

WHY THE ACTIONS OF VICHY FRANCE WERE HELPFUL TO THE ALLIED  
CAUSE DURING WORLD WAR II

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how the initial defeat of the French army in June 1940 and subsequent request by Marshal Pétain for an armistice with Nazi Germany which was followed by collaboration with the Nazi regime in an attempt to maintain some degree of French National Sovereignty would eventually allow the Vichy French time to aid the Allies in the defeat of Germany. Under terms of the armistice, the Germans fully occupied the Northern Region of France, leaving the French government to administer the Southern region of France as well as the French North African colonies. This paper will argue that exigent circumstances instigated the call for the armistice. This paper will show the extent of the collaboration between Vichy and the Nazi regime. A significant number of Vichy leaders clandestinely and the French populace in general reached out to the Allies in various ways aiding the Allied cause during World War II.

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CHAPTER I  
THE GERMAN INVASION AND FRENCH DEFEAT

When war erupted in 1939, France mobilized against a traditional enemy, Germany. French society had faced Germany less than a quarter century before. This paper explores how the German military conquest of France in the summer of 1940 changed the government of France. It changed from a constitutional democracy to a totalitarian regime under the French hero of Verdun who earned his fame during the Great War. Marshal Philippe Pétain was that hero. During the course of World War II significant Vichy French leaders clandestinely and French society in general would eventually defy the dictate of Nazi Germany. This aided the Allied cause in spite of the armistice called for by Pétain in June 1940.

There is a great deal of debate among historians concerning what role the government and populace of Vichy France played in the outcome of World War II. American historian Robert Paxton wrote: “no one who lived through the French debacle of May-June 1940 ever got over the shock. For Frenchmen, confident of a special role in the world, the six weeks’ defeat by German armies was a shattering trauma.”<sup>1</sup> The unexpected rapid defeat of France shattered the confidence of the Allies in their quest to

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (New York: Knoph, 1972), 3.

curb or if possible halt Hitler's blatant aggression and obvious intension to dominate Europe and the World.

In 1940 the renowned French historian and resistance fighter Marc Bloch wrote a first-hand account of the German invasion and rapid collapse of France, which occurred during his service as a reserve officer in the French army. The significance of Bloch's account was it provided historians a view of the military collapse of France through the eyes of a first-rate historian whose critical faculty and all the penetrating analysis added credibility to the account far in excess of a typical narrative. In this work, Bloch agonizingly struggled with why France and the French army were so inefficient in defense of the homeland. Bloch, after significant analysis, concluded that the main cause of the disaster was the incompetent French High Command as well as other important factors including how French national solidarity had been comprised since 1870. Bloch intuitively wrote: "the duty of reconstructing our country will not fall on the shoulders of my generation. France in defeat will be seen to have had a Government of old men. That is but natural. France of the new springtime must be the creation of the young."<sup>2</sup> Historians continue to write and argue the copious factors that caused the rapid collapse of the French army in 1940 but it is difficult for any to exceed the insight and analysis of Marc Bloch.

The catastrophic defeat that Bloch described was a reality and by the middle of June 1940, the government leaders in Paris were packing up their offices and preparing to leave Paris to the German invader. What to do now? It was apparent that someone had to step forward and deal with Adolf Hitler while keeping order in France and its colonies.

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<sup>2</sup> Marc Bloch, *Strange defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*, translated by Gerald Hopkins (New York: Norton & Company, 1968), 175.

Who amid all the chaos commanded the instant respect and possessed legitimacy with the French people? One possibility was Marshal Henri Phillipe Pétain, the hero of Verdun, advocate of the Maginot Line, and recently named Paul Reynaud's vice-premier. As the victorious German army marched into Paris, on June 16, 1940, French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned in favor of a hero of the First World War, Marshal Pétain who immediately requested terms for an armistice from Hitler. The Third Republic had collapsed.

It should be noted that only eight months prior to the collapse M. Edouard Daladier, President of the Council of Ministers, had proclaimed in Paris to the French people "Men and women of France! We are waging war because it has been thrust on us. Every one of us is at his post, on the soil of France, on that land of liberty where respect of human dignity finds one of its last refuges. You will all cooperate, with a profound feeling of union and brotherhood, for the salvation of the country, Vive la France!"<sup>3</sup>

Daladier's words "for the salvation of the country" must have been in the mind of Marshal Pétain when he petitioned Germany for an armistice in June 1940. Historically, France had been at odds with Germany for centuries with the memory of World War I and the harsh terms and reparations that France and its Allies had demanded of Germany at Versailles in 1918. At this juncture in the summer of 1940, Marshal Pétain and the people of France had little choice but to ask Germany for an armistice. Marshal Pétain did what he perceived as the only viable option in order to save France as a nation. This paper will argue that even though Vichy France collaborated with Germany partly on

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<sup>3</sup> "Avalon Project: The French Yellow Book: No. 370: Appeal to the Nation by M. Edouard Daladier, President of the Council of Ministers, Paris, September 3, 1939," Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed April 6, 2013, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/ylbk370.asp>.

ideological terms on similar perspectives of the Jewish question that it would also be open for collaboration with the Allies for the purpose of redeeming France as an independent nation. In doing so Vichy France would aid the Allied cause.

The exigent circumstances that precipitated the call for an armistice were evident in many of the desperate actions taken by the retreating French army. Robert Paxton wrote: “for there was simply no mistaking the wave of relief which came flooding after the anguish when Marshal Pétain announced over the radio, shortly after noon on June 17, that the government he had formed the night before was seeking an armistice. ‘With heavy heart, I tell you today that it is necessary to stop the fighting.’”<sup>4</sup> Pétain, the French army and the people of France found themselves in a foreboding situation that would take time to sort out but eventually a significant number of Vichy leaders would exact revenge on their traditional enemy Germany by aiding the Allies most notably in the Allied invasion of North Africa that would occur in November 1942. At this point, it was necessary to weather the storm and hopefully save at least a modicum of National sovereignty.

