

Vichy against Vichy:  
History and Memory of the Second World War in the Former Capital of the *État français*  
from 1940 to the Present

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## Abstract

Vichy against Vichy:  
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Following the June 22, 1940 armistice and the subsequent occupation of northern France by the Germans, the French government left Paris and eventually established itself in the city of Vichy. The name ‘Vichy’ soon came to be used to refer to the regime instigated by Pétain and his ministers. The shortcut was maintained and popularized in the postwar period, to the great displeasure of the *Vichyssois*, who have long been refusing to incorporate the war into the city’s history. Whereas the Vichy regime is considered one of the most defining historical events of France’s recent past, the city of Vichy stands out as a *non lieu de mémoire* in the national memorial landscape of the Second World War.

This dissertation investigates the wartime period in Vichy and explores how the population has dealt with the fraught legacy of the Vichy regime from 1944 to the present. My research examines how the interaction between national mythology, specific local concerns, and broader troubling issues have impacted – and often blocked – the formation of a local war memory. In the immediate postwar years, local resisters strove to establish a strong memory of the resistance. At the same time, a powerful victimhood myth emerged in response to the city’s fears of stigmatization and ostracism. The spa tourism’s recovery in the early 1950s marked a significant change in the city’s memorial politics, leading to the memory of the war being pushed into the background, thereby establishing a tradition of silence in Vichy. This, however, does not mean that the memories of the war never resurfaced. They did, especially during the Algerian War. In the 1950s, Vichy’s economy largely depended on colonial spa tourism. Known as the “Capitale d’été de l’Afrique du Nord,” Vichy was indeed a privileged summer destination for thousands of settlers, especially *pieds noirs* from Algeria. The fear provoked by the prospect of a grave economic crisis in the event that Algeria would become independent led to a rightward shift of the population. This shift provided the ideal environment for a pro-Pétain memory to gather strength in Vichy, beyond Pétain’s traditional extreme right base. While in the 1950s, Pétain’s myth also

enjoyed a revival of popularity in France, it declined rapidly, when, following the end of the Algerian War, the extreme right hit historical lows. In Vichy, on the other hand, this counter memory continued to develop in the 1960s. In the post 1970s period, although the local Petainist memory went underground, no other memory has risen to occupy a central place in the local collective remembering of the war, turning the city into a *non lieu de mémoire* and making it a counter example of what has been happening in many other places across Europe, where the most shameful aspects of the Second World War have been memorialized.

Keywords : Vichy, Second World War, Occupation, Pétain, Resistance, Memory, *Lieu de mémoire*, Realm of Memory, Algerian War, Decolonization, De Gaulle



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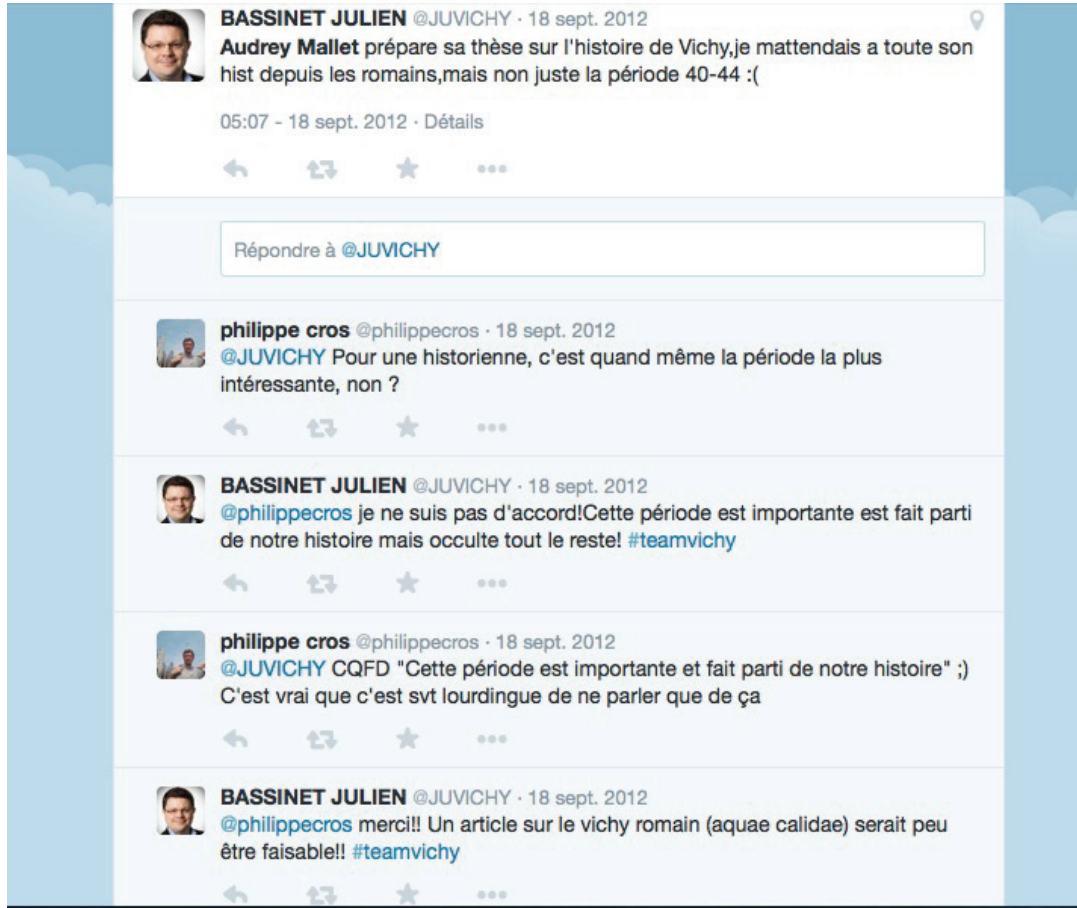
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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Vichy vs Vichy



In the summer of 2012 I had not yet started my fieldwork research, yet the relevance and legitimacy of my dissertation – about the history and memory of the Second World War in Vichy – was already being debated on twitter. The above-mentioned comments by Julien Bassinet, a city councilor, and Philippe Cros, a local journalist, reveal the local malaise currently surrounding Vichy’s Second World War legacy. That Vichy’s current mayor, Claude Malhuret, has refused to speak with me is even more telling.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In his response to my request to interview him (May 11, 2015), M. Malhuret congratulated me on an interesting research, wished me a successful Ph.D., but declined to meet with me because of his “emploi du temps (...) très chargé.”

According to Bassinet, scholars (and journalists) should investigate Vichy's ancient history rather than focusing on the brief 1940-1944 period, when the city was France's substitute capital. Bassinet is certainly not alone in his views. In Vichy, many residents have argued that the Second World War does not belong to the city's history and have cried their concern that the conflation between town and regime has unfairly stigmatized the city in the eyes of the world. Whereas the Vichy regime is now considered one of France's most important *lieux de mémoire*,<sup>2</sup> in the French memorial landscape of the Second World War, the city of Vichy stands out as a *non lieu de mémoire*.

Shortly after Gaul became a Roman province in 52 BC, some Gallo-Romans discovered hot springs in a rural area of Central France. A small community established itself there and erected baths and swimming pools seeking to exploit the curative effects of the water. Two centuries later, the small village – Vichy – was a popular spa town and an important center for ceramic production. Following the decline of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, however, the baths stopped being used. The healing powers of Vichy's water were rediscovered only in the early seventeenth century. In 1605 Royal Letters Patent were issued and signaled the beginning of an important spa development in Vichy. The first spa house opened in 1630. French author Madame de Sévigné, Louis XV's daughters, Napoléon I's mother, and, later, Napoléon III were among the most famous *curistes* in Vichy in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Under Napoleon I, cultural activities developed and the city started to be known not just for its water, but also for the quality of its theatrical and lyrical representations. It was Napoleon III, however, who transformed Vichy into an urban center that was easily accessible from both Paris and the *province*.<sup>3</sup>

To compete with the German spa resorts, renowned for combining health and pleasure, and to boost French *thermalisme*, Napoléon III issued a new regulation on January 28, 1860, stating that consuming spring water no longer required medical prescription. This policy was

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<sup>2</sup> Philippe Burin, "Vichy," in *Les Lieux de mémoire Volume III – Les France*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 321-345.

<sup>3</sup> On the early history of Vichy, see: Antonin Mallat, *Vichy à travers les siècles* Tomes 1 & 2 (Vichy: C. Bougarel, 1890 and 1894); Antonin Mallat, *Histoire Contemporaine de Vichy de 1789 à 1889* (Vichy: Imprimerie Wallon, 1921).



designed to encourage all people to visit French spa resorts.<sup>4</sup> Following the decree, Napoléon further took action to revitalize the city of Vichy and improve its spa activities. Napoléon believed that Vichy, because of its numerous assets, was the French resort that was most likely to supersede German resorts, which it eventually did. Vichy's popularity amongst the French and foreign elites grew, and by the eve of the First World War, Vichy received up to 100,000 *curistes*/tourists every summer. In the interwar period, the *curistes* were so numerous that additional baths had to be constructed (*Bains Callou* and *Bains Lardy*). The city's entertainment services grew in parallel. In the 1930s, operas and operettas were performed in Vichy weekly, if not daily. Visitors also enjoyed themselves at horse races, music shows, ballet performances, playing golf, and so on. In a 1918 postcard written to a friend or a family member, a tourist describes the city as a paradise: "(...) Mais quelle ville superbe, c'est le paradis, quoi ! Je vous engage à venir vous rendre compte par vous même, vous serez contents de votre voyage !" <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pascal Chambriard, *Aux Sources de Vichy Naissance et développement d'un bassin thermal* (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 1999), 49 & 115.

<sup>5</sup> AM (Vichy). Postcard (May 28, 1918).

SAISON 1897

GRANDE-GRILLE









Figures 1, 2 & 3. Posters from the *Guide de l'étranger*



After the defeat of France by the Germans and the June 22, 1940 armistice, the country was divided into several zones. The Germans occupied the northern region and the Atlantic coasts.<sup>6</sup> A demarcation line separated the occupied zone from southern France, which remained unoccupied until November 1942, with the exception of the Mediterranean coastal belt, which was placed under Italian control. France's colonial empire also remained under the authority of France. In theory, French sovereignty was to be exercised everywhere in France, but in the occupied zone the French were subject to the German military administration and forced to abide by the Germans' orders.

In the summer of 1940, the French government set up its base in Vichy. The government remained in the spa resort until the summer of 1944. The regime that took form in Vichy quickly became known as the 'Vichy regime', or simply 'Vichy'. In the postwar period, the shortcut was maintained, and the word 'Vichy' continued to be widely used as a shorthand for Pétain's regime in the press, scholarship, and within popular culture. These expressions have become such a standard practice that the Second World War, Pétain, and the Vichy regime have become inexorably linked to the city's own history.

In addition to investigating the wartime period in Vichy, this dissertation explores the formation and evolution of the local memory of the war between 1944 and the 2010s. The key questions that it seeks to answer are: How did the close proximity of the government impact the local experience of the war? In the postwar period, how have local leaders and the population dealt with the fraught legacy of the Vichy regime? What local, national, and international events have impacted how *Vichyssois* have remembered the war? What type of memory work, if any, has been done? By whom and to what purpose? More specifically, my research explores the complex interplay between the local, national, and international layers in the construction of a local collective memory of the war. It investigates how the interaction between national mythology, specific local concerns (with regard to spa tourism, for example), and broader troubling issues (such as the Algerian War) impacted how the war has been remembered in

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<sup>6</sup> Within this zone there were two forbidden sectors: an area of twenty kilometers along the Atlantic coast in northern France, and a region, which corresponded to the Lorraine and parts of the departments of Franche-Comté, Champagne and Picardie, intended for German soldiers. Alsace-Lorraine, which had been returned to France in 1918, was re-annexed by Germany.

