



**National Regeneration in Vichy France:
The Appeals to Renewal and Sirens of Decline**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses plans for national regeneration in Vichy France through the ideals that inspired them and the forces that shaped them during the 1930s and under the German Occupation. The thesis argues that Vichy's National Revolution was a complex mixture of reform agendas that cannot be understood as a single programme or coherent philosophy. Nevertheless, the National Revolution had ambitious aims to build a new political culture, reshape economic and power structures, change the pattern of social order and redefine French national identity; aims that reveal important continuities in French political and intellectual history. The thesis shows that, both before and after the defeat of 1940, the language of regeneration was a unifying force for the right and gave the impression of consensus, especially in times of crisis. Catchwords that warned of decline and appealed for renewal were used by a wide spectrum of the right during the 1930s. The catchwords illustrate the points at which right wing thought coalesced, especially in opposition to the Third Republic and in reaction to fears of national decline. However, analysis of the intellectual debate behind the catchwords reveals extremely broad and ambiguous reform agendas. The catchwords therefore served to disguise the diversity and divisions of the right. Under the Occupation, the catchwords and language of regeneration provided Vichy with a ready made framework for its reforms: they gave the National Revolution an intellectual provenance and a degree of energy and autonomy from Nazi models. However, when Vichy had the opportunity to turn the ideals of regeneration into policy, the divisions of the right became apparent. The catchwords could not long disguise the incoherence of the government's thinking or its policy failures. The harsh realities of the war and Occupation and the demands of Vichy's own pursuit of collaboration exacerbated the differences in reform agendas. The National Revolution must therefore be understood not only in intellectual terms but in the social, political and economic context of the Occupation, its shifting power structures, its rivalries and its delusions.

This thesis contains no material which has been submitted for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Debbie Lackerstein

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AN	<i>Archives Nationales de France</i>
BN	<i>Bibliothèque Nationale de France</i>
CF	<i>Criox de Feu</i>
CGQJ	<i>Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives</i>
CGT	<i>Confédération Générale du Travail</i>
FNC	<i>Fédération Nationale Catholique</i>
FNSP	<i>Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques</i>
IEQJ	<i>Institute pour l'Etude des Questions Juives</i>
JNP	<i>Jeunesse Nationale Populaire</i>
JO	<i>Journal Officiel</i>
LVF	<i>Légion des Volontaires Français</i>
MSR	<i>Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire</i>
PPF	<i>Parti Populaire Français</i>
PRO	<i>Public Record Office</i>
PSF	<i>Parti Social Français</i>
RNP	<i>Rassemblement National Populaire</i>
SF	<i>Solidarité Française</i>
SGJ	<i>Secrétariat Générale de la Jeunesse</i>
SOL	<i>Service d'ordre légionnaire</i>
STO	<i>Service du Travail Obligatoire</i>

Introduction

Regeneration

Nous avons à restaurer la France. Montrez-la au monde qui l'observe, à l'adversaire qui l'occupe, dans tout son calme, tout son labeur et toute sa dignité ... C'est à un redressement intellectuel et moral que, d'abord, je vous convie. Français, vous l'accomplirez et vous verrez, je le jure, une France neuve surgir de votre ferveur.
Marshall Philippe Pétain, Armistice speech, 25 June 1940.

A French government ruled France during the 'dark years' of German occupation from 1940-1944. The Etat Français, more commonly known as the Vichy regime, was not imposed on a defeated nation by its occupiers and cannot be dismissed as a temporary aberration in French history: it was neither illegitimate nor a mere Nazi puppet. Vichy's creation was extraordinary but strictly legal and it rested on popular support, though the support attached personally to Pétain, rather than to the regime in general, and it declined rapidly from 1941 when the deprivations of occupation began to bite.

The creators of the Vichy regime, and those who subsequently led it, did not intend merely to shield France from the worst effects of military defeat and occupation. They, including Pétain himself, believed in, initiated and actively pursued political collaboration with the German occupiers. The leaders of Vichy were inspired by a will to regenerate France and they designed the new laws and reform initiatives that made up the far-reaching programme that they called the National Revolution. Though there were many agendas at Vichy and though the National Revolution was a jumble of different and competing projects, its aim was clear: to establish an authoritarian new

order that would repair the degenerative effects of parliamentary democracy and liberal society. In such ideals, as well as in the personnel who served it, the regime carried clear continuities from the Third Republic, through its four year existence and on to future, post-war governments. The ideals that inspired Vichy were deeply rooted in French political culture.

These conclusions about the nature of Vichy had to overcome a historiography that characterised the regime as foreign and, above all, insignificant in comparison to the heroic Resistance that had continued the true pattern of French history.¹ Such insights rest largely on the seminal work of Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* which, though it was first published in 1972, still remains the bedrock for studies of the Vichy regime. All academic histories of Occupied France acknowledge Paxton's influence on the scholarship of the period and most have built upon his legacy. Paxton exposed the true nature of the regime. He showed Vichy to have been a complex mix of 'old' conservative and reactionary forces and 'new' modernising influences, all with strong continuities in French history. He judged France to have been unique among occupied nations in attempting to carry out 'a domestic revolution in institutions and values' and he revealed the unacknowledged truth of its aims: 'Vichy was more than a repair job ... Vichy was not a Band-Aid. It was deep surgery'.²

Paxton was not the first to examine Vichy. The great impact of his study, however, lay in its challenge to any heroic interpretation of the regime's aims, in its

¹ Beginning with the Gaullist government's creation of the Comité d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale as early as October 1944, only two months after the Liberation of Paris, historical study of the Occupation focused on the Resistance and created a heroic myth. This myth, which persisted until the 1970s, held that the majority of French men and women had resisted German occupation while a small and insignificant minority had collaborated. In 1971 Marcel Ophüls released his ground breaking documentary film, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, which revealed another face of Occupation: that the majority of the French population had not been *résistant* but at best *attentiste*, concerned with their own survival and profit and sympathetic to Vichy. However, French television refused to air the documentary until 1981. Vichy continued to be neglected by academic historians and generally ignored, except in the memoirs and writing of protagonists and supporters.

² Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 20. Several leading historians of the era have assessed Paxton's legacy in the Symposium in Honor of Robert Paxton held at Columbia University in 1997, the proceedings of which are published in Sarah Fishman *et al.* (eds), *France at War: Vichy and the Historians* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

synthesis of important previous insights and in its opening of scholarly enquiry into long-neglected and new fields of study.

The first major study of Vichy, Robert Aron's *Histoire de Vichy*, written in 1954, attempted to redeem certain elements of the government.³ Before the defeat, Aron had been a leading nonconformist intellectual and critic of the Third Republic and, but for the fact that he was Jewish and eventually had to flee its persecution, he found himself largely sympathetic to Pétain's reformist aims in 1940. Aron portrayed Pétain as a patriotic 'shield' behind whom the Resistance fought for liberation, protecting France not only against German domination but also against the pro-collaboration forces of Laval.

From the mid-1950s, but very slowly, a truer picture of the Vichy regime began to emerge through the first stirring of academic interest. Though none attempted a comprehensive history, a number of scholars produced important insights into aspects of the regime, its aims, divisions and pre-war antecedents. Stanley Hoffmann's ground-breaking studies of the turmoil of the 1930s, the competing factions under Vichy and the nature and various strands of collaboration were published as articles from the mid-1950s but not collected in a single volume until 1974 under the title, *Decline or Renewal?*⁴ That Vichy was not merely a German puppet and that collaboration was pursued by the French and by Pétain himself was clearly established by Eberhard Jäckel in *La France dans l'Europe de Hitler*, first published in German in 1966.⁵ Initial enquiries into Vichy's formation and policies appeared at around the same time, a notable example being Henri Michel's study of the regime's first six months.⁶ However, a comprehensive picture of government structures, policies and personnel was still lacking. An important step in this direction was made in 1970 when the *Fondation nationale des sciences politiques* held a colloquium on the Vichy government. The

³ Robert Aron, *Histoire de Vichy, 1940-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1954), published in English as *The Vichy Régime, 1940-1944* (London: Putnam and Co., 1958).

⁴ Stanley Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France Since the 1930s* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

⁵ Eberhard Jäckel, *La France dans l'Europe de Hitler* (Paris: Fayard, 1968).

⁶ Henri Michel, *Vichy, année 1940* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1966).

proceedings, published in 1972, remain an important source of information on government structures and they include the perspective of several Vichy protagonists who had championed various reform agendas from before the defeat.⁷

An explosion of research and writing on Vichy France followed the publication of Paxton's work. Yet, in the assessment of Julian Jackson, whose highly comprehensive yet nuanced account of France's 'dark years' synthesised the vast scholarship of the period, subsequent work has refined, rather than challenged Paxton's interpretations, producing a more complex picture of social, political and cultural attitudes under the Occupation.⁸ Jackson's *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* is impressive in its integration of the broad scholarship that now exists on Vichy and the author identifies three phases in that scholarship: the first, begun by Paxton, concentrated on the nature of the regime; the second, from the late 70s, on public opinion and different social groups; and the third, from the mid-80s, on the social and cultural interaction between the regime and the people. Jackson's work furthers this scholarship and includes the Resistance. His work is particularly strong in drawing out the many 'shades of grey', the complexities and ambiguities that are integral to the dark years, and in showing how they developed from social anxieties as well as a will to 'rethink' France before the defeat.

Between Paxton and Jackson, work on the nature of the regime has made important steps in fleshing-out reform policies and those who championed them and in clarifying the many divisions amongst collaborators. Studies of specific policies, individuals and groups are too numerous to detail here and are referenced under the relevant chapters, but special note should be made of several works that broke new ground and have stood the test of time. W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, did much to illuminate the broader nature of the regime and it remains the best study of

⁷ Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, *Le Gouvernement de Vichy 1940-1942* (Paris: FNSP, 1972).

⁸ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Introduction, especially pp. 9-16.

Vichy's highly important and diverse policies for the young.⁹ Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton in *Vichy France and the Jews*, pioneered the neglected truth of Vichy's policy towards the Jews and revealed the extent to which the regime was independent of German control and supported by public opinion.¹⁰ In studies of collaboration, important works clarified the politics and culture of collaboration and separated the ideologically driven collaborationists from 'old guard' conservatives and from modernisers willing to work within the regime: Pascal Ory *Les Collaborateurs 1940-1945* was pioneering in the field; essays collected by Gerhard Hirshfeld and Patrick Marsh as *Collaboration in France*, launched the study of the politics and culture of collaboration; and Bertram M. Gordon *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War* remains indispensable to understanding the collaborationist groups and their dynamic.¹¹

Significant studies, often with a regional focus, have deepened our understanding of the experience of occupation. In this regard, John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation*, is outstanding in revealing the complexities of occupation.¹² Studies of public opinion have also helped to give a multi-dimensional picture of the regime: Pierre Laborie's work, especially *L'Opinion Française Sous Vichy*, is essential to understanding shifting attitudes and the policies that sought to control them.¹³ A broad and diverse coverage of aspects of life under Occupation and the centrality of the Vichy government in understanding that experience is achieved by many important contributors in the proceedings of the colloquium

⁹ W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

¹⁰ Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

¹¹ Pascal Ory, *Les Collaborateurs 1940-1945* (Paris: Seuil, 1976). Gerhard Hirshfeld and Patrick Marsh (eds), *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture During the Nazi Occupation 1940-44* (Oxford: Berg, 1989). Bertram M. Gordon, *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980).

¹² John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹³ Pierre Laborie, *L'Opinion Française Sous Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

organised by the *Institut d'histoire du temps présent* in 1990 and published under the editorship of Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida as *Vichy et les Français*.¹⁴

Several milestones in scholarship have also revealed a great deal about the dynamics of the regime. Laurent Gervereau and Denis Peschanski, in their analysis of propaganda, *La Propagande sous Vichy 1940-1944*, uncovered not only the means by which the government conveyed its messages and the various French and German agencies which competed with those messages, but also exposed an important dynamic of power that shaped and complicated the regime.¹⁵ Denis Peschanski has also written widely on repression as a constant in Vichy's policies. He has shown that its policies of control and persecution were part of its nature, more deeply ingrained from its inception as well as dictating its path in collaboration with the Germans: many of his essays are collected in his *Vichy 1940-1944: contrôle et exclusion*.¹⁶

Studies of opinion and attempts to manipulate it have exposed a broad range of diverse and shifting attitudes between the population, the state and the occupation forces and this has altered scholarly perspective on collaboration. France became disenchanted with Vichy more rapidly than was first thought and, though the population was in the main unsympathetic to the Germans, it adapted to 'accommodate' the Occupation in a complex web of interactions. This more subtle insight into the nature of collaboration at both the level of government and of the general population is achieved in Philippe Burrin's outstanding study of everyday accommodation with the demands of occupation, *France Under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*.¹⁷ Robert Gildea's *Marianne in Chains*, also adds to this more balanced understanding of the everyday mechanics of collaboration through a focus on German-French interrelations at

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (eds), *Vichy et les Français* (Paris: Fayard, 1992).

¹⁵ Laurent Gervereau and Denis Peschanski, *La Propagande sous Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: BDIC, 1990).

¹⁶ Denis Peschanski, *Vichy 1940-1944: contrôle et exclusion* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1997).

¹⁷ Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (New York: The New Press, 1996), first published in French under the title *La France à l'heure allemande* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993).

close quarters in a rural area of occupied France.¹⁸ Gildea, who seeks to redress the post-Paxton emphasis on the *guerre franco-française* by putting the Germans back into the equation, uncovers German attitudes, how they changed and how the population, particularly its notables, dealt with the Occupier and the complications of Vichy's legislation.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the intense spotlight of current affairs illuminated some of the darker aspects of France's Vichy past and at the same time focussed new arguments and interpretations of memory and commemoration.¹⁹ Several prominent French citizens, then at the end of their careers, saw their involvement in radical-right and collaborationist politics exposed or re-examined. Not the least of these was François Mitterand, France's Socialist and longest serving President. In 1994 Mitterand admitted that in his pre-war youth he had been attracted to the radical right and that under the Occupation, between his release as a prisoner of war and joining the Resistance, he had served the Vichy regime.²⁰ During the same period, the nature of the regime and the interpretations of its historians were also subjected to the scrutiny and manipulations of the criminal legal process when several public officials who had organised the deportation of Jews under Vichy were indicted and subsequently tried for crimes against humanity.²¹ These events stirred intense

¹⁸ Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation* (London: Macmillan, 2002).

¹⁹ The debate was begun by Henri Rousso who warned against replacing the myth of Vichy's insignificance with a new obsession with its memory: Henri Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), published in English as *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). The debates over memory and the process of France's reconciliation with its Vichy past are summarised and interpreted by Jackson, *France*, 'Epilogue', esp. pp. 608-25.

²⁰ Mitterand cooperated with the journalist, Pierre Péan, in the writing of his biography, *Une Jeunesse Française: François Mitterand 1934-1947* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1994). The book caused a sensation when it revealed the depth of Mitterand's involvement with right wing movements of the 1930s and his commitment to Vichy, but Péan's title is particularly interesting in its suggestion that Mitterand's choices as a French youth of the period were not out of the ordinary. Mitterand's admissions shed new light on his ambiguous attitudes towards Vichy: in 1992 he had refused an official apology for the state's involvement in the deportation of Jews (ironically, arguing the old Gaullist line that the Etat Français was not legitimate); he had voiced his distaste for the reopening of trials of collaborators and had delayed that of René Bousquet; and, on each Armistice day since 1987, he had had a wreath placed on Pétain's tomb: see Jackson, *France*, pp. 621-3.

²¹ Maurice Papon, Paul Touvier and René Bousquet were indicted for crimes against humanity in 1983, 1989 and 1991 respectively, though Papon's first indictment was quashed and he was reindicted in 1998. Bousquet was assassinated before he was brought to trial but Touvier (1994) and Papon

controversy and at the same time gave further evidence of the deep ambiguities that made reconciliation between contemporary France and its *années noires* so difficult.

In academic circles, the process of reconciliation was made all the more difficult by the problem of locating Vichy in the continuum of French history, particularly in its intellectual history. Paxton exposed the centrality of Vichy's regenerative aim and established many continuities that linked it to the pre-war regime. Subsequent analyses of Vichy's reform policies reinforced the continuities in personnel and agenda. But the breadth of Vichy's aims and the diversity of its ideals have made it difficult to define Vichy in intellectual terms or neatly locate it in the ideological spectrum. Indeed, Andrew Shennan in *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, has detailed continuities in reformist ideas not only between the Third Republic and Vichy but also with de Gaulle's Resistance and the post-war regime.²² In the realm of ideas, the era's 'shades of grey' blend one into the other without clear lines of separation.

A major problem in understanding the origins of reformist ideals under the Occupation is that they lie mostly in the turmoil of the inter-war period when intellectual and political lines were highly fluid, especially on the right. A growing sense of crisis fed a general radicalisation of politics and a politicisation of intellectual life. Amidst intense criticism of the Republic, a myriad of ideas for national renovation and revolution flourished and many of these resurfaced under Vichy. While there is a great deal of literature covering the inter-war years, little directly addresses the question of Vichy's origins. Julian Jackson is most successful in locating Vichy in the wider context of the previous forty to fifty years, exposing many of the roots or antecedents of reform initiatives under the Occupation. 'Anticipations', Part One of Jackson's *France: The Dark Years*, deals with the cultural impact of the Great War, divisions within, challenges to and attempts to reform or revive the Republic and the threat of Nazi

(1998) were found guilty, the first sentenced to life and the second to 10 years in prison. The first trial to test France's reconciliation with its past was that of a German, Klaus Barbie, the former Gestapo chief of Lyons, in 1987. See *ibid.*, pp. 615-8 and 623-5 and Richard R. Golson (ed.), *Memory, the Holocaust and French Justice: The Bousquet and Touvier Affairs* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1996).

²² Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Germany.²³ Such issues are the essential background to understanding many projects for regeneration after the defeat.

There is a rich and highly stimulating literature on the intellectual turmoil of the inter-war years which, though it does not always address Vichy directly, sheds light on ideals and reformist plans under the Occupation. Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle's *Les Non-Conformistes des années trente: une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* is a sound analysis of the young intellectuals who claimed to be forging a new political culture that was 'neither right nor left' and who continued writing or went on to play important roles under the Occupation.²⁴ More recently, Daniel Lindenberg in *Les Années Souterraines 1937-1940*, has provided a broader analysis of intellectual life under the looming shadow of war: his first two chapters are particularly evocative in capturing the tenor of those anxious times and, overall, Lindenberg conveys the deeply apocalyptic mentality of those intellectuals who were profoundly disappointed with French politics and society.²⁵

The fact that a significant number of intellectuals actively supported the Occupier after the defeat has been difficult to reconcile in a country where the role of the intellectual is so highly valued. There is a large number of fine biographies of fascist and right wing intellectuals who sought to influence the political and cultural tone of the 'dark years'. As a group, the intellectuals and their influence are assessed by Jean-François Sirinelli *Les intellectuels et passions françaises*, Pascal Ory & Jean-François Sirinelli *Les Intellectuels en France de l'Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* and Tony Judt *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956*.²⁶

The unique mix of politics and emotion that coloured the far-right literary scene is covered in Jeanine Verdès-Leroux's carefully researched *Refus et violences: Politique*

²³ See also Gérard Noiriel, *Les Origines républicaines de Vichy* (Paris: Hachette, 1999).

²⁴ Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes des années trente: une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

²⁵ Daniel Lindenberg, *Les Années Souterraines 1937-1940* (Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 1991).

²⁶ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels et passions françaises* (Paris: Fayard, 1990). Pascal Ory & Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France de l'Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992). Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); chapters 1 & 2 deal with the Third Republic, defeat and Occupation.

littéraire à l'extrême droite des années trente aux retombées de la Libération; but David Carroll's *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture* offers more insights into the nature of literary fascism.²⁷ The study of literary fascism, particularly in France where there was no dominant fascist party, has done much to illuminate the aesthetics, idealism and enthusiasm that formed part of the attraction of fascism and its appeal to regeneration. In this field Alice Yaeger Kaplan's, *Reproductions of Banality*, is outstanding.²⁸ Kaplan uncovers the utopian and communal appeal in the work of the most prominent literary fascists of the 1930s and 40s and, in identifying their sense of revolt against the dominant culture, draws out their differences with National Socialism and the classical, Maurrassian right.

However, literary studies are limited in their ability to place ideas in their full political context. Intellectual and political histories are more effective in analysing and assessing the impact and development of ideas in their specific context. A great deal of recent academic scholarship has centred on the history of the right, a comprehensive coverage of which can be found in Jean-François Sirinelli's edited three volume study, *Histoire des droites en France*.²⁹ In particular, an ongoing and heated debate concerns the definition and nature of fascism, the depth of its penetration in France and the degree to which it challenged traditional political structures in the inter-war period or 'infected' the Vichy regime. Excellent assessments of the historiography of fascism in France and sound, though in some respects opposing judgements of these questions can be found in Philippe Burrin's essay, 'Le Fascisme' in Sirinelli's *Histoire des droites* and in Robert Soucy's introduction to the second volume of his detailed study of fascist

²⁷ Jeanine Verdès-Leroux, *Refus et violences: Politique littéraire à l'extrême droite des années trente aux retombées de la Libération* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996). David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²⁸ Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

²⁹ Jean-François Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites en France: 1. Politique; 2. Cultures; 3. Sensibilités* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

movements and intellectuals between the wars, *French Fascism: The Second Wave 1933-1939*.³⁰

The definition of fascism is a vexed question. Robert Paxton's recent study, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, is not focused on France. However, Paxton's analysis of the disparate forms of fascism through various stages of development (he identifies five) contributes a great deal to the understanding of fascism generically as well as in specific contexts, including France: his conclusions are highly relevant to this thesis.³¹ In particular, as discussed in more detail below, Paxton situates fascism in relation to liberalism and conservatism and clarifies the relationship between, on the one hand, ideas and intellectuals and, on the other, pragmatic politics and power brokers.

Defining fascism in France has proved especially problematic. In France fascism took many political forms and a mature party or regime never developed, the result being that ideas play a relatively more important role in definition. Most French historians argue that fascism was imported, insignificant and never penetrated deeply: they therefore classify the majority of the inter-war extra-parliamentary and radical movements as something other than fascist—popular nationalism or Boulangism, for example—and regard Vichy as part of a French counter-revolutionary or Bonapartist tradition. Though he essentially ignored Vichy, France's 'immunity' to fascism was argued by René Rémond across a time scale spanning from the early fifties, when his classic account of the history of the right was first published, to its most recent rewriting in the early eighties, entitled *Les Droites en France*.³² Michel Winock essentially

³⁰ Philippe Burrin, 'Le Fascisme' in Sirinelli, *Histoire des droites en France: 1. Politique*, pp. 603-52. Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave 1933-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 1-25. See also Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave 1924-1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Specific issues in the definition of fascism will be more fully documented where they are most pertinent in this work: chapter 5 in particular deals with important subjects of dispute such as the leagues, revolutionary activism and the specific case of the Croix de Feu. The literature on fascism in France has also been analysed in several literature reviews. For work up until the late 1980s, see John F. Sweets, 'Hold that Pendulum!: Redefining Fascism, Collaborationism and Resistance in France', *French Historical Studies*, vol. XV:4 (Fall 1988), pp. 731-60. More recently, the literature concerning the traditional right, fascist movements and ideas is reviewed by Robert D. Zaretsky, 'Neither Left nor Right, nor Straight Ahead: Recent Books on Fascism in France', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73 (March 2001), pp. 118-32.

³¹ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).

³² René Rémond, *Les Droites en France* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982).

reinforces Rémond's interpretation that fascism was marginal and not native in France: several of his articles from the 1970s and 1980s have been recently collected in his *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Fascism in France*.³³ Philippe Burrin, while rejecting the 'immunity thesis' also argues the weakness of fascism in France.³⁴ Burrin's *La Dérive fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery 1933-1945*, a study of the political transition and collaborationist careers of three prominent political figures, is the best analysis of the so-called phenomenon of left-wing conversions to fascism during the 1930s and it is indispensable to understanding the aspirations of collaborationist leaders under the Occupation.³⁵ Pierre Milza's insightful study, *Fascisme français: passé et présent*, describes a more significant 'fascist impregnation' in France than initial studies first allowed, but still agrees with its essential marginality.³⁶

Important American, British and Israeli scholarship argues for a wider definition and deeper penetration of fascism. A major historical controversy concerning fascism in France was spurred in the 1980s by the publication of Zeev Sternhell's, *Ni droite ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France*.³⁷ While most studies stress the undisciplined nature of fascist thought and the importance of the political and social context of the inter-war years, Sternhell, in this and in earlier books, represents fascism as a coherent ideology, the origins of which can be traced back through a direct line of development to French intellectuals of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Sternhell argues that fascist ideas were widely held in France during the 1930s and that Vichy was fascist by choice.

³³ Michel Winock, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Fascism in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) (published in French in 1990). See also the collection of essays under his editorship, Michel Winock (ed.), *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993).

³⁴ Burrin, 'Le Fascisme' and Philippe Burrin, *Fascisme, Nazisme, Autoritarisme* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

³⁵ Philippe Burrin, *La Dérive fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery 1933-1945* (Paris: Seuil, 1986).

³⁶ Pierre Milza, *Fascisme français: passé et présent* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987).

³⁷ Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

³⁸ Sternhell has traced the origins of fascist ideology in France in three books which appeared from 1972 to 1983. They have been republished in a three volume set, the updated introductory essays addressing the wide debate that they stirred: Zeev Sternhell, *La France entre nationalisme et fascisme*: vol. 1, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*; vol. 2, *La droite révolutionnaire: les origines française du fascisme*; vol. 3, *Ni droite ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris, Fayard, 2001).

While Sternhell offers some valuable insights into similarities between conservative and fascist ideas, his definition and conclusions are too broad. A more comprehensive and balanced history of right wing intellectuals and fascism can be found in Robert Soucy's comprehensive two volume history, cited above. William D. Irvine has also provided important insights into the crisis of conservatism and its relation to fascism in several articles and a book, *French Conservatism in Crisis: The Republican Federation of France in the 1930s*.³⁹ Once again, a regional study has provided the basis for sound judgment and broader conclusions on the impact of the radical right on traditional politics in Kevin Passmore's, *From Liberalism to Fascism: The Right in a French Province, 1928-1939*.⁴⁰ These studies have convincingly focused the debate about the nature of fascism in France on the inter-war years and particularly on the 1930s.

The question of Vichy and fascism was addressed by Roger Bourderon before the debate on the nature of fascism in France became so acute, but his early article, 'Le Régime de Vichy, était-il-fasciste?', raises still relevant questions that have been taken up by subsequent authors and by many studies of the nature of the Vichy regime.⁴¹

The Vichy regime now has a rich and extensive historiography. Any study of the nature of the regime must therefore reflect its complexity and the deep ambiguities of the *années noires* and the years of crisis during the inter-war period.

* * *

This thesis analyses Vichy's plans for national regeneration by exploring the various ideals that inspired them and the diverse forces that shaped them. The thesis seeks to

³⁹ William D. Irvine, 'French Conservatives and the "New Right" during the 1930s', *French Historical Studies*, vol. VIII:4 (Fall 1974), pp. 534-62 and *French Conservatism in Crisis: The Republican Federation of France in the 1930s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

⁴⁰ Kevin Passmore, *From Liberalism to Fascism: The Right in a French Province, 1928-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴¹ Roger Bourderon, 'Le Régime de Vichy, était-il-fasciste? Essai d'approche de la question', *Revue de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, 91 (July 1973), pp. 23-45. See also Alain-Gérard Slama, 'Vichy était-il fasciste?', *Vingtième Siècle*, 11 (July-September 1986), pp. 41-54 and Michèle Cointet-Labrousse, *Vichy et le fascisme* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1987).

understand the project for national regeneration as a whole, encompassing shades of opinion, competing aims and methods and the context of the Occupation that dictated the limits of success.

The National Revolution was a defining element of the Vichy regime and there are many outstanding histories that illuminate and analyse important aspects of it, yet there is no single study of the National Revolution as the expression of Vichy's ideology and aims.⁴² An analysis the reformist project under the Occupation as a whole is important to a full understanding of the continuities in French history, especially from the 1930s. Such an analysis is also essential to uncovering the complex relationship between different elements of the right and these relationships must now be explored in the light of a new understanding of the accommodations demanded by occupation.

The absence of an overarching study is testament to the complexity of the National Revolution and to the difficulties in such an undertaking. The National Revolution, as an expression of ideology and reformist aims, cannot be taken at face value. Any attempt to analyse the ideals of the National Revolution, their origins and the reforms through which the government sought to apply them, raises several conceptual and structural problems. This thesis seeks to address these problems in several ways. First, just as the literature has shown that the regime was made up of so many different and competing elements that it is more useful to conceive of several Vichys, the National Revolution cannot be treated as a single, coherent programme. There was no clearly defined philosophy or single ideology behind the National Revolution; its ideals were enshrined mainly in Pétain's speeches and expressed through official rhetoric in language borrowed from many, often unacknowledged sources. Support for the National Revolution encompassed different, sometimes opposing

⁴² Olivier Wormser, *Les origines doctrinales de la "Révolution Nationale": Vichy 10 juillet 1940-31 mars 1941* (Paris: Plon, 1971) is not a dispassionate history of the ideological origins National Revolution: the story of its publication is, however, illuminating. The work was completed in Morocco in 1943 as Wormser made his way to join the Free French in London. He aimed to discredit the Vichy regime by showing that its support rested on opposition to the republican constitution, mainly from monarchists. However, it was unwise at that time to acknowledge a legitimate line of French thought with a long political tradition in French history and the work was not published for many years.

visions of future France. These ideals inspired diverse policies that in turn worked independently one from another and that varied widely in their application and success. A chronological account of the development of the National Revolution would not aid an understanding of Vichy's ideals. The thesis is therefore structured thematically, according to the ideals of regeneration put forward by many groups and individuals in the crisis years of the 1930s and under Vichy.

Further structural challenges arise from analysing ideals. Right wing thought and groupings were highly fluid in the late 1930s and reality and illusion were inextricably mixed under the Occupation. The existing literature on right wing thought, and on the definition of fascism in particular, has generated a long debate on the centrality of ideas and their role in categorising groups and individuals. One problem is that ideas often lacked logic or coherence. Other problems arise when ideas are examined or categorised independent of context: the turbulence of the 1930s meant that any label had a brief half life and the political complexities of the Occupation often cut across ideological groupings.

This thesis does not seek to label the various elements of the right: as Robert Paxton has observed in relation to the definition of fascism and the search for an elusive 'essence' or 'minimum', this is an exercise that 'generates more heat than light' and is essentially 'static and limiting'.⁴³ Instead, the thesis seeks to study ideas 'in action' and in the context of the 1930s and 40s. Identifying where and when the elements of the right coalesced is essential to understanding the depth of the crisis of French democracy in the 1930s and the extent of Vichy's 'deep surgery' under the Occupation. In studying the ideals they claimed to share and how they diverged when the National Revolution offered them a chance to put them into practice, this thesis sheds light on the divisions within the right and the common enemies and passion for regeneration that at various times brought them together.

⁴³ Robert O. Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgère's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture, 1929-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 164 and *Anatomy of Fascism*, p. 206. Paxton sees fascism as a 'network of relationships' rather than a fixed essence: *ibid.* p. 207. See also his 'The Five Stages of Fascism', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 70 (March 1998), pp. 1-23.

The historical continuities that make Vichy an integral part, not an aberration, of French history are now clearly established in the historiography of the Occupation. This thesis contributes to the study of continuity in right wing ideals, but also aims to show that intellectual continuity is a highly complex issue. It is the context of the *années noires* that makes it so. Ideals of regeneration cannot be analysed in purely intellectual terms, in isolation from their social, political and economic context. This thesis seeks to locate ideals of regeneration in this context and to add the all important element of power under the Occupation. Reformist ideas from the inter-war period were given rein only as a result of military defeat and were thereafter shaped by the intricate and constantly shifting power structure of the Occupation. Wielding power under the Occupation demanded endless pragmatic choices. A complication in understanding the nature of Vichy is that the National Revolution, an expression of French ideals, was inseparable from the war aims of a foreign occupier. The realities of the wider war and Nazi ideology drove German attitudes to collaboration and by mid-Occupation, Germany's failure to defeat the Allies and the nature of the Nazi regime meant that collaboration had become a one way street. Collaboration made the National Revolution possible, but it also shaped, distorted, limited and ultimately subsumed it.

A further complication of power under the Occupation was that the Germans usually exercised their control indirectly, by playing on French rivalries; this thesis shows how plans for regeneration were shaped by those rivalries. Although many reformists liked to portray France in 1940 as a clean slate on which a stronger nation would be redesigned, in fact the political legacy of the Third Republic was ever present. The National Revolution was always muddled by past agendas and old rivalries. There were also new divisions and rivalries under the Occupation. In an obvious and very general sense, those who sought to reform France and collaborate with the Germans divided geographically between a fascist or collaborationist Paris and the more traditionalist and conservative Vichy. Yet beneath such broad divisions, diverse currents of thought always co-existed. Both between and within the two 'camps' of Vichy and Paris, there was a constant battle for influence and power: the prize, they

thought, was the chance to implement their vision of a new France in the New European Order.

While power shaped all possibilities of reform, one of the deepest complications in analysing the National Revolution is that many protagonists ignored the realities of power. Illusion or self-delusion played a role in regeneration. High emotion fuelled right wing idealism of the thirties and carried through into the immediate aftermath of defeat when thinkers rallied behind the idea of regeneration. In the minds of many of its supporters, the National Revolution was quite separate from the everyday reality of occupation and the demands of collaboration. This was especially so in the first year of Occupation when calls for change were most urgent but, long after general disillusion had set in, some pro-Vichy reformists continued to talk and write of national regeneration irrespective of German victory or defeat. Collaborationists, who of course did not ignore the German presence, suffered under their own illusions in claiming to the bitter end, despite all evidence to the contrary and in the face of Nazi barbarity and certain Allied victory, that a revitalised France would play a significant role in a collaborative New European Order.

These conceptual and structural challenges—the lack of a single, coherent programme, the fluidity of ideas and positions and the complications of context, power and delusion—all contribute to the challenge of analysing the ideals of regeneration. There remains another major challenge, however, and that is that the language or expression of regeneration is in itself problematic. The primary source materials for this study are the publications of intellectuals, thinkers, reformists and activists during the 1930s and under the Occupation, articles in journals and newspapers and the official publications of the Vichy regime. The challenge in this material is that, while ideals for regeneration can be analysed only through what protagonists said or wrote, these words cannot simply be taken at face value. The language of regeneration concealed many different meanings and political positions and any study of reformist ideas must come to terms with this diversity.

The language of regeneration is important because it appeared to be a unifying force for the right. Throughout the crisis years of the 1930s, a broad spectrum, from conservatives to fascists, used the words and imagery of regeneration to give the impression of consensus against a dying Republic and to gain popular support by promising energy and positive solutions. The highly charged rhetoric was deliberately emotive and vague, most often employing metaphors of sickness and disease to undermine Republican traditions and offering health and vitality, rather than reasoned criticisms, definite policies or explicitly stated principles. Most strikingly, the language of regeneration was a *patois* of catchwords that were interchanged and recycled in right wing reformist circles. These words were used so frequently that they stand out in the literature. The cry of 'Decadence' was the greatest siren of France's decline, one which went before all other plans or justification of reform. The calls for 'Order' and 'Action', for a return to 'Realism' and for the creation of a 'New Man' were the ubiquitous appeals for renewal that infused right wing reformist literature during the 1930s and they remained the banners under which Vichy presented and justified its reforms under the Occupation.⁴⁴

After establishing the context of power under the Occupation, this thesis takes its main structure from these five catchwords. It is important to note here that the catchwords did not describe any coherent philosophical position or systematic ideology: this was so even when they were expressed, as they often were, as 'isms', such as realism or activism. The catchwords sometimes drew on a deeper and coherent intellectual tradition and were all the more powerful when they did so but their usage was confused in the thirties and forties by the fact that protagonists layered new meanings onto old without any conscious acknowledgement that they were doing so. This means that catchwords are in themselves limited as tools of analysis: the aim here is not to analyse whether France was decadent or lacked order, action, realism or new

⁴⁴ After the first reference, catchwords are consistently written without inverted commas, though they were often used as exclamations or codes that concealed many and sometimes new or inconsistent meanings.

men. Rather, the thesis explores the various meanings, positions and agendas hidden by the use of the catchwords. It is also important to note that a common language may have appeared to group people together but the catchwords did not delineate any clear group, consensus of opinion or political agreement.

The ubiquity of the catchwords is evidence of their effectiveness as rhetorical weapons: their emotional charge meant that they did not demand reasoned argument, analysis or consistency. The catchwords were shorthand for a whole complex of ideas and passions. In some ways they overlap and reinforce each other and together they capture the urgency and emotion that energised political and intellectual debate. They express the anxiety of perceived national decline as well as voicing the hopes for continuation and survival, even rebirth as a stronger nation. In other ways, however, the catchwords contain and disguise many differences and contradictions and indicate an absence of reasoned or elaborated principle: such confusion and lack of real agreement became obvious only when Vichy was given the opportunity to put ideas into practice.

The structure of this thesis seeks to establish a dialogue between ideals and aspirations on the one hand and, on the other, their practical application in the context of the Occupation. The thesis first analyses the attraction of each catchword, its meaning or meanings and the various and sometimes contradictory ways it was used by different parties with different political and ideological stances to express their reformist ideals. In a subsequent chapter or chapters, the thesis then examines how the catchword was applied by the Vichy government or used to support policy under the National Revolution and how this policy was criticised by collaborationist critics.

The advantages of this approach are numerous. First, it brings together the study of ideals and political choices and illustrates the dynamic and compromise between the two. Furthermore, whereas much of the existing literature has tended to focus on divisions and the overarching negativism of right wing thought, this structure focuses analysis on the points at which the right coalesced, as well as the positive ideals that broadly united it. Close examination of the range of meanings contained in each catchword also illuminates where opinions and choices diverged, divisions that a

common language often disguised. Critics of democracy were not always true bedfellows and the apparent consensus against the Third Republic was weaker than the right itself assumed. The Vichy government readily adopted the catchwords of the 1930s, often as a means of hiding its incoherent thinking, its lack of policy and the harsh realities of the Occupation. However, when the ideals of regeneration had to be translated into policy, the different agendas disguised by the catchwords surfaced. The various elements of collaboration used the catchwords against one another in their struggle to enshrine their vision of future France in the National Revolution.

Chapter one of this study, 'The Realities of Power under Occupation', outlines the complex and dynamic power structures that shaped the period of German occupation from 1940 to 1944. In order to understand the context of ideas and plans for regeneration under the National Revolution, this chapter explains the pressures of the war and collaboration, the internal political rivalries, the intellectual and cultural influences and the battle for control of popular opinion, all of which helped to complicate the reform agenda.

Chapter two, 'Decadence', analyses the most ubiquitous and powerful generational catchcry of the 1930s, one that strongly engaged the intellectual debate and, more than any other, appeared to draw together the various elements of the right. The right may not have agreed on whether France was or was not decadent or on what constituted or caused it, but the assertion of and arguments about decadence expressed widely held fears about national decline. These fears had a long political, intellectual and literary history in France. Concerns about national, moral and cultural weakness stretched back to the nineteenth century. From the founding of the Third Republic, the assertion that the regime was decadent was a constant refrain in the political rhetoric of the right. Cultural trends at the turn of the century, especially the public display of the avant-garde and literary decadence movement, seemed to confirm a growing sense amongst defenders of tradition that moral and artistic standards were in decline. As a result, decadence became associated with anti-modernism and with scientific and philosophical theories of degeneration, decay and cyclical decline of civilisation.

The complex origins of the concept and its deep roots in French politics and culture help to explain the degree to which discussion of decadence infected all right wing thinking and writing about France's future. This chapter focuses on the 1930s and seeks to explain how the extraordinary coincidence of international and domestic social, political and economic crises revived fears about decadence. These fears had a profound influence on France's political and literary consciousness and discussion of decadence became part of the culture of crisis that waxed and waned in the anxious decade that preceded the outbreak of war.

This chapter also analyses the various meanings of decadence during the 1930s. Despite—or perhaps because of—its long complex associations in France, those who espoused or discussed decadence did not necessarily agree on what constituted or caused it and it did not denote a fixed set of beliefs. In the early thirties, several celebrated books appeared on the subject of decadence and the decline of France or of western civilisation. Those who asserted decadence came from quite different political and philosophical positions and they put forward various interpretations and solutions. Yet these differences mattered less when those who asserted decadence had no prospect of political power and the fact that discussion of decadence came from such a broad political spectrum seemed to universalise the sense of crisis.

The defeat of 1940 appeared to confirm that fears of decadence had been well founded: Pétain immediately blamed France's collapse on the nation's lack of seriousness and moral fibre. This chapter addresses the debate about the impact of assertions of decadence on the strength of democracy in France and shows how, despite the disagreements and uncertainties, all plans for regeneration under the Occupation came to be premised on decadence.

Chapters three and four deal with 'Order'. Chapter three analyses the various meanings of the call for 'Order' which, overall, represented the antithesis of decadence and the clearest challenge to the established political culture of Republican France. The notion of social order was premised on various conceptions of a natural balance and on the identification of the forces of disorder that threatened it. Discussion of order

therefore involved the identification of 'true' social values and economic relationships or structures and how various threats, such as parliamentary democracy and Marxism, should be identified and eliminated. The call for order was also the antidote to decadence and hence demanded radical solutions. In this sense, the call for order overlapped with the call for action but the lack of agreement on the methods and aims of reform also reveal some of the greatest divisions and tensions amongst the right before in the decade preceding the defeat. Chapter four, 'New Order', examines how the Vichy regime interpreted and applied the concept once it had the opportunity to create a new was by in its aim to create strong government, forge national cohesion and end class conflict, reforms which were highly contested by collaborationist opponents.

Chapters five and six analyse the call for 'Action'. Despite the immediacy of its appeal, action was the vaguest of all catchcries and its usage and definition remain problematic. In its most positive form action signified vitality, energy, enthusiasm and force and it gave the sense of moving forward. In this form it was a password especially amongst the young and radical who hoped to revitalise the nation. However, the term also has to be understood as essentially negative, a siren or warning against inaction. An even greater problem is that the word was often used to mean support for 'activism' or is inseparable from activism in this analysis. Activism itself had both historical meanings and new meanings in the context of the 1930s and the Occupation. Activism was and is used in several senses. Especially for intellectuals, activism meant commitment or political engagement but, somewhat paradoxically, that commitment could also mean refusal, taking a stand or reacting against things that were 'not working'. Activism was more widely understood as the call for a more vigorous attitude towards political action and struggle, perhaps led by an activist core or vanguard. Some protagonists called for a more extreme form of activism, one that justified direct action or the use of force to bring about change. The catchcry of action and support for activism, with their revolutionary, anti-rationalist and Social-Darwinian overtones, were most attractive to the radical right, the extra-parliamentary leagues and the fascists. Chapter five, in exploring this attraction before the war, analyses one of the

main sources of disagreement and difference between conservatives and the far right. Chapter six examines the problem of action under the constraints of the Occupation. The slowness of the National Revolution was a major weakness that exposed the Vichy and its supporters to the most intense criticism of collaborationists whose call for greater commitment to Germany's New Order won them inroads into power.

Chapters seven and eight deal with 'realism' and appeals to the 'real' France. These catchwords were ubiquitous under Vichy but, because of their various and often contradictory meanings, did not define any one ideology or ideal. The terms had philosophical associations with the search for independent truths or fundamental values but their meaning could be stretched so widely as to encompass all reforms and problems and thus the themes of all other catchwords. Yet realism and the real had deep origins and associations in French thought, especially on the Maurrasian right where concepts of the 'real' or 'true' France originated in the nineteenth century. Anti-modernist and anti-urban ideals also influenced the intellectual debate on realism and the role of the intellectual. Supporters of Vichy built on these origins to portray Pétain as the ultimate realist, embodying truth, common sense and hard work. The National Revolution promised a return to a natural and stable social order and to basic realities of soil, hearth and nation. In many ways, this interpretation of the 'essential' France formed the foundation myth of the National Revolution. Chapter seven examines the creation of this myth in Vichy's promise of a 'return to the real' but also explores how this contrasted with the pragmatic demands of collaboration and the criticism of collaborationists. Chapter eight extends these themes in analysing the conception and fate of two of Vichy's policies aimed most clearly at re-establishing the core social values of its ideal nation, the 'return to the soil' and 'return to the hearth'.

Chapters nine to eleven analyse the important and highly contested subject of the 'New Man'. Chapter nine analyses how the various elements of the right conceived of the New Man both before and after the defeat. Chapter ten examines how the Vichy government aimed to create or build a new type of French man and woman through its policies for education and youth and how these conceptions and policies were

challenged by conflicting collaborationist visions. Chapter eleven shows how both the government and its critics aimed to defend the new man, the race and women from what they saw as pernicious influences.

Calls for national regeneration energised the thinking of many right wing intellectuals in the crisis years of the 1930s. They feared that France was decadent or in decline. They also believed that the decline could be halted and that the cure for decadence could be found in a society based on order and respect for real or basic values, on a reinvigorated or active national community and in the shaping of a new moral and social being. Their aim was in fact to build a new political culture—not merely to reshape the power and economic structures, but to change the pattern of social order and relationships. They aimed to redefine France's national identity.

Such highly ambitious aims seemed possible after the defeat when the Vichy government offered an extraordinary opportunity for reform. But the National Revolution failed. It failed as a whole and in its component parts and, though the outcome of the war ultimately sealed Vichy's fate, the National Revolution failed long before Germany's defeat and the liberation of France. The reasons for these failures are complex: they can be found in the confusion of aims and agendas carried over from the 1930s; in the interplay of ideals and pragmatic choices in the context of the Occupation; and in the internal divisions, rivalries and contradictions of France during its *années noires*.

Chapter 1

The Realities of Power under Occupation

The Vichy government was born out of defeat. In May and June 1940, France suffered a rapid and total military collapse which plunged the nation into deep shock and confusion. The defeat was the result of several factors: failures in military planning and tactical response; indecision and defeatism within the French government; and the urgency imposed by the human tragedy of the *exode* as millions of refugees fled before the advancing enemy forces. On 16 June, only 37 days after the German armies crossed France's borders, the Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, resigned. Marshal Philippe Pétain led the defeatist camp to form a new government and to sue immediately for an armistice. Pétain announced the Armistice on 17 June. It was signed five days later on 22 June at Compiègne, Hitler's desire for revenge and humiliation dictating that the formalities should take place in the same village and in the same railway carriage as the Armistice which signaled Germany's defeat in the First World War. In order to relieve themselves of administrative burdens, the Germans divided France into two zones - the Occupied and the Unoccupied - and permitted the continuation of a national government to rule France from the Unoccupied Zone. Pétain's government set itself up in the spa town of Vichy.

France spent the next four years divided—metaphorically as well as physically—and under the occupation of a vicious and rapacious Nazi regime. As Germany expanded and was then slowly but inexorably ground to defeat by the combined power of the Allied forces, France remained vital to its war effort and to its grandiose plans for a New European Order. Vichy, determined to hold on to its unique position amongst occupied governments, represented both the vestiges of French power and an intention to address the causes of the defeat by accomplishing a massive program of reform—its National Revolution.

Any understanding of the Occupation, and especially of plans for social reform, must take into account its structures and its politics and the progress of the war in general. These were the realities of power which defined the possibilities and limits of reform. But power structures under the occupation were highly complex. Power was, first of all, dynamic, not static: the shifting course of the war and the changing demands and politics of occupation constantly redefined the limits of reform. Outside these limits lay silence, ineffectiveness or resistance. There were also many different sources of power in occupied France and hence great competition between those who sought to shape the new France.

There were several competing sources of power within the Vichy government. Pétain, or more accurately, Pétainism was the force which bound them together. The popular support for Pétain, a good measure of which he retained long after support for the regime and policies he created began to wane, made him indispensable to the German occupiers and personally inviolable to critics of government reforms. Pétain was subject to many influences from his large and changing entourage of hangers-on and advisers. Beneath Pétain, the state power structures—the various ministries and individuals who controlled them—represented different and at times conflicting agendas, priorities and strategies.

There were also important centres of power outside Vichy which tried to challenge its authority. Collaborationists of various hues in Paris exerted a constant,

critical pressure on the government in their attempts to sway public opinion, win favour from the Germans or gain a place in government. Over-arching all sources of French power were the German occupation forces, and even they had several agencies. Initially, though some distrusted the element of French national revival, the Germans were not interested in the National Revolution so long as it did not affect collaboration. From the beginning, however, the various occupation agencies constantly tweaked the various strings of power and their control tightened as the war dragged on and as their need to exploit French resources became more acute. In addition, the nature of control changed as the Germans began to put their ideological and racial plans for the Nazi European Order into effect. All these pressures and complications of power gave occupied France its political dynamic, determined the nature, timing and success of change and hence shaped the National Revolution and all plans to reform France.

This chapter will provide an overview of the Occupation according to the realities of power and provide a background to subsequent chapters which will focus on specific ideals and reform initiatives. The chapter divides the Occupation into several historical phases. These phases were based largely on the changing power structures in France and were defined mainly by the control of political power. However, the various phases of the Occupation were also determined by the pressures of war and encompassed a wide range of cultural influences in which competing intellectual forces promoted their cause or battled for the control of popular opinion.

From Utopia to Disillusion: July - December 1940

Pierre Laval, deputy premier in Pétain's government, was the architect of the Vichy regime. Laval convinced the majority of parliamentarians who fled Paris for Bordeaux and then collected at Vichy that, in order to resolve the ambiguities in constitutional power, they should vote full powers to Pétain and dissolve the National Assembly. This they did on 10 July 1940. The following day, Pétain promulgated the acts which created the new *Etat Français* and which gave him, as its head, extraordinary power.

He appointed Laval as head of government and named him as his successor. From then until the end of 1940 defines the period when the Vichy regime was most secure and when those who flocked to its cause were most confident and enthusiastic in their plans to bring about a National Revolution and shape a new France out of defeat.

This enthusiasm was not matched by popular opinion: most of France was still suffering immense uncertainty and confusion. The massive trauma of defeat left a complication of emotions and misconceptions: relief that France would not suffer *Polandisation*, that the occupiers behaved 'correctly' and that the Armistice terms did not appear to be severe; expectation that the war in Europe would soon be over and that the occupation would be temporary; and residual resentment against Britain, renewed by the shock of its attack on the French navy at Mers-el-Kébir. Such feelings produced mass support for Pétain. Above all, people had confidence in Pétain's promise of protection; his calls for national reform and renewal to eliminate the weaknesses that had brought the nation to such a pass seemed part of that protection. With mass support, with only the barest stirrings of resistance and with the goodwill of the Germans who welcomed the policy of collaboration that was sealed by the Hitler-Pétain meeting at Montoire in October, the new regime seemed unassailable.

The summer of 1940 was also the period when Vichy's political culture was at its most diverse. Support for Pétain and the lack of any challenge to his contention that France's defeat indicated a deeper, national decay gave the new government licence for a program of social, political and moral reform. In his first radio address to the nation as Head of State, Pétain announced a broad-sweeping plan of reform which would 'rendre à la France les forces qu'elle a perdues'.¹ Among many intellectuals of the right and critics of the old regime there was real enthusiasm for the prospect and possibilities of far reaching change. Many of these idealists and hopeful reformists gravitated to the new seat of power at Vichy. For them, despite the terrible fate that France had suffered

¹ Pétain, speech of 11 July 1940. For the texts of Pétain's radio broadcasts and speeches throughout, see *Messages du Maréchal* (Paris: Edition du Secrétariat Général de l'Information et de la Propagande, 1941) and *Discours aux français, 17 juin 1940-20 août 1944*, edited by Jean Claude Barbas (Paris: A. Michel, 1989).

and from which the nation was still reeling, the summer of 1940 was 'le temps de toutes les utopies'.²

In reality, it was the traditional, conservative Right—the Church, the military and Maurrassians—who found their utopia at Vichy. This group filled most of the positions of power and leadership, but even they were divided by different political allegiances and tendencies, personal conflicts and palace intrigues. At the top of the power structure, there was growing animosity between Laval and Pétain. Pétain was backed by a personal entourage amongst whom his doctor, Ménétrel, was a strong and shadowy influence. The ministries were not equal: the vengeful and power hungry Raphaël Alibert, the first Minister for Justice, had little in common with his more cautious colleagues from social-Catholic backgrounds. Below all the froth of political intrigue, a relatively small group of technocrats and civil servants rode the ministerial changes and gave continuity to the regime.³ Despite these differences, the first months of Vichy's existence were a period of relative innocence and hope for a wide spectrum of the right who sought far reaching change.

Change, however, did not come soon enough for some. The feeling of utopia at Vichy soon began to evaporate. Disappointment and disillusionment came quickly for the intellectuals and more radical elements of the right, well before the continuation of the war and the realities of foreign occupation began to impact fully on the general population. Many radical right wing intellectuals had been attracted to Vichy by the scent of imminent change, but what they found there was a rarefied atmosphere of inane and backward provincialism. One such intellectual was Lucien Rebatet, a leading nonconformist of the thirties who had been increasingly attracted to fascism and who

² Denis Peschanski, 'Encadrer ou Contrôler?', in Gervereau and Peschanski, *La Propagande sous Vichy*, pp. 10-31, p. 10.

³ There are many memoirs and personal accounts of the political intrigues at Vichy written by early protagonists: Paul Baudouin (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Neuf mois au gouvernement, avril-décembre 1940* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948); Marcel Peyrouton (Minister for the Interior), *Du service public à la prison commune; souvenirs: Tunis, Rabat, Buenos-Aires, Vichy, Algiers, Fresnes* (Paris: Plon, 1950); Yves Bouthillier, *Le drame de Vichy*, 2 vols (Paris: Plon, 1950, 1951); Jérôme Carcopino (Minister for Education), *Souvenirs de sept ans, 1937-1944* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953); René Belin (Minister for Production and Labour and, coming from a left wing and syndicalist background, an exception at Vichy), *Du secrétariat de la CGT au gouvernement de Vichy* (Paris: Albatros, 1978).

became an avowed Nazi supporter under the Occupation. Rebatet later reflected on the lost opportunities of this period. His book, *Les Décombres*, became the most celebrated criticism of the failures of the Maurrassian right into which he had been bred. Rebatet claimed that he had been genuinely hopeful that some real change would result from the diverse mixture of people he found at Vichy in the first weeks of its creation, but that he had soon become convinced of the regime's lack of substance:

je m'écriai sur cette frivolité extravagante que je sentais dans tout l'air de Vichy. Que signifiaient, bon Dieu, ces piaffements, ces tintements d'éperons, ces plastonnades, cette garnison de généraux, au lendemain de la plus radicale tourchée que nous ayons encaissée et vécue depuis cinq siècles au moins? ... Des aspersion d'eau bénite suffisaient-elles à laver le monceau de sanie qui avait empoisonné la France?⁴

Rebatet's pen was partisan and particularly spiteful, but other, more conservative observers who flocked optimistically to Vichy after the defeat, also attest to this sense of disappointment. Anatole de Monzie had been an independent, high minded politician and had held several cabinet positions in the inter-war period. He had initially supported Pétain and the Vichy government after the defeat, but was rapidly disillusioned. An acute observer of the new regime, he came to see it as consisting of 'hommes de paille et lois de paille' and soon discerned that in Pétain's deliberately slow and cautious policy there was only weakness and the illusion of power.⁵

The first to be disillusioned with the personnel, style and inertia of the new regime were the avowed fascists and ultra collaborationists, variously called the *ultras* or the *collabos*. The *collabos* contrasted greatly with the 'old guard', clerical conservatism that dominated at Vichy. Jacques Doriot, the leader of the most powerful openly fascist league of the 1930s, the *Parti Populaire Français* (PPF), tried at first to keep a foot in

⁴ Lucien Rebatet, *Les Décombres* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1942), p. 484. Rebatet claimed to have been inspired by Vichy, but his excessive language and his anti-Semitic hatred colour all his descriptions of the regime: see pp. 466-7, 481-4 and 500. See also, Belot, Robert, *Lucien Rebatet: un itinéraire fasciste* (Paris: Seuil, 1994).

⁵ Anatole de Monzie, *La saison des juges* (Paris: Flammarion, 1943), p. 11. Despite his disillusionment with Vichy and his desire to publish his criticisms in 1943, De Monzie did not support either resistance or greater collaboration in opposition to the government. Disillusion and disappointment with Vichy also shapes the memoirs of Henri du Moulin de Labarhète, *Le Temps des illusions: souvenirs (juillet 1940 - avril 1942)* (Geneva: Editions du Cheval Ailé, 1946).

both camps. However, he found it impossible to break through Pétain's entourage and the continuing influence of former parliamentarians whom he blamed for the regime's faint heartedness and lack of vigour. He was drawn increasingly towards Paris, a close associate later explaining his reasoning:

La Révolution Nationale ne se fera pas à Vichy. Trop d'hommes du passé y agissent en maître et le Maréchal, malgré ses idées justes et son immense bonne volonté, ne peut pas grande-chose contre cet état de fait dont il est en parti responsable ... La Révolution Nationale, avec tout ce qu'elle comporte de changements révolutionnaires se fera à Paris, comme toujours, et aussi en province ... Pour ma part je vais regagner Paris ... Il ne faut pas laisser le monopole de l'information aux farfelus qui se prétendent journalistes et penseurs politiques.⁶

Many fascists and collaborationists who had left Paris for Vichy soon returned to the old centre of government. They claimed to find in occupied Paris an air of realism that was palpably lacking at Vichy. By realism they meant not only an ideological affinity with the Nazis. Real power resided in Paris. The *collabos* knew that the Germans would dictate France's immediate fate and, after Germany had won the war, as few doubted it would, the Germans would decide the ultimate shape of the new France in the new Europe.⁷

The *collabos* immediately began to compete for the patronage of the various official German government representations and offices in Paris. For the Nazi occupiers, there was obviously great political advantage in maintaining a constant challenge to the security of Vichy. The German military authorities supervised the exploitation of French resources and internal security until 1942 when they became even more crucial to German war aims and the SS assumed such responsibilities. In the

⁶ Doriot according to Victor Barthélémy, *Du communisme au fascisme: l'histoire d'un engagement politique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), p. 189.

⁷ Notwithstanding the 'other worldliness' of Vichy, the French government soon showed that it was aware of this fact and was careful to maintain its own 'ambassador' and representatives in Paris. In December 1940, the government appointed Fernand de Brinon as its representative in the occupied zones. De Brinon, an advocate of Franco-German cultural ties during the 1930s and a close friend of Germany's ambassador to France, Otto Abetz, did more to represent German interests than those of Vichy. Through his *Groupe Collaboration* he worked closely with Abetz to control censorship and propaganda and to distribute German subsidies to collaborationist groups. After the Liberation he became head of the collaborationist government in Sigmaringen before he was captured, tried and executed in 1947.

early stages of the Occupation, the most important sources of patronage and finance were the Propaganda Department (*Propaganda Abteilung*) and the German Embassy, two offices with somewhat overlapping functions and which did not always see eye to eye. The Propaganda Department, as well as promoting active propaganda and 'cultural events', controlled the radio, cinema and all newsprint and literature through its allocation of printing supplies. It kept close control of the occupied press and required the publication of certain articles. No such pressure could be exerted from Vichy, with the result that collaborationist papers often ignored government propaganda and failed to censor critics. The main function of the German Embassy was to co-ordinate all factions of collaboration—the official collaboration with Vichy as well as the various collaborationist groups and individuals in Paris—but under Otto Abetz, who was appointed ambassador in late 1940, the Embassy also became the main patron and centre of cultural affairs. Abetz courted theatrical, literary and pro German journalistic circles, all of which flourished as they always had done in the old centre of power.⁸

Generous German finance allowed *collabos* to gain paramount influence in the Parisian press and radio. The majority of the inter-war press and all left wing press disappeared from the occupied zones. Some conservative, Maurrassian publications moved to the unoccupied zone where they followed a pro Vichy line, though not without some criticism of the government. The German-financed Parisian press, on the other hand, never swerved from a pro fascist, pro Nazi and ultra collaborationist line, though some papers tried to attract a niche readership or attached themselves to certain collaborationist leagues or factions.⁹ All the Parisian press attacked the priorities and

⁸ For cultural life in occupied Paris see: Gordon, *Collaborationism in France*; David Pryce-Jones, *Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation, 1940-1944* (London: Collins, 1981); G. Perrault and J.-P. Azéma, *Paris Under the Occupation* (New York: Vendome Press, 1989 [first published in France 1987]).

⁹ There were 40 papers and journals published in Paris. Of the four dailies which had appeared before the defeat, *Le Petit Parisien* supported Jacques Doriot and his *Parti Populaire Francaise* and *L'Œuvre* became the mouthpiece of Marcel Déat and his *Rassemblement National Populaire* (the other two dailies were *Le Matin* and *Paris-Soir*). *Je Suis Partout*, a weekly which reappeared after the defeat, continued its virulent anti-Semitism, became pro Nazi and attracted many prominent intellectuals as writers and editors, most notably Robert Brasillach who was executed after the Liberation. A new weekly paper, Alphonse de Châteaubriant's *La Gerbe* also aimed to attract a literary and cultural readership and published prominent writers such as Henry de Montherlant and

methods, if not the principles, of the National Revolution. The *collabos* accused Vichy of lack of contact with everyday realities and ordinary lives. They pressed constantly for a firmer policy towards Britain and more active collaboration by playing upon the hopes of winning release of prisoners of war. They also began to call for the setting up of a single party and totalitarian state structures in imitation of the Nazi model. Above all, they attacked ceaselessly the 'old guard' personnel of Vichy. Marcel Déat, in his daily, *L'Œuvre*, went so far as to encourage Pétain, who remained above direct reproach, to rid the government of the anonymous clique of reactionary intriguers and incompetents who were undermining France's future.¹⁰

The opposition between the reformist and collaborationist camps of Paris and Vichy was now set and their battle for supremacy was to endure throughout the Occupation. However, divisions between Paris and Vichy were not always clear cut and their opposition was not simply the opposition of radical and conservative. Within both centres there was an intense struggle for power. Collaborationists soon began a protracted struggle for dominance which lasted the whole Occupation and even beyond, as they fled to Germany after the Liberation. If France was to be governed by a single party system along Nazi lines, then there had to be some form of amalgamation of all *collabo* groups, there could be only one leader and none was willing to stand aside for another. Instead, the *collabos* competed for German patronage and were played, one against the other, by the various Nazi agencies which themselves had their own agenda and which were necessarily wary of too much power being concentrated in the hands of a dominant national leader.

It was, however, tensions within Vichy government circles that brought about the end of the first political phase of the regime. While Pétain and his followers occupied themselves with the National Revolution, Laval, ostensibly the vice-deputy of the *Conseil d'Etat* under Pétain, was most concerned with negotiations with the Germans

Jean Giono. See Pascal Fouché, *L'Édition française sous l'Occupation, 1940-1944* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Littérature française contemporaine de l'université Paris 7, 1987).

¹⁰ Marcel Déat, *L'Œuvre* (2 December 1940).

and with manipulating the developing factions in government. This is not to say that Pétain was unconcerned with power and did not favour a policy of collaboration: he believed in collaboration and played a major role in instituting policies of political revenge in order to establish his power. It was for political reasons, not ideological differences, that Pétain sacked Laval on 13 December 1940 (as well as from a personal dislike for a man who seemed to exemplify much that was reprehensible in the body politic of the Third Republic). Pétain thought that Laval was plotting to usurp his position and he felt that Laval's unpopularity damaged the cause of collaboration which he hoped to lead in his stead.¹¹

Interregnum: December 1940 - April 1942

The second phase in the life of Vichy was the period from Laval's dismissal, his replacement by Admiral Jean-François Darlan, the anti-British head of the navy, to his return to power in April 1942.¹² Pétain formally appointed Darlan as vice-president of the Council on 9 February 1941.¹³ Under Darlan, the separation between Vichy and Paris became increasingly wide. This is ironic since his tenure in office was a high water mark of French-initiated, state collaboration and under him France came perilously close to full military co-operation with the occupier. Darlan came to office aiming to normalise relations with the Germans through a formal peace, military neutrality and cooperation in matters of social order and economy; his aim only increased France's subservience to German power.

Darlan's period in office marks the end of the reformist optimism which characterised Vichy's first six months. The demise of optimism was not solely due to

¹¹ Marc Ferro in round table discussion (with Stanley Hoffmann, Michèle Cointet-Labrousse, Yves Durand, Robert Paxton and Denis Peschanski), 'Le fonctionnement du régime', in Azéma & Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 251-63, p. 257.

¹² Before Darlan was appointed, the government was briefly led by Pierre-Etienne Flandin who took Laval's role as Foreign Minister, but German annoyance over Laval's dismissal and their refusal to deal with Flandin meant that he lasted only two months.

¹³ Darlan had already held talks with Hitler and Abetz to prove his pro-collaboration credentials. As well as Vice President and appointed successor to Pétain, he also took on the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Information.

the initial disillusionment of the *collabos* and the mounting criticism emanating from Paris. Vichy soon showed itself to be too preoccupied with old enemies and past conflicts. This preoccupation became more obvious as the government defined and began to put into action the various programs of the National Revolution and it culminated at the end of this period in the Riom trials. The trials, which began in February 1942, sought to blame the leaders of the Third Republic for the defeat of France. They were not only ill-conceived and cleverly turned by the defendants against the regime, but they were also widely seen as a vain and shallow attempt at revenge. Though they had no sympathy for the defendants, collaborationists and fascist intellectuals were confirmed in their belief that Vichy could look only backwards, not forwards.

With Laval's sacking, initial disillusionment and criticism of Vichy emanating from Paris hardened into fixed opposition. Collaborationist criticism grew more virulent. 'Intellectual' fascists such as Alphonse de Châteaubriand in his pro-Nazi paper *La Gerbe*, and Robert Brasillach, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle and Lucien Rebatet in the anti-Semitic *Je Suis Partout*, constantly lamented the government's failure to bring about a fascist revolution and racial regeneration. They attacked what they saw as the government's short sighted timidity and its ineffective and erratic policies which were failing to win the favour of the future masters of Europe.¹⁴ They saw in Vichy's uncertainty, its lack of total commitment to the Nazi cause and, above all, its failure to promote new, fascist men in government, the demise of any hopes of restoring France or of staking a claim in the new Europe before the German victory was fully won.

The arrest of Marcel Déat on the day following Laval's sacking confirmed the fears of all *collabo* leaders that Pétain's close advisers planned to obstruct full collaboration and their path to power.¹⁵ Ostensibly in response to this threat to France's

¹⁴ Collaborationists played on the hardships of the Occupation and the promise that greater cooperation would bring relief. Barthélemy claims that he and Doriot found Vichy's lack of total commitment most objectionable because it failed to bring about the release of French prisoners of war: *Du Communisme au Fascisme*, p. 258.

¹⁵ Déat was held for only a few hours and was freed following the intervention of Abetz.

future, in February 1941, with Abetz' support, Déat joined with Eugène Deloncle, head of the *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire* (MSR) to launch a new political party, the *Rassemblement National Populaire* (RNP).¹⁶ The RNP's program was National Socialist, pro-Laval and claimed to unify the collaborationist movements (though after a mere six months Déat evicted Deloncle from the movement and began to undermine other leaders). Déat maintained his attacks on Vichy's record, declaring that the defeat and Laval's sacking were attempts to gain and maintain power by the forces of reaction.¹⁷ He still absolved Pétain of blame, declaring on the anniversary of the 'coup', 'Je crois bien qu'il est à Vichy, le seul véritable novateur et le seul authentique révolutionnaire!'.¹⁸ However, Déat claimed that Vichy was a synthesis of conservatives: monarchist Maurrassians, rejoicing in the 'divine surprise' of the defeat; defeated militarists, uselessly plotting their revenge with wooden rifles; and clericals, trying to play high politics and dreaming of a 'spiritual', Latin bloc against the materialism of the Germans.¹⁹ This is why, he wrote, no hidden genius, no striking success had been born of Vichy and why some people had begun to lament the passing of the old regime.²⁰ Déat's solution to the problems of occupied France was the creation of a single party in imitation of the Nazi model (with himself as leader) and, to this end, his criticism was incessant.

Jacques Doriot, head of the PPF, also put himself forward as a potential leader of a single movement. Brazenly ignoring his own split from the Communist Party, he claimed that other league movements were corrupted by the 'debris of old political factions', men who looked backwards, not forwards and some of whom merely hid their

¹⁶ The RNP was influential as its founders included men with power and experience in the press and in political circles: Marcel Déat, former Socialist deputy and founder of the Neo-Socialist Party and editor of *L'Œuvre*, Jean Luchaire, editor of *Le Nouveau Temps*, Jean Goy, ex-servicemen's leader, Jean Fontenoy, editor of *La France au Travail*, and Pierre Cathala, the ex-Minister of Information at Vichy (he later returned as Minister for Economy and Finance).

¹⁷ Marcel Déat, *Nouveau départ, nouveaux combats: Discours de Marcel Déat, 9 novembre 1941, Palais de la Mutualité* (Paris: Imprimerie centrale de la presse, n.d.), pp. 10-11.

¹⁸ Marcel Déat, *Conférence de Marcel Déat 14 décembre 1941, à Rennes* (Rennes: Imprimerie Rennaise, 1942), p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

old enmities behind a facade of collaboration: 'Elles abritent des gens qui n'ont de commun que le passé ... elles rassemblent des frères ennemis'.²¹ Doriot declared himself to be 'un homme du Maréchal' but criticised Pétain's entourage for not adhering to their master's principles. The PPF, he claimed, was the only movement capable of uniting the country behind the Maréchal.

Neither Doriot's nor Déat's sycophancy won favour from Pétain. The collaborationist leaders hoped to find a more promising source of power and influence following Germany's invasion of the USSR. The political rivals Doriot, Déat and Deloncle collaborated to set up the *Légion des Volontaires Français Contre le Bolshevisme* (LVF) to fight on the eastern front as part of the German army. Though it never raised the numbers of volunteers that its leaders had initially predicted, the LVF won the support of Pétain and official government sanction in August 1942. Doriot in particular sought to gain kudos from the LVF as he was one of the first volunteers to leave for the Eastern Front (in German uniform) in September 1941. Thereafter, his constant cry for increased military commitment to the Nazi 'crusade' against communism carried favour with the Germans, pressured the government and embarrassed his fellow collaborationist leaders who did not themselves serve in the organisation they launched.

To counter the constant pressure from its collaborationist critics, the Vichy regime received intellectual support from powerful sections of the right. Such support rejected the extremism of collaborationists, espoused moderation and stability and emphasised diversity within national unity (this, despite the fact that the government had already defined limits to diversity and excluded sections of the national community). Thierry Maulnier, the former nonconformist intellectual who in the early 1930s had been impatient for revolutionary change, claimed after the defeat that France needed to

²¹ Jacques Doriot, 'Crises des vieux partis' (22 December 1940) in *Je Suis un Homme du Maréchal* (Paris: Grasset, 1941), pp. 99-101, p. 99. For criticism of Pétain's entourage, see in the same collection 'Il faut choisir' (10 December 1940), pp. 76-9 and 'Balayer devant sa porte' (11 December 1940), pp. 80-2. For criticisms of Déat and other collaborationists aiming to create a single party, see 'L'épouvantail' (16 December 1940), pp. 89-92 and 'Détails historiques sur le parti unique' (18 December 1940), pp. 93-5.

restore its equilibrium before it could regain its influence in the world. In 1941 he published a series of articles in the Maurrassian *Revue Universelle* entitled 'L'Avenir de la France Nouvelle'.²² Perhaps with an air of resignation, but nonetheless defending Vichy's National Revolution, he commented, 'l'incertitude est un progrès immense sur les fatales certitudes qui semblaient être notre lot en juin 1940'.²³ He attacked those Parisian collaborators who advocated German solutions in order to solve France's problems, stating that simple imitation was a form of servility.²⁴ Maulnier claimed that France, the most complex of nations, would be diminished if it adopted a 'single vocation' or tried to live according to the 'dangereuses simplifications des grands mythes modernes'.²⁵

In another sense, however, intellectual and political rivalries were merely the ripples from deeper shifts in the power balance which took place during this period. Darlan's tenure in office coincided with Germany's planning, launching and failure of Operation Barbarossa which aimed to defeat the Soviet Union before the end of 1941. The prolonged conflict in the east meant increasing German demands on the French economy and especially on the supply of labour. It also meant increased German pressure for anti-communist repression and the maintenance of order just at the time when the rapid growth of internal, especially communist-inspired resistance made the maintenance of good order much more difficult.

Darlan did little to resist increasing German demands or to win concessions, but his attempts to pursue his aims for France in the face of these demands led to important political developments within the Vichy government. Darlan presided over 'la belle époque des grandes réformes' when change was dictated from above and pragmatism,

²² Thierry Maulnier, 'L'Avenir de la France Nouvelle', *Revue Universelle*, N^o Série (January-June 1941). The article was published in five parts: 'I: Tout reconstruire', 3 (1 February), pp. 149-51; 'II: Les particularités françaises et la crise universelle', 4 (15 February), pp. 209-16; 'III: Guerre mondiale et révolution nationale', 6 (25 March), pp. 340-6; 'IV: Guerre mondiale et révolution nationale' 7 (10 April), pp. 435-43; 'V: La méditation française', 9 (25 May), pp. 570-7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 'I: Tout reconstruire', p. 150.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 'II: Les particularités françaises', pp. 215-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 'V: La méditation française', p. 573.

efficiency and a hard edged realism fuelled the legislative engine.²⁶ With Darlan came a definite shift in the power balance at Vichy, away from the somewhat diverse and ‘amateur’ traditionalists surrounding Pétain and in favour of the technocrats, a highly trained and modern elite group of public administrators. Darlan and the technocrats increased centralisation and state control in many spheres: in the various projects of the National Revolution and, more ominously, in the administration of justice and public opinion. It is partly because of this that historians have claimed that Darlan’s time in power represents an important step in the increasing authoritarianism and fascisation of the French state.²⁷

Darlan’s period of office also marks the shift towards authoritarianism and fascisation in another way: it was under Darlan that collaborationists first made their appearance within the structures of government. Paul Marion (Information), Jacques Benoist-Méchin (Foreign Affairs) and Pierre Pucheu (Interior) were anti-Republican and anti-Marxist and had their political formation in the extra-parliamentary leagues of the 1930s. Early interpretations of Vichy characterised these public officials as ‘young men in a hurry’, but they were in fact impatient to establish a French dictatorship within the new German order.²⁸ The technocratic and totalitarian influences of such men worked to increase centralisation in all spheres of government but greater state control did not mesh well with the loosely organised and often extra-governmental reform initiatives which had begun the National Revolution. This resulted in increasing personal and bureaucratic tensions within the regime. The push for a single party now came from both within and without the government and, as Denis Peschanski points out, collaborationist control of key ministries gave them great influence in shaping Vichy’s political culture.²⁹

²⁶ Jean-Marie Guillon, ‘La philosophie politique de la Révolution nationale’ in Azéma & Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 167-83, p. 179.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180 and Denis Peschanski, ‘Exclusion, persécution, répression’ in Azéma & Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 209-34, p. 217.

²⁸ Aron, *The Vichy Régime*, p. 279.

²⁹ Peschanski, ‘Le fonctionnement du régime’, p. 260.

The new technocratic and collaborationist influences were felt particularly in two key state agencies: the Interior, which governed the administration of order and justice, and Information. In July 1941, Pierre Pucheu, an industrial technocrat and league member during the 1930s, was appointed to the Ministry of the Interior.³⁰ Although the French government had already demonstrated its determination to exclude communists and Jews from the new France, Pucheu took the first steps which allowed French police to aid the Germans in the enforcement of their anti-communist and anti-Semitic policies. He also introduced a series of reforms which centralised police forces throughout France and created special police units and judicial sections to deal with communists and Jews. This dual aim of enhancing government power while aiding German-initiated policies, led Vichy into a new stage of its relationship with the occupier. From September 1941, the Germans demanded not only order but retribution for the communist tactic of random assassination of German troops. The government was faced with the prospect of either allowing the Germans free rein to carry out the reprisals or refusal to cooperate. Either option would have resulted in a loss of power and legitimacy for the French government. Vichy chose instead to protect whatever power it could and itself select the victims for German reprisals.³¹ Thus, Vichy's attempt to defend its own legitimacy led it to increase its mechanisms of repression. Thereafter, the Germans could always manipulate the government into relieving them of onerous tasks by threatening to usurp elements of its power, a tactic which they used very effectively against Jews in France.

The second key agency which underwent great change under Darlan controlled the manipulation of public opinion. In August 1941, Darlan appointed Paul Marion General Secretary for Information, an appointment which had a great impact in shaping

³⁰ Pucheu resigned when Laval returned to power in April 1942. In May 1943 he left mainland France for North Africa but was arrested, tried by the Resistance Council and executed in March 1944.

³¹ In September 1941, Hitler announced the general policy of shooting 100 hostages for every German killed and 50 for any attempt on a German life. Vichy selected the victims from the ranks of communists held in its prisons and internment camps. Over the next six months the Germans shot 471 hostages and another 254 were killed before the Liberation. Peschanski, 'Exclusion, persécution, répression', p. 200.

the political culture of the Vichy regime.³² Marion believed that for France to take its place in the Nazi New Order, it had to undergo a national resurgence to create a unified community and that this resurgence could be achieved through propaganda and through the creation of a new power structure based on a single party led by a revolutionary elite. This was a definite departure from the traditionalist themes and the Pétainism of the National Revolution. Marion's political agitation not only failed to arouse general public opinion, but it unnerved the Church, military and conservative figures who had set up many of the National Revolution's early programs. They feared that Marion was the vanguard of totalitarianism. At this stage of the war, the Germans could not continue to support him in total disregard of the opposition: Marion's power was curtailed in January 1942 when a separate position to control propaganda in the Unoccupied Zone was set up under Paul Creyssel.³³ Despite his failure, Marion's attempt at fascisation, is an indication of the complex and changing balance of power between the various factions vying to impose their image of France in the New Order.

Other important changes in the political landscape took place during 1941. Public opinion had undergone a gradual transformation as a result of the continuation of the war. By the close of 1941 any illusion about the nature and duration of the German occupation had vanished: shortages and deprivations had begun to bite, especially in urban areas; general restriction and repression of certain elements in the population were more apparent; resistance had begun to spread; and there was a growing ambivalence and then opposition towards the policy of collaboration. Pétain, quite unjustly, escaped most of the blame and retained much, though not all, of his early

³² Marion's career reveals much about the political turmoil of the inter-war and occupation periods. His political formation during the 1920s was in the Communist Party before he flirted in the following decade with neo-Socialism and non-conformism and finally joined the fascist PPF. He was appointed to the secretariat for Information in February 1941, six months before he became General Secretary. Denis Peschanski argues that Marion was a pivotal figure in Vichy's attempt to create a form of totalitarian social unity: 'Encadrer ou Contrôler?', pp. 15-22. See also his 'Vichy au singulier, Vichy au pluriel', *Annales* vol. 3 (May-June 1988). When Laval returned to power he usurped some of Marion's powers while granting him a titular promotion to Secretary of State for Information. Marion fled to Germany in 1944 but returned to France after the war and was tried and sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

³³ Creyssel was a former member of the *Parti Social Français* (PSF)—the *Criox de Feu* (CF) transformed into a parliamentary party—was more attuned than Marion to the unpopularity of aspects of collaboration.

popularity. From early 1942, the renewed German effort towards total war production led to greater economic exploitation of France. German ideological and racial aims also spelt increased control of France's internal affairs, which meant that Vichy could no longer make any policy independent of the demands of collaboration. For these reasons, in April 1942, the Germans sought the return of the man whom they thought best understood the new realities of power.

Laval's Return: April 1942 - December 1943

The return of Laval marks the beginning of the third phase of Vichy's political development. With German support, Laval increased his power. He now enjoyed the title of Head of Government, replacing the former vice-president title which had placed him firmly subservient to Pétain. He also assumed the key ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Interior and Information. Laval realised that Vichy's survival now depended on German victory and his main concern was the negotiation of France's position in the New Europe. This time around, however, he was much more careful to control public opinion and to ensure that his opponents remained weak and divided.

Laval recognised the risks and the unpopularity of any attempt to enforce a single party program, but neither did this suit his skills or temperament. He was comfortable manipulating power hierarchies as he had done under the Third Republic. He did this even though it meant further placating German demands by including even more collaborationists into the government and complicating the political structures at Vichy. Laval sought to please the Germans and remove the focus of collaborationist criticism from himself, while at the same time maintaining the pressure of opposition on Pétain and his entourage. To lessen the criticisms emanating from Paris, he set up a committee for the co-ordination of the press and invited Jean Luchaire, the director of the Parisian daily, *Nouveaux Temps*, and close associate of Abetz, to represent the government in the Occupied Zone. In return, Laval won an agreement that the occupied press would

follow the general orientation of the government and conform to the spirit of the National Revolution.

Laval, with German backing, was relatively successful in controlling his Vichy opponents but he was much less successful in manipulating the power structures of occupied France. His agreement with the press did not stop the criticism of government policies emanating from Paris; criticism became more indirect and, at the same time, even more biting. The occupied press now used the key words and catch phrases of the National Revolution but they imbued them with different meanings or turned them against the government and its failure to live up to the promises inherent in them. More significantly, despite his skill, Laval found it impossible to manipulate the Germans. As the end of the war looked more remote than ever in mid-1942, he found it increasingly difficult to wring concessions from the occupier. As the value of collaboration became less and less obvious to the occupied, Laval sought to portray the war as a fight against the Bolshevisation of Europe and in this context in June 1942 he announced his hopes for a German victory and encouraged Frenchmen to fight on the eastern front. This statement further alienated public opinion and cost him dearly in his trial after the war.

Laval made important concessions to the Germans in order to maintain his personal power. In June 1942, he initiated the *Relève*, the system of prisoner release in return for volunteers for labour in Germany. When this failed to attract sufficient volunteers for German needs, he announced the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (STO) which effectively conscripted and deported men between the ages of 18 and 50 and women between 21 and 35.³⁴ Also in mid-1942, the French police assisted German authorities in the first 'round-up' of Jews in the occupied zone and their subsequent deportation to extermination camps in Poland. When Laval, having already conceded important aspects of French power to the occupier, gained the right to sign laws and decrees for the French state in November 1942, the Germans gained even more direct control of the levers of power.

³⁴ The STO became officially operative from 15 February 1943.

The closing months of 1942 also resulted in the loss of important symbols of Vichy's power and independence: following the Allied landings in North Africa, the Germans occupied southern France and disbanded the Armistice army and the French themselves scuttled the navy in Toulon. The fascists in Paris portrayed these losses to French prestige as the result of the inaction of the 'old guard' and the infiltration of Gaullists in government:

Qu'on ne fait pas de national socialisme français avec des démocrates. Qu'on ne fait pas du fascisme avec des attentistes. Qu'on ne fait pas de la collaboration avec l'Allemagne au moyen de gaullistes conscients ou déguisés. On ne défend pas son sol avec ceux qui sont décidés à le vendre. Qu'on ne gouverne pas avec des hommes qui trahissent les principes affichés du Gouvernement.³⁵

Many collaborationists now contended that regeneration for France under the present regime was all but impossible. Mixing his metaphors, an unnamed 'special envoy' of the MSR's paper *Révolution Nationale*, sent to observe the occupation of the south, described Vichy as a carousel turning uselessly in circles and as a nineteenth century vestry where 'il flotte une odeur d'encens mort'.³⁶

In a mounting campaign of criticism, collaborationists condemned Vichy's failure to embrace full collaboration with Germany and demanded of Laval immediate measures to redress the situation. Jacques Doriot's main weapon against the government remained military commitment to the fighting on the Eastern front and in this regard the LVF gave him an edge. In June 1942, Laval attempted to dull this edge by establishing a rival and, he claimed, elite fighting force for the Eastern Front, the *Légion Tricolor*.³⁷ But Doriot felt particularly peeved at the loss of North Africa since he regarded it as a PPF stronghold and he called for an administrative *épuration* of all

³⁵ Robert Brasillach, 'Pour que la France vive', *Je Suis Partout* (13 November 1942).

³⁶ 'Vichy-Marseille: Choses vues par notre envoyé spécial', *Révolution Nationale*, 21 November 1942.

³⁷ A great rivalry always existed between Laval and Doriot for influence over the veterans' organisations and it came to a head over raising forces for the fight against communism on the eastern front. While Laval sought to limit Doriot's 'activist' influence, Doriot tried to use his activist reputation in a bid for power. However, neither organisation was very successful in raising forces for the Eastern front and by the end of 1942 each had failed to win German support against the other (Abetz would not back Doriot against Laval but neither would he agree to ban the PPF). See Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. 254.

'undesirable elements' in the government, stronger measures against Jews and for official military collaboration—the declaration of war on Britain and America, the reconquest of North Africa, adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact as well as renewed efforts for the Eastern front.³⁸

The government resisted the collaborationists' call for military commitment to the war but it could not resist the greater pressure to maintain order within its borders where avoidance of the STO had begun to swell the Resistance and challenge German economic exploitation of France. Pétain created the *Milice* in January 1943, essentially by renaming the *Service d'Ordre Légionnaire*, the special unit of his beloved veterans' organisation which he always considered the heart of his most loyal support. As a police and anti-resistance force, the *Milice* rapidly began to work in co-operation with the German occupation forces against their common enemies—the Resistance and all Communists, Freemasons and Jews. Laval was the nominal head of the *Milice*, but it was directed by Joseph Darnand, a former member of the shady, extreme right wing activist group of the 1930s, the *Cagoule*. Darnand brought together elements of the extreme Maurrasian right and avowed fascists. He favoured a single party dedicated to the National Revolution and saw the *Milice* not only as its protector, but also as the training ground for its cadres. *Milicians* saw themselves as the New Men, the basis of the new France. Darnand vigorously pursued all enemies of the regime. By mid-1943, the *Milice* numbered about 35,000 men and, after the Germans approved its arming in November 1943, Darnand adopted full military co-operation with the occupation forces and led several hundred of his men into the *Waffen SS* to fight on the eastern front.