Historians continue to argue how the French populace during the early Vichy period viewed the devastating military defeat, the terms of the armistice and the new Vichy government. Three important themes of the Vichy experience that received considerable analysis were resistance, collaboration and memory. This paper will focus on collaboration from two perspectives; the collaboration between the Vichy and the Nazi regime and the collaboration between some high ranking members of the Vichy government and the Allies. From the perspective of the resistance, focus will be on the

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<sup>4</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, 8.

resistance aimed at the Germans and the resistance against the Vichy government will be explored. Additionally, the role the French police played in support of the Vichy government and police collaboration with the Nazi regime certainly had a critical function in helping the Vichy government continue the policies outlined in the armistice agreement. Article 3 of the Franco-German Armistice of June 1940 stated the obligation the French police had to collaborate with the Nazi regime. This stated that:

In the occupied parts of France the German Reich excises all rights of an occupying power. The French Government obligates itself to support with every means the regulations resulting from the exercise of these rights and to carry them out with the aid of French administration. All French authorities and officials of the occupied territory therefore, are to be promptly informed by the French Government to comply with the regulations of the German military commanders and to cooperate with them in a correct manner...<sup>5</sup>

Ineluctable authoritarian states use the police to ensure the suppression of public liberties. In doing so, police use methodology that would include monitoring public opinion on behalf of the government. Historian Simon Kitson wrote: “Vichy considered the institution as a means of guaranteeing the survival of the state, particularly since ministers were aware from as early as the middle of 1941 that their government was extremely unpopular.”<sup>6</sup> During the middle of 1941, it was becoming increasingly more apparent that many Vichy leaders and the populace were reaching a point that the Nazi regime could no longer be passively tolerated and must be driven from French soil. The United States had entered the war in December 1941 giving the French hope that the

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<sup>5</sup> “Avalon Project: Article 3 of the Franco-German Armistice: June 25, 1940, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed April 6, 2013, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/ylbk370.asp>.

<sup>6</sup> Simon Kitson, “From Enthusiasm to Disenchantment: The French Police and the Vichy Regime, 1940-1944,” *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (August, 2002), pp. 371-390, published by: *Cambridge University Press*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081843> (accessed: 11/05/2013), 373.



Allies and Vichy militaries would receive vast material assistance as well as large infusions of American troops.

## CHAPTER II

## COLLABORATION WITH THE ALLIES IN 1942 IN NORTH AFRICA

American's formal entry into World War II in December 1941 significantly changed the course of the war as it infused American strategy and resources into the conflict. The British and American approaches as to how to prosecute the war in Europe were divergent after the Americans entered the war in 1941. The British were essentially designing a strategic plan that would rely on blockade, bombing, subversive activities, and propaganda to weaken the will and ability of Germany to resist. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was skeptical of confronting the German land forces head on believing that committing vast armies of infantry and armor to the continent like was done in World War I would be a mistake. Instead, he proposed a strategy that would emphasize mobile, hard-hitting armored forces operating on the periphery of German-controlled territory rather than a large scale ground action against the German war machine on the continent. Therefore, Churchill believed that the best approach was to wage war on the continent with a peripheral strategy. Historian Dr. Maurice Matloff wrote: "the Mediterranean or 'soft underbelly' part of the peripheral thesis has received great attention in the post war debate...from the beginning the British leadership

envisaged a cross-Channel operation in force only as the last blow against a Germany already in the process of collapse.”<sup>7</sup>

The Americans on the other hand believed that large-scale land operations would be needed to defeat Germany. Mass concentration was the core of American strategy. Matloff wrote: “in the summer of 1941 the [American] army’s strategic planners concluded that sooner or later ‘we must prepare to fight Germany by actually coming to grips with and defeating her ground forces and definitely breaking her will to combat.’”<sup>8</sup>

These two opposing strategic views of how to best prosecute the war in Europe against Germany and the Axis powers were reflected in 1942 in the debate over Operation Bolero vis-à-vis Operation Torch. American Admiral Harold R. Stark had as early as November 1940 predicted that it would take large scale land operations to defeat Nazi Germany and in the summer of 1941 the army’s strategic planners concluded that in the end the Allies would have to defeat Germany by defeating her ground forces.

After Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Secretary of War Stimson, General Marshal and American war planners in the United States were concerned with American assets becoming too widely disbursed and as a result devised Operation Bolero. The plan was designed to assemble troops and supplies in England for a major cross-Channel invasion as early as the spring of 1943. According to Matloff, the British initially

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<sup>7</sup> Maurice Matloff, “Allied Strategy in Europe, 1939-1945,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 684.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 685.

approved Bolero in principle in April 1942 but that the agreement lasted less than three months.<sup>9</sup>

The British strategic planners were concerned that a major cross-Channel offensive at this juncture would be premature prompting Churchill to go to Washington for a strategy meeting and propose a North African operation instead of Bolero. This new British proposal so frustrated the American war planners that they threatened to concentrate on the Pacific theater instead of Europe, however, President Roosevelt overruled them. Roosevelt believed that since the British were not in favor of a cross-Channel operation in 1942 that a thrust into North Africa would be a viable alternative. Operation Torch would place American ground forces against the Germans and a successful operation in North Africa would help secure vital Mediterranean Sea lanes and potentially secure a staging point for an Allied invasion into southern Europe. Additionally, resources existed for Operation Torch where they were suspect for a cross-Channel operation in 1942.<sup>10</sup>

Substantial evidence exists that a significant number of high ranking Vichy military officials would be involved in the planning of Operation Torch and that Vichy complicity with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) is additional evidence of high ranking Vichy Officials defying Pétain and the armistice agreement with Germany.

Operation Torch began in the early morning hours of November 8, 1942 when Allied troops, mostly American, landed ashore at various points in Vichy French-

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<sup>9</sup> Matloff, "Allied Strategy in Europe," 685.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 686.

controlled Morocco and Algeria marking America's first major offensive in World War II. Historian David A. Walker wrote: "simultaneously, pro-Allied guerrilla fighters organized by General William J. ('Wild Bill') Donovan's recently formed Office of Strategic Services (OSS) sprang into action to assist in the invading forces."<sup>11</sup> For the previous three months, these guerrilla fighters had been recruited and trained by OSS agents stationed in Vichy French North Africa. This tactic by American forces represented a new approach or dimension to military operations in the field during World War II. Additionally, OSS agents were tasked with assessing enemy motivation and the conducting of clandestine negotiations designed to create pro-Allied factions in either enemy or neutral countries.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note the early collaboration between American and Vichy French authorities in North Africa began in the form of the vice-consuls organization which was the precursor of the OSS which formed in June 1942 and its predecessor organization, the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), in July 1941. In May, 1941 the vice-consuls organization was established after the Murphy-Weygand economic agreement of March 10, 1941. This agreement allowed for certain American goods to be imported into French Northwest Africa even though the British had a blockade of the area in effect. In return, the Americans would be allowed by Vichy French authorities to maintain American observers in Vichy controlled North Africa to monitor the destination of the imported goods and ensure that they did not fall into the

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<sup>11</sup> David A. Walker, "OSS and Operation Torch," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 22, no. 4, Intelligence Services during the Second World War: Part 2 (October 1987), pp. 667-679, Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd., <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260815> (accessed October 10, 2012), 667.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 667.