Vichy. In the process, it interrogates how the Vichy case is informative to a fuller understanding of French memory of the Second World War remembered in France.

## 2. Doing micro history

Until the middle of the twentieth century, historians were mostly interested in exploring broad historical structures, with a preference for political and economic considerations. This practice started changing under the influence of the 1960s New Left movements and the emergence of the sub-discipline of social history. Some historians now claimed that History “must abandon its high, straightforward narrative of great events and allow new voices to be heard – the voices, in the first stance, of the laboring and rebellious poor.”<sup>7</sup> The sentiment that historians should concentrate on the history of the everyday and write a “histoire humaine” instead of the “histoire d’une humanité”<sup>8</sup> led to the relative decline of macro history in favor of micro studies investigating episodes of the life and death of common people, as well as their fears, hopes, and struggles.<sup>9</sup>

While in the early days of micro history many historians criticized the approach for only providing anecdotal evidence of people, communities, villages, and local events,<sup>10</sup> the many assets of micro history are now recognized by the broad historical community. In addition to giving a voice to underrepresented populations, by investigating the lives and experiences of individuals and small communities, micro studies also bring a human dimension to history, offering unique “fragments de réel.”<sup>11</sup>

Investigating the specific, the individual, the mundane, and establishing thick descriptions of the events under study has also allowed for more nuanced examinations of wider processes. As French historians Raphaëlle Branche and Sylvie Thénault argue, “cette échelle permet de

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<sup>7</sup> Anthony Grafton, “History’s Postmodern fates,” *Daedalus* 135:2 (Spring 2006), 57-58.

<sup>8</sup> Christian Delacroix, François Dosse, and Patrick Garcia, *Les courants historiques en France: XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 195.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Clark, *History, Theory, Text. Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 75.

<sup>10</sup> A lot of traditional historians of the 1970s were irritated to see the younger generation use methods drawn from outside their fields. At that time, anthropology and literary studies, Anthony Grafton explains, were often associated with the academic Left. “To some true believers in the centrality of politics and warfare, and even to more up-to-date practitioners of quantitative and class-based social history,” he writes, “the moral of the story seemed clear. The microhistorians, like earlier generations of Left revisionists before them, wanted to create a New History even if doing so required them to ignore the normal canons of historical research.” Grafton, “History’s Postmodern fates,” 66.

<sup>11</sup> Raphaëlle Branche and Sylvie Thénault, *La France en guerre 1954 – 1962 : expériences métropolitaines de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne* (Paris: Autrement, 2008), 10.

compléter les tableaux déjà dressés de certains groupes, de certains mouvements, de certaines initiatives. Des acteurs locaux émergent, et, à travers eux, à travers une meilleure connaissance de leur rôle, c'est une autre histoire qui peut s'écrire."<sup>12</sup> Narrowing the scale of investigation has therefore allowed scholars to illuminate unique processes or phenomena, invisible at a broader level, yet informative with regard to social relations and historical processes.

French historians have a long tradition of doing micro history. In the 1970s the third generation of the *École des Annales* began using micro history to explain the evolution of social and economic phenomena.<sup>13</sup> Following their lead, many historians working on the Second World War adopted a micro historical approach, in the hope of accounting for the fact that during the war and the military occupation, "il n'y [avait] plus de 'centre', ou plus exactement, il s'[était] éparpillé dans les 'périphéries'," with many big cities assuming the role of a local capital.<sup>14</sup> Since the late 1970s, the *Institut d'histoire du temps présent* (IHTP), which took over from the *Comité d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale* (created in 1951 following the merging of the *Commission d'histoire de l'Occupation et de la Libération de la France* and the *Comité d'histoire de la guerre*),<sup>15</sup> has coordinated a network of approximately forty regional correspondents throughout France, whose research has regularly been included in syntheses, the contribution of which has been invaluable.<sup>16</sup> Following the IHTP's initiative, many other historians in France and abroad have embarked on micro historical studies of the wartime period in France.<sup>17</sup> According to Jean-Marie Guillon, "Il n'est guère de villes, les plus grandes en

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<sup>12</sup> Branche and Thénault, *La France en guerre 1954 – 1962*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> See for instance: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). See also: Paul Leuilliot, "Histoire locale et politique de l'histoire," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. 29:1 (1974), 139-150.

<sup>14</sup> Isabelle Von Buelzingsloewen, Laurent Douzou, Jean-Dominique Durand, Hervé Joly, and Jean Solchany, *Lyon dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale: Villes et métropoles à l'épreuve du conflit* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 12.

<sup>15</sup> The IHTP was founded in 1978. For a brief history of the IHTP, see: Institut d'histoire du temps présent, *Écrire l'histoire du temps présent* (Paris: CNRS Edition, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Examples of regional studies about the Occupation by scholars affiliated to the IHTP include: Denis Peschanski, "La répression anticomuniste dans le département de la Seine (1940-1942)," in *Vichy 1940-44. Archives de guerre d'Angelo Tasca*, ed. Denis Peschanski (Paris: CNRS and Feltrinelli, 1986), 111-138, Marc Bergère, "La justice à l'épreuve de la Libération. L'exemple du district judiciaire d'Angers," *Bulletins de l'IHTP. Usages politiques du droit et de la justice* 80 (2002). For an example of syntheses, see: Marcel Baudot, "L'épuration : bilan chiffré," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'histoire du temps présent* 25 (September 2009): 37-53.

<sup>17</sup> Some of these studies include: John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Françoise Taliano-Des Garets, ed., *Villes et culture sous l'occupation: Expériences françaises et perspectives comparées* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012); Pascal Ory, *Villes sous l'occupation. L'histoire des Français au quotidien* (Paris: L'Express, 2012); Von Buelzingsloewen, Douzou, Durand, Joly, and Solchany, *Lyon dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*.

particulier, qui n'aient fait l'objet de monographies sur les 'années noires'." <sup>18</sup> The city of Vichy, surprisingly given its prominent domestic role throughout the war, is the exception to the rule.

Most of the books and articles published about the war in Vichy have been written by local historians or local journalists. <sup>19</sup> Although the contribution of some of these studies to the scholarship on the war in Vichy cannot be denied, the lack of citations and the obvious partisanship of many of them limit their monographs' utility. <sup>20</sup> Michèle Cointet is the only recognized historian that has written an in depth and illuminating study on life in Vichy during the war: *Vichy capitale 1940-1944*. <sup>21</sup> However, while she provides interesting examples of everyday life in the capital, she says little about how the Jews in Vichy experienced life at the doorstep of the government or about how local resistance fit within wider trends of resistance in the department. This omission leaves the reader with little understanding of the uniqueness of the experience of Jews in Vichy and the specificity of the resistance that unfolded in the capital.

While micro history has been very valuable in broadening our understanding of historical events, microanalyses have also widely been used in the field of memory studies. Until recently, most of the collective memory scholarship considered memory structures as being bound by tight social and political groups, such as the nation. <sup>22</sup> Studies that have broadened, or narrowed, the scope of analysis have revealed that the relationship between collective memory and the nation is not as stable as it was once believed to be. Microanalyses, for instance, allow for in depth examinations of the interconnections and tensions, not only between individual and collective memories, but also between local, national, and transnational processes of remembering. Michael Meng's study of Jewish sites in postwar Germany and Poland is illustrative of the interplay of several spheres of influences in the construction of collective memories. Reflecting on his methodology, Meng writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Von Bueltzingsloewen, Douzou, Durand, Joly, and Solchany, *Lyon dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> See for example: Georges Frélastre, *Les Complexes de Vichy* (Paris: France-Empire, 1975); Georges Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois sous Vichy* (Nonette: Créer, 2005); Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale 1940-1944* (Le Coteau: Horvath, 1983); Jean Débordes, *Vichy, Capitale à l'heure allemande* (Paris: Godefroy de Bouillon, 1998); Robert Liris, *L'ordinaire de Vichy, 1940-1942* (Belgrade: Pesic and Sinovi, 2011); Thierry Wirth, *Vichy Capitale* (Lyon: Les Trois Roses, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Jean Débordes, Thierry Wirth, for instance, do not properly reference their sources.

<sup>21</sup> Michèle Cointet, *Vichy capitale. 1940-1944* (Paris, Perrin, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> See for instance: Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984, 1986 & 1992); Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).



Using micro histories to address macro questions, I hope to pull together from the specific urban landscapes of these five cities a broader narrative about the appropriation of Jewish spaces in postwar Germany and Poland. In short, my comparative interest is more global than local in scope, crossing the national boundaries of Germany and Poland and the political divisions of democracy and communism.<sup>23</sup>

Micro history also allows documenting the behaviors of the actors involved in the very process of remembering. Moving away from the government's politicization of the memory of a particular event, the focus on smaller spaces therefore forces us to re-contextualize and re-articulate old assumptions about memorial processes.

Over the past twenty years, several case studies have investigated how local communities have remembered the Second World War in high profile sites of memory in Europe. One of the first historians to address the issue of what it was like to live in places of shame and/or horror was Gordon Horwitz. His 1991 book, *In the Shadow of death: Living Outside the Gates of Mauthausen*, explores the wartime interactions – or the lack thereof – between the inmates at Mauthausen and the civilian population of the city, and the city's postwar amnesia.<sup>24</sup> One of the most influential books on the postwar management of legacy of shame is Sharon Macdonald's *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (2008). Nuremberg, the Nazi city *par excellence*, provided Macdonald with an ideal site to analyze the relationship between heritage and identity, through an exploration of the city's postwar renegotiation of its identity, in the face of an extraordinary legacy of shame.<sup>25</sup> Other books and articles dealing with how specific cities have dealt with a heavy legacy from World War II include, but are not restricted to: "Commemorative Cosmopolis: transnational networks of remembrance in post-war Coventry" by Stefan Goebel, *Remembering Katyn* by Alexander Etkind, Rory Finnin et al, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol After World War II* by Karl Qualls, and *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish ruins in Germany and Poland* by Michel Meng.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Meng, "Shattered Spaces: Jewish Sites in Germany and Poland after 1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008), 15.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon Horwitz, *In the Shadow of death: Living Outside the Gates of Mauthausen* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Stefan Goebel, "Commemorative Cosmopolis: transnational networks of remembrance in post-war Coventry," in *Cities into battlefields: metropolitan scenarios, experiences and commemorations of total war*, eds., Stefan Goebel, Stefan and Derek Keene (Aldershot: Ashgate 2011), 163-183; Alexander Etkind, Rory Finnin et al, *Remembering Katyn* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012); Karl Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in*

These studies explore how local communities have dealt with their difficult heritage, navigating a fraught terrain, where memories of victimhood, heroism, and shame overlap. They also document the tensions between local communities, governments, and interest groups with stakes in these historical sites over the ‘ownership’ of the place, calling attention to the endless interactions between the center and the peripheries. In some cases, such as in Coventry and Nuremberg, Goebel and MacDonald have shown how the cities transformed into not only national *lieux de mémoire* but also into transnational sites of remembrance and peace.

