angle. Nevertheless, the importance of the insurrection nationale remained, for how else could the Party historians treat the crowning moment of the FTP’s military history? After all, in their own terms, they had liberated France.

As in their depiction of the resistance, the communist historians triumphantly accounted for the Parisian strike and uprising as the Party’s latest heroic success. They showed that this was the moment for which Thorez and Duclos had pledged themselves to resist the occupation.

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1 See Pierre Hervé, *La Libération trahie* (Paris: Grasset, 1946). The phrase derived from the title was employed by a number of the representative communist texts in order to capture the idea that the promises of 1944 had been deliberately left unfulfilled by bourgeois members of the resistance. For instance it was cited by Jean Dautry and Louis Pastor, *Histoire de la résistance*, 3.
The historians underlined the PCF’s anti-Vichy activities. They repeated that they represented a more authentic expression of the popular will than the Gaullist resistance. Laurent Casanova, in his short essay ‘Le Parti et l’insurrection nationale,’ emphasised that the PCF had called for the citizens of Paris to lift the nazi yoke. Categorically he stated, ‘C’est au Parti Communiste enfin que revient l’honneur d’avoir lancé dans la nuit du 18 au 19 août, par la voix des élus communistes, l’appel à l’Insurrection Parisienne’.²

Somewhat overlooked in the secondary literature devoted to historiography, the communists’ reportage also contained a new political edge, the focus of which was the Soviet Union’s contribution to the defeat of nazism. As well as providing a glimpse of what they could achieve when Party and people acted in unison, the selected writers suggested that a similar harmony was achievable between France and the Soviet Union. Communists claimed that this had already occurred during the liberation of France. Celebrating Stalin’s seventieth birthday, Thorez underlined the crucial role which he had played throughout the liberation of Western Europe. He stated,

Quand des millions de Français et de Françaises, quand des millions d’hommes et de femmes sur le globe, prononcent avec amour et gratitude le nom de Staline, c’est que d’abord ils se souviennent des cruelles épreuves de la guerre et de tout ce qu’ils doivent à Staline, au peuple soviétique, à ses glorieuses armées qui ont écrasé les hordes hitlériennes et ramené la paix en Europe et dans le monde.³

Thorez indirectly linked the liberation with the Chairman of the Soviet Party and the forces of


the Soviet Union. Portraying 1944 was an element in the construction of Stalin, and vice versa. Writing in the *Cahiers*, Jean Guillon addressed the theme. The communist historian alluded to the critical role which the Soviet Union had played. He claimed: ‘Août 1944, ce sont les actions multiples des FFI appuyées par le peuple de France tout entier, c’est l’insurrection de Paris, c’est l’offensive de l’armée soviétique’. The liberation was carefully associated with the Party’s view of the Soviet Union and its military capacity. By the late 1940s this viewpoint functioned as a countermove against the growth of anti-communist propaganda. The image of the Red Army was at the centre of the pro- and anti-communist representations. Whereas for right-wingers, such as de Gaulle, the Soviet military were ‘only the distance of the tour de France from Strasbourg’, for the PCF the history of the liberation allowed this kind of proximity to be seen in an entirely different light. They pictured the Red Army as the driving force behind the emancipation of Europe in 1944. The communist historians, such as Guillon, compared the Soviet forces to the French resistance. They idealised the Soviet war effort. By 1955, the Party number-two, Jacques Duclos, described European history in the following terms:

Il y a dix ans, le fascisme fut vaincu grâce, avant tout, aux efforts titanesque de la grande Union soviétique, dont la guerre libératrice s’était confondue avec la lutte de tous les peuples pour leur indépendance [...] Elle montra dans les faits la supériorité de l’armée soviétique, armée d’un type nouveau, éduquée dans l’esprit de l’internationalisme, dans l’esprit du respect envers les peuples des autres pays et dans l’esprit du maintien de la paix entre les peuples.  

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The anti-communist projection of the Red Army was inverted. Duclos embraced the Soviet force as a modern, peaceful, military body which had saved France. If one is to read his assessment at face value, he constructed it as a ‘humanitarian brigade’ which respected the sovereignty of all nations.

A series of confident images was associated with the events of the 1944 uprising and the simultaneous Soviet march westwards. To an extent, these images promised hope for France. This was the positive characterisation of the insurrection nationale which, among others, Wall, Rousso, Beevor and Cooper have discussed. Nevertheless, the PCF’s historical interpretation did not depict the period in an unquestionably triumphant light. The historians were shrewder than has sometimes been presented. The fact that the Party had not won a complete victory in 1944 had to be clarified. Writing on the liberation was not just a simple question of immortalising heroism. The concluding pages of Fils du peuple list the perceived complexities which France faced in 1949. Thorez stated:

Le peuple avait obtenu des améliorations sensibles. Il garde le souvenir des temps où nous étions au gouvernement. Il mesure le recul effectué depuis que nous n’y sommes plus. Les travailleurs vivent toujours plus mal, tandis que s’accroissent les profits capitalistes; des grèves nombreuses ont éclaté que les gouvernants ont réprimées féroce; les impôts montent. Le franc a perdu la moitié de sa valeur; les prix ont triplé.

La réaction relève la tête; les résistants authentiques, calomniers avec une impudence croissante, sont traqués, arrêtés, condamnés. Les traîtres, les anciens collaborateurs sont blanchis, remis en liberté; les dossiers économiques des profiteurs de guerre sont classés.

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7 Maurice Thorez, Fils du peuple, 220.
The passage is typical of the communists' libération trahie account. Despite the redeeming memory of the brief period of PCF government, the Fourth Republic was cast in bleak terms. To paraphrase in the light of class analysis, the forces which had caused the Second World War had mysteriously escaped punishment and had resumed control of France. Listing the nation's economic woes, Thorez implied that the reason why poverty and exploitation had returned was because 'reaction' had been reinstated. The liberation had failed to conduct social reform, and those who had been most responsible for the collapse of France in 1940 had escaped justice. He protested that the épuration had been turned against the resistance.

This analysis of why the liberation had failed was complex. Since the PCF was not in power, it had to be explained that despite the honourable successes of the communist resistance, capitalism had sabotaged the movement's progression. The historians established why the resistance had not lived up to the hopes of its supporters. They justified why their politicians had been ousted from office. The preferred conspirators were de Gaulle and the military elite. This corresponded with the broader construction of de Gaulle as a reactionary. The historians showed that the General had limited a popular uprising against fascism and in its place he encouraged a convenient middle-class exchange of power. Writings on a series of incidents were drawn together to convey the message. Histoire de la résistance contains several good examples which illustrate the theme. In the battle of the Vercors, and the Parisian insurrection, the historians identified a Gaullo-bourgeois conspiracy against the people. In the context of the Vercors they saw a betrayal of the French forces in favour of the Wehrmacht. Dautry and Pastor revealed:

Il n'entrait ni dans les plans anglo-américains, ni dans les plans des généraux français au service du GPRF que les maquis entreprirent pour leur compte de grandes actions au cours de la Libération. […]

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Le 14 juillet, la République est proclamée à Die par des éléments de l’enorme maquis du Vercors. La Wehrmacht qui s’attend d’un moment à l’autre à un second débarquement sur la côte méditerranéenne, pour conserver sa liberté de manœuvre dans la vallée du Rhône lance 35,000 hommes contre le maquis du Vercors qui succombe. Ni le général de Gaulle, ni le BCRA chargé des parachutages, ne font le nécessaire pour que le Vercors tienne jusqu’au débarquement, qui n’aura lieu que le 15 août près de Fréjus. Une escadrille prête à partir d’Afrique du Nord se voit même retirer sa mission.8

The implication was that the capitalist powers, de Gaulle and his secret service, the BCRA, had allowed the maquis to be massacred at the hands of the Germans. The PCF historians suggested that similar conspiracies had ruled the day in Paris. By ensuring that they established a truce until de Gaulle could liberate the city the bourgeoisie had arrested the dynamism of the masses. Unlike Thiers’ memorable attack on the Communards, class interests had triumphed through cunning rather than firepower. The historians stated: ‘Les anticommunistes craignent moins le général von Choltitz, commandant allemand dans Paris que la Libération de Paris par sa population seule, communistes au premier rang’.9 They suggested that a co-ordinated bourgeois exchange of offices had occurred and that the true course of the liberation had been lost.

In 1946, concurrently with the events themselves, Kriegel-Valrimont explained to the readers of the Cahiers why history had developed in this manner:

Au fond, ce qui inquiète le plus les réactionnaires, c’est de voir la classe ouvrière tenir une place de plus en plus importante dans la vie nationale; ceux qui se gargarisent de formules paternalistes, de ‘promotions ouvrières’ ne supportent pas de voir juger des amiraux par des travailleurs communistes. Comme ils regrettent le temps où ils pouvaient poursuivre André Marty pour

8 Jean Dautry and Louis Pastor, Histoire de la résistance, 36-37.

9 Ibid., 37.
son action héroïque!\textsuperscript{10}

In response to the initial triumphs of the Party and the people, the communist historians illustrated the return of class interests. Even after the resistance period, bourgeois society and culture were not prepared to witness the sentencing of Admirals at the hands of people’s justice.

The PCF historians created two parallel versions of the foundation of the Fourth Republic. On the one hand, the story of the \textit{insurrection nationale} proved what might have been the case had communist heroism carried the day. Conversely, a second interpretation, centred on the power of the bourgeoisie, claimed that the middle class had re-established a society which was not dissimilar to the inter-war period. The bourgeoisie had restored unfettered capitalism to Western Europe, a Third World War loomed large, whilst culturally speaking the communists recorded that a sea of degradation marked the nation’s intellectual life.\textsuperscript{11}

The historians were more astute than has often been recognised in the secondary literature. The \textit{insurrection nationale-libération trahie} dichotomy is hardly an example of a ‘mémoire-bunker, ossifié’.\textsuperscript{12} Neither is it a simple reflection of the ‘cult of Revolution’.\textsuperscript{13} The dual portrait of hope and hopes dashed, which I have extrapolated, was valuable because it formed an open-ended view of the liberation and the contemporary period of the Fourth

\begin{enumerate}
\item With regard to the perceived decline in post-war cultural standards, a puritanical line of anti-Americanism was to be found in condemnations of the licentious Henry Miller. For example, Laurent Casanova, “Art, littérature et politique”, \textit{Cahiers}, 3-4 (1947): 295.
\item Azéma and Bédarida, “L’historisation de la résistance”, \textit{Esprit}: 30.
\item Gildea, \textit{The Past in French History}, 53.
\end{enumerate}
Republic. Writing on the nearest period of contemporary history, the communists employed a practical device to account for events that had yet to run their course. It meant they could categorise day-to-day politics either as a continuation of the successful insurrection or as a reflection of the disastrous betrayal. Whatever occurred, the historians could claim that their account had already predicted the outcome. For example, they would view communist electoral triumphs as a return to the halcyon days of the liberation. Conversely, continued governmental support for ‘the bosses against the workers’ was anticipated in the libération trahie strand of the presentation.

The structure of argument delineating two radically different versions of the liberation might have been unique to the communist sources. The portrayal reflects the ambiguities of the Party’s position in the late 1940s. It was the largest political group in the Republic, but after 1947 had become a pariah for both the RPF and the centre parties of the Troisième Force. To this extent, for a communist, the liberation could not be read in an exclusively laudatory light, for to do so would have been to ignore the contemporary political environment. Nevertheless, although the PCF historians had good reason to depict the liberation as both a positive and a negative episode, as we will see, this was a more universal approach which marked the work of historians’ writing across all three currents.