hands of Axis powers.<sup>13</sup>To further accentuate the Vichy American collaboration Dr. Walker wrote: “Furthermore, OSS maintained links with disaffected officers of the Vichy French army of North Africa, and it was on the basis of evidence supplied from this source that OSS agents claimed that the resistance of the Vichy French to a primarily American invasion of North Africa would be minimal.”<sup>14</sup> It was reported that one of the major tasks entrusted to the OSS was the recruitment of the distinguished French General Henri Giraud to the Allied cause. Many historians have noted that, for a long period of time during the planning of Operation Torch, General Eisenhower favored General Giraud over Admiral Darlan to head Vichy French forces during the North African operation. However, other historians dispute this as Douglas Porch points out that Eisenhower believed General Giraud was “reactionary, old-fashioned and cannot be persuaded to modernize...he has no, repeat no, political acumen whatsoever.”<sup>15</sup> A possible reason for the OSS directive on the recruitment of Giraud was found in an incoming message R-2014 from Headquarters ETOUSA on October 16, 1942 addressed for the eyes of General Eisenhower only in paragraph of that communication:

[Eisenhower was] to transmit this information to General Giraud immediately. General Mast stated that General Giraud desires that he be dealt with instead of Darlan, who he feels cannot be trusted, but is merely desirous of climbing on the band wagon. A request was made for an expression of unity of French forces (army and navy), of whom Darlan is Commander-in-Chief. The French Fleet is extremely important in that the admiral controls ports and coastal batteries in French North Africa. Mast stated that the army is loyal to and will be commanded by Giraud instead of Darlan; also, that the navy in French North Africa should go

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<sup>13</sup> Walker, “OSS and Operation Torch,” 668.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 668.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory: The Mediterranean Theater in World War II*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 366.

along with the army. I urge that the success of the operation depends upon the working of the French forces with us.<sup>16</sup>

This message from General Marshal at Headquarters ETOUSA to General Eisenhower on October 16, 1942 provides a portion of the evidence why some historians believe that General Eisenhower preferred Vichy General Giraud over Admiral Darlan to head Vichy French troops during the North African operation. General Mast, who commanded a Vichy French army division in Casablanca, Morocco during this period, was one of America's chief contacts in North Africa and a strong advocate of General Giraud leading French troops during the invasion.

Historian Dr. Arthur Funk has noted, however, that three weeks prior to the commencement of Operation Torch an agreement had been consummated in a London meeting by General Eisenhower, General Clark, Churchill, Eden, and the British Chief of Staff General Sir Allen Brooke and that Roosevelt had been kept informed. Funk wrote: "these deliberations had led to a qualified acceptance of Darlan (he was then considered less useful than a rival candidate, General Henri Giraud) as a possible replacement for Clark as Eisenhower's deputy."<sup>17</sup>

The news that Admiral Darlan would lead Vichy troops in North Africa brought indignant protest in the American and British press because he was perceived as a Nazi collaborator and had demonstrated his anti-Semitism as well as his Anglophobia. Additionally, the British had backed and given refuge to Free French leader General

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<sup>16</sup> Message taken from General Mark Clark's papers at The Citadel, Charleston, S.C., from Box one, cables and coded messages.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Funk, "Negotiating the 'Deal with Darlan,'" *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.8, no. 2 (April, 1973), pp. 81-117, *Sage Publications, Ltd.*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259995> (accessed March 19. 2013), 81.

Charles de Gaulle, who considered the Allies reported deal with Darlan an ill-considered affront. The editorials in both the British and the American press asked the same basic question: “how could American commanders, General Dwight Eisenhower and his deputy General Mark Clark have been so short-sighted or ignorant that they could improvise a compact with a notorious double-dealer, a fascist and a quisling, in order to obtain uncertain temporary advantage?”<sup>18</sup>

Evidence based on documents found in General Mark Clark’s letters show a significant number of high ranking Vichy French officials like General Mast, General Giraud, and Admiral Darlan were open to and did collaborate with the Allied cause. Arthur Funk wrote: “Even before Giraud and Darlan had been taken under consideration; the Allied planners had decided to reach a political and military accord with some Vichy official.”<sup>19</sup>

Allied planners, in early October, had drawn up a model agreement as a benchmark to use when they began negotiations between Allied task force commanders and whatever senior Vichy official surfaced in Algeria or Morocco who would be willing and capable to aid the Allies by providing facilities and security measures necessary to prosecute the invasion. There is little doubt that the existence of such a benchmark document was evidence that the Allies were searching for ways to deal with Vichy officials thus aiding their cause during Operation Torch and the war in general. At the insistence of President Roosevelt, General de Gaulle had been ruled out during the early planning stages. Therefore, the principle of collaboration was established weeks before

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<sup>18</sup> Funk, “Negotiating the ‘Deal with Darlan,’” 81.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 81.



the invasion of North Africa. Once the principle of collaboration with Vichy had been agreed on; it became urgent to identify and successfully recruit a Vichy official.

At this point, it should be noted that General Eisenhower made a last-minute effort to recruit Vichy General Giraud into the operation. Some historians have noted that Allied commanders learned after the invasion that General Giraud had little or no influence in North Africa which left planners little choice but to negotiate with Admiral Darlan. It is well known among scholars that the United States and the British decision makers preferred a friendly Vichy leader to control the operation over an American military government in North Africa which would have been the only practical alternative.<sup>20</sup> There is little question that the controversy over which Vichy official would emerge was further complicated because of the demeanor and character of Free French resistance leader General Charles de Gaulle who President Roosevelt refused to consider.

There is evidence that as late as October 1942 the Americans were still considering Giraud because on October 27 General Marshal sent an urgent message to General Eisenhower which stated:

Mast sent messenger to France after meeting with Clark. Giraud request you continue study of plan for bridgehead southern France. He concurs in principle with our plan. Information for me only which I have promised not to transmit to you is that Giraud is willing to come to French Africa for the military operation. He did not wish you to know because last Friday messenger left in the morning by air before I could give him text of proposal which Clark, Mast, and I had agreed upon and approved. Giraud had, therefore, only an oral account of Clark and Mast morning meeting, October 26. On basis of oral preliminary report he agrees, subject to final decision upon study of text.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Funk, "Negotiating the 'Deal with Darlan,'" 82.

<sup>21</sup> Clark letters, Box one, messages and dispatches, The Citadel, Charleston, S.C.

This communication was sent to General Eisenhower a little more than a week before Operation Torch would be launched on November 8 providing further evidence of Allied and Vichy collaboration.