In France too, specific sites of memory have become the subject of scholarly investigation. In the postwar period, each city and village constructed its own myths. Each locality had its own way of celebrating victory, mourning its dead, and honoring its heroes. The vested interests of the Gaullist and the communists, as well as the urgency to reconstruct the French political body, only led to the creation of a somewhat unstable historical narrative, with which many French could not relate. Hence, documenting how the war has been remembered in different communities across France and bringing nuance and complementary information to existing wider works about the memory of World War II in France is essential for our understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the management of difficult heritage.

Since the 1980s, the IHTP has been especially productive with regard to this specific matter. Given the institute’s long interest in the local experience of the war, it is unsurprising that it also developed an interest in investigating how the war has been remembered by communities across the country.<sup>27</sup> Other studies, not published by the IHTP/CNRS, albeit often written by historians affiliated with the institute, have offered further insight into how the memory has been remembered locally.<sup>28</sup> Foreign historians have similarly enriched the scholarship about how the war has been remembered in different communities across France.<sup>29</sup> Given the recent interest in

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*Soviet Sevastopol After World War II* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2009) ; Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish ruins in Germany and Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> See for example: Institut d’histoire du temps présent, *La Mémoire des Français. Quarante ans de commémorations de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Edition du CNRS), 1986.

<sup>28</sup> See for example: Renée Poznanski, Denis Peschanski and Benoît Pouvreau, *Drancy, un camp en France* (Paris: Fayard, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> See for example: Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Megan Koreman, *The expectation of Justice: France 1944-1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Vlossak, “Remembering Oradour and Schirmeck: Struggles of Regional Memory and National Commemoration,” in *Place and Locality in Modern France*, eds., Philip Whalen and Patrick Young (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 114-124.

conducting microanalyses about the evolution of the war memory in France, it is surprising to note that no in-depth studies have been done about the city of Vichy.

While the issues surrounding the memory of the war in Vichy are regularly mentioned in the press,<sup>30</sup> they have never been deeply researched by scholars. Only a handful of them have shown an interest in the topic: Valérie Haas, a professor of social psychology, whose Ph.D. dissertation aimed to “saisir comment les répercussions [de la polysémie vichyssoise] sont repérables ou vécues par les Vichyssois eux-mêmes, à travers les représentations qu’ils possèdent de leur ville”<sup>31</sup>; John Campbell, professor in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Glasgow University, who published a four-page article in the 2006 *French Studies Bulletin* about the plaque on the wall of the Opera House commemorating the eighty deputies who voted against Laval’s proposal to give Marshall Pétain full authority to revise the constitution on July 10, 1940, and about the city’s blocking out of the Occupation years more generally<sup>32</sup>; Bertram Gordon, who has written about war memory and war tourism in Vichy, outlining recent debates over whether and how the city should memorialize the war,<sup>33</sup> and more recently, Canadian historian Kirrily Freeman, who has investigated how the city’s identity around the memory of a decadent and luxurious prewar history has reinforced rather than effaced the much-decried image of a city which did not suffer during the war thanks to its so-called privileged status as France’s substitute capital.<sup>34</sup>

In the early 2000s, *New York Times* journalist Adam Nossiter published *The Algeria Hotel: France, Memory and the Second World War*, the culmination of a three-year investigative journalism project in the cities of Bordeaux, Vichy and Tulle.<sup>35</sup> Out of the book’s seventeen

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<sup>30</sup> See for example: Julie Pascal, “Vichy’s Shame,” *The Guardian* (11 May 2002); François Dufay, “Vichy : cette ville qui veut oublier Pétain,” *Le Point* (January 31, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Valérie Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d’une ville – Le cas de Vichy” (Ph.D. dissertation, EHESS, Laboratoire de Psychologie sociale, 1999), 19. See also Valérie Haas, “Approche psychosociale d’une reconstruction historique. Le cas vichyssois,” *Les Cahiers Internationaux de Psychologie Sociale* 53 (2002): 32-45; and Valérie Haas, “La face cachée d’une ville,” in *Devoir de mémoire, droit à l’oubli ?*, ed., Thomas Ferenczi (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2002), 59-71.

<sup>32</sup> John Campbell, “Vichy, Vichy, and a Plaque to Remember,” *French Studies Bulletin* Vol LX.I, No 98 (2006).

<sup>33</sup> Bertram M. Gordon, “French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem,” in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, eds. Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 239-272.

<sup>34</sup> Kirrily Freeman, “A Capital Problem: The Town of Vichy, the Second World War, and the Politics of Identity,” in *The Long Aftermath: Historical and Cultural Legacies of Europe at War, 1936-1945*, eds. Manuel Bragança and Peter Tame (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 131-151.

<sup>35</sup> Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel: France, Memory and The Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001).

chapters, six focus on the memory of the war in Vichy. While his interpretation of some oral history interviews lacks critical assessment, the author provides an especially useful discussion about the war's legacy in France's former capital. In their own way, filmmakers Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel have also contributed to the debate over the place of the war in the city's collective memory in Vichy, through their video documentary *L'année dernière à Vichy*, which includes testimonies both about the wartime period in Vichy and about the postwar malaise surrounding this legacy.<sup>36</sup> Although all these authors offer valuable insight into the unique situation in Vichy, none explains why the *Vichysois* have chosen to remember – one might argue forget – the war the way they have.

### 3. Sources and methodology

Writing the history of recent pasts raises specific problems, especially related to the positioning and status of historians. Historians investigating the recent past are often accused of lacking distance and objectivity. Such criticism, however, ignores the fact that all historians – regardless of whether they work on recent or distant pasts – “are bound to their historical position, their personal perspective, [and their own memories],” and that historians’ ultimate desire for complete objectivity is always impossible to achieve because we all “select certain historical events into a meaningful story by means of narrative structuring and rhetorical devices.”<sup>37</sup> In her foreword to the English translation of Henry Rousso’s *The Haunting Past: History, Memory and Justice in Contemporary France*, Ora Avni underlines that “since any investigation is necessarily filtered by the preoccupations and the demands of the present, temporal distance from the event under examination is not a guarantee of scientific impartiality. History of the past can be as biased and subjective as history of the present.”<sup>38</sup> So, writing the history of both the distant and recent pasts requires “proper research, rigor, caution, and some degree of humility.”<sup>39</sup> The recent past can be as much a historical object as the distant past if the researcher treats it as such, which I have attempted to do throughout this dissertation.

Being a native of Vichy and having my family still there raises further methodological questions. The biggest disadvantages for insider researchers are their own biases about the

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<sup>36</sup> Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel, *L'année dernière à Vichy* (Julianto Films, Arte France, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 39.

<sup>38</sup> Ora Avni, foreword to Henry Rousso, *The Haunting Past: History, Memory and Justice in Contemporary France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

questions they have chosen to study, and their personal involvement in the community. I left Vichy when I was eighteen and I have lived and studied abroad for about ten years. I therefore consider myself dispassionate enough to carry out this research. I see my position as a distant insider as having been much more beneficial than detrimental. Not only was I well aware of local debates and local political concerns prior to embarking on my research, but my status as a *Vichyssoise* has also inspired the confidence and trust of people who might have been suspicious of outsiders eager to pry into the city's difficult past. Being an insider has also given me access to private sources, which would certainly have remained inaccessible to a non-*Vichyssois*.

Doing micro history allows one to not only document new processes and provide a more complex and nuanced picture of society through the analysis of the interactions between individuals or groups, but also to rethink the historian's relationship to sources and to use little exploited sources, such as the ones stored in municipal and departmental archives.

The popular excitement following the Ministerial Order of December 2015 about some World War II archives suggests that the myth of the inaccessibility of archives related to the Vichy regime is still going strong in France.<sup>40</sup> Although the Order has facilitated access to some archives, it did not 'open' the war archives to the public, as many have argued. These collections have long been available to researchers, and to the public, although a special waiver was sometimes required.<sup>41</sup> The so-called inaccessibility of the archives in the city of Vichy is a myth that has had an even longer shelf life. In her article "Vichy's Shame," Julia Pascal reports on the following incident: "I meet the *adjoint* for tourism, Jean-Louis Bourdier... 'Are there municipal archives here about the Vichy period?' I ask over our brasserie lunch. 'Yes,' Dr. Bourdier smiles. 'Can I see them?' The smile does not shift. 'No'."<sup>42</sup> In *The Algeria Hotel*, Adam Nossiter tells a similar story: "At the city hall, I asked to see the municipality's file from the war years. 'Oh, I'm afraid those records are not available to the general public', the archivist said, smiling. 'They haven't been sorted, yet'."<sup>43</sup> Although it is very possible that Pascal's and Nossiter's accounts are accurate, they could have probably accessed those municipal archives by sending a formal written request.

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<sup>40</sup> "Arrêté du 24 décembre 2015 portant ouverture d'archives relatives à la Seconde Guerre mondiale." Published in the *Journal Officiel* on December 27, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Jospin's Order in 1997 marked an important step forward in the accessibility of the archives related to the Second World War. "Circulaire du 2 octobre 1997 relative à l'accès aux archives publiques de la période 1940-1945." Published in the *Journal Officiel* on October 10, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Pascal, "Vichy's Shame."

<sup>43</sup> Nossiter, *The Algeria hotel*, 101.

Vichy's municipal archives are still not 'freely' accessible, in the sense that there is no catalogue and one has to make an appointment to meet one of the archivists prior to requesting documents. After a request is filed, the municipal archivists search for documents that may be of interest to the researcher and they present them in a dossier. One may conclude that this method is meant to keep some documents hidden because the archivists are the gatekeepers to the material made available to the researcher. Although this method is clearly problematic, after having spent months in the municipal archives in Vichy, I do not think that the archivists withheld information from me or lied about the documents they possess. Rather, the lack of a clear and effective organization appears the result of poor funding and staff shortages.

The types of documents I consulted in Vichy's municipal archives were varied and concerned both the prewar, postwar, and wartime periods. Vichy's municipal archives provided access to key documents about Napoléon III, the transformation of the city into a world-renowned spa resort in the early twentieth century, the requisitions between 1939 and 1947, prewar and postwar municipal elections, and so on. Municipal council minutes from the nineteenth and twentieth century, as well as newspaper clippings about topics as diverse as spa seasons, the Algerian War, and World War II commemorations, have provided other valuable sources.

Most of the available documents about Vichy during the war are located in the departmental archives in Moulins and, to a lesser extent, in Clermont-Ferrand. Both centers have catalogues freely accessible to the public. However, the current reorganization of the World War II fonds in Moulins has resulted in many overlaps between the 996 W and 1289 W series, which has made the research more difficult than it should have been. Regardless, I spent approximately three months there and consulted a large number of documents, including correspondence between local leaders and government departments, reports by *préfets* and *sous préfets*, lists of registered, rounded-up and deported Jews, police reports during the war and during the *épuration*, postal control reports,<sup>44</sup> and documentation on internment camps. I also consulted documents at

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<sup>44</sup> During the First World War, the postal control was used to counter the threat of espionage, and to control the troops' morale. The letters that were deemed to be subversive and the ones that included military information could be seized. During the Second World War, the postal control was exercised by a special and autonomous bureau, which was attached to the *Présidence du Conseil*. The government monitored the mail in order to identify the individuals who might be potentially dangerous for the regime. There were several bureaux throughout the French territory. Every two weeks, these bureaux were required to provide detailed syntheses to the government. On this, see: David Bidussa and Denis Peschanski, eds., *La France de Vichy. Archives inédits d'Angelo Tasca* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1995).



the national archives (at the Pierrefitte site), mostly from the following series: AJ 38 (*Commissariat général aux questions juives*), 415 AP/4 (about Pétain's forcible abduction on August 24, 1944), and 2/AG (containing, amongst other documents, notes from governmental agencies).