_Recovering National Honour or a Return to the Third Republic?_

The Gaullist historians also showed that the liberation had been conducted in the letter but had been abandoned in spirit. Theirs was an account of a liberation postponed in which de Gaulle delivered the nation to the people but then was mercilessly ousted from high office. In a remarkably similar structure of argument to that which I have identified in the communist
current, the Gaullists created two further portrayals of 1944. They demonstrated that General de Gaulle and those in his command had revived France from the defeat of 1940 and protected the nation from the likelihood of a communist coup d’etat. However, echoing the PCF historians’ view of the *libération trahie*, they also suggested that the Fourth Republic was balanced on the cusp of future decline (albeit for different reasons to the analogous argument found in the communist texts). The constitutional failings which had been associated with the late Third Republic, compounded by the rise of the PCF, were considered to have damaged the hopes of 1944.

As outlined by Rousso and Gildea, the Gaullists conceived the liberation as the long awaited opportunity to salve the wounds of 1940. The Gaullist historians emphasised that the ‘Bataille de France’ had recommenced. Thus, they returned to the issues of 1940. Alain Brossat correctly analyses the discourse when he writes:

> En ce sens, bien des scènes de la Libération déroulent à l’envers le film terrible et humiliant de l’exode de juin 1940: on harcèle, on traque, on mortifie chaque fois qu’on le peut, et pour des raisons symboliques aussi, les troupes allemandes en retraite vers le Rhin, tout comme le faisaient les Stucka à l’encontre des centaines de milliers de civils abandonnés sur les chemins de la débâcle.

The historians intimated that the sins of defeat had been cleansed by victory. They employed the two conflicts over the territory of France to frame the beginning and the end of the World War. Comparison between the two campaigns was explicit, drawing attention to the recovery which the country had made, via de Gaulle’s actions, since the 18 June 1940. De Gaulle and Georges Cattaui illustrated the period as a repetition of earlier confrontations. Citing a passage

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15 Alain Brossat, *Libération, fête folle*, 38.
from de Gaulle’s statement of the 6 June 1944, Cattaui began:


The historiographic source confirms Brossat’s view. The allusion to de Gaulle’s claim that industrial strength was used decisively against the Germans was a direct reference to his earlier break from the thinking of the military hierarchy, and thus also a reminder of 1940.

A second central point of the representation was that the Gaullist liberation was constituted as the return of the legitimate forces of order. Although Cattaui stated, ‘le peuple de France se lève’, the communist implication that the people had liberated themselves through popular unrest was not emphasised. This was a restoration of authority, pursued by a self-consciously elite group. However, the general manipulation of the topic was not especially surprising. It corresponded to the dynamics of the wider Gaullist rise-fall myth of the war, as well as the historians’ treatment of its resistance activities.

In addition to the better known aspects of the Gaullist account, historians from this current also argued that the period had witnessed a victory against communism. This was consistent with much of the anti-communist thrust of the current’s writing (see Chapter VI above). The historians saved much of their venom for their portrayals of the liberation of Paris. De Gaulle’s treatment of communist conspiracy is exemplary. At the beginning of the second volume of his war memoirs, he explained what was at stake. He summarised:

16 Georges Cattaui, Charles de Gaulle, 94-95.
Mais le parti communiste est là. Depuis qu’Hitler envahit la Russie, il se pose en champion de la guerre. Engagé dans la résistance où il n’épargne pas ses pertes, invoquant les malheurs du pays et la misère populaire pour confondre en une seule révolte l’insurrection nationale et la révolution sociale, il ambitionne de se donner l’aurore du salut public. Pourvu d’une organisation que ne retient aucun scrupule et ne gêne aucune divergence, excelling à noyer les autres et à parler tous les langages, il voudrait apparaître comme l’élément capable d’assurer une sorte d’ordre, le jour où l’anarchie déferlerait sur le pays. Au surplus, n’offrirait-il pas à la France dédaignée l’aide active de la Russie, la plus grande puissance de l’Europe? Ainsi, le parti communiste compte-t-il trouver, dans l’écrasement de Vichy, l’occasion d’établir chez nous sa dictature. Oui! Mais ce calcul est vain si l’Etat est refait ailleurs, si dans l’âme des Français la première place est prise par un gouvernement national, si son chef, dans la lumière de la victoire, paraît tout à coup à Paris.  

Published in 1956, the year of the Suez crisis and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt, the passage is typical of the current’s anti-communism. It reflects a theme that runs across the spectrum of the Gaullist texts. For example, Adrien Dansette’s earlier work on the liberation, as printed in the 1949 Trente ans collection, presented a similar picture. Dansette categorically warned that a bolshevisation of France had been perilously close in 1944. He commented: ‘Pour les communistes, le départ des Allemands hitlériens, la chute de l’Etat français, ne sont que des étapes vers cette transformation intégrale qui ferait de la France une autre URSS’.  

This indicated that de Gaulle had defeated not only the occupying forces and their French collaborators but equally the secondary internal danger of a communist dictatorship. This was a full Red scare which relied on a retrospective anti-communist view. Whether or not there had actually been a serious communist threat to France in 1944 is not

directly relevant. What is important in understanding the politics behind the discourse is that the liberation was cast, not only as a triumph over nazism, but also as a victory over the domestic extreme left wing. De Gaulle was shown to be superior on two counts.

The two angles on the liberation discussed above formed a heroic portrait of de Gaulle’s contribution to national revival. The liberation highlighted the completion of the mission that he had accepted in June 1940. The rhetorical gambit was a delicate one. It appears that all the Gaullist historians had sought to use the liberation period to underline the significance of the General’s actions in 1940, and the equally symbolic power of the errors which others had made. The representation suggested that the tragedies of 1940 had been corrected by the French military liberation of Paris, an event which was both predicated by, and predicted in, de Gaulle’s 18 June appeal. To forget 1940 was to diminish the triumph of 1944. The former defeat was instrumental in the recollection of the latter victory. Moreover, it would be wrong to think that this was the only dimension to the Gaullist account. As I have stressed, writing on this episode of the war also had a more pragmatic, contemporary-political function. The historians had the opportunity to depict de Gaulle’s effectiveness as a leader in the battle against communism. This was another powerful rehearsal of de Gaulle, ‘the anti-communist champion’. The implied message was that the General was the best equipped to manage the Cold War because he had already conducted an impressive demonstration of how best to handle the PCF, saving France from its grasp in the summer of 1944.

Despite the powerful strand of glorification which marks the work of de Gaulle and Cattaui, as in the contemporary communist accounts of 1944 the Gaullists did not construct the

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19 As is now well known, de Gaulle had probably avoided a genuine PCF threat through his November 1944 negotiations with Stalin. Infamously Stalin had advised, ‘je connais Thorez et qu’à mon avis, c’est un bon Français...Si j’étais à votre place, je ne le mettrais en prison...du moins pas tout de suite’. Moreover, the Yalta conference designated Soviet interests to the East, with France remaining in the Western sphere of influence. For the de Gaulle-Stalin interview see Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol.2, 89-90.
early post-war era as an unmitigated success. For example, General de Gaulle resigned the presidency in January 1946, and subsequently the voters had ignored his constitutional preference. The nation appeared to be divided against itself, and even worse, under threat from a new external enemy, the USSR. The Gaullists accounted for these conditions in a second, considerably darker, commentary on the liberation era. As in the communist current, the liberation could not be seen as an unmitigated victory. For the historians to have done so would have appeared naive, and to have ignored many of the political events listed above. Instead it was far more credible for them to produce a second reading which reflected what François-Georges Dreyfus describes as the RPF’s general mood of pessimism.  

The year, 1944, was again discussed around a structure of negative arguments.

In a continuation of the Red scare which had explained the detailed issues of the successful liberation of Paris, it was presented that despite the fact that a complete communist triumph had been thwarted by de Gaulle, several ‘political’ factors had contributed to the continuation of a dangerously high level of communist influence on the post-war political system. This was a uniquely Gaullist type of anti-communism which was neither akin to the thinking of, say, a Winston Churchill in Britain, or a Joseph McCarthy in the United States. It is far closer to what we know about characteristic Gaullist perceptions of the French political class, as has, for instance, been illustrated in the studies of Touchard and Rioux. Specifically, the anti-communist explanation of the post-war malaise was deeply influenced by that other Gaullist bugbear, dislike of the frailties of the parliamentary culture of the Third Republic which it feared was being imitated. The rhetorical assault linked the challenge of the PCF with

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the perceived failings in the constitutional system. In the appropriate chapter from the *Trente ans* collection, Michel Habib explained what had occurred between 1944 and 1948. The assessment reads:

"La minorité communisante du MLN rejoint le Front National et constitue avec lui le Mouvement Unifié de la Renaissance Française (MURF), filiale du parti communiste. Ainsi s'opère le regroupement de la Résistance à la suite des partis.

La vie politique se réveille donc, et déjà le parti communiste, bien que participant au ministère, pratique l'opposition latente, en critiquant les actes du Gouvernement dans son ensemble ou ceux des ministres non communistes, tout en 'colonisant' le plus possible les départements qu'il détient. [...] A l'image du parti communiste et pour lutter efficacement contre lui, les socialistes, le MRP et à un degré moindre les modérés qui se regroupent en décembre dans le Parti Républicain de la Liberté (PRL) adoptent une structure hiérarchisée et monolithique qui en fait d'énormes machines, très disciplinées, mais aussi trop exclusivement imbues de l'infaillibilité de leur propre doctrine et subordonnant trop souvent l'intérêt national à leur intérêt particulier.

Cette structure des partis a de graves répercussions sur la structure gouvernementale elle-même."

The first complaint lodged against the PCF was that its disciplined organisation had negatively influenced the wider political culture of the period. That is to say, Habib accused the communists of having participated in the disastrous game of 'playing politics'. Habib suggested that the PCF had tempted the other political parties to return to structures of self-regulation comparable to those that had existed before the war. The Gaullists accused the parties of being more concerned with protecting their own self-interest than with defending the interests of France, or, as Habib asserted: 'subordonnant trop souvent l'intérêt national à leur intérêt particulier'. The negative account of the errors of the post-war era focused, not on the PCF's version of Marxist-Leninism, but rather on its characteristics as a domestic political party.

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They fused anti-communism with the politics of anti-politics. Habib continued:

On ne peut en effet sortir de l'alternative suivante: ou bien le cabinet forme une équipe homogène cimentée par la présence à sa tête d'une forte personnalité, telle que le général de Gaulle, et dans ce cas, les partis ne s'estiment pas liés par les actes de leurs représentants dans le ministère et combinent les avantages de la participation et ceux de l'opposition; ou bien les ministres restent étroitement dépendants de leur parti et le gouvernement n'est plus que le reflet des divisions de ceux-ci et sombre dans l'impuissance.

Le général de Gaulle ne fut pas longtemps à s'apercevoir des inconvénients de ce système. 23

A stalemate situation in which good government was an impossibility was felt to have developed. As might be expected, de Gaulle was himself separated from these events and pictured as an outsider who could immediately identify the weaknesses in the new Republic. This distanced de Gaulle from the perceived negative results of the liberation, and thus positioned him as the one leader who could rectify the Constitution (a point which was made in almost all the sample Gaullist writings).