Additional evidence found in the Clark's files concerning Vichy-Allied collaboration prior to Operation Torch was a letter from General Mark Clark to General George Marshal dated October 30, 1942. In this letter General Clark reported on a secret meeting that had taken place at a location in Algeria when Allied officers conferred with Vichy General Mast and his staff. Those present at that meeting were General Mast, American diplomat Robert Murphy, Major General Mark Clark, Brigadier General Lemnitzer, and Colonel Jousse (Chief of staff to General Mast). The following is a brief summary of the meeting as reported by General Clark:

General Mast desired to know what positive indications there were that the Axis powers intended to occupy North Africa in the near future. Upon being informed he stated that the French had similar information. He pointed out that, in his opinion, it was necessary to undertake simultaneous operations in Southern France together with any North African operation, or France would be lost. He indicated that the French army could hold a bridgehead if it was provided with modern arms and equipment. Upon being informed of the logistical difficulties involved in such an operation, he stated that he fully appreciated the problem. General Mast estimated that he could raise a French North African Army of about 300,000 in two weeks if the Allied Nations could provide them with the necessary arms and equipment...<sup>22</sup>

This letter addresses some important points about Vichy-Allied collaboration in that General Mast was concerned about the possibility of the Axis occupying French North Africa and his concern that an Allied operation in North Africa would in all probability precipitate a strong German response into southern France. There is little doubt that most of these Vichy leaders were cognizant of their duty to protect France and

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<sup>22</sup> Clark letters, Box one, October 1942 correspondence, The Citadel.

its sovereignty over all else and at this juncture cooperation with the Allied cause was the best course of achieving that goal.

It should be noted that General Clark sent a coded message to General Eisenhower in London on October 24, 1942 which preceded the letter to General Marshal dated October 30. The October 24 communication was to inform General Eisenhower that the meeting with General Mast had successfully taken place on October 22 and that Mast was to contact General Giraud in France in regards to assuming command of French forces in North Africa and that a favorable response was expected within days. General Clark stated that “I base this on their [French] favorable reaction to the strength of forces USA could put into such an operation. All questions settled satisfactorily except time of assumption of Supreme Command by French. My view on this submitted to Giraud through Mast for this consideration with definite understanding my proposal had yet to be confirmed by you.”<sup>23</sup>

Additional evidence of the sensitive negotiations between the Americans and the French prior to the North African invasion was found in a message from General George Marshal in October 1942 to General Eisenhower concerning the delicate situation between the French and the British. The message acknowledged the uncertainty of who the French would choose between Admiral Darlan and General Giraud to lead French troops during the pending invasion. Also the problem of French distrust of the British that was manifested after the action at Mers-el-Kebir on July 3, 1940. A British Naval task force had attacked the French fleet, which was at anchor and not expecting an attack from its former ally. Marshal’s urgent message to General Eisenhower:

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<sup>23</sup> Clark letters, The Citadel, Box one, 1942 dispatches.

This is extremely important. The French suspicion and distrust of British intentions after the United Nations are established in the area. We must make it clear that the U.S. will control and direct the action toward the territories in question after the occupation.

It is realized that the question of Giraud and Darlan is a very delicate one which is difficult to handle. The suggestion is made that negotiations may be possible without too much detailed entry into personalities. Clark should state that we have no RPT no intension of interfering with the civil government of the territory in question, that we are quite prepared to accept a French Commander-In-Chief later under the conditions outlined in your message number 3711; and that we will provide for equipment for French forces that operate against the Axis. Any suggestion that we accept Darlan as the future Commander-In-Chief of armed French forces in North Africa may result in a complete disruption of negotiations since Clark's negotiations will be conducted with the representative of General Giraud and it appears that there is considerable feeling and possible distrust between the two. We do not RPT not consider it advisable for America to be involved in any way with the selection of the commander of the French forces but believe that this is a matter to be handled by the French themselves...<sup>24</sup>

It is apparent that the Americans placed a high value of collaboration with the Vichy French. Their cooperation would save American and Allied lives and be vital in a successful North African operation. The French also placed a high value on collaboration with the Allies because it offered the best chance to rid France of the domination and occupation of France by Germany and would preserve French sovereignty.

The Americans believed it was essential to allow the French to choose who would head French forces in North Africa. The two primary candidates were Admiral Darlan and General Giraud. Admiral Darlan had consistently provided Marshal Pétain with strong support from the fall of France in 1940 when he became Chief of French Naval forces and Minister of the Navy. Additionally, Darlan used Pierre Laval's dismissal in December 1940 as an opportunity to consolidate his power and two months later was appointed deputy premier as well as adding the positions of Interior, Information, and

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<sup>24</sup> Clark letters, Box one, 1942 correspondence, The Citadel.

Foreign Affairs. Then in 1941 Darlan consolidated War, Army and Navy under his control when he became Minister of National Defense.<sup>25</sup>

When arguably Vichy France's chief Nazi collaborator Pierre Laval was dismissed in 1940 by Marshal Pétain many of his contacts with German authorities were lost, however, Darlan because of Germany's military successes, to that point, was so impressed that he made an attempt to reestablish those ties with the Nazis. Darlan's motivation did not appear to be ideological like was the case with Laval but practical as he wished France to be on the winning side without regard to which side that might be. Therefore, to hedge his position, Darlan did not blindly follow the German lead but continued to monitor the situation ready to jump on the Allied side if circumstances dictated.

Darlan came from an old republican family in the southwest of France. His father a small town lawyer, political figure and minister of justice in the Meline cabinet was a friend of George Leygues who served several times as minister of the navy in the late 1920's and 1930's. Leygues gave Darlan the opportunity to serve as head of the minister's staff. In effect, Darlan served as Minister of the Navy from 1926 to 1939.<sup>26</sup> Robert Paxton wrote: "The main result of that career was Darlan's considerable success in winning funds from a parsimonious Third Republic for naval construction between the wars. The French Navy was, in 1939, at its strongest point in history."<sup>27</sup> When the German's began their major offensive in May none of the great European navies risked a

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<sup>25</sup> Funk, "Negotiating the 'Deal with Darlan,'" 84.

<sup>26</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, 109-110.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 110.

sea battle which left the powerful French fleet intact. After the armistice in June 1940, the French fleet was the last major military asset available to the French and both the Axis and the Allies coveted the use of the French fleet. The evidence confirms Darlan was untrustworthy and double dealing but at the same time arguably the best option to lead French troops during the North African campaign. As General Marshall's dispatch confirms, the Americans believed it prudent to allow the French to choose their leader for the North African campaign.

General Henri Giraud, one of France's most esteemed General officers, was the other high ranking member of the Vichy regime that General Eisenhower, General Marshall and the Allies had considered to lead French forces during the North African campaign subject to who the French chose for the task. Historian Arthur Funk points out that Eisenhower had relied on Giraud to rally French troops for seven weeks prior to D-Day. The plan was to fly Giraud directly from France into Algiers for the purpose of appealing to the French forces to cooperate with the Allied invasion. Under this scenario, Eisenhower had hoped that Giraud would be seen as the savior of French honor and would be recognized as Governor and Commander-In-Chief of French forces in North Africa. Additionally, if this strategy was successful, the British and American forces would go virtually unopposed during the initial invasion. However, Eisenhower sensed based on several messages from General Clark, General Marshall and others that a misunderstanding had festered among the French on whether Darlan or Giraud should lead French forces.<sup>28</sup> Funk points out that the Allied plan endorsed by Roosevelt and

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur Funk, "Eisenhower, Giraud, and the Command of 'Torch,'" *Military Affairs* 35, no. 3: 103-108. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 25, 2013), 103.