In *Memory in Culture*, Astrid Erll suggests that historians whose interests lie in the aftermath of events, and in the history of commemorations and memory more broadly, broaden the scope of their inquiries to include intangible manifestations of memory that might not be accessible through mere observation and archival research, and that they conceive memory as “process and movement,” rather than something fixed and imposed from above.<sup>45</sup> Although not an anthropologist, I have tried to pay attention to non-textual and non-material evidence through participant observation. I have gained much insight into certain issues from informal conversations in Vichy's parks, at the local library, in shops and in people's homes. As beautifully written by Caroline Wiedmer in the acknowledgment of her book, *The Claims of Memory: Representation of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France*, studies are often “patterned as much by the sights and flavors of city streets and by insights gained from countless conversations along the way as ... in the solitude of archives and libraries. Many of my ideas therefore originated in sources for which I have no page numbers or even names.”<sup>46</sup>

I also conducted testimony-based research in the Visual History Archive (VHA) at USC Shoah Foundation, in Los Angeles. USC is home to more than 52,000 audio-visual testimonies of genocide survivors and other witnesses. I identified about 120 interviews (in French, English, and Spanish – the three language I can understand) of Jews who lived or went through Vichy during the war. These interviews provided a remarkable complement to the numerous archives about Jews in the department of the Allier, which I have found in the departmental archives in Moulins. The oral testimonies of *Vichyssois* who experienced the war in Vichy, recorded by Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel in 2008 for the purpose of a documentary,<sup>47</sup> and the series of interviews I conducted myself, with about fifteen *Vichyssois*, have also been useful in better understanding the local experiences of the war and how the population has dealt with the legacy of the war in the post 1945 period.

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<sup>45</sup> Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 173.

<sup>46</sup> Caroline Wiedmer, *The claims of Memory: Representation of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), ix.

<sup>47</sup> De Solliers and Muxel, *L'année dernière à Vichy*.

Many historians have pointed out the ambivalent role of testimonies in the writing of history. To be sure, individual memories cannot be considered as vectors of historical truth. First, the witnesses' accounts have necessarily been influenced by the witnesses' experience after the event. Human memory, Aleida Assman points out, "is by nature geared toward adapting itself to a changing environment."<sup>48</sup> Second, witnesses often tend to generalize their personal experiences and to describe the events according to their own hierarchy.<sup>49</sup> Third, by asking certain questions, the researcher becomes involved in the fabrication of the testimony, leaving an indelible trace in it, despite his/her initial objective to not interfere.<sup>50</sup>

Despite such limitations, I have chosen not to discard testimonies altogether in my investigation into the wartime period in Vichy. In Robert Frank's words:

L'historien faillirait évidemment à sa tâche, si, subjugué par ses sources orales, il succombait aux sirènes de la mémoire des autres et tombait dans les pièges de leur subjectif. Mais il se priverait d'un immense champ de recherche, s'il se limitait à la banale et indispensable règle de la critique historique et refusait d'inverser la perspective d'un point de vue herméneutique.<sup>51</sup>

I have used the testimonies as fragments of individual experience, and as potential indicators of the atmosphere of the time, not as sources of historical truth. Wherever possible, I have positioned these accounts in dialogue with other sources, thereby enriching the historical record.

Through an examination into the 'official' vectors of memory (school books, discourses, monuments, etc.) historians have long been interested in showing how the past was (mis)used by the elites, who appropriate and construct it according to their needs. While those in power might have a considerable influence on how the past is remembered,<sup>52</sup> the formation of collective memories is neither linear, nor homogeneous, nor the product of a top-down mechanism. As Alon Confino has put it,

How individuals understand their past behavior, place it in a larger context, justify it, how they tell it to family and friends, how they change it over time, and how they translate their memories into social

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<sup>48</sup> Aleida Assman, *Shadows of Trauma : Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, 110.

<sup>49</sup> Denis Peschanski, "Les camps français d'internement (1938-1946)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Université Panthéon Sorbonne, Paris 1, 2000), 14.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Frank, "La bouche de la vérité? La recherche historique et les sources orales," *Cahier de l'IHTP* 21 (1992).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



and political actions are not quite the same as, and certainly not identical with, the narratives of national memory acted by states and institutions in the public sphere.<sup>53</sup>

Testimonies provide one way of obtaining a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how communities remember specific events. There is no doubt that testimonies reconstruct the event, but, once again, as argued by Robert Frank, “ce ‘présent du passé’ est précisément la mémoire, et l’étude savante de celui-ci permet de mieux comprendre l’identité qu’elle a pour fonction de structurer.”<sup>54</sup> In *La mémoire collective*, Maurice Halbwachs has shown how by mirroring wider trends of remembering, individual memories are unique repositories and vectors of collective memory – although only individuals have the capacity to remember, people always remember within the framework assigned by society.<sup>55</sup> In sum, studying the collective memory of a group requires that we look at “l’ensemble des manifestations qui non seulement révèlent, donnent à voir, à lire ou à penser la présence du passé, mais qui ont pour fonction, ou simplement pour effet, de structurer l’identité du groupe ou de la nation, donc de les définir en tant que tels et de les distinguer d’autres entités comparables.”<sup>56</sup> Through an analysis of the commemorations, the official discourses, the association’s claims, the inhabitants’ testimonies, this is what I have tried to do.

#### 4. Outline

At first sight, the collective remembering of the war in Vichy appears to have been rather straightforward: the *Vichyssois* do not want to have anything to do with the legacy of the war. However, my dissertation shows that the remembering process has actually been complex and often contradictory.

The first four chapters focus on the wartime period. Those chapters show how Vichy’s population accommodated to its city becoming capital. Like elsewhere in France, although grassroots collaborationism, collaboration, and resistance existed, most of Vichy’s population waited for the war to pass, adapting their behaviors and action according to the war’s evolution.

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<sup>53</sup> Alon Confino, “Telling about Germany: Narratives of Memory and Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 76: 2 (2004), 407.

<sup>54</sup> Frank, “La bouche de la vérité?”

<sup>55</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 33.

<sup>56</sup> Henry Rousso, “Les usages politiques du passé: Histoire et mémoire,” in *Histoire politique et sciences sociales*, eds. Denis Peschanski, Mickael Pollack and Henry Rousso (Bruxelles: Edition Complexe, 1991, 251. See also: Henry Rousso, *Face au passé: Essais sur la mémoire contemporaine* (Paris: Belin 2016).

While it is true that the city of Vichy suffered much less than other cities in France, and that a strong attachment to Pétain developed within the local population, there is nothing ‘extraordinary’ – no dark secrets – from the wartime period that justifies the current malaise with regard to the management of the war’s legacy.

In the immediate postwar years, the city, obsessed with the fear of a long-lasting decline of spa tourism, developed a powerful victimhood discourse, in which it presented itself as a threefold victim: of the Vichy government, of the Germans, and of the postwar governments for reportedly failing to rehabilitate its ‘innocent’ population. In parallel, local resisters strove to establish a strong memory of the resistance. Yet, as soon as spa tourism recovered, the memory of the war was pushed into the background, establishing a long-lasting tradition of silence and non-memorial intervention in Vichy (Chapters 5 and 6). This, however, does not mean that memories of the war never occasionally resurfaced. Some of these memories did resurface, especially during the Algerian war.

In the nineteenth century, after hydrotherapy had positioned itself as one of the few effective treatments against the debilitating and degenerative effects of tropical climates, increasing numbers of French settlers (most of whom were from French Algeria) visited Vichy to obtain treatments for their colonial diseases and to re-whiten their skin and spirits, thereby contributing to the city’s growth and prosperity.<sup>57</sup> Unsurprisingly given the tight links between Vichy and French Algeria, during the Algerian war, Vichy supported French Algeria and moved significantly to the right side of the political spectrum. The political, social, and economic shifts brought about by the Algerian war and the arrival of a large community of right-wing *pieds-noirs*<sup>58</sup> provided the ideal environment for a pro-Pétain memory to gather strength, beyond Pétain’s traditional extreme right base. This counter memory crystallized in Vichy in the 1960s, while it significantly declined in France (Chapters 7 and 8). With time and with the memories of Algeria fading, however, the expression of this pro-Pétain memory lessened in scale. While it did not disappear, from the late 1970s onwards, it stopped expressing itself in the city’s public realm. No other memory, however, rose to occupy a central place in the local collective remembering of the war, creating a memorial void, which has yet to be filled.

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<sup>57</sup> Eric Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology, and French Colonial Spas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 55.

<sup>58</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 2, 2015).

In the last thirty years of the twentieth century, the release of Marcel Ophüls's film *Le Chagrin et la pitié*, the publication of Robert Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940- 1944*, which deconstructed the comforting narratives of heroism and victimhood still dominant in France, the pardon granted to Paul Touvier, and the highly publicized trials of Maurice Papon and Klaus Barbie provoked an explosion of public discussion and memorial initiatives about the war, the Holocaust, and the Vichy regime. Vichy, however, has largely remained impervious to these shifts. For different reasons, the municipality has continued the de facto politics of silence. While a section of the population has been fully satisfied with the municipality's choice to not memorialize the war, other residents have been increasingly critical of the status quo, and have striven to re-inscribe the memory of the war in Vichy's urban landscape and collective memory, so far, with limited success (Chapters 9, 10 and 11).

Not only does this case study contribute to the scholarship on the memory of the Second World War, but it also reveals how the formation of collective memories are to be sought not only in the experience of the event that is remembered but also (and in some cases, above all) in the history preceding this event. To understand Vichy's own logics of remembrance with regard to World War II, for example, one has to go back not to the wartime period but to the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when Vichy was "Reine des villes d'eaux," and when colonial tourism was thriving.

## CHAPTER 1 – Living side by side with the government

How was life in Vichy under the Vichy regime? Given the amount of scholarship on life in France under the Occupation, one can only be surprised that this question has been mostly ignored, except by a few local historians and Michèle Cointet, an established historian of the Second World War, whose book *Vichy capitale 1940-1944* remains, to this day, the most accomplished study on the subject.<sup>59</sup> Bringing new elements about daily life in Vichy to the front, this chapter offers a substantial new contribution to this marginal, yet interesting and informative, field of investigation.

This chapter investigates how the population and local leaders responded and reacted to their city becoming the cradle of French collaboration and the headquarters of the *Révolution nationale*. More specifically, it examines how the population navigated a fraught terrain of pleasures, fears, and frustrations. It draws both on the few secondary sources that deal with this subject, as well as on a wide variety of primary sources, including prefectoral syntheses, testimonies, judiciary reports from the *épuration*, reports by local agents, police reports, postal control reports, and various documents from local agencies. The questions of grassroots collaboration and resistance are examined in Chapter 2.

### 1. Vichy enters the war

During the Great War, Vichy was transformed into a health center for wounded soldiers. In addition to the city's renowned military thermal hospital, many hotels were requisitioned in order to absorb the thousands of wounded soldiers that were arriving in the city. Out of the city's 136 hotels, about sixty were turned into temporary hospitals. In total, more than 8,000 beds were made available to those in need of medical care. From 1914 to 1918, more than 140,000 wounded soldiers were sent to Vichy, making for about five percent of the total number of sick and wounded during this war.<sup>60</sup> In 1939, the *Vichyssois* expected a similar scenario to repeat itself. Shortly after the beginning of the war, four hotels (*Thermal, Radio, Poste* and *Helder*) were

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<sup>59</sup> Georges Frélastre, *Les Complexes de Vichy ou Vichy les capitales* (Paris: Éditions France Empire, 1975); Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale. 1940-1944* (Le Coteau: Horvath, 1983); Jean Débordes, *L'Allier dans la guerre 1939-1945* (Romagnat: Editions De Borée, 2001); Thierry Wirth, *Vichy Capitale* (Lyon: Les Trois Roses, 2015). Michèle Cointet, *Vichy capitale. 1940-1944* (Paris: Perrin, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Pascal Chambriard, "Vichy, une ville thermale dans la Grande Guerre : entre effort patriotique et réalisme touristique," *SHAVE* 158 (2012), 27-29.

requisitioned and converted into temporary hospitals.<sup>61</sup> During the Second World War, however, wounded soldiers were not the only ones to come seek shelter in Vichy.