They grounded the black interpretation of the liberation in the issue of the Constitution and the party system. Seven years after Habib's account Cattaui perpetuated the picture in his biography of de Gaulle. Although we have seen this source frequently focused on 'de Gaulle - the man', Cattaui also explained the mistakes of 1944/45 in terms of a communist intrigue. If anything, his accusations of conspiracy are more explicit than in Habib's analytical approach. Using the biographical form, Cattaui continued to claim that although de Gaulle had won the war for France, the political parties who had done so much damage in the 1930s had returned. Whilst not directly implicated in this process, by association the largest party (the PCF) was perceived to have organised the attack.

23 Ibid., 291.
In its various manifestations, the negative treatment served two very important functions: it continued the attack on the PCF that had often been prominent in RPF propagandising, and secondly, it discursively linked the other political parties with a system of government which was associated with communism and with the ghosts of the Third Republic. This refocused the readers’ attention on the criticisms of the two Republics. However, both the positive version of the liberation and its negative counterpart were concerned with addressing the threat of communism. In the former, the account of the liberation was used to display de Gaulle’s powers as an anti-communist campaigner, whilst in the latter they implied that the dangers of communism had continued after 1944-45 and therefore required de Gaulle’s return to office.

The Gaullist texts produced a second set of binary representations which forecast that the liberation had brought hope but equally a regression to the mistakes of the past. This orientation of history was dominant in all of the sources reviewed, especially when read alongside the implicit criticisms of the Fourth Republic found in their manipulation of the causes of the debacle. As a method of argument the dual account resembles the previous communist case, a fact which points to the underlying structural similarities which existed in the two currents’ writings on the liberation. Whereas many scholars have rightly perceived ideological history writing to be very different across currents, the way in which the communist and Gaullist historians dealt with this subject reveals a degree of commonality of form. Gaullists were as aware as communists that the most effective way to discuss the liberation was to provide a subtle account which looked at its benefits and drawbacks. This was

a shared disposition because both sets of historians were trying to predict the implications of 1944 without appearing one-dimensional or simplistic. The strategy which they developed was to offer two versions of what the liberation meant for the future, organising their material around the positive and negative aspects. Although displaying animosity towards each other, the historians were using a comparable framework to organise their interpretations. The PCF claimed that the negative events had been due to de Gaulle, whereas the Gaullists ascribed a similar role to the communists.

The Purge: Suffering and Nobility

The extreme right’s re-interpretation of the liberation period began from a completely different perspective to either the communist or Gaullist writers. Whilst it is important to note that none of the selected extreme right-wing writers admonished the liberation, it is fair to claim that they were aggrieved at the manner in which it had been conducted. The key subject was the épuration. This in itself marks the extreme right-wing account apart from the other two treatments of the era. However, similarities of structures of argument recurred. Like their rival historians, Professor Louis Rougier, Jacques Benoist-Méchin and Pierre Héring organised their material on ‘1944-45’ around two interconnected sub-interpretations. The texts provided a generally pessimistic reading of the purges which had been made against themselves and their fellow supporters of the Vichy regime. The historians sought to explain who, or what, had caused this unnecessary conclusion to the war. Their writing worked around the attribution of blame. In addition to this highly developed message, they constructed a second, more impressionistic view which was decidedly affirmative about what they perceived to have been the nobility with which key members of the extreme right wing had faced the onslaught. The
broad pattern of detailing the liberation between positively and negatively constructed events, identified in the communist and Gaullist texts, was echoed.

Graphic depictions of the purge were common in all of the texts. The historians' exaggerated claims of anti-Vichy persecutions far outweighed the occasional reference to any anti-resistance/antisemitic atrocities which had been committed under the auspices of Franco-German collaboration. As we now know, much of this was based on fabrication and fear, rather than empirical evidence. Peter Novick's work on the scale of the purge has seriously revised the previously high mortality levels put forward by the extreme right wing and supported by the studies of Robert Aron. Furthermore, Novick's work illustrates the wide sectorial variations which occurred. For example, publishers were more likely to receive lesser punishment than their authors. Equally cushioned were the hyper-conservative institutions of the Catholic Church and the Académie française.

Monarchists, dyed-in-the-wool Pétainists and neo-fascist members of the community could all agree that Gaullo-communists had persecuted their number after the war. In addition to the more general exaggerations of scope, the writing on the purge worked around a series of accusations that sought to explain why such terrible things had happened to such good people. The historians could have framed all of this as another conspiracy theory (sometimes they did) but it is important to realise that they applied less esoteric explanations. Instead of intrigues, the alleged purge atrocities were simply classified as having been the natural side effect of the triumphs of Gaullism and communism.

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25 In Peter Novik's *The Resistance versus Vichy* (London:Chatto and Windus, 1968) it is accepted that 9673 executions were committed during the purge. Previously Robert Aron had indicated the high estimate of 30,000-40,000 summary killings. A figure used in his *Histoire de l'épuration*, 3 Vols (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1967, 1969, 1974).

Considering extreme right-wing literary and journalistic sources, Nicholas Hewitt has shown how references to the Red Terror of 1793-94 framed the political group’s interpretation of the purge.\(^{27}\) This is also true of the historical sources which I have reviewed and in which the historians implied that another republican-motivated massacre had occurred. Héring, in detailing the perceived errors of Pétain’s trial, wrote that the events of the courtroom had been nothing less than ‘la réplique fidèle du Tribunal révolutionnaire de 1793’.\(^ {28}\) Similarly, Louis Rougier commented that Pétain’s fate had been uniquely French, unfortunately inspired by the nation’s revolutionary past. With an additional observation on the English way of handling sensitive circumstances, he summarised:

> En Angleterre, on eût confiné le maréchal Pétain dans une belle propriété de l’Île de Wight et on eût donné consigne à la presse de se taire. Le monde s’étonnait de cette fureur jacobine qui consistait à formuler la sentence avant même que s’ouvrissent les débats.\(^ {29}\)

Yet suggesting that the extreme right-wing historians only manipulated 1944 through the vector of past animosities would be inaccurate. Representing the purge was not only a question of ‘Bridging the Revolution’.\(^ {30}\) The historians tended to delegitimise the épuration on the basis of a series of more contemporary forces than those of the Convention. In the final chapter of *Mission secrète à Londres*, Louis Rougier established a negative model of what kind of France was being built on the bones of the épurés. His conclusion was a polemical warning

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\(^{29}\) Louis Rougier, *Mission secrète à Londres*, 189.

\(^{30}\) The phrase, ‘Bridging the Revolution’ is from Robert Gildea’s *The Past in French History*, 298, in which he uses it to frame his discussion of extreme right wing historiography.
that the key errors of the purge had not only been the false punishment of collaborators who had resisted but equally the unjust promotion of ignoble *faux-résistants*. He remonstrated:

Aytant détruit la constitution, bouleversé l’administration, il [de Gaulle] lui faut payer les frais d’établissement du nouveau régime. Les frais sont élevés, car, ayant fait appel à l’intérêt pour arriver, les dents des associés sont devenues longues. Tous les maquisards, de la première ou de la treizième heure, les véritables et les simulateurs, les combattants et les terroristes, ceux du plateau de Glières comme ceux du marché noir, revendiquent places et sinécures. Pour s’en faire une clientèle, il triple, quadruple, quintuple le nombre des fonctionnaires, […] Il installe la bureaucratie la plus nombreuse, la plus incompétente, la plus vénale que la France ait connu au cours de son histoire, 31

The consequence of the Gaullist misunderstanding of the history of the war, and the purges that followed from it, was the creation of a top-heavy state that was incapable of competing with the rest of the capitalist world. Over-glorification of the resistance was not only presented as morally and historically wrong, but also economically disastrous. In addition to criticising the purge for its actual miscarriages of justice, Rougier slowly pieced together a dystopic vision of a future France in which de Gaulle had banished all that had been noble and efficient. Indeed, contra Harvey G. Simmons’ recent analysis, nothing in the work of any of the historians suggests that de Gaulle acted as the ‘magnetic point toward which the entire French right wing turned after 1945’. 32 Instead, hatred of the arrogant de Gaulle was the common bond which united the extreme right wing.

Continuing his analysis of the bureaucratisation which he felt had accompanied the purge, Rougier detailed the indirect, but massive, economic consequences of 1944. He argued:


Pour payer ses créatures, il faut faire fonctionner ‘la pompe à phynances’. Au temps de l’occupation, la Banque de France virait quotidiennement au compte des autorités occupantes la somme de 400 puis 300 millions de francs. Au temps de de Gaulle, la planche à billets imprime pour un milliard de francs par jour. Du 7 mars 1940 au 28 décembre 1944, le stock d’or de la Banque de France est demeuré inchangé à 1778 tonnes: 40% du stock d’or en poids avait disparu. Les nationalisations précipitent la chute des valeurs en Bourse. La dévaluation de la devise nationale est imputée comme un enrichissement sur lequel s’abat l’impôt de péréquation. La poursuite des bénéfices de guerre se transforme en une véritable inquisition fiscale qui paraîse les chefs d’industrie.33

Rougier displays the range of issues and themes which extreme right-wingers raised through writing on the purge. The two examples from Mission secrète à Londres illustrate the notion that deep political and economic changes had accompanied the false treason trials. The extreme right wing was not only aggrieved at a miscarriage of justice, but also used the purge to demonstrate the society which they considered the Gaullo-communist liberation was founding.34 Rougier’s argument was based on a neo-liberal condemnation of state intervention in the market, in which the PCF was a target.35 However, the accompanying portrayal of de Gaulle showed him to have been equally to blame. The Fourth Republic, far from being represented as separate and different from de Gaulle, was shown to be his creation. This, of course, was a major difference in tone from the Gaullist critique which, nevertheless, also used anti-communist rhetoric in order to pursue a reformation of the Fourth Republic’s constitutional order.

Jacques Benoist-Méchin was no less pessimistic about what 1944-45 had demonstrated.

33 Louis Rougier, Mission secrète à Londres, 214.


35 This corresponds with Rougier’s inter-war ultra liberalism, see Richard Cockett, Thinking the Unthinkable, 9-12. 55.
In the final pages of *Soixante jours* he compared the legal basis of the Vichy state with the alleged illegality of the subsequent purges which were made against it. Just as Rougier had used the catastrophe of the *épuration* to illustrate the malicious forces of Gaullism and communism, Benoist-Méchin implied that democracy was much less interested in the rule of law in 1940 and again in 1944 than ever the authoritarian Vichy government had been. He wrote:

> Ainsi donc, en démocratie, on peut lancer un pays dans la guerre sans un vote du Parlement, l’y maintenir avec une voix de majorité, le saigner à mort, en paraphant de son propre chef des accords qui ne sont soumis à la ratification de personne; mais lorsqu’une majorité massive adopte une loi rigoureusement conforme à la volonté populaire, et qui a pour seul objet le salut de la nation, celle-ci n’a aucune valeur parce qu’une infime minorité en a décidé autrement?  

For Jacques Benoist-Méchin the purge could be used as another example of the false rhetoric of democracy, claiming that only in a so-called democratic society could a popular and legitimate government (the *Etat français*) be quickly denigrated by the wishes of ‘une infime minorité’. Again the history of the purge, here only alluded to, was employed to discredit what was considered to have been its cause, ‘democracy’.