By the end of 1943, the facade of Vichy's bargaining power had collapsed, revealing the emptiness behind the promise of collaboration and the futility of Laval's attempts to negotiate a favourable place for France in a German-dominated Europe. In November 1943, Pétain tried to distance himself from Laval whom he considered responsible for the regime's loss of power and popularity. He planned to announce that

³⁸ Barthélemy, *Du Communisme au Fascisme*, pp. 325, 332-3.

a reconstituted National Assembly would elect his successor in the event of his death, but the Germans blocked his speech. They then further limited Vichy's power by demanding that all legislation be subject to their ratification. Pétain, though still determined to hang on to his position, was now essentially ignored by the occupier except as a ceremonial head. This reduced Laval's field of manipulation even further. The political dynamic at Vichy was now provided only by internal struggles: the contest for power within collaborationist circles and the fight against the Resistance. The way was open to the march of totalitarianism and the tide of civil war.

The Police State: 1944

In January 1944, despite Pétain's opposition, a ministerial reshuffle took place at Vichy. The changes saw the entry of collaborationists into portfolios which were central to German demands to control labour, order and information. Essentially, they led to the creation of a police state, National-Socialist in all but name, the 'état milicien' that was the final phase of the Vichy regime.³⁹

Marcel Déat became Minister of Labour and National Solidarity, ensuring total German exploitation of French resources. Joseph Darnand became Secretary-General for the Maintenance of Order, thus giving the head of the *Milice* control of the police and justice system and ensuring absolute repression of all opposition. In the face of mounting pressure on Germany in the war and the Allied invasion of France in June, the occupying authorities were nonetheless determined to quell the growing resistance, particularly in the *maquis*-dominated mountainous areas of southern France which harboured many STO resisters. Vichy not only committed itself to armed co-operation of the *Milice* with German forces in their attack on the Glières and Vercors *maquis* groups, but it also legitimised summary executions of *maquisards* and those who were considered to be helping them. The *Milice* perpetrated vicious repression, torture and

³⁹ This is not to deny Vichy's own policies of control and repression which targetted certain groups—Jews, Communists and Freemasons—from the earliest days of the regime. As Peschanski has shown, repression and exclusion were important aspects of continuity across all the identified phases in the regime: see his *Vichy 1940-1944*.

brutality and aroused intense hatred which erupted in reprisals and summary executions in the *épuration* which followed the Liberation.

Philippe Henriot, another member of the *Milice*, received the portfolios of Information and Propaganda. Until his assassination by the Resistance in late June 1944, Henriot gained such influence that in many ways he dominated this period of occupation.⁴⁰ He made two radio broadcasts daily, to which the majority of the country, friend and foe, tuned in. Henriot staffed his ministry with fellow members of the *Milice*, replacing Laval's supporters and facilitating total German control of information in France. From February 1944 the Germans tightened their control of the press: the Propaganda Abteilung began to send 'notes d'orientation' to all papers in the southern zone with the demand that they had to produce at least two editorials per week and, after the Normandy landings in June, they imposed total military censorship.⁴¹ Vichy was now a mere reflection of the Occupier's will.

The growing power of the collaborationists within government did not put an end to their constant campaigning against 'old guard' elements nor against each other. Rivalries and bickering reduced the final weeks of the regime to a tragicomic farce. Though France had been a battleground for a month, on 5 July 1944 Déat led three other government ministers as well as prominent collaborationists and journalists in Paris to sign a 'Joint Declaration on the Political situation'. The Declaration called for the end of Laval's *attentisme* and his double game with the Allies and deplored his failure to control the resistance 'anarchy' and 'terrorism' which was sweeping the country. Laval survived the attack on his position but no doubt perceived a greater threat from the Allied advance on Paris. His attempt to revive the National Assembly was cut short when the Germans ordered the evacuation of the government in August 1944, forcing both him and Pétain to Germany. Even evacuation to Germany did not stop the

⁴⁰ Henriot came from a pre-war background of militant Catholicism, violent anti-Semitism and anti-communism and a journalistic career with *Je Suis Partout*. He joined the *Milice* and wrote for its journal *Combats*. H.R. Kedward distinguishes this phase of the Vichy regime as one when Philippe Henriot reached the zenith of his power: 'The Vichy of the Other Philippe', in Hirschfeld and Marsh, *Collaboration in France*, pp. 32-46.

⁴¹ Peschanski, 'Encadrer ou Contrôler?', p. 31.

bickering and jockeying for some illusion of power. The 'power' of the collaborationists who gathered at Sigmaringen castle and set up the farcical 'government in exile' was entirely symbolic and their political dynamic was purely self destructive.⁴²

* * *

In a sense, the ultimate outcome of the great struggle for supremacy in Europe meant that Vichy's vision of national regeneration was doomed. As the tide of the war turned against Germany and as Nazi ideology took precedence over Germany's need for French co-operation, the benefits of collaboration came to flow in only one direction. The possibility of independent French action became increasingly restricted until it disappeared completely. Vichy's reforms and those of its collaborationist critics were doubly doomed since even German victory would not have meant success. Any real national regeneration would have proved incompatible with a Nazi-domination of Europe and was, therefore, an illusion.

Yet, the nature of the Occupation and the changing tide of war produced a complex and dynamic power structure which constantly impacted on Vichy's plans to rebuild France from the 'ruins' of defeat. There were real possibilities for change in the first two phases of the Occupation. A compliant France was vitally important to the prosecution of Germany's war aims and, until the final months of the Occupation, the

⁴² Sanctioned by Hitler in August 1944 as the Germans retreated from France, the makeshift 'government in exile' finally settled at Sigmaringen castle and in October was named the 'French Governmental Commission for the Defence of National Interests'. The Commission, which claimed to act under Pétain's authority though he never recognised it, was headed by Fernand de Brinon and included Darnand, Déat and Luchaire. Many Miliciens fleeing the *épuration* also gathered at Sigmaringen, along with prominent collaborationist figures such as Marion, Céline, Rebatet and de Châteaubriant. Laval spent time in the castle but did not indulge in the illusion of power. Some prominent *collabos* also rejected the illusion by remaining in Paris: Brasillach went into hiding, gave himself up after several weeks and was eventually executed after one of the most celebrated trials of the immediate post-war era; Drieu la Rochelle committed suicide. Doriot held himself apart from the Sigmaringen 'government' and took his followers to a different town in Germany. He continued to press his claims on the Germans to be recognised as the leader of France and in January 1945 he created a rival 'government', the 'Committee for the Liberation of France'. The Sigmaringen group agreed to join Doriot's committee but all pretence of regaining power was ended by Doriot's death in February when an Allied plane strafed the car in which he was traveling.

Germans could not afford to ignore the power structures in France. The defeat and the initial phase of collaboration gave the new Vichy government real power. This power always depended on collaboration and collaboration meant constant accommodation with changing German demands. Collaboration and the nature of occupation also produced intense internal competition for power and a battle for public opinion. This inter-French competition never diminished, even as any chance of independence was whittled away. These factors provided the dynamics of power that invariably impacted on all attempts to regenerate France.

The defeat and the occupation brought together the diverse political and ideological elements of the right. They were bound to differ. But they were also united in two important ways: first, they believed that far reaching reform was vital for France; second, they believed that solutions to France's long standing problems were at hand and that a new order for France was achievable under foreign occupation. Common to all reform agendas under Vichy was the contention that the defeat in 1940 was the result of fundamental weaknesses which had to be addressed if France was to survive. 'Decadence'—or the need to 'cure' it—was therefore the catchword with which many collaborators justified their desire to wield power under the Occupation.

Chapter 2

Decadence

On a plein les mains de ce qui reste de l'esprit, on en est tout englué, grotesque, méprisant, puant. Tout va s'écrouler ... tout s'écroule ...

Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*, 1932.

When, in July 1940, Pétain blamed the defeat on deep seated national weakness, he drew on fears that had haunted France for most of the previous decade. The nation had in fact weathered a long series of crises and had responded to the outbreak of war with a unity that some had doubted possible, but the defeat revived and confirmed old fears. For most of the decade, political leaders had worried over the nation's chronic instability and division. Significant elements of France's intellectual elite had expressed not merely discontent but disaffection with French political culture. They feared that France would prove incapable of meeting future challenges, that the nation was weak and in decline. Their malaise found expression in a conviction, which at times raised itself to the level of an obsession, that France was decadent. The assertion of decadence was certainly not new: it had been a powerful tool in the political rhetoric of the right since the founding of the Third Republic. However, the extraordinary coincidence of external and internal, social, political and economic crises throughout the 1930s made the fear of decadence and its consequences particularly acute. Assertions of decadence waxed and waned according to the level of perceived crisis but some feared a more general

collapse, one that threatened the very basis of liberal democracy or western civilisation. This sense of decline pervaded France's literary consciousness and found its ultimate expression in Céline's grotesque image of corruption and decay.

The contention of decadence was strong at first in a reasonably wide spectrum of social and political commentary, left and right, but increasingly prevalent in the literature of nonconformist movements, the right and the extreme right. Decadence had many different meanings amongst these groups in the inter-war years. Generally, those on the left found decadence in the renewed attacks on republican principles and in the rise of fascism in France. Nonconformists perceived a spiritual and moral decline behind the constant political and social crises. The right attributed all weakness and instability to the decadence of the Third Republic which had destroyed France's strength and harmony and corrupted its true national character. According to the traditional right, the falling birth rate, urban immorality and hedonism, immigration, and the constant threat of left wing, revolutionary violence were both evidence and further cause of the corruption of France's true values and traditions. The right also tended to postulate a more general decline in western civilisation, a growing distance from some mythical, golden past. The extreme right intensified the fear of national decline, especially where they claimed it resulted from Marxism and its liberal or Masonic sympathisers.¹ Extreme right wing groups exploited the air of crisis which pervaded the thirties and interpreted all contentions of decadence as evidence of a growing consensus against a crumbling regime and for a new political and social path.

Perhaps because of its long history in France and because the assertion of decadence was so widespread in the 1930s that few saw the need to explain precisely what they meant by it. Not all who worried over decadence were entirely convinced by it and some were concerned about the effects that such criticism would have on

¹ The right constantly attacked certain 'demons' and often equated them with the causes of decadence. Robert Soucy has argued that the demonology of a wide range of fascist groups, was not irrational but served the social, economic and cultural interests of the extreme right. Robert Soucy, 'Functional Hating: French Fascist Demonology between the Wars', *Contemporary French Civilization*, vol. XXIII:2 (Summer/Fall 1999), pp. 158-176.

patriotism and France's ability to weather turbulent times. Historians, in a long standing and still lively debate on the reasons for France's defeat in May 1940, have considered the possible effect of the assertion of decadence in weakening France but have not focused primary attention on the various contemporary shades of meaning. The debate centres on the questions of whether France of the thirties was decadent and what role, if any, this played in its rapid, military collapse. Simply stated, the debate divides into two camps. On one side there are those who contended that the collapse of France was an indication of deep seated problems which were evident in the previous decade: poor political and military leadership and a lack of social cohesion were the result of a long process of moral decline; paralysis and a cynical unwillingness to defend national values were the effects of the corruption and stagnation of the Third Republic. Those who argue against the contention that decadence played a role in France's defeat tend to focus the discussion on battlefield performance and on more immediate and power-related explanations of France's inability to meet the German threat, including a lack of external support from allies and potential allies.²

² The debate was sparked soon after the war by the publication in 1946 of Marc Bloch's *L'Étrange Défaite*. Written in 1940, Bloc's work is a powerful testament to the experience of the defeat by an acute and trained observer and it remains central to any discussion of the issue. However, as a soldier and as an opponent of the Vichy regime, the 'strangeness' he found in France's defeat is in many ways the premise from which he begins his inquiry as well as his conclusion. Similarly, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's diplomatic history, *La Décadence, 1932-1939* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1979), was heavily influenced by a Gaullist interpretation of the failures of the Third Republic. Since these two seminal works, many important studies, too numerous to detail here, have given a fuller understanding of the military defeat and the pressures which France faced in the years preceding it. While not denying the mistakes made by French leadership, especially at the operational and tactical level on the battlefield, these studies have been more sympathetic to the difficult choices faced by French political leaders and military planners in their efforts to combat German rearmament and aggression while coping with economic and social problems at home. Britain and America's failure to support France and France's failure to negotiate an alliance with the Soviet Union have also been raised as external factors in France's difficulties. The arguments for social and political decadence have been countered with evidence that in the year before the outbreak of war, there was a *revivement* in support of the national effort for which even right wing opponents of the regime proved themselves willing to fight. Many of these important arguments are addressed in a collection of essays in Joel Blatt (ed.), *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998). A six-part round table discussion of the articles in this book on H-Net contains perceptive reviews that led to further enlightening discussion (Sally Marks's introduction also puts forward a convincing argument on the great power deficiencies which underlay all France's problems): *The French Defeat of 1940: H-Diplo Review*, h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu (September 2000). The ensuing discussion between William Irvine and Vicki Caron, two contributors to the volume, on the nature and importance of the *revivement* is particularly engaging and relevant to this chapter as it relates to the position of conservatives. Caron also details differences in meanings of decadence between left and right. Deficiencies of power and leadership as explanations of the defeat are argued by Anthony Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery* (London: Arnold, 1995) and Robert J. Young, *France and the*

This chapter does not contend that France was decadent nor seek to prove that real or perceived decadence was in any way the cause of the defeat or of the collapse of the Third Republic. That is, the question of decadence is not raised here a tool of analysis in order to uncover the reasons for France's 'weakness'. Rather, this chapter seeks to analyse the perception and assertion of decadence and how various contemporaries used the term—in different ways—to air their fears or support their view of national decline and weakness. The analysis shows that fears and perceptions of decadence were widely held during the 1930s. The catchcry of decadence was a very powerful tool in the political rhetoric of a broad spectrum of the right: they used it to convey a sense of crisis and consensus for change and in order to represent their political, social and economic interests. Assertions of decadence—widespread and various though they may have been—do not account for France's poor military performance in 1940. However, such assertions certainly influenced the thinking of many of those who sought to justify or to build a new, reformed and non decadent France after the defeat. The assertion of decadence was thus an important aspect of the culture of crisis of the thirties and during the Occupation. The use or uses of decadence (rather than its truth or falsity) therefore remains important to historians seeking to understand the relationship between various elements of the right, traditional and radical, and the nature of fascism in France.³

Decadence and the Culture of Crisis

By the 1930s, decadence was a term already rich in historical and literary

Origins of the Second World War (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996). Recent studies which add further dimensions to the overall picture of the defeat are: Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les Français de l'an 40*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1990); Peter Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace: Intelligence and Policy Making 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ernest R. May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).

³ Robert Soucy in his two-volume study of the two 'waves' of French fascism in the 1920s and 1930s shows how many, different movements used the assertion of decadence to promote their cause. Zeev Sternhell makes more of the assertion of decadence, using it to connote a specifically French brand of fascism and linking those who asserted it in a long ideological chain stretching back to the late nineteenth century. Sternhell claims that assertions of decadence helped to undermine democracy and thus weaken France when faced with the challenge of war: Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche*, in particular pp. 238-9. See also Sternhell's *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

associations and not easily defined.⁴ Its use in political rhetoric was complicated and coloured by its origins in earlier and quite different contexts. In particular, the meaning of decadence still carried the baggage of nineteenth century literary movements and especially of the *fin de siècle* cult of decadence that achieved its ultimate expression in France.⁵ Literary figures—the *decadents*—such as Flaubert, Rimbaud, Huysmans, Baudelaire, Renan, Taine, Verlaine and others symbolised a rebellion against bourgeois society, rejecting its stuffy conventionality, its supreme confidence and its dedication to progress and material success. Their work expressed their sense of anomie and spiritual anguish and their distaste, disgust and even despair for the modern world.⁶ They lived their social criticism by adopting a decadent lifestyle and by publicly displaying their difference: they celebrated the perverse, the unnatural and the artificial. The *decadent* was the new dandy who craved new sensations and tested conventional morality as he pushed the boundaries of experience.⁷

While decadence may have begun as an aesthetic and literary movement—one that was, it must be noted, not altogether negative since it contained elements of renewal—it came to confirm in its legion of critics that cultural and moral standards were in decline, society was corrupt and modernity was to be feared. These convictions had important intellectual and political consequences, especially on the right, at the turn of the old century and into the new. Social and political conservatives reacted against the decadent movement's amorality and contempt for tradition. Many critics also saw the decadents

⁴ Richard Gilman, in his study of the various uses of the word, describes decadence as 'a slippery character, a chameleon changing color while you stare at it': *Decadence: the strange life of an epithet* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979), p. 9.

⁵ There is an extensive literature on literary decadence. The following focus on France: Jennifer Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1986); Eugen Weber, *France: Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 13-26; Eric E. Hansen, *Disaffection and Decadence: a crisis in French intellectual thought 1848-1898* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982); *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 17:1 (January 1982), special issue on decadence; Roger L. Williams, *The Horror of Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980); Koenraad W. Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth Century France* (The Hague: International archives of the history of ideas (7), 1964).

⁶ J.-K. Huysmans, *A Rebours* caused a sensation when first published in 1884 and came to symbolise literary decadence. For an English translation see J.-K. Huysmans, *Against Nature: A New Translation of A Rebours by Robert Baldick* (Hamondsworth: Penguin, 1959).

⁷ On dandyism see Rhonda K. Garelick, *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

as a threat to masculinity.⁸ If the modern world was creating men who were weak, 'nervous' and effeminate, it also seemed to be spawning a new and assertive 'unwomanly' woman who also threatened tradition, morality and masculinity.⁹

At the turn of the century, concerns over decadence coincided with a broader European anxiety over degeneration.¹⁰ Theories of degeneration claimed to have their roots in science and drew on a wide variety of fields from medicine and psychology to sociology, anthropology and biology. They expressed an evolutionary fear that progress had sown the seeds of mankind's decline and the effects of that decline were becoming obvious through a whole series of human and social 'disorders'. Though they were in so many ways different, theories of degeneration came to be associated with decadence and anti-modernism in social and cultural discourse, even if some of those theories were bizarre and condemned equally as they were celebrated. The Jewish Hungarian writer with medical training, Max Nordau, settled in Paris and in several books, most notably *Degeneration* in 1892, contended that an extreme crisis in modern society was caused by the growing tension between the human body and social conditions.¹¹ The result, Nordau claimed, was exhaustion and a new form of hereditary hysteria that could be measured in physiological deterioration and cultural disease: he identified the literary decadents, symbolists, mystics, naturalists, feminists and socialists as evils of degeneration.

Philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were also concerned with decadence but their interpretation differed again. To them, decadence

⁸ For a penetrating study of the history of masculinity and its political consequences see George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁹ On the new woman and the perceived threat to society at the turn of the century see the two studies by Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Culture* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996). On decadence and women's writing see Elaine Showalter (ed.), *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin de Siècle* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848 – c. 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Sander Gilman and J. Edwards Chamberlin, *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹¹ First published in German, the second edition was translated into French in 1894 and English the following year: Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton, 1895).

described the decay and breakdown of the social structure. A state of decadence was therefore the precondition for their ideological solutions and their call in the face of decline was for a positive and active social commitment. An idea of decadence was inherent in philosophical works as diverse as those of Marx, Nietzsche, Sorel, Péguy and Maurras. Each expounded a critique of bourgeois society, but each had a different conception of what was decadent and their solutions looked variously to the past or to the future and ranged from integral nationalism to international socialism and from the spiritual to the economic.

Theories of decadence often played upon the decline from a once great civilisation, the detrimental effects of materialism and the physical and moral dangers of urban living. There was wide divergence on the cure for decadence but seeking it inspired urban and welfare reformers, rural idealists and the Olympic ideal of Baron Pierre de Coubertin. The pseudo scientific theory of decline put forward by Oswald Spengler in his *The Decline of the West*, struck a chord in 1918, not only with Spengler's German countrymen who sought explanation of their defeat, but with the melancholy mood which swept across Europe in the immediate aftermath of such terrible human loss.¹² Spengler's theory of cyclic decline predicted the end of a humanistic era where the individual and reason held sway, and the dawning of another – one of collective faith and force.

Thus, by the 1920s, the concept of decadence was already a powerful 'siren of decline', even if, as a critical tool, it served many masters and all extremes and inspired diverse forms of action. The assertion of decadence fitted well with the many crises of the inter-war years in Europe since it postulated ongoing decline and imminent collapse which would be irreversible and catastrophic unless a certain path or cure was quickly adopted. Decadence bolstered the philosophies and rhetoric of those who lamented a loss of power or influence and saw little possibility of a reversal of the trend. It also bolstered those who were seeking power or influence for the first time and who saw far

¹² Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1926-9).

reaching change as the only way of achieving it. The assertion of decadence united conservatives, who looked back to a golden age of stability and feared a violent future, and elements of the extreme right who were most concerned with promoting crisis politics in order to achieve radical change.

Philosophies of decadence greatly influenced the intellectual and political formation of the inter-war generation in France. The philosophies of Charles Péguy, with his distaste for the modern world, and Georges Sorel, who lamented the passing of a simpler, more heroic age, had a strong influence on conservative education. The *Action Française* also had an extraordinary influence on young, right wing intellectuals and political activists.¹³ The organisation, formed at the turn of the century after the bitter taste of military defeat in 1870 and civil war, found a resonance in the generational gulf which developed amidst the ambiguities of France's victory in the First World War. The integral nationalism of the *Action Française* rested on the premise of France's fall from former power and glory and Maurras and Barrès, the leading lights of the organisation who inspired the post-war generation, lamented the decline of national energy and will and the failures of those in power. Although in the 1930s the *Action Française* became part of the old world which the new intellectual generation of the right sought to reject, its teachings helped to keep alive the image of a nation in terminal disorder, free falling into decadence and to promote aggressive and activist solutions.

In the 1920s, theories of decadence and their aggressive solutions combined with the attractions of Italian fascism to form an ideological basis for the first French proto-fascist and fascist leagues.¹⁴ Georges Valois's *Faisceau*, Pierre Taittinger's *Jeunesses Patriotes*, François Coty's *Solidarité Française* and Marcel Bucard's *Francistes*, as well as the veterans' league, the *Croix de Feu*, led by Count François de La Rocque de Sévérac, all sought to end French decline by reuniting and reinvigorating the nation.

¹³ This was so even after the organisation's excommunication in 1926 which reduced its membership. See Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962).

¹⁴ Paul Mazgaj, 'The young Sorelians and decadence', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 17:1 (January 1982), pp. 179-99.

Many early fascist leagues did not survive long into the 1920s, in part because the sense of crisis on which they thrived did not last, but in the 1930s the leagues again electrified the political climate and were joined by new, National Socialist-style leagues such as Jacques Doriot's *Parti Populaire Française*. Although they never gained sway over traditional political or veteran affiliations, the leagues were a sign of a renewed and deepened sense of crisis and a revival of theories of decadence. With the growing activism of the leagues, decadence became central to the language of crisis of the extreme right; they used the term to draw a connection between the fall from greatness, the inability of current political parties and institutions to cope and the need for new and radical solutions in order to prevent an imminent collapse.

The crisis of the 1930s was unique.¹⁵ Assertions of decadence had accompanied every social, political or economic crisis since the mid-nineteenth century in France but never before had such a wide spectrum of the nation's intellectual and political elite offered so little hope of renewal for its liberal democracy. Many voiced fears of total collapse. 'Collapse' of course meant different things to different sections: the left feared that France's democracy might not survive the assaults from fifth columnists and from abroad; the conservative right feared social violence and revolution; and everyone feared the consequences of another war.¹⁶ These fears waxed and waned and shifted ground throughout the decade. In France's extremely polarised politics, there was wide disagreement over the cause and nature of successive crises and, as power shifted from one pole to the other, so too did the locus of fear. Nonetheless, a foreboding of possible disaster of some kind was very real until the final years of the decade when this consensus of fear dissipated in the battles over fascism and the approach of war.

¹⁵ Eugen Weber argues this point in his Chapter V: 'The Decadence', *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), pp. 111-46.

¹⁶ For the cultural impact of war on France in the inter-war years see Omer Bartov, 'Martyrs' Vengeance: Memory, Trauma and Fear of War in France 1918-1940' in Blatt, *French Defeat*, pp. 54-84. Bartov argues that memories of the last war and abhorrence of the prospect of another crossed all barriers and dominated France's political, ideological, popular and military thinking. The political exploitation of these fears and the nation's inability to reach a consensus on war, Bartov contends, were sources of its paralysis in 1940 and of its willing collaboration after the defeat. Peter Jackson provides a useful review of Bartov's arguments in his contribution to the round-table discussion, *French Defeat of 1940*, *H-Diplo Review*.

The lack of national confidence was partly the result of a unique convergence of crises early in the decade: economic depression, political instability and scandal and the fear of social schism.¹⁷ External factors added to French fears as the decade progressed. The rise of the fascist states, and the resurgence of Germany in particular, made France's international position increasingly insecure. In contrast to the vitality, dynamism and unity which seemed to be the key to strength and success in the modern world, France seemed a 'blocked society', with a shrinking population and national leaders who were capable only of squabbling amongst themselves: the rapid succession of governments—thirteen from the end of the war to January 1934—achieved no more than the constant reshuffling of the same ministerial pool.

The growing sense of disenchantment with the inability of successive governments to address the crisis was fed by a long series of public scandals which added a dimension of moral corruption. The indignation which these scandals produced led to an extraordinary wave of anti-parliamentary feeling. This sentiment was widespread, but on the right its effects were evident in renewed attacks on the corruption of the regime from authoritarian and extra-parliamentary movements such as the *Action Française*. Anti-parliamentarism also fired the veterans' leagues: their members, already imbued with a sense of moral fortitude, were fundamentally concerned with erosion of their economic power.¹⁸ At the same time, the traditional right feared that economic crisis might lead to increased influence of the left; a fear apparently realised when Edouard Daladier, a Radical, appeared to be giving in to socialist and communist pressure in sacking the Parisian Prefect of Police, Jean Chiappe, who had shown considerable bias in favour of right wing groups.¹⁹ Conservative fears, combined with extra-parliamentary discontent, finally boiled over when several deputies were

¹⁷ There is a substantial literature on the crisis of the 1930s. Studies not already cited include: Serge Bernstein & Pierre Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle, vol. 2, 1930-1945* (Brussels: Ed. Complexe, 1991); Dominique Borne & Henri Dubief, *La crise des années 30, 1929-1938* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989); Serge Bernstein, *La France des années trente* (Paris: A. Colin, 1988).

¹⁸ Robert Soucy, 'France: veteran's politics between the wars', in Stephen R. Ward (ed.), *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 78-9.

¹⁹ Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 30-33, traces the convergence and divergence of the traditional and extra-parliamentary right during and after the riots.

implicated in the financial misdealing of Alexander Stavisky, an embezzler of municipal bonds who also happened to be Jewish.

In the aftermath of the the Stavisky affair, on 6 February, the leagues took to the streets and marched on the National Assembly with cries of 'A bas les voleurs!'. In the riot which followed, fifteen were killed and over 300 hospitalised. The violence was sparked by a small minority of the protesters, but its extent shocked the nation and surprised the leadership of the leagues. The 6 February riots were a manifestation of the right (despite the small Communist presence), and brought together traditionalists and radicals in a convergence of fears. More generally, the riots and the government's response (simultaneously violent and weak) represented for many contemporaries the depths of corruption and ineffectiveness to which the regime had sunk. Daladier resigned, though he did not lose a vote of confidence in the Chamber. The riots and their immediate aftermath marked a low point in national confidence.

The sense of crisis and disillusionment in the early 1930s can be measured across the political spectrum, right and left. Before 1934, the grand principles of the left seemed less able to maintain the political initiative at home or to combat the growing threats of fascism and war abroad. As France became increasingly surrounded by ideologically opposed powers, the left found its familiar territory of pacifism and anti-militarism pulled from under its feet and was thrown back into a re-appraisal of its basic principles. In 1933, the Socialist and future *résistant*, Pierre Brossolette, echoed Céline's sense of collapse:

Nous voici maintenant en 1933. Et tout s'est écroulé. Le mot internationale et le mot socialisme suffisent à provoquer les rires. Les Internationales se dissolvent, la Société de Nations est morte, l'Union européenne est une dérision et le désarmement une blague. L'autarchie est devenue le dogme d'un monde économique où l'on ne parle plus que de barrières douanières, de contingentement et de bataille monétaire. L'Allemagne est plus loin que jamais de la France. Partout une extraordinaire marée nationaliste a submergé les peuples.²⁰

In the face of crisis, the parties of the left could not overcome their differences: the

²⁰ Pierre Brossolette, *Notre Temps*, 2-9 July 1933, quoted by Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes*, p. 19.

Communists seemed dogmatic and negative; the Socialists, bureaucratic and inactive; and the Radical Party, over cautious, embroiled in financial scandal at home and impotent on the international stage.²¹ Emmanuel Berl, a left wing intellectual and editor of the weekly journal *Marianne*, wrote in 1932 that the political parties were no longer adequate to meet the current political reality; they could no longer drive politics and left and right were collapsing into sameness.²²

The disillusionment with traditional and parliamentary politics can be seen in the phenomenon of dissidence within the traditional parties and in the attraction of some of those dissidents to fascism. The 'Neo-Socialist' deputies Marcel Déat, Barthélémy Montagnon and Adrien Marquet sought to promote a more active programme and an anti-capitalist front which would unite the working and the middle classes under the banner of 'Order, Authority, Nation'. They were expelled from the party in 1933.²³ The 'Young Turks' of the Radical party, such as Gaston Bergery and Bertrand de Jouvenel, were allowed more leeway, but their call for a stronger state, a more radical social policy and a 'planned' economy was a sharp tack away from the party's traditional policies. Jacques Doriot, the popular mayor of the working class stronghold of St. Dennis and former rapidly rising star of the Communist Party, was finally expelled in June 1934 after flouting the rigid Moscow line on class conflict and distance from the socialists. His subsequent conversion to fascism was the most spectacular defection from left to

²¹ Weber, *Hollow Years*, pp. 113-16.

²² Emmanuel Berl, *La Politique et les Partis* (Paris: Rieder, 1932).

²³ After their expulsion, Marquet, Déat and Montagnon formed their own party, the *Parti socialiste de France – Union Jean Jaurès* (popularly known as the 'Neo-Socialists'), which dressed its supporters in blue-grey shirts and advocated a strong, nationalistic state. The party lasted only until 1935 but Déat and Marquet remained influential in politics and government. Both were strongly pro appeasement: Déat published his influential article, 'Mourir pour Dantzig?' in May 1939 and, even after the outbreak of war, both opposed its vigorous prosecution. Déat's role as one of the most committed collaborationists is well known: he escaped France in 1944 and evaded his death sentence under the protection of the Catholic Church in Italy; he died in 1955. Marquet's role under Vichy was less prominent because it was more short lived and is less well known. A popular Mayor of Bordeaux, Laval rewarded his early militancy in support of negotiations for the armistice by appointing him the first interior minister of the Etat Français. Before Pétain sacked him barely two and a half months later, Marquet proved himself to be a strong advocate of collaboration and authoritarian government. His sacking, his failure to convince the Germans that he would make a better leader than either Laval or Pétain and his later reluctance to resume a prominent role when Laval and Déat asserted their power, saved his life when he was tried after the war. He was sentenced to 10 years 'national indignity' and he too died in 1955.

right in this tumultuous period.²⁴

Such spectacular conversions were rare but the phenomenon of dissidence was indicative of a broader generational divide. The divide was complex. No generation is ever entirely uniform but the several generations that experienced the inter-war turmoil each had their own grievance and differences in their ideals were more strongly than ever tinged with impatience and desperation. In the face of the apparent failure of a given set of ideas, elements of the post-war generation sought to assert their own intellectual identity and to find new and concrete methods of ensuring peace and stability. The crisis of decadence in France was nevertheless particularly acute for young intellectuals. The exploration of the meaning of decadence was a contemplation which the ordinary citizen could not afford, but for the intellectual elite it brought into question their role in French society as well as the global value of France's intellectual heritage.²⁵

Many young intellectuals claimed to be seeking a new way, a total break from the old political moulds. A generational disillusionment, a passion to be different and the search for new values led to the mushrooming of the nonconformist 'movement' amongst France's young intellectuals in the early 1930s. In reality, the movement consisted of a number of loose and constantly intertwining groupings around several journals. The membership of these loosely defined groups came mainly, though not exclusively, from the right. The 'new way', as they saw it, lay somewhere between, on one extreme, democratic weakness, individualist division and capitalist materialism and, on the other, totalitarian control and mass politics: theirs was a vague unity which hid

²⁴ Doriot's defection was probably more to do with issues of power than with ideology, but he based his new party's policies on ideas of decadence. Studies of Doriot's career include: Gilbert D. Allardyce, 'The Political Transition of Jacques Doriot', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 1:1 (1966), pp. 56-74; Dieter Wolf, *Doriot* (Paris: Fayard, 1969); Jean-Paul Brunet, *Jacques Doriot* (Paris: Balland, 1986).

²⁵ The debate about the role of the intellectual in France was engaged in 1927 by the publication of Julien Benda's *La Trahison des Clercs* which appeared in English as *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (New York: W. Morrow & Company, 1928). Benda contended that the intellectuals had betrayed their true role of detached analysis, defence of principle and abstract thought and instead had adopted partisan, political argument. Although his concern was not decadence *per se*, Benda received a great deal of critical attention in the debate over decadence and the ideals, values and roles that had been supposedly lost or neglected in France's fall.

diverse political positions.²⁶ Nevertheless, the nonconformist cry of 'Ni Droite, ni Gauche!' was a powerful rallying call for all those who sought a new solution as a cure for decadence; a necessary search, they said, in order to save the nation from the intellectual, moral and political impasse which was paralysing and gradually killing it.

²⁶ The groups differed in their connections or dissidence from the *Action Française* (some groups moving from one position to the other), in their closeness to the Catholic Church in their spiritualist or technocratic orientations and in the solutions they espoused (the latter difference is expanded in Chapter 5, Action'. Nonconformists cannot be clearly linked to any one political position and, as we shall see, individuals took various political paths at certain crisis points in the 1930s and then under the Occupation. See Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes* and Ory & Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France*, pp. 90-2. Memoirs of nonconformists offer valuable insight into their generational challenge: Jean-Pierre Maxence, *Histoire de dix ans, 1927-1937* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939); Claude Roy, *Moi je* (Paris, Gallimard, 1969) and Pierre Andreu, *Le rouge et le blanc, 1928-1944* (Paris: Table Ronde, 1977). Loubet Del Bayle, who gives them more coherence than they perhaps deserve, divides the nonconformists into three main groups:

Emmanuel Mounier's group, *Esprit*, espoused 'personalism', the primacy of the spiritual side of human nature and the need to separate it from all political mores. It opposed the disorder of capitalism, materialism, individualism, collectivism and idealism but its opposition remained highly intellectual. The group split in 1934, with many of its more radical elements leaving to found a new association, *Troisième Force*. However, thereafter Mounier took a more active interest in everyday politics and international events, moving distinctly towards the left: he opposed Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, the war against the Republic in Spain and the Munich agreement; within France he showed some sympathy for the social programme of the Popular Front. Nevertheless, Mounier welcomed the Vichy regime and its National Revolution as a possible new start for France. The group's journal, *Esprit*, reappeared in the Unoccupied Zone in November 1940 but its opposition to totalitarian and racial policies finally led it to fall foul of the Vichy censors in July 1941. *Esprit* was one of the few pre-war journals to be reestablished after the Occupation, though Mounier died in 1950, aged 44: see Michel Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue 'Esprit', 1930-1950* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975).

L'Ordre Nouveau was dedicated to the idea of a revolutionary, international youth movement and hence it was the most eclectic and original of all the nonconformist groups. The slogan *Ni droite ni gauche* was revived amidst this group. Being so diverse, it enjoyed good relations with all other groups. It was formed out of a student discussion group concerned mainly with spiritual questions but under the influence of Arnaud Dandieu and, after his death in 1933, Robert Aron, it became more political and more strongly anti-rationalist and anti-materialist. In the early 1930s Aron and Dandieu wrote a series of influential books, none more so than their first, *Décadence de la nation française*, in 1931. In general the movement stood for spiritual and human values, patriotism and an economic system in which production was not the driving force. *L'Ordre Nouveau* favoured a loose organisation of small, diverse and autonomous groups that would spread its ideology through an appeal to spontaneity. However, internal divisions resulted from the movement of some of its principals towards the left and specifically from a proposal for an anti-fascist organisation. The reaction of the leadership to the riots of 1934 was to encourage further reflection before action since the foundations of the revolution had not been laid: there were no tactics, goals or doctrine. The group remained theoretical and outside the political turmoil of the day.

The *Jeune Droite* movement was most closely tied in its origins to the *Action Française*. It grouped together many influential young writers: Jean-Pierre Maxence, Jean de Fabrègues, Robert Francis, Thierry Maulnier, Robert Brasillach and Maurice Bardèche and spawned a plethora of reviews. Its beginnings were mainly as a moral and spiritual movement though some, such as Maulnier and Maxence, were more political and strongly anti-parliamentary. In 1934 Maulnier, Maxence and Francis wrote *Demain la France*, calling for a greater commitment to revolutionary change. Reviews springing from the groups after this date such as *Combat* and *L'Insurgé* were more aggressive, provocative and more in agreement with the right, even the extreme right: hostility to the Popular Front, support for Italy, Franco and Munich. The group was more Machiavellian than others in its political programme but it was not pro-Nazi; the group defended liberty of thought and condemned anti-Semitism (though the anti-Nazi stance caused Brasillach to leave *Combat*).

What united the nonconformists was their belief in the priority of the spiritual. A spiritual crisis—one that put political and economic concerns first—was the source of the nation's malaise and decline. Their focus on the spiritual brought broader cultural concerns into the debate over decadence. One of the most influential nonconformist philosophers was Emmanuel Mounier, the youthful editor of the monthly journal, *Esprit*, which first appeared in 1932 and soon attracted a diverse following of young intellectuals. Mounier's spiritual philosophy, which came to be known as Personalism, was strongly influenced by the teaching of Péguy and was committed to challenging the status quo, though stressing social responsibility and personal sacrifice.²⁷ Mounier and *Esprit* had great appeal in youth and education circles and inspired many reformist movements in those areas, a fact which later led him into direct involvement in the National Revolution under Vichy.

The assertion of a spiritual crisis was also a defining feature in the works of those literary intellectuals who were drawn towards fascism during the course of the 1930s: Ferdinand Céline, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach remain the most prominent amongst them.²⁸ Such literary figures emphasised different aspects of spiritual decline—rampant materialism, lack of commitment or lack of energy—but they were united by a sense of cultural despair.²⁹ The main appeal of fascism was as the 'cure' for French decadence. Fascism became the only hope. There was no middle ground and some of its supporters promoted the most ruthless methods in order to institute it. The spiritual crisis necessitated a moral crusade. In this way, Robert Soucy argues, the idea of decadence justified fascism's most repressive, callous and violent

²⁷ Many of Mounier's articles, published in *Esprit* from 1932 to 1935, are collected under the title *Révolution personnelle et communautaire* (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1935). Volume one of his collected works contains articles from 1931 to 1939; Emmanuel Mounier, *Œuvres*, vols. 1-4 (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1961-1963). For studies of Mounier see Michel Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue Esprit, 1930-1950* (Paris: Seuil, 1975) and John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1981).

²⁸ Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, Chapter 6, 'French Fascist Intellectuals and the Revolt against Decadence', pp. 280-307. Soucy makes the point that many intellectuals contributed to the idea of decadence but he treats in detail Bertrand de Jouvenel, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Robert Brasillach and Ferdinand Céline.

²⁹ See Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

aspects:

What a number of fascist intellectuals did was to provide ... "moral" reasons for dealing harshly with one's political opponents. In doing so, they helped fuel an ethical fanaticism that became a force of its own, a form of extreme self-righteousness that went beyond simple political, economic, and social self-interest to a so-called spiritual purpose, to a revolt against decadence.³⁰

Many protagonists claimed that the riots of February 1934 were a revolt against decadence. The eruption of discontent certainly precipitated a political watershed. The violence put an end to much of the political uncertainty that underscored the sense of crisis during these early years of the decade. The left rallied in defence of the Republic in counter-demonstrations and strikes on 9 and 12 February. The traditional right retreated from extremist violence, at first because the new, conservative Doumergue government assuaged fears of a creeping left wing influence in France and then in reaction to Nazi policies in Germany.³¹ The old political lines appeared to be reemerging.

The spirit of non-conformism flared briefly in the promulgation of a plan for reform signed by nineteen intellectuals from various backgrounds and united under the title, *Groupe du 9 Juillet*. Their plan described a state of collapse in France: the nation's 'civil war', economic problems and political disorganisation were due, they claimed, to 'une profonde démoralisation du pays'.³² The group asserted that the incapacity and moral laxity of those in power had led to a loss of confidence in the principles behind the regime:

Les grandes idées républicaines ne semblent avoir été inscrites au fronton des monuments que pour être plus aisément reléguées en dehors des réalités pratiques.³³

³⁰ Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 280-1.

³¹ Soucy argues that the Night of the Long Knives and the repression of Catholics and conservatives in Nazi Germany played an important role in the disassociation of French conservatives from fascist movements in France. Fear of Marxism, in the guise of the Popular Front, led a significant minority of conservatives back into sympathy after 1936, which was the real high point of fascism in France. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-6.

³² Le Groupe du 9 Juillet, *Plan du 9 juillet: réforme de la France proposée par le groupe du 9 juillet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1934), p. 16.

³³ *Ibid.*

But the nonconformist movement based on reform, rather than rejection of the regime, burnt itself out in the aftermath of the riots: the movement polarised, partly to the left, mostly to the right.

Political polarisation also pulled the literary fascists more definitely into the political fray and led many to declare their fascism openly. Drieu La Rochelle did so in 1934, joining the PPF on its formation in 1936 and publishing his fascist novel, *Gilles*, in 1939. Brasillach began to write for the fascist paper, *Je Suis Partout*, becoming its editor 1937, and his novels reflect a growing fascination with revolt and the fascist cult of youth and energy. Céline's universal ranting worked against any clear affiliation, but he continued to dissect what he saw as the rottenness of French and western civilisation and he now began to indulge his loathing in his anti-Semitic diatribes, *Bagatelles pour un massacre* and *l'Ecole des cadavres* in 1937 and 1938.³⁴

However, the fear of fascism gaining a foothold in France led the left wing parties to unite. The electoral victory of the Popular Front government in 1936 and Léon Blum's social programme produced a resurgence of confidence on the left. The formation of the Popular Front produced another shock-wave of crisis through the right (traditional and radical, political and intellectual), swelling the ranks of the 'second wave' fascist parties such as the PPF and the PSF which offered regeneration through anti-communism, militarism and activity for its own sake.

Political polarisation had changed the nature of the crisis in France, but the crisis did not go away—indeed its focus widened to include the international perspective. The Spanish civil war highlighted the internal and external weaknesses of Léon Blum's programme for reform. Caught between the demographic legacy of one war and the growing threat of another, France's domestic policies were constrained by the initially delayed and then prolonged effects of the economic depression and by the weakness of the left wing coalition which soon broke apart. Strikes and industrial unrest led many

³⁴ Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Bagatelles pour un massacre* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1938) and *L'Ecole des cadavres* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1938).

Radicals away from co-operation with the left and into alliance with the traditional right which, with the demise of the Popular Front, became less enamored of fascist flirtation. The Communists were increasingly tortured by shifts in Soviet foreign policy and the principle of revolutionary defeatism. Most of all, it was the question of peace that preoccupied France. The greatest threat to peace was Nazi Germany and its reoccupation of the Rhineland in early March 1936 had lent support to the Popular Front as a potentially strong anti-fascist coalition against German aggression. However, continued German aggression and the making and eventual failure of the Munich agreements showed the weakness of France's diplomatic and military position and its declining power to influence international events.³⁵

Though the eventual avoidance of war was greeted with great relief, 1938 was a watershed year for France. The Munich crisis provided the shock which sobered France to the prospect of war. Public and political attitudes began to shift in favour of defending the nation against external threat. Lamentations of decadence and unstoppable decline were quieted. In the year before the outbreak of war, the Daladier government made pragmatic preparations in diplomatic, economic and military spheres and did much to unify France, steel its resolve and bolster national confidence.³⁶ When war was declared in September 1939, the most trenchant critics of the regime—those who had condemned it as decadent, including those on the extreme and fascist right who had claimed 'better Hitler than Blum'—proved themselves willing to fight for France. Whether this is explained by a national *revivrement* based on consensus or by government controls remains a topic of debate.³⁷ It seems evident, however, that the

³⁵ See Julian Jackson, *The Politics of Depression in France, 1932-1936*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Alfred Sauvy, *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres*, vol. 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1967). For the diplomatic crisis see Duroselle, *La Décadence*.

³⁶ See Elisabeth de Réau, 'Edouard Daladier: The Conduct of the War and the beginnings of Defeat' in Blatt, *French Defeat*, pp. 100-25. For more detail on French rearmament see Robert Frankenstein, *Le prix du réarmement français (1935-1939)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982).

³⁷ William Irvine, in a thought provoking corrective to the decadence theory of defeat, argues that the Third Republic was remarkably resilient, that France underwent a *revivrement* prior to the outbreak of war and was ready—morally as well as materially—to fight: 'Domestic Politics and the Fall of France in 1940' in Blatt, *French Defeat*, pp. 85-99. Irvine shows that Daladier achieved a national consensus for war by placating the centre and right through backing away from the Popular Front programme while rearming France and thus reassuring the left that France would put up a credible military challenge to Nazism. Vicki Caron is more critical of the government's preparedness for war

conviction that France was decadent did not outweigh patriotic sentiments, even for the most trenchant critics of the regime: everyone could fight for his own vision of France.

France did not welcome war in 1939. National confidence was low and the experience of the *drôle-de-guerre* tested it further. This was not so extraordinary in the general European context. It was the experience of the defeat which totally shattered French confidence. Instantly, the defeat revived accusations of decadence. To some extent such accusations were attempts to shift the blame for the disaster, but those who had warned against the weakening effects of a decadent republic could now claim vindication, their belated patriotism saving them from accusations of defeatism. The rapidity and the completeness of France's defeat in May 1940 laid bare a system for which there was virtually no intellectual defence.³⁸ Though the perception may have soon altered and though each laid the blame differently, in 1940 the general mood in France was that the defeat was more than a simple military failure. A Briton traveling through France during the last days of the Republic found everywhere

the vague feeling that the catastrophe was the inevitable and unfortunately deserved result of an epoch of moral decay due to the domination of amoral leaders.³⁹

and explores its failure to utilise all possible means of defeating Germany: 'The Missed Opportunity: French Refugee Policy in Wartime, 1939-1940' in Blatt, *French Defeat*, pp. 126-70. Caron argues that there was 'some turnaround in opinion' in favour of war but that this was due in part to the Daladier government's crackdown against the extreme right after a rather tardy acceptance of the inevitability of war. She cites the Marchandeau Law of April 1939 which controlled the extreme right press, the arrest of notorious anti-Semites and the banning of foreign associations and she contends that evidence of *revivrement* amongst the extreme right was largely due to their attempts to 'save their own necks'. She concedes that there was an overall *revivrement* in national unity in 1939 but is not convinced of any 'dramatic change' amongst conservatives, especially of the anti-Republican variety, who were won over mostly by Daladier's measures against the communists. She adds that the *revivrement* broke down during the *drôle-de-guerre*. For the discussion between Irvine and Caron following the round table review of Blatt's volume on *H-Diplo*, see Irvine and Caron, 'The French Defeat of 1940: Revising the Decadence Theory', 14 November 2000 and Caron, 1 December 2000.

³⁸ For the attitudes of French intellectuals to the Republic and to the defeat in 1940 see: Tony Judt "We have discovered history": Defeat, Resistance and the Intellectuals in France', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 64, supplement (December 1992), pp. 147-72; and Ory and Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France*. Much has been written to qualify the complex reaction of public opinion to the defeat: see, amongst other fine accounts: Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*; Stanley Hoffmann, 'Le Trauma de 1940' in Jean-Pierre Azéma & François Bédarida (eds), *La France des années noires, t.1: De la défaite à Vichy* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1993), pp. 131-50.

³⁹ 'Rough notes and observations on his experiences in France during the last days of the Republic. By Kn. July, 1940', *Conditions and Politics in Occupied Western Europe, 1940-1945*, PRO, FO 371/24312.

The shock of the defeat produced a strong sense that definite and urgent choices had to be made and a drove a powerful consensus for change and national renovation, even amongst *résistants* and republican supporters. For some time into the Occupation, the bitter taste of defeat and the image of a rotting and collapsing political system were manipulated by Vichy and by collaborators who sought a reincarnation—a *mort rédemptrice*—for France. This is an important aspect of the context in which the birth of the Vichy regime, its National Revolution and the programmes of those who sought to build a new France within a Nazi Europe must be understood. All plans for a new order were premised on a crisis of decadence.

The Meanings of Decadence

As it was a universal ‘siren of decline’, those who declaimed decadence in the crisis years of the 1930s, never saw any need to agree on a definition of its nature or its causes. Decadence retained its multitude of meanings and associations. However, some young intellectuals did pause to examine its meaning and to dispute its solutions. Since they were seeking to define a new way, based on the demise of the old, nonconformists were most keenly concerned with the meaning of decadence. In 1931 Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu produced their first collaborative exploration of the nature of France’s decline, *Décadence de la nation française*.⁴⁰ They began by painting a sorry picture of the modern Frenchman and his country, lost and with no future:

⁴⁰ Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Décadence de la nation française* (Paris: Editions Riéder, 1931). Robert Aron (1898-75) was a quintessential *intellectual engagé* of the 1930s. As a journalist and teacher his interests spanned the social, political, artistic and cinematic trends of the era. His philosophy and his interest in personalism inspired the movement *Ordre Nouveau* and he edited its review from 1933 to 1938. Ironically, a fellow member of this group who later worked for the Vichy administration facilitated his escape from internment and the regime’s persecution of Jews. In 1942 he joined de Gaulle in North Africa and, after the war, wrote some of the earliest histories of Vichy and the Liberation and took up the cause of European Union. He was elected to the Académie Française shortly before his death. Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933), director of the Bibliothèque Nationale from 1925 until his untimely death, had wide academic interests and influenced many young intellectuals through his journal articles and inspiration of the *Ordre Nouveau* group. Aron and Dandieu published two more books together: *Le cancer américain* (1931) and *La révolution nécessaire* (1933).

Maintenant, n'ayant gardé de sa virilité passée que quelques souvenirs ou oripeaux, il végète, hésite, se contredit, sans direction, sans nécessité intérieure. De là, de cet absence de raison d'être, provient, pour n'en voir que les aspects les plus banals, l'absence fatale de continuité et de nécessité dans la politique française.⁴¹

Aron and Dandieu claimed that France's troubles—the falling population, rural decline and the pessimism and lack of energy in French society and politics—were merely the symptoms of decadence. Such symptoms were a reflection of a deeper and more general malaise which was 'plus atroce, plus constante et plus féconde, une angoisse supérieure, métaphysique'.⁴² The sickness was spiritual. Modern man related only to the material world and this accounted for his lack of foresight and effectiveness. People could no longer provide the 'spiritual force' in order to inspire the state which, in consequence, was left directionless. The spiritual force of France, according to Aron and Dandieu, was made up of two elements: the cult of individual liberty and patriotism.⁴³ In essence, France's spirit was the revolutionary spirit of '89, the spirit of revolt and individualism, the revolutionary 'no'. The demise of this spirit was leading to a society that was narrowly conservative and conformist.⁴⁴ Aron and Dandieu saw France's spiritual home undefended while under attack by both 'Americanism' and fascism.⁴⁵ Significantly, they did not claim that it was under attack by Marxism: in fact, they claimed that the French revolution and Marxism had a common goal, the exaltation of the individual, while the bourgeois aim was to turn the individual into a purely economic entity and fascism would turn him into a totally compliant one.⁴⁶

Aron and Dandieu, in criticising the decadence of France, intended to strengthen an accepted concept of the nation, not weaken it. They hoped to reinvigorate patriotism in France and hence halt the decline. Though they defined patriotism in vague terms (a harmonious, 'instinctive' and living relationship with the nation and between

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 12. Eugen Weber characterises their solution to decadence as 'individualistic and moral' and opposes it to a 'pragmatic and technocratic' school of thought: Weber, *Hollow Years*, pp. 121-2.

⁴⁴ Aron and Dandieu, *Décadence*, pp. 217, 237.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16-18.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123. Aron and Dandieu claimed that Marxism was misunderstood if its goal was taken to be an all powerful state, since its ultimate aim was to neutralise the state and exalt the individual.

compatriots), they categorically rejected its corrupted or rationalised form, nationalism.⁴⁷ Nationalism, they claimed, was ideological and abstract, ignoring the real or specific traits of the nation. It was based on division and agitation and, since it subjugated the individual in the name of territory, it led inevitably to war.⁴⁸ The decline of patriotism, according to Aron and Dandieu, was part of the general 'embourgeoisement' of France, a loss of national identity and the moving away from real or concrete values in pursuit of profit.⁴⁹ This, they felt, was the central problem of modern civilisation. The individual's relationship with the material world was changing: concrete forms of existence, such as the family and attachment to location, were disintegrating because man was losing his spirituality in materialism and rationalism.

Aron and Dandieu's theories on decadence were certainly not intended to undermine democracy. For these authors, the nation's decadence lay, not in its democratic foundations, but in its inability to support them with more than mere rhetoric. Furthermore, fascism was a cause of decadence, a claim which they maintained in their third collaborative effort, *La révolution nécessaire*, published two years later.⁵⁰ However, while continuing to condemn decadence and claiming its main cause to be spiritual, Aron and Dandieu's solutions to decadence indicated some shifts in their thinking. In *La révolution nécessaire* they warned against wasting time in either defending or attacking past heroisms, such as the principles of '89, which may have suited their time but did not suit the present.⁵¹ They maintained that economic materialism was the new tyranny, but they now they claimed that Marxism was akin to capitalism: both were materialistic and both inhuman.⁵²

Despite these apparent changes, Aron and Dandieu's works proved to be highly influential during the course of the decade. In particular, the authors stimulated concern,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 192.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86-8.

⁵⁰ Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *La révolution nécessaire* (Paris: Grasset, 1933), p. 152.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

especially amongst nonconformist intellectuals, with spiritual decadence and the consequent loss of national mission and vitality. In 1933, Thierry Maulnier, reviewing *La révolution nécessaire* for the Maurrassian *Revue Universelle*, argued that France no longer possessed the necessary energy to live up to the role it had once played in the development of western civilisation:

le seul peuple d'Europe qui détienne, par prédestination ou par héritage, des valeurs universelles et le seul qui n'ait plus la force ou la volonté d'universaliser.⁵³

The average Frenchman had achieved the government he deserved, claimed Maulnier, since, in his quest for security and tranquility, he had proved willing to make any concession or compromise.⁵⁴ Furthermore, France was renouncing its mission at a time when 'il faut risquer la vie pour la sauver'.⁵⁵ France's spiritual or 'psychological' decadence lay in the complacency, egoism and immobility which followed the war and which had robbed the nation of its dignity and self confidence. However, Maulnier still saw France as a 'superior' and powerful nation and he rejected the political options which other nations had chosen:

Il importe de rendre à la France la foi en elle-même, la volonté de vivre, le sens d'une mission à remplir. Car elle est aujourd'hui encore, 'la terre décisive'. C'est elle seule, ce sont les valeurs édifiées par elle au cours des siècles qui peuvent constituer la suprême défense des civilisations supérieures contre les mythes abstraits du racisme et du collectivisme.⁵⁶

Although some nonconformists rejected fascism along with communism as an inadequate response to decadence, their analysis of the problem had a great deal in common with those who did choose fascism as the answer. In particular, fascist intellectuals were obsessed with decadence as the decay of spiritual values. As Robert Soucy has explained, for these intellectuals 'spiritual' had at the same time one

⁵³ Thierry Maulnier, 'Psychologie d'une décadence', *Revue Universelle*, no. 18 (15 December 1933), pp. 750-5, p. 751.

⁵⁴ Attacks on 'le français moyen' were common at this time, especially in such radical reviews as the short lived *L'Insurgé* which was more emphatic about the influence of capitalist democracy. See Jean-Pierre Maxence, 'Pour que "ça" change', *L'Insurgé*, 1 September, 1934.

⁵⁵ Maulnier, 'Psychologie', p. 751.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 750.

meaning—it was the opposite of decadence—and a myriad of meanings.⁵⁷ Various, ‘spiritual’ could signify faith, an uncompromising serious-mindedness or a commitment to social hierarchy based on ‘natural’ or ancestral elites. Fascists found spiritual force in diverse sources from romantic tales of chivalry from the Middle Ages to the current political ruthlessness of fascist regimes. Spiritual force was military discipline and unity, virility and a physical, masculine, prowess. Thus, Soucy explains, decadence:

connoted not only Marxism and liberalism but also secularism and feminism. Decadence was proletarian solidarity, class struggle, and Marxist internationalism. It was political, social, and gender democracy. It was rule by the Darwinian unfit. Decadence was the nationalization of the basic means of production and working-class selfishness, laziness and indiscipline. It was hedonism, cowardice, and self-indulgence as well as physical and moral softness. It was debilitating rationalism, religious skepticism, and liberal sentimentalism. It was military defeat by one’s enemies. Decadence was female.⁵⁸

Of all the fascist literati, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle was the prophet of decadence; he not only railed against it, but expressed it as a deep, personal wound.⁵⁹ Older than the other fascist intellectuals of the thirties, Drieu’s explanation of French decadence went back to the effects of the Great War and reflected a nostalgia for the spirit of the trenches. The struggle and sacrifice of that conflict had offered Drieu new meaning, but Europe’s failure to unite after the war and France’s return to the pursuit of material gain and comfort was, for him, a bitter disappointment and a sign of sickness in western civilisation. Drieu claimed that his novel, *Gilles*, first published in a censored edition in October 1939 and released with additions and changes in 1942, was a ‘study of French insufficiency’, its eponymous hero bearing the ‘crushing fact’ of French decadence.⁶⁰ In

⁵⁷ Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 280-2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁵⁹ Drieu contended that it was the fate of all artists to fight against decadence but that only he and Céline observed it systematically and satirised it: Frank Field, *Three French Writers and the Great War: Studies in the Rise of Communism and Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 90. For biographies and studies of Drieu see: Pierre Andreu, *Drieu: témoin et visionnaire* (Paris: Grasset, 1952); Pol Vandromme, *Drieu La Rochelle* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1958); Dominique Desanti, *Drieu La Rochelle: le séducteur mystifié* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978); Pierre Andreu and Frédéric Grover, *Drieu La Rochelle* (Paris: Hachette, 1979); Michel Winock, ‘Une parabole fasciste: Gilles de Drieu La Rochelle’, *Le Mouvement Social*, vol. 80 (1972), pp. 29-47; and Robert Soucy, *Fascist Intellectual: Drieu La Rochelle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) and *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 287-94.

⁶⁰ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Gilles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), pp. 7, 111. There are interesting differences in the two editions: the pre-war version supported a fascist Europe but also the defeat of

the novel, decadence is an 'incurable' disease that contaminates society at all levels and in all facets: it has multiple causes and one cause—the spiritual, capitalist, sexual and racial, particularly Jewish, corruptions of the modern, urban world. Drieu internalised decadence more than any other intellectual and expressed it in profoundly personal terms. In his preface to the complete edition of *Gilles*, Drieu wrote:

De plus, chez moi, à cause de mon idée de décadence, l'introspection prenait une signification morale . . . Je flagellais sans pitié l'époque en moi, cette époque où la société vieillissait si hâtivement.⁶¹

Gilles is both an allegory of France's decline and a fascist parable: the hero, depleted physically and spiritually, searches for a love that will renew him but, when he finds it, his heroine is consumed by cancer, taking his unborn child with her when she dies. Gilles 'disappears' for a time but is reborn in the guise of a warrior fighting in Spain for Franco's Nationalist cause. There he is purified by physical violence and liberated by his own death, the ultimate sacrifice to a greater, spiritual cause.

The young intellectuals of the right were also united in a strong anti-modernist trend. They could agree that the 'modern world', vaguely defined, was destructive of spiritual values, even if they did not always agree on exactly what was modern.⁶² America symbolised the modern: it epitomised the pace and goals of modern civilisation; it was the ultimate development of materialist culture, the inevitable shape of things to come if western civilisation did not alter its course.⁶³ No doubt the Wall Street crash of 1929 was a catalyst for the deluge of anti-American criticism at the beginning of the 1930s, but America and 'Americanism' came under simultaneous attack from a broad cross section of the right and left and became symbols of general decadence.

Germany; the version produced during the Occupation was, not surprisingly, collaborationist but mildly cautions Germany against total denial of national sovereignty in the new European order.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶² Marc Simard, 'Intellectuels, fascisme et antimodernité dans la France des années trente', *Vingtième Siècle*, vol. 18 (April-June 1988), pp. 55-75.

⁶³ For a survey of anti-Americanism in French history see Michel Winock, "'US go Home": l'antiaméricanisme français', *L'Histoire*, vol. 50 (November 1982), pp. 7-20.

Georges Duhamel was a writer and novelist whose experiences as a doctor and veteran of the First World War reinforced his pacifism and left wing humanism. As a diagnostician of western civilisation's decline, Duhamel was widely read and celebrated. His diagnosis was that the disease of modern materialism was creating a weak and homogenized culture, an affliction that threatened the uniqueness, essential strength and vitality of France. In 1930 he published his impressions of America in *Scènes de la vie future*, and prophesied:

Notre avenir! Tous les stigmates de cette civilisation dévorante, nous pourrons, avant vingt ans, les découvrir sur les membres de l'Europe.⁶⁴

Duhamel saw America as an unbalanced society, immature but prematurely aged by the disease of materialism. The symptoms of this disease were numerous, all of them accelerated by the feverish pace at which everything moved. First of all, America seemed obsessed with entertainment, with forms of distraction that were fleeting, standardised, too unlettered and short lived to be art or else frozen in a 'perfection morte' of recordings. Americans drank, danced, exercised, married and divorced to excess. Most harmful of all, their cinema immersed them in a passive and unthinking world of the worst form of stupidity:

J'affirme qu'un peuple hébété par des plaisirs fugitifs, épidermiques, obtenus sans le moindre effort intellectuel, j'affirme qu'un tel peuple se trouvera, quelque jour, incapable de mener à bien une œuvre de longue haleine et de s'élever, si peu que ce soit, par l'énergie de la pensée.⁶⁵

To Duhamel, another symptom of America's decadence was its dedication to the machine, to the latest invention which its inhabitants, slavishly, had to possess. He feared that machines would soon replace every human task and in turn create a society devoid of individual effort and organised with insect like precision.⁶⁶ The car in

⁶⁴ Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1930), p. 17.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 197. Duhamel frequently used the American elevator as a symbol of lack of effort: p. 212.

particular troubled Duhamel. A symbol of power, wealth and racial superiority while they lasted, cars were abandoned and left rotting on roadsides when they broke down.⁶⁷

Cars served man's vices: they sped him, unthinking, towards his demise:

J'y distingue tout à coup une image du monde future. Cette machine épileptique, lancée à pleine vitesse entre deux paysages de carton pâte, cette machine conduite par une charmante dame aux ongles peints, aux belles jambes, qui fume la cigarette, entre cinquante et soixante miles à l'heure, pendant que l'homme, assis sur les coussins du fond, mâchoires serrées, fait des chiffres.⁶⁸

While the genius of France was to coax bounty from nature (100 cheeses and 50 varieties of plum simply to please the palate), Duhamel's America was a land of promise exploited and corrupted for the sake of profit. His metaphor for America was the Chicago abattoirs: seduced by the best meat he had ever tasted, he sees that it comes from a hellish chaos—a dark maze of blackened buildings, illuminated only by the fires of burning carcasses.⁶⁹

There were many other critics of Americanism from different political positions. Less dramatic than Duhamel's portrait of sickness, the analytical approaches to social and economic problems of modern civilisation nonetheless concurred in their rejection of a society based on materialism. Even though Aron and Dandieu in *Decadence de la nation française* attributed France's decline to various sources, including fascism, it was 'Americanism' which received the main thrust of their criticism. They quickly followed up this theme in *Le cancer américain*.⁷⁰ American materialism—a religion of production, advertising, hedonism and immorality—its urbanism and its formula for international relations based on the power of finance all worked, they claimed, to undermine spiritual development.

The more established right also criticised American materialism, but it was not so much the capitalist system which came under scrutiny as the way in which profit was

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, 'L'automobile ou les lois de la jungle', pp. 76-88: Duhamel quotes the woman driving him as saying that running over negroes was of no importance.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-20.

⁷⁰ Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Le cancer américain* (Paris: Editions Riéder, 1931).

pursued to the exclusion of all 'higher concerns'. Henri Massis, writing in the *Revue Universelle* in the same year, 1931, reviled American society for its prosaic nature and lack of vision: he repeated Proudhon's rhetorical question, 'où est son idée, où sa poésie, où sa religion, où sa destinée sociale, sa fin?'.⁷¹ For Massis, America represented rampant individualism and lack of respect for tradition, criticisms which Aron and Dandieu did not make, but they concurred in their rejection of anti-human forces of mass organisation for economic profit. Massis claimed that America had no ideals beyond productivity and riches and no philosophy beyond fantasy. America was sinking into and spreading moral and human disaster: 'une nation qui ne saurait que produire de la richesse, on pourrait dire qu'elle a été créée et mise au monde pour fabriquer du fumier'.⁷²

In a sense, the concern with American materialism universalised the perceived crisis in France. It also internalised it, gave it a human dimension. Money was seen by many young, right wing intellectuals as the great corrupting force of the century. Money was dehumanising or 'de-personalising' modern man; it was replacing his spiritual dimension with material goals and, beyond these goals, the reason for his existence was no longer clear to him. Mankind, not merely the social structures he built, was becoming decadent. Céline's protagonist in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, finds in Manhattan that the worship of money has completely replaced man's spirituality:

C'était le quartier précieux, qu'on m'a expliqué plus tard, le quartier pour l'or: Manhattan. On n'y entre qu'à pied, comme à l'église . . . C'est un quartier qu'en est rempli d'or, un vrai miracle, et même qu'on peut l'entendre le miracle à travers les portes avec son bruit de dollars qu'on froisse, lui toujours trop léger le Dollar, un vrai Saint-Esprit, plus précieux que du sang . . . Quand les fidèles entrent dans leur Banque, faut pas croire qu'ils peuvent se servir comme ça selon leur caprice. Pas du tout. Ils parlent à Dollar en lui murmurant des choses à travers un petit grillage, ils se confessent quoi. Pas beaucoup de bruit, des lampes bien douces, un tout minuscule guichet entre de hautes arches, c'est tout. Ils ne l'avalent pas l'Hostie. Ils se la mettent sur le cœur.⁷³

⁷¹ Henri Massis, 'Proudhon et L'Amérique', *Revue Universelle*, no. 20 (January-March 1931), pp. 223-7, p. 224. Concern for the spiritual failings of America continued to be expressed in the review under the Occupation. See the anonymous article, 'La tragédie spirituelle du peuple américain', *Revue Universelle*, no. 47 (December 1942), pp. 713-20.

⁷² Massis, 'Proudhon et L'Amérique', p. 224.

⁷³ Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1932), p. 242.

Considering the effects of materialism on the human psyche so great, Thierry Maulnier concluded in 1935 that man was self destructing.⁷⁴ He envisaged a future man who would be molded to fulfill a certain task and who would have no identity outside that mould except as a consumer—a purely economic entity:

L'intelligence rationalisée que répand les journaux et les cinémas, la morale réduit à une hygiène individuelle et sociale, le conformisme froid et sans âme du catéchisme puritain, tout tend à créer une conscience régulière et formaliste pour un individu qui travaille, mange, s'amuse et aime à heures fixes et par troupeau . . . tout concourt à faire de chaque être la machine précise, uniforme et bien réglée, l'homme inhumain capable de s'offrir sans mémoire sans révolte et sans espoir, sans autres raisons de se lever et de venir que la clameur glacée des sirènes horaires, au morne sacrifice vivant que le monstre économique engloutira chaque matin.⁷⁵

The events of 6 February 1934 changed the meaning of decadence by refocusing attention from metaphysical to concrete, political problems. The polarisation of many nonconformists to the right following the riots led to a much more emphatic rejection of parliamentary democracy: the regime was so corrupt as to be beyond reform. Thierry Maulnier had not expressed such sentiments when reviewing the work of Aron and Dandieu in 1931 but, in *Demain la France*, written in conjunction with Robert Francis and Jean-Pierre Maxence and published after the riots in 1934, the authors dedicated the book 'AUX MORTS DU 6 FEVRIER, premiers témoins de la prochaine révolution tombés sous les balles d'un régime anti-national, anti-social et inhumain'.⁷⁶ The book condemned the republican ideal and institutions, claiming them to be absurd, promoting only narrow and base values. The state was unstable due to the dishonesty of party politics and the 'illegitimate' influences of financial groups, foreigners, Jews, unions and Freemasons. The authors claimed that the average Frenchman had long since lost any attachment to and faith in the regime and now his attitude had turned to anger and disgust. But they also went further in proclaiming that France's problems were due to the destructive powers of the regime itself: democratic ideals had misjudged the role of

⁷⁴ Thierry Maulnier, *La crise est dans l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1935).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷⁶ Robert Francis, Thierry Maulnier and Jean-Pierre Maxence, *Demain la France* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1934).

the state and could not produce equilibrium between nation states; the rationalist influence of liberal thought had created a man who could only measure, reduce and formulate but who could not examine or judge.⁷⁷ France had lost all sense of its power and superiority and Francis, Maulnier and Maxence predicted that the decaying regime would soon collapse:

L'état républicain a cessé de représenter quelque intérêt réel, quelque principe que ce soit, et se trouve considéré partout comme un système périmé d'institutions archaïques, au service d'une coalition d'incapables, d'escrocs et de policiers . . . Tout ce qui est vivant, énergique, héroïque dans le peuple français, tout ce qui a seulement le souci d'une dignité ou d'un désintéressement quelconques se trouve tourné contre lui . . . un tel état n'est loin de son agonie.⁷⁸

The riots of 1934 also changed the significance of decadence by introducing a greater sense of urgency. Francis, Maulnier and Maxence observed, 'la période que nous vivons est si riche en évènements qu'elle semble précipiter le rythme même de l'histoire'.⁷⁹ This new urgency produced an important change in attitude: no longer did the authors feel the need to examine the crisis intellectually. So urgent was the crisis, they argued, so broadly felt by such a wide cross section of society, that it was superfluous to attempt to prove society's decline:

Chacun comprend, parce que d'abord il l'éprouve en soi, le caractère exceptionnel, vraiment unique, de la crise présente . . . Chacun se sent aujourd'hui un chômeur en puissance, un être promis à la misère, un homme incertain de sa vie . . . A quoi bon chercher à prouver un désordre que chaque homme éprouve!⁸⁰

France's inability to act decisively in international affairs in the face of Nazi Germany's continued disruption of the European balance of power served only to heighten the sense of urgency from 1936. Now the perception of decline was characterised by a sense of loss of control, of powerlessness and of impending doom. As Daniel Lindenberg has shown, in literary terms the 'dark years' began before

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 283, 294.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

France's defeat in 1940 and included the last years of the decade: so much literature flirted with the idea of decadence that the entire cultural scene was overshadowed, he says, by 'catastrophe literature'.⁸¹

A significant number of social commentators from the traditional right were convinced of rapid decline and they once again moved closer to the radical right in their sense of urgency. The most prominent conservative figure to add his voice to warnings of impending doom was the former prime minister, André Tardieu, who published a series of books with titles such as *Sur la pente*, *La révolution à refaire*, and *Alerte aux français*.⁸² Georges Duhamel also envisioned the imminent demise of modern civilisation. In 1938 he published a short pamphlet entitled *Au Chevet de la Civilisation* which pictured on its front cover a crumbling ruin of a classical building and on the back, a modern power station.⁸³ In this lament for bygone glory, Duhamel asserted that the pursuit of material gain had warped time and 'broken the moulds' of existence so that time and space were no longer on a human scale. Duhamel complained of the poverty of modern culture which seemed to be taking delight in destroying the foundations of western civilisation while mankind looked on, helpless to stop it:

L'esprit du nouveau monde est sur nous, est chez nous. Comment l'ignorer? Il trépigne, il triomphe, il danse la danse du scalpe. Il embrouille tout, il confond les plus sûres notions humaines. Nous assistons, impuissants, au triomphe de la camelote.⁸⁴

A sense of powerlessness and loss of control also pervaded the writing of Paul Baudouin (who was later to serve in the first Vichy government as Foreign Minister) where he

⁸¹ Daniel Lindenberg, *Les années souterraines*, pp. 22-33. Lindenberg cites the works of Jules Romains, Roger Martin du Gard and others to claim that, even before it became associated with defeat, collaboration or resistance, French literature took a 'dark turn' at the end of the 1930s.

⁸² André Tardieu, *Sur la pente* (Paris: Flammarion, 1935), *La révolution à refaire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1936), and *Alerte aux français* (Paris: Flammarion, 1936). In the first years of the decade, Tardieu's attempts at economic modernisation, political realignment and constitutional reform failed, as did his personality-driven political style. He left politics in disgust in 1934 after the failure of the Doumergue government. See Julian Jackson, *France*, pp. 55-6. Maulnier's reaction to the crisis can be read in, 'Nous ne voulons plus être humiliés', *L'Insurgé*, 17 February, 1937.

⁸³ Georges Duhamel, *Au Chevet de la Civilisation* (Paris: Flammarion, 1938). See also *Scènes de la vie future*.

⁸⁴ Duhamel, *Au Chevet*, p. 7. See also pp. 14-15.

sought to analyse the underlying causes of France's malaise in 1938.⁸⁵ Baudouin described the changes in western civilisation as being so rapid and so radically different that the effect was apocalyptic:

les cadres devenus trop étroits, craquaient; des communautés plus vastes se préparaient. L'âpre réfutation des vieilles doctrines, l'ardente émancipation de l'intelligence mettaient en cause les hiérarchies existantes. La conscience morale s'affaissait brusquement. Tout paraissait crouler, alors que rien de neuf n'avait encore été construit. De nouvelles formes sociales étaient pressenties, sans que personne put les définir.⁸⁶

Baudouin put the problem of man's development at the core of the social malaise. Modern man, he claimed, had lost the sense of the general, of social responsibility, of the natural rhythms of existence. He was concerned only with the immediate and the ephemeral and, since he was constantly seeking passion and excitement, he was prey to new political myths and mass psychology. The future, for Baudouin, was a gradual 'abêtissement' of mankind.⁸⁷

The near certainty of war and the demands of patriotism once hostility was declared brought a brief respite in discussions of decadence. Once the rapidity of the defeat 'proved' France's weakness, however, the assertion of decadence became the essential precursor to prescribing a cure. But those who had appeared to be united in diagnosing French decadence in the 1930s had not agreed on the symptoms or on the causes. There was no agreed remedy either and no single or clear vision of a non decadent future. Nevertheless, decadence was an important word in the language of crisis of the 1930s: it illuminated the common ground between factions of the right, their fears in the present and for the future. The internal and external crises of the decade united the conservative and radical right in predictions of decline or catastrophe, especially when the former felt that their political or economic interests or the social order was under threat. As the prospect of war loomed, assertions of decadence became less intellectual and more urgent, reflecting a general sense of unease and uncertainty.

⁸⁵ Paul Baudouin, 'Les données du problème française', *Revue de Paris*, vol. 45:3 (1938), pp. 571-579.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 580.

Common to the assertions of decadence was the belief that France had lost its vitality and mission; that these weaknesses indicated a more general decline and deeper causes; that some aspect of modernity, materialism in particular, had corrupted man's true nature or spiritual force; and that man was no longer at the centre of his civilisation. Prophets of decadence never had to admit to differences or changes in meaning nor agree on the impact of decadence: some believed in the possibility of reform under the existing regime, some did not and some believed both at different times.

Decadence and Democracy

Zeev Sternhell argues that all those who in the 1930s promoted the image of France as a decadent nation contributed to the growth of fascism and facilitated the collapse of democracy.⁸⁸ Thus he links together men of very different backgrounds and horizons: Aron and Dandieu, Maulnier, Drieu La Rochelle, Brasillach, Tardieu and others all formed part of an ideological continuum stretching back to Barrès and Sorel, and these critics of French decadence reinforced each other to bring about the fall of the regime. Even those who claimed to be opposed to fascism helped its cause, according to Sternhell, since they perceived the same social weaknesses as did the fascists or at least expressed them in the same terms. They spread a sense of decline and weakness so that, at a crucial time in 1940, democracy found 'beaucoup moins de défenseurs zélés qu'elle n'aurait été en droit d'espérer'.⁸⁹

Certainly the assertion of decadence pervaded a great deal of literature and social comment in the 1930s and, in the immediate aftermath of the defeat, its influence may have compounded a reluctance to express faith in France's traditional ideals.⁹⁰ However, the concern with decadence was mainly amongst the political and intellectual

⁸⁸ Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche*, pp. 238-9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁹⁰ In 1940, Philippe Bourdet, a government official en route to the French mission in China, reported to the British Foreign Office that the B.B.C. broadcasts into France 'insisted too much on Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité and other antique slogans' which were, he claimed, 'generally regarded as a bit 'pompiers' and tainted with 'the decadence that had led to the present weakness of France'. *Conditions and Politics in Occupied Western Europe, 1940-1945*, PRO, FO 371/24312.

elite and it tended to reinforce the doubts of the already alienated or the fearful. In a general sense, all those who helped to sow discontent with France's institutions lent weight to a consensus for change. This goes some way towards explaining the degree of 'negative solidarity' against the deposed regime after the defeat.⁹¹ However, the assertion of decadence should not be judged only in the light of the defeat, the Occupation and the most glaring transformation in political culture—the rise of fascism—as this obscures its diverse and changing interpretations. Not all those who warned against decadence or who wanted change were anti-democratic or fascist and it is not easy to show exactly how those who asserted decadence but still openly rejected fascism as a means of revitalising France, were ultimately aiding its cause.

The question of the impact of criticism on a weakened France was in fact posed before the defeat. In 1938 Thierry Maulnier attempted to defend himself, Brasillach and other 'young nationalists' against an accusation of weakening France through indulgence in 'romanticisme de la décadence'.⁹² His detractor, A.M. Petitjean, rejected the possibility of French decadence, which he defined as an incapacity to adapt to the modern world. While he admitted to a failure of 'representation' and inertia in political life in France after the Great War, Petitjean contended that such 'verbal extremism' could only complement and exacerbate the disorder:

Or parmi nos préromantiques, les plus dangereux sont précisément ceux qui nous parlent de notre décadence. Ce sont d'ailleurs les mêmes qui depuis 1919, et il y a sept ans encore, n'hésitaient pas à imputer à la France, soit pour l'admirer, soit pour la vitupérer, soit pour l'exploiter, le premier rôle sur le continent. Ces messieurs sont vraiment trop nerveux, et versent trop aisément dans les excès de gloire, ou d'indignité.⁹³

Maulnier, in his reply, admitted to the dangers inherent in criticising France as decadent but he denied that he ever had:

⁹¹ Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal?*, p. 4.

⁹² Thierry Maulnier, 'A propos de la "décadence" française', *Revue Universelle*, vol. 12 (September, 1938), pp. 743-7. Maulnier was replying to an article by A.M. Petitjean (based on his book, *Le moderne et son prochain*), 'Après l'après guerre', *Nouvelle Revue Française*, vol. LI (July - December, 1938), pp. 456-64. Maulnier's response is crucial to the historical debate on the nature of fascism in France: Sternhell, in *Ni droite, ni gauche*, singles him out for close scrutiny as an example of French fascism.

⁹³ Petitjean, 'Après l'après guerre', p. 483.

La "décadence" française est sans doute une invention littéraire que rien ne justifie, ou une exagération polémique dangereuse, si l'on entend par "décadence" le déclin irrémédiable des énergies vitales et des possibilités créatrices dans un peuple, son vieillissement.⁹⁴

Because he believed that the French 'eclipse' was neither permanent nor incurable, Maulnier would not accept that his criticism of France's democratic institutions and traditions was romanticising decadence or harming the nation. On the contrary, he asserted that since France's decline was patently obvious, it would be worse than useless to try and hide the fact. If, as he believed, democratic principles were responsible for the decline and would inevitably lead France, as the universal defender of these principles, into another war which it could not win, it was in fact his duty to attack the problem at its core.

En acceptant sans examen la France telle qu'elle est, en la considérant comme solidaire et inséparable de ses institutions politiques actuelles, de son aspect actuel, de ses engagements politiques ou philosophiques actuels, en déclarant a priori valable tout ce qui est français parce que cela est français, M. Petitjean me paraît dépasser le fascisme lui-même dans la voie de l'exaltation nationale.⁹⁵

In the *revivement* of late 1938-39, Maulnier was certainly defining the term much more narrowly than he had in the early 1930s but, on the eve of war, he insisted that neither France nor western civilisation were irredeemably decadent. It was, he claimed, a time of anarchy and contradiction but he added that the 'forces vives de la civilisation' remained intact—reform was possible.⁹⁶ Even Paul Baudouin, in his apocalyptic vision of collapsing society and degenerating humanity, concluded positively: he asserted that civilisation was undergoing a transformation, not destruction; that western man would be forced into a long neglected self-examination but that he would find the intelligence, initiative and capacity for action which would allow a new order to be built.⁹⁷ Such were the contradictions of decadence literature.

⁹⁴ Maulnier, 'A propos de', p. 746.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Thierry Maulnier, 'Vivons-nous un siècle de décadence?', *Revue Universelle*, vol. 7:1 (July 1939), pp. 117-21, p. 120. Maulnier admitted that some 'grumblings' about decadence were no more than 'romantic catastrophism' and were both a manifestation and cause of decadence (p. 119).

⁹⁷ Baudouin, 'Les données du problème', p. 579.

The belief that France was decadent comprised a complex set of attitudes. It is certainly true that neither Baudouin nor Maulnier were ‘zealous defenders’ of the regime after the defeat in 1940—but then few were. Many who were convinced of decadence and even avowed fascists such as Brasillach and Drieu, joined their units on the outbreak of war to fight for France against Germany. By no means all those who interpreted France’s defeat as an indication of deep seated problems embraced fascism or Vichy as the solution: some, like Marc Bloch, joined the Resistance in its various forms.

Since believers in decadence offered no clear or positive solutions, it is not easy to show how they affected public perceptions or choices in 1940. For the mass of the French people, reaction to the defeat was conditioned by practical realities and not merely by ideological conviction. Popular acceptance of the defeat had more to do with the *Exode*, with the presence of Germans in Paris and with the collapse of the government than with any conviction of decadence. It was the experience of the defeat which created the wave of resentment against the Third Republic. The assertion of decadence did not cause the defeat of democracy or the triumph of the extreme right in France.

The defeat of France and the demise of the Third Republic did not bring an end to concerns with decadence. In the immediate aftermath of the defeat, even as they voted themselves out of existence, leading politicians such as Pierre-Etienne Flandin sought to lay the blame elsewhere:

si ce pays est tombé au point où il est tombé, il ne doit pas seulement à la décadence des mœurs parlementaires, il doit à une décadence généralisée (très bien, très bien) ... une ombre s’est étendue sur ce pays ... c’est celle de l’argent qui a tout corrompu ... (applaudissements).⁹⁸

The Vichy government did not have to prove the nation’s decadence in 1940. The

⁹⁸ Assemblée Nationale, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission chargée d’enquêter sur les événements survenus en France de 1933 à 1945 par M. Charles Serre, rapporteur générale*, vol. 1, ‘Account of the private sitting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, Vichy 10 July 1940’, pp. 494-5. Pierre-Etienne Flandin served in many ministries during the inter-war period and briefly as Prime Minister from November 1934 to May 1935.

defeat provided Vichy with a confirmation of decadence and with a new political rhetoric: the language of a *mort rédemptrice* implied the need for sweeping change. Nevertheless, the obsession with decadence did not cease under the Occupation; indeed it took on a purpose and an importance which it had not had before. All programmes of reform under the Occupation began from the premise of decadence: this was true for both the Vichy government and the various collaborationist groups in Paris.⁹⁹ The defeat and the reasons for it continued to obsess all shades of intellectual collaboration for the first half of the Occupation.¹⁰⁰ Those who wished to rebuild France in a different mould had a vested interest in undermining the old and propping up their reforms with references to past weaknesses and failures. Those who wished to support Vichy or to push France further down the path of collaboration with the Occupier never ceased to recall the chaos to which France would fall prey if it reverted to its old ways.

Those who tied themselves most closely to the Nazi cause justified their collaborationism by claiming that the defeat had proved France and its liberal democracy to be decadent. Many fascist intellectuals had made their ideological preferences obvious before 1940 but they used the defeat to give their convictions added force. Some collaborationists may have dressed their political ambitions in ideological rhetoric but the message of fascist intellectuals and collaborationists was essentially the same: change was now inevitable, it had to be total and fascism—in the form of the Nazi New European Order—was the only option for France. In this sense, collaborationists were fundamentally pessimistic. They saw only irretrievable loss of power and mission

⁹⁹ To some extent this was also true for non-collaborators and even resisters. The social and political programmes of many resistance groups rejected a return to pre-war politics and hoped for a restructuring of French society after the Liberation. See Shennan, *Rethinking France*, especially Chapter 2, 'The Resistance: Liberation and Renovation', pp. 34-52.