In anticipation of a German attack and of trench warfare, the civilians from the Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, and Moselle departments began to be evacuated as early as September 1939 (Strasbourg began to be evacuated on September 2). It is estimated that more than 600,000 civilians were forced to leave their homes. In all the cities to be evacuated, large black boards installed on the streets and in public places guided inhabitants to their assigned areas of cover.<sup>62</sup> The accommodation potential of the Allier had been estimated at a maximum of 40,000 people.<sup>63</sup> Yet refugees were so numerous that as early as September 15, 1939, the Allier *préfet* expressed worries about the number of refugees his department was receiving: not only had the Allier already received many refugees from Paris and Lyon, who, for fear of a rapid German invasion, had come seek refuge in the department (although the Allier “ne leur [était] pas normalement affecté”), but the department was now about to receive “un nombre appréciable de réfugiés ... évacués [du Nord Est de la France] par les soins des autorités.”<sup>64</sup> One city in the Allier was particularly at risk of overcrowding: Vichy.

While the evacuees and other refugees were spread out over the entire territory of the department, most of the refugees ended up in Vichy. Although in the fall of 1939, with the spa season approaching its end, thousands of rooms were readily available, there were just too many refugees. By mid September 1939, while the city had already received “une affluence d'éloignés volontaires et d'étrangers pouvant se chiffrer à plus de 15,000 personnes,” the municipal council complained that 10,000 additional people from the East of France were expected to arrive in the following days.<sup>65</sup> Other refugees from Eastern Europe, most notably Jews from Poland and Czechoslovakia, also came to Vichy in the hope of finding accommodation.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Wirth, *Vichy Capitale*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Éric Alary, Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon, and Gilles Gauvin, *Les Français au quotidien 1939 – 1949* (Paris: Perrin, 2006), 55-56 ; Jacques Semelin, *Persécutions et entraides dans la France occupée. Comment 75% des juifs en France ont échappé à la mort* (Paris: Seuil – Les Arènes, 2013), 67 & 70. .

<sup>63</sup> AM (Cusset), 4H. “Réquisition des immeubles pour logement des Réfugiés.” (1939-1945) ; n° d'Invent. 6H8; 4H7\*\* / IV. Note from the Allier *préfet* (February 5, 1940).

<sup>64</sup> AM (Cusset), 4H. “Réquisition des immeubles pour logement des Réfugiés.” (1939-1945) ; n° d'Invent. 6H8; 4H7\*\* / IV. Note from the Allier *préfet* to the mayors of the department (September 15, 1939).

<sup>65</sup> AM (Vichy). Report on the reception and accommodation of refugees in Vichy (March 19, 1940).

<sup>66</sup> Wirth, *Vichy Capitale*, 9.

In order to relieve the city from overcrowding, the small villages around Vichy were pressed into contributing their share of rooms and service.<sup>67</sup> This, however, proved insufficient and by the winter of 1939-1940, the city was already saturated. In addition, Vichy faced many practical problems, the most important of which being that the city's hotels were not heated as the latter were normally only used between May and October for the spa season.<sup>68</sup> This made the conditions of accommodation precarious, especially for children and old people. While most of the refugees only stayed in Vichy for a couple of days, the flow of arrivals was such that the city never experienced periods of relief.

As German troops advanced through Belgium, hundreds of thousands of additional people became refugees. Throughout the war, 2,000,000 of Belgians – one out of three – left Belgium; this exodus amounts to the most important population transfer to have taken place during a war.<sup>69</sup> Shortly after, the panic spread to Paris, and on June 6, Parisians started leaving en masse, too.<sup>70</sup> During the spring and early summer of 1940, the roads of northern France were clogged with interminable lines of cars, and horse-drawn carts piled high with all types of furniture, clothes and household items. Many people, who did not have a car or who had run out of gas, were on foot, pushing prams and carts laden with children, pets and their most precious and useful possessions. In *Pilote de Guerre*, the writer-pilot Antoine Saint-Exupéry describes the exodus, as he saw it from the sky:

Je survole donc des routes noires de l'interminable sirop qui n'en finit plus de couler. On évacue, dit-on, les populations. Ce n'est déjà plus vrai. Elles s'évacuent d'elles-mêmes. Il est une contagion démente dans cet exode. Car où vont-ils, ces vagabonds ? ... Personne ne savait rien. Ils évacuaient. Aucun refuge n'était plus disponible. Aucune route n'était plus praticable. Ils évacuaient quand même. On avait donné dans le Nord un grand coup de pied dans la fourmilière, et les fourmis s'en allaient. Laborieusement. Sans panique. Sans espoir. Sans désespoir. Comme par devoir.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> In Cusset, for instance, a service dedicated to the refugee question was created, with the mandate to find and list all the rooms available in the city. AM (Cusset), 4H. "Réquisition des immeubles pour logement des Réfugiés." (1939-1945) ; n° d'Invent. 6H8; 4H7\*\* / IV. Note from the Allier préfet to the mayors of the department (September 15, 1939).

<sup>68</sup> AM (Vichy). Report on the reception and accommodation of refugees in Vichy (March 19, 1940).

<sup>69</sup> Pierre Miquel, *L'Exode 10 mai – 20 juin 1940* (Paris: Plon, 2003), 110.

<sup>70</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 119.

Already in September 1939, 500 000 Parisians – mostly women and children – had fled the capital for fear of bombings. Alary, Vergez-Chaignon, Gauvin, *Les Français au quotidien 1939 – 1949*, 78.

<sup>71</sup> Antoine Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), 75.



By the end of June 1940, about 300,000 refugees and several thousands of soldiers were believed to have passed through Vichy.<sup>72</sup> Before the war, Vichy had a permanent population of about 25,000. To be sure, Vichy was far from being the only overcrowded city in France.<sup>73</sup> Yet, it was most certainly one of the most overcrowded. Although there were 11,200 rooms available in the city,<sup>74</sup> space and accommodation were cruelly lacking.

Everywhere in southern France, accommodating and taking care of these refugees proved very challenging. In Saint-Exupéry's words, "il n'est, dans le Sud, que des villes pleines à craquer, où l'on couche dans les hangars et dont les provisions s'épuisent... Et si la caravane aborde un vrai village qui fait semblant de vivre encore, elle en épuise, dès le premier soir, toute la substance. Elle le nettoie comme les vers nettoient un os."<sup>75</sup> Due to the government not envisaging such a rapid military defeat, it was not prepared to deal with the ensuing large-scale exodus.<sup>76</sup> Many refugees complained about the government's poor management of the crisis. The functionaries working in the Minister of the Interior's repatriation office were especially criticized for lacking both competence and empathy. In a letter to Pétain, the president of the French Red Cross talked about the functionaries' "extreme insolence" towards the refugees.<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, the state financially contributed to the relocation of some of the refugees. In 1939, the Allier *préfet* explained to the mayors of his department that they had to "mettre en oeuvre tous les moyens pour subvenir aux besoins des évacués," and that the state "[prendrait] en charge toutes les dépenses occasionnées."<sup>78</sup> Local residents who accommodated refugees in their homes were also entitled to financial compensation for gas and electricity, in addition to the six to ten francs they were given daily in compensation for food.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "Nous avons pris Vichy," *Les Cahiers Bourbonnais* 37 (1966), 9. Translation of the extract from the diary of a German war correspondent in Vichy, initially published in the *Volksischer Beobachter* (August 6-7, 1940).

<sup>73</sup> The population of Pau went from 38,000 to 150,000, that of Brive from 30,000 to 100,000, and that of Bordeaux from 300,000 to 600,000. Jackson, *France The Dark Years*, 120.

<sup>74</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de guerre*, 75-76.

<sup>76</sup> Hanna Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler – France 1940* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from M. Robert, president of the French Red Cross to Pétain (summer 1941). Cited in Kirrily Freeman, "A Capital Problem: The Town of Vichy, the Second World War, and the Politics of Identity," in *The Long Aftermath: Historical and Cultural Legacies of Europe at War, 1936-1945*, eds. Manuel Bragança and Peter Tame (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 142.

<sup>78</sup> AM (Cusset), 4H. "Réquisition des immeubles pour logement des Réfugiés." (1939-1945) ; n° d'Invent. 6H8; 4H7\*\* / IV. Notes from the Allier *préfet* to the mayors of the department (September 15, 1939 and March 04, 1940).

<sup>79</sup> AM (Cusset), 4H. "Réquisition des immeubles pour logement des Réfugiés." (1939-1945) ; n° d'Invent. 6H8; 4H7\*\* / IV. Note from the Allier *préfet* to the mayors of the department (March 4, 1940).

Some public companies also aided the refugees, albeit sometimes more out of necessity than humanitarianism. In Vichy, many hotels were made available to refugees at the expense of the *Centre financier*, which had recently relocated to the city. The Center paid for the accommodation of the refugees who were supposed to be granted rooms in some of the hotels where the financial agencies had established themselves, so as to make sure that there was no contact between the refugees and the *Centre financier*'s employees, "en raison de la nature des opérations."<sup>80</sup> Many associations and humanitarian organizations, such as the *Amicale Franco-Belge* and the Red Cross, also mobilized to provide aid to the refugees in the form of food, clothing, and other supplies.

While the help coming from the government, public institutions and humanitarian associations proved essential, the municipalities' logistical involvement was just as important. In addition to requisitioning many buildings, the city of Vichy transformed the equestrian stadium into a reception center and canteen for refugees. Between May 13, 1939 and November 19, 1940, about 800,000 meals were served.<sup>81</sup> An orphanage, a maternity ward, and several health centers for refugees were also quickly set up.<sup>82</sup> Despite the creation of these places, the management of refugees remained extremely complicated. Making use of the *système D* was an imperative. According to Jules Louis Dewitte, volunteer secretary at the *Comité d'accueil et de Secours aux réfugiés* in Vichy, many problems, especially relating to food supplies, were partially overcome thanks to "une organisation spéciale leur ayant permis d'assurer leur ravitaillement par leurs propres moyens, sans passer par l'intendance."<sup>83</sup>

George Frélastre, a local resident, shared his memory of the chaotic summer of 1940 in his books *Un Vichyssois sous Vichy* and *Le chien vert*. George and his sister were born in Paris. Their father, who was severely wounded during the Great War, died in 1927. In 1934, in order to meet household subsistence needs, their mother invested in a small thermal spring three kilometers away from Vichy. At the time, the reputation of the Vichy water was such that George's mother hoped that this investment would make them rich.<sup>84</sup> The family's ambitions,

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<sup>80</sup> AM (Vichy). Note from Vichy's mayor about the establishment of the financial center in Vichy (June 11, 1940). The refugees were offered accommodation in the following hotels: *hôtel Alphonsine* (twenty-seven rooms), *hôtel Lafayette* (fifty rooms), *hôtel Enghien* (twenty-six rooms), *hôtel de la Marine* (forty-seven rooms), *hôtel d'Angleterre* (sixty rooms), *hôtel St-James* (fifty rooms).