In sum, representing the *épuration* established another derisive construction of France under the Fourth Republic. In this case, the very forces which had triumphed in 1944 were blamed for the purge and the subsequent crisis of the state. Without doubt the hatred with which the purge-liberation was viewed by the extreme right outweighed the communists’ fears of a *libération trahie* or the Gaullists’ concerns about the constitutional system. Nevertheless, it highlights the fact that, in varying degrees and with different slants, all three currents of historians felt that the liberation had not created the France for which they hoped. There was

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a propensity to understand the recent past as having produced a malign political order.

Nonetheless, in the case of the extreme right it is less well documented that its historians were apt to provide another more confident version of events. The strategy was significant because it signalled that they had not been completely crushed. By praising the way in which key figures from the Vichy regime conducted themselves during the trials, the activist historians asserted that their political beliefs continued to be valid and had not been extinguished. The implication was that the seeds of future triumph were visible, even at the point at which many must have thought all was lost.

As in the communist and Gaullist writings, the extreme-right historians did not conclude their portrayal in a cloud of overwhelming pessimism. Balanced with the explanations reviewed above, Héring and Benoist-Méchin derived comfort from the noble sacrifices which their ideological representatives had suffered. Whilst writing on the purge discredited opposing political actors (Gaullists and communists) and their core beliefs (for instance state economic intervention, or liberal democracy), the historians also manipulated the fate of Pétain and Laval to emphasise their personal qualities of strength and dignity, which were then implicitly associated with either the political beliefs which they had held or the regime which they had established. For example, in the following passage Jacques Benoist-Méchin reviewed Laval’s final confrontation with death. Comparing Laval’s psychology in 1940 with his behaviour in 1944, he wrote:

Durant les journées qui vont du 2 au 10 juillet [1940], Laval ne déploie pas seulement un immense talent, mais une activité inouïe. Alors que son fatalisme le prédispose à la nonchalance, il se dépense en interventions, en démarches, en discours, et fait preuve d’une énergie dont on ne l’avait pas cru capable. Elle dissout peu à peu les petits côtés de sa nature, pour ne plus laisser apparaître, à travers ses regards et ses paroles, qu’un cœur déchiré par les souffrances du pays.
Lors de son procès, il se débattre comme un sanglier blessé qui refuse de mourir. En juillet 1940, sa lutte est différente, mais elle n'est pas moins belle, car tous ses efforts sont dirigés vers un seul but: empêcher la France de périr. Et l'on saisit soudain la passion la plus profonde qui l'anime au delà de la richesse, au delà même du pouvoir, c'est un amour brûlant et forcé de la vie...37

The hagiography constructs Laval’s trial and execution as a final challenge in the life of a great man. Laval’s own efforts to protect himself in 1944 were carefully juxtaposed with those he had made for France in 1940. Benoist-Méchin’s allusion to the purge, with its deliberately violent but heroic overtones - ‘il se débattrre comme un sanglier blessé’ - suggested a dignity and beauty which he also showed to be a fitting conclusion to Laval’s life. His unjust and violent death romantically underlined the qualities that he had possessed in 1940.38 Apart from the metaphysical deductions which might be drawn from the combination of a noble life and savage death it is important to note that this opinion relegitimated Laval’s entire career. The emphasis on the tragic, almost Jacobean, nature of his demise was oriented to imply that his war had been equally meritorious.

More widely acknowledged by commentators has been the equivalent tone in the case of writing on Pétain. In his death, and the suffering which preceded it, Pierre Héring contended that Pétain’s concerns had only ever been for France, strongly echoing his famous phrase, ‘je fais à la France le don de ma personne’. Repeatedly, the extreme right wing stressed that Pétain had accepted his punishment so that the people of France could be united. Héring writes, ‘Le Maréchal, avons-nous dit, a tout sacrifié, jusqu'à sa propre gloire, pour le

37 Ibid., 591.

38 A similar discourse was used in the case of Robert Brasillach. For example, see Maurice Gait, “Il y a six ans, Brasillach”. Rivarol, 8 February 1951: 8.
salut de la France et du monde’. 39 He concluded with a play on the theme: ‘Le Maréchal n’a rien d’un arriviste. Il n’a jamais cherché à se pousser. La gloire lui est venue toute seule et il n’a pas hésité à la sacrifier pour le salut de son pays’. 40 The writing functioned in support of Pétain’s legitimacy in 1940 and 1944. Like Joan of Arc before him, the extreme right characterised the Marshal as having been wrongly punished and as having sacrificed himself for a better cause. By implication this ‘better cause’ was the Vichy regime. The portrayal of Pétain’s cruel demise only added to the myth of his life. In turn this implied that the épuration had witnessed a resurgence in national values, embodied in the leader’s sacrifices. Although the period had no doubt been hard, the historians knew that all had not been lost. As for Pétain, one can repeat Richard Griffiths’ remark, ‘He became the embodiment of all that was best in the French nation, an almost religious figure whose final sufferings and imprisonment only served to enhance his sanctity’. 41

Concluding Discussion

The historiography inspired by the liberation testifies to the similar structure of argument across the three currents. That all of the selected historians divided the period into two broad patterns of writing which either glamorised the period, or decried it, is significant. It reveals the common form which all of the activist historians used to debate the meaning of the most recent episode from the history of the war.

The strategy to detail the liberation in two different ways appears to have been the result of a common aim. Each of the historians preferred to await the full impact of the

39 Pierre Héring, La Vie exemplaire du Maréchal Pétain, 127.

40 Ibid., 137.

41 Richard Griffiths, Marshal Pétain, 339.
liberation before ascribing it an exclusively favourable or critical interpretation. Identifying
aspects of its history which were either beneficial or harmful to France allowed all of the
chroniclers to imply that the object of their ideological preference had been responsible for the
positive angle. Conversely, enemies were accused of having tarnished the hopes which
naturally followed the end of the occupation.

Writing on a period of history, the implications of which had yet to run their full
course, meant that the historians had to be cautious. Offering a definitive account of the
meaning of the liberation in the late 1940s or even the early 1950s would have appeared
cavalier. A simplistic condemnation or tribute would have looked suspicious and only
undermined the credibility which all of the historians required. Offering a positive and a
negative interpretation allowed them to seem balanced, even when they were clearly pursuing
an ideological line. Indeed, the dual pattern of argument allowed the historians to read
subsequent events in two ways, either as following the implications of, for example, the
national insurrection or the libération trahie.

The shared structures of argument also add to our knowledge of the more general
political positions of the three ideological currents. That not a single historian viewed the
liberation as an entirely positive national experience indicates the political difficulties in which
the three ideological groups found themselves. Had any of the ideological groups been
dominant, one assumes that their historians would have viewed the liberation in an exclusively
rosy light. However, the complexities of the immediate post-war period meant that all three
groups did not develop this position. Despite the fact that Gaullists and communists had done
so much to bring about an end to the occupation, events had not worked out in their favour.
For the PCF the early Cold War had proved trying. For the Gaullists, even after their initial
electoral success (1947), the prospect of working within a parliamentary system which they
despised was problematic. In a sense because neither the French Communist Party nor the RPF controlled the Fourth Republic, its birth was likely to be cast in the dual manner which I have analysed. Unlike the more or less straightforwardly approving accounts of their respective resistance movements, PCF and Gaullist historians had to handle the liberation with care. One of the great ironies of the politics of the period and the historiographical works which it produced, was that the liberation, the apotheosis of the resistance, was not open to simple exaltation by a single group. Perhaps, this frustrating position contributed to the ferocious debates which were conducted over the meaning of Vichy, or in the language of Rousso, was a significant cause of the early stages of the syndrome.

The most surprising feature of any of the currents is that the extreme right-wing identified limited aspects of the purge in an heroic manner. Often unmentioned in the several accounts of the faction in this period, this was an important part of its writing. Had the purge only been accounted for as a terrible trap in which the French had been captured, its activist historians would have been unable to offer their followers hope for change in the future. Even in one of their darkest hours, the extreme right were sufficiently lucid to remember that glimpses of strength maintain solidarity. The descriptions of the heroic suffering of martyrs served the purpose. To borrow a phrase from Susan Suleiman, the purge was viewed as the ‘delayed triumph of future good’. The implication was that knowledge of the enemy’s actions, balanced with respect for the dignity which had been maintained by friends, meant that the extreme right would flourish in the future, a step which the publication of historical writings advanced.

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CHAPTER VIII
DEGREES OF NEUTRALITY

The aim of this chapter is to use the knowledge of the three currents to analyse more neutral historical texts. I examine four works on the occupation: Robert Aron’s and Georgette Elgey’s *Histoire de Vichy*, André Siegfried’s *De la IIIe à la IVe République*, Henri Michel’s *Histoire de la résistance*, and Michel’s and Boris Mirkine-Guetzévich’s *Les Idées politiques et sociales de la résistance*. The affinities between the historians’ writing and the extreme right-wing’s, the Gaullist’s and the PCF’s interpretations are examined. A discussion of the problems of writing an ideology free account of the occupation concludes the chapter.

**Reviewing Ideological Alignments**

It has sometimes been argued that key histories of the war were either crypto-Pétainist or crypto-Gaullist in their tone. Lucette Valensi and Marc Ferro have uncovered extreme right-wing sympathies in Aron’s and Elgey’s *Histoire de Vichy*.¹ In recent years Aron’s reputation has been seriously tarnished.² As I have shown, extreme right-wing journalists slowly recuperated *Histoire de Vichy*, a process which, to an extent, the Giraudist accepted.³ As has been well documented elsewhere, his subsequent *Histoire de l’épuration* is an exaggerated

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³ See Chapter II above.
Similarly André Siegfried, a doyen of French political science, has received comparable reproach. Despite being unable to link the historian to an extreme right-wing group, Jean-Pierre Azéma contended that his interpretation of contemporary history contained Pétainist ideological marking. Similarly, it has been gently implied that aspects of Michel’s or the CHDGM’s work lent support to a Gaullian view of the war. However, our knowledge of the three ideological currents brings a more nuanced view of the first wave of writing. The standard ideological alignments suggested by Valensi and others require greater clarification than has been previously offered.

Robert Aron’s, Georgette Elgey’s and André Siegfried’s Vichy

At just over 720 pages, Histoire de Vichy was a comprehensive survey. Although written ‘en équipe’ with Georgette Elgey, its cover bore only Aron’s name. Principally, the historians narrated the political and cultural life of the regime, focusing on its internal ideological divisions, and external relations with Germany. They employed and evaluated many secondary sources which others had already produced (as we know, pro-Vichy enthusiasts had written the majority of these books). Aron and Elgey also discussed the differences of view contained in the growing literature, they looked to judicial evidence, and eyewitness testimonies from non-French sources, for example, the accounts of foreign diplomats, the Swiss Walter Stücki and the American Kenneth Pendar. Moreover, Aron’s journalistic experience makes the account


7 Walter Stücki, La Fin du régime de Vichy (Zurich: Dresde, 1947); Kenneth Pendar, Le Dilemme France-Etats-Unis (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1945).
a fluent récit. His style is engaging, notably when developing several petits histoires of the regime. The detailed portraits which the historians produced of the more colourful figures who were drawn to collaboration are fascinating. They enhance the authenticity of the work.