¹⁰⁰ Maurras and his supporters saw the defeat as a vindication of their anger but the defeat also drew those outside the far right into diagnosis of decadence: see Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp. 20-4. For many months and years into the Occupation books, pamphlets and articles too numerous to list were published on the defeat and decadence, often with very small print runs and with similar titles: see, for example Henri Texier, *Les Causes de la chute et les conditions de redressement* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1940); Robert David, *Les Causes de du désastre et les conditions de relèvement* (Limoges: Société des Journaux et Publications du Centre, 1942). Collaborationist newspapers often reminded their readers that leading collaborationists (who should now be heeded) had predicted France's demise (in this case its dealings with communism): 'Ceux qui ont vu clair: MM. F. de Brinon, J. Doriot, G. Suarez, R. de Marmande, J. Luchaire', *La Gerbe*, 3 July 1941.

and a lack of choice for France. The essential pessimism of their message persisted throughout the Occupation. Not long after the defeat, the writer and future Minister for Education, Abel Bonnard, claimed that the power of inspiration that had once been part of the French genius had now passed to the new, totalitarian states and France could no longer shelter behind confidence in its superior culture and taste.¹⁰¹ Even as the tide of war turned against the Germans, Alphonse de Châteaubriant, the self-styled collaborationist idealist, still celebrated what he saw as a controlled society where everybody knew their place and duty and he feared the chaos of the modern world.¹⁰²

Typically though, it was Drieu La Rochelle who expressed the defeat in the most personal terms and who felt that the decadence he could measure within himself could be cured only through National Socialism. In his account of the immediate aftermath of the defeat in 1940, Drieu's demobilised soldier, wandering the streets of Paris, sees the nation's plight as a personal failure: 'C'est moi, qui faisais la guerre, c'était ma guerre et j'ai perdu *ma* guerre personnellement. C'est pourquoi j'ai honte, une horrible honte'.¹⁰³ Drieu's 'systematic observation' of decadence did, he claimed, have a purpose: it was the precondition for change. He contended that France's 'philosophie de bonheur absolument idiote et impracticable' ran counter to the true nature of life which was never tranquil nor static.¹⁰⁴ Comfort and softness was not part of the true French tradition which, he believed, lay in the heroism and virility of the Middle Ages. His hope that a similar mythology could solve the problems of modern civilisation and save it from decadence conditioned all his political choices:

Je suis fasciste parce que j'ai mesuré les progrès de la décadence en Europe. J'ai vu dans le fascisme le seul moyen de contenir et de réduire cette décadence . . . je n'ai vu d'autre recours que dans le génie d'Hitler et de l'hitlérisme.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ A. Bonnard, *Pensées dans l'action* (Paris: Grasset, 1941), pp. 32-3.

¹⁰² Alphonse de Châteaubriant, *La psychologie et le drame du temps présent*, text of speech given at a conference of the *Cercle Européen*, 27 January 1943.

¹⁰³ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, 'Un homme marche dans Paris' in *Ne plus attendre (Notes à leur date)* (Paris: Grasset, 1941), pp. 19-26, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Révolution Nationale*, 23 January 1943.

Thierry Maulnier was more cautious about the nature of the defeat and France's future.¹⁰⁶ In 1941 he argued that the defeat had been more than a military failure, that the state had decomposed and that the old order had been totally destroyed. He also claimed that the nation could benefit from the defeat since it had illuminated its problems and swept from power those who sought to mask them: France was thus able to rediscover the elemental laws of society. There is no doubt that such opinions aided Vichy's National Revolution and, by implication, its pursuit of collaboration which made regeneration possible. However, Maulnier did not accept total defeat as an absolute good. France, he wrote, had been badly led but its real vitality had not been destroyed. He claimed that any idea of 'rebirth' which denied France's past achievements was humiliating and servile. France, he said, could create its own future without accepting it from the hands of foreigners. Thus Maulnier continued to use the language of decadence to define his political position, but along a new political spectrum which now placed him in opposition to the collaborationists.

After the Liberation, Paul Baudouin was condemned not merely for his role in the Vichy government but also for asserting French decadence.¹⁰⁷ In the parliamentary inquiry set up after the war to examine the Occupation and its prologue, he was censured on several counts: for his pre-war article in the *Revue de Paris*; for having contributed to a review which was 'presque pro-nazi' because it published fascist sympathisers; for calling for intellectual and moral reform in France; and for not writing 'd'un meilleur goût'.¹⁰⁸ Baudouin answered his critics by pointing out that his pre-war writings had

¹⁰⁶ Maulnier's ideas are expounded in two articles, 'Rester la France', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 1 (1 January 1941), pp. 23-8 and 'L'Avenir de la France nouvelle', published in 5 parts: 'L'Avenir de la France nouvelle: I – Tout reconstruire', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 3 (1 February 1941), pp. 149-51; 'L'Avenir de la France nouvelle: II – Les particularités françaises et la crise universelle', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 4 (15 February 1941), pp. 209-16; 'L'Avenir de la France nouvelle: III – Guerre mondiale et révolution nationale', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 6 (25 March 1941), pp. 340-46; 'L'Avenir de la France nouvelle: IV – Guerre mondiale et révolution nationale', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 7 (10 April 1941), pp. 435-43; 'L'Avenir de la France nouvelle: fin – La méditation française', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 9 (25 May 1941), pp. 570-77.

¹⁰⁷ At the end of the war Baudouin attempted to escape to Spain but was caught and tried for treason in 1947. He served one year of a five year sentence of hard labour and published his memoirs on his release.

¹⁰⁸ Assemblée Nationale, 'Rapport fait au nom de la commission chargée d'enquêter sur les événements survenus en France de 1933 à 1945 par M. Charles Serre, rapporteur générale', audition de M. Paul

also kept company with writers whose political motives were now beyond reproach. However, he found it much more difficult to answer accusations of having accepted France's defeat as evidence of political and social failure and of welcoming the defeat as a salutary lesson and a springboard for reform. Baudouin could only admit that before the war he had not been 'très chaud sur le régime française' and that he had believed it to be 'sick' but he insisted that he had been motivated by patriotism and the belief that he could contribute to the 'redressement français'.

* * *

The assertion of decadence became the universal justification for political action and reform under the Occupation. Though theories of decadence and decline had infected the intellectual climate and influenced the reformist debates of the 1930s, they remained diverse and contested and limited as social analysis. Decadence as a catchword was so ubiquitous in the political rhetoric of the pre-war right that it gave the impression of an intellectual consensus against the regime and against the nature and values of contemporary society but the term retained various shades of meaning and its assertion was so fundamentally negative and lacking in solutions that its political effects were limited before the defeat. The catchcry of decadence was nonetheless important as an expression of discontent and unease that capitalised on a sense of crisis in the 1930s.

Given the ubiquity of assertions and theories of decadence, it is easy to focus on and overestimate their impact on France's performance in war. But France did not owe its defeat to decadence or to criticism of decadence. The real importance of assertions of decadence is what they reveal about ideas for the creation of a new France after the defeat—their effect on a defeated France, rather than on the defeat. Though solutions to decadence had never been agreed upon, let alone seriously pursued before the war, implicit in the criticism of decadence was the acceptance of change and the need for

Baudouin, ancien Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Séances du 12 & 26 juillet 1949, vol. VII, pp. 2037-71, 2097-134.

reform. The defeat allowed the new regime at Vichy to make decadence the basis of and justification for its actions. There were many problems inherent in this. Vichy was torn between the need to make pragmatic decisions in the present and to conceive the future positively, while constantly looking back to the faults of a decadent past. Since they could not agree on its causes, critics of decadence could never agree on solutions. Among those who aimed to rebuild a non-decadent France under German occupation, the nature of reform varied from a disciplined moral and social reconstruction to sweeping, total change. For the first time, critics of decadence were forced to come up with positive solutions. They could only produce more catchwords—the rhetoric of regeneration.

Chapter 3

Order

L'ordre n'est plus dans l'ordre, il est dans la révolution
Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *La révolution nécessaire* (1933)

Order signified the antithesis of decadence. Just as decadence described the underlying cause of all France's problems, order was the catchword which encompassed all solutions. In right wing intellectual and political discussion, order was a call for measure and balance, for an end to the excess which many detected in French social, political, moral and cultural life. An ordered society was therefore the aim or ideal of reformists who sought to regenerate France. Order was also the antidote to decadence; the means to arrest and reverse the process of national decline. As an all-encompassing solution to decadence, order was an appealing and ubiquitous catchword in the 1930s, but the right differed widely in its ideal and in the means of achieving it. For the traditional right, the ideal of a stable order could be found in France's pre-decadent past and could be achieved through 'orderly' or non violent reform but for the most radical elements of the right, the concept of a 'new order' went beyond reform to a total redefinition of political, social and economic structures and the means of achieving it might include violent upheaval. Such differences were evident in the decade preceding the defeat of 1940, but masked by the negative consensus against the Third Republic.

Overwhelmingly, critics of French decadence defined their ideal of order through attacking its opposite—the unstable and corrupt society of the Third Republic. Social disorder was the right's greatest fear. Different elements of the right emphasised different sources of disorder but their combined criticism covered all facets of society: class division; ideological conflict; political weakness and chaos; an increasingly debased and pleasure seeking culture; and the overriding pursuit of narrow, economic goals. In more positive terms the consensus for order was based on several points of agreement. First, behind the ideal of order was a belief in an alternative social balance that was natural, stable and healthy. Second, forces of disorder had destroyed the natural social balance and had to be eliminated or controlled if France was to be saved from self destruction. Third, the right stressed that its programme of change would be different to any that France had previously witnessed: it would institute a new and stable basis of social organisation.

Orders: Past, Present and Future

The concept of a new order was a fundamental challenge to France's established political culture. Divisions over political culture were deeply embedded in French political history and in this sense the call for order was part of the long *guerre franco-française*: a war over France's past as well as for its future.

The founders of the Third Republic had carefully constructed modern French nationhood on a celebration of France's revolutionary tradition and, by the early twentieth century, France's most potent symbols of patriotism—Marianne, the Marseillaise, the Tricolour—were reminders of the Revolution of 1789. Revolutionary ideology and action were firmly part of the left's mythology. The right had traditionally regarded the Revolution, the Republic it spawned and the ideology of agitation which it enshrined as the source, protector and disseminator of disorder. Fears of decadence during the thirties led a broad section of the right to call for urgent and deep seated change to rid the nation permanently of its disorder.

In challenging France's established political culture in such a fundamental way, right wing critics were forced to grapple with the old divisions between left and right. Most claimed that their reforms would constitute more than mere reaction but they had to argue their adaptation to the modern world and, in particular, how they would avoid the disorder of the established revolutions of liberalism and Marxism. Some amongst the radical right openly embraced fascism as a modern revolution for order, but those who did not and who still called for revolutionary change were hard pressed to show how their ideal differed from the foreign solutions of the fascist states.

At the core of the traditional right wing challenge to the established culture was a belief in an organic or natural order. In the organic order, society existed in a healthy balance. Individuals found their just role and level in society, were sustained there by a sense of duty and responsibility and were therefore not susceptible to any discontent or seduction that might threaten the unity and strength of the whole. An organic society was strong; it was a natural, stable hierarchy. Every role, no matter how menial, was noble and each individual, no matter how poor, was vital to overall health. In an organic order, ideology—including the assertion of rights, equality or individuality—was a useless abstraction and competition for power was meaningless: both meant self-destruction.

Outside these broad parameters, conceptions of the organic order and how to achieve it varied. The dominant view was that an organic order had once existed but had been corrupted by modern society. The monarchist right located its natural order firmly in pre-Revolutionary France. While few on the right advocated the restoration of the *ancien régime*, a wide spectrum of right wing opinion was deeply influenced by Maurras's ideal of classical order, his defence of the 'Mediterranean genius' and his doctrine of 'integral nationalism', which rested firmly on the tripod of king, nation and Catholic Church. Maurras contended that civilisation had reached its height in classical culture and that this ideal had been sullied by the French Revolution and the disorder of the democratic and Romantic movements which followed it.

Maurras's view of the Revolution as a source of chaos had wide appeal among the right, especially the conservative right whose concept of natural hierarchy was of a near immobile structure, based on responsibility and maintained by the example and vocation of those at the top. In the broad conservative opinion, the Revolution of 1789 had destroyed the acceptance of authority and place that had glued the nation together and made it strong. Some considered the rights of the citizen to be an abstraction which obscured the realities of duty and responsibility and destroyed the bonds of familial affection that kept the nation grounded and stable. Many on the right, from all elements, thought that the revolutionary principles of individualism, liberty and equality had allowed base emotions—egotism, greed and factiousness—to become part of the social fabric.

Though the traditional right wanted to remake France's revolutionary political culture, they did not favour revolutionary methods of achieving their goal. The ideal of balance, stability and classical civilisation that was fundamental to their organic ideal meant that they did not favour violent upheaval. They condemned violence and all mass, revolutionary movements as inherently unnatural. Conservatives distrusted the passion of the crowd because it released base appetites and because they feared that it could not be controlled.

The new and more radical elements of the right also envisaged a natural order that existed in organic balance, but they differed from the traditional right in several important ways. Despite those fascist literati who romanticised the feudal order (or, more accurately, its mythical form), nonconformists and fascists saw their ideal order as modern and revolutionary in the sense that it rested on a new organisation and valuation of social forces.¹ The various elements of the new right disagreed on details of social, political and economic organisation and varied in their sensitivity to tradition but many pointedly rejected any suggestion of reaction. Robert Aron, a leading spokesman of the

¹ See: Paul Sérant, *Romanticisme fasciste: étude sur l'œuvre politique de quelques écrivains français* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1959), especially sections on Châteaubriant and Drieu La Rochelle; and Alphonse de Châteaubriant, *Cahiers 1906-1951* (Paris: Grasset, 1955), p.182.

Ordre Nouveau nonconformist group, described his 'âge d'or' as 'ni désordre ni réaction; c'est un état d'équilibre organisé et organique, où la coutume puisse régner, sans dégénérer en arbitraire'.² Order became a generational key-word for the nonconformists in particular. They aimed to infuse it with new meaning. In their discussions, order had an internal, metaphysical meaning, as well as an external, social application. The various nonconformist groups advocated different social, political and economic policies but they agreed that the ideal order would nurture what was essential and unchanging in human nature and support the notion that man's personal vocation was as important as his social expression or economic status.

The new right diverged from the traditional most of all in their attitude to revolutionary action, which they claimed to welcome.³ At the heart of this disagreement were different conceptions of order: specifically, the role of the masses in the social hierarchy and as the motor of change. Fascists wished to stir the revolutionary power of the masses, but emphasised the role of leadership as a controlling and guiding force. To encourage leadership, they favoured, albeit in theory more than in practice, a more fluid and competitive social hierarchy based on merit or 'fitness'. The fascist leagues reinforced this ideal through their militarism and through their mystique of mobility and the dynamic of survival of the fittest. Many nonconformists also admired the energy generated by revolution. They saw it as a natural, creative force which they needed to tap if they were to fight the forces of disorder and develop man's potential. Some nonconformists favoured stirring this energy in a 'révolution permanente' against the institutions that man himself created. However, on the eve of war when it looked as if France's political and social order was truly under threat, significant disagreements began to emerge, even within nonconformist groupings. While a few of his close associates in the Jeune Droite group were increasingly seduced by the passion and violence of revolutionary activism, Thierry Maulnier returned to his *Action Française* roots. Maulnier remained wary of the masses, found mass movement distasteful and

² Robert Aron, *Dictature de la liberté* (Paris: Grasset, 1935), p. 129.

³ Different attitudes to revolutionary action are explored further in Chapter 5.

insisted that France's mission was to remain true to its aristocratic vocation and intellectual tradition.

Despite these differences in their concept of natural order, all elements of the right could unite against what they saw as the main threats to that order. Parliamentary politics and Marxism were the greatest symbols of disorder. Both had a common genesis in the Revolution of 1789 and its aftermath. The Revolution had heralded a new liberal capitalist order but it had also instituted the forces of disorder. Instability, corruption and materialist excess were inherent in liberal capitalism and were the seeds of its own destruction. Instability and corruption had become concentrated in parliament, where their effects could now be seen in the successive crises and the impending collapse of the Republic. Materialist excess had given rise to Marxism. Of most concern to the right was that Marxism would triumph over the ruins of liberal capitalism: the great fear that united the right was the specter of a communist world order.

All those who called for a new political order, even before the defeat in 1940, agreed that it would not resemble the politics or government of the Third Republic. The chronic instability, constant scandals and the general air of base compromise and mediocrity which seemed to characterise the latter parliaments of the Third Republic, were seen by many as evidence of a constitutional crisis. Politicians and members of parliament were widely condemned as dishonest, irresponsible and self-serving—certainly not worthy or fit leaders of the nation. Anti-parliamentarianism united diverse elements of the right, from conservative Republican politicians to the extra-parliamentary leagues: while the former may not have called for the destruction of the system, they took the high ground of moral outrage while the veterans' and fascist leagues inflamed and exploited popular distrust and discontent.

Anti-parliamentarianism fed the extremism of the leagues and promoted authoritarian solutions to the perceived constitutional crisis. But it also encouraged some to seek a 'third way'. Some fascist and nonconformist intellectuals rejected the old concepts of political division, claiming to support social policies from the left while

insisting on the right's sense of political and national stability. In the early thirties, Drieu La Rochelle was searching for a new form of socialism that would satisfy his distaste for and appreciation of both extremes of politics. In his *Socialisme Fasciste*, he wrote:

Je méprisais à jamais l'esprit étroit des droites, le contraste entre le chaleur patriote et leur froideur sociale: mais j'appréciais la vague aspiration qu'elles gardent pour la tenue. Je méprisais le débraillé des gauches, leur méfiance devant tout fierté du corps et pourtant je goûtais leur amertume.⁴

The nonconformists in particular objected to political classification and claimed to be 'ni droite ni gauche'. At the core of their objection, even for men like Aron and Dandieu who were most sympathetic to France's tradition of liberty, was an open disrespect for parliamentary politics:

s'il faut absolument nous situer en termes parlementaires, nous répétons que nous sommes à mi chemin entre l'extrême-droite et l'extrême-gauche, par-derrière le président, tournant le dos à l'assemblée.⁵

Looking back on the decade, Aron claimed that parliament had become the 'tomb' of the will of the people: it 'trafficked' in votes and then reneged on its promises.⁶ Parliament was the 'anti-chamber of dictatorship' and, far from protecting liberty, it aided the cause of tyranny by functioning badly and by giving ammunition to its opponents.⁷ Jean-Pierre Maxence, an important animator of the *Jeune Droite* group, describes in his political memoir of the decade how he moved beyond any regard for parliamentary democracy until he came to see it as decrepit and pathetic:

⁴ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Socialisme Fasciste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1934), p. 40.

⁵ Aron and Dandieu, *Révolution nécessaire*, p. 12.

⁶ Robert Aron, *La fin de l'après guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 87.

⁷ Aron counted the leagues amongst the opponents of liberty, but he held special contempt for ex-parliamentarians who joined them. He wanted parliament reformed rather than destroyed: he called for smaller assemblies which would be regionally based and which would separate the non-political and technical functions of government; the role of the national assembly would be to oversee the other bodies and reconcile their policies with the national interest. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-5.

c'est la démocratie vieille, épuisée, rongée de vermine, la démocratie qui flatte le commun et vénère l'argent, qui parle au peuple dans les meetings et pelote les marquises dans les boudoirs; la démocratie où la grandeur, la force, la lucidité, le génie n'ont qu'une sanction, le vote, qu'une seule apothéose, les applaudissements.⁸

Marxism was the right's other great symbol of disorder. Anti-Marxism was the greatest unifying and mobilising theme for all elements of the right in the inter-war period. The traditional right saw Marxism as a total inversion of the natural order: it was born out of false doctrine, rather than the true test of experience; it was a 'bottom up' hierarchy which could not provide a solid foundation on which to build a stable social order; and its basis in mass politics, class struggle and materialism reduced man to the instincts and status of an insect. Communism, according to conservatives, exploited instability. It was based on disorder and could only lead to decline. Paul Baudouin wrote of France's problems in 1938:

La néfaste mystique de la lutte de classes est liée à la conception d'un monde impitoyablement matérialiste ... la lutte de classes ne conduit à rien, si ce n'est à tuer le pays qui s'y livre par le désordre et la misère ... la dictature des masses est une absurdité qui serait le monde à l'envers. Ce sont les individus qui ont fait progresser l'humanité, non les foules anonymes et passionnées.⁹

The radical right—the extra-parliamentary leagues, fascists and the more right-leaning elements of the nonconformist movement—were also fundamentally anti-Marxist. Despite their claim to be forging a new path between Marxism and capitalism that was 'neither right nor left', most of their attention and criticism was directed against Marxism and the left. There was little that was new in their political and ideological criticism and the social and economic policies which they espoused to combat Marxism's influence, were more right than left.¹⁰

⁸ Jean-Pierre Maxence, *Histoire de dix ans* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), p. 102.

⁹ Baudouin, 'Les données du problème français', p. 594.

¹⁰ Soucy, *French Fascism: Second Wave*, has several sections dealing with the anti-Marxism and anti-liberalism of the major groups and intellectuals and demonstrates a great deal of similarity between the anti-Marxist programmes of the various fascist groups in France. Soucy argues against the theory that fascism in this period was simply a revision of Marxism.

The extra-parliamentary leagues despised liberal democracy as too weak and corrupt to combat Marxism. One of the earliest and most successful fascist leagues, François Coty's *Solidarité Française* (SF), condemned Marxist statism and mass production as inhuman, uncivilised and particularly destructive of the essence of the nation—the region, the artisan, the family and the moral and religious ties which bound them all together.¹¹ The leadership of the leagues often cited class conflict as Marxism's most corrosive and disruptive force. Their solutions to such conflict, however, amounted to more conflict, aimed entirely at the left: calls for a coup to stop the spread of Marxism and calls for the destruction of left wing governments, parties and unions in France (actions which they admired in neighbouring fascist countries). La Rocque promised that, through the CF and PSF, he would harness and harmonise the energy of the working classes and achieve a 'spiritual fusion' of all classes. But rather than harnessing the energy of the working class, La Rocque opposed any manifestation of working class power or solidarity. Rather than fusion, his policy was to cement even more rigid class divisions. He lamented the fact that class mobility could be achieved by the mere attainment of wealth and he advocated class 'reclassifications' and the elimination of 'unhealthy' or 'useless' elements in the social structure.¹²

The PPF was built on anti-Marxism.¹³ Combined with Doriot's working class rhetoric and frequent reminders of his 'insider knowledge', this gave the PPF a rather confused but much more fluid concept of class in relation to other leagues. In 1938 the PPF programme proclaimed that its first priority was to ameliorate the proletarian condition and eventually to transform it out of existence. On the other hand, it promised to preserve the middle class since it was a status to which workers had always aspired.¹⁴ The PPF stressed the importance of its labour policy: it advocated a labour charter (later

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-8. The SF also accused Marxism of being inspired by Judaism. The league did not survive long after its founding in mid-1933, but its membership went on to join the CF and PPF.

¹² Colonel François de La Rocque, *Service Public* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1934), pp. 125-8.

¹³ The immediate party programme of 1938 was: first, to end Marxist/Communist lies; second, to end Liberal lies; and third, to end Liberal and Communist lies in common. Paul Marion, *Programme du Parti Populaire Français* (Paris: Œuvres Françaises, 1938), pp. 19-23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 39-40.

adopted by Vichy) and other measures to give a greater sense of dignity and identity to workers.¹⁵ But the PPF often exploited working class insecurities: it played upon resentment of the influx of immigrants by promising measures to protect French workers and, claiming to understand the realities of unemployment, it stressed the need for the real benefits of health, insurance, education and retirement plans.¹⁶ Doriot's much vaunted social concerns and his desire to put an end to class conflict was incidental to his main battle against his old party. He declared 'tant que des communistes restent à combattre, notre mission n'est pas terminée'.¹⁷

Doriot's status as a former insider who could use communism's own tactics to destroy it won him some important supporters. Drieu La Rochelle, in search of his new form of non-Marxist socialist order, was impressed by Doriot's ex-communism.¹⁸ Drieu had been tempted by Marxism but, like many radical right wing intellectuals of the thirties, he took particular exception to its contention that the working class was the only class capable of revolutionary action. Unlike most other fascists, Drieu analysed Marxist doctrine and responded to it intellectually. He dismissed the revolutionary nature of the proletariat as historically false and rejected as ideological myth the argument that class struggle was the motor of change. He claimed that class evolution was much more complex than Marxist theory proposed and that revolutions were brought about by the shift of power from one classless elite to another.¹⁹ He did not accept that economic factors were the primary force behind historical development, but instead turned Marxism on its head, claiming that political ideas shaped economic and social change.²⁰ Drieu condemned Marxist socialism as 'la seconde vague romantique:

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7. The PPF contrasted its 'real' programme with 'abstract' Marxist promises such as the 40 hour week.

¹⁷ Jacques Doriot, *Refaire la France* (Paris: Grasset, 1938), p. 9. Doriot targeted most of his criticism at the Communist Party and the Popular Front: *ibid.*, pp. 37-52.

¹⁸ He declared, 'J'aime les gens qui revienne de loin; ils ont des histoires à nous raconter': Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Avec Doriot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p. 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13. Much of Drieu's objection to Marxism was based on its determinism - its dedication to theory and to waiting for the right material conditions - which denied human agency, passion and action.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, 'Contre Marx', pp. 9-75. Soucy, *French Fascism: Second Wave*, pp. 257-9.

celle du naturalisme et du positivisme' and looked instead to the socialism of Owen, Proudhon, Lassalle, Bakounin and Labriola.²¹

Drieu claimed that his fascist socialism would cater to man's higher needs, rather than define him by his labour, and bring about an 'ordre reposant'. But Drieu's restful order had little to do with the real world: it was a metaphysical or spiritual state. He was searching for 'un socialisme vif, volontaire, souple, pragmatique', one that had 'plus de cœur au ventre' than the old socialist parties, and though he thought that he had found these qualities in fascist socialism, he did not believe that his ideal had yet been realised in a political state.²²

The challenge to Marxist doctrine during the 1930s also had a profound effect on the left, even though the political significance of the realignments it provoked was not fully realised until after the defeat.²³ Revisionists in the Socialist and Radical parties, together with technocrats who sought modernisation and syndicalists who favoured employer/employee trade associations objected particularly to Marxism's narrow focus on the working class and to its rigid adherence to revolutionary methods. Such orthodoxy led, they claimed, to Marxism's failure to combat rampant capitalism, the formation of trusts and the effects of modern economic cycles of boom and bust. Revisionists often called for some form of class reconciliation; the co-operation of all economic and political forces in meeting the challenge of the Depression which orthodox Marxists chose merely to condemn as a crisis of capitalism. While they seldom agreed on the form that reconciliation should take, such a view represented a move away from the path of revolution to one of gradual reform and social evolution towards a goal of economic balance. As left wing coalitions formed and fractured and

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 204-9. Drieu disliked the statism of the Nazi dictatorship and, though he supported the creation of a fascist regime in France, he wanted always to retain the freedom to stand outside and criticise it. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5, 212, 235.

²³ Under Vichy, several left-wing revisionists of the thirties played a prominent role in shaping or criticising the new economic and labour policies.

the Communist Party in particular continued to adhere to Marxist purity, anti-communism became an increasingly powerful source of division for the left.²⁴

Marxist revisionism on the left brought together several strands of economic reformism, all of which continued to co-exist under the Occupation. Marcel Déat, while still a young star of the French Socialist Party in 1930, published his *Perspectives socialiste*, calling for a social alliance which would bring together the working class and the petit bourgeoisie, for whom Marxism and liberalism had failed. The neo-Socialist dissidents, as Déat and his group came to be known, demanded a more 'dirigiste' approach to economic change. Marquet, Déat and Montagnon, put 'Order' at the forefront of their proposed national triptych, 'Order, Authority, Nation' and at the Socialist Party Congress of 1933 Marquet lamented:

Ah, si la grande force que représente le socialisme était capable d'apparaître, dans le désordre actuel, comme un îlot d'ordre et un pôle d'autorité, quelle influence serait la sienne, quelles possibilités d'action s'offriraient alors à lui.²⁵

Dirigisme united anti-Marxist socialists with *planistes*—technocratic reformers who advocated structural economic reforms and the nationalisation of key industries and banks. Both favoured state intervention to modernise the economy in order to combat the effects of the economic crisis and to strengthen France. Elements of the syndicalist movement had long distrusted the Communist Party and, as the Popular Front began to disintegrate, influential figures such as René Belin, the deputy head of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), advocated not only nationalisations, but the effective 'institutionalisation' of union power.²⁶ Belin promoted the formation of management and workers' organisations of equal power and their co-operation in a corporatist state. Such left wing revisionists and anti-Marxists, by seeking to modernise capitalism, would preserve rather than destroy it or allow it to destroy itself.

²⁴ See Jackson, *France*, especially 'The consequences of the Popular Front', pp. 77-80.

²⁵ B. Montagnon, A. Marquet and M. Déat, *Néo-Socialisme?: Ordre, autorité, nation* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1933), p. 46.

²⁶ Shennan, *Rethinking France*, p. 277.

All the elements of liberal capitalist and Marxist revisionism—those from the left and the right, conservatives and modernizers—can be found in the nonconformist movement. Nonconformist intellectuals were most concerned with defining their position in relation to the established revolutionary ideologies. Despite the diversity of their ideas and their divergent political paths after 1934, the nonconformists were united by anti-rationalism and anti-materialism: their rejection of liberal capitalism and Marxism defined them.²⁷ Both ideologies, they claimed, were misrepresentations of true human nature and simplifications of its diversity. Both were founded on myths: liberalism, on a promise of wealth; Marxism, on historical and class determinism. Both assumed that human existence and social organisation were based on economic worth, on calculations of productive or property value and both denied man's spirituality, seeing him only as a rootless, abstract entity. Nonconformists claimed that their revolution and their new order would always defend human interests before any other and would therefore be 'real', not based on ideological myth nor driven by economic systems.²⁸

The nonconformists' critique of Marxism appeared on the surface to differ from their critique of liberal democracy in that they appreciated its strengths. Nonconformists could admire Marxism's attempt to redefine the economy in relation to man, its commitment to social criticism and reorganisation and the ardour and spirit of sacrifice of its devotees.²⁹ However, perhaps betraying their *Action Française* formation, many nonconformists feared Marxism because of its strength: it was the 'ideological parasite' which fed off the failures of liberalism and which would eventually consume its host.³⁰ Marxism, they said, strangled man's natural, creative energy—the type of energy that was needed to transform society for the good of mankind. Marxism denied the national community as a whole, functioning organism by limiting the source of creative energy

²⁷ Aron & Dandieu claimed that opportunistic capitalism and Marxist pessimism were two complementary forms of materialism; *Révolution nécessaire*, pp. 36-7.

²⁸ Francis, Maulnier & Maxence, *Demain la France*, pp. 233-4.

²⁹ Loubet del Bayle, *Les nonconformistes*, p. 277.

³⁰ Francis, Maulnier & Maxence, *Demain la France*, pp. 209-10, 232; and Thierry Maulnier, *Au delà du nationalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 182.

to a narrow class base. Marxism did not allow man to be the noble, creative being that he was; it saw man as a helpless puppet of economic forces and his ultimate fate was to be a slave of the state, indeed totally indistinguishable from it since the Marxist state absorbed all human energy.

The nonconformists acknowledged that Marxism was a powerful force in the modern world, but they also condemned it as a false solution to modern problems. Like the conservatives, nonconformists characterised Marxism as an unnatural force leading to imbalance. But in contrast to the 'old' right, the nonconformists defined their movement not as anti-Marxist but as 'beyond Marxism':

Il n'y a pas de nécessité profonde, pas de raison absolue pour que le prolétariat soit la classe révolutionnaire ... l'esprit révolutionnaire appartienne, DANS TOUTES LES CLASSES ET INDEPENDAMMENT DES CLASSES aux individus qui prendront le plus nettement conscience du caractère abstrait et impersonnel de la tyrannie nouvelle. Par là, la position révolutionnaire que nous cherchons à dégager est la seule qui, tactiquement et doctrinalement, soit véritablement au delà du marxisme.³¹

Despite their claim, nonconformist intellectuals did not move far beyond the critique of Marxism: their analyses of modern decline and their definitions of the ideal order were transfixed by it. Thierry Maulnier, in his prolific writing on France's problems throughout the thirties, returned often to what he saw as the false attractions of Marxism.³² He deemed it to be a mass religion, characterised by the great enthusiasm and discipline of its followers. But, he claimed, the enthusiasm which it engendered was meant only to serve the state and the discipline it demanded amounted to strict conformity. Maulnier reserved particular condemnation for Marxist intellectuals who hid their true values behind the abstractions of the ideology and who used Marxism as a facile shelter for their social scruples. Overall, Marxism was, Maulnier concluded, an

³¹ Aron & Dandieu, *Révolution nécessaire*, p. 47. See also Francis, Maulnier & Maxence, *Demain la France*, pp. 223-8. Many intellectuals, left, right and nonconformist, were influenced by the writing of the Belgian socialist Henri de Man, whose critique of Marxism was published in 1927 in France under the title of *Au-delà du Marxisme*.

³² Maulnier published many articles and included an analysis of aspects of Marxism in all his books: see especially *La crise est dans l'homme* and *Mythes socialistes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936).

incomplete revolutionary doctrine which gave the world new methods, but not new values.³³

Critics of the established order contended that France's future depended on a change in values. Greed and loss of contact with real or human issues had caused the division and instability that were the sources of France's weakness. However, they found it difficult to define new values. Only in negative terms could they agree that those values should be non-materialistic and non-abstract. When intellectuals, especially in nonconformist circles, ventured to describe new values in positive terms, their definitions were often general and opaque: new order values had to be universal, human and spiritual and at the same time remain true to an essential 'Frenchness'. The right was most firm and united in its support for values that would draw society together and create a new sense of collectivity, stability and strength. Even though they could not agree on the ultimate shape of that collectivity, nor how to achieve it, the right agreed that the new order would be found in some form of communitarianism.

Communitarianism was a term first coined in the mid nineteenth century for a social philosophy that supported the good or virtuous communities in society. Communitarians focused on the values that those communities espoused and the institutions that supported them. The philosophy offered no single definition of the community or values or institutions, however, communitarianism contrasted with Liberalism and its focus on individual rights and values and was therefore a challenge to the prevailing social order. Though they did not necessarily use the term and though they lauded different social structures, various elements of the right supported its major precepts. The loose definitions could draw in a wide political spectrum, especially the extremes that sought to challenge to the established order. On the extreme right, Maurras had, for forty years, lauded the natural communities of family, village, region and trade. These communities made up his 'pays réel' or true France as opposed to the false nation of the 'pays légal', by which he meant the apparatus of the republican state.

³³ Thierry Maulnier, 'Le communisme, itinéraire de fuite', *Revue Universelle*, no. 8 (July 1933), pp. 245-8.

On the extreme left, the syndicalists also idealised the community—in their case, the community of the workplace. Syndicalists saw labour as the true basis of personal freedom and dignity and they rejected the legitimacy and interference of the centralised state. There had even been some intellectual cross-over between these two extremes before the First World War in the *Cercle Proudhon*, but its effects were limited.³⁴

The perceived crisis in French decadence in the inter-war period breathed new life into communitarianism and open use of the term. Community values accorded with the right's ideal of an organic order and seemed to offer the necessary antidote to the symptoms of Liberal and Marxist decadence—rampant individualism and materialism and the excesses of mass culture. The idealisation of community values was especially strong in intellectual, Catholic, reformist circles of the 1930s. Amongst the most prominent and influential communitarians were Emmanuel Mounier and François Perroux (both of whom went on to play significant roles in Vichy's National Revolution). Mounier's ideal of a humanist, non-materialist and 'spiritual' community, pursued in the pages of his journal, *Esprit* and through his prolific writing, attracted a wide band of followers.³⁵ François Perroux, whom Julian Jackson credits as the man who reflected most carefully on the doctrine of communitarianism, was deeply impressed by Mounier and the anti-individualist and anti-parliamentarian ideas of the nonconformists.³⁶ Perroux, an economist, advocated the rebuilding of the national community by basing it on the concrete communities and hierarchies of the workplace and through the creation of a corporatist state.³⁷

³⁴ Jackson, *France*, p. 46. Jackson points out that, even though Georges Valois failed to build bridges between the *Action Française* and the syndicalists through the *Cercle Proudhon*, the attempt was significant in illuminating the common ground between the two extremes and their shared opposition to the Republic. Valois believed that syndicalism could survive only in a corporatist system and under a king, who alone could protect the interests of all sections of society. Valois's working class doctrines and his admiration for Italian Fascism led to his rupture with the *Action Française* and his founding of the *Faisceau* league in 1925. Paul Mazgaj covers the attempt at alliance against the Republic in his *The Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

³⁵ See in particular, Emmanuel Mounier, *Révolution personnelle et communautaire* (Paris: Editions Mouton, 1935).

³⁶ Jackson, *France*, p. 352-3.

³⁷ François Perroux, *Capitalisme et communauté de travail* (Paris: Librairie de Recueil Sirey, 1938).

The ideal of the corporatist state gained popularity in the 1920s and thirties. Corporatism contended that various functional and economic groups were the most important elements of the community and that they, rather than the individual or locality, should be the basis of political representation. Theoretically, corporatism looked back to medieval estates or guilds and was taken up by fascist theorists, though in practice fascist states such as Mussolini's Italy did not devolve political or economic power but centralized it in the party and its leadership. Corporatism also united a diverse collection of anti-liberals, anti-communists and agrarian idealists who believed that class struggle had led to social disintegration and that a re-ordering of the economic basis of society according to professional grouping would promote class co-operation and economic success. Corporatism called for the setting up of a decentralised system of trade and labour regulation. It rested on the creation of professional or trade associations, based on the enterprise and comprising both employers and employees. Each trade association would co-operate within the region and send regional representatives to a national council that would advise the government but remain independent of its control. Beyond the general theory, however, corporatism was open to different interpretations and it could serve many different masters. This was certainly the case in France.

The most consistent proponents of corporatism in the inter-war period were the agricultural organisations. In 1937, a young director of the *Union nationale des syndicats agricoles*, Louis Salleron, sought to define French corporatism.³⁸ He saw it as based firmly on regional and peasant culture, distinguishing it from Marxism and fascism which were based on class, production and centralisation. Salleron called for real, decentralised power and autonomy for each professional corporation. However, outside of the agricultural sector, most corporatist ideas in inter-war France were ill-defined, incoherent and tended to encompass quite diverse social and economic theories. This was because the dominant brand of French corporatism was essentially a vision, as

³⁸ Louis Salleron, *Un régime corporatif pour l'agriculture* (Paris: Dunod, 1937). Salleron went on to influence the creation of the Peasant Corporation under Vichy.

much a moral and spiritual stand as an economic theory, but it was nonetheless important.

Corporatism sat well with the ideal of a pre-Revolutionary organic society and many of its supporters liked to stress its essential Frenchness.³⁹ The right saw corporatism as a non-materialistic form of economic organisation that was based on real communities, the collectivist answer to capitalism, communism and decadence in general. The corporatist vision promised new values and a new social organisation. The reaffirmation of human communities would fortify family and local ties, create a stable hierarchy, strengthen the nation and foster patriotism. Class conflict would disappear, the result of a rejection of the ethics of profit, exploitation and competition. There would be conciliation between capital and labour. Workers and management would, for the first time, work together to regulate their own industries and would themselves, without the need for state intervention, deal with the economic and social consequences of cycles of boom and bust. Corporatism would provide economic and social justice, protecting the weak and preventing the domination of any particular interest group.

However, behind the idealism of the corporatist vision, lay many old conflicts and new divisions. The corporatist policies of various right wing groups were remarkably similar and, far from winning the support of the working class, betrayed their partisanship and their obsession with fighting old battles with the left. All the major leagues espoused corporatism. Despite the fact that the urban, working class leadership of the PPF had little in common with the 'real France' communities that corporatism sought to revive, PPF policy statements could have been written by the *Action Française* or any other league. The PPF promised to revive and protect the nation's basic 'cells' and restore the old moral solidarities that had bound them together by

³⁹ Although corporatism in fascist Italy attracted much comment, advocates of corporatism in France were often keen to proclaim its French roots, especially in the social-Catholic ideas of La Tour du Pin. A few saw corporatism as a reincarnation of the guilds of the *Ancien Régime*, some saw it as a form of the utopian socialism of Proudhon and the French syndicalists, but most saw corporatism as a twentieth century solution to industrialisation, capitalism and Marxism. For a history of corporatist ideas in France see Matthew H. Elbow, *French Corporative Theory, 1789-1948: A Chapter in the History of Ideas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).

recreating 'le goût de la différence'—the satisfaction that one's place in the social hierarchy was just and fitting.⁴⁰ The PPF announced that it would create a new set of values that would not be dependent on privilege by establishing a hierarchy of service, founded not only on accomplishments but how they were achieved.⁴¹ Such vague claims of innovation rang hollow and showed no contact with reality.

The enthusiasm of the leagues for corporatism was only a thin veneer for smashing the power of the national, Marxist unions.⁴² No league gave any guarantee that labour would not be disadvantaged under corporatism, despite the fact that when unions were prevented from organising nationally or independently of management they would certainly be deprived of any political influence and most of their power.⁴³ On the other hand, and even though the corporate structure would clearly be dominated by employers, the leagues often reassured the middle classes that they would protect their interests.⁴⁴ Similar reassurances to workers that the trade councils would ameliorate pay and conditions and would carry out necessary social work did not inspire much confidence. At best, the attitude of the leagues to improving the conditions of the working masses amounted to nothing more than old world paternalism.⁴⁵

The commitment of the intellectuals to communitarian and corporatist ideals was deeper than that of the leagues and their ideas were diverse and complex. However, their policies were often vague and sometimes naive. The nonconformists were keen to present themselves as constructive and realistic and it was in their dedication to communitarian ideals that they were most united. All the nonconformist groups agreed

⁴⁰ Marion, *Programme du PPF*, pp. 93, 98-9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴² In his plan for remaking France, Doriot's support for corporatism comprised mainly of criticism of the CGT. Doriot, *Refaire la France*, pp. 112-5.

⁴³ Jacques Doriot called for protection of workers' rights, the control of trusts and the limitation of corporate profits by the setting up of a social fund to redistribute excess profit, but he never defined any clear policy; Soucy, *French Fascism: Second Wave*, pp. 245-51. As Soucy argues, La Rocque's claim to support basic rights such as a minimum wage and working hours, amounted to no support at all since he stipulated that such 'rights' should be decided, not at the national level, but by each enterprise and region and according to individual performance of each worker.

⁴⁴ The PPF promised the middle class protection from big business in the form of reduction in taxes and low interest loans. Marion, *Programme du PPF*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁵ Soucy, *French Fascism: Second Wave*, pp. 167, 178-89.

that the new order should be more 'personal'. They envisaged a new order where the natural communities would act as intermediaries between each individual and the state, tying the former to the latter through a series of personal and community bonds that were stronger than any ideological, materialistic or class affiliations. All groups were strongly decentralist but agreed that the new political order should in some way federate and harmonise the complex network of natural communities and should organise the economy to serve man, not profit. However, the groups did not agree on which of the natural communities formed the 'eternal bases' of the social order: the *Jeune Droite* was Maurrassian in this regard, but other groups such as *Order Nouveau* and *Esprit* were influenced by Proudhonnien socialism and were more likely to emphasise ties of local custom and soil. Similarly, according to their political leanings, groups also disagreed on key issues such as the rights of property, capital and labour.

The majority of nonconformist intellectuals tended towards corporatism, though there were so many variations in their ideas that there was no single policy which united them all. Mounier and his followers in the ultra-spiritualist *Esprit* group found corporatism too materialistic. *Esprit's* distaste for any discussion of money or profit in relation to man, meant that they put forward no real alternative and did not formulate any precise economic policy. The *Jeune Droite* group was most strongly in favour of a social, Catholic form of corporatism. This, they said, would create a more 'personal', human society that would reflect man's true nature and his real needs: 'la société organisé revient à l'homme en utalisant tous les groupes nés des besoins de l'homme'.⁴⁶ They believed that corporatism would produce a new order of social peace and economic justice, but they also envisaged safeguards within the system: a minimum wage; a living wage which could sustain family life and which would be adjusted according to family size; and the guarantee of work and leisure.⁴⁷ Maulnier and Maxence defended inequality as both natural and necessary aspects of community and

⁴⁶ Francis, Maulnier, Maxence, *Demain la France*, p. 245.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 247. Francis, Maulnier and Maxence claimed to go 'beyond Marxism' in seeing labour as a property or asset rather than a commodity to be exchanged. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-3.

social hierarchy. They were realistic enough to admit that systemic inequality would inevitably produce antagonisms, but their contention that these antagonisms would never upset the overall stability of the social hierarchy was based on the naive assumption that no one would exploit them because everyone would respect the dignity of others.

For many intellectuals, corporatism was a leap of faith. They believed that it was 'realistic', not abstract or ideological, because it rested on the social reality of community values. They believed that corporatism would work because it was part of a discernible movement of 'new' forces against the old order. Drieu La Rochelle recognised in 1934 that corporatism was plainly and demonstrably open to the type of state interference and direction that he feared. Yet he was willing to suspend his doubts because of the promise of new values and a new order.⁴⁸ Robert Aron saw corporatism as fundamental to all new societies and revolutions, including Fascism and National Socialism, and claimed that this was an indication of a common preoccupation:

d'opposer à l'abstraction et l'artifice des régimes purement politiques un régime nouveau fondé sur le contact avec les réalités professionnelles et économiques.⁴⁹

There was shared ground but also many differences between avowed fascists and other right wing critics of the old order. The traditional right and nonconformist intellectuals were often at pains to distinguish their ideal of a corporatist community from the reality in neighbouring fascist states, criticising totalitarian collectivism, authoritarianism and bureaucratic statism.⁵⁰ They claimed that fascist corporatism was imposed from above, centralised and subordinated to the state, whereas French corporatism grew from the roots of natural communities and would not be open to state tyranny.⁵¹ While French fascists and those tempted by fascism, did not openly laud the

⁴⁸ Drieu La Rochelle, *Socialisme Fasciste*, p. 105. To the corporatists he wrote, 'Je ne puis guère vous croire, mais je veux vous suivre'.

⁴⁹ Aron, *Dictature*, p. 130.

⁵⁰ Aron & Dandieu, *Révolution nécessaire*, pp. 88, 152; Francis, Maulnier & Maxence, *Demain la France*, pp. 233-4, 279; and Maulnier, *Au delà du nationalisme*, p. 239.

⁵¹ Aron, *Dictature*, p. 254.

statism of fascist regimes, they were more inclined to admire *dirigisme* or revolution from above and authority played a greater role in their concept of community cohesion and of leadership.

The question of leadership united and divided the right in different ways. The widespread rejection of parliamentary disorder meant that a new form of social and political leadership had to be found. The right was united in the belief that there should be one strong leader holding the social pyramid together and that the distance between the leader at the apex and the people at the base should be wide enough to enhance the power of and inspire respect for the 'chef'. However, the right differed in its concept of the ideal leader: should he be aristocratic or authoritarian, as the Maurrassian or conservative right might favour; a 'spiritual' leader, to satisfy the nonconformist intellectuals; or popular and muscular to suit various league and fascist groups? Even more open was the question of national elites. If not through election and representation, how would elites emerge from the community? How would they convey the wishes of leader and the population: through decentralised, corporate structures or through a single, political party?

Thus, while the right could agree in general terms on the nature and causes of the disorder which afflicted France in the 1930s, they were less united in their conceptions of the future and the values which would create and sustain a new order. Technocrats, economic modernisers and *dirigistes* sought to address the realities confronting France with definite strategies for change. However, despite the conviction that collapse from decadence was imminent, concepts of the new order retained a strong visionary quality. When the new order materialised with the Vichy regime, it was not surprising that many who had imagined it throughout the previous decade, welcomed it in Maurras's words, as a 'divine surprise'.

Chapter 4

New Order

L'ordre nouveau est une nécessité française. Nous devons, tragiquement, réaliser, dans la défaite, la révolution que, dans la victoire, dans la paix, dans l'entente volontaire de peuples égaux, nous n'avons même pas su concevoir.

Marshall Philippe Pétain, speech of 11 October 1940

In a single radio broadcast, Pétain explained the terms of defeat and proclaimed a new order for France. The two were, and always remained, inextricably linked. The momentous speech of 25 June, three days after the Armistice was signed, began with a description of Germany's crushing military superiority and an outline of Allied defeats since 10 May. Pétain described briefly the conditions of France's 'temporary' occupation, admitting that they were severe but consoling the nation with the claim that French honour had been saved: the Navy and Air Force would not be turned over to the Germans; sufficient force would be left to maintain order in France and its colonies; and, most important, the government would remain free—France would be administered only by the French. Pétain then urged France to look to and work for the future: a new order, he said, was beginning.

In the shock of defeat, many French people would have found solace in Pétain's assurance of national revival and few would have realised that the new order would be so much more than the impositions of a military victor on the defeated. Few were

prepared for the speed with which Pétain and his supporters established their power. In the course of only a few days, citizens of the French Republic became subjects of the new French State with Pétain, who had been premier for only nine days, at its head. But from the outset, Pétain attributed the defeat to France's own weakness—its lack of seriousness and its repudiation of the spirit of sacrifice. He made it immediately clear that France and the new government at Vichy would shape a new order out of defeat.

Pétain was not specific about the meaning of the new order nor did he spell out exactly how the government would achieve it. In his second radio broadcast to the nation, Pétain stated only that his general aim was to make France strong again.¹ In the broadest sense, and despite the incongruity of claiming to build national strength under foreign occupation, Vichy justified all its reforms, grouped under the rubric of the National Revolution, as a means to strengthen France. Not until 11 October was Pétain more forthcoming about the nature of the new order, which he declared to be a 'French necessity'. Typically, his first comments defined what the new order would not be: it would under no circumstances be a return to the 'old errors' which had led to the defeat; it would not be a moral crusade or a political revenge; nor would it be an imitation of foreign solutions. Vichy's political vendettas and moral cleansing had already belied Pétain's second promise. The proposal of collaboration which Pétain was soon to make at Montoire and the collaborationists' clamour for greater Nazification would betray his third promise. Vichy's new order was defined by Pétain's first promise: just as in the pre war discussion of order, the new order was the antithesis of the decadent Third Republic.

Pétain went on to expand more positively on the nature of the new order. He promised the French people 'un régime adapté à son climat et à son génie'. He outlined the external, internal and economic policies of the new regime. With oblique references to Franco-German relations which would 'continue to dominate' France's future and to his hopes for 'international' and 'peaceful' collaboration, Pétain described a regime

¹ Pétain, Speech of 11 July, 1940.

which would defend national unity, culture and heritage. He declared that the new regime would be 'a social hierarchy', the two elements inseparable. The new social hierarchy would be based on work and talent and would give everyone an equal chance to serve. Class struggle would disappear; 'true elites' would re-emerge and form the cadres necessary to develop 'well being and dignity for all'. Authority, Pétain said, was necessary to safeguard the freedom of the state and to guarantee the freedom of the individual against 'coalitions of particular interest'. Finally, Pétain declared a revolution in economic organisation which would eliminate conflict and corruption, guarantee the right to work and which would benefit the national interest.

Pétain's aims for the new order were highly ambitious. They were no less than to achieve a total redefinition of France's 'failed' political and economic structures and to forge new social bonds in a strong, cohesive, national community. Vichy's most ambitious aims were also its most unrealistic. Within such broad aims, a myriad of different but co-existing visions of a new order persisted, both within the government and more widely in occupied France. Many conceptions of the new order demonstrated strong continuities with right wing reform agendas of the 1930s and some of these essentially ignored the fact that France had been defeated, that it was occupied by a rapacious regime and that a world war continued to rage around it. Other conceptions of the new order did reflect the complicated mix of new opportunities and limitations that were the result of German occupation, but some mirrored the shifting dynamics of power so closely that the strength of the ideological conviction behind them must be questioned.

The politics of collaboration, the war and the increasing likelihood of Allied victory after 1942, constantly impacted on all plans for the new order. Underlying all such complications, however, was a basic contradiction: Vichy's promise of a new order assumed that fundamental change, stability and national unity were achievable but, given the nature of the regime and the realities of German occupation and war, they were not, and it was clear that they were not after barely a year of Vichy's existence.

Announced after long delays and internal disagreements, Vichy's most ambitious reform programmes pedaled illusions. Initially however, the promise of a new order offered an illusion in which many people wanted to believe. In 1940, the people of France sought certainty and stability and Vichy claimed to represent both. There was also an undeniable warning in Pétain's representation of order:

Il n'y a pas de neutralité possible entre le vrai et le faux, entre le bien et le mal, entre la santé et la maladie, entre l'ordre et le désordre, entre la France et l'anti-France.²

Vichy underscored all its plans for a new order with the promise that it would end the instability and excess of the Third Republic. In his early speeches, Pétain used the word 'order' to signify stability and measure; order described his goal as well as the means by which he would achieve it. When he spoke of the new order, Pétain emphasised national strength, unity and well being. He sought to reassure France in the turmoil following the defeat that change would be, above all, orderly. Vichy propagandists stressed that the regime was not the product of revolution, that Pétain had gained power by strictly legal means and that his programme for reform, though far reaching, was organised, controlled and disciplined.³

Pétain also gave the impression that the new order would emerge easily and naturally as the 'real' France was freed from the corruptions of the modern world and as it returned to its true balance and national traditions. In his second speech to the nation after the defeat, he claimed that France's restoration to health, to stability and measure, would be brought about by following age old, 'simple rules' of social organisation: authority and direction from above, obedience and discipline from below, the whole bound together by justice and an acceptance of place.⁴

² *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 September 1940.

³ Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale*, pp. 80-1, 199.

⁴ Pétain, in his speech of 11 July 1940 said: 'Notre programme est de rendre à la France les forces qu'elle a perdues. Elle ne les retrouvera pas qu'en suivant les règles simples qui ont, de tout temps, assuré la vie, la santé et la prospérité des nations. Nous ferons un France organisée où la discipline des subordonnés répondra à l'autorité des chefs, dans la justice pour tous'.

It was a feature of the regime's unreality that it never gave up this pretence of the simple solution. Vichy clung to its promise of order, even in the total shipwreck of its power. Long after it became obvious that a new order would not emerge naturally or easily, when the woolliness of Vichy's thinking had clouded every reform initiative, when German domination had deprived Vichy of all vestiges of power and independence, and even as violence spread through civil society, the regime still saw itself as the guarantor of a French order. Vichy always claimed to ensure stability and to be the protector of the 'national genius'. Propagandists such as René Benjamin saw France's situation in metaphysical terms: man, struggling against his own disorder, happily finding the man of providence, Pétain, who could put society in rhythm with the universe but knowing that without him the nation would descend into civil war.⁵ Even as the nation descended into civil war, propagandists continued to praise Vichy's 'esprit de l'ordre' and to claim that it represented a continuation of French classical traditions, of Cartesian clarity, logic and directness.⁶

Despite all such confusions and illusions, there was a structure to Vichy's plans for a new order. Vichy's 'simple rules' were designed to restore a 'simple organism' of state. Such an organism needed to be strong, cohesive and free of internal conflict. These were the three aims which Vichy pursued as a basis of its new order: first, to create strong government, based on a clear hierarchy of power; second, to form a cohesive community; and third, to establish economic justice and well being, thereby ending class conflict.

Strong Government and Hierarchy

The first step in Vichy's construction of a new order for France was to institute strong and stable government. Pétain wanted not only to increase the power of the executive, as was the consensus amongst many survivors of the chronically unstable inter-war

⁵ R. Benjamin, *Les sept étoiles de France* (no publication details, 1942), pp. 94-5.

⁶ F. Allengry, *La philosophie sociale et politique du Maréchal Pétain, Juin 1940-Juin 1942* (Charles-Lavauzelle & Cie. No place or date of publication.), pp. 3, 5.

governments, but to break permanently with the liberal democratic traditions of 1789. On 11 July 1940, the day after what remained of the National Assembly gave him the right to amend the constitution, Pétain promulgated the first of twelve constitutional acts which effectively dissolved the Republic, defined his extensive powers as Head of the French State and adjourned parliament indefinitely. Pétain acquired near total executive, legislative and judicial power, free of the sanction of any elected or representative body.⁷

In order to further streamline this system of top down government, Vichy set up a very narrow pyramid of power, with a small number of ministers and lesser secretaries of state. All were appointed by Pétain, were directly responsible to him and could be replaced at any time. An even smaller group of key ministers and advisers had any real influence on Pétain. Pétain held parliament and parliamentarians most responsible for France's collapse and he never lost his distrust of them. In February 1941 he appointed a consultative body of notables, the *Conseil National*, to 'give the regime a more liberal facade', but he refused to allow it to sit in full session as over forty percent of its members were former parliamentarians.⁸

Pétain declared that he wanted to free the administrative structures of state from the destabilising influence of politics, parties and elections, but he also seized the opportunity to purge the bureaucracy of any real or potential political opponents and to strengthen central control. He demanded a signed allegiance from all public servants and permitted instant dismissal without appeal, thus allowing the government to further purge the service of suspected opponents.⁹ Vichy acted quickly to rid the state bureaucracy of all elected bodies and representatives: in October and November 1940, it decreed that local councils and mayors would be appointed and it sought to replace any who did not fit the government mould. Vichy chose its replacements mainly from the

⁷ It is a comment often made that, at least in theory, Pétain had more power than the Bourbon kings. He needed parliamentary sanction only for the declaration of war.

⁸ Jackson, *France*, pp. 153-4. For the composition of the *Conseil National* see Guy Rossi-Landi, 'Le Conseil National' in Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, *Le Gouvernement de Vichy*, pp. 47-54, pp. 49-50.

⁹ JO, Law of 17 July 1940.

conservative, Catholic and sometimes military circles that formed the basis of its support. Most significantly, the government replaced or reassigned the majority of regional prefects, 'reeducated' those who remained and then increased their powers. Vichy then relied on the prefects to be its eyes, ears and main agents for change in the *départements*.¹⁰

Despite these changes, the reality of Vichy's control fell short of its authoritarian ideal and its aim of instituting stable and decisive government failed on many levels. As we have seen, the realities of power at Vichy were complex: there were many centres of power and government decision making was not streamlined; ministries, especially key ministries, changed rapidly; and, despite Pétain's extensive powers, he became increasingly irrelevant to the everyday demands of collaboration. Notwithstanding its pretence of independence and concern to protect French sovereignty, Vichy's power rested on its ability to meet two basic demands of the occupier: first, to aid the German war effort; and second, to maintain public order. Since the first depended on the second, public order was the bottom line of German tolerance. There was always a complex mix of coercion and compromise between Vichy authorities, German authorities and local populations, especially in the Occupied Zone and, in the face of determined local opposition to its bureaucratic reforms, dismissals and appointments, the government could be and often was forced to back down.¹¹

In another sense, all Vichy's governmental reforms failed because they were short term. This was not only because the Allies liberated France and won the war. After

¹⁰ In less than two months the government assigned a new prefect to nearly 70 percent of all départements. See Sonia Mazey and Vincent Wright, 'Les Préfets', in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 267-86. Julian Jackson points out that 'the prefects were infinitely more important to Vichy than any of its own innovations': 'The Prefects: Propagandists of Truth' in France, pp. 264-8. Many regional studies reveal the importance of the prefects in their role as defenders of French sovereignty as well as intermediaries between local communities and the German military and administrative forces in the Occupied Zone. When Laval returned to power in 1942, he once again reorganised the préfecture and, seeking efficiency rather than dedication to the National Revolution, he reinstated some who had been sacked in 1940. However, his aim was also to ensure authoritarian control and to protect his form of collaboration.

¹¹ Robert Gildea illuminates the power of local populations to win concessions from both Vichy and German authorities and he outlines some of the compromises between Vichy's reforms (especially the appointment of mayors) and German security demands: Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation 1940-45* (London: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 58-64.

establishing his personal power, Pétain showed very little concern for the permanent constitutional reform that had been a key aspect of his promise of stability. As late as 1942, he was content to allow his most ridiculous propagandist to give the impression that, having returned France to its classical and pre-Revolutionary traditions, he was now mulling over France's future:

Il rêverait d'un Sénat ... composé de très peu de membres ... nommé par lui. Presque les Sept Sages de la Grèce. Encore faudrait-il les trouver. Et une Assemblée consultative qui serait ... mais sur ces mots comment rendre son sourire, sourire de rien, du coin de la lèvre, qui serait ... «les conseillers du roi!» Que cette petite phrase ne fasse pas sauter les républicains ... s'il en reste. Ce n'est pas une phrase provocatrice. Elle établit le lien avec une grande tradition.¹²

The government approved a subcommittee of the *Conseil National* to write a new constitution, but it met only twice and the draft it produced was never promulgated.¹³ Laval, occupied with the real business of collaboration, had no time for such irrelevancies. Only when France had nothing left with which to bargain and when German defeat looked certain did Pétain finally sign a speedily drafted constitution which made some concessions to democracy.¹⁴ By late 1943 to early 1944, however, such desperate measures to win support from the Allies were totally redundant. The only result was to annoy the Germans sufficiently that they forced Laval to accept collaborationists into government.

Collaborationist opponents of the regime had long criticised Vichy's failure's to embrace permanent constitutional reform and especially its failure to create a strong, political hierarchy rooted in mass mobilisation and structured in a single party. Collaborationists insisted that the necessary consequence of total defeat should be revolutionary change and that that revolution should be inspired by Nazi success. They lauded a fascist order of efficient government and clear lines of authority which never in

¹² Benjamin, *Les Sept Etoiles*, p. 9.

¹³ The draft invested all decision making in the Head of State, though it did seek to broaden the base from which he would gather advice through a Grand Council (220 notables appointed by himself) and a National Council (300 members selected by provincial assemblies, the professions, veterans and heads of families). See M. Cointet, *Le Conseil national de Vichy: vie politique et réforme de l'état en régime autoritaire 1940-1944* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1989).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 316-27.

reality existed in Nazi Germany. The collaborationists agreed with Vichy that change had to be imposed 'par en haut' but had no confidence in the ability of its 'social hierarchy' to bring about change. They were convinced that a new order could be achieved only with the support of a revolutionary cadre and the creation of a single party.

The collaborationist press harped endlessly on the need to create a single party of revolutionary elites which would direct real change, sweep away the false reformists who clung on at Vichy and integrate France into Germany's New European Order.¹⁵ Each collaborationist league claimed to be the one true party and the necessary motor of change. They did not differ significantly in their interpretation of the role of the party in creating the new order, though they sometimes emphasised different elements of that role. Georges Soulès, on the eve of the internal coup in which he seized control of the MSR from its founder Deloncle, emphasised the need to create a new French elite who would quickly integrate France into the New European Order.¹⁶ In February 1942, Soulès outlined the functioning of the party and a fascist view of political, social and racial hierarchy. First, he claimed, the party would be an intermediary between the people and the leader, expressing the wishes of the masses. It would attract, after tough selection, the best elements of youth, without consideration of birth or fortune. The party would therefore function as an open and popular aristocracy, permanently renewed from the base. The final and highest role of the party was as 'le détenteur conscient et le régénérateur des vertus permanentes de la race'.¹⁷

Though Vichy opposed the formation of a single party system, the government was not immune to such pressures. Vichy not only needed but wanted to maintain

¹⁵ See, for example the long series of articles by Camille Fégy entitled 'France, une: un chef, un seul parti, une seule mystique' in *La Gerbe*, from 25 June, 1942. Fégy's interviews on the subject of the single party aimed to demonstrate wide support from all corners of society. He interviewed the two most likely leaders, Doriot and Déat (2 July), as well as returned prisoners of war (16 July), a relief worker (23 July), an ex-communist (30 July) an ex-syndicalist (13 August) and Lucien Rebatet, fresh from the success of *Décombres* (6 August). He continued the topic and interviews under the banner 'Vers le parti unique' (24 September).

¹⁶ Soulès, a writer and former socialist, had been a long standing, ranking member of the MSR, but tired of Deloncle's terrorist activities and replaced him as leader in May 1942.

¹⁷ *Revolution Nationale*, 1 February 1942.

public order: this was the basis of its power which it derived from the Germans and it was also integral to its concept of the new order. As opinion increasingly turned against the regime and collaboration, Vichy found it more and more necessary to create the means to enforce compliance. Vichy's many failures meant that, in the end, Laval could not resist the German pressure which eventually foisted single party collaborationists onto government. However, long before this date, the call for the formation of a coherent force dedicated to a real national revolution and a totally new order could be heard within the Vichy government, from its authoritarian wings.

Pierre Pucheu and Paul Marion were key figures in the attempt to create such a force and, even though they did not succeed directly, their influence remained important. Surrounding Marion at Vichy was a group of former nonconformist intellectuals who promoted yet another type of order: not a political cadre, but an 'Order' in the chivalric or monastic sense, an elite who would lead France in a spiritual revolution.¹⁸ Such men agreed with the collaborationists that France had to create an instrument of revolution if it was to achieve a new order and that the natural communities on which the government pinned its hopes for change could not be a militant force. Jean Maze, a former nonconformist in Marion's circle, wrote in *Idées* in 1943 that France was so sick, so addicted to division and chaos, so paralysed by the fear of unity and structure that the cure had to be imposed on a reluctant nation by a healthy, revolutionary minority.¹⁹ However, Maze and his group contended that this minority should not be an arbitrary political construction, formed on paper by the agreement of a handful of party leaders, nor should it be imitative of the Nazi party. The motor of revolution for France should, he claimed, be an 'Order' (he proposed the name *L'Ordre révolutionnaire français*), a caste of political knights whose moral qualities and asceticism, rigour, personal commitment and unshakeable discipline made them real

¹⁸ Bernard Compère, *Une Utopie Combattante: L'École des Cadres d'Uriage, 1940-1942* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), pp. 215-6. See chapter 8 for the influence of such ideas on the *École des Cadres* at Uriage. The ideal of a chivalric order, dedicated to reform and showing exemplary behaviour was common in fascist ideology and was praised by politically ambitious collaborationists in Paris such as Déat: Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1964), p. 41.

¹⁹ Jean Maze, 'Ordre ou Parti', *Idées* 17 (March 1943), pp. 6-17, pp. 7-9.

revolutionaries. The Order would demand total dedication and engagement: admission would be difficult, leaving impossible. This would be France's new aristocracy, based on 'la noblesse du service révolutionnaire'.²⁰

Though Pétain had not initially supported an idea of a moral crusade, Vichy had already adopted the idea of a secular Order in the form of the *Service d'ordre légionnaire* (SOL). On his own initiative, Eugene Deloncle, a veteran and strong supporter of Pétain and Vichy, had shaped the SOL as an elite and activist formation within the Legion of Veterans. Recruits to the SOL became devotees in a chivalric order dedicated to Pétain and the National Revolution. They took an oath of loyalty on their knees after passing a night in vigil and meditation. Laval officially sanctioned the SOL in January 1942, not because he failed to recognise the naivety of such medieval ideals, but because he hoped that such a formation would counter the collaborationists' call for a revolutionary cadre. However, under pressure to defend the authority of the state, the SOL soon mutated into the *Milice* which, by the end of 1943, was the major instrument of state repression. Under Darnand's influence, the *Milice* provided yet another model for a single, fascist party in opposition to Vichy.²¹ Thus, even this ideal of Order—of dedication and belonging—born within Vichy, not Paris, ended in the creation of an apparatus for repression and the enforcement of state power on Nazi lines.

National Cohesion

Vichy's second aim for its new order was to create a cohesive, national community. In some respects, the policies which followed from this aim were among Vichy's most positive and widely accepted. However, Vichy's concept of social order rested on contradictory assumptions about the nature of French society and, in the end, these contradictions served to divide rather than to unite France.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

²¹ In August 1943, Darnand, after flirting briefly with resistance, joined the Waffen-SS and swore an allegiance to Hitler. In September he joined Parisian collaborationists in calling for total collaboration under a single party organised on National Socialist lines. See Jean-Pierre Azéma, 'La Milice', *Vingtième Siècle*, vol. 28 (1990), pp. 155-62.

The architects of the National Revolution assumed that the 'real' France was naturally cohesive and that the national community would therefore be easily revived. Pétain's 'simple' rules would be enough to ensure social equilibrium: the people of France would begin to follow his rules for the good of the nation and because they felt secure under his paternal care; they would continue to adhere to them because they would be content with their place in society.

There was some truth in the first of Pétain's contentions and the full extent of Vichy's failure to unite France must be judged in the knowledge that the vast majority rallied to his call in 1940. However, Vichy could not and did not try to ensure the security and contentment of all of its subjects. Given the circumstances of occupation and its policy of collaboration, Vichy lacked the power to provide these benefits to the majority. Given its own mania for excluding any element which did not fit its concept of national community and for repressing any source of civil disobedience, the government acted against the interests of some of its subjects. Despite Pétain's initial promise, the new order did pursue policies of revenge through exclusion and repression. Contrary to government rhetoric which implied that it would simply facilitate the natural flowering of community spirit, its practice of exclusion and repression demanded constant vigilance and growing resources as disillusionment and resistance spread throughout France. Such contradictions meant that Vichy's attempt to create community and cohesion became little more than the manufacture of homogeneity and the enforcement of obedience.

Vichy's social policies were the result of a complex mixture of positive and negative aims. Vichy's communitarian policies were its most positive: as Julian Jackson has commented, 'communitarianism was the nearest Vichy came to developing a single, overarching ideology'.²² Pétain portrayed community values, especially rural values, as the blood of the simple organism that the National Revolution would restore to health. *Pétainisme*, the cult of his own personality placed Pétain at the heart of the

²² Jackson, *France*, p. 353.

community and the National Revolution privileged the church as the moral backbone of the new order. According to Vichy rhetoric, communitarianism was a positive and vital force, and it, rather than any law or regulation, would be the social glue of the new order.

At the same time, however, Vichy was always negatively fixated on disorder—past, present and potential. Even before the spread of popular disillusionment and resistance, Vichy never acted as if order was a natural or stable balance: it always sought to impose its order on a disordered world. Vichy's obsession with disorder manifested itself in constant warnings against the consequences of disunity and in the plethora of petty, bureaucratic controls which bedeviled the lives of ordinary people throughout the Occupation. The regime never ceased to justify its existence and its reforms with reference to the weakness and division of the past, particularly the disorder of the Third Republic.

In creating its new order, Vichy made it patently clear that it would remove the 'abstractions' of liberalism from the concept of national community. The government wrote sixteen principles of community and produced them in the form of a poster, just as the Revolution had set out thirty-five principles in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*.²³ The poster was displayed in all schools as a means of rapidly entrenching Vichy's new national triptych of *Travail, Famille, Patrie*. The first community principle asserted that the rights of man made sense only in the context of community: of the family which brings him up; the work which nourishes him; and the nation which protects him. Other principles went on to assert that the rights of the individual were subordinate to those of the community and could be guaranteed only through discipline, obedience to the law and respect for the authority of the leader and the state. Individual rights were inseparable from duty and duty meant, above all, work.

²³ ANF, 72 AJ 1073.

It also meant dedication to improving the nation in the spirit of collaboration, not in pursuit of personal reward or political or ideological interests.²⁴

Few people in occupied France objected to the general thrust of Vichy's communitarian principles, especially when the government used them to promote relief initiatives to aid refugees from the Occupied Zone or families of prisoners of war. They were also broad enough to accommodate, albeit with some reservations as the occupation progressed, the various sectional interests of communitarian groups which had been so active during the 1930s. Communitarian groups came from many different intellectual backgrounds—from Maurrassian/authoritarians to social Catholics, to agrarian corporatists.²⁵ The economist and communitarian theorist François Perroux, who played a prominent role in so many community initiatives under Vichy, believed that a means could be found to include all communitarian groups in the new order, based on their broad agreement: that communitarianism would end class conflict, recreate a national elite and reassert France's uniqueness.²⁶ Communitarian

²⁴ Five principles not mentioned above sought to: establish school as an extension of family to teach human order, respect for the fatherland and for France's 'long-established' political and moral beliefs; create a hierarchy based on talent and merit, not wealth and position; ensure financial profit contributed to general good; make duty proportional to wealth; punish representatives of the state who abuse the authority invested in them. Principle eleven is described below.

²⁵ A Maurrassian brand of communitarianism which called for the reestablishment of 'eternal rules' was elaborated under the Occupation by the authoritarian Catholic Jean de Farbrègues: see his 'Qu'est-ce que la communauté française?', *Idées*, November 1941, pp. 20-32. Mounier and his social Catholic followers deeply influenced Vichy's educational initiatives, especially in the *Chantiers* and the *Ecole des Cadres* at Uriage, before they became disillusioned with the regime or were pushed aside by ultra collaborationist forces. Louis Salleron, the theorist of agrarian corporatism, was wary of the intellectual 'wave' of the 'esprit communautaire' which had swept France and later in the Occupation became frustrated with lack of specific reforms. He called for more concrete definition of the community in the realities of blood (family), work (*métier*) and soil (nation): see his 'Limites de la communauté', *Idées*, February 1943, pp. 27-45.

²⁶ See Jackson's highly illuminating discussion of Perroux's career in his *France*, pp. 350-3. Perroux believed that the French proletariat could be led easily by a new elite to reintegrate into the national community. On 10 October 1941 he lectured to the *Ecole Nationale des Cadres civiques*, an extract of which was published the following month in the first edition of *Idées* under the title 'Le problème français du prolétariat', pp. 13-19 (Perroux later objected to the title and asked that it be amended to 'L'intégration du Prolétariat dans la communauté française': *Idées*, December 1941, p. 13). Around the same time, Perroux also wrote for the *Revue Universelle*, calling for the 'restoration of threatened realities and the rediscovery of truth'. Perroux hailed the community as sign of national originality and for that reason insisted that the new French community should not be depend on the state to define it and should not copy 'Hitlerism' or Communism. François Perroux, 'La communauté française', *Revue Universelle*, no. 23 (10 December 1941), pp. 751-5. The assertion of national identity through communitarianism and its distinctiveness from German or Soviet principles was often made in the occupied as well as the unoccupied press, though the distinctiveness was seldom elaborated upon in any detail.

organisations remained committed to these positive ideals throughout the Occupation and continued to organise conferences in an effort to resolve their points of disagreement, even after it became obvious that the government had become much more interested in the negative aspects of defining the community.²⁷

The eleventh of Vichy's principles of community was the only hint that dissent might mar the natural flowering of the community. It stated that any 'clique' that threatened the state or unity of nation must be destroyed. In the cause of unity and for the protection of the state, Vichy justified its manufacture of homogeneity, its pursuit of political enemies and its limitation of the civil rights of large sections of society. To manufacture racial homogeneity, the new government acted very quickly to enact anti-Jewish legislation, to expand the definition of the foreigner and to exclude them from the national community. Its pursuit of political enemies was also swift. One of Vichy's first constitutional acts was to set up a supreme court to try key figures of the old regime for leading an ill-prepared nation into war: seven men were arraigned and interned pending trial.²⁸ Vichy's attack on civil rights furthered its aims of homogeneity and revenge. In a rush of legislation in the first weeks of its creation, Vichy sought to control, remove from influence or punish opponents and potential opponents of the regime. They included all those who might be sources of dissent or who might offer an alternative focus for political or social unity. Thus Vichy defined large sections of society as enemies of the state.

Vichy's measures to control its enemies demanded constant tightening and soon expanded to open repression and persecution. On 13 August 1940, Vichy attacked

²⁷ In April 1943, Pétain's advisors organised a conference of 200 communitarians at the 'Journées communautaires de Mont-Dore'. Another meeting was planned for the following year but the Liberation intervened. See Shennan, *Rethinking France*, p. 28.

²⁸ They were: former premiers, Léon Blum, Paul Reynaud and Edouard Daladier; former ministers, Georges Mandel (Interior), Pierre Cot and Guy La Chambre (Air); and former Commander in Chief, Maurice-Gustave Gamelin. Their trials, known collectively as the Riom trials, did not open until 19 February 1942 when the context of the war and occupation had changed considerably, and they turned into a massive propaganda defeat for Vichy. The Germans were surprised and furious to find the defendants prosecuted for having lost the war, not for having caused it and when Blum and Daladier easily demonstrated the weakness of the government's case, Darlan suspended the trials after only a few weeks (11 April). The defendants were held as hostages for the duration of the Occupation. Mandel and Cot were murdered by the *Milice* in July 1944.

Freemasons by outlawing 'secret societies' and one year later (20 August 1941) it published the names of known Freemasons. On 3 September 1940 Vichy ordered the internment of anyone posing a threat to national security, targeting in particular French and refugee Communists. One year later, fearing growing communist resistance after June 1941, it established a State Tribunal which could hand down death sentences, without appeal, to anyone deemed to be a terrorist. In such measures, and many more, it can be seen that Vichy's own determination to maintain public order and its desire to exclude and repress in the name of the national community paved the way for the authoritarian, 'Milice state' that it eventually became. The *Milice* always claimed to be protecting French community values.²⁹

Anatole de Monzie, the former member of parliament who had voted for the new regime in 1940, was an indignant critic of Vichy's betrayal of its promise of unity. In his devastating criticism, *La saison des juges*, published in 1943, De Monzie wrote that while he, like most of France, had welcomed Vichy in the conviction that 'l'ordre nouveau assurerait l'Ordre', he had not realised that Vichy would make the defeat the pretext for a 'revanche de caste'.³⁰ Pétain, he wrote, had been worshipped as a saint who would slowly and patiently unify the nation in 'mutual tenderness', but the vision had been shattered by 'le bruit des verrous tirés aux portes des prisons'.³¹ Vichy had merely emulated the false order of a police state: its punitive laws were designed merely to produce silence.³² De Monzie found Vichy pathetic, with its 'ambiance de tyrannie lilliputienne'.³³ He condemned Vichy for its lack of grandeur and for its failure to achieve any positive reconstruction. The atmosphere of fear that it had created had only diminished the nation.³⁴ In 1943, he wrote, 'il n'existe plus une seule catégorie de Français inoffensifs'.³⁵

²⁹ *Documentation des Cadres*, Ecole des Cadres de la Milice, 1, pp. 5-7.

³⁰ De Monzie, *La saison des juges*, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³² *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, pp. 21-37, 26.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

However, most criticism emanating from Paris vilified the government for its reticence in controlling the forces of disorder. The collaborationists urged the government on to wider exclusions, a more ruthless pursuit of old enemies and the stricter enforcement of social obedience. French fascists romanticised the common cause which they claimed to share with the Germans in the fight against the forces of disorder. Even late in the Occupation, when public opinion had clearly turned against collaboration, Robert Brasillach was still writing of the 'fraternal affection' which he felt for the Germans as they stood together 'against disorder' and their 'common enemies'.³⁶

Collaborationists generally disliked the fact that the government saw the church as the moral pillar of the community, but found little to criticise in Vichy's communitarian principles themselves. The collaborationist press made only general statements in support: papers agreed that 'la révolution sera communautaire', reiterated anti-liberal and anti-communist sentiments and encouraged community work and the revival of the 'real' France. However, under the rubric of community values, the occupied press vilified black market practices and the general preoccupation with material deprivations: community spirit apparently meant not complaining about the hardship inflicted on France by Germany's rapacious occupation policies.

Some intellectuals in the Occupied Zone voiced their frustration, not with the general thrust of the government's communitarian principles, but with the obvious lack of results. In 1941 a group of intellectuals founded a *Centre Communautaire* in Paris which claimed to establish concrete doctrines in place of the 'vain recriminations' and 'vague aspirations' which had so far failed to re-forge national unity.³⁷ The group aimed to research, define and develop the means of restoring the French community, but this amounted only to publishing a series of *Etudes*. Other communitarian literature

³⁶ Robert Brasillach, 'Naissance d'un sentiment', *Révolution Nationale*, 4 September 1943. Brasillach typically romanticised the common cause he felt for the Nazis as 'fraternal affection'.

³⁷ Martial Buisson, Serge Dairaines, Marcel Delanney, Maurice le la Gatinais, Jean-Pierre Maxence, Roger Mouton, Maxime Poinsignon, 'La Révolution Nationale sera communautaire: raisons, directions, moyens d'action' *Etudes Communautaires* 1 (1941). The *Centre Communautaire* published seven *Etudes* by various individual authors from 1941 to 1943.

emanating from Paris clearly promoted National Socialism as a means of restoring the national and racial community.³⁸

Common to all communitarian literature was the principle that community values defined an essential Frenchness. Collaborationists always rejected the notion that they were imitating a German or any other model. They did, however, tend to place the national community in a wider, European context. Many expressions of Europeanism were naive in relation to German power: they anticipated the formation of an equal and peaceful community of distinctive European peoples under German protection.³⁹ Others were more blatantly unrealistic, insisting that the new Europe was a happy and fruitful community long after any hopes for equal collaboration had evaporated. Eugene Deloncle portrayed Europe's future as one of familial bliss:

Europe de l'avenir, communauté des nations communautaires du continent, toi qui seras
comme une mère aux flancs féconds berçant de beaux enfants dans tes bras!⁴⁰

Despite these ridiculous images in the press, Europeanism was a significant aspect of intellectual collaboration, especially in the early years of the occupation. Most collaborationist intellectuals accepted Germany's inevitable dominance of the New European Order, but they did not see this as an obstacle to a new European community. Two months after France's defeat, Marcel Déat looked forward to the development of a 'European consciousness' under German hegemony which would produce, he claimed,

³⁸ Ch. Fraval, *La Révolution Communautaire* (Paris: Editions LME, 1941). Fraval condemned decadence, 'artificial values' and Jewish influence in France, praised fascist dynamism and called for a single party to restore the national community.

³⁹ Fraval claimed 'Etre Européen, c'est aujourd'hui la seule façon d'être Français': *Ibid.*, p. 243. Fraval had, early in the decade, written on and lamented the failure of peace following the First World War, and his concept of the New Europe was naive in the extreme: he envisaged a Europe guided by the 'four great peoples' of France, Germany, Italy and Spain and where the audacity and invention of Germany and the balance of the Latin peoples would find a synthesis and concrete expression in France: *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 17, 240-3.

⁴⁰ Eugène Deloncle, 'Communisme et doctrine communautaire', *Révolution Nationale*, 1 February 1942. Deloncle argued that real community is identified by bonds of friendship and love (which, he claimed, precluded communism, which is defined by rules and controls, and Jews who were merely a group sharing certain things in common). A few months later, on 17 June 1942, *Révolution Nationale* published a cartoon depicting the building site for the New Europe where brawny workers are busy labouring behind a sign calling for more workers. France, however, sits to one side in a business suit, under a hat labeled 'Attentisme', twiddling his thumbs as he eyes the plans for reconstruction and mutters his inability to help.

not dictatorial control, but 'la grande vie collective et solidaire'.⁴¹ The *Groupe Collaboration*, formed in September 1940, sought to capitalise on inter-war intellectual and cultural links between France and Nazi Germany.⁴² The organisation dedicated many of its discussions and publications to Europeanism, frequently referring to the tragedy of the First World War and promised an end to the 'guerre fratricide' that had divided France and Germany.⁴³

However, the naivety of early expressions of mutual co-operation and intellectual equality were soon exposed by the realities of the war and Nazi occupation. Increasingly from 1942, Nazi supporters equated Europeanism with support for Germany in its war effort. At the height of German expansion, Drieu La Rochelle and Alfred Fabre-Luce portrayed occupied Europe as the beginnings of a community which would be strong enough to withstand the 'invasion' of Communism and Americanism, without denying the uniqueness of each individual member.⁴⁴ By 1943, when the Nazi new order was under threat, German-sponsored propaganda in France portrayed Europe as the house of ancient civilisation, standing against 'communist barbarity'.⁴⁵ Alphonse

⁴¹ Marcel Déat 'Vocation de France' *L'Œuvre*, 23 August 1940 in *Perspectives Françaises*, p. 24. Déat claimed that France's vocation as part of the New Europe would be to 'define the rules' of communal life.

⁴² Groups established after the First World War such as the *Comité franco-allemand* had promoted peace and reconciliation, but the *Comité France-Allemagne*, established in 1935, had more of a political agenda in promoting ties with Nazi offices through its German sister organisation. It brought together many future collaborationist intellectuals such as Alphonse de Châteaubriant, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Fernand de Brinon and Jean Luchaire. Luchaire, editor of *Notre Temps*, established another group sympathetic to Nazi Germany for French youth. See Hans Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus and Michel Trebitsch (eds), *Entre Locarno et Vichy: Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années 1930* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1993). The *Groupe Collaboration*, formed by Alphonse de Châteaubriant and supported by de Brinon as Vichy's 'ambassador' to the Occupied Zone, reunited activists in these groups. It also attracted some prominent French intellectuals from the arts and sciences and reached a wide audience through its organisation of public lectures, readership of its *Cahiers Franco-allemands* and through its broadcasts on *Radio-Paris*.

⁴³ Friedrich Grimm, *Allemagne et France: Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*, (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941); published text of a lecture organised by the *Groupe Collaboration*, 18 January 1941. Friedrich Grimm was a professor of law who had promoted Franco-German reconciliation between the wars and written on Hitler and France.

⁴⁴ In his *Anthologie de la nouvelle Europe*, Fabre-Luce presented excerpts from the works of writers from all over Europe: Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Anthologie de la nouvelle Europe* (Paris: Plon, 1942), Chapter 10, 'L'Europe', pp. 261-95. He claimed to be in search of 'the intellectual roots of the new Europe' which, he said existed long before it was 'baptised' in 1940: *ibid.*, p. III. Drieu La Rochelle welcomed German strength and the opportunity for France to show its ability to work as part of a new Europe: *ibid.*, p. XXXIII and *Ne Plus Attendre*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *L'Europe* (1943), propaganda pamphlet [BDIC]. The tract depicts a family knocking on the door of the house of Europe. On the door is written the promise: 'Franchissez cette porte: elle mène à un avenir meilleur'. The doors open to reveal, on one side, photographs of 'European' industry in full

de Châteaubriant and his paper, *La Gerbe*, clung to hopes for the 'fusion' of European peoples.⁴⁶ Only five months before the Liberation, he praised German youth for its sacrifice in protecting Europe from the American beast and from Asian hordes and he honoured Hitler for having created such heroes.⁴⁷

The Vichy regime did not achieve the national cohesion that Pétain promised in 1940. Indeed, in many ways it lost it. Vichy defined the national community through exclusion and by enforcing homogeneity and obedience. The National Revolution's attempt to forge community values did build on pre-war trends and was in some ways positive and popular, but collaboration and increasing German demands divided rather than united the community. Vichy's collaborationist opponents in Paris advocated only greater division of the nation. Their supposed support for community values was incidental to their concern with other forms of order, in particular to conformity under a Nazi Europe. In Occupied France, there could be no recipe for national cohesion other than liberation.

Ending Economic and Class Conflict

Vichy's aim of forging a strong and cohesive national community was closely tied to its third aim for the new order—to create a system of economic justice and prosperity that would end class conflict. Vichy propaganda promised to create a human economy or a moral economy, drawing heavily on the Catholic traditions of Le Play.⁴⁸ Collaborators of various hues agreed that the realisation of these aims in the creation of a corporatist state was the most important reform of the National Revolution and would prove to be

production, workers leaving for Germany and prisoners returning to France and, on the other, new roads and rail lines running to Russian oil and agriculture which are producing 'for Europe'. The text promises France an amelioration of material hardships in the new year of 1943.

⁴⁶ For early support of Europeanism see: Henry de France, 'A propos de l'Europe nouvelle', *La Gerbe*, 7 October 1940; and Léo Norat, 'L'Exposition de la France Européenne', *La Gerbe*, 29 May 1941.