<sup>81</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. "Dossier Dewitte."

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Georges Frélastre, *Le chien vert* (Clermont-Ferrand: Edition de l'Eclair, 2006), 21.



however, were thwarted by the outbreak of the war and by May 1940, little water from the spring was still being exploited, in large part, because 500 refugees were crammed into the small park from where the spring flowed.<sup>85</sup> Frélastre, not expecting anything of this scale, was deeply moved by this helpless crowd, whose mood of resignation, he says, was sometimes “secouée par un bruit déchirant de sanglots ou de plaintes.”<sup>86</sup> He also recalls the goodness of some shopkeepers, who gave newcomers more supplies than their refugee tickets permitted.<sup>87</sup>

Other documents, however, suggest that the cohabitation was not so smooth. In September 1940, Bernard Ménétrel, Pétain’s doctor and political advisor, told Vichy’s mayor that an investigation had revealed that “les commerçants de Vichy réservent aux gens du pays les denrées difficiles à trouver (café, huile, savon) et refusent presque systématiquement de vendre quoi que ce soit aux réfugiés munis de leur carte d’alimentation.”<sup>88</sup> One cannot generalize about the local response towards the refugees. There is little doubt that some long-term residents gave food and clothing, while others offered temporary accommodation or volunteered in one of Vichy’s refugees’ centers. However, the discrimination against the refugees appears to have been disturbing enough for Ménétrel to complain to the mayor. It seems very likely that the attitude of the population evolved with time. By September 1940, growing uncertainties about the future might have generated inward-looking attitudes.

The beginning of the summer of 1940 was particularly eventful in Vichy, not just because of the massive influx of refugees. In June, France’s defeat caused the withdrawal of the French army. Vichy’s two most beautiful hotels, the *hôtel du Parc* and the *hôtel Majestic*, were requisitioned for the officers of the retreating French army. These officers only stayed in Vichy for two days, but they left a bad impression on the population, who described them as proud, arrogant and defiant.<sup>89</sup> They were also disorganized: in their hasty departure to Ussel and Tulle, they forgot secret documents in the hotels. Frélastre recalls how his teacher, M. Boisselier, burned the records that he was able to locate.<sup>90</sup> Ivan Loiseau, a first-hand witness, and manager at the *Compagnie fermière* in Vichy, recalls how some documents were recycled in a roundabout way:

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<sup>85</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 20, & 43-45.

<sup>88</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from Bernard Ménétrel to Pierre-Victor Léger (September 4, 1940).

<sup>89</sup> *Rapport pour M. le Ministre Secrétaire d’Etat à l’Intérieur sur la poste de circulation de la Madeleine* (August 23, 1941). Cited in Freeman, “A Capital Problem,” 142.

<sup>90</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 13.

... Un de mes collaborateurs, d'origine russe, rentrant chez lui, voulut acheter dans une épicerie un morceau de fromage. Celui-ci fut enveloppé dans une feuille dactylographiée où tout à coup il lut le nom Vorochiloff. Il y trouva un exposé de la conversation en cours entre Français, Anglais et Russes en 1939. Il me montra cela après le déjeuner et je lui dis de repasser tout de suite à son épicerie et de prendre tout ce qu'il pourrait trouver de même nature. Il me rapporta plus de cinquante feuilles, fort bien tapées, et corrigées par une écriture de la meilleure qualité. A la lecture je m'aperçus que ce ne pouvait être que l'original du rapport Doumenc, chef de notre Mission militaire à Moscou, et annoté par lui... Voilà un exemple du désordre de l'Etat-Major du Grand Quartier..."<sup>91</sup>

Fortunately, this incident had no consequences.

The day after the French army left, the Germans arrived in Vichy. On June 18, Vichy was declared an open city (as Paris had been, a few days before). At the request of Vichy's mayor Pierre Victor Léger and Vichy's deputy Lucien Lamoureux, the lieutenant Domb had agreed to override the orders of General Humière and not to fight against the Germans when the latter entered the city.<sup>92</sup> The entry of the German troops (thirty-eight men) in Vichy the following day (June 19) took place in a calm and orderly fashion. A German soldier recalls their arrivals in Vichy:

En avant ! En avant ! Les véhicules grimpent une côte. Le regard plonge dans la vallée. Voilà Vichy. Voilà cette station balnéaire mondiale que nous ne connaissions que par les étiquettes de millions de bouteilles minérale. Voilà notre but. (...) Dans un parc se trouvent, sur leurs socles en pierre, des statues bien dodues et rondelettes, entourées de vigne vierge. Un poilu est debout à côté, nu-tête, les casques sur le chef de ces créatures de granit, le fusil appuyé contre. Il ne tirera plus. Il lève les mains. Nos véhicules ralentissent l'allure. C'est singulier, vraiment singulier. Pas de résistance, pas un coup de fusil, rien.<sup>93</sup>

Many *Vichyssois*, both nervous and curious, gathered to watch the German army's triumphant entry into the city.<sup>94</sup> Contrary to the French officers, the Germans are described as having been very courteous and respectful towards the population.<sup>95</sup> According to the above-cited German

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<sup>91</sup> Ivan Loiseau, *Souvenirs et témoignages* (Moulins: Éditions Les Cahiers Boubonnais, 1974), 108.

<sup>92</sup> An armored train filled with French soldiers was stationed in Vichy. Domb asked his troops to remain in the train and not to attack the Germans when the latter entered the city. Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 14 & 17.

<sup>93</sup> "Nous avons pris Vichy," 8.

<sup>94</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 15.

<sup>95</sup> Archives IHTP, ARC 091. Fonds Victor Guillermin. Diary of Victor Guillermin. Entry August 26, 1940.

soldier, the *Vichyssois* were initially shocked to discover that the Germans were anything but barbarous:

... J'observe les visages qui ne veulent pas réaliser que nous sommes des Allemands. Voilà donc comment sont faits les barbares. Ils savent même sourire, ces Allemands. Ils disent même « s'il vous plaît ». Tout cela est si invraisemblable... on nous demande si nous sommes des Américains. 'Non, nous sommes des Allemands, c'est vrai.' Sur ce, ils nous examinent et nous réexaminent. Ils ne quittent pas des yeux nos visages, notre jeu de physionomie qui ne veut pas traduire la moindre qualité de barbare. Tout à coup, l'un d'eux, un homme à la face tannée, touche notre uniforme : 'Le drap n'est donc pas en papier ?' Demande-t-il, incrédule. 'Et les bottes en vrai cuir.'<sup>96</sup>

In several testimonies, these Germans are also described as big spenders; while Vichy's retailers were displeased at serving German soldiers, the fact that the latter spent lavishly was good for business.<sup>97</sup> The Germans left Vichy in late June.<sup>98</sup>

Following the June 22, 1940 armistice, most of the refugees who had initially sought shelter in Vichy also left the city. Yet these departures were of little relief to the city, as the refugees were immediately replaced by other newcomers.

On June 10, 1940, Paul Reynaud's government left Paris and relocated first to Tours and then to Bordeaux. But the terms of the armistice included Bordeaux in the area permanently occupied by the Germans, which forced the government to leave again. On June 29, the government arrived in Clermont-Ferrand, but the city had too many downsides. First, few high standard hotels meant that the ministers and civil servants were not well set up and were often scattered around the city. Second, the government considered Clermont's working city status<sup>99</sup> and its "reputation for coldness" problematic.<sup>100</sup> Following the victory of the Popular Front in the 1936 elections, major strikes had erupted in Clermont, and the government feared that new demonstrations might break out should the population not be satisfied with the situation. On top of that, the powerful newspaper *La Montagne* had positioned itself against the armistice. The

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<sup>96</sup> "Nous avons pris Vichy," *Les Cahiers Bourbonnais*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> Archives IHTP, ARC 091. Fonds Victor Guillermin. Diary of Victor Guillermin. Entry August 26, 1940.

<sup>98</sup> Only a few weeks later, other Germans established themselves more permanently in the capital. They, too, proved respectful towards the population, by remaining very discreet, often wearing civilian clothes, and never bothering the inhabitants.

<sup>99</sup> Michelin, one of the biggest tire manufacturers in the world, has been based in Clermont-Ferrand since the late nineteenth century.

<sup>100</sup> John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.

government therefore decided to leave. Lyon, the location of which was very good, could have provided a good alternative to Clermont-Ferrand. But in Lyon, where Édouard Herriot had been elected mayor, the risk of social unrest was comparable to (if not higher than in) Clermont.<sup>101</sup>

Paul Baudouin and Raphaël Alibert proposed the city of Vichy as an alternative.<sup>102</sup> Their proposition was accepted and the government moved to Vichy in early July 1940. The spa resort offered many advantages to a government in exile. Not only was the city's accommodation potential exceptional, but it boasted some of the best hotels in France; Vichy had seven palaces, at least twenty high standard hotels and more than 200 classified hotels. That luxury appealed to the exiled. Most of these hotels were requisitioned for governmental use in early July.<sup>103</sup> Shortly after, about 30,000 civil servants and people working for governmental agencies arrived in Vichy for an indefinite period. Many other people attracted by power flocked into France's new capital, and by the fall of 1940, about 120,000 people were living in Vichy.<sup>104</sup>

Vichy's good location and very modern telephone infrastructure were other assets of the city. Following the many requests from tourists and *curistes* from all over the world, a new post office, with a modern telephone system installation that enabled long distance phone calls and the rapid dispatch of telegrams, had been constructed a few years before the war.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the city's location, fifty kilometers from the demarcation line, was very convenient. The fact that the railway link between Paris and Vichy was excellent was yet another advantage. Another of Vichy's assets, which is often overlooked, is the fact that the State owned the city's subterranean mineral rights – and therefore, the water springs, also. As such, not only was the government “un peu chez lui à Vichy,” as Michèle Cointet rightly observes, but its privileged position provided the members of the government with a good means of pressure, should the city refuse to abide by the government's rules.<sup>106</sup> That Pierre Laval's hometown, Châteldon, was only a few minutes away from Vichy may also have been considered a plus (by Laval, at least), although there is no evidence that this ever factored into the government's choice of Vichy.

On July 3, 1940, the radio and the newspapers announced that the National Assembly would meet shortly in Vichy. Six days later, the *Journal Officiel* published the decree that

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<sup>101</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 17-18.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>104</sup> “À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n'est plus qu'une sous préfecture,” *Valmy* (September 25, 1944).

<sup>105</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 37.

<sup>106</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 19-20.

officialized the transfer of the government to Vichy: “Le siège du pouvoir exécutif et des Deux Chambres est provisoirement transféré à Vichy.” This initiative was one of the very last one taken by the Third Republic.<sup>107</sup>

The relocation to Vichy was meant to be temporary. As a consequence, the government never fully settled into its new quarters. In his caricatures of Vichy during the war, French cartoonist Sennep frequently drew scenes representing the atmosphere inside the *hôtel du Parc*. Bedrooms and bathrooms are frequently represented as living and working spaces, with paper all over the floor, guests on the bed, and secretaries typing notes in the bath.<sup>108</sup> In *Hors Saison à Vichy*, Henri Sjöderg, the founder of the *Seuil* publishing house, describes the adventures of a man who has been summoned by the government for a temporary mission. Once in Vichy, he goes to the *Parc* where his appointment has been scheduled. The protagonist describes the room/office of a civil servant working for the government: “Chantefer [fit] la cuisine dans la cheminée de sa chambre d’hôtel, transformée en lieu de camping de la façon scoute la plus imprévue.”<sup>109</sup> Neither Sennep’s drawings, nor Sjöderg’s story should be taken as accurate descriptions of life at the *Parc*. Yet, elements of these caricatures are supported by the recollections of witnesses.