Valensi’s judgement that Histoire de Vichy was a soft extreme right-wing interpretation rests on the fact that it offered a ‘double-game’ theory which was akin to those produced by the extreme right. However, the work is not straightforward. Instead, the historians produced a representation which, on the one hand, was close to the interpretations of Rougier and others, while on the other hand, was significantly different from them. Indeed, Aron and Elgey suggest that Pétain had tried to use the Vichy regime as a front for anti-German resistance. As Ferro has correctly analysed, they described several of Pétain’s circle as having engaged in resistance. Similarly, Ferro was correct to underline the authors’ sympathetic discussion of the armistice, implying that Pétain had not sought full collaboration. Moreover, Aron and Elgey carefully depicted the Marshal: characterising his position in the following terms, ‘Il a choisi de ne pas choisir: ni collaboration militaire avec le Reich, ni résistance ouverte’. This phrase suggests attentisme. It distances Pétain from full military collaboration, whilst not separating him from the armistice and the German occupation. Nonetheless, the use of the term ‘résistance ouverte’ implies a level of support for a secret anti-nazi strategy. This portrayal approaches one of the typical extreme right-wing defences of the regime. Specifically, it resembles Rougier’s and Héring’s opinion that Vichy had been central to the ultimate victory. The depiction confirms Rousso’s subtle view that Aron’s work was viewed with sympathy.

8 Marc Ferro, Pétain, 708.
9 Ibid., 708-709.
In addition, the historians argue that Pétain’s leadership was as honourable as de Gaulle’s, and vice versa. Drawing on the belief that the two men had worked in harmony, the historians wrote: ‘Tous deux étaient également nécessaires à la France. Selon le mot que l’on prêtera successivement à Pétain et à de Gaulle: ‘Le Maréchal était le bouclier, le Général l’épée’.

As we know this is neither a classic extreme right-wing nor a classic Gaullist contention. Generally, historians writing within these currents either selected de Gaulle or Pétain as the saviour of France. Gaullists were uncharitable towards the Marshal, whilst extreme right-wingers mocked the General. Thus, Aron’s and Elgey’s claim is closer to the position of Pétaino-Gaullism adopted by Rémy in 1950 when he argued that the nation had required both their sacrifices. For Aron, who believed in reconciliation between the French and the speedy amnesty of purge prisoners, this line bridged the antagonisms perpetuated in the mainstream Gaullist and extreme right-wing literature. In so doing it reveals his compassion for Pétain.

Nonetheless, not all of the interpretation presented in Histoire de Vichy contributed to a neo-Pétainist rehabilitation of the regime. A significant aspect of the interpretation did not conform to the extreme right-wing or the Pétaino-Gaullist patterns of writing. Although, they imply a double game, Aron and Elgey indicated that this had been an unsuccessful policy. Consistently, they establish the difficulties and weakness of Pétain’s position. For example, they portrayed his actions as having led to national abjection. For example, describing his visit to Metz in 1942 they wrote:

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11 Henry Rousso, Le Syndrome de Vichy, 291.
12 Aron and Elgey, Histoire de Vichy, 94.
Recevant le maire de Metz, qui lui expose que les Alsaciens-Lorrains ont l'impression d'être abandonnés par le gouvernement, Pétain ne retient pas ses larmes... Réaction certes très émouvante, mais qui n'apporte guère de remèdes aux maux dont souffre la France.\textsuperscript{13}

This judgement is not comparable with the work of Rougier, Héring or Benoist-Méchin. The view which it encapsulates denies the central purpose of the regime and Pétain's belief in his own mission. Moreover, whereas the extreme right-wing historians suggested that Vichy had maintained its authority throughout the occupation, Aron and Elgey argued that the resistance movements had gradually won national support. Employing the Maurrassian terminology of the 'pays réel' versus the 'pays légal', the historians emphasised that as the war progressed Vichy had lost the trust of the populace. To paraphrase, whilst the regime maintained its constitutional status the historians underlined that it had lost its original legitimacy.\textsuperscript{14}

On several other symbolic issues, the historians did not support the extreme right-wing's standard account. Notably their depiction of the debacle and Pétain's seizure of power cannot be approximated with any of the ideological stances with which we are familiar. Instead of welcoming Pétain's rise to power the two historians questioned whether he was a responsible leader. Reporting on the events of summer 1940 they stated:

Mais est-il vraiment l'homme exceptionnel que tout le pays attend? A-t-il les qualités supérieures que nécessiterait l'événement? Ou bien n'est-il pas surtout, comme il apparaît en plusieurs points de son portrait, l'homme des qualités moyennes poussées à leur plus haut degré? Ne serait-ce pas à ce titre qu'il lui échut successivement de combler, puis de décevoir, l'attente anxieuse des Français, en proie à des circonstances qui eussent exigé du génie?\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 522.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 594.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 37.
Clearly, this was not the response of a committed extreme right-wing historian. In fact it is nearer to a Gaullist’s assessment of Pétain’s abilities. Evidence from Aron’s and Elgey’s writing on the 17 June repeats this type of analysis. In perhaps the most obvious opportunity to glorify Pétain, the historians were cautious. Although they cited the speech in full, their commentary is not congratulatory. None of the enthusiasm displayed in the extreme right-wing current of interpretation is evident. Simply, Aron and Elgey explained that the speech had the negative effect of implying to the troops that the armistice had already been signed, thus sacrificing lives to the continued enemy onslaught. After citing the broadcast, they reminded the reader that: ‘Cet appel, entendu directement par les combattants ou retransmis par les Allemands, désarme nos dernières troupes. Les Allemands vont le répandre dans tout les secteurs où les Français luttent encore’.16 In representing this central moment of Pétain’s career, the historians construct the event as having caused unnecessary military confusion. This is not an extreme right-wing mode of interpretation. Unlike Ferro, Valensi and others I cannot equate Aron’s work with an unambiguously soft-Pétainist depiction.

On the other hand, neither can their interpretation be associated with the communists’ nor the Gaullists’ historiographic view. Unlike these currents, the historians did not suggest that Pétain had taken office by conspiracy or betrayal. On the contrary, they emphasised that: ‘Jamais Pétain ne complote’.17 Instead, it was noted that a spectrum of political opinion had genuinely hoped Pétain would assume a new position of authority. This assessment moves Aron’s and Elgey’s writing nearer to the work of Rougier and Héring. It also explains why extreme right-wingers admired Aron, though his writing was not consistently comparable to

16 Ibid., 61.
17 Ibid., 32.
their thinking.

To review, *Histoire de Vichy* offered a negative double-game interpretation. Although the historians accepted that members of the Vichy government had turned to secret resistance they also frequently disapproved of the regime’s actions. This included questioning Pétain’s abilities as *chef d’état* and showing the steady decline to civil war. The representation is distinct from the classic extreme right-wing portrayal. In the work of Rougier, Héring, Benoist-Méchin and many of their colleagues, Pétain’s actions were always favourably cast. As I have illustrated Héring considered that the Marshal had contributed to the liberation. Rougier claimed that Vichy had been triumphant. On the whole, Aron and Elgey avoided these arguments. They were critical of a number of Pétain’s decisions. Their interpretation brought a degree of solace to Pétainists but it did not reproduce the panoply of extreme right-wing war myths. Aron’s and Elgey’s work is a complex account which cannot be easily associated with a clear ideological school of interpretation.

A nuanced view of André Siegfried’s work can also be presented. Published by the Bernard Grasset house in 1956, *De la IIIe à la IVe République* included four chapters devoted to the occupation. The inventor of electoral geography discussed the fall of the Third Republic, the political composition of the Vichy regime, and analysed ‘L’œuvre et la signification du régime’. Recently, Siegfried’s thesis has been linked with the ‘défenseurs de Vichy’ current. Azéma has argued:

> il [Siegfried]a une formule qui deviendra classique: ‘Il y a donc un Vichy de Pétain et un Vichy de Laval’. Sans doute le jugement porté sur Laval est-il relativement nuancé (‘un aventurier de grande classe’) alors qu’il dénonce dans le Vichy de Pétain la remontée péricieuse de tendances autoritaires de la société française. Mais, à la thèse qu’il existe bien deux Vichy, totalement différents, se superposera aisément l’idée que le premier est le bon, et le second
This is a simplification of Siegfried's analysis. Certainly he had used the phrase which Azéma cites, but it seems unlikely that it was intended in the way he suggests. In the chapter entitled 'Le Vichy de Pétain, le Vichy de Laval', Siegfried categorised the extensive variety of ideological groups which rallied to the regime. This was not a case of analysing Vichy in terms of only two of its key actors. The title denotes one of several internal divisions which the political scientist discussed. Siegfried noted that whilst Pétain was an authoritarian in the style of Franco, the Marshal had also attracted support from, 'Maurrassiens', 'les technocrates', 'L'Eglise' and 'certains protestants'. The classification of Laval as an 'aventurier' and supporter of 'fascisme de gauche' were further typologies in the range which Siegfried examined. Siegfried's analytical claim that Vichy was a multi-ideological regime does not imply that there was either a morally acceptable, or morally unacceptable, section within it. Simply, his argument indicates that support for Pétain was politically diverse.

In fact, like Aron's and Elgey's work, Siegfried offered what I have identified as a negative double-game account. As in Histoire de Vichy, the political scientist accepted that Pétain had attempted to provide clandestine resistance. However, the characterisation was not enthusiastic. Sceptically, Siegfried questioned those who thought that the double-game had been a triumph. He wrote:

Dani sa conception de l'armée, des groupements militaires ou paramilitaires sur lesquels il s'appuie, le gouvernement apparaît bien comme le Janus à deux faces d'une politique de double jeu. Le maréchal n'est pas 'collaborateur'. Avec les militaires restés à ses côtés, il entreprend de refaire clandestinement une armée

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19 André Siegfried, De la IIIe à la IVe République, 85-87.
Siegfried felt that the double game had been marginal and, to an extent, dishonourable. For instance, elsewhere in the text he described it as the ‘mesquin double jeu’. On this point the work was significantly different from the extreme right-wing current’s portrayal. Historians like Rougier saw the regime’s strategies and gambits as having been relatively successful. Although the political scientist accepted that a double-game had been played, he was not convinced of its merits. For this reason it is a misconception to begin to align his representation with the extreme right-wing current of writing.

*Henri Michel’s Resistance*

*Histoire de la résistance* and *Les Idées politiques et sociales de la résistance* were influential scholarly publications. In the following pages I will question whether Michel’s writings in these works were open to ideological marking.

On a range of historical episodes, it is true that Henri Michel employs a Gaullist interpretation of history. This is the case in his writing on the 18 June 1940 broadcast. On this episode the historian’s description is very similar to those developed by mainstream Gaullists. In his single-authored ‘Que sais-je’ history of the resistance, he spoke of the appeal in the following terms:

Un appel à tous ceux qui voulaient continuer la lutte était ainsi lancé du seul pays encore dans la guerre à ce moment: il était notamment sous la formule: ‘la flamme de la Résistance française ne doit pas s’éteindre et ne s’éteindra pas’.

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20 Ibid., 98.

21 Ibid., 93.
At this critical juncture, Michel supported the Gaullist myth. His discourse overlapped with the classic view developed by Madaule, Cattaui, and de Gaulle that the resistance was inexorably born on the 18 June. The case was repeated in the subsequent co-edited history. For instance, in his introductory essay to the work, Michel argued that ‘peu à peu, la radio dite ‘anglaise’ jouant un rôle prépondérant dans ce rassemblement, tous les Résistants se considèrent comme les soldats du Général de Gaulle’. The equation which implied that all resisters had been under de Gaulle’s authority authenticated one of Gaullism’s core messages. Equally, it denied the veracity of the communists’ or the extreme right wing’s interpretations.