Churchill was to bring the French back into the war and that the North African campaign was a good opportunity to accomplish that goal provided a strong Vichy leader could be found who was ready and able to rally French forces to support and not oppose an Allied landing. The Americans had pursued a Vichy policy following the Armistice of maintaining diplomatic relations with Pétain's government with considerable opposition from the left and Charles de Gaulle's Free French. The hope was to obtain Pétain's invitation for the Allies to occupy Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia without considerable bloodshed. However, Pétain refused to break with Nazi Germany so the American's tried to lure Pétain's proconsul in North Africa, General Maxime Weygand, into the Allied cause. Throughout 1941 Robert Murphy the American Counsellor of Embassy at Vichy was assigned to Algeria for the purpose of persuading Weygand that President Roosevelt would support a French uprising with guns and equipment. Funk contends that "if Weygand had been willing to take an independent line, he might have built his 100,000-man Armistice Army into a formidable threat to Rommel in Libya. But Weygand refused to defy Pétain and in November 1941, he was forced into retirement."<sup>29</sup>

This did not end the Allied hope that a powerful Vichy leader or leaders could be persuaded to join the Allied fold and aid in the fight against the Nazi regime and the Axis powers. The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the German declaration of war on the United States served as a catalyst for the Allies to focus on the Mediterranean as the major strategic area in the west. Prime Minister Winston Churchill in January 1942 journeyed to Washington to consult with President Roosevelt and American Military leaders on the extreme importance of focusing on Europe first and

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<sup>29</sup> Arthur Funk, "Eisenhower, Giraud," 103.

avoiding America's military assets from being widely dispersed in the Pacific theater. Churchill strongly recommended an Allied invasion and rapid occupation of French North Africa. As a result, Churchill and Roosevelt authorized a secret mission to meet with Weygand who had retired to southern France. The hope was to persuade him to head a clandestine North African resistance. Weygand refused, leaving the underground movement Robert Murphy had been tasked with developing without a military leader.<sup>30</sup>

As D-day for operation Torch approached, Admiral Darlan and General Giraud were the two best options available to lead French forces in support of the Allies. Robert Paxton contends that Darlan was surprised and enraged when the Allies landed on November 8, 1942 and initially headed up French defenses in North Africa but on November 11 asked the Allies for a cease fire after learning that the Germans had entered the unoccupied zone of France realizing that there was, at this point, no reason to continue observing the Armistice. Paxton wrote: "He tried for the next week to get the Allies to accept a neutral Pétainist regime in North Africa. Only after General Mark Clark had threatened to institute direct Allied military government...did Darlan agree to commit French resources in North Africa to the Allied side."<sup>31</sup> Even though Marshall Pétain publically ordered continued resistance to the Allies, Darlan knew that Marshall Pétain was under pressure from the Germans and was no longer free to act independently. Paxton wrote: "Around him, Darlan formed an 'Imperial Council' of senior Vichy officials and officers present and willing to participate in the war against Germany: General Bergeret, Vichy aviation minister; General Nogues, high commissioner of

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<sup>30</sup> Arthur Funk, "Eisenhower, Giraud," 103.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Paxton, *Vichy France*, 282.



Morocco; Governor-General Boisson, of French West Africa, Governor-General Yves Chatel of Algeria, and General Henri Giraud...<sup>32</sup> The Allies had transported General Giraud to North Africa by British submarine from General Eisenhower's headquarters at Gibraltar to head pro-French military forces in North Africa. Paxton points out that the majority of the French Army and administration in North Africa, at this juncture, were at war against the Axis powers even though most of the Vichy legislation remained on the statute books and most of the North African Vichy leaders remained loyal to Marshall Pétain.

Admiral Darlan was assassinated on December 24, 1942 leaving a large number of loyal Vichy officers and civil servants who had switched to the Allied side. Even General Alphonse Juin the commander of French troops in Algeria who had only eleven months earlier negotiated with Marshal Goering in Berlin joined the Allied cause.<sup>33</sup>

The evidence points to 1942, during the planning and execution of operation Torch, as a key turning point in the Vichy French military rallying to the Allied cause. An interesting abstract of a speech delivered by General Giraud at Algiers on March 14, 1943 is part of General Clark's papers at The Citadel. This abstract was delivered to Headquarters Fifth Army A.P.O. #464, U.S. Army on March 16, 1943. The following sixteen points of Giraud's speech were addressed:

1. Alsace and Lorraine have been incorporated in the German state. Not a single voice in France was raised in protest. Here, we protest and Alsace and Lorraine will become French again.
2. The people of France have never accepted the armistice.
3. A French Army of 300,000 men is being armed in North Africa. It takes time, but deliveries from America have already begun.

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Paxton, *Vichy France*, 282.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 283.

4. France will be free and take her place again among nations.
5. The sovereignty of the people, destroyed by the Germans, will be restored in France.
6. I promise the people of France that their right to choose their provisional government will be safeguarded.
7. I am the servant, not the chief, of the French people.
8. Since 22 June 1940, the will of the French people has not been freely and publicly expressed.
9. In the absence of a proper foundation of the free expression of the will of the people, legislation passed since 22 June 1940 is of no legal value.
10. Ordinances have already been passed and others will follow to reestablish the French tradition.
11. We are going to take such progressive steps of adaptation as are imposed upon us here by the entanglement of our economic lives.
12. It is impossible to suppress laws and decrees with the stroke of the pen without making adaptation to new conditions.
13. Already some measures have been taken. Municipal assemblies, general councils, and financial delegations are restored. Laws of racial discrimination imposed on France by Nazis no longer exist. The law of 2 June 1941 and all decrees passed under it are abrogated.
14. The degree of Cremieux (1870) which established a difference between Arabic and Jewish natives is abrogated.
15. The territories to which France has carried civilization shall be preserved intact.
16. The union of all Frenchmen for the common cause is essential and I call for that union.<sup>34</sup>

This speech by General Giraud in March 1943 accentuates what some historians interpret as the key points that many Frenchmen believed in but were unable to express under the military domination of Nazi Germany. Marshall Pétain's options in June 1940 were limited because of the military situation the Germans had imposed. In order to save France from losing all hope of maintaining its national sovereignty and completely capitulating to Germany he asked for an armistice. However, once the military tide began to turn on Nazi Germany in 1942, many of the leaders and people in Vichy France

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<sup>34</sup> Clark Papers, Box 2, Correspondence, 1943, The Citadel.

were ready to assume their traditional place as a free constitutional society and join the Allied cause.