In *Les Décombres*, Lucien Rebatet, who, in August 1940, was working as an editor at the government radio offers a description of his working environment:

Les services de la radio d'Etat ... logeaient, fort à l'étroit, dans deux chambres de l'Hôtel du Parc... Dans la première, ... couchait notre rédacteur en chef Georges Hilaire. Un énorme lit de cuivre ... obstruait ... ce lieu. Le plus commode était encore d'assiéger ce monument, de s'y installer à deux ou à trois, à plat ventre ou en chien de fusil, en étalant devant soi ses journaux et le monceau des feuilles d'écoute... Les émissions se faisaient dans deux chambrettes installées vaille que vaille en studio provisoire.<sup>110</sup>

In the words of Jean Débordes, another first-hand witness, “les employés des ministères durent improviser pour pouvoir travailler dans des hôtels non destinés à cet usage. C’était un

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<sup>107</sup> *Journal Officiel*, July 9, 1940.

<sup>108</sup> See for instance: Sennep, *Dans l'honneur et la dignité. Souvenirs de Vichy* (Paris: Société des Éditions de Franc-Tireur, 1945).

<sup>109</sup> Henri Sjöderg, *Hors Saison à Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1945), 130.

<sup>110</sup> Lucien Rebatet, *Les Décombres* (Paris: Denoël, 1942), 291. *Les Décombres* is an anti-Semitic and ultra collaborationist pamphlet, written between July 1940 and May 1942.

entassement général... Certains collaborateurs avaient leur dossier et le téléphone sur le lit transformé dans la journée, en bureau.”<sup>111</sup>

After a few years, this situation annoyed the ministers and bureaucrats, most of whom were looking forward to returning home. According to Robert Aron, who stayed in Vichy for a short period of time,<sup>112</sup> “nul ne vivait [à Vichy] sans désirer être ailleurs.”<sup>113</sup> Frélastre had the same impression:

Autrefois, le pérégrin saisonnier était un ami. Il faisait partie de la station. Il en était une raison d’être. Avec les fonctionnaires des ministères, on ne savait pas où on allait. On ne pouvait familiariser. Eux-mêmes n’y tenaient pas. Ils faisaient sentir à tout bout de champ qu’ils étaient là en exil, en réfugiés du service public. Ils se donnaient parfois des airs de martyrs, dévoués à la cause du pays, condamnés à évoluer dans un cadre qui n’était pas le leur. Ils affichaient une nostalgie des souvenirs de la vraie capitale.<sup>114</sup>

Whether they liked it or not, the members of the government would remain in Vichy for four long years.

## 2. The good sides of living close to the government

Between 1940 and 1945, the French people were deeply impacted by the many wartime restrictions. There were shortages of everything, from raw materials to fuel and food, but it was food that was the overriding concern of most people. In 1942, the official rations amounted to 1,200 calories a day, when at least 2,400 were considered the minimum.<sup>115</sup> In January 1942, Paris’ mortality rate was forty-six percent higher than the average for the years between 1932 and 1938, and this situation led people to make desperate choices. One Parisian, for example, reportedly strangled his granddaughter because she ate his meat ration.<sup>116</sup> Although the food situation may not have been as desperate everywhere, most cities in France experienced similar problems with regards to food. It was also true in the unoccupied zone. In the fall of 1941, the minister of the interior observed that public opinion in all of southern France was mostly

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<sup>111</sup> Jean Débordes, *A Vichy la vie de tous les jours sous Pétain* (Thionne: Edition du Signe, 1994), 44.

<sup>112</sup> On Aron’s experience in Vichy, see: Robert Aron, *Fragments d’une vie* (Paris: Plon, 1981).

<sup>113</sup> Robert Aron, *Fragments d’une vie* (Paris: Plon, 1981), 159.

<sup>114</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 67.

<sup>115</sup> Gilles Perrault and Jean-Pierre Azéma, *Paris under the occupation* (New York: Vendome, 1989), 27.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.



concerned with material issues, especially those relating to food, heating, clothing, and shoes.<sup>117</sup> Vichy was not spared. Frélastre, for example, remembers the very long lines at every shop he went to with his mother.<sup>118</sup> In the report of a meeting at the City Hall on December 24, 1941, the municipality complained that the city received insufficient food supplies:

Les grands centres de production répartissent leur production selon un plan national, la partie dévolue à Vichy est infime car les besoins de la ville paraissent sous évalués. En effet, Vichy, d'après les chiffres officiels du dénombrement n'a que 25,000 habitants alors que la population alimentée par le commerce Vichyssois est actuellement d'au moins 72,000 personnes. A diverses reprises, la situation a été signalée à M. le Ministre du Ravitaillement, à M. l'Intendant Départemental du Ravitaillement Général et à M. l'Intendant Régional du Ravitaillement, aux Services des Renseignements Généraux, au Ministre de l'Intérieur, etc... Satisfaction n'a pu être donnée que pour quelques jours et au cours d'une visite que la Municipalité a rendu le 11 octobre à M. Charbin, Secrétaire d'Etat au Ravitaillement, il ne lui a été laissé que peu d'espoir de voir augmenter le tonnage de légumes à provenir des grosses regions de production au profit de la ville de Vichy. Depuis 15 jours, les arrivages sont insignifiants alors que 20 tonnes journalières de légumes et de fruits seraient nécessaires.<sup>119</sup>

While food was a source of worries and concerns in Vichy, not everybody was affected equally. The high officials, the foreign diplomats, and the local bourgeoisie had little, if any, supply difficulties.<sup>120</sup> Everywhere in France, French officials and German authorities were treated to meals at prices only they could afford.<sup>121</sup> This was especially visible in Vichy. According to several sources and testimonies, a great number of hotels, bars, and cafés in Vichy were very well supplied throughout the war, amongst which: the *hôtel Le Majestic*, the *salon André*, the *hôtel Lafayette*, the *hôtel du Parc*, the *Bonnet café*, the *hôtel Toulousain*, the *hôtel des Ambassadeurs*, the *hôtel Chomel*, the *hôtel de la Paix*, the *bar du Lux*, the *bar Cintra*, the *Brasserie Olympique*, and the restaurant *Trouillet*. In 1943 and 1944, several of these hotels, bars, and restaurants were

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<sup>117</sup> Cited in Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France*, 14.

<sup>118</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 34.

<sup>119</sup> AD (Allier), 956 W 4. Proceedings of a meeting of the municipal council (November 4, 1941).

<sup>120</sup> Wirth, *Vichy Capitale*, 26.

<sup>121</sup> In the *hôtel Chomel* and the *hôtel Castel Rolland*, the price of a meal with wine ranged from 250 to 500 francs. Jean Débordes, *Le temps des passions. L'Allier dans la guerre* (Romagnat: Édition De Borée, 2005), 402.



frequented by Philippe Henriot, Joseph Darnand, Hugo Geissler, the chief of Vichy's SIPO-SD, as well as by *miliciens*.<sup>122</sup>

The unequal food treatment between the population and those in power was referred to the *Chambre de l'Hôtellerie*, yet the decisions taken by the Chamber proved inconclusive, and the "popotes" (the restaurants frequented by the members of the government and the Germans) continued to receive bigger – almost unlimited – supplies, thereby further infuriating the population.<sup>123</sup> February and March 1943 postal control reports pointed out that "la priorité donnée aux popotes et restaurants est jugée scandaleuse,"<sup>124</sup> and that this situation had led to many "plaintes très vives" because

les légumes et les fruits manquent, la viande se fait rare, le beurre est introuvable..., les œufs se paieraient 5 francs pièces à la ferme et 10 francs au marché noir. Les principaux responsables seraient les fonctionnaires et le corps diplomatique qui, possédant essence et portefeuille bien garni, battent les campagnes et n'hésitent pas à se livrer à la surenchère pour obtenir les rares produits que les paysans consentent à vendre.<sup>125</sup>

In April, the same observations were made: not only did people continue to complain about the lack of food, but they also accused the government "de profiter des produits frais disponibles dans les campagnes selon leur bon vouloir."<sup>126</sup> As food was arriving late at the local market, and in decreasing quantities, on June 10, 1943, almost 1,000 people, especially women, took to the streets and looted the food stored at the market.<sup>127</sup> In the diary he kept throughout the war, Pierre Nicolle, the social and economic counselor of the *Fédération des Associations régionales* mentions the event: "vendredi 11 juin 1943 : Dès mon retour à Vichy, j'ai appris que (...) le ravitaillement vient d'être la cause de graves incidents. Pour la première fois, plus de huit cents femmes ont violemment manifesté dans la matinée et se sont livrées au pillage des marchandises entreposées dans les halles."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent: Auvergne – Bourbonnais* (1940-1945) (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 190.

<sup>123</sup> AD (Allier), 956 W 4. Correspondence between the municipality of Vichy and the *Chambre professionnelle départementale de l'industrie et de l'hôtellerie de l'Allier*; report from Vichy's hoteliers to the mayor, Pierre-Victor Léger (December 1941).

<sup>124</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (February 1943).

<sup>125</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (March 1943).

<sup>126</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (April 1943).

<sup>127</sup> Wirth, *Vichy capitale*, 26.

<sup>128</sup> Pierre Nicolle, *Cinquante mois d'armistice - Vichy: 2 juillet 1940 – 26 août 1944. Journal d'un témoin* (Paris: Edition André Bonne, 1947), 193.

In 1943, a local police officer expressed his fears about the long waiting lines and all the other food-related problems, which might become a source for serious disturbances and “un excellent foyer de contamination pour la propagande subversive.”<sup>129</sup> The situation, however, never degenerated in Vichy. Despite the obvious problems related to food supplies and the population’s sentiment that Vichy’s inhabitants were being abused by the government, the city of Vichy was far from being the worst affected cities in France. Frélastre’s statement that “Vichy n’était pas mieux lotie que le reste du pays en matière de ravitaillement”<sup>130</sup> is clearly an overstatement. The housewives’ demonstration at the *marché couvert* in the summer of 1943 was an isolated event, suggesting that the food situation in Vichy was not as desperate as it was in other French cities. Since the events of 1789 and 1917, every government has been aware that food shortages in a capital constitute a serious threat to public order. As a consequence, the state, in collaboration with the municipality, ensured that the city received sufficient food supplies, thus keeping hunger and frustration at a minimum levels.<sup>131</sup>

The authorities’ strategy to ensure that the food situation remained under control varied according to the individuals in charge of the management of food supplies, the availability of the latter, and the time of the year. There is evidence of cases where even small-scale breaches of the law were severely penalized. The court at Cusset, for example, condemned a sixty-four year old woman, who had stolen a few potatoes from a garden, to four months in prison and a 200-franc fine.<sup>132</sup> In the same vein, several owners of restaurants and cafés were heavily sanctioned for failing to display their prices both inside and outside their businesses, as stipulated by the law.<sup>133</sup> These measures were most likely meant to set examples, and for the government to assert its authority in town. On the other hand, other testimonies have underlined how the government showed tolerance toward people who smuggled food from the countryside. Most *Vichyssois* had family, friends or acquaintances among neighboring peasants. Every week, they traveled by train to the countryside and returned with chickens, vegetables and fruits, without declaring them. Frélastre remembers:

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<sup>129</sup> André Gueslin, ed., *De Vichy au Mont-Mouchet : l’Auvergne dans la guerre : 1939-1945* (Clermont-Ferrand: Institut d’études du Massif central, 1991), 11.