⁴⁷ Alphonse de Châteaubriant, 'Europe!', *La Gerbe*, 9 March 1944.

⁴⁸ The *Revue Universelle* often promoted these ideals: see for example Robert Havard de la Montagne, 'La fête du travail', no. 33, 10 May 1942, pp. 710-12; and Sisley Huddleston, 'Entretien sur l'économie humaine', no. 47, 10 December 1942, pp. 689-700.

the foundation of the new order.⁴⁹ However, the government found economic management, let alone economic reform, extremely difficult. The foremost reason for this was the pressure imposed by the Occupation. Germany's division of France, its imposition of a massive fine in the guise of occupation costs and its growing demands for natural resources and labour put huge stress on the French economy. Any government would have found it difficult to deal with such pressures, but Vichy's pursuit of collaboration could only facilitate the pillage of French resources.⁵⁰ The resultant economic hardships, and forced labour in particular, alienated the population from the regime more than any other factor.

Added to the pressures of economic management, Vichy's own programme of economic reform was a complicated mix of different aims and agendas.⁵¹ Vichy's official policy was the creation of a corporatist state, but many servants of the state could only barely pass themselves off as corporatists and those who truly were corporatists were divided by quite different conceptions of how it should work in practice. In an apparent paradox, Vichy's economic programme accommodated both reactionary and modernising tendencies. Nostalgia for the past and grandiose plans for the future co-existed, if not happily then with surprisingly little conflict. That such different agendas could co-exist under Vichy was due, in the final analysis, to the fact that all were fantasies.⁵²

⁴⁹ Pétain's 'hagiographer', René Benjamin claimed that corporatism was Pétain's longest held conviction, that he regarded it as his most important reform and wanted it put into action before any other: *Le Maréchal et son peuple* (Paris: Plon, 1941), p. 9. The collaborationist Luchaire agreed that corporatism was fundamental to the National Revolution and a 'tangible' form of new order: Jean Luchaire, *Partage du Pouvoir* (Paris: Editions Balzac, 1943), p. x.

⁵⁰ Effective summaries of economic collaboration, the difficulties it imposed on the government and the 'accommodations' it forced on business and ordinary people can be found in Burrin, *France à l'heure allemande*, pp. 233-82 and Jackson, *France*, pp. 161-5.

⁵¹ For Vichy's economic policy see Alan S. Milward, *The New Order and the French Economy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). R.F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and M. Margairaz, *L'Etat, les finances et l'économie: Histoire d'une conversion 1932-1952* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1991) establish the continuities in French economic policy and the central role Vichy played in its modernisation. See also R. Vinen, *The Politics of French Business, 1936-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and H. Rousso and M. Margairaz, 'Vichy, la guerre et les entreprises', *Histoire, l'économie et société*, vol. 11:3 (Fall 1992), pp. 337-67.

⁵² On the co-existence of 'reactionary fantasies' and 'technocratic visions' see Shennan, *Rethinking France*, p. 231. Jackson points out that the dichotomy between modernisers and traditionalists should not be exaggerated and that, if the former won out over the latter, it was due largely to the dire

The visionary nature of much pre-war corporatism lived on in Vichy's traditionalist rhetoric. This rhetoric drew on a mythical past in which society was held together in an organic unity and natural balance by hard work. The traditionalist vision was overwhelmingly rural. Traditionalists portrayed agricultural labour as a *métier* and made the peasantry represent the social/familial, moral and spiritual values on which their concept of the nation and its history was based. The National Revolution gave great prominence to its *retour à la terre* policy which reflected this pre-industrial vision of a nation that had rediscovered its 'real' traditions and social connections. In lauding such a vision, the National Revolution maintained the fantasy of an independent nation, free of the realities of occupation and the demands of collaboration. In the same way, the traditionalists at Vichy also ignored central economic debates. Only in the most general terms did they describe their promise of a 'human' economy: to restore the natural communities and to protect them by controlling the excesses of capitalism—trusts, profiteering and cycles of boom and bust. This was Vichy's simple recipe for social reconciliation and the end of class conflict.

Vichy's official traditionalism and visionary economics co-existed with modern, reformist policies. The government's most effective economic management and far-reaching plans for reform were brought about by prominent technocrats and *planistes* such as Yves Bouthillier, René Belin, François Lehideux and Jean Bichelonne who dominated the administration of finance, labour and production.⁵³ Whether or not they

economic circumstances of the Occupation and not because either were any more realistic in their plans for reform.

⁵³ Yves Bouthillier became Minister for Finance in March 1940 and, as a strong supporter of Pétain, retained his position after the defeat. He was ousted by Laval's return to power in April 1942 but remained close to Pétain. Bouthillier considered himself a 'technicien' rather than a politician and played a key role in negotiating the economic terms of occupation with the Germans. He supported collaboration and strong government control of the economy. For his collaboration Bouthillier was sentenced to three years imprisonment after the war and later claimed in his memoirs that his motivation was to protect the French economy. René Belin, from the anti-communist right of the trades union movement, served the Vichy government as Minister for Production and Labour from July 1940 to February 1941 and as Secretary of State for Labour from then until April 1942. He favoured strict economic planning and, though he later maintained that he worked to protect them, the modernisation of trades unions. François Lehideux was Minister of Industrial Production under Darlan from July 1941 until April 1942. A technocrat with a background in heavy industry, he favoured a planned economy and, as head of the Commissariat responsible for infrastructure, he introduced a 10 year plan in 1942 which he hoped would increase production and close inefficient plants. He drafted a second economic plan in 1944, but neither was implemented. Jean Bichelonne

viewed it positively, the technocrats essentially ignored the introspective traditionalism of Vichy's rhetoric. They considered themselves to be forward looking and efficient administrators, working with the Germans to ensure the economic survival of France in the most difficult of circumstances. But the technocrats were also keen to seize the opportunity to force modernisation, efficient organisation and industrial expansion on what they considered to be a reluctant and backward economy. Their fantasy lay in the belief that they could achieve these reforms under German occupation, during a world war.

The question of state intervention also fractured the economic reform agenda at Vichy. Some bureaucrats pushed for the strongest economic management while others adopted a looser, *dirigiste* approach. Corporatist theorists who believed in a totally decentralised system resented any suggestion of state intervention or supervision, while the collaborationists called constantly for greater state regulation and centralisation in order to better serve the New Economic Order and Germany's military needs. Though its rhetoric promised self-regulation, in practice, Vichy's economic management fell somewhere between all these camps and, in the end, satisfied none: it was too piecemeal for the technocrats, too *étatist* for the corporatists, and too vapid for the collaborationist centralisers.

Pétain promised that his government would act immediately to set up a corporatist structure to encompass all the various trades and professions and would then step back from direct involvement in the running of the corporations' affairs to assume a role of arbitration and loose coordination. True to the first promise, on 16 August 1940, the government announced the creation of *comités d'organisation* to regulate each

was a technocrat whose outstanding academic abilities led him to serve several major industries and various governments before the defeat. He entered the Secretariat (later the Ministry) of Industrial Production under Vichy: he was Head of Technical Services from June 1940, Secretary General for Commerce and Industry from July 1940 to April 1942 and Minister of Industrial Production from November 1942 until his death in 1945. Bichelonne held enormous power through the allocation of raw materials to French industry and he played a key role in negotiating the use of French labour for German armaments production. In many ways Bichelonne symbolises the coexistence of modernising and traditionalist tendencies under Vichy. He never gave up his belief that he could modernise and rationalise the French economy under a German-dominated European Economic Order while still retaining the traditional structures and strong peasant roots of French society.

industrial or business sector. These committees were supposed to assess assets, plan production, allocate resources, fix prices and set the levels of profit for each sector. However, the government was unwilling and unable to allow the committees any real power or independence of action: both the *planisme* of the technocrats and German demands on raw materials worked against such freedoms. The state, not the industries themselves, determined the composition of the committees and government representatives were appointed to oversee all their decisions. Subsequent laws and new government agencies only strengthened bureaucratic controls as industry became increasingly centralised to suit the policy of collaboration. On 27 September, the government created a Ministry of Industrial Production and the technocrats who dominated it simply bypassed the *comités d'organisation* in the every day running of the economy and ignored corporatist aims in the development of their long term economic plans.

Vichy's attempt to introduce a corporate structure into the agricultural sector also failed, despite its central importance to Vichy's traditionalist aims and despite the broad acceptance of corporatism in rural communities. A law of 2 December 1940 established the principle of a *Corporation Paysanne* which would bring together in a national body peasant syndicates representing each of the 30,000 rural communes of France.⁵⁴ The Corporation was supposed to unite rural producers in a single organisation, give them independent and self-governing structures and ensure parity with industrial labour. However, Pierre Caziot, the Minister for Agriculture, had no sympathy for corporatism. He immediately began to undermine the reforms proposed by the dedicated corporatists who made up the national commission appointed to bring the Peasant Corporation to

⁵⁴ On the establishment and workings of the Peasant Corporation, see Isabel Boussard, *La corporation paysanne* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1980). René Rémond in the preface to Boussard points out that Vichy's corporatist policies reflected a certain social-Catholic, agrarian tradition in France and did not have to be imposed from above, and that they were not completely dismantled at the Liberation: *ibid.*, p. 12. Pierre Barral and Isabel Boussard, 'La politique agrarienne' in FNSP, *Le Gouvernement de Vichy*, pp. 211-44 remains valuable insight and includes testimony of prominent contemporaries. Louis Salleron, the corporatist theoretician, played a major role in drafting the legislation: for his ideas on the nature of the corporatist state see his *Un régime corporatif* and 'L'Ordre Corporatif', *Idées*, September, 1943, pp. 8-14 and October 1943, pp. 11-20.

fruition.⁵⁵ On 21 January 1941, Caziot appointed a provisional national organising committee which engaged in two years of fruitless debate and served mainly to reveal the increasing tensions within the administration.⁵⁶ When Max Bonnafous was appointed Minister for Agriculture in September 1942, he attempted to speed up the creation of the Corporation. However, when a permanent national body was finally established in 1943, it was not merely too late to make effective change, but the Corporation was undermined by the complete loss of rural sympathies.

The conditions of the Occupation undermined the success of the Peasant Corporation by turning rural sympathies towards resistance. Ever-increasing German requisitions and food shortages in the cities soon turned the Peasant Corporation into a state bureaucracy to control supply and prices. Local authorities and communities often refused to accept the changes to traditional structures and freedoms that this centralisation demanded. Requisitions and centralisation added to the general resentment, not only of the Germans who continued to hold so many young, agricultural labourers in prison camps, but also of the Corporation which failed to protect rural communities. The result was a widespread boycott or evasion of official controls which the government could do little to counteract. Where rural communities appeared to accept the Peasant Charter, it was because they could undermine or ignore it with relative impunity.⁵⁷

Though Vichy's failure to establish corporatist structures to regulate industry and agriculture can be blamed mainly on its internal divisions and its policy of collaboration

⁵⁵ Pierre Caziot, a long-time government advisor on agricultural matters and finance, was Minister for Agriculture from July 1940 to April 1942. He disagreed strongly with Salleron who felt forced to resign from the national commission. In particular, Caziot disliked the fact that the Peasant Corporation would include a number of permanent, elected trustees who would be independent of his control and he immediately reduced their powers. He also protected his own sphere of influence by allowing former agricultural organisations to continue operation and by refusing to make membership of the Corporation obligatory.

⁵⁶ Members of the organising committee made constant appeals to Pétain to arbitrate disputes with Caziot. Henri Dorgères, leader of the peasant fascist movement, *Défence Paysanne*, pushed constantly for recognition of his programme, based on the dynamism of his organisation and the fact that he had for fifteen years placed a 'ceinture verte' around the red centre of Paris. See Bousard, *Corporation paysanne*, p. 27; and Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism*, pp. 142-9.

⁵⁷ For the effects of government controls on a rural community and the workings of the Peasant Charter see, Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, pp. 109-18, 125-33. See also Jackson, *France*, p. 290-1.

with a rapacious regime, Vichy was also distracted by a propaganda war with its collaborationist opponents. Given that corporatism was a cornerstone of the National Revolution, this was an important battle and it forced the government to sink increasing resources into the promotion of the Corporation, rather than its function.⁵⁸ German occupation authorities disliked the Corporation, finding it insufficiently pro-collaborationist.⁵⁹ The collaborationist groups in Paris each set up alternative peasant organisations through which they hoped to gain control of the Corporation and they criticised the government for preserving the privilege of the old nobility and wealthy landowners and for excluding the peasantry and the *hommes nouveaux* of the new order.⁶⁰

Such criticisms struck home: the government did little to protect the interests of those whom it claimed were the moral and spiritual backbone, the *forces vives* of the national community—peasants, artisans and small business. Pétain also said that labour was ‘sacred’—the ‘supreme resource of the fatherland’—but collaboration, centralisation and *planisme* favoured big business interests and Vichy’s labour legislation mainly pursued old enemies on the left.⁶¹ Not surprisingly, but contrary to its rhetoric, Vichy was much more concerned with immediate economic management than with its ‘supreme goal’ of achieving social harmony and class conciliation. In attempting to set up corporatist structures in industry and agriculture, Vichy never solved the basic problem of representation. As a result, its aim of ending class conflict and creating social peace would not only be secondary, but impossible.

In November 1940, the government dissolved the national trade union and employer confederations (the CGT and the Confédération Générale du Patronat

⁵⁸ For Vichy’s promotion of its policy see the series, *Publications de l’Office Central d’Organisation Corporatif*. In this series Jean Daujat, *Principes du Régime Corporatif* (Le Mans: Editions CEP, n.d.) seeks to explain Vichy’s neo-corporatism.

⁵⁹ Boussard, *Corporation paysanne*, pp. 13, 72-6.

⁶⁰ The *Centre d’Action Paysanne* was an offshoot of Eugen Delonçe’s MSR and Marcel Déat, under the aegis of the RNP set up the *Centre Paysan* and constantly attacked the government in *L’Oeuvre* (see for example, ‘Une agriculture sans paysans’, 31 May 1941).

⁶¹ Pétain, speech of 11 July 1940. Pétain went on to say that he would not allow labour to be exploited and degraded by the ‘shady alliance’ of international capitalism and socialism; he obviously saw no need to protect it from employers.

Français), identifying them as the instruments of class conflict.⁶² Local unions were allowed to continue operation but, deprived of the right to organise strikes or lock-outs, they lost a great deal of their former power. Business interests, on the other hand, were enhanced under Vichy. When the government appointed the heads of the *comités d'organisation*, it chose exclusively from the business elite. So close was the co-operation and interchange between this group and the government bureaucracy that Jackson estimates that only 150 to 200 men ran the economy for the entirety of Vichy's existence.⁶³

Legislation to restructure the social organisation of trade and industry took a backseat to the control of production. Not until October 1941, fourteen months after the creation of the *comités d'organisation*, did the government finally promulgate its *Charte du Travail* which, it claimed, would guarantee social peace. The Labour Charter replaced the former trades' union and employer confederations with a single union and a corporatist structure. The delay in producing the Charter reflected the fundamental divisions between, on the one hand, traditional corporatists close to Pétain who favoured combined worker/employer bodies to represent each industry and, on the other, syndicalists such as René Belin who sought to preserve some form of independent labour organisation. The final legislation was a compromise favouring Pétain's group but which failed to satisfy either.

The Labour Charter was a long, rambling and ambiguous document. The corporatist structure that it proposed was so complicated that it was never fully realised.⁶⁴ The Charter divided the economic sector into 29 'professional families' and required each to set up a single union with representation at the local, regional and national level. Further, the Charter divided each professional family into five distinct categories (employers, engineers and managers, white collar workers, foremen and

⁶² The semi-official spokesmen for the National Revolution explained that it was the duty of both workers and employers to put an end to class egotism, struggle and the desire for revenge in order to achieve 'le travail dans l'ordre': J. Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale est un fait* (Amiens: Yvert & Cie, 1941), p. 130.

⁶³ Jackson, *France*, p. 164.

⁶⁴ Jacques Julliard, 'La charte du travail, in FNSP, *Le Gouvernement de Vichy*, pp. 157-210, p. 168.

manual workers) and required every category to form its own local, regional and national organisation. Finally, in every workplace of more than 100 workers, employers and all categories of workers had to co-operate in the formation of *comités sociaux*. The role of these committees was to put in place social and welfare programmes, including support for the unemployed, and to arbitrate agreements in matters of training, wages and manpower. Circumstance, especially German demand for labour, may have rendered the Charter totally irrelevant by 1943 but its ambitious and complicated nature meant that most of the structures it prescribed were never constituted, even though some groups worked on them until the end of the Occupation.

The Charter proclaimed that it abolished class struggle. However, it did not affect the functioning of the *comités d'organisation* which remained entirely responsible for economic and management issues and it allowed the government to dissolve any *comité social*. The Charter's reforms were therefore seen to be mere window dressing in the eyes of traditional corporatists and all but irrelevant to employers and workers.⁶⁵ The cumbersome structure of the Charter meant that it was generally ignored in the workplace which remained as divided as ever. The fact that the Charter specifically affirmed the authority of employers did not encourage change in their social relations with workers. Workers were granted valuable gains in the form of a guarantee of a minimum wage and of arbitration of disputes, but such guarantees were given in the hope that they would stop the spread of communism, preserve social peace and satisfy the German demand to avoid industrial unrest. Vichy's state paternalism in the form of encouragement of welfare relief and charity works could not hide the fact that the Charter was an attack on organised labour. Workers, who found themselves outnumbered in the structure of the *comités sociaux*, often boycotted elections and maintained old forms of union action.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁶⁶ Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p. 122-5. Gildea shows that unions remained more vital than previously thought and that old tensions between different organisations persisted under the Occupation.

Backward looking conservatism, slowness in introducing labour reforms and failure to realise its ambitious goal of class reconciliation left Vichy vulnerable to the united criticisms of collaborationists in Paris. Like the government, fascist romanticisers such as Alphonse de Châteaubriant assigned moral values to labour policy, but they did not look to a pre-industrial vision of artisanal and 'human' scale. Châteaubriant celebrated a modern era of great works—the building of autobahns and autostrade—and saw labour policy as a means of organising national energy into a collective act of will. Despite the war and the defeat, Châteaubriant thought that the French, an old people lacking dynamism, could benefit from the fascist mystique of great works and mass labour.⁶⁷

Other collaborationists took a more realistic view of the limits of labour reform and recognised that Vichy's failures were an inroad to power. Collaborationists from various backgrounds, right and left, and leagues of all sizes courted the urban worker, so neglected in Vichy's vision of the new order, with calls for improving conditions and for greater social security as well as revolutionary change.⁶⁸ The collaborationist press urged the government to provide for the basic needs of the ordinary worker and the unemployed. The MSR's paper, *Révolution Nationale*, harped again on the government's refusal to guarantee a basic wage or to lift the wage freeze imposed on the outbreak of war, despite the rising cost of living and the proliferation of the black market.⁶⁹ By mid-Occupation the paper proclaimed that without such controls, the government would never achieve the reconciliation it claimed to seek and would always remain complicit in the 'revenge of the patronat'.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Alphonse de Châteaubriant, 'La mystique des grands travaux', *La Gerbe*, 17 October 1940. See also in the same issue Robert-H. de Santares, 'De la valeur du travail'.

⁶⁸ Minor leagues such as those founded by Pierre Constantini condemned the Labour Charter for not being sufficiently socialist or communal or revolutionary enough to cope with the 'bouleversements actuels': see undated publication put out under the rubric of both Constantini's leagues, *La ligue française d'épuration et d'entr'aide sociale* and *Mouvement social européen*, 'Pour la libération des travailleurs français de l'esclavage du salaire'. Constantini called for the disappearance of capitalism and the proletariat, for the institution of a massive programme of public works and improvement in basic wages and conditions.

⁶⁹ Daniel Delacourt, 'Les Travailleurs français veulent "VIVRE"', *Révolution Nationale*, 11 January 1942.

⁷⁰ Pierre Mercier 'Collaboration ou lutte de classe?', *Révolution Nationale*, 13 May 1942.

The collaborationists kept alive a form of class rhetoric in their criticisms of the government's labour policy. Since the Labour Charter was fundamental to the new order, they were highly critical of Vichy's slowness in producing it and, when it was promulgated, they condemned its pro-*patronat* bias. In private, Doriot labeled the Charter as 'la dernière victoire capitaliste': it lacked a social dimension and relied on 'the good will of the bosses'.⁷¹ The Parisian press provided a constant reminder of the laborious processes involved in establishing the Charter's complicated structures. Papers aimed at a working class readership were especially keen to report the disappointment of collaborationist labour organisations in the Charter. Over several weeks in early 1943, the daily *Le Petit Parisien* surveyed pro-collaboration workers' representatives, all of whom commented unfavourably on the application of the Charter.⁷² Universally, they condemned the social committees which, they said, employers were attempting to dominate and they protested against the drawing up of the corporatist charters for each industry which they saw as a thinly disguised means of increasing paternalist control. The press reported the indignation of unions and workers who felt pressured by employers in the social committees, systematically ignored in the drawing up of the industry charters and generally deceived by the process of reform which was stripping them of rights without compensation.⁷³

Marcel Déat, with his wide influence in the press and in labour organisations, did a great deal to publicise hostility towards the Charter.⁷⁴ In late 1943, he was key in leading a press campaign in favour of strengthening trade unions and protecting their distinct and horizontal structures: he blamed reactionary forces at Vichy for destroying the accord which had existed amongst union leaders in favour of the Charter and for

⁷¹ See Barthélemy, *Du communisme au fascisme*, pp. 260, 282.

⁷² *Le Petit Parisien*, February-March 1943 in *Supplement to News Summary: Notes on the Application of the Labour Charter*, pp. 2-3, PRO FO 371/36017.

⁷³ *Au Travail*, 10 and 17 January 1942 in *ibid.*, p. 3. *Au Travail* also published a manifesto addressed to Pétain by labour organisations, outlining their disillusionment and their demands: 27 February 1943.

⁷⁴ Déat founded his own labour organisation, the *Front Social du Travail*, in early 1942 and, as well as relentlessly criticising Vichy's labour policy in *L'Œuvre*, he also wrote for *L'Atelier*, the paper of the *Centre Syndical de Propagande* which brought together several collaborationist trades organisations.

pushing workers into clandestine and resistant organisation.⁷⁵ When, in March 1944, Déat gained a position in government as Minister of Work and National Solidarity he attempted to make the Charter more syndicalist and promised to improve workers' wages and standard of living, but it was by then far too late for any effective reform. Given his unflinching support for supplying Germany with French labour, he never had any hope of winning the support of French workers. He championed conscription of youth in order to ensure equality of sacrifice between the working class and the bourgeoisie but such class rhetoric was truly hollow given the ravages of German requisitions and the STO and the approaching liberation of France.⁷⁶

* * *

Vichy established itself on a promise of a new order. The government drew on long standing fears of decadence and the uncertainty of France's future to win a large measure of support for the stability and renewal which its new order claimed to represent. The circumstances of the defeat gave it exceptional powers and an opportunity to institute far reaching reform. But, given the continuation of the war into 1941 and the nature of the Occupation, Vichy could not provide stability or renewal for France, nor maintain its popular support. In this sense, the new order rapidly became a false promise, an illusion of a natural or organic balance which was maintained only through government rhetoric.

The gap between the aims of the National Revolution and the realities of occupation and collaboration was often great, but it was never greater than in the instance of Vichy's highly ambitious goals for the new order: strong government, social cohesion, and economic peace. The reality gap was not the only reason for Vichy's failures. Vichy's order was fractured by its own internal division and contradictions: it

⁷⁵ *L'Œuvre*, 14, 14 October and 19 November 1943. The collaborationist press portrayed Lagardelle, whom Laval appointed as Minister for Labour in April 1942, in a favourable light and as the victim of reactionary forces in government. Lagardelle resigned in November 1943.

⁷⁶ *Review of the Foreign Press: Series F, no. 31 (17 April, 1944)*, p. 58, PRO FO 371/41861.

aimed to be strong but not statist; it was at once paternalist and *dirigiste*, hierarchical and decentralised; its rhetoric spoke of unity and peace but its actions were partisan, exclusive or repressive. The government presented its aims for new order as positive and constructive but the policies which flowed from them were neither. The new order was fundamentally negative: it was the antithesis of the old order and, as such, it demanded the pursuit and defeat of old enemies.

The concept of a new order promised to unite the various factions of collaboration: they agreed that a new order was vital for France and that all opponents were sources of 'disorder' that had to be eliminated. However, the new order also divided the collaborators more deeply than any other issue since it would determine France's political, social and economic power structures. Fundamental internal divisions meant that Vichy's reforms in these areas were slow to emerge and, once they finally did, they could be undermined at all levels of administration and in an alienated community. Collaborationists were always keen to exploit Vichy's failures in order to promote their own power: they sought to curry favour with the Germans and to impose their model of a modern, National Socialist France in the context of a Nazi new European order.

The fundamental mistake of all collaborators was to maintain the illusion of the new order beyond, at the very latest, the middle of 1941. By then, internal division and competition, the desire for revenge and the loss of popular support doomed the new order to failure. National strength, unity and well-being—the ideals of Vichy's new order—were impossible given the continuation of the war, the nature of German occupation and French collaboration.

Chapter 5

Action

Une force irrésistible se préparait, la force, la seule qui ait jamais été et qui sera
jamais, se reconstituait, la force vraie de l'esprit audacieux dans le corps courageux.
Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Notes pour comprendre le siècle*.

During the 1930s, France underwent a crisis in confidence. Many of its intellectuals believed that their nation lacked the force or vitality that was necessary to meet the challenges of the times. To them, France was sick, old and rapidly declining. By constantly probing the nation's maladies and deficiencies, those who declared France to be decadent sought little more than to reveal a fundamental void—a lack of national energy. This lack of energy, they claimed, was responsible for France's disunity and declining status as a great power. There was a simple remedy—'action'. Action was the force which would revitalise the nation.

The call to action resounded across the political spectrum in the years of crisis in the 1930s. Many of those who espoused action did not apparently feel obliged to put forward any concrete proposals as to what exactly should be done. Action was a 'password': it gave entry into a non decadent world; it allowed its proponents to distance themselves from the problem of national decline and thereby become part of the solution. Used synonymously with vitality, force, commitment and mobility, action took on some positive connotations. Essentially, however, it was a cry of impatience

and alarm, a warning of impending doom. The call to action was fundamentally negative and pessimistic, premised as it was on a belief that extraordinary measures were needed to ride the tidal wave of change that was about to sweep western civilisation. Such measures—whatever they might be—had to amount to more than mere renovation: they had to transform the nation and set it on a different course. Continuing on the same path was tantamount to doing nothing. Action was a catch cry which connoted a commitment to drastic and urgent change to the nation's political culture. The nature of that change was less important than change itself.

The call to action was an intellectual portmanteau. Yet it remains significant because of its appeal to the inter-war generation and as a measure of the sense of crisis and impotence. More importantly, as a call for violent change, action carried political and ideological meaning. The appeal of activism is important in gauging the appeal of fascism in France, in the relationship between the radical and the conservative right and, after the defeat, in tracing the nature, diversity and progress of collaboration. The language of activism accompanied the search for new solutions which inspired the phenomenon of dissidence from traditional parties and the nonconformist movement in the 1930s. At its greatest extreme, activism tended towards the idolisation of those individuals or movements which were thought to be the vanguards of change.

Many of the intellectual converts to fascism in the 1930s celebrated the dynamism which had apparently revitalised the national communities of Italy and Germany. This is not to say that all or even most of those who were attracted to activism in the 1930s became fascists or collaborationists. However, the mythology of action had a strong affinity with fascism and indeed at some point and for some individuals became inseparable from it. Fascism everywhere used action as a key tenet. In France the divisions and the attractions between the traditional right and the radical right were highlighted by their attitudes to activism. Under the Occupation, the call for action came to mean the demand for a greater commitment to collaboration and it was the primary barb with which the Parisian collaborationists pricked the Vichy bubble.

The Origins and Nature of Activism

The causes of pre-war activism were political more than ideological. By the 1930s, however, action was an intellectual ideal which owed its attraction and respectability to the anti-rationalist philosophies of Nietzsche, Sorel, Péguy and Bergson. Although ideological and political developments abroad added to its appeal, the mythology of activism was not merely a foreign import to France. The radicalisation of the right, the growth of non-conformism, the processes of fascisation and the development of collaboration had a context which was specifically French. Nevertheless, the question of how far into French history one needs to probe in order to understand the development of fascism in France remains a taxing one, as does the question of the balance between ideological and political influences.

From the turn of the century, a mythology of activism animated French philosophical and literary thought and found a particular generational resonance. Late nineteenth century Social Darwinism had justified the active pursuit of goals and, for the young, a struggle against limitations. But the generation which reached intellectual maturity in the first decade of the twentieth century was distinguished from its immediate predecessor by the prospect of war. For some intellectual historians this generational rift, which was most pronounced in France, accounts for the younger generation's greater 'impatience':

it was looking for something more arresting and dogmatic than its seniors had provided ...
The younger men were no longer satisfied with the urbane detachment of their elders.
Everywhere they were in search of an ideal and a faith.¹

The ideal was action itself. The anti-rationalist philosophies of Nietzsche, Sorel, Péguy and Bergson greatly influenced the intellectual, artistic and literary movements of the day, though in popular, political terms their ideas were often distorted, adopted selectively and exploited in contradiction to their original intentions. Nietzsche's ideas, amongst the most abused in political terms, had a profound impact on French literature

¹ H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930*, revised edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 338-9.

and philosophy. The French Nietzscheans' rejection of reason and celebration of irrationalism elevated instinct and intuition to be sufficient justification of action. Nietzsche's 'supermen' were free of inhibition and willing to use violence or the 'will to power' in order to compete in a purifying struggle which was 'beyond good and evil'.

Other philosophies also appealed to the irrational and the emotional to justify action. In 1908, Georges Sorel in his *Reflections on Violence*, associated violence with purity and advocated the creation of historical myths or heroic values in order to move the masses to action. The heroic struggle, rather than any utopia at the end of it, was the true goal: myth, or the ideal of pure movement, was Sorel's basis for social unity. From a totally different philosophical standpoint, Charles Péguy showed a similar impatience with intellectualism and with political elites: he opposed bourgeois mediocrity with the positive virtue and life giving force of barbarism. Henri Bergson exalted intuition and *élan vital* and was interpreted by some as sanctioning direct political action. Through such philosophies irrationalism and anti-rationalism gained intellectual respectability: spontaneous action was said to be creative, renewing and life giving; action was not only physically liberating, but also spiritually uplifting.

Politically, these ideas proved attractive to the new right, both before and immediately after the First World War, but it is difficult to find in them a consistent fascist or proto-fascist political philosophy, particularly since they were so often based on distortions. Rather, they helped to create an aesthetic of activism which influenced the literary and political avant-garde. Nietzsche's ideas on amorality inspired André Gide, the most celebrated post-war literary figure, and Bergson's exaltation of intuition and *élan vital* inspired Proust. However, it was not until the 1930s that the mythology of action flowered in what one historian has called 'the literature of the concrete'.² The literary focus moved away from an introspective or personal perspective to external reality and human contact with it. This shift was based on a conviction that true understanding came only from the act of doing, from direct experience or 'concrete'

² James D. Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), Introduction: The Origins of the Intellectual Resistance, especially pp. 11-16.

knowledge. Many novelists, with both left and right leanings, showed impatience and frustration with the mundane and the ordinary and instead described the experience and knowledge gained through unusual and challenging situations. Thierry Maulnier, the literary and political commentator of the right, identified this trend as a new 'literature of action'. Maulnier saw in such literature, a return to heroism but where the hero was no longer distinguished by greatness, courage or rationality but by violence, by his indifference to happiness and by his lucidity in the face of concrete problems:

On nous présente enfin des hommes pour qui des problèmes se posent et doivent être résolus, des hommes pour qui les mots de danger, de souffrance, d'amour, de mort, ont leur sens rude et direct, leur sens vital. On s'aperçoit que l'homme n'est l'homme qu'au contact du monde. Et, sans doute pour que la réaction soit plus nette contre une littérature toute intellectuelle et factice, on cherche à le peindre non pas dans les circonstances d'une vie seulement normale, mais dans une vie anormale par la victoire des oscillations, la rudesse de l'aventure, la proche menace de la fatalité: on nous dépeint des hommes d'action.³

For many young intellectuals of the right in the 1930s, there was a close relationship between literature and politics: politics became aestheticised and culture became a model for politics.⁴ Their writing reflected the immediate, political causes of activism—the impatience and frustration which bubbled below the surface of French political life. France had been relatively strong in the 1920s: on the domestic front, France enjoyed political stability, industrial recovery, full employment, financial prosperity and, at the end of the decade, looked well placed to escape the worst effects of the Wall Street crash and the ensuing depression; the international front, where France was a major player throughout the 1920s, bore the promise of increasing peace and stability. A sense of disappointment, rather than ideological fervour, met the new decade which brought an end to post-war prosperity, rapidly evaporating international

³ Thierry Maulnier, 'La vie des idées: retour à l'héroïsme?', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LII: 21 (January-March 1933), pp. 361-5, p. 361. Maulnier mentions in particular Saint-Exupéry's *Vol de Nuit* and André Malraux's *La Condition Humaine*.

⁴ David Carroll, in his treatment of Robert Brasillach's increasing aesthetic appreciation of Nazism, contends not only that literature was inseparable from politics in the 1930s, but that fascist intellectuals such as Brasillach wanted their work to represent a concrete truth. *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 101-2.

security and a perceived failure of 'old' political forms.⁵ In all spheres of power, France seemed to be suffering paralysis in the 1930s. The contrast to France's apparent power and well-being in the 1920s, the prolongation of the economic, social, political and international crises in the 1930s and the growth of Nazi Germany fed a sense of impotence. For the right, any resurgence on the left sparked a new crisis. Activism in France was a response to perceived powerlessness.

Activism took two different, but not totally exclusive, forms: one was based on commitment, the other on refusal. Protagonists who sought commitment often looked to group or collectivist action. Enthusiasm and élan fired the group. This brand of activism was more populist, tended towards irrationalism and was based on blind faith; faith in the leader, the group or in a concept of a group such as youth. This was activism as permanent mobilisation. The league movements and those who sought a charismatic leader were driven by commitment to action or by the desire to commit. Such a dynamic form of activism was bound to find frustration and tension under the occupation and Vichy regimes. But activism was also inspired by refusal. Refusal meant opposition to and rejection of current political options, though, paradoxically, those who refused claimed that they were seeking commitment. Constant searching made them active. Their opposition was often expressed as a philosophical or spiritual position, an ill-defined objection to the epoch in general and a search for purity. Refusal of traditional options was sometimes partial, such as in the phenomenon of political dissidence, and sometimes resulted in total rejection of the 'old' and a commitment to the 'new'—fascism.⁶ However, in France, where no single fascist leader emerged, refusal remained, even under the occupation, a powerful aesthetic and intellectual pursuit; it was an activism without action and without end.

⁵ In his study of non-conformism, Jean-Louis Loubet Del Bayle sees its development purely as a result of the end of the relative prosperity, stability and security of the 1920s: *Les non-conformistes des années 30: une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969).

⁶ See Philippe Burrin, *La Dérive Fasciste*, p. 451.

Activism and Commitment: the Leagues and Fascism

Though historians continue to argue over a generally accepted definition of fascism, activism is one of the essential characteristics on which all can agree: fascist movements everywhere defined themselves by their dynamic posture.⁷ Yet this raises problems in the context of a broad examination of inter-war political culture and in particular for historians of fascism in France. Many of the extra-parliamentary leagues and the new parties which they spawned in the late 1930s claimed to be dynamic, not only to put themselves forward as an adequate counter to the left, but also in order to distinguish themselves from old-fashioned conservatives: they espoused revolutionary social change whereas conservatives, they said, stood for the status quo; they were willing and able to mobilise the masses, which conservatives shunned; and, unlike conservatives, they were prepared to use paramilitary force and the tactics of the street to defeat Marxism on its own ground. In the 'blocked' political culture of the inter-war years, some leagues gained mass followings, largely through their claim to action. Significantly, they drew most of their membership from the conservative right, showing that activism had a wide appeal amongst conservatives. Many leagues imitated or showed admiration for the fascist regimes, but at the same time they proclaimed that they were not fascist.

The question of the political nature of the leagues has opened a lively debate amongst historians of fascism in France.⁸ Which, if any, of the leagues were fascist? If the largest are found to be fascist or not fascist, then certain conclusions concerning the depth of fascist penetration into French political culture must follow. Furthermore, the question of the relationship between the radical and conservative right affects the nature of fascism in France. The majority of French historians argue that most of the leagues were not fascist and, in particular, deny that the largest, the *Croix de Feu*, was fascist.⁹

⁷ Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 19-20.

⁸ The debate is clearly summarised by Soucy, *ibid.*, pp. 1-25.

⁹ In the debate of the early 1980s on the nature and extent of fascism in France, most French historians have not differed significantly from the first assessment of René Rémond, who, in line with his position that fascism achieved only minimal penetration, argues that the largest leagues were not fascist: Rémond, *Les droites en France*; Michel Winock, 'Fascisme à la française ou fascisme introuvable?', *Le Débat*, no. 25 (May 1983), pp. 35-44; S. Berstein 'La France des années trente

They categorise the *Croix de Feu* as a form of authoritarian conservatism—part of a Bonapartist tradition with roots deep in French history. Prominent in their reasoning is the fact that the activist rhetoric of the leagues seldom translated into reality: the leagues were not, therefore, intrinsically totalitarian or subversive of democracy. Some historians explain the association of the traditional right with the leagues as a temporary, tactical, and therefore weak, alliance. The logical consequence of such a line of argument is that fascism was never more than a minor or insignificant phenomenon in France, with little appeal to mainstream conservatism.

Other historians present a case for a deeper penetration of fascism in French political culture between the wars. In his two volume examination of fascism in France, Robert Soucy puts forward persuasive arguments for two ‘waves’ of fascism and he clearly classifies the largest league movements of the 1930s, the *Solidarité Française* and the *Croix de Feu*, among the second wave of fascisms.¹⁰ Soucy puts paid to any

allergique au fascisme: A propos d'un livre de Zeev Sternhell' *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 2 (April 1984), pp. 83-94. Michel Winock argues that the CF was too socially and politically conservative to be labelled fascist and sees it as a force against the growth of fascism. Pierre Milza, who describes a more significant ‘fascist impregnation’ in France, also argues that the CF was not fascist: *Fascisme français*, pp. 114-220 and ‘L’ultra-droite des années trente’ in Winock, *Histoire de l’extrême droite*, pp. 157-87. Jacques Nobecourt, in his study of the league’s leader, argues that the CF was not fascist, indeed was not even subversive to democracy, but that it served to lessen the attraction of fascism in France through La Rocque’s denial of fascism and his emphasis on social and civic responsibility: *Le Colonel de La Rocque 1885-1946, ou les pièges du nationalisme chrétien* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

¹⁰ Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, chapters 3 and 4, pp. 59-103, 104-203. Though the fascism of the SF is less often disputed than that of the CF, Soucy argues the case for both, based on their paramilitarism, anti-Marxism, anti-Liberalism and anti-Semitism, their authoritarianism, right wing nationalism, exploitation of the veterans’ mystique and their praise of fascism in Italy and Germany. See also Soucy’s earlier article ‘French Fascism and the Croix de Feu: a dissenting interpretation’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 26 (1991), pp. 159-88. William D. Irvine’s assessment of the CF as fascist is based on its brand of anti-Marxism and its methods of mobilisation and politics: see his ‘Fascism in France and the Strange case of the Croix de Feu’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 63 (June 1991), pp. 271-95. Kevin Passmore argues that historians have underestimated the populism and overestimated the conservatism of the CF/PSF and that the CF was fascist, above all because of its paramilitarist attacks on the right and left: Passmore, *From Liberalism to Fascism*. Passmore’s judgement on the fascism of the CF is further enlightened by his argument that the fascist nature of the organisation was not fixed but reacted to external pressures: see his earlier article, ‘The Croix de Feu: Bonapartism, National Populism or Fascism’, *French History*, vol. 9:1 (1995), pp. 67-92. In this article Passmore lays out his argument that the CF’s combination of radical populism, reaction and force made its members fascist ‘at least in 1934 to 1936’ but that its gradual abandonment of paramilitarism meant that it was not ‘intrinsically fascist’; it operated back and forth across the fascist/non-fascist ‘boundary’. See also Passmore’s “‘Boyscouting for Grown-Ups?’ Paramilitarism in the Croix de Feu and PSF’, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 19 (1995), pp. 527-57. For an assessment of Soucy’s and Passmore’s arguments concerning fascism and the CF see Robert D. Zaretsky, ‘Neither Left, nor Right, nor Straight Ahead: Recent Books on Fascism in France’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73 (March 2001), pp. 118-132.

argument that their mere denial of fascism is sufficient to deny the fascist label. He is most convincing in showing why the leagues denied that they were fascist: like fascist movements elsewhere, they were willing to make compromises and play a 'double game', even if it meant adopting a democratic mantle, in order to prosper; there were sound political and nationalist reasons for attempting to distinguish themselves from foreign imitation; failure to do so had cost past movements their support; and such declarations were necessary to reassure their conservative supporters who had witnessed the repression which followed fascist success in Germany. Soucy is therefore amongst those who argue a fluid relationship between conventional conservatism and the radical right, one which became especially close in times of crisis.

William D. Irvine has also revealed the close and mutually beneficial relationship between the parliamentary right and the major leagues: the leagues derived finance, leadership and legitimacy from the support of the parliamentary right which in turn benefited from the revolutionary dynamism and the anti-Marxism of the leagues.¹¹ The dissolution of the leagues in 1936 and their transformation into political parties led to some competition for membership and dominance with right wing parties, but the league/parties continued to define their position relative to conservative rivals by their claim to dynamism. Conservative groupings also continued to flirt with the notion of direct action against communism.¹² Activism must therefore be considered to be at the heart of the relationship between traditional conservatives and the radical right.¹³

¹¹ In his article, 'French Conservatives and the "New Right"' and in his book, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, Irvine describes a 'symbiotic' relationship between the Leagues and the parliamentary right, showing that many conservative deputies belonged simultaneously to the Republican Federation and one of the major extra-parliamentary leagues. Even the largest leagues were heavily dependent on the conservative right for finance: the CF received financial backing from aristocratic and establishment figures, large companies, banks and the government under Pierre Laval and André Tardieu. Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 123-8.

¹² Jean le Cour Grandmaison, parliamentary deputy and vice-president of the *Fédération Nationale Catholique*, said, in his concluding speech to the FNC conference of October 1936, that Catholics should be prepared to fight in the streets against Communism (and added that General de Castelnau was giving advice on this). *Fédération Nationale Catholique, Objectifs 1936-7: La Lutte contre le Communisme; L'Ordre Corporatif*, (Paris: Fédération Nationale Catholique, 1936).

¹³ Passmore argues that the links between the conservative right and the leagues were not merely tactical but intrinsic to the populist/fascist nature of the leagues: the radical activism of the leagues was based on their belief that traditional conservatism had failed and that they formed the new elite: 'The Croix de Feu', pp. 91-2.

Indeed, Soucy goes so far as to conclude that 'for many rightists, fascism was simply a more dynamic form of conservatism'.¹⁴

Activism was at the core of the complex and fluid relationship between the conservative and radical right. This can be seen in the history of the league movement between the wars. The first leagues of the 1920s grew out of strong anti-Communism and anti-parliamentism, but they were fired by frustration and disillusionment with existing party structures and leagues such as the *Action Française* and by a desire to harness the power of veterans' organisations. There were limits to the support for the early leagues since they found it difficult to mobilise the middle class to which they appealed: direct action was still seen to be the domain of the extreme left. They also suffered severely if found to be too closely tied to any 'foreign import'. In general, the conservative right felt no great threat from Italian fascism—indeed, there was some admiration for Italy's new-found unity and energy—but any direct influence or financial aid from the Italian fascists overstepped nationalist boundaries and their revelation cost the leagues support. Perhaps most significantly, support for the early league movement petered out with the defeat of the left wing government (the *Cartel des Gauches*) in 1926 and with the economic prosperity of the late 1920s.¹⁵

Economic collapse, parliamentary chaos and the apparent impossibility of internal reform, as well as the success of fascism elsewhere, revived the leagues in the early 1930s. The sense of crisis made these leagues more willing and able to exploit the mystique of activism. *Solidarité Française*, the most successful movement in the early part of the decade, did not shrink from violence. While professing its non-fascism, members of the *Solidarité Française* gave the fascist salute, its paramilitary shock troops dressed in fascist garb, fought street battles with left wing groups and played a major role in the fighting outside the National Assembly on 6 February 1934. However,

¹⁴ Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, p. 20. Activism in the form of paramilitarism figures large in Soucy's fascist classification and a pivotal aspect of his argument is to show how this was transformed but not subsumed after the banning of paramilitary formations in 1936.

¹⁵ For further reasons for the failure of the 'first wave' of fascism in France (1924-33), see Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave*, especially pp. 217-32, 288.

though the leagues increased in membership and achieved a wide readership of their newspapers, they still could not mobilise anywhere near the same level of support as the fascist parties of neighbouring countries.¹⁶ The leagues of the 1930s still had a difficult course to steer between their professed patriotism and too close an association with foreigners. French conservatives also recoiled from the Nazi state's use of violence. The direction of the leagues became even more tortuous after the Popular Front government banned paramilitary formations in 1936 and the leagues were forced to tack between active anti-parliamentism and legality.

The path between activism and these constraints on league support was best followed by the second largest league prior to the February 1934 riots, the *Croix de Feu*. The *Croix de Feu*'s leader, Colonel François de La Rocque, mobilised his militants for the demonstration but held them back from the fray in front of the Chamber of Deputies. It was military discipline, La Rocque said, which prevented his troops from joining the violence. His primary concern, he claimed later, was 'never to mistake agitation for action':

Je me suis toujours refusé à engager les Croix-de-Feu dans des manifestations bruyantes, dépourvues d'objet immédiat et précis.

L'agitation est négative. Elle peut être un expédient, jamais une méthode. Sa place est à l'antichambre des événements.¹⁷

As a result, the *Croix de Feu* benefited most from the February riots. The league managed to be both reassuring to conservatives who feared mob violence and to be active enough to attract those who wanted a more immediate and radical solution to the threat from the left. The *Croix de Feu* absorbed much of the membership of the

¹⁶ Estimates of league membership vary greatly. Soucy uses police and parliamentary reports to calculate his estimate of support for *SF*, the largest league in 1934: membership 180,000; newspaper circulation 50,000; 2,000-3,000 militants, mainly in Paris; Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, p. 37. Zeev Sternhell claims that the gap between the power of attraction and the inability to mobilise their sympathisers, was a basic feature of French fascism: 'Strands of French Fascism', in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet and Jan Petter Myklebust (eds), *Who were the Fascists? Social roots of European Fascism* (Oslo, 1980), p. 490.

¹⁷ La Rocque, *Service Publique*, pp. 87, 88, 90.

Solidarité Française which declined due to financial and leadership problems.¹⁸ Yet even though La Rocque disliked the excitable mob, he did most of all the league leaders to engineer an aura of dynamism for his movement. La Rocque rejected the paramilitary paraphernalia of the more overtly fascist leagues but, even without the uniforms, the *Croix de Feu* exploited a mystique of military power and suggested a potential for explosive force. The *Croix de Feu*'s paramilitary force—the *dispos* or 'available'—were trained for immediate action. La Rocque organised rallies all over the country and called 'spontaneous' mass gatherings at distant locations to which the faithful would speed by car and on which he would swoop by aeroplane. His speeches constantly referred to the 'D day' or 'H hour' when his troops would respond to his order with disciplined efficiency.

La Rocque never gave the order to act: despite his warnings and exercises, he knew that the *Croix de Feu* did not have the power to stage a coup, even before the forces of the left became aligned with those of the state in the Popular Front. But even after the Popular Front government banned the *Croix de Feu* as a paramilitary movement and the league transformed itself into a political party (the PSF), La Rocque continued to use the language of revolutionary change and to attract members at the expense of conservative parties on the right.¹⁹ The inaction of the CF/PSF led a small number of the most radical elements to leave the movement and criticise it openly for its

¹⁸ Membership of the CF expanded fourteenfold in the two years following the riots: Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, p. 108. Soucy points out that the peak membership of the CF/PSF in 1938 of between 700,000 and 1.2 million was seven to ten times its closest rival on the right (the PPF) and, even at its smallest estimate, larger than the membership of the Communist and Socialist parties combined (though it must be said that the left could draw on wider active support than its party membership would indicate): pp. 38, 114.

¹⁹ See Robert Soucy, 'France: veterans' politics between the wars' in Stephen R. Ward, *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 89. Soucy claims that the CF's 'democratic' conversion was in name only and its basic policy was no more moderate, a sham that was discernible at the time but totally revealed after 1940 when La Rocque lost no time in throwing off the democratic mantle, praising the vitality of the fascist regimes and calling for the harshest punishment, not only for Communists but for all those leaders of the Republic who were responsible for the defeat: see *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, Chapter 4, especially pp. 112-13, 116-17, 144-6. The greatest increase in the membership of the CF came after the election of the Popular Front in May 1936 and it surged again after the league was banned and became the PSF. The league and the PSF drew many members from the parliamentary right, the prospect of electoral competition eventually leading more democratic parties such as the *Fédération Républicaine* to fear for its own decline.

failures. Lucien Rebatet, who claimed after the defeat of 1940 that his disaffection with the *Action Française* began in February 1934, condemned La Rocque with all leaders of the leagues as 'writers', impotent without their pens, too old to act, yet jealously guarding their ideas against any who might try to put them into action:

La Rocque, ou des écrivains, des théoriciens lucides mais trop vieux, qu'on eût désarmés parfaitement en leur ôtant leur encrier, prônant la supériorité de l'action en soi, mais incapables de lui assigner dans le concret le plus modeste objectif, de lui donner une ébauche de forme, écartant ombrageusement enfin les disciples ardents suspects de vouloir 'agir' leurs idées.²⁰

The party which took up the flag for revolutionary action was Jacques Doriot's *Parti Populaire Français* (PPF). Most French historians agree that the PPF was fascist, though its programme was little different to that of the PSF.²¹ The PPF was formed in June 1936, after Doriot (already a renegade from the Communist Party) was offered finance by the reactionary general manager of the *Banque Worms* who was looking for a 'man of the people' on the right to counteract the mass appeal of the Popular Front.²² Doriot's anti-communism seemed all the more effective for being based on an insider's knowledge. His reputation for putting ideas into action quickly won support from those seeking a tougher approach to the Red threat, from disillusioned members of the *Croix de Feu* / PSF and several prominent intellectuals.²³

²⁰ Rebatet, *Décombres*, p. 30. Despite his claims of disillusionment, Rebatet wrote for the *Action Française* throughout the 1930s and he did not voice any criticisms of Maurras's inaction in 1934 until after the defeat. Aron's assessment of La Rocque is probably more accurate: 'Ce que l'on regrette, c'est qu'il n'ait pas de nécessités profondes et que malgré cela il agisse'. Robert Aron, *Dictature de la Liberté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 226.

²¹ Irvine, 'Fascism in France', pp. 228-93.

²² The PPF soon received funds from wider French business and corporate interests, as well as some from Italy: Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 223-30.

²³ Despite the defection of some members of the PSF, the PPF never achieved the same level of support. Doriot, in his transition to the right, carried with him some ex-communists but he soon lost his attraction to the left and, in order to survive, the PPF had to court the middle-class and peasant vote. Prominent intellectuals who joined the PPF were: Bertrand de Jouvenel (political analyst), Alfred Fabre-Luce (writer and political commentator), Abel Bonnard (poet, novelist and member of the *Académie Française*), Raymon Fernandez (novelist) and Drieu La Rochelle (novelist and fascist convert). Estimates of PPF membership lie somewhere between 60,000 in 1937 and 100,000 at its peak in 1938: the circulation of the party's newspapers, *L'Emancipation Nationale* and *La Liberté*, indicate a possible 300,000 'sympathisers'. See: Brunet, *Jacques Doriot*; Philippe Burrin, *La dérive fasciste* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); Soucy summarises the membership debate in *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, pp. 237-45.

Doriot always portrayed himself as a man of action. He was convinced from the beginning that the success of the PPF would depend on his will to act, since action, he said, was the ultimate unifying force.²⁴ The PPF was initially less militarised than other fascist movements but it always had a violent, street brawling and shady element. The league cultivated a reputation for effective use of force in 'legitimate' defence, a reputation enhanced by its success at countering communist attacks on its meetings. PPF shock troops also charged around the country on mobilisation exercises, much in the style of the *Croix de Feu*. But Doriot sought to distinguish his organisation from other leagues by his stated dedication to revolutionary action. To his close associates, he denied that the *Croix de Feu* was fascist because La Rocque stood for order and 'le fascisme n'est pas l'ordre, en tout cas pas seulement l'ordre, le fascisme c'est d'abord une révolution'.²⁵ Though Doriot publicly rejected the fascist label, he shamelessly imitated and adapted fascist symbols and practices: the salute, uniforms, a flag and the stylistic staging of meetings. He aimed to channel the energy of the masses and focus it on himself, the revolutionary leader or *chef* and he always played to his reputation for physical power, energy and courage.

It was Doriot the man of action, rather than the programme of the PPF or the promise of a fascist state, who attracted one of the most prominent fascist intellectuals of the day, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. Drieu declared and explained his dedication to fascism in 1934 in his book, *Socialisme Fasciste*. Quoting Nietzsche, Drieu claimed that life was given meaning only through passion and movement.²⁶ He did not trust any state to preserve this passion as the state was a hindrance to natural dynamism: even in a state as forceful as Nazi Germany he could see a tendency towards self preservation and inertia.²⁷ Drieu was searching for the leader who could combine thought and action,

²⁴ Gilbert D. Allardyce, 'The political transformation of Jacques Doriot', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 1:1 (1966), pp. 56-74. Jacques Doriot, *Refaire la France* (Paris: Grasset, 1938).

²⁵ Victor Barthélemy, *Du Communisme au Fascisme: L'Histoire d'un engagement politique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), p. 103. Barthélemy remained at Jacques Doriot's side as he moved from communism to fascism and founded the PPF and he became one of the directors of the league.

²⁶ Drieu La Rochelle, *Socialisme Fasciste*, pp. 70-1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

who would inspire faith, the *chef* who would lead the constant fight that he saw as the essence of fascism.²⁸ He declared: 'Nous battons contre tout le monde. C'est cela, le fascisme'.²⁹

In 1936 Drieu thought that he had at last found in Doriot the spirit of combat that he had admired in fascism. For Drieu, Doriot embodied action and speed, vitality, health, strength and stamina, as can be seen in his rather ludicrous description of him:

Doriot est grand, gros et fort; il sue beaucoup. Il a des lunettes, ce qui est regrettable, mais quand il les retire on voit qu'il sait regarder. Il a beaucoup de cheveux, il est au milieu d'une substance abondante et forte. Il a de la santé. Ça se voit quand il pense à haute voix pendant trois heures de suite et qu'à la fin, c'est mieux qu'au commencement.³⁰

Doriot represented the 'masculine' forces of virility and discipline that Drieu thought France lacked. Opposed to them was 'feminine' idealism which, by separating words from action, made them useless, like 'uprooted plants'.³¹

Drieu's admiration of Doriot did not last long. His disillusionment with the man was complete by the end of 1938 and he resigned from the party in January of the following year. Like several other intellectuals who left the party after Munich, Drieu criticised Doriot for accepting an agreement which weakened France and for not taking a firm stand against Hitler. However, it was not any single policy that led Drieu to resign. Leadership squabbles and the loss of financial backing made the PPF look less and less healthy. But most of all, Doriot had not lived up to the 'spirit' that Drieu had so admired in him. The Popular Front had been dismantled from within; it had not been destroyed in combat. Though in 1937 Drieu could accept the man of action wore spectacles, by 1939 he could no longer tolerate his increasing corpulence, the outward sign of his loss of vitality. Drieu wrote in his letter of resignation: 'Vous nous avez

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 127, 130-1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

³⁰ Drieu La Rochelle, *Avec Doriot*, pp. 7-8, p. 20.

³¹ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Notes pour comprendre le siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941), pp. 85-6. Drieu explored the forces represented by a virile elite in his novels, particularly *Gilles* published in 1939.

trompés, vous n'avez pas voulu sauver la France ... vous [nous] avez laissés sous l'accablement du doute et de l'ironie.³² Doriot's words had found no roots in action.

On the eve of the war, the PPF, like most of the radical right, was disorganised and depleted: it took the defeat to revive it. There remained, however, a group of rogue fascist intellectuals whose glorification of action was not muted by any dependence on popular support or finance. For them, action remained an important element of the fascist aesthetic. Though they did not tie themselves to any one league or party, literary figures and intellectuals such as Alphonse de Châteaubriant and Robert Brasillach had been increasingly drawn to the energy of fascism in its struggle with the great problems of the day. Both men were attracted above all to what they saw as the health and vitality of Hitler's regime. Though Brasillach still held reservations about some of Nazism's solutions—its statism, mass politics, capitalism and aggressive nationalism—and though his own patriotism meant he did not hesitate to enlist on the outbreak of war, he was besotted by the romantic youthfulness of fascism. Brasillach thought that fascism had found a way of tapping the eternal spring of youthful idealism: 'le fascisme, c'est le désintéressement', he declared.³³ Youthful energy was a simple, uncomplicated form of action based on faith and confidence. It produced the courage and heroism which, he thought, accounted for the success of the fascist regimes and the demise of France.

The writer who took the aesthetic of fascist activism furthest was Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Céline incorporated his politics into the structure of his prose: violent and street wise, his literary works and anti-Semitic diatribes conveyed a primitive, revolutionary energy. The passion and emotion of his language was, for him, the spontaneity and primordial creativity of man, uncorrupted by reason and 'Jewishness'.³⁴

Drieu La Rochelle's memories of the Great War, gave him a more sober and realistic view of the human cost of war. But when war broke out in 1939, Drieu's social

³² Drieu quoted in Desanti, *Drieu La Rochelle*, p. 338.

³³ Brasillach in the review, 1935, quoted by J. Plumyene & R. Lasierra, *Les fascismes français, 1923-63* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963), p. 101.

³⁴ See Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*, chapter 7, 'Literary Anti-Semitism: The Poetics of Race in Drumont and Céline', pp. 171-95, especially, 'Style and Race', pp. 180-6.

Darwinian view of human development led him to support it as a necessary display of violence and primitive instinct. After toying with the idea of leaving France after the defeat, he decided that he could not bear the horror of not being able to act: action was for him 'therapeutic'.³⁵ Perhaps even more so, it was an addiction.

Activism and Refusal: Dissidence, Nonconformism and Fascism

Dissidence, the rejection of or unrest within the structures of the traditional political parties, became a phenomenon of the 1930s: it was the result of a general sense of frustration and a desire to do things differently. However, protagonists perceived their dissidence in the most positive terms; they felt themselves animated by a new vitality that could reinvigorate their parties, engage the people and renovate society; they thought that they were pursuing national inspiration, fervour and unity.³⁶ Such activism swept across the whole political spectrum: the Neo-Socialists, Young Turks within the Radical Party and defectors from the Communist Party thus shared something in common with the dissidents from the *Action Française* and the members of extra-parliamentary leagues. But the question of whether or not they shared something in common with fascism has been the topic of much debate.³⁷ A degree of 'fascist temptation' is undeniable in the France of the 1930s, but often the most important element of that temptation was envy of the successes of fascism in neighbouring regimes, rather than the desire for fascism itself. The desire to activate their party and

³⁵ Robert Soucy, *Fascism in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 290. See also his 'French Fascist Intellectuals in the 1930s: An Old New Left?', *French Historical Studies*, vol. VIII: 3 (Spring 1974), pp. 445-58.

³⁶ Thus, Marcel Déat, who with his fellow Neo-Socialists shocked the 1933 Socialist Party convention by his criticism of republican values, declared that he wanted to restore a sense of mission to France. He later wrote that 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' had lost their 'chaleur primitive': see his *Perspectives françaises* (Paris: Editions de l'Œuvre, no date (articles July-September 1940)).

³⁷ Philippe Burrin, *La Dérive Fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery 1933-1945* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986) is the most impressive study of the causes of 'left wing fascism'. Burrin is careful to point out that the 'phenomenon' of defection of prominent left wing figures to fascism described only a very small minority, that such defections occurred in exceptional circumstances and that each case was particular; they do not prove a link between fascism and socialism/communism as Sternhell has argued. See in particular, p. 451. Pierre Milza also deals with the apparent fascistisation of society in his *Fascisme Français: Passé et Présent* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), pp. 179-220. Milza argues that, rather than fascism 'infecting' the left, fascism was itself part of a general trend of social and political renovation and that left wing renovators were by no means destined to become fascist (p. 180). For the phenomenon of dissidence see also Loubet Del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes*.

society, as fascism apparently had done elsewhere, bound the dissidents together. But when political and philosophical allegiances were put to the test—and the test came at different times and over different issues—most dissidents retreated to their old political structures. Very few of those who sought a more energetic approach to France's problems embraced fascism as the solution.

Intellectual dissidence on the right was most animated in the loose nonconformist groupings of the early 1930s. Their slogan of *ni droite, ni gauche* promised a new and different opportunity for political action which would transcend sterile party division.³⁸ The nonconformists were young intellectuals, born for the most part after the turn of the century. Collectively they appeared to introduce a degree of youthful energy into the French political and ideological scene, an openness towards change and a willingness to construct a new society. The various nonconformist groups were not, however, united by any consistent philosophy beyond opposition to the epoch and only a thread of spiritualism offered any positive unifying force. Even though they were attracted to the possibility of a new direction, they were divided by differing ideological and political beliefs. Indeed, the increasing polarisation of political and ideological positions from the mid-1930s revealed that, behind the accepted passwords, there was a constant tension within and between nonconformist groups. While appearing to tie them most closely together, it was the question of action which divided them most.

The nonconformists were united and animated by refusal. They refused not only the labels of left and right, but stood in opposition to the epoch in which they were born. While this may not appear surprising for such a youthful movement, the nonconformists

³⁸ The slogan 'neither left nor right' was revived from the *fin-de-siècle* though most nonconformists thought they had coined it. Zeev Sternhell has used the term to characterise French fascism. Certainly some fascists claimed that they had taken the best (and rejected the worst) from each camp—the intelligence and creative energy of the left, the realism of the right—and had unified what political parties had divided. See for example, Jean Mariani, *Réforme de l'esprit français* (Paris: Editions d'art et d'histoire, 1942), pp. 19-20. However, the social and economic goals of fascism were ostensibly those of the right, not of the left and the non-conformists, who used the term, can by no means all be labeled fascist. Sternhell's use of the phrase is therefore misleading: see Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave*, pp. 233-5 and *French Fascism: The Second Wave*, Introduction, especially pp. 8-12.

did not refuse with the exuberance of youth or through commitment to any cause. Many felt that refusal was thrust upon them:

Ce refus, nous ne le cherchions pas. Il n'était pas chez nous une attitude littéraire, un a priori, un mouvement de jeunesse. Tout nous l'imposait, la raison comme la dignité ... Si notre combat a un sens c'est celui d'une génération qui, pour se trouver une raison de vivre, qui, pour vivre, a dû constamment s'opposer à l'atmosphère et aux atteintes de son temps. Notre expérience a été une expérience contre l'époque. C'est vrai pour les plus "révolutionnaires" d'entre nous comme pour les plus "réactionnaires".³⁹

Frustration also fired non-conformism. The *Action Française* and its leader, Charles Maurras, were strong influences on France's political culture in the inter-war period. The position of the *Action Française* was compromised in the post war climate by glaring contradictions: it had, by supporting the war against Imperial Germany, helped to prop up the French Republic which it was supposedly dedicated to overthrow; its monarchism was increasingly anachronistic; the papal condemnation of 1926 made a mockery of its support for the Catholic tradition; and it could offer nothing new to combat the mass politics of communism or, later, fascism. Such contradictions seemed to condemn the *Action Française* to inaction. Maurras's leadership focused increasingly on warnings, on dire consequences rather than on possibilities. Above all, Maurras was capable of arousing great passion through his writing, but that passion was never sated by action. In the early thirties, elements within the nonconformist groups reacted with frustration against Maurras and the *Action Française*. Even young intellectuals from the *Jeune Droite* circle which had been most influenced by Maurras, men such as Robert Francis and Thierry Maulnier, began to question the rigidity and remoteness of his doctrine and to call for more direct, revolutionary action and 'street wise' tactics.⁴⁰

Maurras's refusal to compromise his ideals by direct action in the demonstrations and riots of 6 February 1934 produced a great wave of disenchantment. Lucien Rebatet, who fought in the riots and later chose fascism, recounted in *Les Décombres* the point of his final disillusionment with his former mentor: when asked by a young militant, fresh

³⁹ Jean-Pierre Maxence, quoted by Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes*, p. 183.

⁴⁰ Thierry Maulnier and Robert Francis, *Revue française* (June, 1933), p. 877, quoted by Loubet Del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes*, p. 297.

from the fray, what should be done now that the revolution appeared to be under way, Maurras replied with disdain, 'Je n'aime pas qu'on perd son sang froid'.⁴¹

However, in the aftermath of the riots, only a few of the most activist dissidents broke formally with Maurras and the *Action Française*.⁴² Despite their protestations of dissidence and the frustrations of 1934, most nonconformists were indelibly marked by Maurras' philosophy, in particular by its unrelenting negativism.⁴³ The nonconformists defined themselves negatively: they were anti-materialistic, anti-individualistic, anti-parliamentarian, anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist. Their negativism allowed the various groups to call for change within a very general framework, concealing the extent of divergence in their views. Negativism also gave the nonconformists the appearance of energy, so that they felt it unnecessary to put forward positive proposals for change. But it also resulted in a glaring irony: while celebrating activism, the majority of nonconformists rejected any concrete political action. Indeed, some celebrated their negativism as something positive in itself: they saw their philosophical rejections as an active position, an indication of the spiritual force which they said distinguished them from other political movements and set them above the rest. True spirituality lay in maintaining a philosophical position and any concrete action might betray the purity of that position. To such nonconformists, refusal of compromise was purifying. Thus in 1933 Emmanuel Mounier, leader of the *Esprit* group, defended himself against accusations of negativity and destructiveness:

⁴¹ Lucien Rebatet, *Les Décombres* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1942), p. 30.

⁴² Dissidence from the *Action Française*, caused by its lack of a concrete social programme, is treated in chapter 7, 'Realism'. For reasons underlying dissatisfaction with the organisation see: Eugen Weber, *Action Française* (USA: Stanford University Press, 1962), Paul Sérant, *Les dissidents de l'Action Française* (Paris: Copernic, 1978) and, for a personal account, Henry Charbonneau, *Les Mémoires de Porthos* (Paris: Les Editions du Clan, 1967). It should not be overlooked that Rebatet kept to himself his criticisms of Maurras's, inaction until after the defeat when he published them in his vitriolic *Décombres*. As described below, Mounier continued his revolutionary writing after the riots of 1934 but never publicly criticised Maurras and eventually drew closer to his old mentor under the Occupation. Francis (pseudonym of Jean Godmé) retreated from political life from 1935 to write novels but under the Occupation he gave his support to the collaborationists in Paris and joined the PPF in 1942.

⁴³ Verdès-Leroux points out that though nonconformists became dissatisfied with Maurras's anachronistic world view and his immobility amidst the upheaval of the times, many remained sentimentally attached to him and respected and imitated the 'implacable marginality' of *l'homme de refus*. *Refus et Violences*, pp. 47 & 119

Une grande foi commence par porter le fer et le feu. Elle atteste la pureté: il y aura toujours assez de volontaires pour les compromis. C'est une position singulièrement "constructive" en certaines époques de l'histoire où tout le monde accepte et se soumet, que d'amener les hommes à dire "non" avec colère. On croit que nier c'est nier: mais ce sont les "oui", quand ils consentent à la médiocrité, qui sanctionnent la démission de l'homme.⁴⁴

The riots of 6 February 1934 brought the contradictions of non-conformism to the fore and led to a crisis within the movement. Along with those who chose the violence of direct action or the purity of intellectual refusal, the riots and their aftermath also gave voice to those who favoured greater political commitment and a more concrete program for change. After 1934, and leading up to the formation of the Popular Front, the nonconformist groups in general became more strongly anti-capitalist and anti-parliamentary. The philosophical tenor of their discussions and the celebration of unity in refusal decreased as their positions became more polarised. The groups reverted to more classical political positions, though some veered towards the left and others towards the extreme right, increasing conflict between groups. The question of action continued to dominate and the charge of inaction was often used by one group to criticise another. After the riots, Robert Aron warned that action not based on a carefully planned doctrine and translated into institutional reform amounted to mere agitation; violence, excitation and dishonest manipulation of the masses was, he wrote, 'a solution of despair'.⁴⁵ Aron's logic reveals the intellectual emptiness of the activist portmanteau: there was no reasonable response to his warning; the only possible answer was open acceptance of fascist violence and irrationalism or a further retreat from concrete action into intellectual reflection. Emmanuel Mounier favoured the latter, believing that the original spiritual purity of the movement would be degraded by what he called the 'preoccupation with success'.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Mounier, in *Esprit*, no. 7 (April 1933), p. 4, quoted by Loubet Del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes*, p. 184. Mounier had always been suspicious of the activists within the nonconformist movement and rejected their advocacy of violence and manipulation.

⁴⁵ Aron, *Dictature de la liberté*, pp. 213-19.

⁴⁶ The attraction of success is also explored in chapter 7, 'Realism'. In general, from 1934-1938, the most successful nonconformist groups were those that made themselves more politically relevant but which struck a balance between abstract intellectualism and activism. During the Occupation,

As Jeannine Verdès-Leroux has pointed out, such uncompromising refusal or perpetual dissidence constitutes an escape from any real political choice and cannot easily be reconciled with a will to change the world. Mainly for this reason she concludes that nonconformists who preached activism but did not act were not fascists but 'revolutionary nationalists'.⁴⁷ Revolutionary nationalists, she argues, can be distinguished from fascists by their lack of clearly defined goals and because they sought not to promote a political platform but to engage, even enrage: their impatience, dissidence and refusal were without limit and 'led nowhere'.⁴⁸ They could never, therefore, commit to fascism. Furthermore, she claims, despite their activist rhetoric, nonconformists were 'pacifist' in the face of looming international conflict and they rejected the totalitarian, 'barbaric' and 'vulgar' mass politics of fascism. Hence, they were *attentiste* after the defeat, refusing the compromises inherent in collaborationism.⁴⁹

Verdès-Leroux's analysis sheds much valuable light on the subtle shades of radicalism found on the right, particularly in contrasting the declared fascists such as Brasillach and Drieu with intellectuals such as Maulnier who made no clear declaration of allegiance. It is certainly not easy to categorise nonconformists like Maulnier who managed to maintain a certain intellectual independence through a myriad of often contradictory associations, yet in many ways such men remain the key to understanding the temptation of fascism through revolutionary activism.⁵⁰

Though he was once considered to be Maurras's likely successor in the *Action Française*, Maulnier became frustrated and was drawn to dissidence from the *Action*

success meant some degree of collaboration and those who pursued it most avidly were those who tied their cause most actively to that of the Nazis.

⁴⁷ Verdès-Leroux, *Refus et Violences*, p. 88. Verdès-Leroux examines the writings and career of Thierry Maulnier as the quintessential revolutionary nationalist. She compares his uncompromising refusal with the commitment to fascism shown by Robert Brasillach, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and others in journals such as *Je Suis Partout*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵⁰ Most historians had not considered Maulnier to be a fascist until Zeev Sternhell represented him as one of the most important theorists of a 'spiritual' and purely intellectual form of fascism: *Ni Droit Ni Gauche*, chapter 7, 'Le Fascisme Spiritualiste', pp. 234-88. Sternhell's judgements are supported by David Carroll, who sees him as the most philosophical, subtle and sophisticated of France's literary fascists: *French Literary Fascism*, Chapter 9, 'A Literary Fascism beyond Fascism: Thierry Maulnier and the Ideology of Culture', pp. 222-47.

Française by super-nationalism and spiritualistic socialism.⁵¹ For much of the 1930s, he was greatly attracted by revolutionary activism. Yet Maulnier's associations always remained complicated. He never broke publicly with Maurras and he continued to write articles for *L'Action Française* and the *Revue Universelle*. Throughout the decade he wrote measured, highly intellectual and philosophical books but he also wrote increasingly for radical papers, including the fascist and virulently anti-Semitic *Je Suis Partout*, while elsewhere he criticised fascism and anti-Semitism.⁵² Immediately preceding the war, Maulnier's radicalism cooled rapidly and he left the radical milieu in which he had moved only a few years before.

The degree of Maulnier's radicalism during the 1930s can be traced through his attitude to revolutionary activism. In a book published in 1932, *La Crise est dans l'Homme*, Maulnier criticised the 'inaction' of the times but rejected any action which was not 'referenced' to thought and writing: such action was 'pure revolt' and 'inhuman'.⁵³ He called for revolutionary change but stressed that revolution should never assault the dignity of man:

Devant l'anarchie révolutionnaire, on prend la défense de contraintes nécessaires, d'un ordre salubre et beau; devant une oppression grandissante, qui n'est que la seconde phase de la révolution, on prend la défense des hommes.⁵⁴

Soon after, and perhaps reacting to criticisms of intellectualism, Maulnier appeared less wary of any such constraints on revolutionary action. He declared himself willing, for the common good and in order to bring about the revolution that would save France, to exploit the basest of human passions:

ceux qui trompent le peuple pour le perdre sont détestables, non ceux qui le trompe pour le sauver ... La révolution fait feu de tout bois. La convoitise, la haine, la peur flambent

⁵¹ See for example his *Mythes Socialistes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936) and *Au delà du nationalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

⁵² For qualifications of Maulnier's anti-Semitism and anti-fascism and exploration of his super-nationalism see Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*, pp. 241-44.

⁵³ Maulnier, *La Crise est dans l'Homme*, p. 64.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

mieux que l'amour. Une bonne technique révolutionnaire oriente les passions les plus basses vers le bien public.⁵⁵

With the rise of the Popular Front and the threat of a Marxist resurgence, Maulnier declared a more political and realistic approach to revolutionary change.⁵⁶ In 1936 and 1937, he co-founded with fellow nonconformists, two highly activist journals, *Combat* and *L'Insurgé*.⁵⁷ Maulnier was not as radical as some of his collaborators who demanded a *coup de force* to rid France of the democratic and republican state and who, like Jean-Pierre Maxence, saw no option for the future other than a war between revolutionary ideologies:

La bataille donc se jouera entre révolutionnaires. Les communistes ou les autres. Ceux qui tentent d'empêcher les Français de le comprendre sont des chiens.⁵⁸

Maulnier, however, called for the total 'remaking' of society—the reshaping of power and economic structures and the rethinking of social roles—and he wrote of revolutionary action as the 'immense rush of oxygen' needed to accomplish the task.⁵⁹ He thought that the resurgent communist threat would disappear like the phantom it was if it could be fought on its own ground with its own tactics, in the street and with violence. But it was no use, he wrote, putting up barricades to protect miserable

⁵⁵ Thierry Maulnier and Robert Francis, *Revue française* (June, 1933), p. 877, quoted by Loubet Del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes*, p. 297.

⁵⁶ Maulnier, *Mythes Socialistes*, pp. 45, 50.

⁵⁷ He co-founded *Combat* (1936-1939) with Jean de Fabrègues and *L'Insurgé* (January-October 1937) with Pierre Maxence. Both journals were strongly anti-communist and illustrate the close connection in radical right wing thought between revolutionary activism and the urgency of establishing a non-Marxist social and economic order. The violence of their language indicates a definite break with the monarchism and conservatism of the *Action Française*. However the editors did not declare allegiance to fascism as did those of *Je Suis Partout*, who also Maurrassian dissidents, but remained closer to their intellectual roots in support for corporatism and traditional hierarchical structures. See G. Leroy, 'La Revue *Combat* (1936-1939)', in Rocher, Anne and Christian Tarting (eds), *Les Années Trente: groupes et ruptures* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984), pp. 123-34.

⁵⁸ Jean-Pierre Maxence, 'Un climat de révolution, voilà ce que vous nous préparez', *Idées*, 11 August 1937.

⁵⁹ Thierry Maulnier, 'Pas de reconciliation sans revolution', *L'Insurgé*, 27 January 1937.

institutions against communism; all should be 'overturned', not conserved, because 'On ne vaincra la révolution que par la révolution'.⁶⁰

Shortly after, however, in 1938, Maulnier looked back to reassess the 'post-war years'. Rapid change, he wrote, had provoked collective panic and anger but also heroism. Fearing with total and immediate decomposition, some people had turned to action as a 'doctrine imparfaite'.⁶¹ Now he saw the advantages of 'organic metamorphosis' which preserved continuity. Revolutionary action remained valuable, he claimed, but only when it benefited from history and experience and when it destroyed only what was already dead or dying:

la forme d'action révolutionnaire la plus valable apparaît donc moins comme une tâche de destruction que comme un tâche de conquête intérieure, comme un effort de la communauté humaine pour ressaisir la maîtrise des éléments de son destin qui lui ont échappé au cours de sa propre évolution ...

toute métamorphose organique suppose une continuité plus forte que la métamorphose elle-même, tout changement affirme la permanence de ce qui supporte et le produit.⁶²

On the eve of defeat, Maulnier was once again emphasising the human, rather than ideological, dimensions of revolution. He wrote that France must foster the 'forces vives' of the nation in order to carry out a constructive, national revolution.⁶³ After the defeat, Maulnier claimed that the nation had to progress beyond the conflict between 'des forces d'immobilité et des forces explosives révolutionnaires' and he praised Vichy's National Revolution for its 'instinct for conservation' and a desire to preserve the traditions, character and history of France.⁶⁴

Thus, despite his attraction to revolutionary activism during the 1930s, Maulnier did not commit to any definite programme of revolutionary action. Even when he advocated revolutionary change, his methods for bringing it about always remained

⁶⁰ Thierry Maulnier 'Le Communisme, ce fantôme', *L'Insurgé*, 3 March 1937.

⁶¹ Maulnier, *Au delà du nationalisme*, p.27.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 222-3, 225.

⁶³ Thierry Maulnier, 'Pour une politique de la France', *La France, la guerre et la paix* (Lyon: H. Lardanchet, 1942), pp. 26-35 (article originally published in 1939).

⁶⁴ Maulnier, *La France*, p. 10 and 'L'humanisme de la France', *ibid.*, pp. 174-85, p. 175 (article originally published in 1941). See also the conclusion to *La France*, pp. 201-11.

vague and fluid. Maulnier was unable to escape the intellectualism of his Maurrassian formation. He remained marked by its integral nationalism, especially its anti-Germanism. Both these traits made him distrustful of the fascist revolutions which in the early 1930s were transforming France's neighbours and seducing some of his closest associates. As a student of Maurras, he could accept anti-Semitism as a useful political tool for promoting a nationalist revolution, but he disliked Nazi and current French anti-Semitic politics because they lacked philosophical rigour. Maulnier's nationalism led him always to reject imitation, even in the face of Germany's apparent rejuvenation, and to stress the need for France to tap its own sources of energy. But more than this, he found the Nazi regime distasteful. In 1933 he saw National Socialism as a collectivist religion, vulgar and unrefined: it provided energy, he said, but not civilisation.⁶⁵ Maulnier particularly disliked German irrationalism, with its cult of vitality and its appeal to the primitive, to instinct and to force.⁶⁶

However, like many other young intellectuals of the right, Maulnier was radicalised by the events of 6 February 1934 and disturbed by the rise of the Popular Front. In the years following the February riots, he came to envy the vitality, cohesion and enthusiasm of France's fascist neighbours. Maulnier asserted the ability of the 'Latin' races to tap the sap of life and to jolt Europe from its somnambulism. Without such a jolt, and given the awakening of the Asian peoples, he feared the 'suicide of Europe'. He found hope in Mussolini's transformation of Italy where 'la vitalité créatrice, l'élan, l'énergie, la jeunesse' were combating the signs of 'vieillesse', 'désordre organique', 'paresse' and 'dégénérescence'.⁶⁷ After the victory of the Popular

⁶⁵ Thierry Maulnier, 'Jeunesse allemande', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LII: 24 (January-March 1933), pp. 708-15 and 'Les nouveaux mythes germaniques', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LIII: 2 (April-June 1933), pp. 195-204.

⁶⁶ Thierry Maulnier, 'La psychologie du germanisme', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LVIII: 10 (August 1934), pp. 501-6 and 'La position française devant le germanisme', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LVIII: 12 (September 1934), pp. 753-7. Maulnier rejected the proliferation of unfavourable comparisons of France to Germany which saw Germany as richer in 'sap' or natural vitality. He warned against the irrationalism that was, he said, a sentimental weakness in Germanic psychology: it could provide no counter to French rationalism, harmful though that was; irrationalism lacked subtlety and concrete reality and should not, as was the trend, be mistaken for intuition.

⁶⁷ Thierry Maulnier, 'Suicide de l'Europe', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXIII: 13 (October 1935), pp. 102-7, p. 105. Maulnier later praised Oliveira Salazar who, he said, had the privilege of putting French

Front, Maulnier saw that fascism could offer France ‘une vie nouvelle, une vie enthousiaste, un rajeunissement des âmes et des énergies’.⁶⁸ By 1937, Maulnier could see that fascism’s original contribution was in its power of improvisation: under difficult circumstances it had achieved extraordinary success against more entrenched systems and established, communist parties.⁶⁹ Despite its intellectual insufficiency, Maulnier thought that fascism had mobilised a ‘profound’ and ‘secret’ social energy and had achieved what was most pressingly necessary—national cohesion. He still judged fascism dangerous in that it was an ‘easy solution’ which carried the temptation of self satisfaction. However, he could see that fascism as it currently existed might prove to be a provisional system which in time could become more stable and systematic: until that was known, he claimed, fascism had to be allowed its victory.⁷⁰ Fascism had succeeded where democracy had failed.⁷¹

Until the defeat, Maulnier continued to dismiss imitation and to reject fascism as a ‘total’ option for France. He did not hide his distaste for the vulgar populism and unthinking totalitarianism which he found in the particular fascisms of Italy and Germany, but his writings reveal a grudging appreciation of the improvisations and successes of fascism. He believed that France could tap its own reserve of energy to achieve a rejuvenation similar to that of Germany, but one which accorded with the French national temperament and one which preserved that which was special about France: its spirituality, its intelligence and its ‘humanist’ and aristocratic traditions. But

ideas into practice: ‘Les Paroles de Salazar’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXIX: 4 (May 1937), pp. 496-500.

⁶⁸ Thierry Maulnier, ‘Le fascisme et son avenir en France’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXVI: 19 (September 1936), pp. 13-26, p. 20.

⁶⁹ Thierry Maulnier, ‘Un jugement sur le fascisme’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXX: 12 (September 1937), pp. 750-4, pp. 750-1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 754.

⁷¹ Thierry Maulnier, ‘Le "péril" fasciste’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXXIV: 8 (July 1938), pp. 242-6, p. 246. In a review of a special issue of the weekly *Temps Présent* on fascism, Maulnier concluded that the commentators, conservative Catholics in the main, failed to treat the essential problem. The undeniable excesses of the fascist regimes were the result, he claimed, of the failures and inevitable decomposition of democracy. Fascism not only promised to combat the problems that democracy had proved itself incapable of fighting, but it promised to do so heroically. He returns to the success of fascism in destroying socialism against all the odds in a review of a book on the origins of Italian Fascism: ‘La naissance du Fascisme’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXXIV: 10 (August 1938), pp. 488-92, p. 490.

Maulnier was willing to concede that, in order to preserve this true France, to increase authority, to end internal squabbles and compete on the international scene, a 'minimum of fascism' might be necessary: 'Il ne s'agit pas ici de préférences idéologiques. Il s'agit de force'.⁷²

Hence, though Verdès-Leroux rightly highlights the importance of refusal in right wing intellectual thought, she goes too far in making it a clear distinction between fascists and revolutionary nationalists. Neither 'group' had clearly defined goals but they shared in common many 'refusals'. Verdès-Leroux certainly overstates the difference between fascists and revolutionary nationalists in respect of the latter's 'pacifism' before the defeat and their '*attentisme*' after it. The nonconformists opposed the specific, international war which threatened a decadent France, not all war. In this they were no different to declared fascists in France, as Verdès-Leroux says herself.⁷³ However, in describing the revolutionary nationalists as pacifist, she downplays the activist violence of their writing, especially after 1934, its Machiavellian sentiments and taste for blood, explaining it as 'provocation', understandable in the 'context of the times'.⁷⁴ It is true that in a changed context, under the Occupation, nonconformist dissidents such as Maulnier retreated from such activist agitation to shelter under the *Action Française* umbrella but they were at the very least pro-Vichy and supporters of the National Revolution. This scarcely constitutes *attentisme*, let alone *refusal* of collaboration. The path of refusal was taken only by the sole exception amongst former nonconformists: Robert Aron, having warned against agitation before the defeat, might be said to have made a concrete act of refusal by joining the Free French in North Africa

⁷² Thierry Maulnier, 'Un fascisme minimum?', *La France, la Guerre et la Paix* (Lyon: H. Lardanchet, 1942), p. 53 (from an article first published in *Combat* in May 1939). Other former members of the *Action Française* who became collaborationists under the Occupation attacked Maurras for his failure to acknowledge the value of force which he had once preached: 'Au nom du principe du force que vous avez défendu toute votre vie, monsieur Maurras, l'Allemagne s'est acquis certains droits'. Lucien Combelle, 'La France de M. Maurras', *Révolution Nationale*, 31 May 1942.

⁷³ Stanley Payne makes the observation that fascist parties in France, as in most stable and prosperous Western European nations, 'preached a kind of "peace fascism"'. In this respect the radical right overlapped with the conservative nationalist groups and leagues which also opposed the war and did not preach expansionism. Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-45* (London: UCL Press, 1995), p. 298.

⁷⁴ Verdès-Leroux, *Refus et Violences*, p. 121.

in 1942. However, as a Jew escaping persecution (with the help of a former nonconformist associate who worked within the Vichy government), he had little choice but to refuse collaboration.