Furthermore, the historian’s sympathy did not only mean the approval of a selection of Gaullist views but also the de-legitimation of the PCF’s claim to represent the national resistance. Characterising the French Communist Party’s efforts in Les Idées politiques et sociales de la résistance, he instructed that their historiography was difficult to distinguish from propaganda. He explained that the communists’ actions between 1940 and 1941 had included a tentative acceptance of the German invasion and the Vichy regime. In a typical denunciation of the PCF’s Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact policy, Michel revealed that ‘l’autorisation sera demandée à Hitler, après l’armistice, de faire reparaitre l’Humanité’. Although he acknowledged the Party’s significant resistance after 1941, he adopted an anti-communist interpretation. Michel estimated that the PCF’s command had worked only for itself, and by implication not for the national community. For example, he wrote: ‘Bref, le Parti Communiste

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22 Henri Michel, Histoire de la résistance, 7.
23 Michel and Mirkine-Guetzévich, Les Idées politiques et sociales de la résistance, 23.
24 Ibid., 27.
joue toujours son propre jeu'. These assessments of the PCF are akin to those produced by mainstream Gaullist writers, including de Gaulle. That Michel not only supported the Gaullist view of itself but also rephrased the current's assessment of the PCF is indicative of his ideological alignment.

Nonetheless, Michel did not consistently advocate a crude Gaullist interpretation. For instance, he was less charitable towards the General's team in London. Unlike the picture established by orthodox Gaullist historians, he described the Free French group as an internally divided organisation. He questioned the group's cohesion: 'Ils sont trop divisés, trop éloignés les uns des autres pour constituer un tout véritable, trop peu nombreux aussi pour que les oppositions d'idées ou de personnes ne s'exaspèrent pas au contact quotidien et ne se durcissent pas la formation de clans rivaux'. This is not an equivalent view to the Gaullist interpretation in which they employed the Free French as a model for the RPF (see Chapter VI). These criticisms may suggest that Michel supported de Gaulle but wished to distance himself from his immediate political circle.

Secondly, Michel also underlined the diversity of ideological opinions which motivated resistance. He discussed resistance activity of all types and highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each group. His aim to examine all possible political shades is reflected in his selection of primary documents published in Les Idées politiques et sociales de la résistance. It included examples from communist resistance writings, as well as non-Gaullist right-wing texts. Similarly the introductory essay to the collection reviews 'La France libre'; 'Les Mouvement de Résistance'; 'Le Giraudisme'; 'Les Communistes'; 'Les Socialistes' and 'Des Partis Politiques'. Notwithstanding what we know of Michel's judgement of the PCF, this

\[25\] Ibid., 28.
\[26\] Ibid., 17.

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openness to the variety of resistance groups is very different from the discourse of the three dominant ideological currents. All of the activist historians claimed that their preferred political faction had been the major force in the resistance. They discussed the patriotic significance of their own movement whilst normally highlighting the threatening nature of the others. Michel does not always do this. In addition, he was also aware of the possibility of non-ideological motivations in resistance and the deep complexities of the period. For example, in a typical passage, he writes:

Mais l’adhésion à un Mouvement ne signifie pas l’acceptation, nullement exigée, des idées défendues dans le journal. En temps ordinaire, l’abonné d’un quotidien y retrouve des thèses qui lui sont chères; l’affilié à un Mouvement de Résistance, dans lequel il est entré le plus souvent par le hasard des rencontres et des amitiés, inclut dans ses tâches de militant la diffusion du journal du Mouvement, mais peut très bien refuser son accord à telle ou telle idée qui y est exprimée.27

This analysis is unusual. Despite Michel’s confluence with Gaullism, it marks his work apart from it. The majority of ideological historians did not recognise the historic subtleties which Michel was acknowledging in his work. The historian captures a similar tone in the penultimate chapter of Histoire de la résistance which discussed ‘Le Martyre de la Résistance’.28 Here, he reflects on the universal sacrifices of those who resisted. Describing the personal cost of resistance and the dangers of both the French police and the Gestapo, on this subject, the historian avoided using his account to privilege one type of political motivation over another. He ignored the claims of the PCF and the Rassemblement on the war dead. In their place, Michel portrayed an apolitical version of civic heroism.

27 Ibid., 6.
28 Henri Michel. Histoire de la résistance, 119-123.
In sum, Michel's publications combined a keen approval for de Gaulle's actions with a less partisan respect for all forms of resistance. The passage cited below illustrates both Michel's attempted neutrality and the influence of Gaullism on his work. In the final paragraph of *Histoire de la résistance* he writes:

Cependant, en annulant la défaite provisoire, en redonnant à la France sa place parmi les grandes nations, en écrivant quelques-unes des plus belles pages de son histoire militaire, en provoquant un renouveau des plus belles vertus civiques et patriotiques, la Résistance a bien mérité de la Patrie. 29

This conclusion did not categorise resistance as belonging to a single ideological formation. Instead Michel honoured 'la Résistance'. This was different from the communist historians' exclusive praise for the people's resistance or the mainstream Gaullist historians' propensity to conclude with discussions of General de Gaulle's contributions. To this extent Michel's writing did not correspond to either of these currents. Nevertheless, a tendency to support Gaullism is also evident. One can see that the actions which he associated with the honour of having fought in the secret war resemble the classic Gaullist explanations of why resistance had been necessary. As in the Gaullist current of historiography, Michel accounts for the debacle as a 'défaite provisoire'. Similarly, he shows that resistance restored the classic Gaullian values of national prestige and rank. Reproducing the Gaullist language, he classified the resistance period as having been a process of national recovery and patriotic pride. It had resulted in a 'renouveau des plus belles vertus civiques et patriotiques'. The influence of Gaullism on Michel's work cannot be ignored.

In the light of the three ideological currents, a refined evaluation of the work of Aron and Elgey, Siegfried, and Michel has emerged. Aspects of their histories developed extreme

29 Ibid., 127.
right-wing and Gaullist representations. However, this was not a simple propagation of either extreme right-wing or Gaullist views but rather a matter of subtle overlap. As exemplified in the final quotation from Michel, ideological shadings were nuanced and often balanced with less, or differently, coloured perspectives. This is the case in Aron's and Elgey's description of Pétain's 17 June speech and Michel's comments on the Free French group. In addition to using well-known politically marked arguments the historians frequently wrote about the war in ways which transcended the ideological codes with which they have been sometimes associated in the secondary literature.

**Writing Non-Ideologically-Coloured Accounts of the Occupation.**

Empirical evidence suggests that producing an ideology-free depiction of the occupation was highly problematic because of the network of political divisions which encased the key issues of the war experience. On almost any given topic a three-way ideological debate raged. This meant that historical assessments could be quickly labelled and associated with one of the dominant currents of interpretation. The cumulative effect of these types of interpretative polarisations was to make the historian walk an ideological tightrope. His or her examination of any topic was likely to either alienate or attract one of the three common ideological slants. A matrix of political convictions had captured the subject.

We can expand on Henry Rousso's comparison between the symbolic power of the Dreyfus Affair and Vichy.\(^\text{30}\) Whereas, broadly speaking the Dreyfus case produced Dreyfusard and Anti-Dreyfusard interpretations, the occupation period resulted in more complex divisions. The war and occupation was not a single legal case in which innocence or guilt had to be proved. Instead, over the period which the historians' charted, layer upon layer of ideological

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\(^{30}\) Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 335.
divisions and complex similarities were formed. De Gaulle’s flight to London, the nature of resistance and Vichy were all enmeshed in the conflicting representations of the ideological currents. Further controversies within the currents themselves complicated the more straightforward tri-polar cleavages. The historical meaning of a figure such as Pierre Laval provoked internecine fractures between extreme right-wing historians. The scale of the interpretative web which I have illustrated made disconnection from all of the established ideological views extremely difficult.

The power of the ideological historian’s grip on the occupation was self-perpetuating. When historians published new accounts, society judged them on their proximity to the well known fracture points. Classically, this was the case with Aron’s and Elgey’s *Histoire de Vichy*. It attracted support from the extreme right because it conformed to aspects of the group’s view of the period and openly contested Gaullist and communist representations. It did not matter that the work was also at variance with significant aspects of extreme right-wing dogma. New evidence, primary or secondary, was likely to be seen to legitimate or debunk one of the three ideological currents. Potentially, this meant that almost any portrayal of Vichy could be called into the service of an ideological argument. The polarities of debate had the power to filter writings on the occupation into ideological positions which were not always appropriate.

Despite this phenomenon, as I have illustrated in this chapter, it was possible to produce historical writing which at least partially voiced an ideology-free interpretation. There were signs that historians represented Vichy and resistance in ways that did not always comply with clearcut ideological assumptions. In comparison with works produced within the three dominant currents, Aron’s, Michel’s, and Siegfried’s books were less coloured. One can distinguish their texts from the ideological histories because of the variations of analysis,
flexibility of opinions, and inconsistencies of interpretation that they displayed. Whereas all of the ideological historians produced texts which maintained a complete ideological picture throughout their work, the examples which I have drawn out show that contradictory political signals coexisted in the pages of the more scholarly texts. The political inconsistencies in Aron’s, Siegfried’s and Michel’s writing would be almost inconceivable in the work of Thorez, de Gaulle or Benoist-Méchin. The variability of perspective demonstrated in the detailed examples analysed in this chapter suggests a move towards objectivity.
The use of the past by activists to portray and influence the politics of the present was a normal activity. The work of Maurice Thorez, Charles de Gaulle and Jacques Benoist-Méchin demonstrates that a vibrant and healthy political culture had been fully restored to France by the late 1940s.

Through charting the patterns of production, I have shown that inter-ideological confrontation was a consistent factor. Reaction to the extreme right wing’s publications stimulated political passions, with the example of the Taittinger affair illustrating the milieu of litigation, polemic and, more rarely, physical violence. De Gaulle’s war memoirs inspired similar responses from the left and right. This event launched a series of counter-projects, which included the intellectually skilled recuperation of Aron’s and Elgey’s Histoire de Vichy to the Pétainist agenda. These episodes support the view that the early post-war period witnessed a civil war between the ideologies, with their representatives dominating writing in the field. Ideological production was deeply marked by waves of claim and refutation.

Although all three currents published accounts, I have emphasised that the extreme right-wing historians produced books which were more influential than has been previously acknowledged. Historians such as Benoist-Méchin and Rougier found mainstream publishers who supported them, a fact which is further evidence of their current’s growing cultural confidence.

The thesis has shed new light on the figure of the activist historian and his writing. Comparative textual analysis of representative publications indicates the complex process of re-creating history. Writers offered accounts of the past which were both politically assertive and defensive. They sought to show their preferred ideological tradition in its best possible
light, while concealing those aspects of the national record which were likely to prove sensitive. Nonetheless, it has been a significant oversight in the secondary literature to equate this strategy with crude propagandising. A feature of each of the ideological currents was the range and detail of subject matter to be interpreted. The extensive analysis of structural features of the historiography has underlined the sophistication of the ideological producers.