The strategic decision to target North Africa in November 1942 was made by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt. It was proposed to Roosevelt by Churchill in early 1942 and was not popular with American war planners and represented one of the few times Roosevelt overrode his military advisors. The reasons the President made this decision were as much political as military. It represented a way of winning Vichy cooperation and collaboration in the Allied cause and thus bringing France back into the war on the Allied side. In addition, the plan was designed to ease the pressure on the hard-pressed Soviet armies in the east and check potential German advances into the Middle East.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT PÉTAÏN, DARLAN, GIRAUD, MURPHY, JUIN,  
EISENHOWER, DARLAN, CLARK, AND MURPHY



### CHAPTER III

#### COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE IN VICHY FRANCE

Collaboration and Resistance in occupied and unoccupied France as well as in her empire during the Vichy years provide insight into the sentimentality of the Vichy leaders and the populace of Vichy France. There is little doubt that the Vichy government collaborated with the Nazi regime based on exigent circumstances as well as ideological reasons that included the deportation of Jews, communists, and others who were not palatable to the extreme right wing factions of the Vichy government to Nazi Germany for internment in concentration camps. There was also collaboration with the Allies like in North Africa prior to and during the North African invasion as well as collaboration among members of the resistance in France and in her colonies.

Another important aspect of collaboration during the Vichy years was the intelligence services in Vichy France. The prevalence of spying for and against the Nazis in southern France after the German invasion during the early summer of 1940 was one of those aspects.

In view of the rapid, highly successful invasion by the German army and the rapid capitulation of the French army, Marshal Pétain asked for terms of an armistice between Germany and the newly formed Vichy government. Many people believed that after the signing of the armistice that the German victors and the Vichy regime operated smoothly and without major problems. From the perspective of the Nazis, the collaboration of the

Vichy government was crucial. All of this helped establish collaboration between the German's and the Vichy regime which began with the Vichy regime's willingness to arrange the arrest of members of the resistance, particularly Communist, some of whom were handed over to the Germans. Additionally, the Vichy government gave the Nazi occupiers substantial help in the deportation of 76,000 Jews to the extermination camps. It is interesting to note that even with this newly established collaboration the Germans remained vigilant because France was viewed as a hereditary enemy unlikely to suddenly give up her traditional anti-German beliefs.<sup>35</sup>

Kitson wrote: "The political program of the Vichy government was ideologically similar to that of Nazi Germany. But it sought to impose its policy independently and hankered after its own sovereignty...So behind the diplomatic relations lay a certain tension manifested in aggressive German espionage and French counter-espionage."<sup>36</sup>

Pétain's regime was above all focused on maintaining French sovereignty and to accomplish that it would be necessary to use the French police forces as a means to secure it. The police were used by the Vichy government to maintain order, target the Allies, and cooperate with German commanders when necessary, however, as historian Simon Kitson wrote: Paradoxically, in southern France and the empire, which remained unoccupied until November 1942, policing did not just target the Allies or the Resistance but also included some 'anti-German' missions which have been totally ignored by historiography."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Simon Kitson, "Spying for Germany in Vichy France," *History Today* 56, no.1 (January 2006): 38-45. *Historical Abstracts*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 11, 2013), 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Kitson, "From Enthusiasm to Disenchantment," 374.

There is a great difference in how Charles de Gaulle viewed the Resistance that occurred in Vichy France and how it has been viewed since the 1970's. Historian Perry Biddiscombe points out that Vichy represented a last revival of the *ancient regime*. Biddiscombe was referring to how revolutionary and counterrevolutionary movements had permeated French society since 1789 and the French Revolutionary period. "Charles de Gaulle vehemently denied that such a civil war could take place in his idealized 'nation of resisters'"<sup>38</sup> The point here is that the Resistance in Vichy France was more complex than de Gaulle's view of a nation of resistance against the Germans but also included resistance against the Vichy regime and resistance against the Allies and others.

There is little doubt that collaboration and resistance from many different angles played a vital role in Vichy France but in the end was critically helpful to the Allied cause by providing vital intelligence to the Allies and heroic and perpetual acts of sabotage against the Germans during the Vichy years.

In conclusion, it should be noted that collaboration and resistance were two different concepts. In Vichy France there were many different resistance groups even if it is tempting to think of the resistance as a single movement under de Gaulle. Each of these groups had its separate agenda. Collaboration was also varied as there was the collaboration of the Vichy state, by the Marshall so revered by the French, even though he was deeply anti-German. And then there were collaborators, the groups of fascist, whom Pétain and his colleagues sought to suppress, and the collaboration of Vichy officials with the Allies. There were many agendas among the different collaborators.

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<sup>38</sup> Perry Biddiscombe, "The Last White Terror: The **Marquis Blanc** and its Impact in Liberated France, 1944-1945," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73, no. 4 (December 2001), pp. 811-861, Published by: *The University of Chicago Press*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/340147>, (accessed: 10/05/2013), 812

CHAPTER IV  
POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE VICHY PERIOD

The events that took place in France in June of 1940 and especially how so abruptly and swiftly the French army disintegrated in the face of the massive and efficient German invasion was a major shock to the world. However, in the United States the events in France were viewed with a great deal of uncertainty because from a technical standpoint it would be another seventeen months before the Americans would enter the conflict and a diplomatic decision as to whether to recognize the new Vichy government would be forthcoming. The Americans faced the delicate problem of dealing with a defeated but still existent France, and was faced with the problem of working out a course of action that would be of maximum benefit to the anti-Hitler forces.<sup>39</sup>

The Americans had since September of 1939 supported the British by a variety of measures short of war, however, in the summer of 1940 were confronted with a decision to recognize the Vichy government even though the British refused to do so. The British did not want to offend Charles de Gaulle and the Free French who they had allowed to set up a base in London. Even so, President Roosevelt made the decision to accept Marshal Pétain as the legal and spiritual head of the French people and maintained diplomatic relations with the Vichy regime until the invasion of North Africa in November 1942

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<sup>39</sup> Ellen Hammer, "Hindsight on Vichy," *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol.61, No. 2 (June 1946), pp. 175-188, published by: *The Academy of Political Science*, <http://jstor.org/stable/2144597> (accessed March 15, 2013), 175.



when Pierre Laval broke off diplomatic relations with the United States. Dr. Hammer wrote: “As to General de Gaulle, in 1940 there were doubts as to both his politics and his representative character. We regarded him as an unknown quantity.”<sup>40</sup>