Maulnier made no clear refusal. He was certainly not an enthusiastic collaborator and indeed was often attacked in the collaborationist press by some of his former associates for his silence in this regard. But the failure of intellectuals such as Maulnier to engage with collaborationism can be considered a refusal only in the sense that others expected them to give it their full support. The fact that his former colleagues felt Maulnier to be a traitor to collaborationism and to fascism suggests that they at one time considered him to have been amongst their ranks.⁷⁵

Before definite political choices were imposed by events from 1934 to 1940, 'revolutionary nationalists' and fascists were united by an activism which could be, and often was, purely intellectual. A spirit of opposition drew them together. The example of success pushed them on. However, they could never solve the fundamental problem of how to obtain the benefits of fascist renewal without making France subservient to the leading fascist states. It was because 'revolutionary nationalists' and fascists had no real chance of political success in France that their activism was more important to them than any concrete action. Perhaps then, Maulnier, with all his contradictions, represents a form of fascism which was particular to France: it was a purely intellectual, elitist and spiritual position; a literary fascism defined by aesthetics, not political choices. Inevitably, existing forms of fascism fell short of such an ideal and the victory of National Socialism over France meant that it remained an ideal. In this sense of political reality, it was a form of fascism which 'led nowhere'. In another sense, though, an ideal or aesthetic fascism was not totally subsumed even by the defeat and the political choices which it entailed. A celebration of an ideal based on refusal and rejection of compromise remained part of French literary fascism and intellectual

⁷⁵ As a result of his low profile during the Occupation, Maulnier was able to resume his career as a journalist and literary critic after the Liberation. He was made a member of the *Académie Française* in 1964 and died in 1988.

collaborationism throughout the Occupation. Since French fascism had no real political power or constituency, an ideal which celebrated a state of fascism above or beyond the realities of political power should not be so surprising.

Under the Occupation, the 'ownership' of the rhetoric of refusal was contested by resisters and collaborators. Resistance literature celebrated a stubborn refusal towards the Germans, as in *Le Silence de la Mer*, the short novel published anonymously by the clandestine press, *Les Editions de Minuit*. Here the heroine presents a mute but unflinching rejection of the Occupier, even though the Occupier is represented by a sensitive, cultured and Francophile German officer. After the Liberation it was Resistance literature which came to symbolise refusal. However, it should not be forgotten that the collaborationist *litterati* also continued to mythologise refusal as a commitment to a higher, eternal and pure truth which allowed no compromise with debased, material concerns. Nowhere was the contest over the rhetoric of refusal more evident than in the reception of Jean Anouilh's play, *Antigone*, which was written in 1942 and first performed in Paris in the last months of the occupation in February 1944.⁷⁶ Anouilh's Antigone refuses conformity, compromise and compliance; against overwhelming opposition and against what might appear to be common sense, she chooses the revolutionary 'no'. She ensures her own death but it is a spiritually liberating and ennobling end. The play was acclaimed by resisters and collaborators alike. Some spectators and critics interpreted her stand as resistance to the authoritarian state, represented by a Pétain-like Créon and backed by soldiers dressed in the contemporary garb of the *Gestapo*. However, the fascist *litterati* saw their own aesthetic in Antigone's refusal: it was a rejection of the mundane (and therefore the debased); an act of sacrifice to a higher truth; a celebration of irrationality in which one found

⁷⁶ The representation of Anouilh's Antigone as a Resistance heroine gained acceptance mainly after the Liberation. For a study of the fascist sub-text in the play see Mary Ann Witt, 'Fascist Ideology and the Theatre under the Occupation', in Christopher Flood and Richard Golson (eds), *The Invasion and Occupation of France 1940-44: Intellectual and Cultural responses*, special issue of *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 23 (1993), pp. 49-69. After the Liberation, the ethic of active commitment to social change or *engagement* and an exploration of action and will were taken up by existentialist and *résistant* intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

spiritual purity and eternal youth. Créon's path of happiness through order was a necessary opposite.

* * *

Activism in France was a response to powerlessness, arising as it did from a crisis in confidence in the nation's vitality. The call for action was in our sense little more than a cry of alarm, a demand for change without much concern for the nature of that change. Yet, despite its essential hollowness, the call for action appealed to a wide cross section of France's intellectual and political elite, from the conservative to the radical. For some, action conjured national élan and heroism. To others, it was a sign of faith, devotion and sacrifice, qualities that they thought most of their countrymen had lost, and a response to the authority that they thought their countrymen needed. Still others saw in action the appeal of the irrational, of freedom from traditional constraints. Some saw activism as permanent renewal, the work of the avant garde, a selection process for those who would be successful in the new order. As one of the catchwords of the pre-war generation, action served to give a semblance of unity to the discontents and critics of the regime: conservatives who felt powerless in the face of mass society and dissidents from the major political parties, nonconformists, the league movements and the fascists. Activism had both a political and an aesthetic appeal. In pre-defeat politics it sometimes translated into commitment to a cause, a sign of energy and health, but for some it remained a purely intellectual pursuit, a refusal of present options and a quest for perfection.

The widespread attraction to activism should not be taken as unity amongst the right. Conservatives may have used the language of activism in order to achieve or disguise aims which were totally at odds with the more radical aims of those who sought real, revolutionary change; the frustrations of the latter often meant that they used the rhetoric of activism to separate themselves from the 'old' right. The relationship between conservative and radical as seen through activism was always fluid. It waxed

and waned according to the perceived threat from the left and according to political choices.

From the mid-1930s, with the rise and demise of the Popular Front and the deteriorating international situation, the need to make definite political choices began to break down non-conformism and dissidence. By the end of the decade those who remained most attached to the activist cause were those who were most seduced by fascism. Activism also revealed a duality in French fascism: a co-existence but constant tension between aesthetic values in a purely intellectual world and the real political choices which internal and external events thrust upon France. This duality would persist into the Occupation and remain a dilemma for the intellectual right: the maintenance of an aesthetic of refusal meant forfeiting an active role; the alternative, the ability to act under the Occupation, meant capitulation to the Germans.

Chapter 6

Action under Occupation

The Vichy regime was, as Richard Cobb points out, forever 'towards-ing': 'Vers l'Europe Nouvelle, Vers l'Ordre Nouveau'. He adds:

Perhaps it did not very much matter about the final destination: the journey was the thing. And both Vichy and Paris ... laid great stress on the word *movement*. Movement is action, and action is the liberating force.¹

In its reformist rhetoric, Vichy was indeed the inheritor of the 1930s. But Pétain was no man of action. Nor was Laval. Laval remained the consummate politician: a product and symbol of the hated old regime, but essential to the new. Pétain's image was carefully constructed but, despite the efforts of the Vichy propaganda machine to dwell on his military past and portray him as a robust man, virile beyond his years, Pétain's appeal and enduring image was as a shield, solid and immovable. Vichy's policies were no more dynamic than its leadership. The collaborationist press lampooned the National Revolution as moving at a snail's pace. Vichy's reforms were always hampered by the demands of the Occupier and by limits to its freedom as well as by its own palace politics, the woolliness of its thinking and its inner contradictions.

¹ Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 134.

One of the starkest contradictions of Vichy's National Revolution was that it was conceived and put into action by men of the conservative right who were most uneasy with the concept of revolution. Pétain disliked the term revolution and preferred instead to use 'renovation' or 'redressment'.² Revolution not only had close associations with France's left wing past and the political rhetoric of the Third Republic, but it risked social disorder, a state greatly feared by the conservative right. Gustave Thibon (whose 'diagnosis' of France's ills and directions to the path of recovery, were much appreciated by the conservative right) found revolution to be 'monstrous', an unnatural fever, occurring when the 'intoxicated masses', infected by envy, revenge, hatred and a 'morbid hunger', try to take for themselves privilege and the power to oppress.³ Thibon claimed that revolution led to the destruction of inner, spiritual health.⁴ He conceded that revolution could be useful if it cleansed society and re-established order, but warned that it was too dangerous a procedure; failure to recover from it led to degeneration. It was better, he wrote, that the nation accepts gradual reform as a 'gift from above'.⁵

However, though Vichy wanted to erase any taint of the politics of the Third Republic, it also wanted to capture some of the energy which had helped to undermine it. If such energy could be converted to unity, it would bolster the power of the government, or indeed of any faction which could control it. After Marcel Déat and his group of ultra collaborationists failed in the summer of 1940 to organise a single, mass political party, the Pétainists decided to give official support to a plan put forward by the major veterans' leagues to form a single veterans' organisation dedicated to the aims of the new regime.⁶ The *Légion Française des Combattants* was announced in the

² Andrew Shennan makes this point: in 1940 the term National Revolution conveyed a symbolic appeal to unity by combining the nationalism of the right with the revolution of the left: *Rethinking France*, p. 19.

³ Gustave Thibon, *Diagnostics: essai de psychologie sociale* (Paris: Librairie de Médicis, 1942), p. 14. Thibon also voiced his disapproval of revolutionary mysticism in *L'Echelle de Jacob* (Lyon: Lardanchet, 1942), p. 183.

⁴ Thibon, *Diagnostics*, p. 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶ Jean-Paul Cointet, 'Marcel Déat et le parti unique (été 1940)', *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, no. 91 (July 1973), pp. 1-22.

Journal Officiel in August 1940; it was established in the unoccupied zone and Pétain was declared its president. The *Légion*, which comprised 1.5 million members by mid 1941, was the closest Vichy came in its attempt to organise ‘a mass movement for the mobilization of enthusiasm’.⁷ In the *Légion*, the government hoped to preserve the spirit of the inter-war veterans’ organizations—patriotism, the fraternity of the trenches and the support for a strong executive and a moral order—and to make it the champion of the National Revolution.⁸ The championing of the National Revolution meant not merely embodying its ideals, but an active social and civic role for the legionnaires: they were to be the diffusers of Vichy’s ideals and the intermediaries between the Maréchal and the people.

The *Légion* was the longest surviving institution created by the Vichy government and perhaps best represents its aspirations and contradictions. In the *Légion*, the forces of conservatism met those of the new order. Its fate is an illustration of how activism, in the context of division and lack of real power, led to subservience to those who possessed power or to those who served it most closely. Robert Paxton has described the ‘subterranean tug-of-war’ which soon arose between the *Légion*’s spontaneity (which was often no more than the playing out of petty local interests and disputes) and Vichy’s professional administrators.⁹ The Prefects resisted any hint of vigilantism or direct civic action which they themselves had not initiated and their power allowed them to define and limit the actions of the *Légion* at the local level. After February 1941, when Darlan replaced Laval, Darlan’s group of young and ambitious activists such as Pierre Pucheu and Paul Marion sought to turn the *Légion* into a propaganda machine for a single party. This led to division and disillusionment within the *Légion*. But Laval’s return to power in April 1942 saw the *Légion* fall further under state

⁷ John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 64. Despite its mass membership, Sweets, in his study of Clermont-Ferrand, points out that the *Légion* attracted only 50 percent of those eligible to join: pp. 66-7.

⁸ Antoine Prost, ‘Les anciens combattants aux origines de la *Légion*: les mouvements d’anciens combattants’, in FNSP, *Le gouvernement de Vichy*, pp. 115-121. See also Jean Paul Cointet, ‘Les Anciens Combattants: la *Légion Française des Combattants*’, *ibid.*, pp. 123-43 and ‘La *Légion*’ in Laurent Gervereau and Denis Peschanski (eds), *La Propagande Sous Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Publications de la BDIC, 1990), pp. 59-68.

⁹ Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. 191.

control. Its first director, François Valentin, resigned two months later and the majority of the *Légion* became so disaffected that the organisation broke its official link with the government in November 1943. Thereafter, the *Légion* took on the role of purely social action.

However, the basis for the formation of more activist movements had already been established within the *Légion*. The pressure to act in the increasingly narrow political and policing realms gave rise to first the *Service d'Ordre Légionnaire* (SOL) and then the *Milice*. The SOL developed within the *Légion* and was made official in January 1942, against the wishes of the leadership and under pressure from Darlan and the more radical elements within the government. The SOL was the 'shock troop' of the *Légion*; their declared task was the rapid execution of the wishes of the government. The organisation was led by Joseph Darnand, war hero and former *Camelot du Roi* and *Cagoulard*, and his band of 'combat intellectuals'. SOL members tended to be younger, more committed to collaboration and less imbued with the veterans' spirit than those of its mother organisation. With such a genesis and in the context of government indecisiveness and division, the SOL inevitably served the most activist elements and this inevitably led it down the path of anti-Semitism and authoritarianism.

The SOL became the core of the *Milice*. When Laval established the *Milice* in the Unoccupied Zone in January 1943, he made it independent of the *Légion*, declared himself its president and placed it under the direction of Darnand. Several reasons explain the formation of the *Milice*: Laval wanted to concentrate and control the revolutionary wing of the regime; he further marginalised the *Légion* and with it an important element of the Pétainist support base; Laval hoped that such a force would neutralise the influence of Déat and other Parisian collaborationists; and the *Milice* would give a guarantee to the Germans who wanted a supplementary French police force to fight the growing resistance. Hence the *Milice* grew out of competition for the crumbs of power under the Occupation. The *Milice* also illustrates the tendency to extremes that was inherent in that competition. Created to 'animate political life' and to

be the avant garde of the National Revolution, the *Milice* was distinguished by its dedication to elitist action.¹⁰ The cadres of the *Milice* were trained for combat by hard physical exercise and an anti-intellectual schooling. Combat—the name given to the organisation's journal—was in a sense the solution, more than a means of achieving an end: Darnand conceived the *Milice* as the 'fist' which would grab destiny and he convinced his cadres that 'tout va se régler par la force'.¹¹

Elitist action and the attraction of force resulted from the failure to achieve unified action: the National Revolution had not won the hoped for level of support and the country was increasingly divided by the Resistance; recruitment to the *Milice* was slow, despite the exemption it offered from the STO, and its civic action was unpopular. When the *Milice* was extended into the Occupied Zone in January 1944, it attracted mainly the militants of the fascist leagues. Elitist action was a descent into policing, subservience to the Germans and civil war. Darnand soon found Vichy too soft and, in August 1943, only six months after the formation of the *Milice*, he and many leading miliciens joined the Waffen SS and openly embraced National Socialism. By 1944 the *Milice* was involved in murder, torture and in the large scale campaigns against the *Maquis* in Savoie and Limousin. With the inclusion of leading Miliciens Darnand and Henriot in the government, Vichy became a '*Milice* state'. State action under the Occupation had become the slave of order. In its pursuit of unity and power, the Vichy government had arrived at the same point as those who had made an ideological commitment to National Socialism.

The collaborationists who fled Vichy for Paris had few dilemmas concerning the nation's course of action: for them, there was no 'towards-ing'; action meant full collaboration with the Nazis, an ideological commitment. For collaborationists, action and collaboration were synonymous, inseparable and vital for France. From the very

¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Azéma, 'La Milice', in Gervereau and Peschanski, *La Propagande Sous Vichy*, pp. 69-73, p. 72. See also Jean Pierre Azéma, 'La Milice', *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 28 (1990) pp. 83-105. The standard text on the Milice (which contains some errors of fact) is Jacques Delperrié De Bayac, *Histoire de la Milice 1918-1945* (Paris: Fayard, 1969).

¹¹ Azéma, 'La Milice', in Gervereau and Peschanski, *La Propagande Sous Vichy*, pp. 71, 73.

beginning of the Occupation the collaborationist rhetoric of action took on the vocabulary of life, birth and survival. Action/collaboration was also an act of faith: commitment would save France in a spiritual as well as a life prolonging sense. Drieu La Rochelle thought that collaboration would mean an end to what he called the national 'sport immobile d'attendre'; collaboration was, he said, work, even hard labour, but it was 'une garantie de vie'.¹² Thus, though Drieu must have welcomed Pétain's meeting with Hitler at Montoire and his announcement, on 11 October 1940, of collaboration with Germany, the unspoken corollary of his equation of collaboration with survival was that failure to collaborate, and to toil at the task, would mean death for France.¹³

The collaborationists' equation of collaboration with life (versus death or decay) became more strident as they became convinced of Vichy's reluctance to collaborate fully with the Germans. The beginning of 1941 brought an end to the honeymoon which Pétain's popularity and the 'towards-ing' promises had won for the new regime. Parisian newspapers began their relentless attack on the slowness of Vichy reform. Alphonse de Châteaubriant had founded the weekly paper *La Gerbe* in July 1940, aiming it at intellectual collaboration. In January 1941 Châteaubriant portrayed collaboration as a door to a new Europe and hence a new life for France, but Vichy's hesitation to make the simple step through was risking an oblivion so unspeakable that he could only bring himself to hint at it.¹⁴ *La Gerbe* then began to lament that Vichy's National Revolution had not yet been born:

On sait bien que la naissance d'un nouveau monde politique, social, économique, demande plus de temps que la naissance d'un être. Tout de même cette naissance traîne un peu et l'on finit par craindre que l'enfant soit mal venu. Il semble qu'on veuille que cet enfantement s'opère sans douleur, que ce monde nouveau ne remplace pas trop vite l'ancien.¹⁵

¹² Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, 'Plus d'Attente', *La Gerbe*, 10 October 1940. This article appeared the day before Pétain's speech announcing collaboration with the Germans.

¹³ It is not surprising then, that Drieu, increasingly disillusioned with the failures of French fascism and with the imperialist nature of German control, committed suicide in March 1945, when all possibilities of political action had been lost and he faced only trial and execution.

¹⁴ Alphonse de Châteaubriant 'Sinon...', *La Gerbe*, 9 January 1941.

¹⁵ André Marchant, 'Vite et Fort', *La Gerbe*, 16 January 1941.

The author claimed that revolutions are always violent, brutal and disorderly but that this was necessary to create the enthusiasm to sweep away the old and create the new: without force and *élan* nothing could be achieved. He warned that perfectionism was killing the National Revolution and that 'l'inaction serait mortelle'.

Such attacks on the pace of reform invited a wider debate on the nature of the National Revolution. From mid 1941, Camille Fégy, editor in chief of *La Gerbe*, began to complain bitterly of 'la révolution écrite' and proclaimed that 'Une révolution ne se pense pas, elle se fait ... Elle est chair avant d'être verbe. Elle est geste avant d'être loi'.¹⁶ After one year of what he saw as Vichy's near total immobility, he complained that the government legislators had become lost in abstractions, had proved themselves incapable of dealing with everyday problems and had lost touch with the ordinary people of France.¹⁷ Vichy, he said, was like a tailor cutting the cloth to fit old measurements. His advice was to act first and legislate later:

Dans la Révolution, tout est action, tout est création, tout est impulsion, tout est animation. Il faut agir, agir encore, agir toujours. Il faut voir grand, concevoir de vastes programmes et les réaliser tambour battant. La Révolution, c'est la mystique de l'action.

Fégy's revolution was an act of faith; 'Il faut agir et il faut croire'. *La Gerbe* often called on Vichy for a show of faith and enthusiasm for collaboration. No doubt this was a reflection of Châteaubriant's experience of 'conversion' to National Socialism which, he said, tapped the 'ferveur sacrée ... au fond de l'âme'.¹⁸

The debate over the nature of revolution in Occupied France was also taken up by the more intellectual journal, *Idées*. Produced in Vichy, *Idées* published several articles in 1942 which supported the government's approach to change, but it also published its critics. René Vincent, defending the government's slowness in legislating for change,

¹⁶ Camille Fégy, 'Des Chefs! Une révolution', *La Gerbe*, 24 July 1941. Fégy's criticisms illustrate the collaborationist's obsession with the nature of revolution, leadership and activism.

¹⁷ *La Gerbe*, 27 November 1941.

¹⁸ Châteaubriant, *La psychologie et le drame*, p. 12.

claimed that revolution depended on changing spirit, values and ideals, not mere laws and institutions.¹⁹ The National Revolution, he said, did not lack ideas, doctrine or theoreticians but had been forced to improvise on the ruins of the old regime, without the benefit of an organised party to lead it through. The resultant slowness and bureaucratisation was merely a 'childhood sickness' of a state revolution.²⁰ The advantages of such a revolution were the security and discipline that the state could ensure, and any growing pains could be solved by heeding the advice of the leader, Pétain. All actions, he said, had to be grounded in reality since the pure mystique of revolution, while necessary to keep the revolution moving, could end by tempting it into an illusory purity and thereby destroy it. To Vincent and to Vichy supporters, the National Revolution was a conservative revolution, not irreconcilable with the preservation of tradition.²¹

Such arguments were attacked by Thierry Maulnier's former colleague and 'insurgent', Jean-Pierre Maxence. Unlike Maulnier, Maxence had continued down the path of radicalisation in the late 1930s and saw France's defeat as an opportunity for sweeping away old traditions and joining a new Europe. In 1942 he called in *Idées* for a 'revolutionary revolution'.²² He declared, 'Une révolution qu'on parle est une révolution mort-née, un fantôme de révolution. Depuis deux ans, nous parlons la nôtre'.²³ At Vichy, he said, the mere sketch of an idea, rare and fragile truths and timid hopes were drowned in a flood of words; each embryonic act or promise of action 'sèchent au soleil des commentaires'.²⁴ Real revolution, Maxence claimed, is profoundly violent; it fights and never gives up and every day that it fails to mark with its claw is a day lost. Real revolutionaries think, eat and bleed revolution, not comment

¹⁹ René Vincent, 'Devoirs révolutionnaires', *Idées*, no. 8 (June 1942), pp. 1-7, p. 1. See also Armand Petitjean who, in 'Notre problème révolutionnaire', claimed that France, in order to rediscover its destiny and genius had only to resume its history where it had been interrupted 125 years before: *Idées*, nos 10-11 (September 1942), pp. 14-19.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²¹ René Vincent, 'Révolution et tradition' *Idées*, no. 20 (June 1943), pp. 31-5.

²² Jean Pierre Maxence, 'Révolution révolutionnaire', *Idées*, nos 10-11 (September 1942), pp. 6-13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

on it.²⁵ To Maxence revolution was a way of life, a personal mission and the revolution which France had to undertake could not be clouded with romantic ideas or fever. The revolutionary had to be serene, without illusion and beyond hope or despair as the destiny of France was at stake: 'La révolution ... est une question de vie ou de mort, de dignité ou d'esclavage'.²⁶

Maxence recognised then that Vichy's alibi was always 'tomorrow'. He saw that in the wake of the defeat, the word revolution had surfaced and that some of those in power had pretended to welcome it but, by emptying it of all content, they had turned it into a narcotic. In order to make the National Revolution revolutionary, France had to find itself in the present, terrible though that present might be, and to stop hoping for miracles as there would be none.²⁷ If France was to save itself it had to change everything, give up its old traditions and forge new values in the knowledge that half measures would be fatal.²⁸

The Parisian press portrayed the Vichy government as a dead weight on France's future. On the third anniversary of Pétain's announcement of collaboration, Henri Poulain in *Révolution Nationale*, commented on the mournful silence which marked its commemoration.²⁹ He claimed that Vichy had become 'un organisme déjà réduit à l'immobilité totale' so that an observer had to approach very closely to see if the heart of France was still beating and its vital forces—heroism and lucidity—were still coursing. Yet, he wrote, Vichy ignored the promise of recovery which Pétain had made to the nation three years before and still prescribed sleep and inertia: the old remedy of *attentisme*.

Many collaborationists claimed to have arrived at fascism or commitment to their cause 'by way of enthusiasm', rather than through ideological reasoning.³⁰ There is

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

²⁹ Henri Poulain, 'En relisant le Message du 11 octobre', *Révolution Nationale*, 9 October 1943.

³⁰ This is the basis of Victor Barthélemy's autobiographical account of his political journey with Jacques Doriot and the PPF. He claimed that the idea of revolution constantly 'haunted our spirits': *Du Communisme au Fascisme*, p. 259. Similarly, Henry Charbonneau stressed the camaraderie and

indeed some truth in this: studies which have traced the political defections and tortured careers of protagonists of this period have shown the limitations of purely ideological explanations of fascism and collaboration.³¹ However, mere enthusiasm does not take into account the realities and temptations of power. Like the Vichy government, collaborationists also suffered a crisis of inaction based on powerlessness: it was the pursuit of and the competition for power and the ability to act which led them to subjugate themselves increasingly to the wishes of the occupier.

The fortunes of Jacques Doriot and his PPF were revived by the defeat. However, Doriot was without any real power. Though he immediately declared himself for Pétain, his opposition to Laval did not win him any backing from the Germans, as he had hoped. Doriot's chances of winning preferment were further lengthened by the growing rivalries with other collaborationist movements, and with Marcel Déat's *Rassemblement Nationale Populaire* (RNP) in particular. Since leaving Vichy in total disillusionment, Déat, in the daily *L'Œuvre*, had kept up a virulent criticism of the government for its lack of collaborationist zeal. He continued to push for the formation of a single, mass party (as well as for a place in government), an idea which, as unity came increasingly to signify the only hope of power, attracted many collaborationist intellectuals to its cause.³² In February 1941, the RNP brought together several collaborationist parties under Déat's leadership.

It was by living up to his image as the man of action that Doriot managed to revive his prestige. In July 1941, along with other collaborationist leaders such as Déat, he played a prominent role in the formation of the *Légion des Volontaires Français*

'entraînement' which marked his progress from the ranks of the *Action Française* to his involvement with Eugène Deloncle and the Milice: see his two volume memoir, *Les Mémoires de Porthos* and *Le Roman Noir de la Droite Française: Les Mémoires de Porthos II* (Paris: Robert Desroches, 1969). In his account of the formation of the Charlemagne division of the Waffen SS, Christian de la Mazière claimed that most men enlisted out of impulse and anger, not out of mature reflection and that it was the faith of those who had enlisted on his advice that led him to volunteer for the Russian front when all was obviously lost: *Le Rêveur Casqué* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1972).

³¹ Compare, for example Burrin's, *La dérive fasciste* which traces a kind of 'twisted road' of individual experience and circumstance and Sternhell's, *Ni droite ni gauche* which follows a long, ideological path.

³² Déat's success was limited: the Germans were not in favour of a mass fascist party in France; the increasingly Nazified RNP never won a large following; and he gained a place in government as Minister for Labour only in March 1944.

(LVF) to fight the Russians on the eastern front. However, unlike any other leader, Doriot himself enlisted and left with the first contingent. The LVF portrayed itself as a social elite: 'l'élite du jugement et de l'action. Elle marche à l'avant-garde du combat européen pour le redressement français'.³³ Legionnaires were the missionary soldiers of the new Europe who would save France by their clear sightedness and determination (which Vichy lacked) to take the struggle to its logical end: full military cooperation with Germany. The LVF aimed to give 'a lesson in energy' to 'a hesitant France' and thereby to restore its pride: 'Ils lui donnent le visage héroïque de la Patrie retrouvée, sur le chemin de l'action, du combat et de l'honneur'.³⁴

For the remainder of the occupation, the PPF used Doriot's active commitment to attack both Vichy and other forms of collaboration. The PPF paper, the *Cri du Peuple*, lamented Vichy's 'plans, doctrine and methodology' that, it said, had killed France's initial enthusiasm for reform.³⁵ As a result, the PPF declared itself wary of any verbal attempt at revolutionary unity and unwilling to participate in 'des rassemblements de pure forme', a clear attack on Déat's RNP and attempt to form a mass party. Instead, the paper declared, the PPF was dedicated to true unity, a unity forged in combat by 'precise action for a single cause'.

The growing activism of the resistance posed a more serious dilemma to collaborationist action, unity and power. Mounting pressure from the German occupation forces for aid in combating the resistance exploited the rivalries between collaborationist groups and encouraged them to compete for favour. But added to this, resistance activity, particularly the programme of assassination, faced the collaborationists with a choice between victimhood and civil war. The dilemma exposed the divisions within groups as their more radical and less savoury elements had fewer qualms about engaging in civil action. As a result of pressure from within as well

³³ Pierre Costantini, *La haute signification de la légion*, LVF Propaganda no. 185 (no publication details), p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

³⁵ Victor Barthélemy, 'Action et Unité', *Cri du Peuple*, 25 June 1943, quoted in his *Du Communisme au Fascisme*, p. 352.

as without the PPF, Doriot agreed in 1944 (reluctantly according to Barthélemy) to form the *groups d'action pour la justice sociale* to combat resistance.³⁶ In the large cities of the south such as Marseille and Nice, where local PPF leaders Sabiani and Meysenc were relatively free of central PPF or government control, the *groups d'action* became little more than independent bands of thugs and criminals.³⁷ While Barthélemy may have exaggerated the qualms of the PPF leadership in engaging in civil action, he was certainly aware in retrospect of the problem of action without power. In his memoirs he claimed to have warned Joseph Darnand against taking the *Milice* into police action against the *Maquis* because of the uncertainties of power and responsibility:

qui dit guerre civile, dit lutte entre le pouvoir et ses adversaires. Or, Joseph, nous savons bien qui sont et où sont les adversaires du pouvoir. Mais où est le pouvoir? Il n'existe plus. Il n'y a à Vichy et dans ses antennes parisiennes qu'une apparence de pouvoir. Parce que ceux qui, légalement d'ailleurs, le détiennent ont peur de l'exercer, ou en tout cas ne l'exercent pas. Tu vas être le bras séculier d'hommes qui n'ont plus la foi.³⁸

Thus, collaborationist action ultimately meant servitude to the Germans—those who held all the power—and an increasing descent into civil war and thuggery.

* * *

Before the defeat of 1904, the call for action was a reaction to a sense of powerlessness. Action in Occupied France meant either resistance or collaboration. Collaboration meant competition for power and, since power was ultimately the gift of the Germans, all action tended towards subservience to German demands. Thus Vichy was always at

³⁶ Barthélemy, *Du Communisme au Fascisme*, p. 310. Barthélemy claims that the PPF directors were reluctant to engage in reprisals because of the possibility of backlash and because of loss of freedom of manoeuvre in relation to the Germans, but their perceived inaction led to grumbings and some loss of allegiance from the rank and file. Barthélemy goes on to claim that Doriot resisted German pressure to form a special force to search out STO dodgers (those who were resisting forced labour in Germany), but that he gave in to the formation of the 'groups d'action' largely because some PPF sections, such as that led by Simon Sabiani in Marseille, were on the point of openly disobeying his policy: pp. 384-5.

³⁷ For the career of Sabiani and his relationship with Doriot and Vichy see Paul Jankowski, *Communism and Collaboration: Simon Sabiani and Politics in Marseille, 1919-1944* (London: Yale University Press, 1989).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

a disadvantage in regard to its Parisian critics who constantly called for greater collaboration. Vichy failed to harness the energy of an increasingly dissatisfied and pillaged nation to its National Revolution. Collaboration meant repression and control: ultimately this was true for Vichy and for the most activist of collaborationists who served German demands closely and who won increasing influence in France. It is an irony of the Occupation that, just when many on the right thought that they at last had the opportunity to make their actions count, their chosen course of action resulted in what they originally sought to avoid—powerlessness.

Chapter 7

Realism

Le réalisme, un réalisme sain, vigoureux, un réalisme qui maintienne un équilibre vivant entre la lumière que projette l'esprit sur les choses et les choses elles-mêmes ... telle est la seule attitude féconde pour l'esprit français.

Jean-Pierre Maxence, 1942.

'Realism' and 'real' were the most frequently used catchwords in Vichy France. Though the meaning of both terms was clear before the defeat, realism and what reformists considered to be real became increasingly incoherent and difficult to define under the Occupation. Realism did not denote one clear ideology or any logical or reasoned position but was a hotchpotch of ideas from various philosophies. The real did not represent any single ideal but had a wide variety of meanings and reformists often appealed to more than one without ever acknowledging any difference or contradiction. The rhetoric of realism, which often overlapped with elements of all the other catchwords and especially the idea of an ordered society, was highly charged and emotive, making clear definition even less likely. The Vichy government, indeed all those who supported reform under the Occupation, fed and benefited from this emotive charge with frequent references to the defeat: France's collapse was the result of liberal, republican and moral weakness, of division and confusion—in short, of the nation's failure to maintain contact with what was real. Like the other catchwords, the real and

realism were largely defined by their antonyms, which only added to the imprecision in their usage. Despite all these difficulties of definition and the various and imprecise ways in which the terms came to be used, proponents of realism claimed that their reforms were positive and, above all, unifying: realism would be the foundation for France's reconstruction.

This chapter analyses the various and often contradictory ways in which reformists in Vichy France used the terms realism and real in order to support their reform agenda. While the analysis does not explore in great depth the historical origins of these terms, it must be acknowledged that, long before the defeat or the crisis years of the 1930s, clear and consistent concepts of realism and the real were well established in right wing thought. Appeals to realism under the Occupation overlaid rather than replaced these earlier meanings and often conflated them in confusing ways; this testifies to the strength and continued influence of earlier concepts but also demonstrates the new political uses of the catchwords as emotive rhetoric.

The origins of the political use of the term 'real' clearly lay with the teachings of Charles Maurras and the *Action Française*. At the end of the nineteenth century, Maurras created the nationalist ideal of *le pays réel* to stand in opposition to what he claimed was the artificial legalism and vague idealism of the Third Republic—*le pays légal*. Maurrasian notions of *la France réelle* and *l'homme réel*, incarnate in the peasant, blood, soil, hierarchy and traditions of the nation, continued to exert a profound political and philosophical influence. The belief in certain core or real values that held the nation together was also deeply rooted in right wing social thought: such values anchored individuals in their family, community and region and made the nation as a whole unified, stable, purposeful and strong. Vichy built on these notions of the real France and core values and sought to reassure the defeated nation through reference to fundamental units of the social fabric, to universal but concrete concerns and basic needs of ordinary people. The appeal to realism also spoke to those who were convinced that the reason for defeat lay in the fact that the nation had lost touch with its

authentic or true identity and with characteristics that made France unique and strong.

However, some reformists under Vichy also exploited other meanings of real and realism in established right wing thought. One characteristic of the real France was the tough clear sightedness that had once made the nation so powerful. Maurrasian realism—along with its idealisation of the peasant and the soil—was above all unsentimental: based on practical needs and eschewing ideological principle, the realist took the hard decisions. The political weakness of the 1930s tended to reinforce such beliefs and served to bring together all those who saw an opportunity for reform after the defeat. However, at least for some of his disciples, the base line of Maurras's political realism, his policy of *la France seule*, became untenable during the 1930s, even before it became impossible under the Occupation. Dissidents had come to believe that France, in order to survive, must be a part of the new, reconstructed Europe and must look forward, not back, to make realistic reforms.

Appeals to realism or the real under the Occupation—even those that drew on established French traditions—could therefore appear contradictory. On the one hand they supported a curious combination of vague and sentimental policies aimed at restoring the real, authentic or fundamental nation and national values and, on the other, hard nosed *realpolitik* justifications of foreign policy decisions and collaboration with the German occupier.

Conflicts in the concept of realism can also be traced through other philosophical lineages on the right. Robert Soucy has connected the teachings of Barrès, which celebrated instinct as the authentic expression of human nature, to the development of fascism in France.¹ The two interpreters of realism, Maurras and Barrès, one inspired by tradition, the other by spontaneity, are not easily compatible. They illustrate two strands within the ideal of realism, essentially different in time and place. What was real and where was it to be found? Was it something that had been lost, that could be rediscovered and reactivated or did a realistic society have to be built anew? These

¹ Soucy, *Fascism in France*, p. 265.

questions underscored a contradiction in the wide appeal of realism and revealed that it was inspired by opposing fears. The first was a feeling that France, indeed all of human society, was moving too fast; progress was outstripping man's ability to cope and was failing to preserve what was truly valuable. The second fear was that France was not keeping up with the powerful new trends in social development and was being left behind by more effective and enthusiastic societies. Such differences inevitably caused problems for those who sought to justify and construct a new society based on its virtues.

Return to Realism

Initially, however, the defeat meant that Vichy did not have to work hard to justify the need to be realistic. The first and greatest champion of realism under the Occupation was Pétain himself and through him the regime established realism as its fundamental philosophy. Pétain's speeches and official propaganda promoted him as the archetypal realist; embodying the virtues of truth, common sense, simplicity, tenacity and hard work, he was without guile or artifice, the man who would tell France what it must hear, not what it wanted to hear and not, as was often repeated, the lies which had done so much harm. This was a realism firmly focused on the present: behind all Vichy's early decision making, especially its political and foreign policy reforms, was a lesson of hard reality, the steps that had to be taken because of past failures. Neither Pétain nor his propagandists made any attempt to define or analyse realism further—this would not have been prudent and would have run counter to the very spirit of the ideal—but, indirectly, Vichy sanctioned a philosophy of realism that drew heavily on tradition. It was the philosophy of the self proclaimed 'man of the land', Gustave Thibon.

Generally unknown before the defeat, Thibon had in fact written for and moved in Catholic, conservative circles for some time. His first book published under the Occupation, *Diagnostics*, was a collection of articles from before the defeat, but it struck a cord with a nation looking for a diagnosis of its collapse and it was widely read.

Thibon was soon said to be a favourite of Pétain and was celebrated by his many reviewers as a 'savant', an autodidact, a peasant winemaker who lived close to the soil: he was wise but was no mere intellectual. Through his books and articles published by Henri Massis in the *Revue Universelle*, Thibon became the nearest Vichy had to an official philosopher. His writings shared much in common in tone and imagery with official propaganda and with Pétain's speeches and, though his ideas were not new, he aroused considerable interest from a wide range of opinion. Thibon's basic philosophy was that France, to regain its strength, had to return to what was real and he reinforced this message in the title of his most celebrated work, *Retour au réel*.²

Retour au réel was published in mid to late Occupation, when the credibility gap between Vichy's rhetoric and its power was all too clear. Not surprisingly then, Thibon claimed that the ideal of realism was paradoxically abstract and confusing: he was no doubt mirroring the confusion of his readers.³ Thibon's realism was very much a part of his solidly traditional and Catholic ideology: 'la pure doctrine catholique libérée de toute déviation moderniste', as one reviewer judged it.⁴ His message of accepting necessity, no matter what uncertainties or hardships that might entail, also served the 'realist' message of Vichy's collaboration which had become increasingly difficult to sustain. Yet Thibon never argued any political position directly. Instead he sought to embody a spirit of realism.

Described by his supporters as a man of simple tastes, Thibon was said to be in close contact with:

ces vastes réserves de fraîcheur et de profondeur que créent dans l'âme la communion étroite avec la nature, la familiarité avec le silence, l'habitude des paisibles cadences, d'une activité accordée aux rythmes primordiaux de l'existence.⁵

² Gustave Thibon, *Retour au réel: nouveaux diagnostics* (Lyon: Lardanchet, 1943), p. V11. Support for this book came from an extremely wide range of right wing opinion, but reviewers always celebrated its style and spirit rather than its detail. For reviews see: Thierry Maulnier, *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 57 (May 1943), pp. 710-3; Jean-Pierre Maxence, *La Gerbe*, 17 Juin 1943, p. 6; René Vincent, *Idées* (January 1944), p. 55; and unnamed reviewer from the Ecole de cadres de la Milice, *Documentation des cadres*, no. 5 (Château d'Uriage, Isère, 1944), p. 42-3.

³ Thibon, *Retour au réel*, p. V11.

⁴ Vincent, in *Idées*, p. 55.

⁵ Gabriel Marcel in his preface to Thibon, *Diagnostics*, p. 3.

He symbolised 'man in the natural order', a being who was not alienated from nature and the eternal qualities and truths inherent in it. It was these qualities which had somehow been betrayed by the fast pace and urban nature of modern civilisation and which had been distorted by intellectualism. What had been lost was simplicity: the stoicism, stability and good sense which were the concrete values inherent in the soil and the men who worked it. A return to this simplicity was the nation's only hope for regeneration. Thibon, the simple man, would withstand whatever misfortune the fates could throw against him:

il conserve le calme et la solidité du paysan qui regarde venir l'orage, chargé peut-être d'une grêle qui détruira sa récolte . . . C'est ce style, plus encore que ce qu'il revêt, qui est un exemple et un encouragement.⁶

Thibon's concept of realism was vague enough to encompass many different strands. His 'diagnoses' of social ills comprised of homilies rather than sustained analysis. In what most closely resembled a definition, however, he claimed: 'l'idée de réalisme nous paraît commandée avant tout par l'idée de relation organique et d'équilibre vital'.⁷ His basic message was one of organic equilibrium, rhythm and integration of moral and social life. In an article entitled 'De l'irréalisme', he defined realism more opaquely as 'l'idée d'échange vital entre le sujet et l'objet' but his meaning is clearer in this article in which he attacks its opposite.⁸ Thibon claimed that the times were characterised by 'irrealism'. Modern society lacked organic unity: it was based on the masses wherein each individual was isolated and had no 'vital ties'. Society was thereby deprived of any solid foundation. Modern man had no self-motivation, originality or potential for spontaneous or creative élan:

⁶ Jacques Madule, 'Le cas de Gustave Thibon', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, nos 37-8 (July 1942), pp. 9-18, p. 16. There is a close similarity to Pétain's early speeches, especially the rural imagery of storm, hail and crop destruction. Madule went on to say that Thibon was not an intellectual in the 'pejorative' sense of the word.

⁷ Thibon, *Retour au réel*, p. VII.

⁸ Gustave Thibon, 'De l'irréalisme', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, no. 57 (May 1943), pp. 641-51; Nlle. Série, no. 58 (May 1943), pp. 744-55, p. 641.

Aucune attache vitale ne relie entre eux les feuilles mortes et les grains de sable, et c'est précisément pour cela qu'ils s'agitent, au moindre caprice de l'air, avec une merveilleuse unanimité apparente. Le vent n'a pas le même effets sur les arbres d'une forêt: la terre où ils entremêlent leurs racines les nourrit et les retient à la fois. Il n'est pas de plus grandiose "mouvement de masses" qu'une tempête de sable dans le désert.⁹

In both his book and article on realism, Thibon argued that modern life had become removed from the 'profound realities' which 'nourish' and sustain man's existence, ties such as land, blood, nation, work and religion. There was, therefore, only dry intercourse between like beings. Man was superficial and vulgar, always seeking either immediate gratification or rest.

Hence, the problem of irrealism was as much moral as social. Asceticism, Thibon felt, was integral to realism and man had a moral responsibility to restrict his opinions to what he was sure of and to guide his conduct according to his capabilities.¹⁰ The unrealistic man was a chameleon, mechanically adapting his interior life to suit his surroundings. He had lost:

cette aisance, cette richesse, cette élasticité intérieures qui sont les fruits de la convergence vers les mêmes réalités centrales et la condition première des échanges organiques.¹¹

Since realism also encompassed harmony and temperance, the unrealistic man was vulnerable, given to fanaticism and instability, passing easily from one extreme to the other. Thus, he could be an unbending conservative or a reckless revolutionary, pro-German 'jusqu'à la bassesse' or pro-English 'jusqu'à la folie'.¹² Realism lay in the middle path, which is not to say the easy path: clearly, this was the road that Vichy was treading.

Thibon's picture of organic realism gave the impression of 'solid foundations' and 'eternal principles': 'un bon sens enraciné dans le concret'.¹³ However, though they

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 643.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 750.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 644.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 648.

¹³ Vincent, review of *Retour au réel*, *Idées*, p. 55.

contended that his philosophy would be the basis for the 'redressement de la pensée' in the new order, neither he nor his supporters acknowledged that it was essentially retrospective and reactionary. Organic realism was a pre-industrial and pre-revolutionary ideal. Thibon's ideas on the simple man were fundamentally anti-intellectual and anti-rational. It was no coincidence, Thibon claimed, that irrationalism was 'infinitely rare' amongst labourers but 'almost the rule' amongst intellectuals.¹⁴ Too much introspection, self-doubt and lack of practicality or application, disturbed the harmonious equilibrium between the faculties and only knowledge that could be truly absorbed and dominated was of any value:

Nous préférons le vieux paysan illettré qui puise sa rude sagesse dans le contact direct avec la réalité que Dieu a faite au déraciné farci de vaines lectures, qui, comme chante Mistral "ne connaît plus l'heure au soleil et à qui les vieux chemins ne disent rien".¹⁵

According to Thibon, the nation did not need large numbers of intellectuals. The primary aim of education, therefore, should not be to create them but to act as a cement to hold together knowledge and culture.

Intellectuals, Progress and the Real

The role of the intellectual in the 'real' world was a theme which was taken up by many right wing intellectuals under the Occupation. Their enquiry was a reflection of their positivist, anti-rational upbringing in the *Action Française* but anti-intellectualism was given a new lease of life by the defeat. The defeat prompted a greater desire for certainty and a single or at least a simpler, practical truth and the government, indeed pro-collaboration forces in general, did not miss the opportunity to exploit that desire. However, this made the position of the intellectual in society all the more ambiguous and their discussions on the topic illustrate the connections and subtle differences in their thinking. In 1942, the journal *Idées* conducted an enquiry into 'intelligence' and

¹⁴ Thibon, 'De l'irréalisme', p. 645.

¹⁵ Thibon, *Retour*, p. XVIII.

published the opinions of several prominent writers. Henri Massis took the opportunity to blame the nation's decadence on the use of intelligence as a tool of destruction, on the equivocation inherent in rationalism and on the withdrawal from reality which was part and parcel of intellectual meditation: what had been lost, he claimed, was 'le goût de l'affirmation virile et féconde'.¹⁶

In the same series of articles, the nonconformist writer Henri Daniel-Rops reproached intellectuals for playing gratuitous games in the realm of pure ideas, undermining the solid virtues of courage, duty, fraternity and devotion.¹⁷ The more radical Jean-Pierre Maxence accused the intellectuals between the wars of contributing to the decadence of the national community by withdrawing from it and encouraging a false and inhuman concept of intelligence:

Il y a une intelligence lumière, il y a une intelligence scalpel. L'une s'applique à voir, à lire, à comprendre le réel, à le délimiter d'abord pour le mieux connaître. L'autre tend à dissocier, à détruire, à disséquer, elle se perd dans d'incessantes analyses sans jamais débaucher sur la synthèse.¹⁸

Maxence claimed that intellectuals had been guilty of neglecting their first duty, lucidity. They had deified reason and analysis and had indulged in idealism to the extent that these had become independent of reality:

Le réalisme, un réalisme sain, vigoureux, un réalisme qui maintienne un équilibre vivant entre la lumière que projette l'esprit sur les choses et les choses elles-mêmes, un réalisme qui exprime vraiment, suivant la vieille formule aristotélicienne, 'l'adéquation de l'intelligence et des choses': telle est la seule attitude féconde pour l'esprit français.¹⁹

The question of the role of the intellectual in the 'real' world also tapped into a long standing debate on progress and its relationship with tradition. This debate was particularly acute in the 1930s amongst a small group of intellectuals whom Jean

¹⁶ 'Enquête sur l'intelligence: réponse de M. Henri Massis', *Idées* (July - August 1942), pp. 54-6, p. 54.

¹⁷ 'Enquête sur l'intelligence: réponse de Daniel Rops', *Idées* (April 1942), pp. 47-9.

¹⁸ 'Enquête sur l'intelligence: réponse de Jean-Pierre Maxence', *Idées* (June 1942), pp. 54-6. Maxence presented the same material in a more detailed argument in *L'Intelligence française devant l'action* (Paris: *Etudes Libres*, Centre Communautaire, 1942), pp. 3-53.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Mariani later referred to as ‘une minorité intelligente, dynamique, mais impuissante’ who believed that man was not adapting well to developments in science, machinery and technology.²⁰ The *Revue Universelle* showed a particular interest in this debate, notably through articles and reviews by Thierry Maulnier. Maulnier, who would continue to write in the same vein after the defeat, defended tradition on the basis that true greatness could be achieved only if a man was restrained by his ties to past which formed his tastes and instincts.²¹ True progress, he asserted, must include what is permanent and durable: ‘la somme d’efforts qui nous a précédés demande une continuation’.²² The essential question, according to Maulnier, was not whether man was increasing his store of knowledge and control over nature, but whether the époque produced superior human beings. His conclusion was not a happy one for the times: man’s achievements on both ‘superior activities’ such as art and literature and in everyday life had declined; and, though he had learnt to use the tools of science, he had embarked on a vain quest to master nature.²³ Real social progress, claimed Maulnier, had to be measured in human terms; it was dependent on personal experience, effort and work: ‘une confrontation personnelle et quotidienne avec la vie’.²⁴

The *Groupe du 9 Juillet*, writing after the February riots in 1934, also warned against the dangers of science for man:

Le développement scientifique des derniers siècles a accru le pouvoir de l’homme sur la nature, et parfois sur les autres hommes, mais a diminué son contrôle sur lui-même. C’est pourquoi la civilisation est aujourd’hui désaxée. Il faut rétablir l’équilibre en développant les sciences de l’homme.²⁵

The concern was that man would become ‘drunk’ with his power of control over the

²⁰ Mariani, *Réforme de l’esprit français*, p. 1.

²¹ Thierry Maulnier, ‘Tradition et culture’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LVII: 6 (June 1934), pp. 756-8.

²² Thierry Maulnier, ‘Tradition et progrès’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXIII: 16 (November 1935), pp. 499-502.

²³ Thierry Maulnier, ‘L’homme devant ses progrès’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXIX: 3 (May 1937), pp. 367-70, p. 368.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

²⁵ Le Groupe de 9 Juillet, *Plan de neuf juillet*, p. 60.

universe, leading himself into obscurity.²⁶ This fear centered on the threat posed to man by machinery. Though Maulnier warned that progress could not be stopped and that machines were neither good nor bad, merely tools for man's designs, there was a strong suggestion in his writing and in the works of many other writers of the time, that man had to be protected from the possibility that 'le moment va venir où l'homme sera prisonnier de ses triomphes techniques'.²⁷ Machines represented rationalism and materialism, which were two key aspects of 'irrealism'. The new machine civilization subjected all forms of activity to the necessities of production, degrading human labour and making man the prisoner of his technological triumphs.²⁸

While critics of scientific progress agreed that man's failure to adapt to it was degrading humankind, it must be noted that a smaller minority agreed that the natural laws of science also contained the solution. The eminent scientist Alexis Carrel argued that man could use scientific progress to understand his true nature and to make him wiser and happier: eugenics would allow man to adapt to the benefits of science and the machine.²⁹ In a graduation speech to an American college in 1937, Carrel aimed his comments towards the creation of a new elite: 'le but ultime de la science doit être non pas la maîtrise du monde matériel, mais la construction des hommes civilisés'.³⁰ This 'construction', he claimed, would be achieved through knowledge, not only of the influence of psychological and physical factors on human development, but also an understanding of the scientific laws of heredity.

The defeat of France may have fuelled the questioning of progress, but it did not give any sharper focus to the argument. Divergences of opinion were ignored as

²⁶ See Maulnier, 'Vivons-nous un siècle de décadence?', p. 118.

²⁷ Thierry Maulnier, *La crise est dans l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1935), p. 201. See also his 'La crise et la machine', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LV111: 9 (August 1934), pp. 376-80.

²⁸ Maulnier, 'La crise et la machine', p. 377.

²⁹ Carrel was a surgeon who, working at the Rockefeller Institute in America, was awarded the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1912 for his work on tissue culture. After the First World War, Carrel became a prophet of human degeneration and a supporter of eugenics. His book, *L'Homme, cet inconnu* (Paris: Plon, 1935) sold 200,000 copies before the war and was reprinted under the Occupation when he was made director of the *Foundation française pour l'étude des problèmes humains*. Carrel's work in the Foundation is explored further in Chapter 11.

³⁰ Alexis Carrel, *La construction des hommes civilisés: discours prononcé en 1937 à Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire* (no publication details).

supporters of realism competed to describe both society's and man's retreat from 'les lois du réel'.³¹ The ideal remained vague. Thibon reiterated the arguments of the 1930s, but was emphatic in his rejection of the notion of human perfectibility.³² His objection was based largely on his Christian beliefs: the modern myth of progress was a caricature of Christian hopes and idealism and materialism were idolatries. Thibon aimed to promote 'organic progress' which was a process of growth through assimilation of valued traditions. Organic progress recognised the interdependence of tradition and change and nourished the human spirit instead of providing simply for man's comfort. Intellectual and material forms of progress were based on the erroneous belief that change was always good and that the new was always built on tradition. Modern thought had not developed along these lines, according to Thibon. Instead, man's psyche was in a 'perpetual movement of emigration', simply abandoning the old for the new: 'un clou chasse l'autre', he proclaimed.³³ Inorganic progress was, therefore, a rupture between past and present. This was what caused man's lack of stable foundations and unity and led to decadence. It encouraged complacency and fatalism instead of constant struggle and, spiritually, it sapped man's creative power. Although progress sought to solve some social wrongs, Thibon claimed, it created many new ills by forcing man to keep up with the pace of material expansion. This turned him into a 'bête de luxe', complicating the surface of his life but creating a 'vide intérieur'.³⁴ The loss of 'social simplicity' had a moral effect too, enabling evil to hide behind more and more complicated and less identifiable masks. Materialism was, therefore, at the core of man's flight from reality:

l'esprit, en s'atrophiant, tend à ne plus connaître et désirer que la matière, et la matière à son tour dégrade l'esprit qu'elle hypnotise.³⁵

³¹ See *Documentation des cadres*, no. 5, pp. 41-3, Vincent's review of *Retour au réel*, in *Idées* and Jean Rolin, 'D'un réalisme moral', in *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, nos 63-4 (August 1943), pp. 239-49, p. 239.

³² Gustave Thibon, 'Réflexions sur le progrès', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, nos 76-7 (March 1944), pp. 161-81.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4.

³⁴ Thibon, *Retour*, pp. 177-9 and *L'Echelle*, p. 173.

³⁵ Thibon, 'De l'irréalisme', p. 753.

Following the defeat, many others also saw in materialism, an explanation for man's loss of control and lack of direction. However, it was the fascist romantics who took up the anti-materialist and anti-machine cause most strongly, following to some extent the Barrèsian emphasis on instinct. Alphonse de Châteaubriant added a strong measure of mysticism in his reaction against the machine age. He claimed that society's problems began when the development of the machine turned man into the servant of materialism:

"La machine vous tuera", m'avait dit en 1904 un Hindou de l'université de Bombay. "Et non seulement la machine, disait-il, mais le père barbare dont elle est effroyablement issue: le matérialisme – la conception materialiste du monde" – une société confondant son activité propre avec l'activité de ses créations matérielles; une société ayant identifié son rythme propre avec le rythme de la circulation de ses richesses; une société appelant son progrès propre le progrès pour lequel elle acquiert les moyens de diminuer le nombre des actes de son intelligence.³⁶

According to Drieu La Rochelle, the effect of machines on man was even more demonic: 'la machine prolongue, amplifie, rend comme irrémédiable la désincarnation de l'homme par le rationalisme'.³⁷ Machines destroyed man's spirituality which distanced him from nature and severed his connection with his physical body which led to the loss of all creativity and inventiveness:

Aujourd'hui, à quoi servent les mains? Mains, pauvres mains, qui pendent mortes à nos côtés. Comment voulez-vous que naissent encore des peintures, alors que les mains sont mortes? Ni non plus des musiciens, ni même des écrivains. Car le style naît pour ceux-ci comme pour tous les autres de la mémoire de tout le corps.³⁸

In much right wing literature of the 1930s and 1940s, the problems of materialism and machine culture were closely linked to the growth of large industrial cities. Cities were inherently evil. Urbanization was at the core of irrationalism (and decadence in general) since cities were morally as well as physically unhygienic and removed from

³⁶ Châteaubriant, *Cahiers*, pp. 186-7.

³⁷ Drieu La Rochelle, *Notes pour comprendre*, p. 79.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

nature:

cette splendeur qui s'appelle le ciel, le ciel avec le grand silence de Dieu, avec le jour, avec la nuit. Ne me dites pas qu'en ville ils existent aussi bien. En ville ils sont relégués; la ville leur tient tête, les maintenant à distance.³⁹

This perceived deficiency in urban life was, of course, touted by those Maurrasian 'reactive nationalists' who saw the society of the ancien régime as the basis for past world dominance.⁴⁰ Traditionalists and romantics harked back to the old order which was not subject to the destabilising influences of revolutionary ideas and mass politics and idealised the rural past; but at least some of those who espoused the rural life as a cure for urban decadence were aware of the clash between sentimentality and the real world.⁴¹ Furthermore, in the 1930s, many fascist writers, nonconformists and urban groups also criticised the growth of cities. The novels of Céline are a condemnation of the degraded and apathetic urban life.⁴² Drieu La Rochelle was less negative, but nevertheless foresaw a mass exodus from the towns to the country and a new philosophy of life based on a renewed appreciation of sport and athleticism as in medieval and classical times. He lamented:

la révolution urbaine qui avait arraché l'homme à la nature et à la campagne, qui avait séparé son âme et son corps et flétri chacun séparément. La révolution inverse allait ramener l'homme des villes vers la campagne, allait lui faire retrouver la vie totale dans la fusion du corps et de l'âme, lui permettre de recharger la raison d'une force d'exaltation et de dépassement . . . L'homme soudain jette un regard d'effroi et d'horreur sur la ville et sur lui-même tel que la ville l'a fait. Il a honte de son corps, de la laideur, de sa faiblesse. Il ne peut plus supporter la gêne et la souffrance qu'engendre l'inaction.⁴³

Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, in their examination of decadence, agreed that

³⁹ René Benjamin, *Vérités et rêveries sur l'éducation* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1941), p. 59.

⁴⁰ Ernst Nolte, *Three faces of fascism* (New York: Mentor, 1969), pp. 143-5.

⁴¹ Thierry Maulnier 'La tragédie paysanne' (comments on Daniel Halévy's *Visites aux paysans du centre*), *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXI: 3 (May 1935), pp. 371-5, p. 374. Edouard Delbecq, 'Un village qui s'éteint: I-IV', *Revue Universelle*, Nlle. Série, nos 39-40 (July - December 1942), pp. 138-51; Nlle. Série, no. 41 (July - December 1942), pp. 235-43; Nlle. Série, no. 42 (July - December 1942), pp. 312-21; Nlle. Série no. 43 (July - December 1942), pp. 401-8, p. 407.

⁴² Céline claimed the bigger and higher the city, the greater the problems—hence the nature of his hero's experiences in New York in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. See also Robert Soucy, *Fascism in France*, pp. 449-50.

⁴³ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Notes pour comprendre*, pp. 131-2.

urbanization had led to 'la régression de la vitalité française' but they saw the cause in the undermining of individualism, liberty and personal dignity which had destroyed man's revolutionary instinct for change.⁴⁴ Even such organizations as the PPF, born amidst working class areas of Paris, condemned the cities as 'leprous' and 'suffocating' and proposed a programme of resettlement and reintegration of city and country ways of life. This, the organisation claimed, would achieve 'le sauvetage de la race par le retour à des conditions de vie enfin naturelles'.⁴⁵ Indeed, the party went further than this, claiming the nation's strength, health, morality and energy came from the peasantry:

la société française repose sur la paysannerie, sur le village, sur la terre des vivants et des morts ... La paysannerie, pour nous, c'est à la fois l'âme et la semelle de la nation.⁴⁶

Despite this rhetoric, the location of the real in rural and peasant life undoubtedly caused problems for those whose support was urban, problems which were exacerbated under the Occupation when many collaborationist opponents of Vichy chose to return to Paris. So why then, did so many laud this rural idyll of the real France? Under the Occupation, the explanation lies partly in the fact that there was little inspiration to be drawn from the unsentimental, hard nosed policies of collaboration: they described a road, not an ideal. The rural ideal also had tenacious pre-war roots. Realism had become closely tied to a conception of national identity or vocation and this could be exploited under the Occupation.

The Real France

Variouly called 'le génie français' or 'la subsistance de la France', many on the right feared that France's identity and strength were under threat—a fear made more acute in the face of the new nationalisms in Italy and Germany. Many saw the desertion of the countryside not merely as an economic problem but as a moral and identity issue for the

⁴⁴ Aron and Dandieu, *Décadence*, p. 52.

⁴⁵ Marion, *Programme du PPF*, pp. 83-90.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3.

whole nation.⁴⁷ There was a broad consensus that the young, being so easily lured from the land by the attractions of cinema, entertainment and material comfort, no longer possessed the seriousness that was integral to realism: an agreed solution, however, was nowhere to be found.⁴⁸ What had to be instilled in the young was a love of work—*travail*—and a love of the soil—*la terre*: these were powerful and emotive passwords in the 1930s which in themselves took on the proportions of mythology.

In such literature, physical work, most often performed close to the soil, maintained man's contact with reality and nature. Work also had moral benefits: it lent health, pride, dignity and independence to man, brought its own reward and promoted respect for others. This view owed a great deal to the widespread influence of the moral philosopher, Charles Péguy. Julian Jackson has called Péguy 'the confluence of many different Frances' and, since his ideas were adopted—albeit selectively—by all elements of collaboration and the Resistance, he was the 'perfect emblem' for France's *années noires*.⁴⁹ Péguy praised the many and rich traditions of France but, above all, he celebrated rural tradition and artisan labour, a cult which was adapted by many: traditionalists borrowed from them to explain the stability and harmony of the past; revolutionaries used a mythology of work as the impetus for fundamental change. Under the Occupation, when the exploitation of the moral work ethic was vitally important to all elements of collaboration, these two messages were often shamelessly mixed. The writer and long time proponent of Franco-German cultural ties, Alfred Fabre-Luce, published his *Anthologie de la nouvelle Europe* in which he sought to uncover the roots of the Nazi New European Order in French thought and literature.

⁴⁷ Lucien Corpechot, 'De la campagne à la ville', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXVIII: 21 (February 1937), pp. 443-6, p. 445. Humphery d'Honfroi, 'Retour à la terre', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXXV: 18 (December 1938), pp. 749-53, p. 749.

⁴⁸ Though many realised the attractions of the city for the young, there was disagreement as to what should be done about it. The PPF, for example, argued that the village and the city should be integrated to produce new regional 'centres' which would have the advantages of both: parks, wide roads and stadiums for the health of the cities and technology and culture for the cleanliness and education of the country: Marion, *Programme du PPF*, pp. 89-90. Similarly, Maulnier thought that the spread of machine technology and new forms of entertainment would lead to rural repopulation: 'La tragédie paysanne', p. 375. However, others, as in the case of Delebecque, resisted any such changes which would fail to restore the love of work in the young: 'Un village', p. 406.

⁴⁹ Jackson, *France*, pp. 4-6. Vichy France celebrated Péguy the moral philosopher and ignored his socialist sympathies.

Fabre-Luce, who imagined a cultured, sophisticated and civilized collaboration, quoted extensively from Péguy on the value of physical work and claimed in his preface:

La nouvelle Europe considère le travail, non comme un mal nécessaire, une expiation d'une faute originelle, mais comme l'élément fondamental de la vie, qui lui donne son sens et sa dignité.⁵⁰

Drieu La Rochelle, the fascist collaborationist, had a less lofty view of labour but he saw work and revolution as the same force. He declared, 'Rien ne résiste au travail des hommes ... Il y a toujours de quoi suer'.⁵¹ Both saw work as the foundation of a new future for France.

However, the most powerful symbol of the essential link between work and reality was the peasant. Despite his urban affiliations and hopes for fundamental change in the future, Drieu also wrote that it was only in the 'work of the fields' that the 'divine effects' of labour could still be seen. Society was suffering from its decline.⁵² For the fascist as well as the traditionalist, before and after the defeat, the peasant was the 'universal artisan'; self sufficient, needing and depending on nothing except nature and his own labour. Peasant labour was special because it was elemental. All literature of the inter-war years and the Occupation that celebrated peasant virtues, spoke of the 'concrete' values that such labour imbued, especially simplicity and tenacity. Traditionalists may have emphasised his frugality and balance, his deeply rooted traditions which meant stability, but others saw in the peasant the ability to rebuild from nothing except the soil of France.

A mythology of the soil grew during France's dark years out of a broadly shared patriotism which sought to define the essential France. Following the Great War and the growth of the veterans' leagues, it was fed by the spirit of the trenches: self sacrifice, solidarity, camaraderie and devotion to a cause which rose above the moral corruptions of society and transcended the divisions of class and politics. A spiritual quest also

⁵⁰ Fabre-Luce, *Anthologie de la nouvelle Europe*, p. xxii.

⁵¹ Drieu La Rochelle, *Ne plus attendre*, p. 50.

⁵² Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Notes pour comprendre*, p. 85.

imbued the mythology of the soil for young Catholics and the nonconformists in the 1930s who sought to uncover, not only the fundamental elements of the nation but also of mankind. As Thierry Maulnier claimed:

ce qui est en cause, c'est quelque chose de plus durable et de plus primitif que la nation elle-même, ce sont les éléments principaux de la condition humaine.⁵³

Under the Occupation the belief in the unique, spiritual power of France did not decline—or at least no collaborator was willing to admit it—and it brought together disparate personalities and ideals. Paul Baudouin, Vichy's first foreign minister, espoused Christian and Latin nationalism and saw France's spiritualism as a fundamental aspect of the national character and the basis by which France could regain its importance in the world.⁵⁴ René Benjamin, the prolific propagandist for the régime, described France's vocation as teacher, missionary and artist, the three French 'specialities' being 'comprendre et expliquer avec esprit, donner à plein cœur, faire de l'art'.⁵⁵ Similarly, Marcel Déat, the political player, ex-socialist and ultra-collaborationist, touted a vision of national 'plénitude spirituelle et de grandeur morale' in a new, collective Europe under German hegemony in which France, the philosopher and teacher, would 'define the rules' and rediscover the 'true face' of man.⁵⁶

Moving Towards a New Reality

Before the defeat, much realist literature looked to the past and to tradition in an attempt to define the essential strengths of a now decadent France. Ironically, few realists focused on the present. Nonconformists were more likely to do so and Francis, Maulnier and Maxence in *Demain la France*, praised nationalism as the supreme expression of political realism because it led men 'de ne point ignorer la vie, d'observer

⁵³ Maulnier, 'La tragédie paysanne', p. 373.

⁵⁴ Baudouin, 'Les données du problème', p. 579.

⁵⁵ René Benjamin, *L'homme à la recherche de son âme* (Paris: Plon, 1943), p. 307.

⁵⁶ Marcel Déat, 'Vocation de la France' in *Perspectives françaises*, pp. 24-25. (The article was originally published in *l'Œuvre*, 23 August 1940.)

les faits et d'en définir les particularités'.⁵⁷ Some, especially those who became more radical and activist like Jean-Pierre Maxence, eventually went further in their focus on the present. The defeat brought a further change of emphasis and a need to focus on the future. Under the Occupation Maxence argued that realism was essentially a twentieth century movement, respecting tradition but not following it and, above all rejecting idealism:

Alors que le réalisme fait les créateurs, l'idéalisme fabrique les "intellectuels". Alors que le réalisme enfante les grandes pensées efficaces, l'idéalisme débite des systèmes. Une pensée réaliste combat, une pensée idéaliste discourt. L'esprit réaliste est tragique, l'esprit idéaliste ne se révèle qu'éloquent.⁵⁸

The publications of the *Centre Communautaire*, to which Maxence was a contributor, condemned traditionalism for denying all progress, energy and construction. Traditionalism was superficial, rigid and incapable of dealing with the present:

Le traditionalisme commet la seule faute qui ne pardonne jamais: il viole les lois de la nature. Le marxisme ignore la continuité de la vie. Le traditionalisme en ignore le mouvement.⁵⁹

Even Drieu, in criticising 'ivory tower' intellectuals, attacked not only their rationalism but also their failure to face up to the harsh realities of everyday life.⁶⁰ It was the same sentiment that led Marcel Déat to rail against occupied France's mania for detective stories, rather than confronting the problems of building a new France.⁶¹ What seemed to be of importance to Drieu, Déat and other fascist intellectuals such as Robert Brasillach, was the clear and the concrete and this went much further than the

⁵⁷ Francis, Maulnier and Maxence, *Demain la France*, pp. 91-2.

⁵⁸ See Maxence's review of *Retour au réel* in *La Gerbe*. Maxence himself admitted that his article was not so much a review of the book as an attempt to situate realism in the movement of contemporary thought. He placed Thibon in the tradition of Barrès, Maurras, Claudel and Péguy, sounding the death knell to nineteenth century idealism which was guilty of 'mutilation' of the real by its tendency to 'hypertrophier le moi au détriment des liens sociaux'.

⁵⁹ *Etudes communautaire*, no. 6 (Paris: Centre Communautaire, nd.), pp. 41-3. The *Centre Communautaire*, 13 rue Lafayette, produced seven issues of this journal. Contributors were listed as Martial Buisson, Serge Dairaines, Marcel Delanney, Maurice de la Gatinais, Jean-Pierre Maxence, Roger Mouton and Maxime Poinsignon.

⁶⁰ See Robert Soucy, *Fascism in France*, p. 289.

⁶¹ Marcel Déat's editorial in *L'Œuvre*, 30 septembre 1940.

return to the values of 'la France réel'. Even before the defeat, their concept of realism was bound up with the appeal of National Socialism in Germany and Fascism in Italy, specifically, with their energy, force and success. This success implied the need to be actively involved with immediate problems: with the realities of the new nationalism and mass politics in the 1930s and, after the defeat, with collaboration and active involvement in the war.

Though it is true to say that the call for realism reached the height of its appeal after the defeat, it was already an emotive password in the 1930s, particularly amongst discontents or dissidents from traditional political parties who used it together with 'action'. Realism indicated impatience with the old parties but also reflected the fear that France was being overtaken by new forces which were more relevant to the modern world; unless the nation could keep up with these changes, it would be incapable of ever solving its problems. For many dissidents, especially of the left, the loss of realism was almost synonymous with the loss of progressive policy and action. However, this fear of loss of realism was particularly strong amongst some of the younger members of the *Action Française*. Loubet del Bayle has described in his work on the nonconformists of the early thirties, how the sudden breakdown in economic, political and international stability led to a perceived need for a more direct involvement in politics and economics and a greater concern for concrete, social (rather than intellectual) problems.⁶² Prior to this, the discussions of the *Cercle Proudhon* and the energies of Geroges Valois had attempted to make the *Action Française* more relevant to the working class, but the organization's continued neglect of its social dimensions led many to conclude that its dogma was insufficient for the times. As Weber has pointed out, Maurras tolerated a wide range of dissidence so long as a 'superficial coincidence' of ideas was maintained, so not all those who felt this lack of contact with the real world went so far as to attack

⁶² Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes*, p. 25 gives the following quote from Emmanuel Mournier's 'Réflexions sur le personalisme', *Synthèse*, 4 (1947): 'Une époque s'achevait: L'époque éblouissante de l'efforescence littéraire de l'après guerre ... Il n'avait pas apporté à l'homme la lumière d'un destin nouveau...La génération des années 30 allait être une génération sérieuse, grave, occupée de problèmes, inquiète d'avenir'.

Maurras directly or to sever all ties with the organization.⁶³ One of those who did, however, was Henry Charbonneau who later went on to join Deloncle's collaborationist movements, the MSR and the RNP. He wrote in his memoirs:

En revanche en matière sociale on ne nous enseignait que les principes très généraux. Non pas qu'à l'*Action Française* l'on pratiquât un égoïsme de classe, mais peu sensibles à l'idée de progrès, sceptiques quant à l'évolution de la "personne humaine", méfiants au seul mot de "socialisme", tout ce qui était grève, syndicats, actions revendicatives, nous était suspect. Au fond nous avions quand même un vieux réflexe bourgeois. D'ailleurs à notre avis tous ces problèmes devaient être résolus d'eux mêmes le jour où la monarchie serait rétablie!⁶⁴

The most trenchant criticism of Maurras came after the defeat from Lucien Rebatet in *Les Décombres* and it caused a stir when published mid way through the Occupation.⁶⁵ Rebatet found that the *Action Française* maintained its influence through 'équivoques soigneusement entretenues'.⁶⁶ Maurras, he felt, was too satisfied with what he had achieved and was content with mere opposition. He showed only 'le refus obstiné, ressemblant fort à une dérobarde, de considérer en face les réalités les moins inéluctables'.⁶⁷ He held in contempt the human 'herd' and had faith only in the power of his own ideas. But, Rebatet asked, what were his ideas?

Derrière le paravent du royalisme, derrière l'échauffage des traités, de thèses, de complications, d'histoires, de polémiques et de philosophies dressé en l'honneur d'un mythe de monarchie, on découvrait le néant: pas un embryon d'espoir, de manœuvre, pas même l'ombre d'un but.⁶⁸

For some, the *Action Française's* lack of realism meant the lack of any practical application for its ideas and its inability or unwillingness to extend its appeal.

⁶³ Weber, *Action Française*, p. 421.

⁶⁴ Charbonneau, *Les Mémoires de Porthos*, p. 77.

⁶⁵ Part of the appeal of *Les Décombres* was that it traced a familiar path for those who had passed from the *Action Française* down the road of collaboration. Charbonneau claimed he could have written it himself, so close were his own experiences (*Mémoires*, p. 161.) Similar evidence of the dissatisfaction with the *Action Française* is present in the memoirs of Christian de la Mazière who fought for Germany in the Waffen SS. La Mazière claimed that he wanted a revolution for social justice and grew tired of Maurras's 'punctilious conservatism': *Ashes of Honour* (London: Allan Wingate, 1974), p. 12.

⁶⁶ Rebatet, *Les Décombres*, p. 112.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

However, these concerns also reflected the attraction of fascism which, by the mid-1930s, seemed to be successful in winning both political power and mass support. For Rebatet, and perhaps for many like him, realism hinged increasingly on such success: power and enthusiasm reflected ‘le robuste et tenace réalisme de Hitler’.⁶⁹ Rebatet’s interpretation of realism had something in common with the ‘organic’ ideas espoused by Thibon and his supporters through the vocabulary of recovery and health. He claimed he saw in his journeys to Germany:

le retour le plus naturel à la santé et à l’équilibre d’une nation qui, tout entière, catholiques compris, célèbre dans la joie la guérison politique.⁷⁰

However, Rebatet also admired and was attracted by what he saw as strength, decisiveness and ruthlessness in Hitler’s realism. Of the ‘Night of the Long Knives’ he wrote: ‘je compris cette foudroyante justice, ce farouche nettoyage, à notre piteuse foirade de journées de février’.⁷¹ Success was the key factor and, in a sense, this is what led some French intellectuals and power seekers to equate realism with practicality and opportunity and to march further down the path of collaboration towards the Nazi New Order.⁷² Jacques Doriot, for example, when confronted in 1941 with the theory that Britain would not fall, is said to have remarked to his colleagues:

Nous ne sommes pas, tu le sais, des collaborationnistes inconditionnels. Nous avons pris à cet égard, une position réaliste, sans tenir compte de certaines affinités idéologiques que nous pouvons avoir avec tels ou tels aspects du national-socialisme. Nous nous déterminons uniquement en fonction de l’intérêt de la France. Je crois à la victoire de l’Allemagne ...⁷³

At the height of the Nazi domination of Europe, many of those who had been attracted to fascism in the thirties saw their collaboration in terms of such practical realism.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷² Richard Cobb sees collaboration as largely ‘accidental’ and ‘temporary’, being the result of many ‘golden opportunities’ offered to people at all levels of society by the defeat. Of course, he asserts, these opportunities for success were much more tempting to those already in positions of power: ‘it is a natural assumption among those used to authority and obedience to consider themselves indispensable’: Cobb, *French and Germans*, pp. 72-4.

⁷³ Barthélemy, *Du communisme au fascisme*, p. 221.

Alfred Fabre-Luce, who dedicated the first chapter in his *Anthologie de la nouvelle Europe* to 'la première vertu', realism, chose many of his selected readings for their justification of force in the name of the 'sovereign good' of the people.⁷⁴ Horrors of the Occupation, such as the hostage and reprisal question, came to be accepted in the name of this lack of sentimentality, for as Lucien Combelle declared in answer to the question 'fasciste ou pas fasciste?':

Dans une Europe fasciste, la France doit être fasciste . . . Dans une Europe qui va se bâtir sur un certain style, la France adoptera ce style, ou elle disparaîtra.⁷⁵

This 'collaborationist realism' was an attitude of practicality and opportunism which belied the 'avenues of enthusiasm' by which many Frenchmen claimed to have come to fascism. Essentially, it was a pessimistic view, one which focused entirely in the present:

le fascisme, politiquement et moralement, est la négation des grandes principes, ceux que Fontenoy, l'autre jour, dissociait allégrement en évoquant le mythe du progrès. Parce que le fascisme affirme que l'homme, étant plus mauvais que bon, a besoin de quelques sévères disciplines. Parce que le fascisme a changé l'ordre des valeurs en plaçant les devoirs avant les droits. Le fascisme, dans son essence, a posé le doigt sur la plaie.⁷⁶

Fascism had turned reality upside down. The pain of the upheaval was the new reality: in this belief, Vichy and the ultra-collaborationist were not so different.

⁷⁴ Fabre-Luce, *Anthologie*.

⁷⁵ Lucien Combelle, 'Fasciste ou pas fasciste?', *Revolution Nationale*, 7 June 1942. For realism as lack of sentimentality see Soucy, *Fascism in France*, p. 296.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter 8

Realism under Occupation

Réalisme; voilà la première vertu des reconstituteurs de l'Europe.
Alfred Fabre-Luce, 1942.

The Vichy government exploited the call for greater realism to the full. In the aftermath of the defeat, the language of Thibon's principles of organic realism—stability, perseverance, tradition—offered comfort to a confused population. At the same time, the government established its power, justified its most unpopular policies and developed collaboration in the name of unsentimental necessity. Vichy ran both lines simultaneously, unconcerned that one often contradicted the other. The dynamics of power and collaboration shaped France's future but the National Revolution also aimed to regenerate France through returning, as its adopted philosophy stated it must, to what was real. Realism, being such a broad concept, was used to justify many reform agendas, but this chapter will focus on two main policies that were aimed at restoring Vichy's ideal or essential France.

The new regime promised to found itself entirely on realistic principles and, through the National Revolution, to reaffirm the fundamental social attachments of '*travail, famille, patrie*'. These were the 'real' bases of national stability, not the vagaries of ideology that the Republic had enshrined. The ideals of realism pervaded all

Vichy policies and held them together with the promise of restoring to France a secure and revitalised concept of its national character and vocation: through this rhetoric of realism, Vichy promised the nation strength, confidence and unity. Realist ideas were integral to labour and corporatist reform (drawing on the mythologies of *travail* and *la terre*) but at the core of Vichy's vision were the policies of return to the land and the family: these were the cornerstones of Vichy's real France.

Running parallel to policies of collaboration which followed the realities of power, Vichy instituted a type of state-sponsored traditionalism, which gave the impression of ignoring them. Its realist policies were blatantly backward looking; their very names—*retour à la terre*, *retour au foyer*—suggested a need to go back to the lost ideals of the soil and the home or hearth. This was not the pragmatic and forward looking response that some radicals had hoped for. The soothing language of these policies, their promise of protection and emphasis on restoration of strength and stability gave little sign of the probing of painful wounds that radicals favoured in order to bring about revolutionary change. Certainly, the regime attempted to keep alive the pain of the defeat in order to persecute those left wing figures of the Third Republic whom it held responsible, but the Riom trials simply reopened old political sores and threatened to reveal truths that Vichy could not tolerate. Vichy's realist policies were also limited in that they were directed to a narrow constituency: rural, family and employer oriented, they showed little promise of the unity that some intellectuals of the 1930s had found most appealing in the realistic ideal. Vichy's realistic policies were therefore bound to raise objections amongst those who conceived, no matter how hazily, of a more diverse, pragmatic or revolutionary society.

Despite this, the government managed to all but monopolise the claim to be realistic, at least during the first half of the Occupation. There are several reasons for this. The first is that, in the months following the defeat, there was a popular acceptance of France's defeat (few saw other options) and a reaction against the Third Republic and its apparent failure to protect the nation. Vichy was seen as a French

government on 'free' soil and it gained its strength from the popularity of Pétain and the unity that this provided. Vichy had the greatest, if not the only claim to represent the nation. Hence, the mood following the defeat and the lack of alternatives in 1940 gave the government an edge of pragmatism and even a reputation for *realpolitik* which, as Andrew Shennan argues, contrasted with the 'idealist' resisters who failed to recognise the German victory.¹ This pragmatism and possession of power also gave the government an edge over other idealists who wanted the full and immediate acceptance of German hegemony and National Socialist ideals. Fundamentally, of course, Vichy's power and pragmatism depended on and served the German occupier.

The success of Vichy's interpretation of realism was therefore due to the fact that there was little opposition to it in the early months of the Occupation. On one hand, broad agreement on such all-encompassing principles made precise criticism of realistic policies difficult, especially since more radical opinion in Paris was so divided. Examination of the collaborationist newspapers shows that opposition followed a tortuous path in trying to pick a way between the government and the Occupier. On the other hand, critics were to some extent deprived of a voice in the early Occupation by Vichy's 'pragmatic conceit'. Vichy's realism was so exclusive that it denied not only those who disagreed with it in the present but also those who had in the past agreed with it. In spite of its retrospective outlook, Vichy's realism seldom acknowledged its precedents, and then only when it suited. In this way, Vichy built its own ideological ancestry.

Vichy's early popular success in monopolising realism was to equate it with the nation. All Vichy's realist policies were aimed at restoring a sense of national revival and continuity. The tradition of nationalism that Vichy's realism drew upon cut across a wide ideological spectrum and had immediate appeal. It 'promised to transcend the

¹ Shennan, *Rethinking France*, p. 22. Shennan goes on to show that, although this 'pragmatic conceit' gave the disparate elements at Vichy a unifying bond, 'it lapsed inexorably into defeatism' by lowering the 'national ambition'. He also shows how the greater realities of the war turned all collaborators into 'perverse idealists' since they proved 'unable or unwilling to make a pragmatic adjustment in policy': see pp. 23-5. This does not mean, however, that Vichy's policy aims and those of the Occupier were entirely synonymous: they were not as Vichy's realism was not entirely pragmatic.

anxieties of the modern age' and offered the attractions of the 'immutabilities' of land and tradition.² It pre-dated the defeat but helped to reconcile the nation to it; it was the mythology of the soil.

Retour à la Terre

From the earliest days of the Occupation, Pétain's speeches established the soil as the fundamental mythology of the National Revolution. The soil meant truth and integrity, certainty and stability. Containing the seeds of the nation's true 'force', it was vital to France's regeneration:

Je hais les mensonges qui vous ont fait tant de mal. La terre, elle, ne ment pas. Elle demeure votre recours. Elle est la patrie elle-même. Un champ qui tombe en friche, c'est une portion de France qui meurt. Une jachère de nouveau emblavée, c'est une portion de France qui renaît.³

By such appeals to the absolute and universal, Vichy obscured France's painful present and immediate past. In this sense the appeal of the soil was ahistorical. Without acknowledging any debt to Thibon, Pétain combined rural metaphors of ploughing, sowing and harvesting with references to the powerful, often brutal but eternal force of nature in an attempt to inspire perseverance:

Il arrive qu'un paysan de chez nous voie son champ dévasté par la grêle. Il ne désespère pas de la moisson prochaine. Il creuse avec la même foi le même sillon pour le grain futur.⁴

Though such homilies tended to fade from Pétain's later speeches, towards the end of the Occupation he continued to portray the soil as the fundamental patriotism, reminding the nation, that he had never abandoned it. His supporters continued to use the soil as a symbol of constancy and a call for unity:

² George L. Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1980), 'Introduction: Nationalism and Human Perceptions', pp. 1-18.

³ Pétain, speech of 25 June 1940.

⁴ Pétain, speech of 23 June 1940.

Avec son sens du réel, du vécu, du concret, qui ne l'abandonne jamais, même au milieu de ses plus graves préoccupations, le Maréchal voit, dans la Terre, la base de la Patrie: terre de nos "pères", symbol vivant, permanent de la continuité et de l'unité.⁵

Vichy's patriotism also drew heavily on old traditions. References to Joan of Arc and her devotion to the French soil were used liberally to bolster unity, faith and fidelity.⁶ Both Joan and Pétain were made to represent the soldier/peasant, the cultivator and defender of the soil.⁷ The link with the soil and the fallen soldier also drew heavily on the spirit of the *union sacrée* (which, for obvious reasons, was not openly exploited) and the spirit of the trenches (which was). The soil, for which the soldier had fought, had also been his protector. Camaraderie, self-sacrifice, solidarity and devotion to a common cause were said to be the important lessons of the war that France had failed to heed in the 1930s and which now had to be learned.⁸

Vichy also wooed popular nationalism by encouraging an atmosphere of rural *fête*, especially folkloric traditions which could be said to have sprung from the soil itself. The government declared official celebration days such as for Joan of Arc and 'the mother' and they were supplemented by Pétain's carnival tours around the countryside. On such occasions the government promoted the wearing of traditional costumes which were seen as manifestations of the spirit of the soil. Vichy also promoted pilgrimages and the study of local folklore, customs and history.⁹ All this was aimed at captivating

⁵ Allengry, *La philosophie sociale et politique du Maréchal*, p. 8.

⁶ For an exploration of the pliability of the Joan of Arc mythology before the war see Martha Hanna, 'Iconography and Ideology: Images of Joan of Arc in the Idiom of the Action Française, 1908-1931', *French Historical Studies*, vol. XIV:2 (Fall 1985), pp. 215-39. For further exploration of Joan of Arc as a patriotic, feminine symbol in Vichy propaganda, see Chapter 11, footnote 44.

⁷ Benjamin declared that only the peasant and the soldier lived a 'true' life; *Les Sept Etoiles*, p. 97.

⁸ See Robert Soucy, 'France: Veterans' politics between the wars', in Stephen R. Ward, *The War Generation* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1975). The influence of Barrès was significant. Pétain thought that war had important lessons to teach to the young and wanted to add responsibility for education to his first active political role as minister for war in the Doumergue government.

⁹ See Christian Faure, *Folklore et Révolution Nationale: Doctrine et Action sous Vichy (1940-1944)*, doctoral thesis, University of Lyon 2, vol. 2, 1986, p. 670. This thesis has been published under the title *Le Projet Culturel de Vichy: folklore et Révolution Nationale 1940-44* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989). Also by the same author, 'Pèlerinage ou mise en représentation de la faveur populaire: le pèlerinage de la jeunesse du 15 août 1942 au Puy-en-Velay', *Cahiers d'Histoire*, vol. XXI (1986), pp. 23-39; 'Le costume folklorique: décor de la Révolution Nationale (1940-1944)', 112^e Congrès nationale des sociétés savantes, Lyon, 1987, *Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. I (1987), pp. 427-38; 'Le Chantier 1425: enquête d'architecture rurale: la

popular enthusiasm and, from the German point of view, gave legitimacy to Vichy in an acceptable and innocuous form of patriotism.