As we have seen, when it was advantageous to do so, particularly in writing on the debacle, historians of different ideological opinions shared perspectives. The writers were conscious of each other’s viewpoints; with communists and extreme right-wingers reacting to the Gaullists’ treatments of the 18 June broadcast. Moreover, the common desire to present the past as a model for future engagement linked each of the ideological currents. While it was always unlikely for a consensus to develop around the meaning of an event as symbolically important as the liberation, this thesis has shown that comparable rhetorical presentations of the episode formed across the currents. In short, the different groups of activist historians were sharp minded, even sometimes witty, manufacturers of persuasion. As such they employed similar rhetorical devices to prove their case.

Several avenues of further research in the study of ideological engagement and historiography present themselves. The detailed analysis of the three ideological currents contained here opens the way for comparison with the political colouring found in other media, for example, in the early filmic portrayals of Vichy France. Given the nuanced understanding of each ideological current’s interpretation which has been offered, further analysis may or may not suggest the political proximities of fictional pieces which resonate with the legacies of Vichy, such as Malle’s *Ascenseur pour l’échafaud*, or the first documentaries of the period like Resnais’s *Nuit et brouillard*. Similarly, new research could examine the continued history of ideological interpretation of the war into the Fifth Republic. In the light of the detailed
picture of the activist historians’ work in the period before the Algerian crisis, questioning whether decolonisation significantly altered the equivalent treatments produced during the 1960s may prove valuable.

Analysis of centre left publications in contrast with the PCF’s or Gaullists’ interpretations represents another possible direction for supplementary research. However, given that recent historiographic debate has centred on Aron and to a lesser extent Michel, a number of conclusions about their work can be drawn. The writers of a more neutral type should not be confused with outright political activists. While their interpretations are close to the ideological representations, they do not replicate them. It is a misconception to cast *Histoire de Vichy* as an example of a purely slanted text. This is a question of gradation of ideological shading. When the work of Aron and Michel reflected common politically coloured opinions, this was a sign of influence but not of unmitigated commitment.

Following the interpretation provided by Henry Rousso, the study has shown that throughout the Fourth Republic historical interpretation was often based on factors related to inter-ideological conflict. However, one cannot confirm Rousso’s view that de Gaulle’s *Mémoires de guerre* and Aron’s and Elgey’s *Histoire de Vichy* quietened the controversies of the immediate post-liberation era, or in any sense heralded a repression of debate. As has been shown, the events which surrounded the release of both volumes of de Gaulle’s memoirs suggest a climate of heightened ideological activity and discussion of the meaning of both Vichy and the resistance. In addition, despite the many functional and structural commonalities which have been identified across ideological boundaries, one cannot agree with those scholars who have used Rousso’s work to argue that a single national glorification of the resistance united French political culture at this time. Instead, the ideological historians continued their debates, using all manner of rhetorical device to pursue their different causes.
While some in the governmental offices of the Fourth Republic may have wished to modernise, the politically committed historians devoted their careers to arguing that the occupation remained significant. They told their readers that the past contained lessons for the present. This common investment in the belief that historical understanding provided answers to contemporary questions meant that the subject of the occupation retained significance and excitement, at least until a new national drama was played out in 1958.
APPENDIX I: THE APPEL DE MAURICE THOREZ ET JACQUES DUCLOS, AUGUST 1940, AS CITED IN NOGUERES, HISTOIRE DE LA RESISTANCE JUIN1940-JUIN1941, 461-467.

PEUPLE DE FRANCE!

Notre Pays connaît maintenant les terribles conséquences de la politique criminelle suivie par des gouvernants indignes, responsables de la guerre, de la défaite, de l’occupation. Des milliers et des milliers de jeunes gens et de pères de familles sont tombés, des milliers et des milliers d’évacués chassés de leurs foyers ont connu le plus lamentable des exodes sur les routes de France, de nombreuses villes, de nombreux villages ont été détruits, des malades et des blessés souffrent dans les hôpitaux, des centaines de milliers de prisonniers se morfondent loin de leur famille, des veuves, des vieux parents, des orphelins pleurent leurs disparus. La France meurtrie, douloureuse, trahie par ses dirigeants, subit la rançon de la défaite.

La clique des dirigeants banqueroutiers de la politique de guerre a bénéficié de l’appui de tous les partis, unis dans une même besogne de trahison et dans une même haine de la classe ouvrière et du communisme. Le Parti Radical avec ses Daladiers, ses Bonnet, ses Chautemps et ses Chichery; le Parti Socialiste avec ses Blums, ses Sérol, ses Ziromsky, ses Paul Faure; les partis de droite avec Flandin, Marin, Fernand Laurent, Laval, Chiappe; l’U.S.R., avec Frossard, De Monzie, Déat, Marquet; le P.S.F., avec la Rocque et Ybarnegaray; la bande à Doriot et les chefs usurpateurs de la C.G.T., les Jouhaux, Belin, Dumoulin, etc., sont tous responsables des malheurs de la France.

La malédiction de tout un peuple trahi monte vengeresse, vers ces hommes qui ont voulu la guerre et préparé la défaite.

A cause de ces hommes, la moitié du territoire français subit l’occupation de l’armée allemande, aux frais de la France, comme l’indique le traité d’armistice.

A cause de ces hommes, le Peuple de France connaît l’humiliation de cette occupation et ne se sent pas chez lui. Il voit, en même temps, que le Gouvernement de traiîtres et de venus qui siège à Vichy en attendant de venir à Versailles, pour imiter le sinistre Thiers, mise sur des concours extérieurs pour se maintenir au pouvoir contre la volonté de la Nation.

Mais rien ne pourra empêcher que les comptes soient réglés et les masses laborieuses en demandant que la France soit aux Français expriment à la fois la volonté d’indépendance de tout un peuple et sa ferme résolution de se débarrasser à tout jamais de ceux qui l’ont conduit à la catastrophe.
SEULS, LES COMMUNISTES ONT LUTTE CONTRE LA GUERRE!

Seul, debout dans la tempête, fidèle à sa politique de paix, notre Grand Parti Communiste s’est dressé contre la guerre, comme il s’était dressé seul contre l’occupation de la Ruhr par Poincaré, parce qu’il a toujours été contre l’oppression d’un peuple par un autre peuple.

Nous, Communistes, nous avons défendu le Pacte germano-soviétique parce qu’il était un facteur de paix, et dès le premier mois de la guerre, alors que la répression s’était abattue sur nous, face à tous les profiteurs, affairistes et politiciens pour qui la guerre était une fructueuse entreprise nous avons réclamé la paix par l’envoi d’une lettre des Députés Communistes au Président de la Chambre.

C’est pour cela que ces députés ont été emprisonnés et condamnés, c’est pour cela que des milliers de communistes ont été jetés dans les cachots et les camps de concentration cependant que, sous la menace de la prison et du peloton d’exécution, nos militants ont continué vaillamment la lutte pour la Paix.

Désormais, chaque Français est à même de constater que si les propositions communistes, toutes de clairvoyance et de sagesse, avaient été suivies, la guerre avec ses désastres aurait été épargnée à notre pays. Mais les gouvernants français qui n’ont pas voulu la paix, ne se sont pas préparés à la guerre et ont sciemment organisé la trahison.


Seul, un Parti a vu clair, seul un Parti a eu raison, seul, un Parti n’a été ni dupe, ni complice, seul un Parti a eu le courage de lutter; ce Parti, c’est le Parti Communiste Français, Parti du Peuple, au service du Peuple.

LA FRANCE VEUT VIVRE LIBRE ET INDEPENDANTE

La France encore toute sanglante veut vivre libre et indépendante.
Le peuple de France veut régler lui-même, conformément à ses traditions et à son génie, les questions sociales et politiques surgies de la tradition des classes possédantes. La France ne veut pas être mise au pas par les aventuriers de Vichy.
Jamais un grand peuple comme le nôtre ne sera un peuple d’esclaves et si, malgré la terreur, ce peuple a su, sous les formes les plus diverses, montrer sa réprobation de voir la France enchaînée au char de l’impérialisme britannique, il saura signifier aussi à la bande actuellement au pouvoir, sa volonté d’être libre.
Les politiciens, civils et militaires, à la solde du capitalisme ont conduit le Peuple de France à la guerre sous prétexte de défendre la liberté et, aujourd’hui, ils imposent leur dictature, parce qu’ils ne veulent pas rendre de comptes, parce qu’ils veulent que les ploutocrates puissent s’enrichir de la défaite comme ils se sont enrichis de la guerre.
Cela ne doit pas être; cela ne sera pas! La France ne deviendra pas une sorte de pays colonisé; la France au passé si glorieux ne s’agenouillera pas devant une équipe de valets prête à toutes les besognes.

La France doit se relever, elle se relèvera; il le faut, dans l’intérêt même de la fraternité des peuples, que, de toutes nos forces, nous voulons.

La France doit se relever en tant que grand Pays avec son industrie et son agriculture. Aucun travailleur français ne pourrait admettre que soient anéanties ou laissées à l’abandon les richesses industrielles de la France qui doivent revenir à la collectivité nationale.

La France doit se relever, mais elle ne se relèvera que par le travail et dans la liberté. Les usines doivent rouvrir et travailler pour les besoins quotidiens des hommes; les paysans doivent être ramenés à leur terre d’où la guerre les a chassés en grand nombre. Ce n’est pas en enrôlant des jeunes gens, ainsi que semblent vouloir le faire les traîtres de Vichy, pour les amener à la campagne, comme des serfs, que seront résolus les problèmes économiques posés devant notre pays.

La France doit se relever pour être une terre de travail et de liberté, mais non une terre de servitude et de misère.

**QUI DONC PEUT RELEVER LA FRANCE?**

Qui peut relever la France? C’est la question qui se pose.

Ce ne sont ni le généraux battus, ni les affairistes, ni les politiciens tarés qui peuvent relever la France; ils ne sont bons qu’à la trahir et à la vendre. Ce n’est pas dans les milieux corrompus du capitalisme que peuvent se trouver les éléments de la renaissance nationale. C’est dans le peuple que résident les grands espoirs de libération nationale et sociale.

Et c’est seulement autour de la classe ouvrière ardente et généreuse, pleine de confiance et de courage, parce que l’avenir lui appartient; c’est seulement autour de la classe ouvrière guidée par le Parti Communiste, Parti de propreté, d’honneur et d’héroïsme, que peut se constituer le Front de la Libérée, de l’Indépendance et de la Renaissance de la France.

Nous appelons à s’unir pour sauver notre pays, pour l’arracher des mains de ceux qui l’ont conduit au désastre, les Paysans, les Petites Gens qui ont été si abominablement trompés par le Parti Radical, les Travailleurs socialistes que le Parti de Blum et de Paul Faure ainsi que les chefs traiรส de la C.G.T., ont placés à la remorque des potentats du capital, les travailleurs chrétiens à qui les princes de l’Église ont prêché la confiance en des gouvernants indignes, tous les Français honnêtes qui veulent que la France se relève et se libère des chaînes du capitalisme qui a préparé le désastre pour détruire les conquêtes sociales de 1936.

L’Unité de la Nation peut se faire. Elle doit se faire et elle peut se faire tout de suite, pour alléger le fardeau de misère qui pèse sur notre pays.