Dr. Hammer brings up some important and interesting questions about the United States policy toward Pétain: Was the United States policy toward Pétain a necessary preliminary to the liberation of France? And to what extent was there a causal connection between our political maneuvers and our military success? Dr. Hammer wrote:

“Underlying the specific details of our relations with Vichy was a valuation of democracy, not in sentimental terms, but as a weapon in American foreign affairs.”<sup>41</sup>

The United States policy toward the Pétain regime was necessary because by recognizing Pétain as the legitimate leader of France the United States was able to continue diplomatic relations with the French government on the ground in France. This was a vital link to many Vichy French leaders that otherwise would have been lost. The intelligence that diplomats like Admiral William D. Leahy, United States Ambassador to Vichy France and Robert D. Murphy, who served as President Roosevelt’s personal representative in French North Africa and was instrumental in the planning of Operation Torch, provided was critical. The political maneuvers that were developed by Leahy and Murphy in the planning for the North African invasion and their ability to stay in direct communication with Vichy leaders was critical to the Allied cause and instrumental in bringing France back into the war.

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<sup>40</sup> Hammer, “Hindsight on Vichy,” 175.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 176.

The delicate situation that developed when Churchill and the British made the decision to recognize General Charles de Gaulle and the Free French as the legitimate leader of the French people vis-à-vis President Roosevelt's and the American's decision to recognize Marshal Pétain was a critical one. However, the results proved affective to both because through the American's continued diplomatic activity in France the Allies were the beneficiaries of critical intelligence that otherwise would have been lost.

From an internal perspective after Pétain established the Vichy regime in June of 1940, a program was established called the 'National Revolution'. French historian Paul Vaucher contends that in the early stages of the 'National Revolution' not much information was available about the proposed reforms and even less about the attitude of the French public toward them was reaching foreign countries. Even when legal texts were available about the proposed reforms, it is not clear how far the changes on paper are in fact taking place. Marshal Pétain acknowledges that even after eighteen months in power, that his work is still hampered by much resistance which is a reminder that promises are not performance. Vaucher points out that these reforms as a result of the 'National Revolution' would include constitutional, administrative, economic, and social reforms. Vaucher wrote: It [National Revolution] tends to establish a dictatorship freed from any parliamentary control and in command of a powerful administration system. Individual citizens are given no place in such a regime, but social groups are permitted to tender advice and look after their own professional interest."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Vaucher, "The 'National Revolution' in France," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 57, no.1 (March 1942), pp. 7-27, published by: *The Academy of Political Science*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2143506> (accessed 15 March 2013), 26.

It is significant to note that the Pétain regime and its proposed programs were digested and accepted differently by those Frenchmen living in the occupied zone from those living in the unoccupied zone and in the colonies. Also prior to the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942 most of the Frenchmen living in the occupied zone were more focused on getting by each day and were less focused on politics and those in the unoccupied zone where support for the Vichy regime was stronger. All that changed after the invasion when Germany occupied the entire country. The Vichy years were complex but it is difficult to deny that once the tide of the war began to turn against the Germans that many leaders and people of Vichy France were ready and did aid in the Allied cause.

CHAPTER V  
THE JEWISH QUESTION IN VICHY FRANCE

It is interesting that the French even before the war had struggled with the Jewish question. The absence of their own home land had placed Jews in a precarious position in that they were usually viewed in almost all societies as outsiders who infiltrated societies and consumed jobs that otherwise would have gone to natives of a particular society. University of Melbourne Professor Jacques Adler conducted a study titled “The Jews and Vichy: Reflections on French Historiography” in which he examined the state of current research on the fate of the Jews under the Vichy regime. Dr. Adler points out that a significant number of post war studies conducted by native French and foreign scholars have examined the persecution of Jews by the Vichy regime which was hitherto ignored during the period immediately following the war. However, even though these studies provided significant contributions and insight into the nature of the Vichy regime, as to the Jewish question, there is still work to be done before this chapter of French history is closed. Dr. Adler cites the works of French historian Henry Rousso. As previously discussed in this essay, Rousso wrote an analysis of French attitudes to the Vichy regime and argued that France had still not come to terms with that period.<sup>43</sup> Dr.

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<sup>43</sup> Jacques Adler, “The Jews and Vichy: Reflections on French Historiography,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 44, No.4 (Dec., 2001), pp. 1065-1082, Published by: Cambridge University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3133551> (accessed 09/15/2012), 1065.

Adler wrote: “In general historians agree on ideological and structural changes that Vichy introduced in the years 1940 to 1944. However, the support those changes received from some sectors of French society has only been partially studied.”<sup>44</sup> The Vichy government was supported by many professional associations and most of the middle-class but little has been studied about the role of the Catholic Church. The episcopate was in favor of the Vichy regime because it perceived that the regime would strive to re-Christianize France. Did that mean that collaboration with Germany to eliminate French Jewry was condoned?

Dr. Adler points out Cornell Professor Dr. Vicki Caron’s study of French immigration policies adopted during the 1930s as a source on the pre-war and wartime activities of the medical, the legal, and other professional groups in France. In Adler’s view, Caron’s study accentuated the uncomfortable issue of continuity between the pre-1940 period and the Vichy years. Dr. Caron’s research suggested that during the last years of the Third Republic that Vichy’s anti-Jewish policies were born and then carried on under the Vichy regime. During the pre-war years, it was the middle class and the professional class that pressured the government of the Third Republic to introduce restrictive measures aimed at foreign Jews in particular. However, the success of that pressure was limited. Importantly, Caron points out that the Vichy regime not only agreed with the pressure exerted by the professional and middle classes but was willing to carry out restrictions not only against foreign Jews but also against French Jews.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Adler, “The Jews and Vichy, 1066.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 1068.

Dr. Adler wrote: “Of a Jewish population of roughly 330,000 in July 1940, three-quarters survived. Without some contact and support from the French people, that could not have happened.”<sup>46</sup> This provides additional evidence that a significant segment of the French population was not in line with the extreme right or the policies of the Nazis and more inclined to favor the Allied cause over that of the Nazis and the Axis powers.

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<sup>46</sup> Adler, “The Jews and Vichy,” 1068.

## CHAPTER VI

## LOOKING BACK AND HENRY ROUSSO'S VICHY SYNDROME

French Historian Henry Rousso attempts to explore what he and others perceive as the continuing malady of memory of World War II in France. When Rousso began this study, he was well aware that even half a century after the war; the topic of Vichy France was still too troubling and too fresh in the minds of the French populace to achieve the distance necessary to write a strict history of the Vichy regime. Therefore, he decided to attempt to reconstruct the ways the memory of the Vichy regime had been repressed during the twentieth century. Additionally, Rousso attempted to interpret the ways in which the Vichy regime had been reinterpreted to suit contemporary needs.