So long as Vichy's leaders remained the pragmatic choice for the Occupier and so long as the National Revolution expressed its nationalism in acceptable ways, opponents of the regime in Paris found criticism difficult. However, when Vichy attempted to form more concrete policies based on its realist ideals, this was a different matter. Despite the problems of opposition, there was criticism.

Vichy aimed to facilitate a return to the soil through regionalist reforms. Although the conditions of the defeat and Occupation demanded some administrative reform, the National Revolution sought to go well beyond immediate and pragmatic concerns in its regionalist policy. Through reorganisation of the way in which France was physically divided and administered, Vichy claimed to restore to the nation some measure of its former strength and vitality. It cannot be said that there was any great groundswell of enthusiasm for regionalism. Policy was made and imposed from above. However, it was widely acknowledged amongst supporters of the National Revolution that the source of social renovation lay somewhere in the French countryside and that the benefits of returning to that source would be both cultural and economic. But plans for decentralisation soon bogged down in discussions over administrative and political reform, partly because the government sought to organise a process of consultation and partly because it found several schools of regionalist thought, often overlapping, which pre-dated the Occupation but which were further complicated by it.

The traditionalist school of thought adhered to the pre-revolutionary provincial organisation, the Maurrassiens emphasising the provincial asphyxiation caused by the centralising control of the 'Jacobin' departments. Heavily imbued with the mythology of the soil, traditionalists saw the provinces as natural cultural and economic divides which were part of the land itself—'tirées des entrailles même du sol' as Caziot, the

consecration de l'ethnologie rurale française par le régime de Vichy', paper presented to the Association des Ruralistes Français (Amiens), Colloque Nationale, 1985.

minister for Agriculture, put it.¹⁰ They lamented the loss of cultural diversity which was being eroded by centralised education and by the drain of the young elite to Paris, which also exacerbated the provinces' commercial and economic subjugation. Their concern was reflected in a revival of sentimental attachment to local language, literature and folklore, in the vein of Frédéric Mistral, the celebrated nineteenth century poet of Provence who in 1854 founded the Félibrige School of Language and Culture. However, there was also a revival in interest in the writings of other regionalists such as Péguy, Claudel and Henri Pourrat which sometimes carried a stronger social message. The Le Play school of thought saw the province as integral to the natural social hierarchy, coming after the family and the commune and before the nation.¹¹ Nor was all regionalist thinking purely right wing: Proudhon supported decentralisation in order to combat unwieldy administration and excessive control caused by the nationalisation of industry. He hoped to bring real political and economic power back to the local unit in a form of socialism which was not the aim of the traditionalists. Superimposed on all these theoretical tendencies, the German-imposed geographical divisions and the dislocation and strains of the defeat caused immediate difficulties for government administrators and fears for the integrity of French soil.

All these arguments and pressures were present at Vichy and, until the return of Laval in 1942, there was a surprising level of debate, albeit ineffectual and somewhat oblivious to the real context of power.¹² Essentially, the argument centered around two areas. The first was whether or not the new regional divisions should be based on the pre-Revolutionary provinces or whether and how far their boundaries, number and size should be altered to reflect actual economic and practical realities. The second area of

¹⁰ 'French Agricultural and Vichy Peasant Policy' (Supplement to the Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No. 98), August 11 1941, PRO FO 371/28233.

¹¹ Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882) viewed the family as the chief agent of social stability and moral authority. He rejected the assumption of 'progress' in industrialisation and highlighted the problems and conflicts that that process created.

¹² Pierre Barral, 'Idéal et pratique du régionalisme dans le régime de Vichy', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. XXIV (5 October 1974), pp. 911-39. Barral deals comprehensively with the various regionalist arguments at Vichy and the protagonists involved. See also the British Foreign Office reports 'Decentralisation and Regional Organisation in France', PRO FO 371/31940 (1942) and revised in PRO FO 371/36018 (1943).

debate revealed considerable division over the nature of the administrative reform: was there to be decentralisation or 'deconcentration'? That is, should the new regions be given real power over finance, education and justice or was there to be a less thoroughgoing reorganisation of state authority? If there was to be real power at the local level, should it be made truly representative through the ballot box or be appointed by the state? Even when there was agreement on the provincial organisation, there was still disagreement over whether the departmental divisions within provinces should be maintained or abolished.

The result of these opposing arguments was indecision and bickering between the various Vichy ministries and eventual contradiction in Vichy's regionalist policy. Pétain announced, in his first speech as head of state (11 July 1940), a provincial reorganisation for administrative purposes and he set up a National Council in January 1941 to discuss the issues. The eventual division of the nation into twenty provinces simply ignored the German occupation and annexation of French territory. The departmental unit was maintained, the new boundaries resting on pragmatic and economic rather than historical foundations. Provincial governors and local officials were appointed, not elected, the provinces were allowed no real financial independence and the power of the Prefects was progressively expanded.¹³ Thus, state control and centralisation actually increased. Realpolitik and the need for order triumphed. However, Vichy continued to spout regionalist rhetoric and its cultural trappings. The regime never overcame the contradiction caused by its essentially authoritarian nature and the notion that national renovation must spring from below—from provincial, or the 'real' France. While trying to promote an image of rich diversity and depth of culture, it could not tolerate the independence, let alone separatism, which was part and parcel of regionalism. Vichy remained paralysed by fears of disunity and by its desire for total control.

¹³ JO, laws of 16 December 1940 and 19 April 1941.

The collaborationist opponents of Vichy suffered less from such constraints. Nevertheless, little was written in criticism of the government's regionalist intentions before mid-1941. When a government policy began to take shape, however, the criticism became increasingly apparent. Many dismissed the policy as irrelevant to France's immediate concerns and its future: it was not a policy to please the pragmatic realists. Jean Fontenoy, a man with impeccable collaborationist credentials, claimed in his paper, *Révolution Nationale*, that provincial languages and separate cultures had all but disappeared and any attempt to resuscitate them would digress from what should be France's primary aim, the creation of a unified nation.¹⁴

One collaborationist newspaper with a sustained interest in the regionalist question was *La Gerbe*. Under the editorship of the romantic fascist Alphonse de Châteaubriant, it discussed rural issues in its 'peasant page'. *La Gerbe* voiced its support for the principle of regionalism early in the occupation.¹⁵ By mid-1941 the paper applauded the general thrust of Vichy policy. It praised the views of the protagonists in the debates of the National Council, Charles Brun, Joseph Barthélemy and Lucien Romier, but it made no differentiation between them, preferring instead to affirm general principles:

Restaurer le caractère de la vie paysanne et le rayonnement des capitales provinciales.
Rétablir la valeur des grands courants historiques et les adapter aux nécessités de la vie moderne.¹⁶

However, the paper was alert to Vichy's equivocation between tradition and innovation. It demanded to know the relative importance of historical, ethnic, geographic and economic considerations versus the 'geometric' and administrative concerns which

¹⁴ *Révolution Nationale*, 16 November 1941. Fontenoy was an ex-communist journalist who wrote for the PPF in the 1930s and, as a close friend of Otto Abetz, became one of Laval's ambassadors to the Occupied Zone in the summer of 1940. His collaborationist tendencies led him to join Deloncle's MSR and to contribute to the establishment of the RNP. He was editor of *Révolution Nationale* from October 1941 to June 1942 but quit to go to Berlin. He later joined the LVF and died fighting in the streets of Berlin in the last days of the war.

¹⁵ Francis Agry, 'Nécessité du Régionalisme', *La Gerbe*, 5 September 1940.

¹⁶ Lucien Romier quoted by Jean Calhour, 'De la Province à la Région', *La Gerbe*, 1 May 1941.

seemed to preoccupy the government. Whereas it had been willing to accept Vichy's early reforms as a pragmatic and necessary response to the defeat, it saw the government's unwillingness to dispense with the old departmental divisions as a sign of its administrative conservatism and as a rejection of real decentralisation for 'deconcentration'. This, it claimed, was not in the spirit of the National Revolution: in its equivocation the Vichy government was proving itself no better than the previous regime.

La Gerbe favoured a true decentralisation, stating that the basis of French strength still remained in the provinces and it required only their liberty to rediscover it. An article of May 1941 argued that the provinces were not merely administrative units but drew together political, social and economic 'lignes de force' and were therefore representations of local autonomy.¹⁷ No contradiction was seen between particularities of culture and language and a unified nation, let alone a nation under the occupation of a foreign power which was fighting a world war and which, at least in the present, favoured centralised control:

Comme tous les mystères, il faut l'admettre sans le déflorer par trop d'analyse ... La région peut être le lieu géométrique de la tradition et du progrès, elle peut être le point d'équilibre entre l'amour du clocher et celui de la grande patrie, entre les droits de la Cité et ceux de l'Etat.¹⁸

By September 1941 the paper was taking a much more radical line which not only criticised the policies of the National Revolution but linked the idea of real France to a racial identity and to a Nazi New Order. In a series entitled 'A la recherche des forces française', Marc Augier began a tour of the provinces in the belief that France was guilty of sinning against the realities of blood and soil.¹⁹ Augier claimed that the nation could no longer define itself and its true identity could only be found by delving into the past to discover elements of renewal. Augier therefore began his search for French

¹⁷ Calhour, 'De la Province à la Région'.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Marc Augier, 'A la recherche des forces française, I - Le pays des Basques', *La Gerbe*, 4 September 1941, and 'A la recherche des forces française, II - Bécassine est morte', *La Gerbe*, 2 October 1941.

'forces' or 'realities' in the country of the Basques. These people, along with the Bretons, he claimed, were at the pinnacle of racial hierarchy. Above all others they had preserved their racial purity, customs and language and they had achieved this by continual struggle, not only against French centralisation but against the tide of history. The most important 'force' which the Basques had preserved, Augier argued, was the patriarchal nature of the family: at the hearth of the family home, only the Basque language was spoken; women still ate after men; the old primogeniture inheritance law was still followed and sexual license, marital separation and divorce were unheard of:

Le tumulte des cœurs et des sens s'apaise vite tandis que s'allume la flamme tranquille et constante du foyer où la fidélité exemplaire et réciproque clôt ce rythme à peu près immuable des amours ...²⁰

Augier also saw religion as an important 'force', but one of cultural and racial identity, rather than spirituality. He lamented that the Basque runic cross had been replaced by the Christian cross, proving that 'nos races ont été sémitisées par les religions venues d'Orient',²¹

Augier admitted that Vichy inherited a tradition of centralisation which enforced uniformity but he claimed that its reforms were not going far enough. Vichy was not listening to the 'voice of the soil'; its *retour à la terre* policy concerned only territory. Vichy, like the regime it replaced, was practicing 'la grande politique' and instead of restoring the provinces by encouraging language, literature and local administration, it was covering its territorial centralisation with a cloak of folklore. The National Revolution was therefore failing to build true cultural, racial and administrative strength and was merely turning the provinces into folklore museums.

Augier had exposed Vichy's sleight of hand, but he went even further. He argued that it was the war and the defeat of France by Germany that had saved the Basque race from ultimate extinction. By implication therefore, since it was the Basques who

²⁰ *Ibid.* (2 October 1941).

²¹ *Ibid.*

preserved the 'forces française', the renewal of France also depended on German victory. Augier identified the day that Germany invaded France and not the birth of the Vichy regime as the 'date of the rallying of French forces'. The hardships and shortages of war had brought a return to physical and moral health, even amongst the Basques who were being increasingly drawn into the decadent 'civilisation du pastis' that began with the 'tragic and utopic' victory of 1918.²² The Occupation had allowed true racial history to be told and revealed facts which had been hidden by pre-war Jewish writers, such as the similarity between the Basque flag and the swastika. Augier further claimed that the 'French reality' denied the separatism of peoples like the Basques: this 'problem' would be solved after the war when Germany would redistribute the lands of Europe in order to preserve these separate cultures. Germany would preserve the racial distinctions that France had failed to appreciate in the new Europe, just as it had in Germany. He concluded:

qu'importe que ce soit une épée allemande et non une épée française qui veille sur ces côtes, puisque nous étions, avant la guerre, les destructeurs de nos propres richesses!²³

The National Revolution's attempt at social renovation through provincial and administrative reform failed due to Vichy's internal contradictions and fears of disunity. Paradoxically, the government laid itself open to attack on pragmatic grounds and because it failed to go far enough in bringing about real change.

Retour au Foyer

The National Revolution also planned to achieve social renovation at another level, though one closely bound to the mythology of the soil. The concept of *retour au foyer* was integral to the ideology and the moral, social and political programme of the National Revolution. In Vichy's rhetoric, the hearth represented security and tradition

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* (4 September 1941).

and the heart of each home was the family. Pétain's speeches presented the family as the basis for France's rejuvenation:

Les familles françaises restent les dépositaires d'un long passé d'honneur. Elles ont le devoir de maintenir à travers les générations les antiques vertus qui font les peuples forts. Les disciplines familiales seront sauvegardés.²⁴

La famille, cellule initiale de la société nous offre la meilleure garantie de relèvement. Un pays stérile est mortellement atteint dans son existence.²⁵

An avalanche of government propaganda and pro-natalist literature reinforced the idea of the family as the 'essential' or 'initial' bloc on which the whole edifice of the New France must rest and as the 'eternal' social element, the repository of moral values and a long and honourable tradition.²⁶ Vichy propaganda in film, radio, exhibitions and posters (which invariably depicted extended families in rural settings), strongly reaffirmed the message that the family, not the individual, was the real foundation of society.

Vichy's family policy was essentially pronatalist and closely tied to concerns over France's demographic decline. These concerns were not of course new in 1940 and neither was much of the family legislation which sought to address it. As Aline Coutrot has pointed out in her study of the politics of the family under Vichy, there was a strong continuity between the Third Republic and Vichy organisations and much of Vichy's family legislation survived the Liberation and was adopted by the Fourth Republic.²⁷ A growing number of voluntary, employer funded family allowance schemes had been made compulsory in 1932 but the law was widely ignored until Daladier set up a *Haut Comité de la Population* and passed a series of measures known collectively as the

²⁴ Pétain, Speech of 11 July 1940.

²⁵ Pétain, Speech of 25 May 1941 (on the occasion of the Fête des Mères).

²⁶ Allengry, *La philosophie sociale*, p. 25. AN, 72AJ 1080, 72AJ 1081, SAN 7730 (especially, Philippe Renaudin, *La Famille dans la Nation: Conférence du 16 juin 1943 à la Sorbonne* (Paris: Commissariat Général à la Famille, 1943)).

²⁷ Aline Coutrot, 'La politique familiale', *Le Gouvernement de Vichy, 1940-1942* (Paris: Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1972), pp. 245-63. Coutrot details the government structures set up to carry out the family policy. See also Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking Modern France*, chapter 9 which deals with the concerns over France's falling birthrate in the 1930s and under Vichy.

Code de la Famille.²⁸ This sought to address old fears which were fuelled by the deteriorating international situation and by increasingly bleak demographic statistics: rural depopulation continued to be a major concern; the birth rate had not matched the number of deaths since 1935; and the annual number of abortions was said to be increasing, an issue which was often exploited in the right wing press.²⁹ Daladier's code gave a birth bonus to couples who produced their first offspring within two years. Allowances were increased to families and to mothers who did not work and tax and death duties favoured families and penalised the childless. Establishment loans for young couples setting up their own farms were granted with a ten-year repayment period and with repayments reducing with each birth. The code also further tightened harsh laws on abortion, restricted adoption and punished pornography and alcohol abuse. In the last days of the Third Republic (5 June), Reynaud established a ministry for the family. Pronatalism and concern for the family was widespread in the 1930s; even the PPF in its 1938 programme promised support for large families, not only in terms of allowances and concessions but also with political representation.³⁰

Thus, there was little that was new and nothing revolutionary in the pronatalist policies of the National Revolution; much of Vichy's legislation merely reinforced Daladier's code. This did not prevent the government from encouraging and benefiting from the type of pronatalist literature that characterised the pre-war regime as immoral and deliberately organised against the family.³¹ Early publications in support of the National Revolution attributed the fall in the birthrate to materialism, frivolity and a

²⁸ JO, laws of 23 February 1939 and 29 July 1939. See also Richard Tomlinson, Marie-Monique Huss and Philip E. Ogden, 'France in Peril', *History Today*, vol. 35 (April 1985), pp. 24-31 and Marie-Monique Huss, 'Pronatalism in the inter-war period in France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25: 1 (January 1990), pp. 39-68.

²⁹ Dr. L. Beauny, 'L'Etat protecteur d'avortements', *L'Insurgé*, 10 March 1937, claimed that the number of abortions in 1935 was a minimum of 60,000 in Paris and 200,000 throughout France. He claimed that it was just as common amongst married as unmarried women and most prevalent amongst the middle class but still he saw the need for greater state support for women and families.

³⁰ Marion, *Programme du PPF*, p. 51.

³¹ See Jean Guibal, *La famille dans la Révolution Nationale* (Paris: Editions Fernand Sorlot, 1941). Guibal blamed Blum for creating an anti-family attitude and René Gillouin in the preface quoted Péguy's characterisation of fathers as 'les grands aventuriers du monde moderne', a phrase often quoted in Vichy literature. See pp. 2-3, 5.

denial of natural and divine law.³² Often strongly Catholic, such literature condemned the Republic for its failure to distinguish between the legitimate family and the 'famille naturelle', thus encouraging *concubinage* and benefiting, in the words of Renan, only 'un homme qui naîtrait enfant trouvé et mourrait célibataire'.³³ However, although Vichy always continued to promote the family as a moral issue, pragmatism shaped its laws in this as in other concerns. As early as September 1941 the government diverged from the pronatalist moral agenda in giving legal recognition to illegitimate children on the marriage of their parents.

Scant public recognition was given by Vichy or its supporters to the precedents of its family policy and then only to emphasise the differences, such as the Republic's undermining of the authority of the father and thus of family solidarity.³⁴ Vichy nevertheless claimed to be innovative. The National Revolution promised to treat the family as a unit, not as a group of individuals, linked only by legal ties. Vichy claimed that its family policy would combat the individualism which had led to France's decline by firmly situating the individual in a social context which began with the family and ended with the fatherland.³⁵ The family would be treated as a spiritual community which would curb egotism, encourage generosity and fairness and thereby socialise the individual:

A la recherche du plaisir, nous voulons substituer la joie. Au souci de l'immédiat, les perspectives de l'avenir; à la fonction stérile, à la satisfaction du "moi", la joie du bien et des affections profonds dans lesquelles réside l'avenir.

Et comme tout cela ne s'effectue que par le dévouement de chacun, comme cette tâche est par excellence l'école du sacrifice c'est la famille qui apprend à l'homme son métier d'homme.³⁶

³² J. Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale est un fait* (Amiens: Yvert & Cie., 1941), pp. 148-9.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁴ Picavet acknowledges the former regime's 'slightly friendly' attitude to the family in its granting of medals for large families and in its institution of a Mothers' day (traditions which Vichy continued and developed): *ibid.*, p. 156. A fuller account of preceding organisations is given in an official publication, 'Rapport sur la politique familiale et la tâche du Conseil Supérieur de la Famille', AN, F10 4970, pp. 1-2. This report also tries to emphasise Vichy's differences: *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

³⁵ Maréchal Philippe Pétain, 'La politique sociale de l'avenir', *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 August 1940). See also Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale*, p. 50.

³⁶ Speech by Jacques Chevallier, Secrétaire d'état à la famille et à la santé, 14 April 1941, reported by *Agence française d'information de presse*, AN 72 AJ 1854. See also *Conseil Supérieur de la Famille*, 'Rapport sur la politique familiale', pp. 21-22.

Coutrot perceives that Vichy policy operated on two levels, the moral propaganda and the legislative changes but her contention that its family policy differed significantly from that of the former regime, in that it changed the perspective from one of birth rates to one that focused on the family itself, is overdrawn.³⁷ However, Vichy policy was innovative in its 'judicial consecration' of the family unit. This was an attempt to give the family political power under a new constitution. The idea itself was not new but no regime had attempted to put it into practice. Vichy gave fathers of large families representation on councils of towns, instituted a family vote in the peasant corporation and organised a federation of family associations with consultative and representative powers at the communal, regional and national level.³⁸ Vichy made a vague attempt to replace the individual with the family as the basis of social and political organization by identifying the family as the 'cellule initiale' in the draft constitution, but further support came only as heavy doses of moral propaganda.

The bulk of Vichy's family legislation was passed after September 1941 when it created a *Commissariat Général à la Famille*.³⁹ The Commissariat was made up of regional delegates (including Paris), responsible to the prefect who met nationally about twice a year. From June 1943 the Commissariat was advised by the *Conseil Supérieur de la Famille*.⁴⁰ The legislation these bodies produced reflected a tension between the

³⁷ Further evidence for Vichy's ongoing concern with repopulation can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 16-21. The government saw the fight against abortion as both a moral and a population concern, estimating the annual number at 400,000-600,000, equal to the number of pre-war births and not including subsequent infant deaths or disabilities from attempted abortions. Dr. Serge Huard, Secrétaire d'Etat à la Famille et à la Santé, claimed that though the solution was primarily a moral one, this would take a long time to achieve. In the interim, the anti-abortion law of 15 February 1942 (JO 7 March 1942) sought to increase penalties against those performing abortions. Abortionists could now be arrested on police suspicion, lessening the burden of proof, and would be tried by state tribunal for crimes against the French people. Penalties ranging from imprisonment to death would be carried out immediately and without appeal. See *Secrétariat d'Etat à l'Intérieur*, 'Informations Générales: VI Famille et Santé - Lutte contre l'avortement', 9 March 1942, pp. 547-9, PRO FO 371/32080.

³⁸ Laws of 16 November 1940 (JO 12 December), 30 July 1942 (JO 22 August), 29 December 1942 and 12 February 1943 (JO, 20 February).

³⁹ See M. Georges Desmottes, *Le Commissariat Général à la Famille: Sa Mission – Son Organisation*, AN SAN 7730.

⁴⁰ Vichy legislation and the work of the *Conseil Supérieur de la Famille* are set out in 'La politique familiale', pp. 33-43: reforms were categorised as legal, fiscal, material (food and lodging), child protection, education, moral protection and publicity. The legislation was also presented in popular

practical need to address the hardships of the Occupation and Vichy's stated aim of creating a new moral climate beneficial to the family. The granting of priority cards, preferential employment and other benefits for large families, free hospitalisation and maternity leave for pregnant women, as well as sanitary measures in public health and housing served both material and moral needs. The augmentation in benefits satisfied those who argued that material aid and not moral teaching alone was necessary to save the family. However, Vichy's allowances were based mainly on Daladier's code. The birth bonus for those who produced children early was maintained but amended to accommodate separations imposed by the war. Family allowances were increased but not as significantly as some had wished. Daladier's code had given 10 per cent of a fixed average wage for the second child and 20 per cent for each subsequent child. Vichy increased the level of the average wage, thereby raising all allowances, gave the same percentage allowance for the second and third child but increased the allowance to 30 per cent thereafter. As Coutrot points out, the *Commissariat Général à la Famille* wished to augment the family wage to a level which would produce the same standard of living as a single man of similar social standing, but financial constraints as well as conflict with other Vichy legislation made this impossible.⁴¹

However, Vichy did extend allowances to the unemployed, partially employed, widows and the infirm and did not consider them as simple salary supplements.⁴² The 'salaire unique' which replaced the 'allocation de la mère du foyer' and which was given to single income families recognised single mothers and illegitimate children. These two measures were passed despite considerable opposition, a fact which Coutrot uses to show the balance between practical and moral concerns in Vichy's code.⁴³

form in brochures such as: Commissariat Général à la Famille, *Le chef de la famille* (1942) and Secrétariat Général de l'Information, *L'Œuvre du Maréchal; juillet 1940-juillet 1941*. See also the British Foreign Office assessment in 'Social organisation and legislation in France before and since the Armistice', PRO FO 371/36020.

⁴¹ Coutrot, 'La politique familiale', p. 252. In particular, legislation for the *Charte du Travail* worked against suggestions for a family wage.

⁴² *Ibid.* pp. 251-2.

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 260-1. Shennan differs from Coutrot on this point, arguing that under Vichy pronatalism was not only moralistic but also defeatist. Shennan, *Rethinking France*, pp. 205-6.

The moral aspect of Vichy's code applied mainly to the urban, rather than the rural family.⁴⁴ Vichy's family legislation reflected the belief that the nation's 'spiritual impoverishment' was the result of urbanisation.⁴⁵ Whereas rural measures extended benefits and loans and addressed the old problem of inheritance laws (allowing primogeniture with compensation to siblings through the aid of government loans), 'urban' measures increased penalties against prostitution, abortion, infanticide, abandonment of children and alcoholism. Divorce was also made more difficult and permissible only after three years of marriage.⁴⁶ Supporters praised his law as a revolutionary attempt to redress France's immorality since no elected government would have had the courage to support it: it would end the slide into American style decadence where marriage was undertaken on a whim.

A beaucoup de gens le mariage n'apparaît plus comme un contrat sérieux et grave, entraînant des obligations très lourdes: on fait une expérience, un essai, on escompte l'éventualité du divorce, dans le cas où l'autre époux aurait cessé de plaire ... dans des cas plus nombreux qu'on ne pense, la cérémonie accomplie à la mairie et à l'église est simplement un moyen perfectionné de séduction au service d'un jeune homme qui n'eut pas obtenu autrement l'assentiment d'une jeune fille honnête.⁴⁷

Although there was often criticism of its detail, the general principles of the family policy were supported by the occupied press, particularly the conservative press. Such support totally ignored the pre-war, pro-family policies and lamented, as did an article in the *Revue Universelle*, that Vichy's policy had not come sooner since the war would have been prevented altogether.⁴⁸ Darnand's paper, *Révolution Nationale*, went as far back as the ideas of Frédéric Le Play to validate the policy; a return to the

⁴⁴ Allengry, *La philosophie sociale et politique du Maréchal*, pp. 24-7.

⁴⁵ The *Conseil Supérieur de la Famille* stated that in 1789 80 per cent of families were rural whereas in 1939 the figure was 47 per cent. A greater percentage of families were therefore exposed to the disadvantages of urban living: not only overcrowding and poverty but also 'les tentations fréquentes de la rue et des lieux publics, alors que la fatigue nerveuse propre à la vie urbaine diminue les forces de résistance, le caractère anonyme de la vie, la vision continuelle du luxe des classes dirigeantes': 'Rapport sur la politique familiale', p. 24.

⁴⁶ Law of 2 April 1941 (JO 13 April).

⁴⁷ Paul Bureau, *La crise morale des temps nouveaux*, in Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale*, p. 152. See also pp. 151-4.

⁴⁸ M. de Roux, 'L'application du code de la famille', *Revue Universelle*, no. 3 (May 1940), pp. 231-3. The *Revue Universelle* further supported Vichy's policy in an article by Louis Rollanes, 'Comment défendre la famille', no. 6 (March 1941), pp. 399-405.

traditional, pre-Revolutionary family strength which had been sapped by the Code Civil.⁴⁹

It was Vichy's morality laws which provided fuel for the collaborationist press in Paris. Many articles mocked Vichy's simplistic analysis of complex problems and its solutions which counted on 'le gendarme pour rétablir l'ordre dans le domaine morale'.⁵⁰ The collaborationists claimed that the family legislation reflected the government's irrationalism since it was ideological and unconscious of the impact it would have on a community already under stress. Many saw the laws as an emanation of Vichy's narrow clericalism and warned that the government risked causing even greater legal and social problems: children of separated but not divorced couples, for example, would not be entitled to social benefits.⁵¹ *Les Nouveaux Temps* in particular attacked what it called Vichy's 'Catholic zealotry' and returned to the imagery of the wound to condemn the divorce legislation as a failure to address the true faults in French society:

il est permis de penser que nous nous trouvons en face d'un des épisodes de réaction politique et sociale que certains Vichysois veulent faire passer à nos yeux, présumés candides, pour des actes de Révolution nationale et de régénération du pays. Or ni la Révolution nationale ni la régénération du pays ne se trouvent dans un retour aux formules du passé, quoi qu'en pensent des esprits simplistes. Et décourager le divorce avant d'avoir fait à la France une autre âme, avant d'avoir créé des garçons et des jeunes filles mieux conscients qu'hier de l'importance et du sérieux du mariage, c'est, à tout le moins, mettre la charrue avant les bœufs.

On ne guérit pas un mal en en masquant la plaie. En admettant même que l'abus du divorce soit une conséquence de nos erreurs, c'est à ces erreurs qu'il importe de mettre un frein, et non à leur inéluctable résultat statistique.⁵²

The patriotic appeal inherent in the family code was difficult to criticise, just as it was for the policy of *retour à la terre*. But some tried to extend the implications of the policy. Typically, *La Gerbe* continually stressed the principle of paternal authority within the family but also applied it to the need for a strong nation and a strong race.

⁴⁹ Pierre Drouin, 'Un révolutionnaire: Frédéric Le Play', *Révolution Nationale*, 30 October 1943.

⁵⁰ 'La nouvelle loi sur la divorce ou le service matrimonial obligatoire', *L'Œuvre*, 16 April 1941.

⁵¹ 'Une loi qui va à l'encontre de son but', *Les Nouveaux Temps*, 20 April 1941. 'Le divorce enravé', *Inter-France*, 11 April 1941. Jacques Gandouin, untitled and un-dated article, *Agence française d'information de presse*, AN 72 AJ 1854.

⁵² *Les Nouveaux Temps*, 6 April 1941.

Such goals, it claimed, required peace, three centuries of peace in fact, and hence it made sense that France should join the new Europe.⁵³

Vichy's efforts to return France to family values were limited: it did little more than pre-war governments had already done and its most ambitious plans had a low priority when they competed with other policies. Government policy relied heavily on traditionalist rhetoric but this gave some collaborationists opportunity to extend the family debate and relate it to their concept of regeneration. Whereas the traditionalists placed greatest emphasis on the family as a social cell and a vital aspect of the health of the nation, the collaborationists saw the revitalisation of the race as remaining the most pressing question.⁵⁴

* * *

Vichy's claim to realism operated on two levels: while power and realpolitik dictated government policy, the ideals of the National Revolution promised a return to the solid foundations that had once made France strong. This was a sleight of hand, of course, but Vichy's *retour au réel* was successful in that it could exploit patriotic sentiment or build on long standing concerns and previous legislation. However, the reforms designed to restore the 'real' France did not begin to achieve their aims, which were the transformation and revitalisation of French society and the return of national unity and strength. Ultimately, the internal contradictions within the realist 'philosophy' between pragmatic choices, practical needs and modernism on the one hand and traditional, 'proven' values and ideology on the other were revealed. Critics of the regime exploited these contradictions outside the pragmatic realm and sought always to extend the debate beyond patriotic appeal. From the very beginning, making pragmatic choices meant that Vichy's policies were linked to the occupier's immediate needs and, while

⁵³ Raymond Geneve, 'Pour le Mariage', *La Gerbe*, 10 October 1940.

⁵⁴ The two points of view are expressed in Louis Rollanes, 'Comment défendre la famille' and J.M. Amiot, 'Retour à la vraie famille', *Révolution Nationale*, 26 April 1942.

collaborationists could not criticise this, it was a small step for them to extend the interpretation of realism to cover the occupier's ultimate aim—a Nazi European Order. It was because the needs of the occupier changed, especially after 1942, that Vichy eventually lost its claim to represent the pragmatic choice to some of its most strident critics. Ultimately, of course, serving the needs of the occupier, even in the face of Germany's certain defeat, made all collaborators guilty of 'irrealism'.

Chapter 9

Imagining the New Man

Il faut à la France des hommes NOUVEAUX, des hommes extraordinairement
DURS et DIFFICILES, et qui voient loin.

Alphonse de Châteaubriant , 12 October 1941.

Ce qu'il faut à la France, à notre cher pays, ce ne sont pas des intelligences, ce sont des
caractères.

Marshall Philippe Pétain, speech July 1944.

In 1940 many people in France, whatever their political persuasion, perceived the military defeat of their nation as a social and moral collapse. However, it was the right which most strongly and persistently portrayed France's fate as the decline—physical, moral and intellectual—of the nation's manhood. This conviction coloured the whole spectrum of right wing thought in the 1930s: the conservative right saw the political and social disunity and the falling birth rate as the result of the enfeebling influence of liberal democratic thought; new right and nonconformist groups attacked the materialism of modern man and feared that he had neglected his spiritual dimension, his true strength of character; and the fascist's admiration for the enthusiasm and force of Italy and Germany contrasted the weaknesses of the French race. These were disparately voiced concerns, but they fed off each other to fuel a general sense of moral decline amidst right wing intellectual circles. It was not until after the defeat that these

many voices coalesced into what appeared to be a single call: the call for the creation of a new man—*l'homme nouveau*.

In 1940 there was a general agreement amongst the collaborationist right that a new type of being—intellectually, morally and physically transformed—was necessary in order to rescue France from its decline and to enable the nation to play its part in the new Europe. The creation and multiplication of the new man (which included, but with far less emphasis, the reform of womankind) was thus seen to be the most pressing and the most revolutionary task of the New Order. However, when it came to introducing the policies which would re-create and transform the national character, various concepts of the new man emerged. The collaborationist right could not agree about his character, let alone the method for his creation.

For the new French state, the youth, education and racial policies of the National Revolution were the principal means of building the new man. But Vichy's policies were subjected to constant criticism by the collaborationists in Paris. As a result of this pressure, two competing moral visions soon emerged. As in some warped reflection of socialism and communism, 'Fascist man' and 'Vichy man' became the new *frères ennemis* of the Occupation. But even within these two ideals there was much disagreement. Fascist man in France was a mere slave to his many masters. The Vichy government, as in all its policies, allowed ambiguities and contradictions to obscure its vision. Many of Vichy's new elite, the first of the new men who would lead the rest, rejected aspects of the regime which had nurtured them and found kinship with the ideals of the Resistance.

Exploring the ideal of the new man reveals a great deal about the commonalities and the differences between the various factions of the right in Occupied France. This is because the policies which were aimed at shaping the new man were those which remained most French: they did not suffer direct interference from the Occupier as they did not, in the main, affect German economic demands; and even the most imitative of fascists was obliged in some degree to identify a specific Frenchness in his ideal. The

new man, even as part of a new order under Nazi domination, had to be styled as a nationalist and his ancestry had to be rooted in French soil.

Tracing the ideological ancestry of the new men of the Occupation is not an easy task. However, they did share certain character traits, suggesting a family resemblance. First of all, the new men of the right were defined more or less negatively, by their opposition to what already existed and usually in contrast to some distant ideal. This was particularly true of the more conservative elements of the right who looked back to a golden pre-Revolutionary age and distrusted the modern—a distrust which included the concept of a *new* man. Negativity was less common amongst the radical right, particularly the fascist right, who were attracted to the concept of the new man for the very reason that it promised to be positive and different: in many ways the new man was the distinguishing ideological aspect of fascism.¹ Nevertheless, the fascists also looked backwards, usually to a more distant and mythical past to find their ideal of manhood.

During the 1930s, all elements of the right attacked 'democratic man' or 'Marxist man' and defined their own ideals mainly in terms of the shortcomings of these ideological straw men. Their constant difficulty was to define a new man who was strong enough to build a new society but who was free from the degrading influences of liberal-democratic and capitalist-materialist culture and, in particular, untainted by the individualism which they claimed was at the core of France's decadence. Attacking the individualism which had played such a prominent role in defining the French national psyche since the Revolution was one of the factors which united the factions of the right both before and after the defeat. However, there was no unanimity on the solution, with particular disagreement centering on the concept of collectivity.

The result of this negativism was that no clear or wholly positive ideal of a new man developed amidst any faction of the right in France before the defeat. Negativism persisted throughout the Occupation, when all elements of the collaborationist right

¹ Soucy, *Fascism in France*, p. 285.

often fell back on general assertions of human decadence and democratic corruption rather than advancing any positive features of a new man.

Although positive concepts of the new man of the right were slow to develop in France, once they did begin to take shape certain other features of a family resemblance became discernible. A high degree of moralism characterised all the French men of the right and they aspired to the same values—a mix of patriotic, military and religious or spiritual virtues. However, closer examination reveals a different emphasis placed on those values and at times a curious mix of contradictory impulses. This was possible because the man of the right was essentially non doctrinal: he was defined by a spirit rather than an ideology. This was especially so for the new right, fascist and *fascisant* groups and individuals who often portrayed their new man as embodying the answer to mankind's problems: he was the key to a new order and salvation. Both these factors—moralism and non-doctrinal salvationism—were amplified by the experience of the defeat and they gave a major impetus to the calls for the formation of a new man under the Occupation.

A positive concept of a new man was slow to develop in France, partly because the moral education of the conservative right was so strong. The classical and nationalistic political education of the *Action Française* was a powerful influence on the right, as was the moral education of the church and of military values. Such influences described virtues such as duty and service, tradition and honour, morality and discipline. These were the ageless virtues, the tried and tested qualities of the eternal man. The conservative right did not consciously seek to redefine man, even after a general philosophical preoccupation with the idea of a new man had begun to emerge with the close of the nineteenth century and the approach of the twentieth. This turn of the century concern was with western civilisation in general and was neither particularly nationalistic nor characteristic of any one side of politics. Where there was optimism for twentieth century man, it was felt first on the left of the intellectual divide, where the promise of socialism and communism offered new moral inspiration. The traditional

right remained unwelcoming towards the twentieth century and its culture of the masses and rejected any new man who would be master of it.

Even the growing power of youth, reflected in the myriad political and social organisations which sprang up particularly after the First World War, was conceived on the conservative right as an ideal of 'moral purity' rather than as a force for change.² The conservative right was concerned with youth because it offered the opportunity to reinforce and rejuvenate eternal moral values. This is not to say that such values were not already deeply ingrained in French society. The strength of the ideal they offered is illustrated by the inter-war youth movements which attracted a large following. On the outbreak of the war, one in seven French children was a member of a youth organisation.³ The plethora of groups, dominated by the various scout organisations, promoted a wide range of religious and political ideals but they shared a definite commitment to social and moral renewal through education, an active and collective outdoors experience and a dedication to the ideals of civic duty and service, honour and patriotism. The largest of these groups were the Catholic movements, the *Scouts et Guides de France* (inspired by two priests, Donœur and Forestier) and the *Equipes Sociales* (led by Robert Garric). Together with the Catholic *Revue des Jeunes*, they had a powerful influence in bourgeois and Catholic pedagogical circles.⁴ They aimed to form the leaders of the future who would reinvigorate France through the revival of Catholicism and the creation of new social relations based on community and mutual aid rather than class. They reacted against mass culture and individualism, favouring

² See Bertram M. Gordon, 'Radical right Youth in France between the Wars', in *Western Society for French History: Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting*, vol. 5 (1977-78), pp. 313-21. Gordon contends that for elements of the conservative right "'Youth" was a mystique behind which social conservatism could function', p. 318. This is in contrast to elements of the radical right which used the mystique of youth to stand for activism and rebellion.

³ See Bernard Comte, 'Encadrer la Jeunesse?', in Laurent Gervereau et Denis Peschanski (eds), *La Propagande sous Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: BDIC, 1990), pp. 40-58, p. 41 and 'Les organisations de Jeunesse', in Jean-Pierre Azéma & François Bédarida (eds), *Vichy et les Français* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), pp. 409-421, p. 414.

⁴ Comte points out that in many of their moral ideals, the Catholic and lay scout movement shared a common cause and that the lay movement, the *Eclaireurs de France*, did have a considerable impact on state education and ideas for professional development in business and the civil service. Comte, 'Encadrer la Jeunesse?', p. 44.

instead discipline and hierarchy, but their inspiration was more spiritual and humanitarian than political.

In the moral ideals of these youth movements there was a close association with military values: service, duty, patriotism and unity. Many of the organisations were led by ex-military personnel. Indeed, a great influence on the moral/social formation of these groups was Marshal Lyautey who in 1891 had written *Le rôle social de l'officier*, an essay of ongoing significance which was reprinted a year after his death in 1934.⁵ Lyautey encouraged an active social role for the military officer who, armed with the qualities of service and leadership, could have a non partisan and educative influence on the formation of the French character without the need for state controls. Lyautey, who played a role in the organisation of the scout movements, was portrayed as the ideal knight in the service of his country: a man of action whose dedication and patriotism had helped to build the Empire and spread the benefits of French culture.

It was this ideal of manhood which inspired the leadership of the largest youth movements in the 1930s and for the first two years of the Vichy government. Lyautey's disciples included Georges Lamirand, an engineer and specialist in business relations who became Secretary for Youth under Vichy. Like his mentor, Lamirand extended his professional philosophy to the shaping of the nation's youth. In 1932 he wrote a complementary volume to Lyautey's work entitled *Le rôle social de l'ingénieur*.⁶ Lamirand was Catholic, paternalist and concerned principally with the moral and social formation of young males. In his influential book he first exhorted professionals to be fully rounded human beings in terms of their physical and cultural, not simply technical formation. He encouraged in them a sense of vocation, calling on them to offer leadership and to show to those working under them a degree of concern and dedication that was akin to a religious calling.⁷ By the same token, the professional had to know

⁵ Maréchal Lyautey, *Le rôle social de l'officier* (Paris: Plon, 1935).

⁶ Georges Lamirand, *Le rôle sociale de l'ingénieur: scènes de la vie d'usine* (Paris: Revue des Jeunes, 1932), preface by Maréchal Lyautey.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

how to serve superiors, offering obedience and loyalty in ‘un dévouement sans limite’.⁸ Though not explicit, his appeal to professionals was restricted to men: he encouraged in women a similar vocation in the building of a family ‘nest’ to provide rest, security and comfort for the male spirit.⁹

The teachings of Marshal Lyautey also influenced other future youth leaders. He played an important part in the *Cercle Fustel de Coulanges* which included Rivaud and Bonnard, respectively the first and last Ministers for Education under Vichy, and fellow officers Pétain and Weygand.¹⁰ This right wing pressure group advocated educational reform to combat the influence of the left on the *Université*: rather than mere intellectualism, the formation of character and the return to a more classical and practical syllabus.

Despite these efforts to reinforce the ideals of the eternal man, the conservative right saw a need to address what it perceived to be a challenge in the growing literary and political attraction to the concept of a new man. In 1930, the *Revue Universelle* published a review of Lucien Romier’s book, *L’Homme Nouveau*, which had appeared the previous year. Romier, in an optimistic vein, had sought to announce the coming of a new man, a man of adventure and action whose outlook was global in a progressive and tolerant world:

L’homme nouveau serait plus prompt en décision et en action que ses devanciers, plus ingénieux aussi. Ses connaissances, ses curiosités, seraient plus développées. Une audace froide animerait ses résolutions, ainsi qu’un souci d’énergie, témoigné par la popularité des sports. L’homme nouveau serait plus tolérant que l’homme ancien pour les opinions d’autrui; cependant, à l’occasion, il affirmerait les siennes.¹¹

The reviewer, identified only by the name ‘Avesnes’, dismisses the concept of the new man as an excess of energy, the ongoing consequences of the war and a poorly administered victory. Indeed, Avesnes finds a certain perversity in the concept.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁹ *Ibid.*, chapter VII.

¹⁰ Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 7.

¹¹ Romier quoted by ‘Avesnes’, ‘Hommes Nouveaux, Hommes Anciens’, *Revue Universelle*, vol. XLI:2 (April 1930), pp. 176-188, p. 176.

Romier's new man confronts risk, sickness and death for pleasure: he is a type of modern adventurer looking for sport and profit. The ideal of altruism, of service to one's country or communal effort has been lost, Avesnes claims. His conclusion is that the 'old' men of France, generations of them, had served the state well enough through their military service: they served mankind by protecting civilisation and were motivated by honour and altruism, not by profit and adventure. Nor were they lacking in the qualities that the new men now claim to have discovered—audacity, decision, curiosity and adventure—since these qualities had built the empire and made France great.

However, the challenge to the ideals of the 'old' men continued to mount. This challenge came in the main from the radical right. In the years of disillusionment following the Great War, it was the fascist ideologies which seized upon and developed the concept of the new man, particularly in Germany. The fascist man stood against liberal democracy and against Marxism but he could still claim to bring positive renewal because, unlike the conservative man, he appeared to meet the demands of the twentieth century. The ideal of the fascist new man was in fact a mixture of modernist and traditional influences. According to one German historian, it combined two 'mutually exclusive' but co-existing myths of heroic manhood.¹² Fascism did not abandon the ideals of service and duty, so dear to the old right. Indeed, it fed off the heightened sense of loss which followed the war and celebrated the traditional patriotic hero who had sacrificed himself for his country. Fascism—Italian Fascism in particular—added a heightened celebration of youthful enthusiasm to the ideal, but essentially this aspect of the fascist new man was no different to the traditional warrior hero. Since it stressed personal sacrifice, this was an ideal which valued the liberty and

¹² Bernd Hüppauf, 'Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a New Man in Germany after the First World War', *War & Society* vol. 6:2 (September 1988), pp. 70-103. Hüppauf argues that National Socialism benefited from two myths of the new man which grew out of two major battles of the First World War. The first was 'a traditional myth of heroism and sacrifice' and the second 'an aggressive myth with futuristic and nihilistic qualities', p. 70.

independence of the individual and since it was so strongly patriotic, it represented continuity and stability.¹³

But fascism also employed another ideal of the new man which, in its rejection of the old and in its aggressive modernity, contradicted the first. This fascist new man fulfilled his duty in a functional, unemotional way and though he served a higher cause, it was the party which came above all else. He was still represented as a warrior-hero but more as a de-personalised and efficient fighter. In fact, Hüppauf claims, this new man was formed by the forces of modern war: he was 'raw material in need of being shaped by the highly organised, amoral and merciless warfare in the age of modern technology'.¹⁴

National Socialist ideologues also misappropriated the ideas of Freidrich Nietzsche and his call for the creation of an elite and a band of virile supermen who would be vigorous and ruthless enough to control the mass culture promised by the twentieth century. The National Socialist Party in particular adapted such ideas to justify the *Führerprinzip* and the ruthlessness of its political methods; an elite, certain of its superiority and with total faith in the leader could be unrestrained by moral considerations. Such amoralism was useful in a Darwinian struggle for survival which, fascists believed would dominate the twentieth century. And in this struggle, purity of race—a mythological, Nordic race—was essential.

The new fascist man of Italy and Germany found his admirers and imitators in France. In particular, it was the moral and spiritual aspects of the Italian fascist man which found an echo. Many on the right were excited by the promise of a Latin spiritual renaissance which they saw in the rise of fascism in Italy. Georges Valois, who broke away from the *Action Française* to establish one of the first fascist leagues, the *Faisceau*, in 1925, and who announced the coming of a new authoritarian man in his book, *L'Homme Qui Vient*, was greatly influenced by Italian fascism. More conservative elements also praised the moral aspects of Italian fascism. One of several

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 70.

articles appearing in the *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue Universelle* in the early 1930s saw in Italian fascism a new asceticism which had rediscovered a 'sens sacré, religieux, liturgique de la vie'.¹⁵ René Benjamin, the right wing polemicist who sought to justify the invasion of Ethiopia, described Mussolini's Italy as 'le royaume de l'Âme'.¹⁶

Such admirers of Italian fascism gave particular praise to the importance placed on youth and education of children (although Benjamin's readers would be forgiven for thinking that fascist education consisted only of drawing, singing and religion). Admirers claimed, in terms repeated again and again, that fascist education taught faith, heroism, spontaneity, beauty, truth and unselfishness and that it brought about a return to innocence, a rediscovery of a lost paradise and a poetic sense of existence. While Benjamin praised fascist military virtues, he claimed that even the school for military cadets did not teach war but was meant to 'allumer le feu de leur âme', impart high ideals and love of country and create 'grands hommes'.¹⁷ The air force man symbolised the fascist elite: he was heroic but disciplined and austere at the same time.¹⁸ This new man was the ultimate achievement of Italian fascism:

Cette formation d'un type de jeune Italien, brave comme un soldat, discipliné comme lui, parlant peu, réfléchi dans ses desseins, conscient de sa responsabilité, dévoué à la cause commune et faisant abnégation de lui-même, mais surtout accomplissant le travail et le sacrifice avec enthousiasme et chaleur de cœur – c'est le but même du Fascisme.¹⁹

Such praise of the fascist new man singled out moral values that were little different to those of the conservative right and the praise was always tempered by stressing the fascist's respect for the classical past. That which was 'new' in the Italian man (strong, silent, 'unornamented' were frequently applied adjectives) and his military

¹⁵ Henry Bidou, 'L'Esprit de la Nouvelle Italie', *Revue de Paris*, vol. 39:15 (1932), pp. 449-518, p. 501.

¹⁶ René Benjamin, *Mussolini et son Peuple* (Paris: Plon, 1937), p. 5. Benjamin went on to write hagiographies of Pétain in a similar vein under the Occupation.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 145.

¹⁸ Bidou, 'L'Esprit de la Nouvelle Italie', p. 518.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

virtues were portrayed as being in the great Roman tradition, with which the fascist revolution was in perfect harmony.

Praise of the new man in Italy and Germany also came from a small band of fascist and *fascisant* intellectuals in France. As the Nazi regime became stronger internally and externally, their admiration for the National Socialist man grew, based on his moral and physical strength, rather than on any economic or political arguments. Since National Socialist rhetoric claimed to attack all the things which had perverted mankind—industrial technology, intellectual rationalism, individualism, urbanism and bourgeois hedonism—its French admirers saw it as a re-humanising process, the restoration of man's true nature. Fascist intellectuals such as Drieu la Rochelle saw in the new man an animal instinct, a barbaric force and a spontaneous energy that was pure and natural and was therefore tougher, better equipped for survival in the modern world: the National Socialist man was thus ancient and totally modern at the same time.

Drieu La Rochelle's attraction to the concept of the new man focused on the role of the leader or *chef*. He, like many other fascist intellectuals before the war, searched for a great leader. They thought that they had found him when Doriot created his PPF in 1936, though they were soon disappointed.²⁰ The great leader or man of action was necessary, Drieu claimed, in order to bring out the hidden or suppressed qualities of the new man. The French fascist mysticism of the *chef* was, as in National Socialism in Germany, linked to the mysticism of race. However, though many of those on the radical right were attracted to the idea of purifying the French race through physical and moral exertions, there was little support for the ideological racism of the Nazis. Anti-Semitism, both populist and of the right in particular, was at a low ebb after the First World War and until the early 1930s; it grew later as a result of the Depression, domestic tensions and international crises which fed a massive influx of refugees.²¹

²⁰ Several fascist intellectuals had ties with the PPF: Jean Fontenoy, Pierre Pucheu, Paul Marion, Ramon Fernandez, Bertrand de Jouvenel and Abel Bonnard

²¹ The number of Jewish refugees entering France during the inter-war period (though not all finally settled there) has been estimated at 150,000, over one third of them entering after Hitler's accession to power. See David Pryce-Jones, 'Paris during the German Occupation' in Hirschfeld and Marsh, *Collaboration in France*, pp. 15-31, p. 20.

Right wing anti-Semitism remained overwhelmingly in the old Maurrassian school of *race*—social, religious, nationalistic—rather than of *peau* or racial hatred. Where Jews were identified as a threat to France, it was through their assumed association with Marxism or Freemasonry. Most fascist movements were not racist and several leaders publicly rejected racial anti-Semitism as a foreign import. Even though the largest movements, the CF and PPF, became more anti-Semitic in the last years of the decade in order to exploit popular unrest, this did not contradict their contention that France had to find its own solutions to its own problems.²²

Some French fascists took their lead entirely from Germany. As Robert Soucy has often indicated, French fascist moralism was not religious in the traditional sense; however, it often had an element of religious conversion to it. There was no more spectacular conversion to Nazism than that of the novelist Alphonse de Châteaubriant who was transformed by a visit to Germany in 1936. Châteaubriant's adulation of Hitler represented him as a god who had revealed the essential truths to the German people and thereby created a master race.²³ Such non-doctrinal, non-intellectual, even anti-intellectual appreciation of the spirit of fascism tended to focus on the creation of the new man and his *chef*. For such people, fascism offered a simple solution, a salvation for an ailing mankind

Robert Brasillach, who witnessed the Nuremberg rally of 1937, gave a more sober appreciation of Nazi Germany but he was also impressed by the new strength and enthusiasm in the German people. Brasillach was particularly struck by the health and vitality of German youth, though his vision of fascism was poetic rather than political. However, Brasillach, who in 1937 still maintained close links with the *Action Française*, reflected the unease with which most elements of the right contemplated the new man of Nazi Germany. This unease was only partly due to the fact that Germany was the traditional enemy and the aggressive nationalism of the National Socialist man

²² For the anti-Semitism of the major fascist leagues see Soucy, *Second Wave*.

²³ Richard J. Golsan, 'Literary Collaboration at *La Gerbe*', *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 23 (1993); Alphonse de Châteaubriant, *La Gerbe des Forces* (Paris, 1936).

was a renewed threat to French sovereignty. The amorality of the National Socialist man, his total dedication to the leader, party and state and his collectivist mentality was often seen as alien to the French national character. Catholics rejected the pseudo-religiosity of Nazism and its mysticism of race.²⁴ Ironically, since he was to be executed nine years later for collaboration, Robert Brasillach was well aware of these differences in national character in 1937. He found Hitler's Germany to be 'prodigieusement, et profondément, et éternellement, un pays étrange'.²⁵ Filled with disquiet, he doubted whether, behind the impressive spectacle and the mythology of a new religion, there was anything real which would endure:

devant cette construction d'un homme nouveau, on se dit: est-elle permise? N'y a-t-il pas là un effort qui outrepassé les bornes de la nation? Demain l'hitlérisme sera-t-il plus qu'une gigantesque curiosité historique? Tout cela n'est-il pas trop?²⁶

Even though many remained wary of the concept of the new man, the triumph of totalitarianism in Europe convinced many younger members of the conservative right, the new and nonconformist right, that France must undergo its own rejuvenation in order to survive. Thierry Maulnier, writing on the possible birth of the new man in 1935, feared the consequences of leaving the conception entirely to others. Acknowledging the temerity of the call for a new man, he rejected the timidity of those who were content with the status quo or who sought merely to rescue a 'menaced culture'.²⁷ He did not doubt the inevitability of a substantial collapse of western civilisation, but feared above all that communism would build from its ruins a new communist man, a partial and mutilated being who lacked the essential human qualities of spirit and passion. Therefore, the challenge of the day, as he saw it, was to offer

²⁴ Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes*, deals with the attraction and objections to fascism amongst the nonconformist and new right groups.

²⁵ Robert Brasillach, 'Cent heures chez Hitler: le Congrès de Nuremberg', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXXI:13 (1 October 1937), pp. 55-74, p. 74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Thierry Maulnier, 'Un homme nouveau, va-t-il naître?', *Revue Universelle*, vol. LXII:9 (August 1935), pp. 371-6.

vitality and efficacy equal to the collectivist doctrines (or rather myths) which were monopolising the enthusiasm of the young.

The concern to keep up, to not be overtaken by events or other philosophies, illustrates how the concept of the new man was inextricably tied up with the growing activism and radicalisation of right wing politics in France. However, this concern clashed with another, equally important force which shaped the character of the new man. All elements of the right, apart from a small, imitative minority, agreed that France needed to discover or reclaim its own national character, to nurture its own genius. Any new man who did not embody the French genius would be an alien import. It was a clash between the demands of a rapidly changing present and future and the desire to identify what was stable and unchanging. The tension between these two factors was to shape and confuse the concept of the new man of the right throughout the mid to late 1930s and during the Occupation.

The search the new man was in many ways synonymous with the definition of an essential Frenchness. Inevitably this involved the old critique of individualism and materialism as part and parcel of the degrading baggage of liberal-democratic thought, but during the 1930s there was a renewed assault against individualism which sharpened the spiritual and moral edge of the attack and at the same time sought to put forward a new and positive solution. The critique came from nonconformist circles and gave rise to the term 'personalism'.²⁸ Personalism gave a new impetus to the concept of a new man of the right. However, it was not a defined doctrine. It was another generational password for those who said that they were seeking a way between totalitarian collectivism and democratic subservience to the individual, both of which reduced man to a political and economic entity. It was this different conception of man, a spiritual conception, which the personalists believed was a reflection of the French genius.

²⁸ The term personalism was coined by Alexandre Marc (pseudonym for Alexandre-Marc Lipiansky) who was one of the founding members of the group *Ordre Nouveau*. Of Russian-Jewish background, Marc converted to Catholicism in the early 1930s, continued to write for Catholic reviews and helped to found a Catholic resistance group under the occupation.

The most positive tenets of personalism were that man possessed a special human dignity or value which was his spirituality and that he was a social being of great diversity and complexity. However, as a password rather than a doctrine, personalism encompassed various interpretations. As it sprang from the new Catholic right, one of the strongest and most influential interpretations of personalism was Christian: a celebration of human values but at the same time a battle against man's natural tendency towards disorder and sin. Christian personalism was described as a faith in a superior form of human value.²⁹ Other interpretations of personalist spiritualism were humanist rather than Christian: they celebrated the vitality, heroism and creativity of the free man.

However, despite the conscious effort to present a positive picture of the new man, a fatalism often ran through personalist philosophy. Adherents believed that the new personalist man, freed from the tyranny of the laws of number and finance, would return to his natural community where he would find happiness in his personal vocation and contentment with only the 'necessary elements' of life—bread, family, work. It was a life of acceptance and perseverance:

La personne est nantie d'une famille, elle exerce un métier, elle paie des impôts, elle se bat, elle a des besoins précis, des ardeurs sacrées – justes ou injustes – elle est soumise concrètement, charnellement à tous les maux qui menacent l'homme: à la faim, à l'angoisse, à la mort, au désespoir qu'aucune parole ne peut traduire.³⁰

This personalist man was not powerful, nor was he ambitious or even hopeful. He was a tragic hero who accepted his fate, but in that acceptance found contentment.

Such a conception of the new man differed from the more vital and activist vision of the radical and fascist right. However, the relationship between these two conceptions of the new man was complex and is difficult to trace for several reasons. First of all, in the milieu of non-conformism, philosophical differences coexisted without conflict. Second, authors often represented several different conceptions of the

²⁹ Aron, *Dictature de la Liberté*, p. 162.

³⁰ Francis, Maulnier & Maxence, *Demain La France*, p. 240 and *passim*.

new man simultaneously or at least in rapid succession. This implies a third explanation; that ideas or intellectual trends were influenced by rapidly changing political events and that this influence was not always made explicit.

These points are illustrated in the relationship between Thierry Maulnier and Jean-Pierre Maxence who collaborated on several literary ventures during the 1930s. With Robert Francis in 1934, Maxence and Maulnier described a spiritually complete man, content with the 'necessary elements' of life and ensconced in his natural community. But Maxence, who never officially joined the *Action Française*, was greatly attracted to the ruthless and above all heroic, fascist man and was involved with one of the early fascist leagues, *Solidarité française*. Maulnier, who remained a member of *Action Française*, also became disillusioned with a purely spiritual concept of man. In 1936 he claimed that the term had been appropriated by 'preachers' and 'moralists' and had distracted from the real revolution by turning criticism inward instead of outward, against the regime.³¹ The riots of 1934 and the challenge of the Popular Front government had refocused attention on the political aspects of the right wing revolution.

In 1937 Maulnier and Maxence collaborated on a short-lived newspaper, *L'Insurgé*, which appealed to direct action and revolution to overthrow democracy. Here it was asserted that since the creation of a new man was impossible under democracy, all energies must first be directed towards the overthrow of the existing order.³² The first issue of the paper described the role of the insurgent man:

se lancer dans l'inconnu, de forcer violemment la main à la Destinée et, par le seul fait de sa volonté, par l'extraordinaire puissance que lui donne le sacrifice qu'il fait d'avance de sa vie, de contraindre la Destinée à accoucher.³³

This new man was not content with his fate; he would actively shape his future.

³¹ Thierry Maulnier, 'La révolution dite spirituelle', in *Mythes Socialistes*, pp. 37 - 50.

³² Louis-Henry Mortane, 'L'homme nouveau est mort-né', *L'Insurgé*, 18 August 1937.

³³ Edouard Drumont, *L'Insurgé*, 13 January 1937.

However, while drawn towards the activist man, Maulnier remained critical of the Nietzschean hero whose influence had been creeping into European literary and political consciousness throughout the 1930s.³⁴ The Nietzschean man had renounced happiness and in this, according to Maulnier, lay both the attraction and the danger of this new hero:

C'est là, nous semble-t-il, le seul véritable caractère nietzschéen de notre temps; Il ne faut pas chercher l'influence du penseur allemand que dans une attitude générale en face du monde, faite de courage, de lucidité désespérée, d'absolu désintéressement et parfois de la tentation de la catastrophe. On ne promet plus aux peuples la prospérité ou le butin; on ne soulève plus les masses en leur promettant l'égalité matérielle, la richesse pour tous, la perfection sociale; on ne montre plus aux nations, comme Bonaparte, les plus riches plaines du monde, on ne leur parle plus de la gloire. L'effort, la sacrifice, la mort possible, sont demandés aux hommes au nom d'une grandeur encore vague, d'une conformité mystérieuse avec le destin, d'une mission ou d'un mythe.³⁵

Without happiness or contentment, the Nietzschean hero could be motivated only by myths which demand sacrifice and devotion without any sense of purpose—the action was justification in itself. When applied collectively to the masses this left man open to manipulation and control. It meant the loss of personal autonomy and the enshrinement of political and social despotism:

Ainsi, ce qui devait tendre à l'élévation et à l'enrichissement du type humain peut tendre, en fin de compte, à sa simplification, c'est-à-dire à son abaissement.³⁶

Jean-Pierre Maxence, on the other hand, was increasingly drawn towards the image of the activist hero. In an assessment of the decade between 1927 and 1937, he saw the influence of Nietzsche everywhere. Despite their differences, the most active young writers—Montherlant, Malraux and even Maulnier, who had denied him—could not avoid Nietzschean 'accents' or 'vibrations'. They were on a 'pente commune', he claimed, which saw the strong and ruthless hero as the only salvation to decadence:

³⁴ Thierry Maulnier, *Nietzsche* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933) and 'Les révolutions de désintéressement' in *Mythes Socialistes*, pp. 51-54.

³⁵ Maulnier, 'Les révolutions de désintéressement', p. 54.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Etre héroïque, c'est peut-être le seul moyen de secouer la poussière du monde, de sortir de la pourriture d'une société qui se décompose.³⁷

Retrouver des valeurs qui permettent ce mépris supérieur de la vie, montrer des héros qui fussent capable de penser que 'le service de certaines causes vaut qu'on ne recule pas devant le meurtre ou la mort' ... Des bassesses mêmes de la vie, de la molle lourdeur d'une atmosphère de décomposition, s'élève la revendication, l'affirmation des valeurs d'exemples héroïques.³⁸

Despite these differences in method and tone, those young Frenchmen who believed in a personalist and spiritual revolution saw themselves as held together by a common thread. They agreed on one essential or fundamental truth that explained the crisis of western civilisation:

Si une civilisation tout entière peut être aujourd'hui remise en jeu, c'est parce qu'elle a ignoré et blessé aveuglement l'être humain dans ce qu'on pourrait appeler son exigence éternelle.³⁹

Spiritual revolutionaries saw themselves as on a crusade, a noble struggle for perfection, for an absolute, definitive truth.⁴⁰ They sought nothing less than purity:

Le certain est qu'il faut retrouver une pureté. Pureté, la spontanéité d'une inspiration qui sait trouver son feu et sa mesure hors des mots d'ordre d'école et des artifices; pureté, la solitude créatrice qui peut s'abstraire de l'unité, de la mode, de la vanité ou de trop faciles entraînements; pureté, la rigueur d'un choix qui méprise tout ce qui n'est pas essentiel; pureté, nudité de l'homme et de l'art.⁴¹

The spiritual revolution therefore reflected the traditional right's quasi-religious fervour for eternal truth and, in its postulation of a key to understanding and salvation, it also drew upon a newer, more dramatic myth of a total solution. Such differences were never fully explored within the personalist movement. Indeed, so long as the primacy of the person, rather than the individual, was agreed upon, the personalists saw their

³⁷ Maxence, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, p. 278.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

³⁹ Maulnier, *La Crise est dans l'Homme*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

diversity as a positive factor: they were, after all, part of a nonconformist movement, 'neither right nor Left'.

However, the contradictions did not go unnoticed by more conservative elements of the right. Henri Massis distrusted the universal, all embracing idea that opposed philosophies could find unanimity through agreement on a single, 'fundamental reality' and thereby save civilisation. He found this to bear the confusion and fragility of all 'modern' thought and suspected a mere political tactic rather than any true identity of principle.⁴²

In a short article for the *Revue Universelle* in 1938 entitled 'Défense de la Personne Humaine', Massis claimed that the lack of rational discrimination and its all-embracing tendency actually undermined the legitimate principles of personalism. He contended that personal and social salvation could be achieved only through recognising a spiritual order but that this meant allowing a rational intelligence to examine and understand the soul or interior being. This synthesis, long since discovered by the Catholic Church, he said, was under threat from writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre whose existentialism bred an incoherence of self, a moral disassociation and disgust for being. But many personalists had praised Sartre, simply because he sought to examine 'the person', the interior being. What they failed to see, according to Massis, was that existentialism was the denial of the unified person and led to a partial, degraded, totalitarian man.

Totalitarian man, according to Massis, was the result of inner chaos. He sought to escape from this turmoil and rediscover his enthusiasm and optimism for life through irrational action and violence. Inner turmoil led him to seek out a sense of total engagement in order to give him the discipline which could no longer come from within. This resulted in the exaltation of heroic virtues at the expense of the intellect and a devaluation of the free and disinterested act of service: 'tout céder à un ordre élémentaire et irrationnel—fût-il national—cela ne va pas sans abaissement de

⁴² Henri Massis, 'Défense de la Personne Humaine', *Revue Universelle* vol. LXXIV:9 (August 1938), pp. 349-53.

l'esprit'.⁴³ Massis therefore saw, not merely internal contradictions, but real danger for those who rallied behind the personalist password.

The new man mythology had a profound impact on French right wing intellectual debate during the course of the 1930s. The idea of a new man fed the sense of moral decadence which had long been part of right wing opposition to liberal democratic culture. Conservative intellectuals were attracted by the promise of a moral *renaissance*, but thought that this could best be achieved through a return to certain basic or eternal values. Such intellectuals rejected the modernism implicit in the ideal of the new man, a modernism which became increasingly explicit under the influence of the nonconformist, *fascisant* and fascist groups. These groups sought new and positive solutions to what they claimed were the unprecedented challenges of the modern world. Thus, while all the factions of the right sought a solution to the problem of moral decadence, they could agree only in vague and general terms on the moral make-up of the ideal French man of the future. To some extent the depth of these divisions were masked by the tendency of the right to define its ideal man in terms of 'spirit' rather than doctrine, but the methods of bringing about a moral renaissance, the political choices to be made and tactics to be followed, remained a source of great division and uncertainty.

The defeat of France brought an end to division over political choices, though for only a very short time. The republican elites, the champions of the individual, were swept away. The installation of Pétain as *chef*, gave not merely an extraordinary opportunity for change but also an immediate example of manhood and leadership. In 1940 there was no question amongst the right that a moral collapse had contributed to the defeat and that a moral regeneration was vital if France was to survive in a totally altered world.

But conflict over the nature of the new man soon re-emerged in the new political reality of collaboration. In order to explain the defeat and then to underpin its calls for

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

unity and acceptance, the Vichy government immediately resorted to familiar arguments against individualism. In early 1941, Pétain, still appealing to recent 'cruel experience', condemned individualism as the cause of all France's misfortunes:

L'épreuve soufferte par le peuple français doit s'inscrire en traits de feu dans son esprit et dans son cœur. Ce qu'il faut qu'il comprenne pour ne jamais oublier, c'est que l'individualisme, dont il se glorifiait naguère comme d'un privilège, est à l'origine des maux dont il a failli mourir.⁴⁴

Pétain went on to describe individualism as a parasite on the social body which could only be tolerated if the host was strong and rich. If France was to be reconstructed and achieve 'peace and joy', he claimed, the first step had to be the elimination of individualism. Individualism had corrupted the French taste for independence, a positive quality, and created indiscipline and anarchy. The new French man had to learn to live communally and embrace the 'puissants et bienfaisants effluves collectifs où se mêlent les héritages du passé et les appels de l'avenir'.⁴⁵ He had to develop a cooperative, group spirit and, above all, a sense of duty. To serve, according to Pétain was the destiny of man.

Pétain's appeals to the military/moral code of service and duty and to the acceptance of destiny were repeated incessantly throughout the Occupation. These were the eternal values of the conservative right, reinforced now by the tragedy of the defeat which loomed over Vichy's moral reforms as a constant reminder of a decadent past. But Pétain's appeals for moral reform also reflected the fatalism which had been discernible in some aspects of the spiritual and personalist movements of the 1930s. Vichy propaganda often used a quasi-religious imagery and appealed to an unspecified higher force. Vichy represented individualism as the intellectual form of original sin: it had caused an abdication of universal values in favour of personal appetites and revolted against the human condition itself: 'l'individualisme refuse le pardon parce qu'il

⁴⁴ Philippe Pétain, 'L'Individualisme et Nation', *Revue Universelle*, Nelle Série:1 (January 1941), pp. 1-4, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 3.

nie avoir péché'.⁴⁶ The individual had cast himself out of the 'cosmic continuities' (soil, work, family and fatherland) which had bound and nourished him and the result was desiccation and death without bearing fruit.⁴⁷ The effects of moral decadence—the defeat, France's falling birth rate—thus became the result of the 'unnatural': a denial of destiny or superior law where man had created himself as God.⁴⁸ According to this cosmic view, the catastrophe which struck France in 1940 was the shock which would force France to face 'une lente refonte des mœurs sous l'influence de la nécessité quotidienne'.⁴⁹

Thus Vichy sought to reassure the population by representing the post-defeat man as the 'eternal French man' and as a survivor. This made him simultaneously strong and vulnerable. As a mere survivor, he was essentially powerless; his future was assured only so long as he trusted and served the moral cause of the National Revolution.

Le nouveau Français—et cette nouveauté consiste à revenir simplement à la France éternelle—se distingue à la masse par sa joie de vivre, par sa confiance; il obéit au maréchal Pétain et il accepte les enseignements du désastre.⁵⁰

Vichy's new man drew his strength from his faith in the destiny of France. He was secure in the embrace of *Travail, Famille, Patrie*, but he was also bound by it. Implicit in the triptych of the new order was a moral imperative for unity: anyone who threatened national unity was precluded from the ranks of new men.⁵¹

The more radical and fascist elements in Paris also preached the 'salutary lessons' of the defeat, but they soon sought to go beyond them. In general terms, the image of

⁴⁶ Jean Arfel, 'Les chemins de l'individualisme', *Revue Universelle*, Nelle Série:65-6 (September, 1943), pp. 265-77, p. 274.

⁴⁷ Gustave Thibon, 'Individualisme et dénatalité', *Revue Universelle*, Nelle Série:27 (February, 1942), pp. 161-71, p. 162 and Pétain, 'L'Individualisme et Nation', p. 2.

⁴⁸ Thibon, 'Individualisme et dénatalité', p. 165.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵⁰ Jean-Pierre Liausu, 'Nouveau Français', *Révolution Nationale*, 26 October 1941.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* As the following chapter shows, in practice and in the context of occupied France, unity meant exclusion, not only on political, but also on racial grounds. Unity also meant homogeneity, the husbanding of an essential or eternal Frenchness, and this opened the door to a biological conception of the new man and the state's role in creating him.

the new man which emerged through the pages of the collaborationist press was forward looking, heroic and politically active. This new man was conscious of his strength and anxious to exercise his power. Men such as Jean Pierre Maxence who had passed through personalist circles to an attraction to fascism in the 1930s also attacked individualism as the cause of France's moral distress after the defeat, but Maxence's main criticism of individualism was that it had failed to produce men who were strong enough to play a part in shaping their own destiny:

Si l'intelligence française demeure enfermée dans l'étroite zone d'ombre, dans l'étroite prison individualiste, elle consommera l'affaïssement de vitalité dont les symptômes présents manifestent la gravité. L'individualisme est une solution impossible pour les Français en une époque où ce sont d'immenses et dynamiques communautés qui pèsent sur le destin de la France.⁵²

For many fascists, the defeat promised total change. So excited was Drieu La Rochelle by the prospect of the new and by the possibilities which the future held for the complete transformation of France, that he saw the nation as embarking on a voyage of discovery. Its mission was nothing less than the discovery of man. In the course of this voyage France would be transformed from the tired, old and over-sophisticated nation it had become, into 'un peuple gai', a community of curious, adventurous and unpredictable beings:

Il y a la vie et la continuelle merveille de sa recreation, de sa métamorphose dans l'inattendu et le surprenant. Ah! Français, n'avez-vous pas le goût de vous perdre, de vous oublier, de cesser d'être ce que vous êtes depuis si longtemps, et de frapper en vous la source qui est dans chaque peuple, la source de tous les miracles, la source de la vie? N'avez-vous pas envie de changer, d'être quelque chose de neuf, de découvrir dans votre âme et votre paysage quelque chose qui y est latent, possible et qui est encore inconnu?⁵³

Those Parisian collaborators most closely tied to the occupying authorities were also keen to stress that the creation of a new man presupposed a total rupture with the past and that France's new situation demanded a new man. Early in the Occupation, Alphonse de Châteaubriant thought it important to address 'cette fameuse notion de

⁵² Maxence, 'L'Intelligence française devant l'action', pp. 36-7.

⁵³ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, 'Jeanne d'Arc était gaie' (19 October 1940), in *Ne Plus Attendre*, p. 54.

‘l’Homme Nouveau’ dont tout le monde parle tant et que si peu voient clairement’.⁵⁴ He claimed that people had developed a vague idea of a new man situated somewhere between the two poles of a standardised, mass production man and a Nietzschean superman. The true new man, he claimed, would be born out of an absolute and fundamental break with France’s past. He reproached French men for having refused the chance of a new life when they were offered it: a reference, no doubt, to their failure to follow him in his conversion to Nazism in the 1930s. Instead French men had chosen to stick with the man of the social contract: defined by law, dedicated to protecting person and property and aspiring to nothing higher. It was this man that France now had to reject totally. The new man, claimed Châteaubriant, was not an individual. He was less egocentric, more for social community. He was a man of action, politics being completely alien to him. He was not concerned with laws, rights or liberty but only with the intrinsic value of humanity. He was a ‘man of faith’ in communion with a superior law. His life was serious and austere, guided by ineluctable responsibilities: it was ‘l’antipode de la vie facile’.⁵⁵ This new man was no different to the man Châteaubriant had described before the defeat but what defined him now was a sense of rupture with the French past, an urgent need for revolutionary change.

As the Occupation progressed, the frustration of this desire for a total break with the past can be read in the pages of *La Gerbe*. One year after Châteaubriant’s article, *La Gerbe*’s editor-in-chief, Camille Fégy, frustrated with Vichy’s bickering, published an attack on the slowness of the revolution and entitled it ‘Faites la Révolution ou f...-nous la paix!’. He warned the current leaders—men of the armistice—that they were in danger of being overtaken by men of action. If they did not soon accomplish the revolution, the young would do it for them:

on vieillit vite en période révolutionnaire, surtout lorsqu’on préfère la discussion théorique à l’action concrète ... les jeunes nous passeront sur le ventre.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Alphonse de Châteaubriant, ‘Révélation du présent’, *La Gerbe*, 5 September 1940.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Camille Fégy, ‘Faites la Révolution ou f...-nous la paix!’, *La Gerbe*, 20 November 1941. Fégy was another ex-communist journalist who followed Doriot into the PPF. He edited *La Gerbe* until 1942.

Fégy praised the men who had taken control of France for their prescience, swift action and courage but claimed that an armistice mentality was no longer enough. France now had to go beyond the defeat and (here he paraphrased Déat), pass from the camp of the defeated to that of the victors. Not only did France have to make this leap, but it had to achieve in two or three years what in Italy and Germany had taken twenty and it had to achieve the transformation without failing 'de penser français, d'agir français, d'être Français jusqu'au bout des ongles'.

Fégy went further than attacking the defeat mentality and the lack of men of action. He criticised all those, from whatever political background, who were vying for control of France in the new National Socialist Europe but who refused to renounce their old ways: 'On parle tous les jours de créer un homme nouveau et personne ne veut tuer en soi le vieil homme'. The result, he claimed, was the transmission of all the faults of France's spiritual fathers, be they Marx or Maurras. But he reserved particular criticism for those on the right who had not broken unequivocally with Maurrassian and old nationalist ways:

Ils ont continué de coller politiquement à la vieille droite, et, reprenant ses justes critiques de la démocratie capitaliste - qui étaient aussi celles de Lénine comme elles furent celles de Hitler et de Mussolini - ils n'ont jamais choisi nettement entre la monarchie de leurs pères et le monarque de la révolution moderne: le Chef.⁵⁷

These men, while occasionally paying lip service to the new and putting forward frivolous formulas for change, were merely repeating old catechisms and defeated dogmas, according to Fégy. The revolution in France, a National Socialist revolution, was once again on the point of failure and its failure would be due, as in 1934, to the old right returning to its old ways, like a dog, he said, returning to its vomit.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Fégy claimed that the National Socialist revolution had failed twice before in France: the first failure was after the riots of February 1934 when the old right had refused the revolutionary path; the second was the chance offered by the PPF in 1936 which enjoyed only a brief flowering.

While at pains to avoid direct criticism of Pétain, Fégy claimed that appointing men such as Bergery, Doriot, Déat and Brasillach to ministries under Laval would complete the revolution which was now faltering. This was the beginning of a growing tendency to criticise Vichy's lack of revolutionary zeal by attacking the ministerial personnel at Vichy, who were not 'new men'. Fégy claimed that the government needed to take supporters from all backgrounds (so long as they were willing to build a new, authoritarian and fascist state) in order to make a truly popular revolution and in order to stop the bickering between parties. Above all, the new men of France had to forget about the past and think of the future: 'pour construire et non pour ruminer'.

However, increasingly from 1942, as the German victory and the National Revolution failed to eventuate, the collaborationists themselves obsessed over the past and used the defeat to distinguish themselves from the timid and the quibblers who had preferred the 'trodden path':

J'appelle d'abord un homme nouveau celui qui a envisagé son présent et son avenir sans s'outirer au passé des dommages et des intérêts, celui dont le premier souci a été de créer, de construire ... celui qui a préféré, au lendemain de juin 1940, les risques du courage et de l'entreprise à une assurance tous risques ... des hommes qui ont gardé leur bravoure, le sens du réalisme et la confiance. Des hommes qui ont repartis de zéro sans ergoter sur ce zéro.⁵⁹

Towards the end of 1942, an article appeared in the journal *Idées* in which the author, Charles Mauban, equated the failure of the National Revolution with its failure to build a new man.⁶⁰ Typically, and despite his subject, 'L'Homme de la Révolution Nationale', Mauban could confidently define the new man only in negative terms: he would not be a *bien-pensant*, unrealistic or mechanistic. His positive attributes included a mixture of opposites: a true son of French soil, a Christian humanist, audacious and rigorous, strong and sensitive, capricious and steadfast. Mauban's new man bore little resemblance to the new man imagined in the pages of *La Gerbe* but Vichy's failure to make him live led to the same criticisms.

⁵⁹ Jean Lasserre, 'Hommes Nouveaux', *La Gerbe*, 16 April 1942.

⁶⁰ Charles Mauban, 'L'Homme de la Révolution Nationale', *Idées*, September 1942, pp. 20-4.

The National Revolution, claimed Mauban, would fail, not through lack of doctrine but through lack of unity, passion, enthusiasm and risk. The revolution had not moved beyond political revenge and its concerns with the moral order were confounded by the 'fog of personalism'. Any changes that had been achieved were for the most part the result of the demands of the defeat. The National Revolution had not created a new spirit nor embodied it in a certain type of man: 'le jeune hitlérien existe ... le jeune fasciste existe ... le phalangiste existe. Le jeune révolutionnaire national français n'existe pas'. Vichy's new man was a 'lourd et proche secret dont la révolution reste jalouse' yet without him the National Revolution would die. The National Revolution had not brought about the essential unity of opposites which was necessary to build this new being:

Du moine et du guerrier, du missionnaire et du colonial, du militant d'extrême-droite et du militant d'extrême-gauche participera certainement cet homme nécessaire et que nous attendons encore.⁶¹

* * *

Though the concept of a new man was central to the right's ideas for social change, it was never possible to combine its various, vague and opposing visions. This was especially so in the context of the Occupation when the new man became a pawn in the power game between Vichy and the collaborationists. Nevertheless, the fact that all the factions of the collaborationist right considered the creation of a new man vital to the survival of France under a National Socialist Europe, ensured that every aspect of Vichy's programme of moral reform—its education, youth, and racial/exclusionist policies—was vigorously contested.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Chapter 10

Creating the New Man

Au moment où plus rien ne devait être conservé, on voyait reparaître tous les conservateurs.

Lucien Rebatet, *Les Décombres*, 1942.

Supporters of the Vichy regime and its collaborationist critics shared the basic assumption that lasting change depended on the creation of a new man. But the National Revolution was a programme for moral and intellectual reform rather than revolution. It aimed to build a strong backbone of support for the New Order, in the main by inculcating the tried and tested values which, according to the conservative moral creed, had once made France great. Rather than innovate, the various administrative structures of the Vichy regime provided an umbrella for the plethora of conservative reform movements which had sprung to life in the inter-war period. Detractors and opponents of the regime often reserved their most trenchant criticisms for the new man policies. They favoured methods which would bring about a more rapid and a more complete transformation of the national psyche: in short, this was often no more than the imitation of National Socialist methods and organisation. However, the most constant lament of Vichy critics was that ‘real’ change could not be brought about by the ‘old guard’—the conservatives who had taken up the reigns of power after the defeat and shaped the National Revolution. The call for a

new man was thus intricately bound up with the struggle for the political control of France within the Nazi New Order.

The National Revolution aimed to build a new man through various policies, the most prominent of which were its much vaunted policies for education and youth. While the government's programs for education and youth were numerous, it should not be forgotten that Vichy's new man would also be the result of a programme of political and racial exclusion.

Education

Enseigner d'abord aux enfants à se tenir bien. L'éducation, avant l'instruction.
Pétain to a teacher, according to René Benjamin.¹

The first step in the Vichy government's programme of moral renewal was to define a policy of national education. But in this task, so fundamental to the birth of the new man, Vichy had no success. The reasons for this were numerous. The ideal of the new man was blurred in the first instance by the pursuit of old educational agendas and in the second, by the precedence given to the regime's immediate political/propagandist aims. The concern to promote Pétain as the role model for the new man also confused the ideal, as did the ever-present tendency to celebrate a vague spirit or character rather than to produce a solid body of legislative reform. The lack of a coherent education policy was in part the cause, in part the result of chronic ministerial instability and disorder. These reasons for failure were mainly *sui generis*. The government also had to contend at times with opposition from the Germans and, more frequently, from their supporters in Paris who ruthlessly exploited the government's failure to embody its oft-touted ideal of the new man in order to gain political power for themselves. Altogether this meant that the Vichy regime never formulated a coherent educational policy and never approached the intellectual renewal it

¹ Benjamin claims that upon hearing these words, the teacher began to cry, liberated at last from having to suppress such truths. René Benjamin, *Le Maréchal et son peuple* (Paris: Plon, 1941), p. 35.

called for at its inception.

Vichy's failure to convey a sense of educational renewal was, to a large extent, due to the fact that its policy followed an old agenda—to dismantle the Republican system of public education. The school system had long been a bone of contention between the state and the conservative right. Throughout the life of the Third Republic, conservatives had attacked the state's control of the education system, especially its strict secularism. Conservative pressure groups deplored the social and moral values inspired by the curriculum's 'glorification' of France's Revolutionary heritage and of individualism, rationalism and intellectualism. Conservatives were also well aware that the greatest obstacle to any change was the close identification of the body of teachers with the politics and ideology of the Third Republic. During the 1930s, such long standing criticisms from the right were joined by assertions of decline and cultural decadence. The prospect of the transmission of decadence to future generations and the concern over social and international tensions, lent a renewed immediacy to the right's calls for education reform.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Vichy was so quick to blame the defeat on the educational system. Vichy supporters claimed that republican education had undermined the nation's strength of character and had sapped its will to fight.² Long before 1940, however, Pétain had demonstrated an interest in education: when he entered politics in the 1930s he had spoken on the need to inculcate military and patriotic values through the school system and he had been a member of the Catholic educational pressure group, the *Cercle Fustel de Coulanges*. As head of government, he was quick to establish his image as an educator. Two months after claiming power, he published two articles on education in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*—articles which Vichy propaganda mined for the remainder of the Occupation.³ Pétain and the regime began and never ceased to attack the old enemies of the right, the individualism and intellectualism which had contaminated French

² After the defeat, accusations that teachers had undermined the sense of patriotic sacrifice and military duty in French youth, led the government to consider the formation of a commission of inquiry to determine the role of teachers in the military disaster. See Rémy Handourtzel, 'L'école', in Gervereau and Peschanski, *La Propagande sous Vichy*, pp. 32-39, p. 32 and *Vichy et l'école: 1940-1944* (Paris: Noesis, 1997).

³ Philippe Pétain, 'L'Education Nationale', *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 August 1940).

education. Pétain was fond of saying that the true aim of education was to create character: the human heart was not naturally good, firm, constant, or courageous and human nature needed firm discipline and strong convictions to temper and guide it. Pétain's educational aim was to impart a love of physical effort, an ability to create and characteristics of decisiveness and responsibility—in short, to foster an 'esprit artisanal'. The opposite of the individualist concerned only with abstractions, the new French child would leave school physically tougher than his predecessors, armed with practical skills and prepared for a life based on morality, family and national community.⁴ None of this was new.

The old conservative educational agenda accounted for much of Vichy's early failure, especially in relation to its own new man rhetoric. Not only did the old agenda ensure the opposition of the vast majority of teachers, but it ill prepared Vichy's first ministers of education for the minefield of Occupation politics. Extraordinary instability, even for the times, saw four different ministers for education in the six months from June 1940.⁵ Vichy's first minister for education, Albert Rivaud, a professor at the Sorbonne, not only carried the intellectual baggage of the Catholic, conservative pressure groups of the 1930s (he was also a member of the *Cercle Fustel de Coulanges*) but his obvious lack of sympathy for Nazism ensured that his stay in office was short—just 26 days. Rivaud's successor, Emile Mireaux, lasted seven weeks before falling foul of Pétain's distrust of politicians (he was a former Senator and economic journalist). The third minister, a former Dean of Law, Georges Ripert, managed three months' tenure of office, but Pétain suspected him of being a Laval supporter and dismissed him together with Laval in the coup of 13 December.