Que tous les hommes et les femmes de bonne volonté, que les vieux et les jeunes s’unissent à la ville, au village, partout, en des comités populaires de solidarité et d’entraide, pour organiser l’assistance aux réfugiés, aux malheureux, aux démobilisés, aux chômeurs, aux malades, aux blessés; pour organiser le ravitaillement qui, dans de nombreuses communes isolées n’est pas assuré; pour créer d’un bout à l’autre du Pays, un esprit de solidarité fraternelle fondé sur le principe ‘Un pour tous, tous pour un’.
LA FRANCE AU TRAVAIL

Mais s'il faut panser les plaies, il faut aussi reconstruire; reconstruire pour le bien de la collectivité et non pour fournir l'occasion de nouveaux profits aux maîtres et protégés de ces Messieurs du gouvernement de Vichy.

Il faut remettre la France au travail, mais en attendant, il faut assurer le pain quotidien aux sans-travail. Et pour remettre le pays au travail il faut mobiliser les ressources de la Nation, en confisquant tous les bénéfices de guerre et en effectuant un prélèvement massif sur les grosses fortunes.

Il faut remettre la France au travail, mais pour cela les voleurs capitalistes doivent être mis hors d'état de nuire, les mines, les banques, les chemins de fer, les chutes d'eau et autres grosses entreprises doivent être restitués à la Nation.

Il faut remettre la France au travail, mais pour cela il faut assurer aux petits et moyens paysans des livraisons d'engrais à bas prix, livraisons que rendrait possible le retour à la collectivité nationale des industries chimiques et il faut aussi remettre à ceux qui les travaillent les grosses propriétés foncières appartenant aux banquiers, seigneurs et autres exploitants du Peuple.

Il faut remettre la France au travail, mais pour cela il faut que les pouvoirs publics au lieu de se désintéresser du sort des paysans fassent droit à leurs revendications:

a) paiement des récoltes détruites ou perdues du fait de la guerre; b) livraison de semences sélectionnées; c) paiement de dommages pour la reconstruction des maisons détruites et le renouvellement des instruments aratoires détrônez ou anéantis, ce qui donnera du travail à de nombreux ouvriers; d) livraison d'animaux aux paysans sinistrés pour la reconstitution du cheptel; e) versement d'une indemnité aux petits paysans sinistrés pour qu'ils puissent vivre en attendant la prochaine récolte.

Il faut remettre la France au travail, sans subordonner la reprise de l'activité économique du pays au profit des capitalistes, et en s'attaquant, au contraire, aux privilèges des classes possédantes.

LES DROITS DU PEUPLE

Le peuple a le droit d'exiger que son travail profite à la collectivité et non à quelques parasites capitalistes, et il a le droit de demander des comptes à ceux qui ont fait le malheur du pays, fauteurs et profiteurs de guerre, ministres d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, généraux traîtres et incapables.

Le Peuple a le droit d'exiger la mise en accusation des responsables de la guerre et des désastres de la France.

Le Peuple a le droit d'exiger la libération des défenseurs de la Paix et le rétablissement dans leurs droits et fonctions des élus qui ont combattu la guerre.

Le Peuple a le droit d'exiger l'abrogation des mesures de dissolution prises contre les groupements politiques, syndicaux, coopératifs, culturels et autres en raison de leur hostilité à la guerre.

Le Peuple a le droit d'exiger le rétablissement des libertés syndicales et le rétablissement dans leurs fonctions des délégués élus et des conseillers prud'hommes déchus.
par le gouvernement des fauteurs de guerre.

Le Peuple a le droit d’exiger la parution en toute liberté des journaux en qui il avait
c confiance, qui lui disaient la vérité et qui ont été interdits à cause de cela.

Le Peuple a le droit d’exiger que soient reconnus les droits sacrés des mutilés, des
veuves, des orphelins, des vieux parents dont le fils a été tué. Les victimes de la guerre ne
laisseront pas Pétain déclarer que l’État ne fera rien pour elles en même temps que les
profiteurs de guerre gardent les milliards volés au Pays.

Mais ces droits, le Peuple devra les imposer par son union et par son action.

**UNE PAIX VERITABLE**

Le Peuple français qui paie si cher les crimes des fauteurs de guerre, veut de toutes ses
forces la Paix dans l’indépendance complète et réelle de la France. Il n’y a de paix véritable
que dans l’indépendance des peuples, et les Communistes qui revendiquent pour la France le
droit à son indépendance proclament aussi le droit à l’indépendance des peuples coloniaux
asservis par les impérialistes.

Au surplus, le Peuple de France peut constater que c’est guidés par la haine du peuple
que les gouvernants français nous ont conduits à la guerre et se préparaient à attaquer le Pays
du Socialisme comme le prouvent les télégrammes échangés entre Gamelin et Weygand sur le
bombardement de Bakou et de Batoum.

L’U.R.S.S., de Lénine et de Staline, pays du Socialisme et espoir des travailleurs du
monde est le rempart de la Paix comme elle vient de le montrer une fois de plus en réglant
pacifiquement avec la Roumanie la question de la Bessarabie et de la Bukovine du Nord. En
défendant le pacte Germano-Soviétique, en août 1939, nous avons opposé à la politique des
fauteurs de guerre la politique stalinienne de Paix et aujourd’hui nous avons conscience de
servir la cause de la paix et de l’indépendance de notre pays, en demandant la conclusion d’une
pacte d’amitié franco-soviétique.

**UN GOUVERNEMENT DU PEUPLE**

Pour relever la France, pour remettre la France au travail, pour assurer son
indépendance dans la Paix, pour assurer la sauvegarde des droits du Peuple, pour libérer notre
pays des chaînes de l’exploitation capitaliste et de l’oppression il faut chasser le Gouvernement
de traîtres et de valets dont le chef Pétain a dit cyniquement aux blessés, aux refugiés, à ceux
qui ont tout perdu: ‘l’État ne pourra rien pour vous.’

Le gangster de la politique Laval, le radical staviskrate Chautemps, les Socialistes
Rivière et Février, le P.S.F., Ybarneagaray et autres politiciens vendus à la Frossard et à la
Marquet ont imposé la Constitution de Vichy pour faire peser sur le Peuple de France la
dictature des forbans.

Avec la Constitution de ces Messieurs, plus de liberté d’opinion, de presse,
d’association, plus de libertés syndicales, plus de pensions pour les anciens combattants, plus
d’assurances sociales, plus d’élections pour désigner les membres de la Chambre qui seront
nommés par les Ministres, et puis enfin, un seul parti autorisé, le Parti de Laval, La Rocque.
Doriot, Chautemps, Frossard, Rivière, Février et Cie.

La complicité du Parti Radical et du Parti Socialiste a permis à Pétain de se faire nommer dictateur, mais derrière lui c’est Laval, son remplaçant éventuel, qui détient le pouvoir. A peine les Ministres radicaux et socialistes avaient-ils assuré l’étranglement des libertés publiques qu’ils disparaissaient de la scène pour laisser la place aux réactionnaires Lémery et Piétri et à M.Mireaux, directeur du Temps, ‘la bourgeoisie faite journal’, comme disait autrefois Jules Guesde.

Ce Gouvernement de honte où se retrouvent aux côtés de militaires battus, les Bazaine de 1940, et aux côtés d’affairistes notoires, des politiciens tarés, déshonore la France.

Voilà travailleurs et démocrates français les résultats de la politique de Daladier, Blum, et consorts qui, en frappant le Parti Communiste français, ont préparé la destruction des libertés républicaines dans notre pays et viennent d’aider Laval, Marquet et Weygand à devenir les maîtres de la France.

Mais le Peuple de France ne se laissera pas faire. A la ville, dans les campagnes, dans les usines, dans les casernes doit se former le front des hommes libres contre la dictature des forbans.

A la porte le gouvernement de Vichy! A la porte le gouvernement des ploutocrates et des profiteurs de guerre!

C’est un tout autre gouvernement qu’il faut à la France.

Un gouvernement que l’unité de la Nation rendra possible demain; un gouvernement qui sera le Gouvernement de la renaissance nationale composé d’hommes honnêtes et courageux, de travailleurs manuels et intellectuels n’ayant trempé en rien dans les crimes et combinaisons malpropres de la guerre; un gouvernement du Peuple, tirant sa force du Peuple, du Peuple seul, et agissant exclusivement dans l’intérêt du Peuple.

Voilà ce que pense le Parti Communiste, voilà ce qu’il te dit, Peuple de France, en ces heures douloureuses en t’appelant à t’unir dans tes Comités populaires de solidarité et d’entraide, dans les syndicats, dans les usines, les villes, les villages, sans oublier jamais que, tous unis, nous relèverons la France, nous assurerons sa liberté, sa prospérité et son indépendance.

Sous le signe de la lutte contre le régime capitaliste, générateur de misère et de guerre, d’exploitation et de corruption, qui a déjà disparu sur un sixième du Globe, en U.R.S.S., sous le signe de la fraternité des Peuples, nous serons les artisans de la renaissance de la France.

A bas le capitalisme générateur de misère et de guerre!
Vive l’unité de la Nation Française.
Vive la France libre et indépendante.
Vive le Parti Communiste Français, espoir du Peuple de France.
Vive le Gouvernement du Peuple, au service du Peuple!

**AU NOM DU COMITE CENTRAL DU PARTI COMMUNISTE FRANCAIS:**

**MAURICE THOREZ**
Secrétaire Général

**JACQUES DUCLOS**
Secrétaire
**Appel du général de Gaulle aux Français - Le 18 juin 1940**

Les chefs qui, depuis de nombreuses années, sont à la tête des armées françaises ont formé un gouvernement.

Ce gouvernement, alléguant la défaite de nos armées, s’est mis en rapport avec l’ennemi pour cesser le combat.

Certes, nous avons été, nous sommes, submergés par la force mécanique, terrestre et aérienne, de l’ennemi.

Infiniment plus que leur nombre, ce sont les chars, les avions, la tactique des Allemands qui nous font reculer. Ce sont les chars, les avions, la tactique des Allemands qui ont surpris nos chefs au point de les amener là où ils en sont aujourd’hui.

Mais le dernier mot est-il dit? L’espérance doit-elle disparaître? La défaite est-elle définitive? Non!

Croyez-moi, moi qui vous parle en connaissance de cause et vous dis que rien n’est perdu pour la France. Les mêmes moyens qui nous ont vaincus peuvent faire venir un jour la victoire.

Car la France n’est pas seule! Elle n’est pas seule! Elle n’est pas seule! Elle a un vaste Empire derrière elle. Elle peut faire bloc avec l’Empire britannique qui tient la mer et continue la lutte. Elle peut, comme l’Angleterre, utiliser sans limites l’immense industrie des États-Unis.

Cette guerre n’est pas limitée au territoire malheureux de notre pays. Cette guerre n’est pas tranchée par la bataille de France. Cette guerre est une guerre mondiale. Toutes les fautes, tous les retards, toutes les souffrances, n’empêchent pas qu’il y a, dans l’univers, tous les moyens pour écraser un jour nos ennemis. Foudroyés aujourd’hui par la force mécanique, nous pourrons vaincre dans l’avenir par une force mécanique supérieure. Le destin du monde est là.

Moi, général de Gaulle, actuellement à Londres, j’invite les officiers et les soldats français qui se trouvent en territoire britannique ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver, avec leurs armes ou sans leurs armes, j’invite les ingénieurs et les ouvriers spécialistes des industries d’armement qui se trouvent en territoire britannique ou qui viendraient à s’y trouver, à se mettre en rapport avec moi.

Quoi qu’il arrive, la flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s’éteindre et ne s’éteindra pas.

Demain, comme aujourd’hui, je parlerai à la radio de Londres.


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251


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