Rousso depicted the period directly following the war as a time of mourning for the French people. Then, the period under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle during the 1960's, he noted that the memory of the Vichy regime was repressed which served as a catalyst for student demonstrations which accentuated an obsession with the war and the Vichy government. Rousso points out that many diverse groups in France interpreted the conduct of the Vichy regime and the French populace during the war years in a multitude of ways that only added to the perceived illness Rousso termed the "Vichy Syndrome."

Rousso argues that the trauma France experienced during the devastating period between 1939 and 1940 occurred so rapidly and abruptly that it was difficult for the French people to make sense of the changes while they were happening. This perception

helps explain why de Gaulle and the post war French government appeared to be in denial that the Vichy government had existed during World War II. General de Gaulle saw Vichy France as an abnormality, an aberration and refused to believe that it was ever really France.

Rousso asserts that General de Gaulle created this myth of the post Vichy period when on August 25, 1944 de Gaulle stated:

Paris! Paris humiliated! Paris broken! Paris martyred! But Paris liberated! Liberated by itself, by its own people with the help of the armies of France, with the support and aid of France as a whole, of fighting France, of the only France, of eternal France.<sup>47</sup>

In respect to General de Gaulle's August 25 proclamation, Rousso acknowledges that thanks to de Gaulle's efforts it was a French division that first entered Paris and it was also true that in the southwest of France that French troops did most of the heavy lifting, however, for de Gaulle to discount the Allies' major role in supporting these actions was pure fantasy. From de Gaulle's perspective," the republic never ceased to exist. Free France, fighting France, [and] the French Committee of National Liberation have by turns embodied it. Vichy was and is null and void; I myself am the president of the government of the Republic. Why should I proclaim it?"<sup>48</sup> Some historians argue that General de Gaulle viewed the two world wars as a single unit in order to focus on military matters and thus divert attention from the unique aspects of World War II. For example, the role played by irregular partisans, ideological conflict, and the genocide

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<sup>47</sup> Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16.

<sup>48</sup> Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 17.



were some of those unique aspects.<sup>49</sup> Rousso, in his study, presents a good argument for de Gaulle's role in contributing to "the Vichy Syndrome" in post war France.

Rousso wrote: "The post war citizen clung to the reassuring image of a resisting France, but the desire for a return to normality and the wish to forget the exceptional circumstances of the Occupation stood in the way of any real consecration of the resistance."<sup>50</sup> This period ends with both a revival of memories of Marshal Pétain, Vichy France and increased visibility of the stories of survivors of the war.

In regards to some of the divisions in French society Rousso wrote: "When the French public is asked about actual or possible political decisions bearing on wartime memories, the results are diverse. The public is even less capable than the politicians of dealing rationally with symbols stemming from the 1940s."<sup>51</sup> Rousso cites a survey of opinion that was conducted in 1971 over the transfer of Pétain's ashes to Douaumont. The survey revealed that seventy two percent approved and of those twenty six percent were in favor because they believed it would do justice to the man, Pétain; twenty one percent believed it was time to forgive and forget; and twenty five percent believed that the transfer would cause no problems. Eleven percent was adamantly opposed and seventeen percent had no opinion.<sup>52</sup> Surveys like this further accentuate the division of opinion in French society over the reality and legitimacy of the Vichy regime. However, it should be noted that Pétain's choices in 1940 were extremely limited as he was faced

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<sup>49</sup> Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 292.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 292.

with the daunting problem of what he perceived as saving France's national sovereignty or capitulate to France's traditional and long standing enemy Germany and lose all national identity.

Rousso contends that internal quarrels left deeper scars than either the defeat or German occupation. He suggests three structural factors "that make this crisis an archetype of Franco-French conflict have also shaped the way it has been remembered since the end of the war."<sup>53</sup> The first is the role traditional Catholicism played in shaping and sustaining a Pétainist view of history. Rousso points out that after 1951 many of the original hard core Pétain supporters were joined by others from various parts of the political spectrum, including members of the resistance. Rousso wrote: "In other words, Pétainism, in this interpretation, was a kind of ideal for those who in one way or another remained loyal to some form of a counterrevolutionary Catholic tradition."<sup>54</sup> The second structural factor was ideological and had to do with the nature of traditional political divisions in France. The right-wing and extreme right-wing led the way for Vichy France but were joined by members of the left who embraced the fascist totalitarian methods and ideology of the regime. Importantly, the third structural factor affecting the Vichy syndrome was anti-Semitism.<sup>55</sup> The reality that these divisions exist in traditional French society provide further evidence that the Vichy regime was more in line with the democratic principles of the Allied cause even though circumstances

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<sup>53</sup> Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 297.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 298.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 298.

dictated collaboration with Nazi Germany and the Axis powers. Even so, there were key members of the Vichy regime who were ready and did aid the Allied cause.

In conclusion, the opportunities for collaboration and resistance in Vichy France during World War II were affected by one's location. Resistance in the Northern Zone was much more difficult due to the presence of German soldiers and authorities. However, if one resided in the Southern Zone the absence of occupying German soldiers until November 1942 made it more difficult to convince the ordinary citizens to resist. This allowed the citizens of the south to form a stronger allegiance to the Vichy government. Many of the French still had a strong affection to Marshall Pétain. It should be noted that in the period before November 1942 many historians have debated if the resistance to the Germans was different or the same as the resistance to the Vichy regime. In the south there is evidence that it was not the same but in the north it arguably was the same. After November 1942, resistance to the Germans became much stronger in all of France.

Chronology and geography both affected collaboration and resistance during the Vichy years. During these years the chronology of events must be considered because of the wider developments of the war outside of Vichy were of extreme importance. For example, when Hitler broke the non-aggression pact of 1939 with Stalin and the USSR in June 1941 and launched Operation Barbarossa the French communist quickly joined the resistance.

There was little similarity between Vichy France in 1940 and what it had become in 1944. As time went on during the war, the Vichy regime became increasingly repressive. This caused the populace to resent the Vichy government even more and

demanded the Germans out of France at all cost. There is arguably little doubt that the Vichy years are extremely complex but the evidence before, during and after the invasion of North Africa in 1942 prove a significant number of Vichy leaders and a large portion of the populace of Vichy France and in the North African colonies did aid the Allied cause.

As a result, some Vichy leaders and some Vichy French citizens aided the Allies during World War II. Their collaboration with the Allies before and during the invasion of North Africa was essential. Intelligence gathering by the Vichy was part of their collaboration. Their active participation in supporting the Allies after Germany occupied southern France helped the Allies defeat Hitler and the Nazi regime. Post war memories of Vichy France differ. These various differences of opinion contribute to “The Vichy Syndrome”.

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