Despite this ministerial instability, Vichy's early legislation clearly demonstrated that the regime's educational reform had little to do with the ideal of the new man and a

⁴ J. Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale est un Fait* (Amiens: Yvert et Cie., 1941), p. 174.

⁵ In all, there were six Ministers for Education under Vichy: Albert Rivaud (17 June-12 July 1940); Emile Mireaux (12 July-6 September); Georges Ripert (6 September-13 December); Jacques Chevalier (13 December-23 February 1941); Jérôme Carcopino (23 February 1941-16 April 1942); and Abel Bonnard (16 April 1942- August 1944). W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 16-40, gives a biographical profile of all Vichy education ministers and their policies.

great deal to do with establishing its power and with immediate political/propagandist aims. Although Vichy claimed its mission was to bring peace to 60 years of educational conflict and to free the schools of political and state control, this was only a thin disguise for a political *épuration*.⁶ Vichy's aim was first, to undo the influence of teachers, especially primary teachers, those 'ambassadors' of the Republic who often served as local elites and community leaders, and second, to wrest control of the educational system from professional unions and organisations. Almost immediately upon taking office, Vichy's second Minister for Education, Miraux, began a witch-hunt of left wing teachers with a law providing for the dismissal of teachers who were 'disloyal' or who 'promoted' politics or disorder.⁷ He continued the attacks on teachers' professional independence.⁸ But Vichy's third minister, Ripert, with more time in office and a strong inclination towards authoritarianism, did most to increase government controls over the profession and the curriculum. He took the supervision of the school curriculum from the *Ligue de l'Enseignement* and he claimed the right to nominate members of the departmental education councils. Most importantly, in October 1940, the government suppressed the *Ecoles Normales Primaires*, the teacher training colleges. Of course, Ripert claimed that these measures were an attempt to broaden and increase teachers' intellectual formation, to give them higher school qualifications before entering teacher training and a classical education to suit the new curriculum. However, the government undoubtedly perceived the *Ecoles Normales* to be the seedbeds for socialist, Masonic and anti-clerical influence and they had to be destroyed if the ideals of the new regime were ever to survive.⁹

⁶ J. Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale est un Fait* (Amiens: Yvert & Cie., 1941), p. 158, offers the justifications for Vichy's educational reforms; Handourtzet, 'L'école', details the steps in educational *épuration*.

⁷ JO, law of 17 July 1940. Halls points out that many teachers were also victims of the laws against Freemasons: *The Youth of Vichy France*, p. 113.

⁸ The law of 27 July 1940 suppressed the Consultative Committees for Primary Education and on 2 August, their role of assessing promotions was given to inspectors from the Academy.

⁹ A study of official controls, surveillance and denunciations of teachers can be found in Roger Austin, 'Political Surveillance and Ideological Control in Vichy France: A Study of Teachers in the Midi, 1940-1944', in R. Kedward and R. Austin, *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 13-35. Austin examines the efficacy of government policy at the local level and finds that inspectors had some latitude of action, at times resisting the political *épuration* enforced by Prefects and at others settling old scores from the 1930s, especially with unions. Austin argues that from 1942, Vichy's political surveillance of teachers meshed with its more

Religious education represented another long standing battle between left and right and Vichy could hardly claim its advocacy of religious education as a new or innovative policy. Like the Maurrassian right, Vichy's support for the Church was expressed in moral, not religious terms: religious education would impart respect, veneration and obedience but there was no religious salvation in Vichy's vision.¹⁰ The new regime began the reintroduction of religion into schools early, but relatively cautiously.¹¹ However, Vichy's fourth minister for education, Jacques Chevalier, a Catholic philosopher, pushed the religious agenda forcefully. He introduced religious education in state primary schools and gave subsidies to Catholic schools in an attempt to break the single state system.¹² The protest from teachers, outrage from Parisian *collabos* and the disapproval of the Germans led to Chevalier's demise after only two months in office.

Vichy's education reforms were diluted, not only by the fighting of old battles, but also by the regime's pursuit of immediate political/propagandist aims. The educational system offered a powerful tool for spreading the ideology of the National Revolution: it had an impressionable and captive audience and reached, as only it could, into every corner of France. Vichy used this control to foster and spread the personality cult of Pétainism. Pétainism combined old, conservative values and new, propagandist aims. Obviously, Vichy propaganda aimed to strengthen the regime by exploiting popular support for Pétain, but Pétainism also portrayed Pétain as the ideal man, the role model for the new France. But as a role model, Pétain was scarcely a new man: he was portrayed as a wise and virtuous father figure who could command respect, discipline and obedience and as a martyr who could ask for sacrifice in times of trouble. A huge number of publications—from photographs to stories to speeches—and many competitions and

general and obsessive concern with internal security. Also, when ministerial pressure for ideological control peaked under Bonnard, the lack of popular support for the failed National Revolution meant that there was no longer any will at the local level to enforce his policies.

¹⁰ The failure of the attempts by the Church to influence first, the political and religious outlook of the teaching body and second, the policies of the Vichy government in this regard is explored by Nicholas Atkin, 'Church and Teachers in Vichy France, 1940-1944', *French History*, vol. 4:1 (March 1990), pp. 1-22.

¹¹ JO, law of 4 September 1940 (abolished the laws which forbade religious education in state schools) and JO, law of 15 October 1940 (extended scholarships to religious schools).

¹² JO, laws of 6 January and 22 and 26 February 1941. Free secondary education was abolished and replaced by a system of scholarships open to all schools, including private institutions.

projects promoting Pétain were aimed at youth and particularly at schools. In the classroom, the regime fostered a religious devotion to Pétain: Handourtzet describes the school ritual as a new cult in which children were forced to become the novices, singing songs to Pétain every morning, using books and pens bearing his image and overlooked constantly by his portrait which hung in every classroom of France.¹³

The cult of Pétain focused the attention of educational reform on the formation of 'heart' and 'character'. Pétain's espousal of familial authority and practical and outdoors education over 'book learning' diminished the importance of the classroom. The *Revue Universelle*, a journal which showed a keen interest in educational reform and youth affairs, supported and elaborated on this refocusing of educational goals. Several articles in the *Revue* called for school to be an extension of family and a preparation for work and a close collaboration between all three:

La communauté nationale repose sur le foyer et sur l'atelier. Les maintenir, les affermir, prévenir les actions dissolvantes de ces deux cellules mères, c'est à quoi se résume le rôle social de l'école.¹⁴

Thus education would reinforce traditional values which are learnt at home and which are the basis of civilization: honour, probity, conscience and the taste for hard work and perfection.¹⁵

This is not to say that the *Revue Universelle* was totally anti-intellectual in its support for educational reform. The journal dedicated much attention to education as a historical problem, especially where it had 'gone wrong' since the parallel national trauma

¹³ Handourtzet gives many illustrations of the types of material provided by the state and points to the huge cost which this must have entailed, especially given the shortages of printing materials: 'L'école', pp. 35-6.

¹⁴ Serge Jeanneret, 'L'école et la vie professionnelle', *Revue Universelle*, no. 2 (15 January 1941), pp. 120-5, p. 121.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 123. Many articles mention the teaching of Péguy in relation to the taste for hard work which is learnt in the family. See also Henri Bœgner, 'Place et tâche de l'Université dans la France Nouvelle, I & II', *Revue Universelle*, no. 29 (10 March 1942), pp. 327-40 and no. 30 (25 March 1942), pp. 433-43. In this article Bœgner represents Pétain's educational aims as non political and more like the concerns of a grandfather, protecting his grandchildren after the sudden disappearance of their parents: part I, p. 338.

of defeat in 1871.¹⁶ However, the journal's strong anti-individualism led it to oppose the Third Republic's 'dictature d'intellectuels' which had, it claimed, attempted to usurp the parental role in education.¹⁷ There was an important place for intellectual study and competition in schools but, the journal claimed, they should play a small role in a more general education based on practical and concrete goals in science, national and natural history, geography and moral formation.¹⁸ If the education of 'real men' took place in the family, the workshop, the office, the sporting team and the regiment, then Barrès was right in his description of intelligence as, 'cette petite chose à la surface de nous même'.¹⁹

In its most extreme form, the celebration of character and spirit that was so important to the cult of Pétain ran counter to any institutional education. René Benjamin insisted that the young child embodied pure spirit and poetry and that the preservation of such originality and warmth could be achieved only outside the school system which was by nature cold, designed for the masses and for the mere convenience of parents.²⁰ Benjamin's solution for the preservation of the child-spirit was to 'mettez-le dans le jardin': a secure, family and outdoors environment where the child would learn the value of manual work and discover his natural gifts.²¹ The role of institutional education, according to Benjamin, was limited: it was not to agitate the mind with competition, curiosity and science, but to reintroduce the mystery, goodness and wisdom of the human spirit through the teaching of poetry and the lives of great men.²²

¹⁶ See, as an example of such historical analysis, Daniel Halévy, 'Le problème de l'éducation nationale', *Revue Universelle*, no. 17 (10 September 1941), pp. 298-308. Halévy's career from Dreyfussard socialist and supporter of Péguy and Proudhon, to pessimistic conservative and anti-Republican is, according to Julian Jackson, 'emblematic of the drift away from Republican values by a part of France's elite': *France*, p. 47. In his books such as *La fin des notables* (1930) and *Décadence de la liberté* (1931), Halévy expressed his distaste for the uniformity and permissiveness of the modern era and yearned for the return of noble service to the state.

¹⁷ Henri Bœgner, 'La culture et l'esprit dans la formation de l'homme, I & II', *Revue Universelle*, no. 43 (10 October 1942), pp. 361-73, and no. 44 (25 October 1942), pp. 460-73, part I, p. 371.

¹⁸ In regard to moral formation Bœgner praised Barrès, Péguy, Claudel and Maurras, who were not included in the former curriculum, for their faith, love of country and respect for traditional disciplines. He pointed out that those who were included—Valéry, Gide and Romain—taught nihilism, immorality, perversity and eroticism: *ibid.*, part II, p. 469.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, part I, p. 372.

²⁰ René Benjamin, *Vérités et rêveries sur l'éducation* (Paris: Plon, 1941), pp. 18, 22, 41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-7.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 171-3, 193, 202. Benjamin claimed that six to eight months of science teaching was sufficient: p. 239. He also abhorred any form of institutionalised sport or outdoor activity which he

Similarly, official propaganda constantly promoted the new spirit of the regime but the government did little to create it. Vichy's early educational policy was driven by an assumption that the new man would emerge through the celebration of spirit: the concern for legislative change was secondary. This, on top of Vichy's political/propagandist concerns, its failure to innovate and its ministerial jumble, capped Vichy's educational failure.²³ As minister of education, Jacques Chevalier reiterated Pétain's contention that a reformation of character was the ultimate goal of Vichy's educational policies, but he gave only a vague suggestion as to how this change would be brought about inside the classroom:

Le but général à atteindre est d'amener la jeunesse à pratiquer le bien, d'éclairer les esprits et de hausser les cœurs ... On insistera sur les devoirs particuliers à l'enfance et à la vie scolaire: respect, obéissance, travail, courage, sincérité, loyauté.²⁴

Vichy assumed that an enlightenment of spirit and uplifting of hearts would somehow emerge through the reintroduction of classical studies and civics: the moral and ethical lessons inherent in these subjects would instill the virtues of duty, service and altruism in France's youth. The new curriculum aimed to create a new patriotic fervour, celebrating France's eternal greatness through the figures of the French kings and Joan of Arc and through the study of the French Empire.

Once created, the government believed that it could extend the new spirit beyond the classroom to the wider community by requiring children to carry out acts of civic service and good deeds for the needy. Chevalier hoped that celebrations such as the *fête des mères* and the *fête de Jeanne d'Arc* would serve to 'faire rentrer dans le peuple tout un ordre de vertus oubliées'.²⁵ Chevalier's successor, Jérôme Carcopino, a classicist and former director of the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, continued the practice of involving children in

condemned as fruitless competition (a poor substitute for true labour) and as another convenient means of removing the child from the home: p. 58.

²³ Halls points out that though the government constantly stated what it wanted, 'the educational corollary to these ideas was never fully worked out and certainly never realised': *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 13.

²⁴ Jacques Chevalier, JO, law of 5 December 1940.

²⁵ Handourtzel, 'L'Ecole', p. 38.

communal work such as collecting recyclable materials like paper, wood, clothes, bottles and metals. The practical ineffectiveness of such civic action mattered less than the fact that its supporters believed its value lay in overcoming individualism and promoting solidarity. Perhaps also for the regime, being seen to do something was better than doing nothing. Thus, Vichy continued to peddle the image of Frenchmen working together 'coude à coude' for a common task and supporters continued to celebrate the redemptive value of civic action and the perfection of man through work, well beyond the failure of the National Revolution.²⁶

One way in which Vichy aimed to build character and spirit was through increasing the hours dedicated to physical education in schools.²⁷ Support for such an increase was by no means new in educational circles, nor could it be characterised as exclusively traditionalist, however many Vichy educators believed that France's defeat in 1940 had been caused by the poor physical health of its youth. Vichy aimed to shape the character of the new French child who would be, not only physically tougher and fitter, but also morally and spiritually stronger. A regime of physical toughness and austerity (enforced through increased exercise and cold classrooms) would counteract the Republican tendency towards 'soft intellectualism'. The new policy would address the nation's inaction and its lack of realism by taking students outdoors. Activity outdoors was meant to be spiritually uplifting and joyous, giving children a love of country as well as introducing them to manual labour. Vichy encouraged team sport and games in order to teach children effort and endurance, co-operation and selflessness, discipline, courage, modesty, spontaneity (and much more). Thus Vichy's physical education policy aimed to build 'des hommes robustes et équilibrés' who would be 'artisans de la rénovation française'.²⁸

²⁶ Raymond Postal, *Réflexions sur le manuel d'éducation civique* (No details of place of publication: Editions Alsatia, 1943), p. 30.

²⁷ See Jean-Louis Gay-Lescot, *Sport et éducation sous Vichy, 1940-1944* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1991).

²⁸ Secrétariat d'état à l'éducation nationale et à la jeunesse, *Les activités d'éducation générale* (Editions Archat, 1941), p. 3. This government publication reminded teachers that 'La décadence d'un peuple commence lorsque ses élites, perdant le rude contact des hommes et des choses, ne sont plus capables de tendre toutes leurs forces, corporelles et spirituelles, vers l'action'.

As early as September 1940, Vichy established a *Commissariat Générale à l'Éducation Physique et aux Sports* and appointed as its head the former tennis star, Jean Borotra.²⁹ Borotra, a veteran, nationalist and long time Pétain supporter, always maintained that poor physical health had contributed to France's defeat but believed strongly in amateur sport and its ability to teach:

force, endurance, adresse, ténacité, courage, loyauté, maîtrise de soi, esprit de décision, sens de la discipline et de l'autorité, esprit d'équipe, esprit de sacrifice: cet esprit de sacrifice qui est l'un des éléments du sens social.³⁰

Borotra made a particular appeal to primary teachers who, he said, bore the main responsibility of shaping a 'straight and firm' character and instilling hope in the young, so important in this 'l'ère des vastes réalisations'.³¹ Borotra sought to outline for teachers eight different forms of physical activity and the aspects of character that they would build: curiosity, attention and memory from educational games; leadership, organisation, collaboration and initiative from outdoors games; joy, breathing and self-effacement from choral singing, and so on.³²

The Commission achieved little. Its publications consisted in the main of photographs of male youths exercising in modern sports grounds and in rural settings. The contrast with reality only highlighted the failure of Vichy's sporting programme: there were few funds to build sporting facilities or buy equipment, the limitations in urban areas were ignored and, in rural areas, 'unproductive' outdoor activities drew particular hostility.³³ Physical formation was also closely associated with Nazism and Borotra was forced to defend himself, not only against the Parisian collaborationists who saw him as 'old guard' and even pro-Gaullist, but also against charges of imitation of the Germans

²⁹ Borotra always remained loyal to Pétain but was anti-German and unpopular with Laval and the Parisian collaborationists. After Laval's return to power in 1942 he was dismissed and his attempt to escape France after the German invasion of the South led to his deportation and imprisonment. He was not tried for his role in the Vichy government after the war.

³⁰ Jean Borotra, *L'éducation générale et les sports: Conférence d'Information, Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques, 23 Mars 1942* (Mesnil, 1942), p. 9.

³¹ Jean Borotra, *Instituteurs de France ... vous répondrez à leur appel* (Grenoble: Commissariat Générale à l'Éducation Générale et aux Sports, 1942), p. 5.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 16-23.

³³ Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 197.

and un-Frenchness.³⁴

Vichy's emphasis on character and physical formation was particularly male focussed. Its educational philosophy assumed that moral virtues were inherent in the female character and needed, therefore, only to be cultivated.³⁵ Vichy did not see girls as future scholars or workers, but believed that 'c'est pendant l'adolescence que les femmes et les mères, gardiennes des foyers et de la race, doivent se préparer à leur mission'.³⁶ To reflect their true vocation as wives and mothers, the government aimed to educate girls in the practical skills of home crafts. Girls received less physical training than boys and it was not as prolonged nor in any way violent. However, to be good home makers, Vichy claimed that girls needed more physical training: strong abdominal muscles for deportment and child bearing and dance and rhythm exercises for balance, suppleness and grace. Borotra believed that girls would benefit mentally from physical exercise by developing courage and self control, characteristics necessary for their role as 'l'âme de la renaissance'.³⁷

By early 1942, the failures and limitations of Vichy's dreams of reshaping the

³⁴ Borotra, *L'éducation générale*, pp. 12-3. Borotra often emphasised that his ideas were based in French tradition and that the value that the French placed on the intellect was not diminished by giving it a 'concrete foundation' in the body. Borotra was also keenly aware of the lack of facilities: pp. 28-30. Anatole de Monzie was one who rejected the 'improvised' curriculum which increased physical education by reducing the time given to other subjects ('la tyrannie du sport au détriment de l'histoire') and who attributed the apparent reversal of educational values to the German victory ('C'est un insupportable paradoxe que ce recours à la force physique des individus au sortir d'une épreuve où cet élément a été si peu déterminant'): *Pétition pour l'histoire*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1942), pp. 31, 39.

³⁵ René Benjamin claimed to be reluctant to say much about education of women as it caused such heated debate. However, he felt sure not to offend anyone by saying that women were fragile creatures who were likely to go mad if their nerves were prematurely used, such as by too much study. Fathers were too ambitious for their daughters, with the result that 300 female law graduates were walking the streets of Paris. Mothers were getting cars, going out and leaving a deserted house: young women therefore had nothing to do but more and more study: 'Il s'agissait de tuer le temps'. Benjamin believed that girls' education had to serve their essential mission as mothers and to cultivate the nobility and morality that was natural to them. The dignity of man depended on woman: the woman's role was to help her man, make him better and less vulgar. Benjamin, *Vérités et rêveries*, pp. 185-8. The physical and moral dangers of too much and the wrong type of education for women was a common theme under the Occupation, although collaborationists tended as always to inject a greater sense of crisis. A series of articles in Deloncle's *Révolution Nationale*, claimed that girls were in mortal danger unless the government developed special education adapted to their natural mission as dedicated mothers and wives and to their aptitudes of developing taste and sensibility in the home: Denise Courtois, 'De l'éducation des filles', *Révolution Nationale*, 22 March and 5 April 1942.

³⁶ Secrétariat d'état à l'éducation nationale et à la jeunesse, *Activités d'éducation générale*, p. 42. The pamphlet states that lack of physical exercise for girls was causing many of their 'puberty problems'.

³⁷ Jean Borotra, *Instituteurs*, p. 11.

national character through a new education policy were clearly evident. The government had managed some innovation in education policy. However, the reforms which proved to be constructive and of lasting value were largely the work of Vichy's fourth minister of education, Jérôme Carcopino, and he owed his success (and the length of his tenure in office) to his sense of moderation and to his skilful navigation between the numerous political factions and vested interests. Although Carcopino believed that the narrow intellectualism and 'divisiveness' of the old system needed to be undone, he was not fired by any urgency to shape a new man through education. He favoured moderate and gradual change. He tried to defend a degree of autonomy and political independence in education. Carcopino undid Chevalier's attempts to force religion into the school system by ruling that religious education was to be given outside school premises and he toned down his predecessor's religious language, substituting more circumspect and non denominational spiritual references.³⁸ Carcopino's constructive reforms transformed the state secondary system and survived the end of the war: he restored an elitist and classical education to *lycées*, granting scholarships to talented state primary students and he modernised technical and higher elementary schools.³⁹ But Carcopino's reforms were concerned primarily with structural change and modernisation, not with the moral and intellectual creation of a new man. His reforms also came rather late in Vichy's program and were inspired in large part by the necessity to undo or modify earlier excesses. His sacking, with the return of Laval in April 1942, signaled the ultimate failure of Vichy's educational policy: though there had been many earlier failures, Carcopino's demise marks the end of any element of 'good faith'.⁴⁰

The appointment of Abel Bonnard illustrates the extent to which the old forces at Vichy lost political control to more radical elements, but these elements did not advance the creation of a new man in any tangible way.⁴¹ There were several reasons for this.

³⁸ Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale*, p. 173.

³⁹ Charges against Carcopino for his role in the Vichy government were dropped at the Liberation. He published his memoirs, *Souvenirs de sept ans*, in 1953.

⁴⁰ Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 33.

⁴¹ Bonnard was already 60 when appointed to the ministry. He was a homosexual, arrogant and widely disliked, particularly by Pétain who referred to him as the 'gestapette'. Before the war he had been

First, although collaborationist pressure to install more radical personnel in government was backed by the Occupiers, the Germans were never keen to aid any physical or intellectual recovery in France: they turned down Vichy's requests for the release of teachers from prisoner of war camps, for example, and never rescinded this decision. Second, the collaborationist agenda was focused on gaining control of the educational power structures, not on ideas. In general, the collaborationist press agitated for a single, state school system and called for even greater regimentation and political 'guidance'. Some policies, such as Vichy's religious reforms and subsidies to private schools prompted editorial outrage in papers such as Déat's *L'Œuvre*.⁴² However, in the main, the daily press focused its criticism on the ministers and on the pace and nature of reform, condemning it as too slow, too piecemeal and totally lacking any real innovation.

The 'intellectual' collaborationist press showed a greater concern with the creation of a new man through educational reform but was even more vague than the government when it came to explaining how to bring about the necessary spiritual and moral transformation. *La Gerbe*, despite its intellectual pretensions, printed little on education: several contributions from Bonnard before he was appointed minister merely repeated his constant lament over the failure to create heroes.⁴³ Several long articles appeared in the journal *Idées*, asserting that education was the foundation of the National Revolution and calling for revolutionary change instead of 'timid reforms'.⁴⁴ However, from 1943, *Idées'* ideas on education amounted to no more than the inevitable jumble of the political (the creation of new leaders) and the heroic (the inspiration of passion, discipline, steeliness), a

part of the conservative *Cercle Fustel de Coulanges*, a member of the *Académie française* and an *Action Française* sympathiser until his admiration for the Nazis led him to admire the PPF and promote greater French-German cultural ties. He continued this promotion under the Occupation, associating with the *Groupe Collaboration*.

⁴² See Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, pp. 72, 88. Déat and his RNP organisation, took more interest in education than most collaborationists and argued its value in transforming society along National Socialist lines until late in the occupation: see Pierre Vailland and Guy Lemonnier, *La Réforme de L'École: Rapports présentés au Congrès de l'Union de l'Enseignement, les 24, 25 et 26 septembre 1943* (Paris: Editions du RNP, 1943).

⁴³ See Abel Bonnard, 'De l'homme au héros', *La Gerbe*, 26 June 1941.

⁴⁴ See, for example, François Gravier, 'Variations sur la Réforme de l'enseignement', *Idées*, February 1942, pp. 12-27 and 'Réforme de l'Enseignement ou Révolution de l'Éducation', *Idées*, November 1942, pp. 14-28: Gravier argued for the need to destroy the whole *Université* and build more warmth and imagination in education.

jumble which underlay all collaborationist rhetoric about the new man.⁴⁵

Bonnard himself was part of the problem and he achieved nothing of substance. He brought a new style to Vichy: asserting that the old France was dead and talking of integration into a new European order, he openly advocated the politicisation of education along Nazi lines. However, there was nothing new in his political and intellectual purification of the education system. He renewed attacks against 'dissident' teachers and pushed practical, technical and agricultural education above the intellectual study which he claimed corrupted the natural energy and wisdom of youth, especially young women. Bonnard gave more emphasis to the creation of a new French man, but he never moved beyond rhetoric and his early vision of the hero acting in a 'poetic reality'. He claimed that France needed:

des hommes qui exaucent son vœu, plutôt qu'ils ne lui demanderont son avis; c'est pourquoi elle ne sera satisfaite que par des réalistes qui seront des poètes'.⁴⁶

In his speeches as minister he continued to vaunt a new man who was uncomplicated, virile, disciplined, serious, fired by a new spirit and a desire to serve, strong in body and character—a new man all but indistinguishable from the National Socialist hero.⁴⁷

Even if Bonnard had more to offer than empty rhetoric, by 1943 any long term plans were a vain hope. By then the school system was affected by massive absenteeism and evacuations, by the increased resistance of teachers to the National Revolution and by shortages of food and equipment resulting from the increasingly poor conditions of occupation.⁴⁸ Any chance of achieving intellectual or moral renewal through the education system was clearly long past.

⁴⁵ Serge Jeanneret, 'L'Ecole et la Révolution Nationale', and Jean Rolin, 'La Réforme de l'Enseignement' both in *Idées*, January 1943, pp. 29-41; Michel Mohrt, 'L'Education des Garçons selon Montherlant', *Idées*, July 1944, pp. 38-45.

⁴⁶ Abel Bonnard, *Pensées dans l'Action* (Paris: Grasset, 1941), p. 53. Bonnard continued this theme as Minister; on the opening of Arno Breker's exhibition in Paris in May 1942 he said that the sculptures represented the new hero 'celui qui a les pieds dans la réalité et la tête dans la poésie: *La Gerbe*, 28 May 1942.

⁴⁷ Abel Bonnard, *Les messages de M. Abel Bonnard, Ministre de l'Education Nationale* (Information de l'Etat français, 1943).

⁴⁸ Handourtzel, 'L'Ecole', p. 39.

Youth

Pour bien vous engager dans des sentiers abrupts, vous apprendrez à préférer aux plaisirs faciles, les joies des difficultés.
Maréchal Pétain, 1940.

There was obviously a close ideological and bureaucratic link between the National Revolution's policies for education and those for youth. But while reformers wanted a reorientation in the system of education as necessary to bring about long term moral reform, they saw policies for youth as a short cut to shaping the new man and the new order. As a result, youth policies elicited even more bitter arguments between Vichy and the collaborationists.

The youth policies of the National Revolution must be seen in the context of a period in European history which placed a great emphasis on the importance of youth, but the years from 1940 to 1942 in France were ones in which certain youth movements received greater opportunity and favour than ever before. All the various groups within the Vichy government and all collaborationist groups and intellectuals gave a special place to youth. Each claimed that they could shape the first new men out of this youthful generation, a generation that could summon the energy and strength necessary to sweep away the decadence of the old and embody the new order. More prosaically, and more realistically, each group was aware that the allegiance of the nation's youth meant a great deal of political power to whosoever could win or control it.⁴⁹

The question of youth allegiance raised a great many concerns amongst reformists

⁴⁹ For competition for youth allegiance see Bernard Comte, 'Encadrer la jeunesse?', in Gervereau and Peschanski, *La Propagande sous Vichy*, pp. 40-58. Halls, in *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 135, illustrates how French youth was pulled in different directions from four main influences: the anti-democratic Catholic intellectuals and military officers, many of whom became Vichy officials; Henri Massis and the Maurrassiens who followed the Italian Fascist model; the Paris collaborationists who followed a Nazi model; and the Catholic youth organisations which wanted to protect their dominance and autonomy from threats of standardisation and a single movement. Halls also points out that only one sixth of young people joined a movement: p. 183. The large number and variety of youth organisations in occupied France is covered in the above texts and also in Pierre Giolitto, *Histoire de la jeunesse sous Vichy* (Paris: Perrin, 1991).

who feared that the dislocation, unemployment and general demoralisation of the defeat and Occupation would have a particularly bad effect on the nation's youth. Influential people in the government and military circles, such as General Weygand, feared that this would lead to unrest and, especially given their lack of military training, might mean that the generation would never be tamed. Such fears produced in all groups seeking to control youth, an increasing distrust of any cause which might induce a rival commitment, be it *résistant* or other government or collaborationist groupings. For these reasons, the various groups fought bitterly over the allegiance of youth, the organisations which controlled it and the ideology or mythology which shaped it.

Competing Visions

Through its policies and favourable funding, the Vichy government demonstrated an obvious desire to target, discipline and inspire the nation's youth in a way that no previous government had attempted. But Vichy also created a maze of overlapping bureaucracies, competition for power and disagreement over tasks, style and aims. Though it sought from the beginning to give youth a high profile, the government was uncertain as to where ministerial responsibility for youth should lie. In July 1940 the government announced the formation of a Ministry for Family and Youth, the *Secrétariat d'Etat à la Famille et à la Jeunesse*, but in September it created a separate youth section, the *Secrétariat Générale de la Jeunesse* (SGJ) under the purview of the Ministry of Education. With Pétain's support and as a result of the chronic instability of the Education portfolio, the SGJ and its personnel at first enjoyed relative autonomy and freedom of action. However, beginning with Darlan's government and the appointment of men such as Pierre Pucheu and Paul Marion, the growing technocratic and collaborationist influences brought pressure for changes in personnel and doctrine. These pressures forced some changes in personnel, but Pétain resisted where he could by replacing them with men of similar background and philosophy. When Bonnard became Minister of Education under Laval's second ministry, he increased efforts to rid Vichy's youth organisations of conservative, Catholic influences and to direct youth affairs along Nazi lines. With the end to any prospect of new

initiatives, Bonnard suppressed the SGJ altogether in December 1943 and demoted youth affairs to a commission under his ministry.

The task of the SGJ was to shape the moral, civic and professional education of the nation's adolescent youth. This wide ranging task was complicated by its own unwieldy bureaucracy. The power of the SGJ was diluted through a series of regional and departmental representatives, through various organisations and through the many schools, leaders and teachers scattered throughout rural France. There were also competing and overlapping authorities within the government, sometimes with a different view of the role of the nation's youth in the National Revolution. The SGJ had no direct control over education or sport, but there were obviously overlapping concerns. Other Vichy offices and organisations, such as the *Secrétariat d'Etat d'Information et de Propagande* and the *Légion des Combattants* portrayed different versions of the role of youth. Military and religious interests and established youth organisations were well represented at Vichy and many individuals close to Pétain, such as his doctor, Ménétrel, and Du Moulin de Labarthète, the director of his civil cabinet, also dabbled in youth affairs.⁵⁰

The mix of competing centres of power and interest within Vichy was further complicated by the Germans who had obvious cause to be wary of any youth organisation which threatened to become too powerful, including and indeed especially one which sought to imitate the Nazi model and organise along military lines. The SGJ was forced to run two virtually separate offices, one in Vichy and the other in Paris. In the occupied zone, the SGJ had little freedom of action. The Germans tolerated SGJ vocational schools and the religious youth movements which worked closely with them but they forbade most other youth initiatives in the Occupied Zone, especially those which offered military-style training. Instead, the Germans encouraged competition from the youth wings of the Paris-based collaborationist organisations and protofascist parties.⁵¹ Vichy had no power to

⁵⁰ Comte, 'Encadrer la jeunesse?', p. 42. See also Yagil Limoré, 'La propagande et la formation de l'homme nouveau sous Vichy', *Guerres Mondiales et Conflicts Contemporains*, no. 180 (October 1995), pp. 105-129.

⁵¹ Most collaborationist parties formed youth wings which achieved only limited memberships of between 3,000-6,000: for example Bucard's *Jeunesse Francistes*, Doriot's *Jeunesse Populaire Française* (JPF), Déat's *Jeunesse Nationales Populaires* (JNP) and Clémenti's *Jeune Front*. For further information on youth organisations in the Occupied Zone see Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*

influence such movements, either politically or morally. They attacked the government relentlessly. Each collaborationist movement sought to form a single, state organisation and they stood against Vichy's moralist approach to youth policy. Later in the Occupation, the Germans also lent their support to the youth wing of the *Milice*, the *Jeunesse de France et d'Outre-Mer*, thus favouring the totalitarian elements within the government and helping to undermine Vichy's youth initiatives from within. From 1942, with the total occupation of France, obligatory labour and the imminence of Allied invasion, the Germans increasingly feared that government youth organisations would become centres of resistance and they finally forced their closure.

The reasons for Vichy's failure to develop a coherent youth policy went beyond the political complications of the Occupation. Vichy's policy was fraught with internal contradictions, especially when viewed in the context of the new man rhetoric. First, since it relied heavily on the structures, personnel and philosophy of pre-existing youth organisations, the government offered little that was new. Second, government propaganda worked hard to portray Pétain as extraordinarily youthful for his age and an example to the young, but it was an inescapable fact that the nation's youth policies were promulgated by a gerontocracy. Both these contradictions, combined with the government's limitations in funding its initiatives, were a fertile source of criticism for the government's collaborationist critics and rivals.

Vichy's reliance on pre-existing youth organisations was in many ways unavoidable since they commanded a large following, independent of government controls.⁵² The continuing power of these movements and the fact that they were keen to protect their autonomy and resist any attempts to make them fulfill political and propaganda functions, meant that Vichy's youth policy can be seen as little more than a series of compromises,

and Bernard Comte, 'Les organisations de la jeunesse', in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 409-21. Ironically, the Germans supported various collaborationist movements which all called separately for a single youth organisation.

⁵² The continued popularity of organisations such as the Scouts, the largest youth group, with membership from 42,000 in 1940 to 160,000 by 1944, shows the failure of attempts to politicise youth under the New Order.

loosely stitched together.⁵³ But it is also true that Vichy made it clear from the beginning that it did not favour a single, totalitarian youth movement.⁵⁴ Instead, the government clearly favoured the Scouting and religious, especially Catholic movements and encouraged their pre-war leaders to play the key role in setting up its youth programme.⁵⁵

Until 1942, the SGJ was dominated by men of traditional, conservative ideas and remarkably similar background. They were Catholic, patriotic, often military and anti-German, with a proven involvement in education, youth policies and social reform. As before the war, they opposed individualism, egalitarianism, mass culture, rampant capitalism and class division.⁵⁶ After the defeat they espoused no direct enthusiasm for collaboration. Instead, they looked to Pétain to inspire youth: he was to them a symbol of honour, the guarantor of national unity, discipline and hierarchy and the moral guide who would achieve the social renovation they had long desired.⁵⁷

Chief among these men was Georges Lamirand, appointed by Pétain himself to lead the SGJ.⁵⁸ As a follower of Marshal Lyautey and celebrated author of *Le rôle social de*

⁵³ Comte, 'Les organisations de la jeunesse', p. 411. In September 1940 the various scout groups agreed to federate on the basis of a shared patriotic and moral code, but remained divided in their attitude to the state. All groups had openly opposed Nazism before the war but the Catholic *Scouts et Guides de France* were most sympathetic to the National Revolution and state offices. The lay *Eclaireurs de France* and, even more so, the Protestant *Eclaireurs Unionists* were more wary of connections with the regime and were critical of anything that might increase government controls or undermine their separateness. While all groups protected the Jewish *Eclaireurs Israélites*, some were more open in their rejection of Vichy's racism and repressive measures.

⁵⁴ Pétain, in a speech of 13 August 1940, said that all the existing youth movements would be maintained, respected and encouraged while new initiatives would complement and extend their work.

⁵⁵ Apart from left wing movements which were banned, the largest pre-war movement to suffer from the disruptions of the Occupation was the non religious youth hostel organisation, the *Auberges de la Jeunesse*: it was regulated by Vichy and outlawed in August 1943. The Jewish Scouting organisation, the *Eclaireurs israélites de France*, was initially preserved by the SGJ. Under Bonnard all Jews were banned from all other youth movements and the operations of the *Eclaireurs israélites* restricted, but the organisation was not banned until January 1943 and then by the commission for Jewish affairs.

⁵⁶ The desire to break down class division through youth policies was an anti-Marxist goal which united many Vichy initiatives. Jean Borotra also aimed to bring together workers, the middle class and intellectuals through sport: see his *L'éducation générale et les sports*, p. 26.

⁵⁷ Comte, in 'Encadrer la jeunesse?', gives an extensive account of men involved in Vichy's youth organisations and thus demonstrates their remarkable similarities, their connections and friendships and the degree of continuity from the organisations of the 1930s. Particularly striking is the involvement of military personnel in the SGJ: General de la Porte du Theil who had headed the artillery school at Fontainebleau, became the Head of the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse* and several founding members of the *Cercles Sociaux d'Officiers*, an organisation of officers for social reform created in the 1930s, were early recruits into the SGJ and became leaders of *Ecoles de Cadres*.

⁵⁸ Despite tremendous internal and external pressures, Pétain's personal patronage allowed Lamirand to survive as head of the SGJ from 25 September 1940 until March 1943.

l'ingénieur, Lamirand's philosophy was known to be a recipe for social reconciliation and renovation within a pluralist, patriotic and religious context and not for social revolution. In his position as head of the SGJ, Lamirand drew heavily on the influence of Péguy and the pure sentiments which they both saw as sufficient to inspire and enthuse the nation's youth: the mystique of hard work, love of French soil and national heritage and hatred of the social cancers of money and politics.⁵⁹ Lamirand's speeches and writings exhorted the young people of France to believe that the National Revolution was the 'grande cause' and 'œuvre splendide' to which they should dedicate themselves totally and selflessly.⁶⁰ He believed that youth could transform themselves and France:

Faire la Révolution Nationale, c'est chasser tous les miasmes qui intoxiquaient le pays: la paresse, l'égoïsme, l'argent, la lâcheté, l'immoralité. Il faut rompre avec ces défauts et nos faiblesses. Il faut se «dépouiller du vieil homme», comme disaient les anciens. Il faut nous redonner des cœurs et des corps neufs.⁶¹

Mais vous autres, les *Jeunes*, dont l'âme encore pûre n'attend que les empreintes, vous les jeunes dont les forces sont intactes, vous les jeunes qui croyez encore sans réserve au désintéressement et à l'idéal, c'est vous les jeunes qui serez les véritables animateurs de la Révolution Nationale.⁶²

To carry out this great task, Lamirand stressed that the nation's youth should remain within their diverse groupings:

Pas de jeunesse unique, mais une jeunesse unie, chaque groupement apportant, avec le minimum commun à tous, la marque particulière de sa vocation propre.⁶³

Vichy's pluralist approach, a perception of the same enemies and a strong coincidence of moral, social, spiritual and patriotic values drew the long established youth movements into early cooperation with the state. A shared belief in the regenerative

⁵⁹ See Lamirand's preface to Pierre Péguy, *La Pensée de Péguy* (Lyon: Editions de la France Nouvelle, 1941). Vichy's youth propaganda often mentioned Péguy, although Lamirand dedicated considerable space to himself with photographs and information about his 20 years of experience: see Georges Lamirand, Georges Pelorson and Yves de Verdilhac, *Vers l'unité: France nouvelle à nous, Jeunes!* (No publication details. Held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

⁶⁰ Georges Lamirand, *Messages à la Jeunesse, Cahiers Français* nos 1-8 (Clermont: Fernand Sorlot, 1942), no. 3, p. 40.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, no. 1, p. 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, no. 3, p. 87.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, no. 5, p. 49.

powers of physical exertion, especially when carried out in the countryside, led many established organisations to cooperate in Vichy youth initiatives. The fact that only the government could provide finance in a time of great difficulty and need, also played its part. In the summer of 1941 the government and the independent youth groups formed an agreement to participate in the *Conseil de la Jeunesse* which imposed certain loose controls in return for recognition and continued funding. The *Conseil* was Vichy's attempt to chart a middle course between the pre-war proliferation of groups, the need to innovate and the growing collaborationist call for a single, state operated youth organisation. That it did not last long was a testament to the difficulties of maintaining a 'jeunesse unie' rather than a 'jeunesse unique' and of attempting to shape a new youth according to 'les grands courants de la pensée française' under foreign occupation.⁶⁴

Vichy's New Youth

Despite the tensions within youth policies, government initiatives which sought to combat unemployment and dislocation could rely on the support, expertise and experience of the major youth organisations and the tolerance of the occupation authorities and their acolytes. Initiatives such as the *Maisons des Jeunes*, *Service Civique Rural* and the *Centres Urbains et Ruraux de la Jeunesse* which operated in both zones, organised youth in community work for the needy or displaced, helped with harvesting and gave basic training for the unemployed between the ages of 14 and 21. The organisations promised an atmosphere of camaraderie and joy and were heavily imbued with the moralism of patriotic duty and civic service. Young men could learn a trade or spend six months in the country engaged in 'le beau métier du paysan'. For young women, the choices were more limited: in the urban and rural centres they were given 'un métier féminin ... une formation professionnelle en rapport avec leurs goûts, dans le cadre d'une discipline familiale'. Women were taught the skills of home making—cooking, laundry, sewing and

⁶⁴ Recommendations of the final sitting of the *Conseil de Jeunesse* in 1942 in Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 156. The *Conseil* was a fragile grouping, continually and increasingly threatened by tensions from within and attacks from without.

baby care—and though they were promised eventual employment, there was never any doubt that they would ultimately become wives and mothers.⁶⁵

Though it could rely on general support for this type of youth employment program, Vichy was still faced with the problem of how to introduce new initiatives to mobilise and transform the nation's youth without threatening pre-existing movements or overstretching German tolerance. This was a problem of both organisational and ideological dimensions and it resulted in mixed success.

One important and early initiative to regenerate French youth was the creation of the *Compagnons de France*. Conceived by a former scout leader, Henry Dhavernas in July 1940 to engage youth under the age of twenty, Vichy quickly recognised the *Compagnons* as the vanguard for its National Revolution and funded the organisation generously. It was in many ways a rival scout movement, organised into camp/schools and working companies.⁶⁶ Its philosophy was less religious and more populist than pre-war scouting and its military style hierarchy and dress was accompanied by a fascist salute, making it the closest Vichy came to a state movement along totalitarian lines. However, the *Compagnon* organisation was not anti-Semitic and condemned 'les adorateurs de la Race, de la Puissance et du Sang'.⁶⁷ Its mythology, rather than celebrating any aspect of modernity, was rooted in the rituals of the medieval journeyman. *Compagnons* placed great emphasis on manual labour in the cause of patriotic and civic devotion. Young men laboured for six hours a day, repairing roads, helping refugees or doing agricultural work. Their leaders believed that such hard work and community service in a context of

⁶⁵ Above quotes taken from an undated SGJ brochure, *Jeunes de France* (World War II Collection, National Library of Australia). The brochure claims that in December 1941 50,000 and 20,000 young people were attending the centres in the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones, respectively. H el ene Eck states that in 1944 20,000 women were attending 345 centres around France: 'Les Fran aises sous Vichy: femmes du d esastre citoyennes par le d esastre?', in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (eds), *Histoire des Femmes: vol. 5 Le XXe si cle* (Paris: Plon, 1992), p. 193.

⁶⁶ There were 13 camp/schools in the unoccupied zone, with about 200 companies, each of 50 youths. Membership of the *Compagnons* reached 30,000 in February 1941 before Dhavernas was replaced (his successor, Guillaume de Tournemire was another follower of Lyautey) and the movement was all but destroyed by the German invasion of the southern zone and the STO. The leadership continued to support conservative over totalitarian elements and went into hiding or joined the resistance before the movement was dissolved in January 1944.

⁶⁷ Claire Andrieu, 'D emographie, famille, jeunesse', in Az ema and B edarida, *La France des ann ees noires*, pp. 453-87, p. 484.

solidarity, hierarchy and work discipline would bring about a national, moral and physical regeneration. However, the style and philosophy of the *Compagnons* proved to be less attractive to the young than the leaders and the government had hoped, and the movement never received the support they had anticipated.

The largest Vichy youth initiative, and the only one which was compulsory, was the creation of the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*. These vocational camp/schools led by yet another former scout leader, General Joseph de La Porte du Theil, were a substitute for military conscription.⁶⁸ Every twenty-year-old male was required to attend for 8 months in order to carry out 'work of national importance' such as forestry, road building, harvesting and charcoal burning. No women could live within the camps.⁶⁹ La Porte du Theil stressed that the organisation was dedicated to Pétain's vision for France and that it was not an imitation of any other national youth movement. Pétain, for his part, praised the *Chantiers* as an 'idéal supérieur' and a 'source de richesse morale' and claimed that they were 'le terrain choisi où se forment les vrais disciples de la Révolution Nationale'.⁷⁰ The *Chantiers* were set deliberately in rural and often quite isolated places, in part to remove a potential source of unrest from the bad influence of the city, but also better to shape the new man from the soil and 'in the open air' of France.⁷¹

⁶⁸ The *Chantiers* were created in July 1940 under general Weygand's influence to occupy the 100,000 twenty-year-old males who had recently been called up and were due to be demobilised on 1 August under the terms of the Armistice. They were established in law on 18 January 1941. There were 55 *Chantiers* in the unoccupied zone and North Africa and in total 329,100 men passed through them. The Germans disbanded many *Chantiers* after their occupation of the southern zone in November 1942 and sent about 100,000 men to work in Germany. The introduction of the STO led many young men to abandon the camps and to join the resistance: by 1943 there were only 30,000 recruits in the camps. La Porte du Theil was arrested and deported to Germany in January 1944 and the *Chantiers* were officially dissolved four days after the Normandy invasion. La Porte du Theil was not prosecuted after the Liberation.

⁶⁹ Even though he believed that the permanent presence of women within the camps would lead to 'disorder' and that even limited contact had caused 'some trouble', La Porte du Theil did see some benefits to female input into life in the *Chantiers*. He favoured female nurses over male because 'la femme est beaucoup plus douce et compatissante que l'homme'. He did not want married couples to be separated and encouraged married camp leaders to live nearby with their wives. He thought that wives of camp leaders provided important, often 'hidden' services 'de délicatesse, d'ingéniosité dans le bien, de dévouement, de générosité'. *Bulletin*, no. 16, 5 December 1940 and no. 27, 20 February 1941, in Joseph de La Porte du Theil, *Les Chantiers de Jeunesse ont deux ans* (Paris: Sequana, 1942), pp. 99-100, 155-7.

⁷⁰ Letter to La Porte du Theil quoted in preface to *ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

⁷¹ The first men to fill the *Chantiers* were those who had been demobilised and uprooted after the defeat and whom La Porte du Theil considered to be in 'grave danger' and 'imminent peril' of demoralisation and revolt: Joseph de La Porte du Theil, *Un an de commandement des chantiers de la*

The *Chantiers* were inspired by a mystique of communal labour in service of the *Patrie*. Communal solidarity was fundamental to the aim of the *Chantiers*. Each *Chantier* was structured as twenty groups of twenty men, based on the notion that group solidarity would encourage hard work which in turn would promote a new sense of patriotic duty and provide the firm basis necessary for national renovation:

Qui est incapable de s'intégrer à un groupe, d'acquérir le sens vital de l'équipe, ne saurait prétendre à «servir», c'est-à-dire à remplir son devoir d'homme et de citoyen ...
Apprenez donc à travailler en commun, à réfléchir en commun. En un mot, cultiver parmi vous l'esprit d'équipe.
Vous préparerez ainsi le solide fondement du nouvel ordre français, qui vous liera fortement les uns aux autres, et vous permettra d'affronter l'œuvre immense du redressement national.⁷²

The ethos of hard work in the *Chantiers* was another panacea for Pétain's national renovation. The resuscitation of abandoned farms, planting trees and tending old forests would revive the heartland of France and foster a love of community. Manual work would also break down class divisions and restore the balance of practicality, precision and initiative that had been lost from French society. Much of the vocational and civic education provided in the *Chantiers* supported this ideal of hard work for the good of the community and of France.

The doctrine of the *Chantiers* was overwhelmingly moralistic.⁷³ In an issue of the *Chantier's Bulletin* in January 1941, a young man sought to give some parting advice to his companions about to leave the group:

Montre-toi d'abord un «Jeune» au vrai sens du mot. Aie le culte du «regard clair» de ce regard à travers lequel on pourra lire dans ton âme et pour cela un seul moyen, sois pur.
Sois un homme fort, viril, n'aie pas peur de l'effort, n'hésite pas devant la travail, au

jeunesse (Paris: Sequana, 1941), p. 7. La Porte du Theil aimed to make the *Chantiers* self-sufficient 'à l'image d'une cité': they grew food and had their own bakeries and butcheries: *ibid.*, p. 98. See also Jean Delage, *Espoir de France: les chantiers de la jeunesse* (Paris: A. Quillet, 1942), pp. 19-26. After the war, Delage defended the *Chantiers*, not only as a great achievement, but also as a preparation for the liberation: *Grandeurs et servitudes des chantiers de jeunesse* (Paris: Editions André Bonne, 1950).

⁷² Maréchal Pétain, speech broadcast on 29 December 1940. The speech was often reproduced in Vichy publications, here as the epigraph to Delage, *Espoir de France*.

⁷³ Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, pp. 288-90, outlines and condemns the doctrine of the *Chantiers* as unrealistic and a major cause of the failure of Vichy's youth policy. The *Chantier* at Castillon dedicated itself to 'moral formation', with Péguy as its patron.

contraire, sois gai à l'ouvrage, ne te plains pas des restrictions.
 Sois Français ... faire à la France le sacrifice de ta vie, sacrifice pacifique, qui consiste à travailler de toutes tes forces pour Elle ...
 Enfin sois Chrétien ... tu as vécu en pleine nature et ce contract permanent avec elle est enrichissant, tu t'es senti plus près de Dieu ... prêche cette piété que tu viens de priser.⁷⁴

La Porte du Theil hoped to achieve the moral reformation of the recruits by promoting a cult of honour.⁷⁵ As part of a group, each individual would learn honesty, responsibility, duty and self sacrifice for the common good and would share in the high achievements of the elite in a natural hierarchy. The isolation of the schools and their dedication to self sufficiency aimed to create a sense of natural community, without regard to class or social divisions. Outdoor exercise and sport would be designed to teach everyone, rather than just the most able or competitive, an appreciation of nature and gamesmanship. Above all, La Porte du Theil believed that labour itself was the moral force that would reform the nation's youth: it would give them the 'goût du travail' and leave them with life long habits of order, economy and discipline.⁷⁶ The harsh regime of strenuous tasks and cleanliness in Spartan conditions was intended to lift the spirit as well as harden and toughen the mind and body.⁷⁷

The failure of the *Chantiers* to inspire and unify youth through labour was evident in their own *Bulletins* and in La Porte du Theil's castigation of certain groups.⁷⁸ Less than a year after the organisation's creation, commissioners found apathy, indifference and resentment of the demanding physical labour which some seemed to view not as a 'vertu formatrice' but rather as a 'corvée'.⁷⁹ There was obvious grumbling in the *Chantiers* over

⁷⁴ La Porte du Theil, *Un an de commandement*, *Bulletin* no. 20, 2 January 1941, pp. 114-19, pp. 118-19.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16. La Porte du Theil's philosophy was strongly anti-individualistic: *ibid.*, pp. 81-3.

⁷⁶ R. Barrat, Commissaire Assistant au Commissariat général, 'Valeur éducative du travail', *Bulletin* no. 42, 5 June 1941, in *ibid.*, pp. 262-8.

⁷⁷ La Porte du Theil believed that exposure to the natural elements of 'air, sun and water' would develop 'sang-froid' and 'audace' and he ordered that 'Tous les hommes sans exception doivent pouvoir se laver tous les jours, par tous les temps, le torse nu, à l'eau froide': *ibid.*, pp. 18, 95. He also believed in route marches of 25 to 30 kilometers, combined with nature and regional studies: *ibid.*, p. 204.

⁷⁸ La Porte du Theil, since he felt that he had insisted on it most strongly, was surprised by the failure of groups to obey his command to engage in extensive manual labour within the *Chantier*: *Bulletin*, no. 37, 1 May 1941, *ibid.*, p. 248.

⁷⁹ Barrat, 'Valeur éducative du travail', in *ibid.*, p. 262.

poor supplies and lack of pay. The leadership could not claim that these conditions were morally or spiritually uplifting and could retort only that hard economic times dictated the nature of the work that needed to be done and that the young should be content to repay a debt that they owed to the nation.⁸⁰

After two years of operation, La Porte du Theil was frustrated by the ‘passivity’ which he saw infecting the *Chantiers* and he identified the root of the problem as the difficulty in finding and forming leaders from amongst the nation’s youth.⁸¹ But he believed that true leaders could not be created by indoctrination. In the early stages of the project, he stated, with obvious distaste of totalitarian methods, that natural leaders—*chefs*—did not have to be created or recruited. *Chefs*, he claimed, would single themselves out from the group by their ‘rayonnement’.⁸² The role of leadership schools was therefore to ‘perfect’ the natural elite.⁸³ France, he claimed, had previously failed in this task as its education system had selected only for one type of intelligence.⁸⁴ *Chantiers* would therefore aim to shape multi-dimensional leaders. Their education programme would comprise art and culture alongside the practical and theoretical.⁸⁵ The *Chantiers* would form leaders who were morally as well as intellectually and physically superior as it was this moral dimension that was most important in separating the natural elite from the mediocrity of the masses. By embodying the virtues which they would inspire in others, these ‘braves garçons’ would lead by personal example: they would be sincere, understanding, friendly, enthusiastic, energetic, courageous, firm and consistent; they would demonstrate strong personal discipline, keen judgment and foresight, high moral

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 263, 265.

⁸¹ La Porte du Theil, *Les Chantiers de Jeunesse ont deux ans*, p. 2.

⁸² ‘Le recrutement des chefs des chantiers’, note du Commissaire Général au secrétariat général de la Jeunesse, 15 October 1940, in La Porte du Theil, *Un an de commandement*, p. 61. La Porte du Theil was careful not to portray the leaders in any individualistic way; they were ‘the soul of the group’ and they had a ‘métier’ or calling to lead: *ibid.*, pp. 86, 146. La Porte du Theil addressed the problem of leadership elsewhere and maintained that leaders who were dogmatic functionaries could win at best only superficial allegiance from youth: ‘Les chefs des Chantiers’, *Revue Universelle*, no. 45 (10 November 1942), pp. 535-44, p. 537.

⁸³ La Porte du Theil, *Un an de commandement*, p. 61.

⁸⁴ La Porte du Theil claimed that intellectual competition had not produced a true elite but one which was sterile, corrupt and egotistical: *Les Chantiers de Jeunesse ont deux ans*, p. 341.

⁸⁵ La Porte du Theil believed that culture and art would teach a love of France and its traditions: *ibid.*, p. 315. Singing was motivational and an important counter to the demoralisation of the times and mime taught the moral and expressive value of silence; *Un an de commandement*, pp. 186-7.

standards, a deep sense of responsibility and an unbreakable will; and they would be devoted to their inferiors and loyal to their superiors.⁸⁶ The natural leader, according to La Porte du Theil would be ‘la main de fer dans le gant de velours, mais velours de belle qualité’.⁸⁷

The desire to form a new leadership cadre led to the most ambitious of Vichy’s youth initiatives. Beginning in the summer of 1940, the government established a system of *Ecole des Cadres* or leadership schools, throughout the country and, by early 1941, there were 60 such schools throughout France, four for women. Their initial mission was to create youth leaders who would aid in the running of the *Chantiers* and other youth initiatives, but very soon they became central to the wider task of national regeneration through the moral and spiritual formation of a new elite. There were three main centres: one was the leadership school for females at Ecully, near Lyon; the main school in the occupied zone was located at La Chapelle-en-Serval; but the most important and most heralded was the first leadership school which was established at Uriage, an isolated château in the mountains near Grenoble, in November 1940.⁸⁸

The *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Cadres d’Uriage* was the head and nerve centre of the leadership school system. It attracted a large number of extremely influential teachers and contributors of the Catholic and nonconformist right, making it the ‘think tank’ for the formation of the new elite. Its publications were distributed to all other regional schools, so that its ideals and practices were widely copied. Uriage offered

⁸⁶ La Porte du Theil’s specifications for the natural leader were so numerous that it is not surprising that he found so few: such qualities are mentioned many times in his writings but see in particular, *ibid.*, pp. 73-8 and *Les Chantiers de Jeunesse ont deux ans*, pp. 312-5. See also Delage, *Espoir de France*, chapter VIII, ‘Journées de chefs’, pp. 87-102.

⁸⁷ La Porte du Theil, *Un an de commandement*, p. 78.

⁸⁸ For detailed coverage of the leadership school project and Uriage in particular see: Bernard Comte, *Une Utopie combattante: L’École des cadres d’Uriage* (Paris: Fayard, 1991); and John Hellman, *The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage, 1940-45* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993). See also Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac, *Le Vieux Chef: mémoires et pages choisies* (Paris: Seuil, 1971). Segonzac established the first leadership school at the Château de la Falconnière, near Vichy in September 1940 but quickly found it more prudent to move to a more remote location. The women’s school at Ecully was strongly influenced by the general philosophy at Uriage. While promoting ‘girl guide’ virtues, it accepted without question the ultimate ‘métier féminin’ of home maker and gave practical training to leaders of the female work centres. The leadership of the school at La Chapelle-en-Serval soon came under collaborationist control, assumed a totally different ideal to that of Uriage and caused many tensions with the SGJ.

intensive, voluntary courses normally of three weeks duration; one course, for the cream of the elite, lasted six months. Its first recruits were from the youth organisations but soon a broader range of young men—students, teachers, civil servants—joined its call and, in all, about 3,000 men passed through its courses.

The founder and head of Uriage, the *Vieux Chef*, was Captain Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac. Segonzac was dashing and charismatic, if yet another figure in the Catholic/Maurrassien/military mould who based his leadership on the social, moral and communitarian philosophies of Lyautey and Péguy. Prominent amongst the many influential teachers at Uriage was Emmanuel Mounier, the leading light of the nonconformist group, *Esprit*, and editor of the journal of the same name.⁸⁹ The philosophy of personalism fired the group. Mounier's courses on civilisation and philosophy soon influenced the whole enterprise. Personalism aimed to value the 'person' rather than the individual and to celebrate man as a spiritual being who gained meaning through living up to his superior qualities, through his social relationships and through serving the community. Moral, intellectual and psychological formation was therefore just as important as physical. To this mix, Hubert Beuve-Mèry, an impressive young journalist from the *Esprit* group who would later found *Le Monde*, brought to his classes at Uriage an edge of political and economic awareness.

The leadership courses at Uriage offered Spartan conditions and long days of intensive study, physical work and fitness training punctuated by singing, marching and silent contemplation. As in other Vichy youth initiatives, the instructors at Uriage aimed to foster group spirit, fraternity, discipline, honour and altruism in the service of the *Patrie*. This moral order was exclusively male: not only were there no female recruits, but women who worked or lived at the school were allowed only the most minimal contact with the future leaders of the nation.⁹⁰ This did not hinder Segonzac celebrating Joan of

⁸⁹ Mounier was also involved in another youth initiative, *Jeune France*, which was established in November 1940 by yet another ex-scout and friend of Lamirand, Pierre Schaeffer. Its first aim was to employ young out of work artists but it soon became dedicated to popular education and the renewal of national artistic and cultural traditions. Its refusal to accept 'official art' and state control of its productions finally led to it being banning in March 1942.

⁹⁰ Hellman, *Knight-Monks of Vichy France*, pp. 88-92.

Arc as a symbol of pure and traditional French values and an example of the ideal *chef*: dutiful, generous, disinterested, strong in spirit and body and pure of faith; the type of 'man' that Uriage hoped to build.⁹¹ Segonzac predicted that, albeit slowly, Uriage would shape out of France's troubles:

une génération de jeunes garçons capables d'efforts rudes, possesseurs d'un métier de qualité dans la vieille tradition française, animés d'un véritable esprit social, désireux de se mettre au service d'une mission de grandeur pour laquelle ils sauront donner leur vie. Ces garçons auront en plus un sens de l'entr'aide, un désir de se connaître entre eux, de travailler en commun, qui constituera véritablement quelque chose de nouveau, de révolutionnaire.⁹²

Uriage had strong support in government from the highest circles and from Pétain himself, but it soon became obvious that its vision of the new man conflicted not only with collaborationist tendencies in Paris and Vichy, but with traditionalist aims as well. Unlike any other youth initiative in occupied France, Uriage celebrated the intellect. There was an atmosphere of high intellectual achievement and philosophical rigour. Courses put great emphasis on a humanist tradition and on personal development and reflection. The instructors insisted upon free and open discussion in classes and tolerated, within certain anti-Marxist, anti-bourgeois and anti-individualist limits, a high degree of ecumenism and pluralism. On the other hand, they disdained the uncritical acceptance and 'unreflective enthusiasm' for the National Revolution that the regime expected of them.⁹³ They also criticised fascism, especially its cultish idolatry: when Jacques Doriot visited Uriage, Segonzac refused to greet him. Spiritual freedom and the dictates of conscience did not rest easily in any zone of occupied France:

The ideal type that emerged was the clean-cut, clear-eyed, strong-willed, muscular, young man. It was not quite the type that Vichy would have preferred, for the reverse of the medal was non-compliance and the refusal to accept the defeat.⁹⁴

This is not to say that Uriage defended in any way the old order or its leaders. The

⁹¹ Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac, *Réflexions pour de jeunes chefs* (Uriage: Editions de l'école nationale des cadres d'Uriage, 1943), pp. 5-7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹³ Hellman, *Knight-Monks of Vichy France*, pp. 85-6.

⁹⁴ Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 312.

instructors at Uriage abhorred the decadence that had caused the defeat, condemned the former elite as intellectually abstract and physically weak and welcomed the opportunity to bring about the moral reform of the nation. They wanted, however, to go far beyond the harping critiques of the Third Republic and beyond the community works mentality of other Vichy youth initiatives. The leaders of Uriage hoped to create a new, revolutionary community for the modern world. They elevated the ideals of anti-materialism, communitarianism and self-sacrifice for the common good to a new, spiritual mythology. The formation of the new man at Uriage was a chivalric quest for purity, virtue and honour but one which sought to accommodate the modern world, not look back to any ancient or mythological past. The recruits at Uriage were expected to make a deep and solemn commitment to this cause, to be the 'knight-monks' of a new, virile order.⁹⁵

In the context of total occupation, forced labour and the polarisation of youth politics, the manifest independence of Uriage's spiritualism made its plans to shape a new elite an impossible dream. Some of Uriage's teachers began to question their task or the possibilities of its success. Mounier sensed that the project's elitism could never engage the working and peasant classes and could never lead the popular revolution that he hoped for. His reserve towards collaboration and his open criticism of state anti-Semitism led, in April 1941 to the cancellation of his courses at Uriage and shortly afterwards his journal, *Esprit*, was banned. Beuve-Méry continued to believe in the school's ability to create a

⁹⁵ The relationship between Uriage and its ideal of the knight-monk on the one hand and the Vichy government and its National Revolution on the other have become important in the historical debate over fascist tendencies in France. Comte is generally sympathetic to the Uriage experiment, finding in it little in common with fascism. In evidence, he shows that, from its inception, Uriage had contact with the resistance and that many instructors and recruits joined the resistance when the school was closed. Comte argues that Uriage reveals the many ideological tendencies of an 'exceptional time' and that it is 'unclassable' except as a 'fourth way' between liberalism, communism and fascism: *Une Utopie combattante*, pp. 15-19. Hellman, in focusing on the intellectual origins of the Uriage mentality, argues that the personalist philosophy and the knight-monk ideal shared certain common themes with National Socialism. He concludes that Uriage displayed a 'guarded sympathy' for fascist youth philosophy and that, as disquieting as it was to traditionalists, Uriage provided Vichy with 'shock troops ... of the spirit': *Knight-Monks of Vichy France*, pp. 99, 116. The most interesting and fruitful interpretation of Uriage is as an 'alternative Vichy', one that might have been if not for constraints imposed by the traditionalists and collaborationists. This view of Uriage is put forward by Roderick Kedward in *Resistance in Vichy France* (Oxford, OUP, 1978), p. 209 and is supported by Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 324. Similarly, Giolitto in his *Histoire de la jeunesse*, argues that Uriage was not fascist, but a left wing, visionary form of *Pétainism*. For a discussion of the debate just prior to the publication of Comte's and Hellman's major studies see Brian Darling, 'Uriage: The Assault on a Reputation', in Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin (eds), *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 147-58.

new, 'collective man' but became openly disdainful of National Socialism's clumsy attempts at moral reform and finally came to doubt that French national renovation could ever be brought about under occupation.

By 1942, its nonconformist teachings won Uriage some important opponents amongst conservative intellectuals such as Henri Massis.⁹⁶ More progressive Vichy supporters also began to turn against the school. The group of young intellectuals who founded the review *Idées* had a background in the nonconformist group *Jeune Droite*. The review came to argue that the revolutionary potential of youth was being dissipated by the SGJ.⁹⁷ This was particularly so at Uriage where the recruits were not trained for concrete action, had only a fragmentary view of the task of renovation and were guided by prudence instead of the need to be effective.

On ne pensait pas assez aux intellectuels égoïstes, aux maires ignorants, aux curés retardataires qui ont une influence dans les cités françaises. En 1941, tel qu'il était conçu, l'enseignement d'Uriage ne pouvait pas permettre aux délégués de la Jeunesse de dominer la tâche écrasante qu'on leur confiait.⁹⁸

The *Conseil de Jeunesse* charged Uriage with a lack of political direction and of fostering a spirit of individualism and democracy. Prominent teachers were suspected of resistance activities: in January 1942 Mounier was arrested. The growing influence of collaborationists in government also led to measures against the school. On 27 December Laval and Bonnard signed the decree which closed Uriage.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Pétain charged Henri Massis and his journal, the *Revue Universelle*, with elaborating the government's doctrine on youth. However, Massis and other followers of the *Action Française* were further to the conservative right than even Lamirand and the leaders of the SGJ, let alone the nonconformist teachers of Uriage.

⁹⁷ René Vincent, 'Discours aux hommes de vingt ans', *Idées*, February 1942, pp. 5-11, p. 6. Criticism of Vichy's youth policy, its lack of real innovation, its uncertainty and *attentisme*, moved the journal closer to the collaborationist camp, however *Idées* supported a diversity of youth movements and argued against the mythologising of youth: See, Guy Prat, 'Propositions pour un ordre nouveau de la jeunesse', *Idées*, October 1942, pp. 36-41. The journal continued to lament the failure of the government to develop the revolutionary potential of youth, as fascist countries had, by developing a national doctrine: Guy Poulon, 'La jeunesse comme élite révolutionnaire', *Idées*, March 1943, pp. 54-9.

⁹⁸ Marcel Army, 'Où va la jeunesse?', *Idées*, August 1943, pp. 43-7, pp. 44-5. Discussion of this article continued for some time: 'Problèmes de la Jeunesse', *Idées*, October 1943, pp. 50-3; Marcel Army, 'Un dernier mot sur la jeunesse', *Idées*, February 1944, pp. 43-6.

⁹⁹ The closure of Uriage led to mass resignations from other *écoles de cadres*. With the closure of the school and the introduction of the STO, many Uriage students and teachers joined the resistance. As

The Collaborationist 'Vision'

Vichy's youth initiatives failed as a result of external pressures of war and occupation and internal weaknesses and competing visions. The collaborationists, first from Paris and then from within government ranks, exploited these weaknesses and pressures in order to further their political ends and to put forward their own ideal of youth. The youth movements of the fascist leagues rejected the moralism of Vichy's youth policy makers and instead celebrated toughness, ruthlessness and action, even calling for violence to engender fear and gain respect.¹⁰⁰ These movements were militantly anti-Marxist and anti-Semitic, calling for exclusion from youth organisations on racial as well as on political grounds. *Révolution Nationale*, the mouthpiece of the *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire* led by Eugene Deloncle, put forward a muscular solution for reshaping youth:

Les muscles et les nerfs, le cœur et l'esprit devront être soumis à la grande épreuve commune. Il faudra réaliser l'homme nouveau; il faudra donc posséder une technique que l'expérience seule peut permettre d'acquérir. Voilà le problème «jeune» ... A nous, révolutionnaires MSR, de savoir le résoudre.¹⁰¹

Collaborationists, convinced that more revolutionary methods were needed to bring about the new order, vilified the old-guard clericalism, military elitism and inward looking patriotism which inspired Vichy's youth policy.¹⁰² The collaborationist press found the state-sanctioned movements, the *Compagnons* and *Chantiers* in particular, to be in turn childish, *attentiste*, then Gaullist and certainly never revolutionary. Yet the

critics of the school closed in, Segonzac had been reluctant to endorse open resistance, though he had always maintained his friendship with Henri Frenay, leader of the *Combat* resistance group. After the closure of Uriage he also took up active resistance. For accounts of the 'équipe d'Uriage' from the closure of the school until the Liberation, see Comte, *Une utopie combattante*, epilogue, pp. 525-43; and Hellman, *Knight-Monks of Vichy France*, chapters 8 & 9, pp. 182-238.

¹⁰⁰ Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 183.

¹⁰¹ R. Louiche, 'Le problème des jeunes', *Révolution Nationale*, 22 February 1942. The paper favoured compulsory sport for all youth, including in business and industry: Edith Delamore, 'La jeunesse et le sport', *Révolution Nationale*, 26 April, 1942.

¹⁰² For an illustration of the collaborationist youth criticisms of Vichy policies see Jacques Lesdain, *Notre jeunesse et l'avenir européen: conférence fait le 26 septembre au Théâtre de Grand Palais* (No publication details, BN).

collaborationists often used the same language as Vichy in relation to youth and agreed on its key role in forming the vanguard of national rejuvenation. Collaborationists saw great potential in some Vichy youth initiatives, the *écoles des cadres* in particular, and sought to control them in order to further their own vision for youth in the new order.

The collaborationist call for a single, compulsory youth organisation was part and parcel of the struggle for a single party system along National Socialist lines. This was particularly so for the leaders of the larger fascist organisations who hoped that they would lead the single party system should the Germans ever agree to it. Déat constantly criticised Vichy personnel in his paper, *l'Œuvre*, and focussed on Vichy's youth initiatives through his *Jeunesse Nationale Populaire* (JNP) organisation. The JNP condemned the 'tâtonnements lamentables' which had failed to prepare youth for its role as the motor of national revolution. Through the JNP Déat demanded the creation of an 'âme unique' and a national socialist mystique that could only be created by enforcing a single discipline.¹⁰³ From the spring of 1941, collaborationists within government, such as Marion and Pucheu, simply wanted to bring youth affairs more in line with Nazi policy and thereby increase their own control.

To some extent, the hard edge of this political aim was hidden by a romanticised notion of youth which imbued the young with mystical powers of social transformation. Later in the Occupation, when this transformation had obviously not taken place, collaborationists also masked their political aims with vague exhortations to egalitarianism and Europeanism. Abel Bonnard, before he became Minister for Education, often declaimed on the 'poetic nature' of youth. He saw youth as a force of nature, not as a spiritual force, and one which would restore the French race. He enthused, 'les jeunes gens éclatent d'une gloire qui brille sur eux sans être à eux ... ils sont la fleur d'une race ...'.¹⁰⁴ Bonnard envisioned a new youth that was strong, simple, polite, clean and frank. The new youth would be more serious, ardent and ready to take on the long term mission

¹⁰³ Roland Silly and Georges Albertini, *Pour sauver notre avenir* (Paris: Editions Jeunesse Nationale Populaires, 1943), pp. 1, 6. Silly was the head of the JNP and Albertini the general secretary of the RNP. Déat wrote the preface to this collection of speeches.

¹⁰⁴ Abel Bonnard, *Des jeunes gens ou une jeunesse?* (Paris: L'Artisan du Livre, 1941), p. 7.

of restoring the ‘permanent virtues’ of the French character. He claimed that the first of these virtues was discipline, since discipline meant efficacy and order.¹⁰⁵

Alphonse de Châteaubriant was one who indulged heavily in the fascist romanticism of youth:

Il s’agit de rendre aux jeunes enfants le goût d’une vie pleine et chaude, l’éclairement de l’ingénuité, la force de la pureté, – l’élan spirituel dont s’accompagne toute croissance normale et harmonieuse de l’être – de lui rendre le goût de l’avenir, le goût de l’œuvre dont cet avenir sera le champ de développement et, en même temps que cette préoccupation et cette conscience de la valeur morale du travail bien fait, le sens du mystère sacré dont la vie de chacun d’eux est une des fleurs au milieu du vaste champ humain; le souci de se montrer dignes de la beauté de ce champ.¹⁰⁶

Early articles in the youth page of Chateaubriant’s paper, *La Gerbe*, used the same Vichy vocabulary of unity, virtue, abnegation, and hard work and the cartoon strip which headed the page sometimes depicted young men and women engaged in physical labours in rural and natural settings, much like Vichy imagery. However, the fascist intellectuals were more likely to include the vocabulary of love, joy, action and heroism. They stressed the need for a mystique to energise youth and many imagined that the young were more capable of tapping some primitive force which modern man had suppressed.¹⁰⁷ For example, *La Gerbe* welcomed the scouting ethic behind many of Vichy’s initiatives and praised the ideals of communal effort, return to nature, simplicity, and freedom from the urban corruption of concrete, asphalt and jazz. The spiritual value of isolation and the chivalric quest for purity also appealed to fascist romanticism. But the paper thought that it was not so much the moral lessons that were valuable in camp life, but the rediscovery of ‘les puissants instincts primitifs de l’être’ which would take youth ‘jusqu’aux origines de la vitalité et de la virilité française’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, *passim*. Bonnard’s later writing and speeches as Minister often stressed the establishment of Order.

¹⁰⁶ Châteaubriant, *Psychologie et le drame*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Some fascists such as Déat and Brasillach favoured ideology and indoctrination to create this mystique but others such as de Montherlant looked to the rediscovery of a primitive barbarism as the salvation of modern man. See discussion in Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, pp. 164-5.

¹⁰⁸ J-P. Jaureguiberry, ‘Le goût de la magnifique vitalité et de la chevalerie’, *La Gerbe*, 12 September 1940. The same author later wrote for Deloncle’s *Révolution Nationale*, claiming that a single youth movement was a biological necessity: ‘S’unir ou périr’, *Révolution Nationale*, 8 February 1942.

The political and racial ideals which dominated the collaborationists' view of the role of youth in the new order were never far below this surface mysticism. The cartoon strip of *La Gerbe's* youth page soon settled on a depiction of the young chasing out the old order. The paper claimed that the role of the young was to make the country clean, healthy and vigorous and to rid it of its 'vampires ... venus d'on ne sait quel Orient'.¹⁰⁹ Without a single party system and a single youth movement, the article continued, this task could never be completed and France would remain a nation of 'petits vieillards' where 'chacun travaille dans son propre jardin'.¹¹⁰

With the growing influence of technocrats and collaborationists within the government, such criticisms became harder to resist, especially in the Occupied Zone. There signs of the overhaul of Vichy's original youth initiatives were felt from the spring of 1941. In May, Pastor Jousselein, the head of the *école de cadres* at La Chapelle-en-Serval, was dismissed and replaced by a fascist sympathiser, Jacques Bousquet. Bousquet immediately began to change the ideals of leadership by ridding the school of clerical influences, by promoting a doctrine of action and racial purity and by adopting Nazi forms of dress and behaviour.¹¹¹ In the middle of the year, Georges Pelorson, the collaborationist chief of propaganda for youth affairs in the Occupied Zone began his bid for power. With the support of the collaborationist press he declared that France was 'sur la route de l'avenir avec un plein sac de vieilles formules' and that the interests at Vichy who were supporting pluralism and thus trying to prevent the creation of a new man were Judeo-masonic corrupters and clerical old guard.¹¹² He openly supported imitation of Nazi youth formations. If France was to form a new youth, he claimed, it had to do what the

¹⁰⁹ Michel Georges, 'Etre Jeune', *La Gerbe*, 5 September 1940.

¹¹⁰ 'A quand l'unité d'action?', *La Gerbe*, 5 September 1940.

¹¹¹ In October 1941, Marion and Pucheu collaborated in setting up another leadership school in the occupied zone at Mayet-de-Montagne which purported to train civil servants but which mainly conveyed national socialist propaganda. In its final sitting in 1942, the *Conseil de Jeunesse* found that the school at La Chapelle-en-Serval was too influenced by totalitarianism and oriented towards political propaganda. The fact that the *Conseil* criticised the leadership schools in both zones (La Chapelle-en-Serval and Uriage) testifies to the SGJ's difficulty in maintaining a middle path between competing influences.

¹¹² Pelorson, in an interview with *La Gerbe*, was confident that the pluralism tolerated by Vichy was provisional and that the government was moving in the direction of a unified youth. Marc Augier, 'Marchons au pas, Camarades!', *La Gerbe*, 10 July 1941. Before the defeat Augier had been the director of the *Auberges de Jeunesse* but became a great admirer of Nazi youth organisations.

Nazis had proven to be effective:

le mouvement unique, c'est l'ordre, la discipline, des légions en marche au pas cadencé dans des uniformes propres, avec des chaussures cirées, des étendares et pelles sur l'épaule. C'est la fin de la succulente anarchie française ... Un nouvel homme ne sortira de la jeunesse française que s'il est fondu dans un moule unique et pétri dans une pâte où le même levain fera lever le même froment.¹¹³

Pelorson wanted youth to be organised into a revolutionary hierarchy which would make France feel 'le sol tremble sous le poids de bataillons d'idées organisés'.¹¹⁴ Until France defined a doctrine and until it found the *chefs* to teach it and put it into action, Pelorson claimed that there would be no youth revolution. In October 1941, Pelorson was placed in charge of the Paris office of the SGJ.

The political sea change brought about by the return of Laval and the nomination of Abel Bonnard to the ministry of Education led to an overhaul of the SGJ and also produced a new youth organisation, this one with a distinct collaborationist tone. In June 1942 Pelorson, at only 32, was made general secretary for youth and assistant to Lamirand. Pelorson reasserted his belief that the SGJ and its initiatives lacked doctrine and enthusiasm and had exercised only vague guidance over the formation of youth. He announced the reform of all youth initiatives in order to enforce effective controls over moral, social, civic and professional formation and to ensure that youth received the political and revolutionary education that was necessary to give birth to a new France.¹¹⁵ One month after his appointment Pelorson banned all Jews from youth movements. In October he announced yet another initiative for civil action, the *Equipes Nationales*, and demanded the cooperation of the youth movements. The *Equipes* were a means of exercising greater control over youth affairs and the political and ideological development of the young.¹¹⁶ As service in the *Equipes* was compulsory for all young people between

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Georges Pelorson, 'La Révolution de la jeunesse', *La Gerbe*, 23 October 1941

¹¹⁵ Pelorson claimed that the Youth Centres had operated like drop in or meeting places and would now be more oriented to apprentice training. He also announced that he would create a new ideal of the youth leader. When asked about girls' training, he said only that he did not distinguish between the sexes. 'Georges Pelorson nous dit ...', *Revolution Nationale*, 1 August 1942.

¹¹⁶ Pelorson insisted on an oath of allegiance to Pétain which contained a racial message.

14 and 25, Pelorson saw it as a chance to create an over-arching youth organisation, without directly attacking the existing movements. He claimed that the *Equipes* would give youth 'une mystique de la reconstruction française dans l'action'.¹¹⁷ As they would have the great task of defining the national vocation, they would therefore naturally dominate the youth movements. However, although the *Equipes* began operation from 1943, relations with the youth movements remained strained for the remainder of the Occupation.¹¹⁸

The collaborationists had always been most concerned with the need to form cadres or *chefs* to lead the youth revolution. They had long envied the potential of the *école de cadres* at Uriage to form a new youth elite according to their vision. In early 1943 this potential was exploited by the Catholic, monarchist and anti-Communist extreme right in the guise of the newly formed *Milice*. In February 1943 a group of 'mystical fascists committed to a bizarre, Catholic-Nazi vision of the National Revolution' took over the running of the school.¹¹⁹ They sought to train future leaders who were dedicated to the maintenance of order. Behind the veneer of creating white-gloved, gentlemen-officers and despite the old romance of scoutism and a whole new set of mystical ceremonies and rituals, the *Milice* school provided the training necessary to fight a political, propagandist and civil war.

In its final year of operation, the school became increasingly anti-Marxist and actively anti-Resistance. It was also critical of government personnel, opposing the Catholic and military Vichy leaders who were 'nourris à la mamelle du régime défunct' and the 'prétendu révolutionnaire' in government whose commitment to revolutionary

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* Pelorson described the *Equipes* in the vaguest of terms as 'un foyer d'action et de rayonnement'.

¹¹⁸ The *Equipes Nationales* and the *Maisons de jeunes* were the only Vichy youth initiatives to survive until the end of the Occupation; the former in fact survived until just after the Liberation.

¹¹⁹ Hellman, *The Knight-Monks*, p. 185. The school was first led by a fervently patriotic, mystical Catholic, Maurassian French-Canadian academic, Professor de la Noüe du Vair. His traditionalist monarchism and Catholicism earned him the opposition of important members of the *Milice* which in turn led him to plot the seizure of the castle and the overthrow of Darnand. In July 1943, Darnand stormed the castle and later appointed Jean de Vaugelas, a racist ex-army officer to head the school and to carry out attacks on the Maquis. One year later the *Milice* was forced to evacuate the school when it was attacked by the Resistance.

change and to fascism was 'sterile'.¹²⁰ According to school publications, these forces were holding back youth in its aspiration for a more basic and virile existence.¹²¹ What was needed were leaders formed in war who could rediscover the most profound aspects of character and virility and become soldiers for the revolutionary struggle.¹²² The school also became increasingly racist, with a blood and soil doctrine that could somehow, on the eve of the Liberation, still find consolation in the pseudo-science of the Nazi ethnologists:

nous ne sommes pas si loin des géants qui firent notre merveilleuse histoire et dont nous portons encore le sang dans nos veines pour accepter jamais l'idée que notre race est profondément décadente, qu'elle ne porte pas en elle la force de sa régénération. Mais, si nous voulons refaire la France, il nous faut pousser l'intransigence raciste jusqu'au fanatisme et nos descendants nous en béniront.¹²³

The final glimmerings of a collaborationist vision for youth were expressed as a desire to create a new, European youth. The appeal to Europeanism had always been present in collaborationist youth policies: it was a means of putting collaboration in a more positive light while downplaying German domination; and of attacking Vichy's parochialism while creating yet another niche for youth allegiance.¹²⁴ But on the eve of Liberation, and with German demands for resources and order at their greatest, the collaborationist repetition of the same empty slogans about the role of youth but now in the difficult task of rebuilding Europe, was an open admission of failure.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ *Documentation des Cadres*, 1, p. 19; 3, p. 43 (the criticism of 'false revolutionary' was directed at Pierre Pucheu after his execution by the Resistance in North Africa in March 1944). In this collection of publications or 'documents' for recruits, each is divided into sections: *doctrine*; *partie technique* and *partie tactique* (equipment and plans for street fighting); *informations* (short articles and book reviews).

¹²¹ 'La Malaide Catholique', *ibid.*, 4, pp. 41-8, p. 45. The article went on to claim that the youth movements attempted only to produce good sons, good fathers and faithful husbands, without any political formation (p. 46). The publication gave little attention to but did not question the quest for 'pure' young women and expressed a 'horror' of flirtation: 3, p. 65.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 3, p. 66. The publications often reviewed the works of Henri de Montherlant and here celebrated his 'cult of war' as the only hope for regeneration.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 59 (from a review of Jacques Boulanger, *Le Sang Français*, pp. 57-9).

¹²⁴ Despite its criticism of Vichy's pluralism, at the end of 1942 *La Gerbe* announced its support for a new youth movement, *Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle*. The leader of this movement, Jacques Schweizer claimed to broaden the outlook of French youth from a narrow focus on the family home, the difficulties of everyday life and national problems to the wider problems of the contemporary world and the fundamental causes of decadence. Jacques Schweizer, 'Jeunesse: mission Européenne', *La Gerbe*, 19 November 1942.

¹²⁵ Roger Buisson, 'La jeunesse de France devant l'Europe', *La Gerbe*, 20 January, 1944.

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Although many groups and individuals believed that youth reform was the key to establishing lasting change in France, reform proved to be extremely difficult: all initiatives to mobilise and reshape youth failed. The weaknesses in Vichy's youth program were caused not merely by disagreements in policy and by differing visions of a new youth but by a fundamental and simple minded naivety which lay at the core of its failure to create a new moral order. Vichy's moral idealism and community mythology could not mask the reality of war and occupation and the sheer drudgery of life in the youth camps. Increasing authoritarianism and the STO paralysed the SGJ from 1943. The many groups which sought to create a collaborationist youth also failed for the same reasons and because their dream of a unified youth was impossible, given their relentless competition and the Germans' disinclination to support only one group or leader. In the gap between youth mythology and the reality of occupation, many young people remained passively opposed to the regime, rejecting both the simplistic moralism of the National Revolution and the fascist regimentation of the collaborationist movements. Some young men and women formed the energetic counterculture of *les swing* or *les zazous* who openly defied Vichy's conservative moral order of austerity, dedication and hard work in the open air by embracing 'decadent' American jazz in urban cafés, dressing in excessively large jackets, baggy pants or short, pleated skirts and sporting outlandish hairstyles and makeup. The threat of forced labour and deportation quieted the *zazous* but by then more and more young people were turning to active resistance against Vichy.

Chapter 11

Defending the New Man

Je me suis promis à moi-même de ne connaître en France ni partis, ni classes.
Je vous appelle tous à sortir de vos cadres, de vos routines, de vos préjugés,
de vos égoïsmes, de vos rancœurs, de vos défiances, et je vous exhorte à vous
grouper en Français solides qui veulent défendre leur terre et leur race.

Marshall Philippe Pétain, speech of 31 December 1940

The Vichy regime represented its policies for youth and education as a quest for human perfection. The language and symbolism of this quest were overwhelmingly positive: it spoke of health, unity, selflessness and continuity. But the quest for perfection always contained the assumption of exclusion. It was clear from the beginning of the National Revolution that the new man which Vichy hoped to create would not contain any element of 'anti-France'. Indeed, the new man had to be protected from all that was 'un-French' in order that he, in turn, could defend the real France.

Exclusion and repression was an intrinsic part of the new order and the new man rhetoric often disguised, albeit thinly, the political aims of the regime and its collaborationist critics. Under the guise of protecting or ridding the ranks of the new man of pernicious influences, individuals and groups deemed responsible for the defeat could be excluded from the new order. The new man could exist only within certain boundaries: he could not choose to be a Communist, a democrat, a Freemason or a resister. More fundamentally however, since in this there could be little or no choice,

the new man could not be Jewish and the new woman could exist only in a narrowly defined role. These boundaries were not defined by the Germans: they were French. Nevertheless, the concept of the new man was shaped by the inexorable logic of occupation politics. Collaborationists and their German sponsors in Paris defined and enforced racial boundaries through a policy of increasing persecution. Vichy's official position remained the exclusion of 'anti-France' from the French community but its policies, particularly its supposed 'anti-Sémitisme d'état', were shaped and soon subsumed by a racial policy which was biologically based, aimed at persecution and eventually led to elimination.

Jewish Policy: Exclusion and Elimination

Anti-Semitism had a long tradition in France and the last years which preceded the defeat saw it on the rise, the result of new socio-economic pressures, the international crisis and increasing numbers of refugees.¹ Various groups and individuals sought to exploit the general climate of uncertainty and xenophobia. In such a climate, anti-Semitic journals and extreme right-wing movements found renewed vigour. Fascist leagues (assisted in some instances by Nazi finance), used anti-Semitism to promote their ideal of the revolutionary nationalist hero, attributing the failures of French leadership to the influence of international Jewry. The membership of the largest leagues, which were not overtly based on racist or anti-Semitic ideology, was also broadly anti-Semitic.² Anti-Semitism infected the vigorous intellectual climate on the right: young intellectuals and literary figures contributed to anti-Semitic journals such as *Je Suis Partout* and in 1937 Céline published his rabidly anti-Semitic novel, *Bagatelles pour un massacre* to positive reviews.³ The perception of national

¹ Ralph Schor, *L'Antisémitisme en France Pendant les Années Trente* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1992), pp. 11-13. See also François Bédarida, 'La Persécution de Juifs' in Azéma and Bédarida, *La France des années noires*, vol. 2, pp. 129-158.

² Richard Millman, 'Les Croix-de-Feu et l'Antisémitisme', *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 38 (April-June 1993), pp. 47-61.

³ In this novel and in *L'école des cadavres*, Céline blamed the Jews for all France's troubles and for pillaging and exploiting the country. The young intellectuals who wrote for *Je Suis Partout* were weaned on Maurrassian anti-Semitism but, in occupied Paris, they generally went along with Nazi

decadence and cultural pessimism amongst the intellectual elite, also gave greater credence to theories of eugenics and racial hygiene which underscored some forms of anti-Semitism.⁴

After the defeat, both Vichy and the Germans exploited the anti-Semitism of the previous decade in order to anchor and promote their anti-Jewish policies. However, the policy of racially based elimination of Jews would not have existed in France if not for Germany's victory. The Germans began to attack Jews as soon as they gained control of occupied France.⁵ In Paris, they gathered together, financed and promoted the most brutish anti-Semites and the crudest racial scientists that the previous decade had produced. These French men performed several important services for the occupier. They served to show that policies of racial exclusion were not imposed on the

racial policies and deportations (Brasillach objected only when children were separated from their parents).

⁴ Theories of racial hygiene swept the western world in the wake of the First World War. Racial hygienists accepted human decline as fact, but challenged the inevitability of that decline with the ideal of human perfectibility. They claimed a scientific method but often based their theories on some corruption of anthropology or genetics. The most prominent racial hygienists were German and the advent of Hitler meant that their theories became increasingly racist and anti-Semitic. One of the most influential proponents of racial hygiene was Eugen Fischer, a German professor of anatomy who became increasingly interested in inheritance and the transmission of human characteristics. Fischer's ideas were initially class based: he studied the poorest sections of society in order to trace degeneration and the transmission of 'inferior' traits. However, Fischer's growing interest in the effects of colonialism led him increasingly into the identification of racial characteristics and the 'problems' of inter-breeding. He was not particularly anti-Semitic before 1933, but opportunities for advancement under the Nazi state led him to espouse Nazi racial ideology and to cooperate in their forced sterilisation programme. German racial theorists saw France, with its preaching of equality and fraternity, as the incarnation of all dangers, but they nevertheless influenced the development of France's own racial hygienists, especially in colonial and class based studies. French theorists never gained the same standing as their German counterparts and they achieved positions in the state structures only after the defeat. See Luis Dupeux, 'Quelques enjeux anthropologiques des relations ou confrontations culturelles franco-allemandes', in Bock, Meyer-Kalkus and Trevitsch, *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, vol. 1, pp. 483-493, p. 484. Also Liliane Crips & Marc Knobel, 'Eugen Fischer et Georges Montandon: théorie et pratique de l'"hygiène raciale" en Allemagne et en France', *ibid.*, pp. 495-513.

⁵ Indeed, even before they had established control and in the immediate aftermath of the exodus, German soldiers hindered the free movement of Jews. As soon as they took control, the Germans launched an anti-Semitic propaganda campaign and financed various anti-Semitic groups and newspapers such as *Au Pilon* which existed only as an anti-Semitic tract (circulation of 65,000). In July, the Germans expelled over 3,000 Jews from Alsace. These measures were formalised in an ordinance of 27 September 1940 which first defined Jews in occupied France, then formally prevented those who had fled south across the demarcation line from returning to their homes. The same ordinance required Jews to register with local authorities: compliance meant that Jews were designated as such in their identity papers. Businesses were required to display a notice of Jewish-ownership and subsequently all (not merely those designated 'vacant' in the absence of their owners) were put under German trusteeship.

defeated population but arose out of native and ‘popular’ feeling.⁶ They fronted what were in fact organs of the Nazi state such as the *Institute pour l’Etude des Questions Juives* (IEQJ).⁷ On behalf of their paymasters, they attacked the Jewish policies of the Vichy government for not going far enough and, finally, they served as the compliant alternatives when the Germans sought to replace Vichy officials with those who would support their increasingly drastic measures.

Some of those who served German aims portrayed themselves as veterans of a long war: they were ‘camarades de combat’ who congratulated one another for their clear sightedness during the ‘temps héroïque’ before the defeat when their warnings against the Jews were suppressed. They hailed their German-sponsored positions as long-awaited ‘recognition’ and an opportunity to carry out the racial policies that Vichy was obviously unwilling to pursue.⁸ In reality, they acted out of a lethal blend of commitment and ambition which became increasingly corrupted by the profits that could be made by the persecution of Jews.

The press in the Occupied Zone—even those papers which had condemned German policies before the defeat—began immediately to spout anti-Semitic

⁶ On 1 October 1940, five days after the first German ordinance against Jews, *Radio Paris* announced that, since the Armistice, the Jewish problem in France had been ‘amongst the most discussed’ and that ‘the German authorities, moved by the requests of thousands of Frenchmen who begged them to intervene, have passed to action’. British Foreign Office, PRO, FO 371/24313.

⁷ The IEQJ, which was closely controlled by the Gestapo, was set up in May 1941 when the Germans became frustrated with Vichy’s lack of zeal and centralised control in anti-Semitic policy: see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 210-12, who point out that agencies such as the *Légion* performed much of the anti-Semitic public relations in the Unoccupied Zone. The *Service d’Ordre Légionnaire*, the shock troops of the *Légion*, swore in their oath to fight against the ‘Jewish leprosy’. The IEQJ was headed by Paul Sézille, a gross figure who proved himself to be corrupt and incompetent long before the Germans finally got rid of him in mid-1942.

⁸ Jean Fontenoy, ‘Hommage à Darquier de Pellepoix’, *Révolution Nationale*, 21 June 1942. Fontenoy, in praising Darquier as the perfect choice to head Vichy’s Commission for ‘Jewish questions’, predicted that: ‘il va nettoyer les écuries juives et celles où, récemment, se gorgeait le bétail paradoxalement désigné pour assainir lesdites écuries’. In a conference of the group *Collaboration*, Jacques de Lesdain accused Vichy of being a nest of Jewish, Masonic and British interests and was thus unable to pursue the policy of racial homogeneity that would return France to its former strength. As in most collaborationist criticism of Vichy, Pétain was not directly targeted, but Lesdain, while saying that Pétain ‘plane au-dessus de cette peste’, pointed out the ‘scandals’ that were occurring at Vichy because he ‘ne met pas la main dans le panier de crabes’. Jacques de Lesdain, *Comment on reconstruit les peuples* (Conférence donné le 15 février sous les auspices du Groupe Collaboration: Paris, 1941), p. 7.

propaganda.⁹ Such propaganda portrayed Jews in the crudest visual caricatures as the eternal alien, the envious moral corrupter, the exploiter, creator of capitalism, Marxism and class conflict and the instigator of war and revolution.¹⁰ The press advertised Nazi propaganda initiatives such as the exhibition, *Le Juif et la France* that portrayed Jews as racially inferior and as vermin.¹¹ Anti-Semitic propaganda sought to create a sense of Jewish difference and, particularly in the first year following the defeat, many articles in the press purported to trace the history of the Jews and to explain their ethnic and cultural origins. As the war dragged on into 1942 and the Germans began their Final Solution, anti-Semitic propaganda broadened to link the Allies and any form of resistance—from the communists to the *zazous*—to Jewish domination and finance.¹² There was an increased stress on the eastern origins of the Jews and on the contention that they should return there.

Propaganda in the media was not the only means of isolating and persecuting Jews. From early in the occupation of France, as they had done in Germany, the Nazis attempted to legitimise anti-Semitism within a broader context of racial theory. Again, they found willing helpers in Paris where they sponsored the creation of academic study centres or institutes of race. Such centres often claimed a medical basis and had input into population studies and the development of the family code but they were overtly

⁹ Some papers which reappeared after the defeat such as *Le Matin*, *L'Illustration* and *Paris-Soir* found a new anti-Semitic emphasis while others such as *Je Suis Partout* continued their virulent pre-war tone. Not all new collaborationist papers were as strongly anti-Semitic as *La Gerbe* or *Au Pilon: Nouveaux Temps* did not dedicate much space to Jewish policy. See Asher Cohen, *Persécutions et Sauvetages: Juifs et Français sous l'Occupation et sous Vichy* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1993), pp. 161-5.

¹⁰ See, for example, André Gaucher, 'Le Juif dans la nature et dans l'histoire', *La Gerbe*, 10 October 1940. Jews were always portrayed in crude caricatures throughout *La Gerbe*: even the paper's youth page was headed with a cartoon depicting young men and women pushing over a falling edifice onto fleeing Jewish businessmen, financiers and Freemasons. Dominique Rossignol identifies subtle differences in collaborationist anti-Semitic propaganda: the PPF portrayed Jews as thieves, profiteers, saboteurs and criminals; the RNP as exploiters and the cause of the war; the MSR attempted to create a racial mystique in which the Jews, the international financiers, had no place; and the *Ligue Française* showed strong support for Vichy's crusade on behalf of a community under invasion. Dominique Rossignol, *Histoire de la Propagande en France de 1940 à 1944: L'Utopie Pétain* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), pp. 227-8.

¹¹ This exhibition was organised by the IEQJ and ran from 5 September 1941 to 11 January 1942. The official attendance figure was given as 1 million but it was probably no more than 500,000-700,000 and public opinion reacted against this form of Nazi propaganda.

¹² For example, a cartoon in *Revolution Nationale*, 4 July 1942, depicted Churchill and a male and female *zazou* suspended on puppet strings held by Jews.

anti-Semitic and, despite the academic pretensions, crude and unscientific. At the Institute of Hygiene, within the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, Doctor René Martial was appointed to teach a course on the ‘anthro-biology’ of races. In his book *Les Métis* he claimed that the French race had been debased by the immigration of Asians and Jews and by the myth of racial equality. He wrote that those of mixed race or *métis* were asymmetrical in physique, with lighter skulls and shorter life expectancy and in character they were unstable, vulgar and impulsive. He argued that France could be rebuilt from the few remaining good elements but only by eliminating the bad:

il faut éliminer non seulement tous les éléments gangrénés mais même ceux simplement suspects. Nous ne devons plus admettre aucun fruit véreux.¹³

The servants of German anti-Semitic policy in occupied Paris acted from a mix of ambition and commitment or intellectual pretension. This can be seen in the career of Georges Montandon, one of the crudest proponents of pseudo-scientific racial-hygiene in France.¹⁴ During the 1930s Montandon had become obsessed with Jews and, arguing that they were made up of several different races, wrote treatises on how to recognise their physical and moral characteristics. After the defeat, Montandon quickly absorbed the crudest German anti-Semitic propaganda, while still trying to maintain his intellectual posture as a professor of anthropology. He was a regular contributor to *La Gerbe*, the ‘intellectual’ paper, where his first articles aimed to establish his ethno-racial studies within a French tradition, as well as asserting their importance in the development of a new European order.¹⁵ Montandon’s history of the Jews was infected

¹³ Dr. René Martial, *Les Métis: Nouvelle étude sur les migrations, le mélange des races, le métissage, la retrempe de la race française et la révision du code de la famille* (Paris: Flammarion, 1942), p. 26.

¹⁴ Montandon was a Swiss-born doctor who became interested in African anthropology and ethnology. In the mid 1920s he took up various positions in French museums before becoming professor of ethnology at the private *Ecole d'Anthropologie*. He was greatly influenced by Eugen Fischer and German eugenicists and, like Fischer, his early theories were based less on race than on culture. During the course of the 1930s, Montandon adhered increasingly to the extreme right and his ideas veered towards the biological as he claimed to pioneer the classification of physical characteristics which described racial types.

¹⁵ Georges Montandon, ‘La découverte du racisme’, *La Gerbe*, 6 March 1941: describes the elitist and racist theories of Vacher de Lapouge, a French academic of the late nineteenth century. Many articles on race in the collaborationist press sought to establish the French roots of racial theory, celebrating Arthur de Gobineau as well as Vacher de Lapouge: see for example, Dr. René Martial,

with conspiracy and vague but ominous threats: he sought to trace various 'tribal' origins of the Jews; their spread throughout Europe; their 'invasion' of France following the Revolution; their 'infiltration' into the key positions of power; and their almost total control at the outbreak of the war.¹⁶

Montandon soon became totally subservient to the demands of German racial propaganda. In accordance with Nazi policy, Montandon suddenly began to insist on the use of the term 'Jew', with its racial overtones, rather than 'Hebrew' or 'Israelite', terms which accommodated cultural and religious difference and which he had used only days before.¹⁷ His identification of Jews by their supposed physical characteristics reinforced German racial stereotypes: hooked nose, sunken eyes and large lips and frizzy hair—the residual characteristics of the negroid origins, he claimed. Montandon's assertion that Jews had a racial pathology, being more susceptible to diabetes, leprosy and arthritis, amongst other diseases, gave a particularly sinister edge to the term racial hygiene.¹⁸ Montandon's service to the German cause won him, in March 1941, the editorship of an irregular anti-Semitic publication, *L'Ethnie française*, which was wholly financed by the *Institut Allemand*. In these pages, Montandon not only launched personal attacks on prominent Jews, but he also attacked all those who rejected racially based anti-Semitism, an implicit criticism of Vichy policy.¹⁹

'Politique de race' and 'Le génie de Gobineau', *Révolution Nationale*, 11 July 1942 and 11 October 1942 respectively. Jacques de Lesdain of the group *Collaboration* claimed that Gobineau and Vacher de Lapouge had 'creusé les sillons' for Hitler's policy of racial rejuvenation: Lesdain, *Comment on reconstruit les peuples*, pp. 19-20. Lesdain also claimed that racism was an ancient practice that predated Hitler: not only did Anglo-Saxon countries from America to Australia pursue policies to preserve the racial superiority of the white race, but ancient Jews were racist (he added that modern science had proven that Christ's skull was 'noble', 'pure' and 'perfectly Aryan'; *ibid.*, pp. 7, 12-13 and 29. Alfred Fabre-Luce in his suggestions for reading in preparation for the new European Order, put together extracts from French and other European authors (Gobineau, Herbert-Spencer Chamberlain, Barrès, Jean Rostand, Ernest Renan, Hitler and Maurras): Fabre-Luce, *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Europe*, pp. 63-91. In the preface, Fabre-Luce introduced Gobineau's ideas on racial purity before arguing the case for eugenics and the state's role in natural selection as demonstrated by Hitler's Germany; *ibid.*, pp. xiii-xv.

¹⁶ Georges Montandon, 'L'Histoire des hébreux', *La Gerbe*, 17 October 1940 and 'L'établissement des sémites en France', *La Gerbe*, 24 October 1940. Ominously, Montandon did not finish this 'history', ending his article with the words, 'En 1939, ils tenaient pratiquement les leviers lorsque ...'.

¹⁷ Georges Montandon, 'Comment s'est formé le type racial juif', *La Gerbe*, 31 October 1940.

¹⁸ Montandon, Georges, *Comment reconnaître le Juif?* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Français, 1940) and 'Les traits du type judaïque', *La Gerbe*, 17 April 1941.

¹⁹ Montandon singled out Maurras for criticism as an 'anti-racist' but his comments could obviously be directed more generally at Vichy. Maurras, while calling for stricter measures against the Jews,

The development of racially based exclusion in France can be explained in part by the increasing exigencies of German racial policy and by the complications of occupation politics. However, the fate of the Jews in France and the power and influence that men like Montandon eventually achieved can only be fully understood in the light of Vichy's own anti-Semitic and discriminatory laws.

Vichy's anti-Semitism was in many ways a continuation of a long, Catholic and nationalist tradition. In its tone, it was heavily reminiscent of 'la France au français', the xenophobic catchcry of the anti-Semitic right and the *Action Française* since the end of the nineteenth century.²⁰ But there were also new elements in Vichy's anti-Semitism: the new government sought to isolate and then totally exclude Jews from the national community in order to 'purify' it. Vichy normalised this exclusion in a broader context of laws which forbade membership of political parties such as the Communist Party or societies such as the Freemasons. It is also significant that the government initiated this policy without encouragement or coercion from the Germans, nor was it simply trying to curry favour with a rabidly racist occupying regime. In its inception, this was a French policy and Vichy struggled to keep it so. Once initiated, however, Vichy's policy of exclusion was open to pressure from the occupiers and their policy of persecution, deportation and murder.²¹

Laws that aimed to exclude 'foreigners' from the national community were amongst Vichy's earliest legislation: the first came only a week after the government was constituted and legislation continued in a steady stream over the next few months. Vichy exploited general public resentment over the influx of refugees during the previous decade, but its legislation broadened the definition of foreigner and implicit in

mocked Montandon's claims of 'scientific racism' in the pages of *L'Action Française*, published in the Unoccupied Zone. See Cohen, *Persécutions et Sauvetages*, pp. 155, 159.

²⁰ Maurras always distinguished his 'anti-sémitisme d'état' from 'anti-sémitisme de peau'.

²¹ Despite early German anti-Semitic measures, Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton in their *Vichy France and the Jews* have established beyond any question, that Vichy initiated its own anti-Semitic policy without any direct German order. They have dealt definitively with issues that will not be addressed here: the responsibility that Vichy—its protagonists and functionaries—must bear in the persecution of French and foreign Jews living in France; and how Vichy's desire to protect its sovereignty facilitated the application of the Final Solution in France. Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), adds the perspective of changing public opinion to Jewish policy in Occupied France.

it was the targeting of Jews. The government restricted employment to those born of French fathers, first in the public service and then in medicine and the law.²² On 22 July, Raphaël Alibert, the Minister for the Interior, set up a commission to review all naturalisations since 1927 and to strip citizenship from all 'undesirables'. The government then initiated more repressive measures: it interned all foreign Jews and stripped French citizenship from Algerian Jews, a right granted 75 years previously.²³

Vichy's early legislation against foreign Jews might be seen as a cautious beginning, as it was not long before it acted against French Jews in mainland France. Three months after its creation, Vichy acted to exclude all French Jews from the national community and from any position of authority or influence on 'the formation of the French character'.²⁴ On 3 October, the government promulgated the first *Statut des Juifs*, forbidding Jews employment in the public service, the armed forces, in teaching, the media and the performing arts (it allowed veterans of the Great War and distinguished veterans of 1939-40 to remain in minor positions). The statute also implied the purification of France by defining Jews racially, not religiously as the Germans had done in the Occupied Zone, and it further extended the Occupier's definition of Jewishness from those with three Jewish grandparents to those with two if they were also married to someone with at least three Jewish grandparents.

Vichy propaganda played upon nationalist sentiment by representing Jews as the eternal foreigner or nomad, the profiteer, corrupter, infiltrator and traitor. The government couched its Jewish policy in references to the turmoil of the previous decade and to the defeat, asserting Jewish contamination of the nation's vitality and

²² Respectively, laws of 17 July, 16 August and 10 September 1940. Justifications of such laws claimed that they were a 'measure d'assainissement' and that they were a 'question de bon sens que l'on s'étonne d'avoir eu à résoudre': Picavet, *La Révolution Nationale*, p. 100.

²³ Respectively, laws of 4 and 7 October 1940.

²⁴ The Foreign Minister, Baudouin, used this phrase in a communiqué aimed at placating the American government. Baudouin claimed that Vichy's legislation was 'a matter of security, without any racial significance' based on the fact that Jews 'did not accept the French spiritual inheritance'. British Foreign Office, PRO, FO 371/24313.

strength. Through such propaganda and by unleashing the anti-Semitic press, Vichy sought to undermine any notion of assimilation.²⁵

Once Vichy initiated a policy of exclusion, the Germans began to exert pressure on it, and the realities of occupied France meant that such pressure would inevitably reshape it. In early 1941, the Germans began pushing for the creation of a central body to co-ordinate Jewish policy throughout France. In compliance with this pressure, on 29 March 1941 Vichy established the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* (CGQJ). The man appointed at its head, Xavier Vallat, embodied Vichy's *anti-Sémitisme français*.²⁶ He did not fully satisfy German persecutionist intentions which became patently clearer with the introduction of the *rafles* or round-ups of Jews.²⁷ Vallat nonetheless soon extended Vichy's anti-Jewish policy through the promulgation of a second statute on 2 June 1941. This statute further broadened the definition of Jewishness: Jews now included anyone with two Jewish grandparents who was married to someone with two Jewish grandparents. It also further restricted Jewish employment and education.²⁸ A separate law of the same day required the registration of all Jews.

The second statute did not allay German pressure which was increasingly concentrated on Vichy personnel. In July 1941, the Germans demanded proof of Aryan status for anyone wishing to enter the Occupied Zone. After three months of equivocation over what form the proof should take, the CGQJ began issuing 'certificats

²⁵ The law of 27 August 1940 repealed legislative protection against racial vilification. While supporting the overall government line, some papers published in the Unoccupied Zone, such as *Le Temps*, avoided any overtly anti-Semitic comment. Others, such as *L'Action Française*, continued their pre-war line while a few like *Gringoire* encouraged greater measures against Jews. See Cohen, *Persécutions et Sauvetages*, pp. 158-61.

²⁶ Xavier Vallat (1891-1972), served with distinction in the First World War, became a member of parliament on the extreme Catholic right and, in the *Action Française* mould, was both anti-Semitic and anti-German. Vallat was a strong supporter of the Vichy regime and was close to Pétain. As head of the CGQJ, he often obstructed extreme Nazi anti-Semitic measures when they conflicted with the interests of the French state. He was sentenced to ten years imprisonment after the war, but was released in 1947 after serving two years.

²⁷ The Germans began with the round-up of foreign Jews in May 1941, but in August 4,200 victims included 1000 French Jews. In August they established the transit camp at Drancy for deportation to the east and in December a further 740 French Jews, mostly community leaders and professionals, were rounded-up and deported.

²⁸ In total, 750,000 people were excluded from their employment, including: 1,284 military personnel; 1,111 teachers; and 3,422 public servants: Bédarida, 'La Persécution de Juifs', p. 139.

de non-appartenance à la race juive'.²⁹ However, Hitler's decision to implement the Final Solution soon revealed the futility of all Vichy's attempts to dictate its own exclusions from the national community. Laval used foreign Jews as bargaining chips to obtain concessions from the Germans for French Jews and he negotiated the use of French police in round-ups in order to protect French sovereignty.³⁰ Such attempts to protect Vichy's diminishing power led only to an ever increasing accommodation with German demands. Mass round-ups and deportations meant that Jews could not survive in France without help and some form of resistance, but Vichy's laws and restrictions made survival all the more difficult. The Milice totally assimilated Nazi racism and in its ideals and practice there was nothing to separate *anti-Sémitisme français* from the Nazi's Final Solution.³¹

The decision to implement the Final Solution led the Germans to increase pressure for changes in Vichy personnel. Their demand that a German expert be appointed to aid in racial classifications, led Vallat to select Georges Montandon for the task in February 1942. Vallat's refusal to sanction the wearing of the yellow star in the Unoccupied Zone gave them the opportunity to press for his sacking.³² Vallat's replacement in May 1942 was Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, a notorious Jew-baiter who sat more easily in the collaborationist camp than at Vichy and who was willing to work closely with German authorities and facilitate their policies.³³

²⁹ For details of the deliberations see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. 94.

³⁰ In the Bousquet-Oberg agreements of 2 July 1942, the head of the French police and the general in charge of the German SD in Paris agreed to co-operate in Jewish affairs. French police rounded up nearly 13,000 Jews in the *grand rafle* of 16-17 July 1942; a few days later on 26-27 July, 7,000 more were collected: the victims were sent to Drancy and deported. The round-ups continued after the Germans occupied all of France.

³¹ The Milice emphasised race in the training of its elite at Uriage and proclaimed 'si nous voulons refaire la France, il nous faut pousser l'intransigeance raciste jusqu'au fanatisme et nos descendants nous en béniront': *Documentation des Cadres*, no. 2, p. 57.

³² From June 1942, the Germans required all Jews in the Occupied Zone to wear a yellow patch with a Star of David.

³³ Born Louis Darquier in 1897, he assumed 'de Pellepoix' later. A veteran with a series of career failures, Darquier was a member of the *Action Française* and the *Croix-de-Feu* before he was wounded in the riots of 6 February and found a cause as an anti-Semite. He became a municipal councilor and in 1937, with German money, founded the *Rassemblement Antijuif* which called for the expulsion of Jews from France and the confiscation of their property. After the defeat, his background and his crudity made him unwelcome in Pétain's circle: he spent much of his time in Paris and based himself there permanently after November 1943. After the Germans requested his removal in February 1944 (the result of his incompetence), he fled to Spain, where he died in 1980.

With the appointment of men such as Montandon and Darquier, the crudest form of biological racism and venality became part of Vichy policy. The absurdity of the idea of purifying the national community with the aid of such men was soon patently clear. Darquier, lazy and greedy, became increasingly dedicated to the profits to be made from the 'aryanisation' of Jewish businesses and property. His efforts in propaganda were feeble: he simply denied rumours of massacres and, in an attempt to reduce sympathy for the Jews, insisted that they still had the influence and power to undermine national revival.³⁴ Before the Germans tired of his incompetence, Darquier gave Montandon further preferment in early 1943 by establishing and making him the head of the *Institut d'Etudes des Questions Juives et Ethno-Raciales* [IEQJ]. Montandon began teaching 'ethno-raciology' but he became increasingly occupied by the examination of individuals to prove or clear them of Jewish blood. He used the crudest forms of measurement, phrenology and 'historical' research to form his decisions which, by then, were a matter of life or death.³⁵

Though one might argue that individuals like Montandon and Pellepoix were foisted upon Vichy, other structures in the French state reinforced and legitimised the biological exclusion which they so crudely represented. Vichy's *Foundation française pour l'étude des problèmes humains*, supported Montandon and the IEQJ in their aim of strengthening and 'cleansing' the French gene pool. The Foundation studied the effects of immigration in an attempt to maintain the homogeneity of the national organism. Vichy had always equated national strength with unity, but the work of the Foundation associated strength with biological homogeneity. René Martial at his *Institut d'Hygiène* also warned against the threat that Jews posed to the homogeneity of the French race through their high birth rate and the *métissage* which they embodied. Martial claimed

³⁴ Paul Modave, 'M. Darquier de Pellepoix nous parle de "la question juive"', *La Gerbe*, 11 February 1943. Darquier claimed that persecution was a myth put about by Jews themselves: he 'reminded' the readership that Jewish doctors were responsible for carrying out abortions in France, thus undermining the national community.

³⁵ Montandon's opinion could, however, be bought: he profited from persecution by accepting bribes from Jewish organisations and individuals until he was shot by the resistance in July 1944.

that Jews were descended from four races, each one 'mixed' and they were therefore 'des modèles d'instabales, doublés d'anxieux ... toujours agités, jamais paisibles'.³⁶

Another organisation dedicated to the promotion of eugenicist theories was the *Centre d'Etudes de la Fondation Heucqueville*. In order to maintain the character of the 'national family', Dr. Georges Heucqueville promoted the strongest forms of state intervention: the banning of racial inter-marriage and sterilisations to prevent degeneration caused by alcohol and venereal disease.³⁷ Heucqueville dedicated his studies to Pétain, 'restaurateur de la Famille française', and claimed the patronage of the ministries of Justice, Family and Health.

There was, at least in the minds of some who sought to shape the National Revolution, a strong link between racial and eugenicist theories and Vichy's policies concerning the family and women in particular. In her treatment of ideals and politics of gender under Vichy, Francine Muel-Dreyfus argues that official assumptions of natural or biological inequality extended beyond conceptions of class and race to shape gender roles in the New Order.³⁸ Vichy, she claims, was a racial state: it invested in its subjects only to the level that their biological determination required and it sought to protect its racial patrimony, not only by excluding inferior and mixed races, but also by forcing women into a narrowly defined gender role.

A New Woman? The Eternal Woman, Guardian of Purity

Autrefois les filles de seize ans
 Etaient d'une innocence exquise,
 Et le plus petit compliment
 Les faisaient rougir comme des c'risés.
 Aujourd'hui c'est bien différent,
 De lurs diplôm's ell's vous assomment
 Et dans les p'tits coins sournois'ment
 C'sont ell's qui font rougir les hommes.
Femmes d'autrefois, femmes d'aujourd'hui,
 Satirical song.

³⁶ Martial, *Les Métais*, p. 225.

³⁷ See, for example, Dr. Georges Heucqueville, *Plus d'enfants dégénérés* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1943) and *Mesure de la dégénérescence* (Paris, 1943).

³⁸ Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin: contribution à une sociologie politique de l'ordre des corps* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996), especially chapters 7 and 8.

The National Revolution's new man was such a strongly masculine and virile ideal that it overshadowed the conception of a new woman. While moral reformists defined rigid categories of masculinity and femininity, they simply afforded less attention to females than to males.³⁹ In many respects, this was because their concept of the role of women in the new order was nothing new at all; it was a return to what they saw as the traditional female vocation—a narrow conception of mother, nurturer, wife, homemaker. The female policies of both the Vichy government and its Parisian critics defined an 'eternal' or 'good' woman who embodied the female vocation and who was therefore the source of national continuity and stability. Their policies consisted essentially of reversing modern social trends which, they believed, had turned women from their true vocation, corrupted them and in turn made them a major cause of social degeneration and moral decadence: such 'fallen' women threatened the whole basis of society.⁴⁰ The feminine, for the conservative and the fascist right, could therefore be used either to symbolise purity and order or to embody corruption and chaos.

³⁹ One author giving advice for the new order, consoled women for the lack of attention paid to them by voicing the opinion that women, while no less important than men, needed less guidance because they were inherently good, naturally more intuitive and had a beneficial effect on men because they sought to spread happiness: 'vous incarnez par vocation l'oubli de vous-même ... ce que femme veut, Dieu veut': P. Masson-Oursel, *Apprends à agir* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942), pp. 107-8. Many right wing thinkers constantly defined essential gender differences (women were passive, emotionally driven and above all nurturing while men were active, intellectual and ambitious) and feared that increasing social freedom would make women more like men. Marcel de Corte, for example, explained that female 'immodesty' was the result of 'la masculinisation de la femme': *Incarnation de l'homme: psychologie des mœurs contemporaines* (Paris: Librairie de Médicis, 1943), p. 136. Their fear was that 'masculinisation' and feminism would lead to sterility: 'La femme ouvrière ou fonctionnaire, volontairement stérile, réalise non le triomphe du féminisme, mais la triste caricature de l'effort masculin: la vie ratée d'un homme raté': Masson-Oursel, *Apprends à agir*, p. 109.

⁴⁰ Despite the assumption of an inherent goodness which was natural to women who conformed to the traditional stereotype, both conservative and fascist reformists were scathing of those 'bad' women who abandoned the 'pure' and 'simple' life and did not conform to the eternal ideal. As in right wing criticism of women before the war, moral reformists under the Occupation condemned the bad woman as either 'coquette' (obsessed with frivolity and promiscuity) or 'feminist' (pursuing ambition, education or work), both of which denied her true destiny of motherhood. They accused such women of corrupting French manhood and disseminating sterility and of having played an important role in the decadence and defeat of France. The Third Republic was often portrayed by fascists as weak and feminine: see, for example, Jean-Pierre Maxence's representations of the Republic and Léon Blum in his *Histoire de Dix Ans*; and the analogy of the decline of the Republic with the sexual appetites of an aging woman in Picavet's *Révolution Nationale*, p. 1. Halls quotes the leader of the Doriotist youth group, the JPF: 'the collapse of France ... was in great part the collapse of French women': *Youth of Vichy France*, p. 330. Thus, when women were weak they weakened the whole social structure: Soucy reports that women auxiliaries of the *Légion* were counseled against the temptations of the 'fashions of the late Roman Empire': 'In the troubled times in which we live, you

In idealising the eternal woman, the moral reformists of Vichy and Paris denied the reality of women's lives: they ignored the complexity of roles that women had fulfilled before the defeat and they took no account of the added complications and hardships that the Occupation imposed on women, and indeed especially on those women who were fulfilling the traditional role of home maker in the absence of so many men.⁴¹ Their propaganda also denied new opportunities and roles which the extraordinary circumstances of the defeat afforded some women, as it did some men.⁴²

Nevertheless, the Vichy government was secure in these denials and it used the law and propaganda to define a narrow ideal of the pure and virtuous woman.⁴³ As Francine Muel-Dreyfus has argued, Vichy's traditional conception of women's roles underpinned the social policies of the National Revolution as a whole: if the National Revolution was to bring about a more natural, simple, secure and fecund society, then the government had to restrict and also value the role of women as the centre of the

must keep a severe watch over your private life, being careful not only to avoid scandal but to set an example of wisdom and reserve. We do not require that those who join the feminine sections of the Légion dress with austerity. We do not desire French women to stop being charming. But it is time that honest women repudiate certain ways of walking, using cosmetics, dancing, talking thoughtlessly, reading no matter what, and applauding vile plays': *French Fascism: the First Wave*, p. 35.

⁴¹ In the decade prior to the defeat, women made up nearly one third of the workforce. Women bore the brunt of privations and shortages under the Occupation and their anger often led them into protest and into the political arena. Several authors have extensively covered the lives of women under the Occupation: Eck, 'Les Françaises sous Vichy', pp. 185-213; Célia Bertin, *Femmes Sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Stock, 1993); Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France, 1939-1947* (Paris: Payot, 1995).

⁴² Some recent studies have sought to uncover the experiences of women who were not typical. Some of these women enjoyed or profited from the Occupation and felt that their experience had been excluded from post-war representations of those years. Colin Nettlebeck's study of Germaine Thibault who worked alongside top collaborationist officials, has revealed little explored opportunities for career-minded women in occupied France: "'The Devil You Know': A Professional Woman in Fascist France', paper presented to the Colloquium in Honour of Robert Paxton, *European Fascisms: Then and Now* (University of Melbourne, August 21-23, 1998). See also Elizabeth H. Houlding, "'L'Envers de la Guerre": The Occupation of Violette Leduc', in Melanie Hawthorne and Richard J. Golsan (eds), *Gender and Fascism in Modern France* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), pp. 83-100. The involvement of women in the resistance has now been well documented in the general texts on women quoted above and in more focused studies such as: Margaret L. Rossiter, *Women in the Resistance* (New York: Praeger, 1986); Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995).

⁴³ Vichy's definition of the virtuous and eternal woman is explored by Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin* and Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilising Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For the exclusion of 'undesirable' women from the new order see also Michèle Bordeaux, 'Femmes hors d'Etat français, 1940-1944', in Rita Thalmann (ed.), *Femmes et Fascismes* (Paris: Editions Tierce, 1987), pp. 135-55.

home and the heart of the nation.⁴⁴ Vichy made it clear that women were welcome to contribute at a minor level to public affairs, but only in the realms which directly concerned them, such as the family.⁴⁵ The government did not hesitate to use legislation in order to restrict women's roles—it moved very early to curtail women's financial and legal independence and power, especially after marriage—however, its laws were not an indication that the regime had developed a considered or consistent policy in these matters. The government moved in October 1940 to force married women out of public sector jobs and to oblige women over fifty to retire.⁴⁶ Another law of September 1942 confirmed women's legal inequality by recognising the husband as the *chef de la famille*. However, the realities of the Occupation meant that Vichy could not fully impose its narrow ideal of womanhood nor totally exclude women from the workforce. The prolongation of the war, the economic and legal difficulties it posed, and German labour demands forced more women to seek paid employment and

⁴⁴ Muel-Dreyfus's thesis is that the construction of women's policies around the ideal of an *éternel féminin* was central to the National Revolution. She argues that, while it drew on an ancient ideal of Catholic femininity, the other face of Vichy's feminine ideal was the violence of domination, exclusion and the legitimisation of social and biological inequality. It should be noted that Joan of Arc was a powerful female symbol which Vichy propaganda exploited despite the fact that, as a real historical figure, she did not conform to a traditional feminine role. Vichy celebrated Joan of Arc as a mythical, patriotic symbol, rather than as a real woman or as a symbol of femininity. It was the Maid's spirituality and resilience, her dedication to truth and interior joy which supporters of the regime claimed to speak to feminine duty and values in the New Order: see Lina Fontegne, *Le rôle de la femme devant les devoirs présents: conférence faite le 23 novembre 1941* (no publication details), pp. 1, 12. For analyses of the symbolism of Joan of Arc to the political right and under the Occupation see: Philippe Contamine, 'Jeanne d'Arc dans la mémoire des droites' in Sirinelli (ed.), *Historie des droites en France: vol. 2, Cultures*, pp. 399-435; Gabriel Jacobs, 'The Role of Joan of Arc on the Stage of Occupied Paris', in Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin (eds), *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 106-22; Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981).

⁴⁵ René Benjamin describes Pétain's audience with a female municipal councilor only to prescribe women's public usefulness: *Les Sept Etoiles*, p. 55.

⁴⁶ Vichy's control of women's labour was complicated in part by the need to manage unemployment and hardship but in the main by the ambiguous and contradictory nature of Vichy's policy. Miranda Pollard points out that the government never resolved the contradictions between its use of the terms 'le travail féminin' and 'la femme au foyer': it came to no consensus on what might constitute suitable work for women; it made no restrictions on the employment of single women; it granted exemptions to the law of 11 October to women with husbands on a low wage and women with more than three children who were considered to have fulfilled their national duty; and it did all this before labour demands forced it to change its laws. Miranda Pollard, 'La politique du travail féminin', in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 242-50.

compelled Vichy to relax its restrictions and reverse some of the policies which had deprived women of employment and independence.⁴⁷

That the government never relaxed its control of female reproductive and sexual mores and went far beyond general public attitudes in this area, gives a clear indication that Vichy saw women as central to its moral conception of the nation. Its laws attempted to ensure female fidelity: divorce became more difficult; the abandonment of family became a crime, as did adultery for the wives of prisoners of war.⁴⁸ Vichy also increased penalties against abortion, making it a capital offence and, significantly in terms of women's role in a racial state, a crime against the French people.⁴⁹ According to one historian of women under the Occupation, this made Vichy 'profoundly different' to any previous conservative or anti-feminist regime in France.⁵⁰

However, while not hesitating to use the law, Vichy did not highlight the need for compulsion or punishment in order to change the role of women.⁵¹ Instead, patronising all women, the government gave the impression that, given the right environment, the natural qualities of the eternal woman, qualities which centered on maternity, would flower in some mysterious way. But this environment existed only in the unreal universe of Vichy's own propaganda. Célia Bertin has noted that Vichy's visual representations of women were strangely outdated in clothing and hairstyles,

⁴⁷ Legal problems for wives of prisoners of war forced the government to alter the Napoleonic Code under which married women were deemed to be legally 'incapacitated'. In September 1942, labour shortages led Vichy to encourage married women back into the workforce. When this did not satisfy the German demand for labour, first women without children and then, from February 1944, all women between the ages of 18 and 50 were made liable for conscription. By 1944 there were 44,000 French women working in Germany: *ibid.*, p. 246. Pollard further explores the gap between Vichy's ambitious goals and reality in *Reign of Virtue*, pp. 64-7.

⁴⁸ Laws of 2 April 1941, 23 July 1942 and 23 December 1942.

⁴⁹ Law of 15 February 1942. Between 1942 and 1944, 4000 women were convicted, mostly in civil courts, for carrying out abortions but 'special' abortion cases were also tried by the new Tribunal d'Etat. This court heard 42 cases: 2 resulted in the death penalty; 14 in life imprisonment; and 26 in prison terms of up to twenty years, most with hard labour and fines. See Miranda Pollard, 'Vichy and Abortion: Policing the Body and the New Moral Order in Everyday Life', in Fishman *et al.* (eds), *France At War*, pp. 191-204, p. 193.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 202. Pollard argues that Vichy treated abortion as an act of treason and pursued abortionists as a war policy, the result, she concludes, of its inability to protect French men, homes and families.

⁵¹ This conflicts with Muel-Dreyfus's frequent assertion that violence was at the heart of Vichy's policy towards women.

anachronisms which made some women, despite an awareness of the political ends that such propaganda served, feel slightly schizophrenic.⁵² As one such woman observed:

Il fallait imposer l'image de la femme vertueuse à associer avec celle de la patrie nourricière, protectrice. Sur tous les murs s'étalèrent partout des affiches représentant la mère et son nourrisson, ou bien de jeunes vierges souriantes, les joues roses et des fleurs dans les bras, confiantes dans le bonheur qui les attendait, la paix retrouvée grâce au "sacrifice" du Maréchal. Ces affiches étaient presque aussi nombreuses que celles montrant le bon vieillard digne, beau, bien poncé, avec son képi et sa francisque, qui nous avait fait le don de sa personne.⁵³

With the traditional ground firmly occupied by Vichy, radical collaborationist critics showed uncertainty and inconsistency in redefining a role for women. This was in part because fascist ideas for moral reform were even more fundamentally virile and focused on the masculine than were Vichy's.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the collaborationists did not challenge the basic thrust of the government's *la femme au foyer* policy; they could only assert that Vichy was not doing enough to facilitate it, and even this criticism was often expressed in the mildest way.⁵⁵ Any call for increased state aid for women pointed to problems and inconsistencies for collaborationists. Even before the defeat, fascist ideas for redefining women's roles had relied heavily on state intervention and the limitations of this in the constrained financial climate of the 1930s were plainly obvious.⁵⁶ Under the Occupation, calls for such aid sounded not merely hollow but

⁵² Bertin, *Femmes Sous l'Occupation*, pp. 50-1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵⁴ Relatively recent studies have focused long needed attention on the role of gender in fascist ideology and literature in France: Hawthorne and Golsan, *Gender and Fascism*, David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*; Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave*; Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality*. Hawthorne and Golsan point out that fear of a feminising process which threatened to reduce males to something less than the virile and heroic ideal ran deep in the culture of the National Revolution as well as in fascist literature: *Gender and Fascism*, p. 8.

⁵⁵ See for example Lucien François, 'Le Rôle de la Femme', *La Gerbe*, 14 August 1941: 'Le jour où le Maréchal édictera des lois qui permettront à la femme de ne pas devoir aider l'homme à gagner une vie pénible et de se consacrer tout entière à sa mission éternelle, il aura, une fois de plus, bien mérité de la Patrie.'

⁵⁶ The 1938 program of the fascist PPF league proclaimed that its policy was to support women with family salaries but, in a virtual admission of the impossibility of such support even in the circumstances before the defeat, it suggested other state-based initiatives such as law reform to ensure female-friendly employment, equal salary and independence under the civil code and subsidies to encourage childbirth and to aid widows and single mothers. Marion, *Programme du PPF*, p. 52.

struck a sour note, given collaborationist submission to their master's pillaging of French resources and Germany's refusal to release prisoners of war.

The German-backed popular press aimed to attract a female readership and to reassure women of their importance in the new order by including a women's page as a regular feature.⁵⁷ However, such pages were filled with the same mix of household hints, fashion, leisure and gossip that had made up women's magazines and pages before the defeat.⁵⁸ Such subject matter, in the continuity it provided, may well have reassured some women on a superficial level, but its ability to engage women in favour of the new order was surely extremely limited. The women's pages implied, rather than argued or explained, a narrow, supportive and non-political role for women.⁵⁹

La Gerbe's women's page, in accordance with its intellectual pretensions, ran a few articles which attempted to define women's role in the new order, but its continued preoccupation with fashion and other trivia caused some strange juxtapositions in its content. Edited by the glamorous radio star Yvonne Galli, the page began by exhorting

⁵⁷ One daily, Jean Luchaire's *Le Temps Nouveaux*, included a weekly women's supplement, *Toute la Vie*.

⁵⁸ See Mary Jean Green's comments on the women's pages in the *Croix de Feu's*, *Le Flambeau*: 'The Boubule Novels' in Hawthorne and Golson, *Gender and Fascism*, pp. 49-68, p. 62. It is interesting that the women's pages of the *Flambeau* did not reflect the stated views of the *Croix de Feu's* leader, who wrote in 1934 that women were ready to take on an expanded role in society. La Rocque did not, however, detail what that role might be. While asserting the importance of the traditional role of women in the family, he acknowledged the development of women's social and professional roles since the Great War and claimed that, as women were responsible for many 'splendid initiatives' in social solidarity and hygiene, their virtues would accelerate human and civic progress. See La Rocque, *Service Publique*, p. 76.

⁵⁹ Martine Guyot-Bender goes further in her comparison of Corinne Luchaire's autobiographical *Ma drôle de vie* and the magazine *Toute la Vie*: 'Seducing Corinne: The Official Popular Press during the Occupation', in Hawthorne and Golson, *Gender and Fascism*, pp. 69-82. Guyot-Bender concludes that the apolitical content of women's pages was a deliberate and successful means of bonding women to the new order and of perpetuating male power. There is no doubt truth in her argument that many of the middle and upper class women who made up the targeted readership of *Toute la Vie* wanted to be reassured that the new order would be free from social turmoil but would otherwise be little different from the old. Furthermore, through its optimism, by reinforcing socially ingrained attitudes, by celebrating the persistence of luxury and fashion as aspects of French patriotism and, in short, by making a virtue of political innocence, the collaborationist press may have sought to ensure that such women would not question male power. However, the influence of women's pages and the extent to which their ploys were successful in 'anchoring' women to the new order must remain open to question. Indeed Dominique Veillon has argued that French women's concern with maintaining their high standards of fashion despite the restrictions of the Occupation can be seen as a manifestation of resistance to the drab and foreign new order: *La Mode Sous L'Occupation* (Paris: Payot, 1990).

women to be serious, to forgo ease, pleasure, paid work and all forms of egoism.⁶⁰ Such seriousness was necessary for women to fulfill their main role of looking after the home; a role which would improve their own social status and which made women crucial to the destiny of France.⁶¹ Many articles portrayed women as natural educators, not only of children but of all men, and saw their mission as the moral, psychological and physical reform of the nation. The paper saw the care and education of young children as women's most important mission and it carried many articles on how to promote moral and physical health, often under the byline of a doctor. Many articles encouraged sport, both for children and for women themselves to develop 'Des muscles pour la France de demain'.⁶² *La Gerbe* also promoted a social role for women, at first by running articles on poverty and slum conditions in large cities and then by encouraging women to volunteer for the *Service Féminin Français*, to knit for prisoners and the poor and to care for the sick and needy.⁶³ However, alongside these 'serious' articles were others of a more trivial or frivolous nature: *Murmures de Berceau*, a regular feature of *La Gerbe's* women's page, was a column written in baby language; in other articles, fashion advice warned against risking colours in velvet or told of the current difficulties in haute couture; and beauty tips focused on the popular topics of hairstyles and headwear. From the end of 1942, in what can only be called the remnants of *La Gerbe's* women's page, fashion dominated the 'women's interests' section. These fashion sections were sometimes presented under the guise of understanding and

⁶⁰ See, for example, Yvonne Galli, 'La Femme au Foyer', *La Gerbe*, 5 September 1940. The paper called for a family wage and often claimed that the policy of *la femme au foyer* should be financed by taxes on the unmarried.

⁶¹ P. Peters, 'Le Redressement de la France par le Relèvement de la Femme', *La Gerbe* 9 January 1941 (called for the end of female legal and social dependence so that women, instead of contributing to the decline of France, could bring about its revival); Anne Minvielle, 'Collaboration féminine', *La Gerbe*, 27 March 1941 (claimed that women were more likely to understand the importance of collaboration as, unlike men who focus on the ideological, they were more practical and have a keener grasp of reality); Lucien François, 'Le Rôle de la Femme', *La Gerbe*, 14 August 1941 (described the qualities which made women natural educators and which meant that the feminine mission could be fully achieved only in the home: sensitivity, intuition, spontaneity, realism, amongst others).

⁶² Lucien François, 'Des muscles pour la France de demain', *La Gerbe*, 9 October 1941. The article argued that mothers were in most need of physical education. The same women's page contained an article by Yvonne Galli promoting women's team sports and physical activity.

⁶³ Maggie Guiral, 'Le Taudis, Tombe Précoce', *La Gerbe*, 26 September 1940; and Yvonne Galli 'Le Honte de Paris', *La Gerbe*, 3 October 1940.

guiding young women or indeed as a form of patriotism, but the progressive trivialisation of *La Gerbe's* women's page is undeniable.⁶⁴

Thus, the moral architects of the New Order, while seeking to honour the 'eternal woman', assigned her an extremely narrow role in which she was excluded from any economic or political power and denied any intellectual legitimacy. Though it meant denying or reversing perceived social trends, this was not a new conception of the feminine role. However, one aspect of women's role in French society was new: the moral reformists of the New Order aimed to make women central to the biological regeneration of the nation. This aim went far beyond the pronatalist policies fostered by Vichy and previous, inter-war governments. The aim was not merely to increase the size of the population, but to improve its quality: it reflected a biological conception of a racial 'stock'.

That the state should play a role in shaping the racial stock was new to France. The idea was supported by individuals and groups—doctors, eugenicists, ethnographers and all shades of pseudo-scientists—who emphasised biological influences in constructing the new man or who sought to bring together science and cultural and moral determinants in a new way. Though their number was small, their significance lies in the fact that Vichy gave them an expert role in its project of regeneration. Their interest in forming a new biological order was strongly supported by collaborationist elements in Paris.

The aim of the National Revolution was not only to regenerate and reconstruct but also to cleanse the social body, to rid it of 'problems'. These 'problems' were any elements that disrupted the unity and homogeneity of the national fabric and their eradication involved a programme of moral, social and racial hygiene. Vichy and Paris saw women as central to this task. This can be seen in the work of the *Fondation française pour l'étude des problèmes humains*, the institute for human improvement,

⁶⁴ In a section entitled 'Tout ce qui intéresse la Femme Française' which dealt entirely with couture, the editor J.F., claimed that, in such troubled times, it was vital that women introduce their daughters to a quality French industry which had given proof of 'l'énergie et de la confiance en l'avenir du pays'. *La Gerbe*, 3 December 1942.

which Vichy established in November 1941 under the direction of the Nobel scientist, Dr. Alexis Carrel. Carrel had long written and spoken in the guise of the social savant of the type that became so valued by the Vichy regime. His best-selling book, *L'Homme, cet inconnu*, first published in 1935, was reprinted under the Occupation. Carrel argued that the science of eugenics was indispensable if France was to arrest its 'organic' and spiritual decline and to create a new elite. He claimed that France was mixing the role of the sexes and producing inferior offspring and he named the fundamental problem as the deterioration of its women, by which he meant 'mothers'. Women from 'les plus anciennes familles', those more likely to have children 'de bonne qualité', were not reproducing: education, feminism, egotism, marital instability and economic conditions had created in these women a 'déséquilibre nerveux'. On the other hand, women from lower classes were producing inferior offspring due to the effects of alcohol, tobacco and poor diet and those of weak mind and spirit were not prevented from reproducing. To arrest the decline of the nation's elite, Carrel recommended medical examination before marriage.⁶⁵ In 1937 he advocated the creation of a new type of institution to study what he called the 'science of man': biological 'typologies' and the influence of spiritual and environmental factors such as factory work, city living and the effects of modern entertainments.⁶⁶

The Foundation was the fulfillment of Carrel's long held vision. Its brief was vague and wide ranging, but it represented the government's will to construct Carrel's civilised man according to 'natural laws', to revitalise the population and, importantly, to 'safeguard' it by eradicating 'problems'.⁶⁷ The work of the Foundation bolstered Vichy's education and youth policies, especially in the conception of 'natural' male and female biological roles, in the need for different intellectual and physical formation for

⁶⁵ Carrel, *L'Homme, cet inconnu*, pp. 363-4. In contrast to Nazi policy, Carrel claimed that eugenics, to be truly useful, should be voluntary: this would ensure that qualities of intelligence, courage and education would be passed on to the next generation. He did not emphasise his preference for voluntary compliance after the defeat.

⁶⁶ Carrel, *La construction des hommes*.

⁶⁷ The Foundation conducted research into public health, urbanism, nutrition, immigration, criminality and childhood development: Jackson, *France*, p. 327.

the sexes and in the idea that women should be 'formed' to support men. Many of the foundation's publications sought to inform Vichy's family policy, but Carrel never ceased to stress that pronatalism alone would ultimately weaken national health by allowing the unfit to reproduce: the new man had to be constructed systematically and scientifically.⁶⁸ The Foundation promoted the study of genealogy and renewed the call for a pre-nuptial medical certificate, a call which the government answered by making it compulsory in December 1942, though the law did not prevent 'unfit' couples from marrying.

The collaborationist press in Paris, *La Gerbe* in particular, had praised Carrel and his ideas long before his appointment to the Foundation. *La Gerbe's* women's page, which from early in the Occupation linked the falling birthrate with economic, social and moral threats to racial survival, featured Carrel's advice and warnings on the dangers of alcohol.⁶⁹ The women's page also advised women on exercise and on food, seeing women as Carrel did, as the architects of the physical, moral and intellectual regeneration of the race.⁷⁰ However, collaborationists wanted the government to go further in its racial policy. *La Gerbe* supported Carrel's pre-nuptial examination as a means of protecting the racial health and purity of the nation from alcoholics, epileptics and criminals, but it advocated that certificates be issued by 'independent', non medical state organisations, that examinations be compulsory and take place before the eve of marriage and that France adopt a policy of sterilisation to prevent the consequences of 'unfortunate marriages'.⁷¹

Parisian newspapers also championed more overtly racist critics of the regime. Doctor René Martial of the Institute of Hygiene in the Faculty of Medicine in Paris

⁶⁸ Alexis Carrel, 'La Science de l'homme', in H. Massis (ed.), *La France de l'esprit 1940-1943: enquête sur les nouveaux destins de l'intelligence française* (Paris : Sequana, 1943), pp. 106-12.

⁶⁹ See, for example: L. Devraigne, 'Causes de la dénatalité', *La Gerbe*, 12 September 1940; Docteur Raoul Blondel, 'Le rôle sociale d'Alexis Carrel', *La Gerbe*, 3 April 1941 and 'L'apéritif, fléau social français', *La Gerbe*, 22 May 1941.

⁷⁰ Jean Reno-Bajolais, 'La cuisine, laboratoire de beauté et de régénération raciale', *La Gerbe*, 24 April & 1 May 1941.

⁷¹ Dioscoride, 'Examen pré-nuptial', *La Gerbe*, 6 February 1941, 13 February 1941.

claimed that there could be no national revolution without a racial policy.⁷² The government was guilty of a grave error, he claimed, in thinking that the race could be saved by physical or moral education or by financial support for mothers of large families. He claimed that the race:

ne peut être sauvée que par le retour à un certain degré de pureté, ou mieux, à un dosage bien calculé des mélanges favorables, à l'exclusion de tous ceux qui sont défavorables.⁷³

Saving the race meant two things for Martial: first and foremost, racial selection and the open enforcement of racial policy by the state. Martial wanted the government to make it clear that the pre-nuptial certificate was a means of preserving the race and he lamented its silence on sterilisation which, he claimed, was not a punishment but a necessary racial safeguard. Second, saving the race meant restoring 'féminité normale' and the notion of 'maternité-honneur' which Vichy's family code, in ignoring the issue of race, had failed to address.⁷⁴

* * *

The moral reformists of the New Order could conceive of a new woman only through idealisation and denial. Their concept of the eternal woman idealised a 'true', feminine nature which had been corrupted by modern society and needed only the right conditions in which to flourish once again. But the reality of women's lives, especially given the increasing hardships of the Occupation, soon made the image of the contented wife and mother whose horizons were happily limited by the home and family, a total absurdity. Exclusion and repression of women who threatened the eternal woman ideal was also necessary to redefine women's roles in the New Order. Perhaps since women

⁷² Dr. René Martial, 'Politique de race', *Révolution Nationale*, 11 July 1942.

⁷³ Martial, *Les Métais*, p. 232.

⁷⁴ Martial claimed that feminism, which was vengeful and of Judeo-English origin, was a 'biological error' for women since it disrupted the normal effects of the endocrine glands: *ibid.*, p. 219. He criticised Vichy's family code for using financial incentives to encourage women to have large families rather than promoting a noble ideal of dedication to the race: *ibid.*, p. 234.

were not to have any intellectual role, supporters of the New Order found it impossible to relate to women in any intelligent way. Collaborationists disagreed with the government only over the funding of specific policies. All moral reformists of the New Order saw the role of women as vital in ensuring the moral and racial purity of France. Only in this limited sense did they conceive of a new woman for France.

Conclusion

Appeals to Renewal and Sirens of Decline

France, torn not only, as de Gaulle once put it, between appeals to renewal and sirens of decline, but between nostalgia for the great rare moments of unity and the many instances of Franco-French internal conflict.

Stanley Hoffmann, Introduction to Russo, *The Vichy Syndrome*.

The idea of national regeneration galvanised French right wing thought in the crisis-ridden 1930s and during the *années noires* of German occupation. Preoccupation with regeneration was a particular fixation from 1934 to 1938, after which time the prospect of war sobered the imagination; it arose again during the first year of occupation, when the possibilities for change were strongest. The broad, vaguely defined yet highly ambitious ideals of regeneration gave an apparent unity to the diverse elements of the right. A wide spectrum of the right—though not only the right—used a common language in the 1930s to express dissidence, opposition to the Third Republic, warnings against national collapse and a sense of civilisation's decline. The urgency of their fears and opposition found expression in powerful catchwords. These catchwords became 'generational' passwords amongst a complex group defined less by age and more by support for change. Collectively, the catchwords came to describe an extremely broad reform agenda though they were too vague to form a policy and too amorphous to

constitute an ideology. This makes them difficult to analyse. Their meaning was ambiguous and sometimes confused, their concerns overlapping and often contradictory. Yet they are important. Their very imprecision is indicative of the era. The catchwords measure the perception of crisis in the 1930s: they were ubiquitous, in de Gaulle's pungent phrase, as 'appeals to renewal and sirens of decline'. The most prevalent siren was the warning of decadence which resonated with fears of collapse in the inter-war period and became the rhetorical foundation for Vichy's ambitious programme of regeneration, the National Revolution. Vichy's aims and ideology were expressed—and in some ways hidden—in the language of regeneration. This language gave the impression of a reform consensus, a common voice, and it provided a ready-made framework around which Vichy sought to remake France: the catchwords of order, action, realism and a new man became the cornerstones in the rhetoric that supported the National Revolution. Understanding the language of regeneration is vital to understanding Vichy: it gave the regime a provenance and promised a future in which France would remain French.

The theme of regeneration is therefore an important element of continuity that places the National Revolution in the continuum of France's political and intellectual history. But this study shows that this continuity is more complex than previously acknowledged: there is no logical or intellectually coherent thread that links Vichy to its past and the stated aims of the National Revolution cannot be taken at face value. The aims and policies of the National Revolution cannot be understood without reference to the turbulent right wing intellectual and political climate of the inter-war period, particularly the second half of the 1930s: this is what makes its history so complicated and difficult to explain in a linear sequence. The ubiquitous calls for regeneration in the 1930s did not cause the defeat, nor did they lead ineluctably to the policies of Vichy France. Analysis of the generational catchwords illuminates the diversity and confusion of the right as well as points of convergence and challenge to the ideals of democracy in France. Analysis of the catchwords also reinforces the literature that exposes the French origins of the National Revolution. Such analysis illustrates the National Revolution's

autonomy from German models. But the many new and contradictory meanings that eventually rendered the catchwords meaningless also reveals the way in which French aspirations and traditions were adapted and distorted by the realities and practicalities of the Occupation.

Although the ubiquity of the catchwords gave the impression of agreement and power, this analysis shows that the consensus in right wing ideas for regeneration was more apparent than real. Even in the 1930s, the differences and contradictions were evident for those who cared to examine them. Few did. The negative or oppositional value of the catchwords gave them their real power before the defeat. The various elements of the right coalesced when it came to defining, in broad terms, their enemies or threats—Marxism, individualism, materialism—and they could agree, in even broader terms, on what France lacked—a strong and cohesive national community. However, when the prospect of war demanded a definite choice, the right as a whole reacted patriotically in support of the nation. Thus, the ideological challenge to democracy from the right was not so broad or as deep as the popularity of the catchwords in the 1930s might suggest.

It was not the strength of its ideological challenge but the defeat that afforded the right the opportunity for positive action. Most reformists of the right—not all, and not excluding either those who chose the path of resistance or reformists on the left—thought that the defeat presented a clean slate on which they could ‘redraw’ France. The defeat revived and reinforced the old negative consensus on the failure of the political, social and intellectual order and lent a sense of urgency to the call for fundamental reconstruction. Although the Vichy government seized this opportunity, its reforms uncovered a myriad of right wing visions of a future France. The National Revolution was initially a broad umbrella but it soon became clear that it had drawn in reform agendas that, at best, stood together uncomfortably. Most collaborationist critics removed themselves physically and ideologically from Vichy to occupied Paris but, in a complex play of words, they continued to use the same language of regeneration while turning its catchwords against the government. The clear split was between those who

were profoundly conservative or reactionary and who wanted national regeneration despite German occupation and those who were unswervingly radical and who wanted regeneration because Nazi imperialism promised a new European order. However, the confusion of language obscured fundamental divisions on core concepts and methods of regeneration. Reformists remained divided on what reforms were necessary, how and how quickly they could be achieved, the values that should inspire them and, most of all, who should bring them about and carry them forward. The conditions of the Occupation, especially its power dynamic, further complicated the relationships between competing reform agendas and made their similarities and differences even more difficult to identify. These differences and the essential relationship between ideas and context became clear only when ideals were given practical policy applications in the National Revolution.

The National Revolution failed. It failed in several ways and for two main reasons. The National Revolution failed in its main aim of regenerating France and in the component parts of this task: to establish a new political culture; to reshape economic structures; to redraw the pattern of social relationships; and to create a new moral and intellectual climate. The National Revolution also failed in the many policies that loosely made up the overall project—its limited success, in that some reforms survived the Liberation, was due less to innovation and more to the fact that it sometimes built on pre-war initiatives. Eventually, time and the tide of war exposed the fundamental misconception of all collaborators in their belief that any real renewal of France was possible under Nazi domination. But the failure of the National Revolution cannot be blamed entirely on German Occupation—its internal differences and divisions, its incoherence and contradictions were entirely French.

The true complexity of the National Revolution and its evolution from its aims to its ultimate failures is revealed only through tracing the dynamic or constant dialogue between, on the one hand, ideals and aspirations for fundamental reform and, on the other, the practicalities of power under Occupation. The catchwords—the sirens of decline and appeals for renewal—that inspired regeneration uncover this dialogue.

Chapter 1 of this work has explored the complex and dynamic power structures that shaped the Vichy regime and the National Revolution. Reform was possible only within the limits of power. Power under the Occupation was affected, unevenly and at different times, by several inter-dependent factors; first, the make-up and internal politics of the government, both of which were complicated by the pressure of criticism emanating from the Parisian collaborationists; second, by the changing nature of German policy which altered the nature of collaboration; and third, by the war itself. Ultimately, the war determined everything. The survival of the National Revolution came to depend on German policy and victory: this doomed it to failure.

However, the failure of the National Revolution was complete long before the end of the Occupation, though it was a complex and protracted process. Initial public support for Vichy (essentially for Pétain) and for change, as well as relative German benevolence born of immediate need and confidence in ultimate victory, meant that there was a real possibility for far reaching reform early in the Occupation. Reform was especially favoured in the first year of Vichy's existence, but the opportunity for some independence of action persisted during the first two phases of occupation. The failures of the National Revolution were therefore internal, political and intellectual in nature, and not due solely to the war and foreign occupation. The lack of clarity in Vichy's ideas and the competition and contradictions in its reform agenda emerged almost immediately and dogged each of its programmes. When the government had a clear opportunity for reform, it misused it, often to tighten its political control and to pursue old enemies. These failings were complicated by the competition for power that was always part of collaboration with Nazi domination and were exploited by those who courted it most closely. But the National Revolution was not destroyed by the collaborationists, although they eventually succeeded in infiltrating the government. The various programmes of the National Revolution were squeezed out of contention by the policies of collaboration pursued by both Vichy and Paris. From 1942 on, collaboration was a one way benefit and, from the second phase of the Occupation,

reform became increasingly unimportant: regeneration was irrelevant in the third phase and clearly a fantasy in the fourth and last phase as Vichy lost all independence.

The National Revolution may have been shaped by the power dynamic, but it took its inspiration and initial impetus from a major intellectual preoccupation of the previous decade, the assertion of 'Decadence'. The belief in decline was widespread in the 1930s and was an important point of agreement between elements of the right, be they conservative, reactionary, nonconformist or avowedly fascist. But beyond this broad consensus, exploration of the meaning of decadence in Chapter 2 has revealed a melting pot of different types of opposition and of ideas that did not indicate any specific unity. The assertion of decadence was a measure of a sense of crisis: it indicated flux and some realignment of affiliations but it did not point to any single direction or solution. Indeed, there was a lively intellectual debate amongst the right concerning the meaning of decadence and this served to separate the many different strands of thinking and direction rather than tie them together. There was never any agreement on any single, positive or clear solution. Yet the debate became incidental after the defeat. Decadence did not cause the defeat but it certainly became a powerful rhetorical tool immediately after it. For Vichy and its supporters, the defeat was sufficient proof of French decadence and the justification for a new beginning: it was France's *mort rédemptrice*. Though interest in analysing decadence evaporated, its influence remained pervasive: warnings against a return to its ills underpinned the whole National Revolution.

'Order' was a strident appeal to renewal that revealed the strong links between the right wing agenda of the 1930s and the Occupation. Chapter 3 has shown that the right during the 1930s was united in support for stability and measure and what many assumed to be a natural balance in society. Despite these positive aims, the unity of the right was overwhelmingly a negative consensus against disorder, mainly that which it saw in the political culture and society of the Third Republic. The political chaos of the 1930s fed a strong wave of anti-parliamentism and fears of left wing resurgence revived anti-Marxism, that ideology being the quintessential 'unnatural' order to the right. The

negative consensus masked real differences in their ideals. There were different conceptions of the natural order, some emphasizing organic connectedness, others hierarchical organization and very different attitudes to revolutionary change, mass politics and leadership. In these conceptions there was a wide separation between the traditional right and the new or fascist right. Furthermore, during critical years of crisis, individuals, particularly young intellectuals who passed between dissidence, non-conformism and attraction to fascism or at least elements of it, waxed and waned in the degree of challenge that they offered to the established order. Nevertheless, the strong visionary element in the ideal of order worked against deep analysis: a vague agreement on communitarianism as a guiding social principle, corporatism as a basis of economic organisation and strong political leadership carried through the defeat into the reform agenda of the New Order.

In many ways, Vichy's claim to build a 'New Order', analysed in Chapter 4, was its most ambitious ideal and its greatest failure. To construct new political and economic structures and forge new social bonds into a strong national community was an agenda that would have challenged any government, even in the most favourable circumstances. The conditions of Occupation, however, impacted most severely on these plans since political cooperation, economic supply and social quiescence were basic German demands and since the progress of the war served only to divide France more and more deeply. Within a year of occupation, it was clear that the fundamental political and economic change and national unity needed for Vichy's New Order were not possible.

Yet Vichy maintained the illusion of a New Order: indeed, its order had two faces. On one side, the National Revolution created a cult of Pétain that played on an appeal to unity, stability and tradition and it perpetuated the visionary aspects of the ideal that had been so pervasive in the 1930s. This face of order essentially ignored the reality of occupation and war and gave the regime the aura of 'irrealism' that its collaborationist critics so detested. But it also served to disguise the methods of control that were the other face of Vichy's New Order. From its first days of existence, the reality of Vichy's

policy was the consolidation of its power through the creation of a centralised and steeply hierarchical structure of government that eliminated the old enemies of the right, the supporters of the liberal republic. There was little that was new, constructive or forward looking: long term projects such as the constitution took second place to the everyday demands of control and compliance. This was not surprising as the bottom line of collaboration was the maintenance of public order and maximizing the war effort in support of Germany. But collaborationists, who supported total subservience to the German New Order, never lost an opportunity to criticise the ‘old guard’ for their lack of revolutionary intent.

The illusion of Vichy’s New Order was perpetuated in the policies of the National Revolution that aimed to create a cohesive national community, free of class conflict. This illusion was shattered by many factors; the most immediate was the re-emergence of pre-war divisions in these reform agendas. The National Revolution’s assumptions about the nature of society and the ambition of its economic reforms soon proved to be fanciful. The fact that Vichy could not provide security for all its subjects and that it actively repressed others also soon became plainly evident. Vichy defined its social order negatively, through revenge, persecution and enforced homogeneity: this eventually played into the hands of its collaborationist competitors—even though the vision of those who saw a strong France integrated into a New European Order under Nazism was also an illusion. The economic reformists gathered under the Vichy umbrella were the most complicated mix of incompatible groups—reactionaries, corporatists and technocrats—who competed with each other while also pursuing another common enemy, organised labour. They also gave the collaborationists ammunition by delaying the development of a coherent policy.

Like the call to order, ‘Action’, examined in Chapter 5, was a password into a non-decadent world and a response to national disunity. Action signified a greater sense of alarm over France’s presumed decline and more impatience in its call for urgent and drastic change. For these reasons, it was a catchword used more by the dissident and radical right but, as a measure of a sense of crisis and impotence, it had wide appeal.

More than any other catchword, action traces the changing relationship between the old and the new right and the appeal of fascism in France, especially the attraction of its dynamism and response to new realities. Though linked to the rise of fascism abroad, the call to action had a definite French heritage in anti-rationalist philosophy and in the appeal to *élan* and to sacrifice that was part of traditional patriotism. Action also had a strong aesthetic quality in its suggestion of energy and health and in the romance of total commitment or refusal. The attraction of action for action's sake declined during the decade as the need to make definite political choices became clearer, but the political/aesthetic mix always remained compelling.

Just as it traced the relationship between the old and the new right before the defeat, the study of 'Action under Occupation' in Chapter 6, traced the diversity and progress of collaboration. Despite the energy that all of France had to expend in order to accommodate the German presence, the 'active' choice under the Occupation, that between commitment and refusal, was a choice between collaboration and resistance. Vichy committed to retaining power and to an ambitious reform agenda, yet its rhetoric promised protection and its reforms were slow to emerge. Pétain's 'shield', even before its gaps and weaknesses became clear, was essentially static, not an active concept, and Vichy's reformist agenda was never total or dynamic enough for those who sought revolutionary change or commitment to Nazi aims. The slowness and piecemeal steps of change provided targets for the most potent criticism emanating from Paris. Vichy also committed to collaboration, but that soon became an exercise in hanging on to whatever power it could: it could not limit collaboration without losing power, but nor could it limit the encroachment of collaborationists into government structures and policy. Action for Vichy meant decreasing protection and increasing repression and control; ironically, action led to less power, not more.

It was also an irony of the National Revolution that, despite the rhetoric which often obscured the reality of the Occupation and of its policies, one of its most widely used catchwords was 'Realism'. Chapter 7 showed that the call to realism was the broadest of all catchwords and that there was considerable overlap in its meaning and

some contradiction with other ideals of reform. Like its New Order, Vichy's realism had two aspects. The first was an unsentimental, practical view which focused on the present and on the hard decisions that that harsh reality necessitated. This attitude backed the government's collaboration and all the shifts in policy and the hard nosed bargaining that it demanded. The National Revolution, however, celebrated quite a different aspect of realism: that of core or basic truths, the fundamentals of French identity and tradition. Essentially, this view focused on the past, to a sentimental ideal that was pre-modern, untainted by ideology or intellectualism and to which France had to return in order to regain its strength and resilience. The dual aspects of realism reflected, though it essentially ignored, debates amongst right wing intellectuals during the 1930s. The question of their role in a time of crisis when action, not words, was needed, and the value of progress, given that it had somehow led to a point of collapse, challenged elements of the new right and fuelled their opposition to the traditionalists who seemed to them incapable of responding to the new realities of the present. Exactly what 'real' values were or where they were to be found, the right never decided and it remained divided on the essential qualities of France, especially the balance of tradition and innovation.

Since realism was such a broad and underlying concept, Chapter 8, 'Realism under Occupation', singled out two major policies of the National Revolution which drew heavily on its rhetoric of a 'return to realism': *retour à la terre* and *retour au foyer*. Vichy appealed to deep seated patriotism in order to anchor in French soil—which it stressed it had not abandoned—its exhortations to acceptance, resilience and hard work. The National Revolution portrayed the soil as France's vocation and force, the source of its strength and stability, and it celebrated the cultural traditions of the provinces. However, even though over-centralisation was one of the oldest and greatest sources of contention between the traditional right and the Republic, Vichy merely paid lip service to real regionalist reform since it would have permitted a level of independence that it could not tolerate. Once again, *realpolitik* triumphed. Similarly, there was little that was new in the policy of *retour au foyer* which celebrated the family

as the bedrock of morality and social cohesion. The National Revolution recycled its anti-individualist themes but essentially built on pre-war demographic policies and was unable to provide the necessary resources for any far reaching change. The collaborationists attacked what they labelled as lack of innovation and genuine commitment in Vichy's realist policies and they vilified the clerical and reactionary nature of the family policies. Although they did their best to link the question of family to 'race building' for the New Europe, the collaborationists created more sound than effect, given that the government was, despite its rhetoric, following the pragmatic path dictated by collaboration.

The concept of a 'New Man' for the new civilisation that would follow the collapse of the decadent old world fascinated the right in the inter-war period. The new man became a matter of urgency after the defeat: creating him and ensuring his survival was the most pressing and revolutionary task of reform because the new man defined the future. These issues were explored in the final section and last three chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 9, 'Imagining the New Man', showed the profound impact of the conviction of moral and spiritual decline on the intellectual debate of the 1930s and under the Occupation. During the 1930s, the right broadly agreed on the fact of decline. Intellectual discussion centered on identification of malign influences and there was again agreement that rampant individualism, fed by materialism, was the major factor. Perhaps because it was such a leap of imagination or because the task of recreating man was so great, the positive characteristics of the new man and what it would take to inculcate them into the young did not cause great division before the defeat. There were, however, definite positions on these issues. Traditionalists had long believed in building and nurturing moral and spiritual strength through military, church and outdoor influences and though they argued for a moral renaissance, this was essentially a return to eternal values of service and duty. There were similar attitudes amongst the new right but some nonconformists argued for a new form of spiritualism that addressed the challenges of the modern world. Still others were attracted to the fascist new man or, if

not to the whole ideal, to different characteristics from the Italian and, to a lesser extent, German models.

Under the Occupation, these very different conceptions of the new man coalesced into two opposed visions that were widely separated: morally, ideologically, politically and even physically, they were poles apart, even if there were also many differences within each group. Within months of the regime's formation, collaborationists left Vichy for Paris. They imagined a new man who stood for a total rupture with the past, one who would no longer be one of the defeated but who could join the ranks of the victors. This was fantasy, of course, but the new man rhetoric provided the collaborationists with an effective means of stigmatizing the 'old guard' of Vichy as a gerontocracy trying to inspire the young but comprised of men who were incapable of innovation: they were, at best, 'men of the armistice' whose time had passed.

The National Revolution expressed the moral gulf which separated elements of the right: the Catholic traditions of the men who largely shaped Vichy's reform agenda now clashed with the secular and pagan inspirations of many collaborationists. The National Revolution, incorporating the new impetus for spiritual renewal that had moved many nonconformists, aimed to rebuild the eternal man, a being who was strong, dependable and morally pure. Collaborationist critics, on the other hand, stressed the need for new characteristics demanded by the modern world: aggressive energy and power; total dedication that was heroic and amoral; a being who was able to inspire and lead the masses and who was racially pure.

Given these differences and given their importance in shaping the future of a regenerated France, it is not surprising that the policies designed to create the new man were the most contested aspects of the National Revolution. Chapter 10 has analysed the task of creating the new man through policies for education and youth and shown how they were complicated by administrative failures, by the immediate demands and the worsening conditions of the Occupation and by ruthless competition for power and control. In these policies in particular, the National Revolution promised reform, not revolutionary change. Government policy continued the many education and youth

initiatives from the 1930s that promoted the moral values and gender defined vocations of Catholic traditionalism and the patriotic/military ideals of service and duty.

The traditionalism of Vichy's education policies provoked the most trenchant criticism of the collaborationists in Paris but the fact that they succeeded in gaining power in government via this policy was not due to more effective or innovative policy on their part. The Vichy government made education a tool of political control: it carried out an *épuration* of the profession; its reforms were focused on political and propagandistic ends, to spread Pétainism and to promote a certain spirit and character, rather than on long term educational goals. The attraction to collaborationists of this political control was clear and the government's bureaucratic failures facilitated their accession to power.

The contrasting visions and divergent paths in creating the new man emerged most clearly in youth policy. There were strong continuities in language and personnel from before the war but harnessing the energies of youth became both the shortest path to regeneration and a vital element in the politics of collaboration. Youth was a highly contested aspect of the National Revolution. The National Revolution's general policy for youth was strongly moralistic, with a focus on hard work and community. Though the government struggled with employing and controlling an increasingly disaffected youth, its methods of achieving its reforms were pluralistic and heavily reliant on pre-war initiatives. The pluralism of its approach harnessed conflicting energies, most notably those of a small but important group of nonconformist intellectuals who were not in accord with its traditionalism or community-works mentality. These elements of the new right thought that they could create, in their isolated château-school at Uriage, a new brand of leader who was inspired by a pure and revolutionary spiritualism. While differences between these modern 'knight-monks' and traditional government policy soon emerged, they were no closer to those collaborationists who expressed, often in the same language, a strong mysticism of youth and desire to create a new and revolutionary leadership. The collaborationist vision of the ideal leader was tough rather than moral, militant rather than merely devoted, rigidly hierarchical, anti-Semitic and dedicated to a

New European Order. However, the collaborationists were bitterly divided amongst themselves, each recognizing the potential political power of harnessing the various youth movements into one and of creating a revolutionary leadership for the masses. Ultimately, the realities of the Occupation, particularly the German demand for labour and order, exposed the naivety of all French plans for making youth the foundation of a reinvigorated France: faced with the choice of working for Germany in deteriorating conditions or joining the Milice, many young Frenchmen joined the Resistance.

While policies of education and youth worked to create a new man, the ideal always contained an assumption of exclusion. The new man had to be protected against elements that were alien, as explored in Chapter 11, 'Defending the New Man', and it was the French, not the Germans, who defined anti-France, though the process of exclusion was shaped by the inexorable logic of the Occupation. Political exclusion of traditional enemies of the right, such as communists and Freemasons, was immediate, uncontested by all elements of collaboration and soon extended to their opponents. However, the National Revolution also aimed to cleanse the social body and national fabric of any element that attacked the unity and homogeneity of France. This meant that Vichy defined the ideal of the new man negatively and narrowly and in terms of race and gender.

The Vichy government passed its own laws of racial discrimination that targeted Jews: they were not the result of German pressure. In some ways Vichy continued old traditions of Catholic and nationalistic anti-Semitism and drew on the more recent xenophobia caused by the refugee crisis of the 1930s, but it also introduced a new element of purity in its definition of Frenchness. Vichy justified its exclusions on the basis of removing any foreign influence on the formation of the French character, rather than in overtly racial terms; however, its enforced homogeneity and its support of eugenics made it a racial state. Any hope of retaining control of a policy of exclusion, once initiated, and of resisting German pressure towards racial persecution was absurd in the context of collaboration and the Final Solution. Collaborationists trod the German anti-Semitic line most closely and, claiming a long history of battle against

Jews, they attacked the government for not being strong enough in opposing them. The Germans found willing tools in anti-Semites and pseudo-scientific 'racial hygienists' who persecuted Jews in propaganda and the media and who were keen to profit from bureaucratic opportunities: such individuals were extremely useful to the Germans in giving Final Solution a French face.

The concept of a new woman existed only very uncomfortably under the Occupation. All elements of collaboration were unable to accommodate the diversity and social and economic realities of women's lives. The National Revolution idealised a traditional concept of the eternal woman: reared for an important but narrow social role as wife and mother and revered as the guardian of the home, the eternal woman had no political or economic power and no intellectual legitimacy. The collaborationist press reinforced this ideal and limited its direct appeal to women to fashion and trivia. However, the government could define no consistent social policy to achieve its traditional ideal and it had to reshape its initial laws to suit new economic realities. Collaborationists could find no means of attack since any real support for women at home was too costly. Vichy extended the ideal of the eternal woman in making her central to its concept of moral purity and racial strength and collaborationists went even further in supporting racial laws to exclude the 'unfit' woman from marriage. However, the new woman was an absurd idealisation based on exclusion, a narrow conception of women's lives and a denial of the realities of the Occupation.

The language of regeneration engendered a high degree of unreality. Unreality became an important aspect of the Occupation, a fact which complicates our understanding of the period. The ambiguity, contradictions and disagreements in the catchwords that had gained force and popularity as 'appeals' and 'sirens' in the crisis years of the 1930s became more apparent once Vichy began to construct an actual programme of renewal. Analysis of the catchwords ceased and they became even less precise: they demanded urgent change through immediate action but also pointed to the need to create and enforce order and stability; they appealed to the eternal, essential or 'real' values while they inhabited a world of flux and destruction; and they called for

unity and community while they excluded and then persecuted sections of the nation. Vichy France was at the mercy of the Germans and the tide of the war but the language of regeneration essentially ignored this fact, even if government policies did not.

Yet the catchwords remained powerful rhetorical tools. Ironically, the catchwords allowed the regime to benefit from pre-war dissatisfaction and the energy of dissent but at the same time claim a break with the past and hide the truth of continuity. The National Revolution never acknowledged its language debts to the ideological or political movements of the 1930s, especially the movements of the new and radical right whose language it often adopted.¹ Vichy created its own ambiguity and deliberately so. The fact that the catchwords were not open to rational assessment, allowed those who used them to avoid a total definition or explanation of every ideological position or policy. The catchwords focused the reformist agenda on 'doing' and 'being' and 'becoming', not on thinking.² Constant repetition of catchwords also aimed to hide the realities of the war and to soften the true nature of the regime and the Occupation. In these ways, the language of reform became a 'facteur d'anesthésie'.³

The people of France could not be numbed to the increasing pain of the war and the Occupation. Vichy's promise of regeneration and its promise to protect, unify and keep France whole, became increasingly hollow as German oppression increased and Allied victory approached. Vichy's command of the language of patriotism was the result of extraordinary circumstances in 1940 and even then it never commanded it exclusively. The Resistance used a parallel language of patriotism: the same words and symbols but representing an opposed political future. According to H.R. Kedward, the

¹ Vichy recycled the personalist vocabulary of the nonconformists, as indeed did many other groups with totally opposed values, both fascist and anti-fascist. The term National Revolution itself was first employed by Pierre Taittinger and his *Jeunesses Patriotes* and the motto of Vichy's National Revolution, '*Travail, Famille, Patrie*', was taken from La Rocque's *Croix de Feu*.

² Cobb, *French and Germans*, p. 156. Cobb lists the favoured verbs and adjectives of the new order which conveyed a sense of movement, strength and fidelity. Laurent Gervereau claims that the National Revolution could be said to 'hésite entre le langage de l'unité (des générations, des classes) et celui de l'avant-garde (de la rupture et des organisations de masse)': Laurent Gervereau, 'Y a-t-il un "Style Vichy"?' in Gervereau et Peschanski, *La Propagande sous Vichy*, pp. 110-147, p. 141.

³ Guillon, 'La philosophie politique de la Révolution nationale', p. 174.

mistake of Pétain and his followers was to assume that popular acceptance of the language and symbolism of patriotism in 1940 meant permanent ideological conversion:

Pétain may well have claimed to be a patriot, as much in 1944 as in 1940, but patriotism no longer claimed Pétain. By 1944 its imagery and language were firmly associated elsewhere ... The absurdity was that Pétain could not see that his monopoly of this language had gone, or could not appreciate why.⁴

Vichy France lacked permanence, not merely in the sense of historical circumstances, but because its attempt to redefine France was doomed to be 'unfinished'.⁵ Vichy's ideals of regeneration were a mixture of past and present, of ambiguity and unreality and they sat uncomfortably, often in contradiction to the improvisation and constant adaptation of policy demanded by the realities of collaboration. That Vichy and its National Revolution was the sum of these ambiguities and contradictions makes definition and categorisation difficult, but attests to the complexity of France's *années noires*.

⁴ H.R. Kedward, 'Patriots and Patriotism in Vichy France', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. XXXII (1982), pp. 175-192, p. 192.

⁵ Jean-Marie Guillon, 'La philosophie politique de la Révolution nationale' in Azéma and Bédarida (eds), *Vichy et les Français*, pp. 167-83, p. 167.

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