<sup>130</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 34.

<sup>131</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 103.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 101-102.

L'arrivée [du train] à Cusset était pittoresque. Des vagues de voyageurs lourdement chargés de sacs à dos, de valises, de paniers et de cabas remplis de ravitaillement, descendaient des voitures à contre-voie, avec leurs bardas, enjambaient les rails et quittaient la gare sans inquiétude... Pendant ce temps, les épouses et les enfants prenaient sagement la sortie officielle, avec des airs de vacanciers inoffensifs. Ils passaient sous le nez des deux gendarmes de service qui, de temps à autre, interpellaient une dame : 'Vous n'avez rien à déclarer ?' Ou bien ils poussaient la curiosité de routine jusqu'à lui demander d'ouvrir son sac. C'était un contrôle fumiste.<sup>134</sup>

Although the city and the government knew that most of the food from these trips to the countryside went undeclared, they remained quiet and people's resourcefulness often went unpunished, even when illegal: "de leur poste, il était aisé aux représentants de la maréchaussée d'apercevoir la bande de débrouillards qui fuyaient en face, comme une volée de moineaux. Mais il ne fallait pas faire de zèle. Il fallait faire la part des choses."<sup>135</sup>

Without going as far as saying that the city was unscathed by the food shortage, the food situation there was nothing compared to that of many other French cities. According to André Gueslin, "une partie des flux [qui devaient alimenter Clermont-Ferrand] était détournée vers Vichy."<sup>136</sup> Even if the majority of the misappropriated food did not end on the plates of the *Vichyssois*, the close proximity of government nonetheless allowed Vichy's population to receive better food supplies than if the city had not been the capital. On June 29, 1944, a carload of condensed milk for Vichy's children, offered by the Swiss government, arrived in the capital.<sup>137</sup> It is unlikely that many other cities in France received such a gift from a foreign government. The fact that city's most disadvantaged groups were entitled to free meals – the distribution of which was organized and managed by the Red Cross in the hall of a local cinema – is another sign of the city's relative privileged treatment.<sup>138</sup> As a result, general mortality remained relatively stable in Vichy, whereas it increased in many other cities, such as Paris and Marseilles.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, children mortality was not as high in Vichy as it was in many other French cities. In 1943, the

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<sup>134</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 26.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>136</sup> Gueslin, *De Vichy au Mont-Mouchet*, 11.

<sup>137</sup> Wirth, *Vichy capitale*, 82.

<sup>138</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 34.

<sup>139</sup> Freeman, "A Capital Problem," 139.

average weight of one-year-olds in Vichy was ten kilograms, whereas the national average was 8,8 kilograms. Infant mortality and stillbirths were also largely inferior to national rates.<sup>140</sup>

The government's presence also benefited the city in many other ways. This was especially true in the early days of the Vichy regime, during which the economic asset of the government's presence in Vichy could not be denied. The postwar problems, some of which concerned the slowness of the financial compensation some hotels were entitled to, have led many *Vichyssois* to argue that the war had been a financial burden upon the city. While the postwar period was indeed challenging for the city (see Chapter 6), the first years of the war were quite positive from a financial perspective. The yearly occupancy of all the city's hotels meant more work for many people, including the 2,500 people who were employed in the hotel industry.<sup>141</sup>

At the beginning of the war, many owners of small hotels considered the requisitions a valuable solution to the economic hardships they were facing. Because of the war, the spa season was not doing very well. Although in 1939 and 1940 there were some rich clients staying in the *Parc*, the *Majestic* and the other palaces, smaller hotels had more difficulty adjusting to the situation. The payments of the requisitions were therefore very much welcomed. On April 1, 1940, a hotel keeper wrote to the mayor to tell him that he was "tout disposé" to have his hotel requisitioned: "Devant les difficultés économiques actuelles, l'impossibilité ... de nous approvisionner en charbon, en huile, en café, en conserves même, ... je reste tout disposé à louer mon établissement... aux conditions stipulées."<sup>142</sup> Requisitions were regulated by laws, which, amongst other things, ensured the owners a monthly rent.<sup>143</sup>

The owners of the requisitioned buildings could negotiate the price of the requisition (within limits). In response to a demand for requisition from the mayor of Vichy on behalf of the *Banque de France*, the owner of the *hôtel Magenta* replied:

Monsieur le Maire de Vichy me prévient que vous seriez désireux de louer mon hôtel pour la durée de la guerre. Je viens donc vous soumettre les prix que je désirerais obtenir. Ma maison avec les annexes comprend 80 chambres de maîtres, un hall, deux salons, une grande salle à manger et de vastes terrasses. Je vous demanderai donc le prix de

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<sup>140</sup> M. Susini, "L'Équipement sanitaire de la Ville de Vichy," in *Vichy Après La Guerre*, ed. Société des Sciences Médicales de Vichy (Vichy: Centre Médical, 1943), 62-74. Cited in Freeman, "A Capital Problem," 139.

<sup>141</sup> Catherine Labbaye, *Joseph Aletti le temps des palaces à Vichy* (Paris: Édition des Écrivains, 2003), 47.

<sup>142</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the owner of the *Hôtel d'Aix et de Chambéry* to the mayor of Vichy (April 1, 1940).

<sup>143</sup> Law of July 11, 1938 (published in the *Journal Officiel* on November 29, 1938).

300,000 francs par an sans être occupée et 600,000 francs étant occupée. Je fournis le service et ce qui est nécessaire au logement. En plus, vous aurez à votre charge le chauffage, l'électricité, l'eau et le blanchissage du linge.<sup>144</sup>

In another letter, the *Commission départementale d'Évaluation des Réquisitions d'Immeubles* notified Vichy's mayor of its decision to pay the owner of a villa 7,300 francs for the latter's requisition between February 2 and May 19, 1941, and 1,400 francs per month for its partial requisition from May 20, 1941 onwards. The Commission asked that the owner let them know whether he accepted or refused the offer within two weeks:

Conformément à l'article 44 du décret du 28 novembre 1938, je vous prie de bien vouloir transmettre la présente notification au prestataire ou à son représentant et l'inviter à vous faire connaître son acceptation ou son refus dans un délai de 15 jours... En cas de non acceptation, le refus motive, qui devra également indiquer la somme réclamée, devra être transmis par votre intermédiaire à Monsieur le Juge de Paix.<sup>145</sup>

Classifieds published in local newspapers confirm that requisitions had their advantages; in March 1942, for example, a requisitioned eighteen-room hotel was advertised for sale as a bankable hotel ("bon revenu").<sup>146</sup>

Of course, requisitions also had downsides. For example, the situation was much harder for the owners of the hotels that had been requisitioned for the Germans. In the fall of 1943, the owner of the *hôtel de la Néva* wrote to the mayor asking for advice on what to do to get the money the Germans owed him. The mayor checked with the *préfet*, who provided the following reply:

... J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que les frais de cantonnement à Vichy ne sont pas à la charge de l'État français. Dans le cas où le Chef des services de la Police allemande à Vichy refuserait de donner suite à la requête de M. Benon tendant au paiement d'une somme de 765 francs représentant le remboursement des dégâts constatés dans son établissement par le personnel du dit service, l'intéressé pourrait constituer un dossier de dommages de guerre comprenant les pièces suivantes:  
1. la demande d'indemnités chiffrées

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<sup>144</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the owner of the *Hôtel Magenta* to the director of the *Banque de France* (April 1, 1940).

<sup>145</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the *Commission départementale d'Évaluation des Réquisitions d'Immeubles* to the mayor of Vichy (December 1, 1942).

<sup>146</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 95.

2. un procès-verbal d'expertise faite par un officier ministeriel ou à défaut les factures acquittées des entrepreneurs qui se sont chargés des réparations.
3. Une attestation du chef des services de la Police allemande à Vichy certifiant que les dégâts causés ont bien été faits par le personnel de la Police allemande.<sup>147</sup>

The *préfet* further specified that this recourse could only be considered once proper legislation was made in this regard.

Je dois toutefois vous signaler que les instructions actuellement en vigueur ne prévoient pas la possibilité d'indemniser les dégâts causés par les troupes d'opérations allemandes. Les demandes présentées en ce sens sont conservées en instance par mes services au titre de dommages de guerre en attendant une réglementation à venir.<sup>148</sup>

Most requisitions in Vichy, however, were made for the French government and were regulated by law, which therefore limited the risks of non-payment.

The government's close proximity also proved a windfall for many restaurateurs, food providers and the owners of luxury stores. Mrs. Corrigan, a very wealthy American widow, held sumptuous dinners twice a week in her living room at the *hôtel Majestic*. Champagne and wine flowed, café was *real* café, premium cigars were offered to all the smokers, and a grey partridge was served whole to each guest.<sup>149</sup> Restaurateurs and food suppliers were not the only ones to take advantage of the presence of very wealthy people in Vichy. Money also widely circulated in luxury department stores that sold jewelry, furs, leatherwear, accessories, and lingerie, amongst other products.<sup>150</sup>

The Vuitton family, who had a store in the hall of the *hôtel du Parc*, was amongst the entrepreneurs who most benefitted from the new status of Vichy. Joseph Aletti, owner of the *Parc*, was ordered by the government to evict all the retailers from the hotel, so that their stores could be requisitioned and rapidly be made available to governmental agencies. Only the Vuittons were allowed to stay. Monsieur Vuitton, Pétain's entourage had been told, was a good Frenchman and a Pétain supporter. In 1936, while the assumption of power by the *Front Populaire* released a burst of optimism for workers and employees, it caused anxiety amongst

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<sup>147</sup> AM (Vichy). Correspondance between M. Benon, the mayor of Vichy and the *préfet* (between August and November 1943).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Joseph Barthélémy, *Ministre de la Justice, Vichy 1941-1943* (Paris-Pygmalion, 1989), 387. Unfortunately for the hotel staff and the food suppliers, Mrs. Corrigan left Vichy in 1942.

<sup>150</sup> Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 195.



employers. In 1940, many employers, including the Vuittons, hoped that Pétain would redress the situation.

The windows of the Vuitton's shop in the *Parc* provided an excellent advertising platform. Every day, dozens of people waited in the hall before being received by Pétain or by the different heads of civil and military offices.<sup>151</sup> But the Vuittons wanted more. Henry Vuitton, who was in charge of the shop in Vichy, strove to infiltrate Pétain's inner circle. In order to do so, he started to very assiduously frequent the *Cintra*, a bar established in one of Napoléon III's cottage that was very popular amongst politicians in Vichy.<sup>152</sup> There he met Robert Lallement, who had just set up "un service artistique du Maréchal," the mission of which was to create beautiful objects in honor of Pétain.<sup>153</sup> Henry Vuitton succeeded in convincing him to hire his team as the official suppliers of the regime. In order to be more productive, Vuitton founded a factory in Cusset, specialized in manufacturing objects that celebrated the glory of Marshall Pétain. Amongst many other items, the Vuittons produced the official busts of Pétain, which were drawn and sculpted by French sculptor François Cogné.<sup>154</sup>

Another tangible and sustainable benefit of the close proximity of the government for the city of Vichy was its promotion to the rank of *sous préfecture* in 1941. Less than a year after the establishment of the government in Vichy, a five-page report written by the *sous-préfet* in Lapalisse (perhaps at the request of Vichy's *sous-préfet*) and listing the drawbacks and inconveniences of keeping the *sous préfecture* in Lapalisse was sent to higher authorities. Amongst others things, the report underlined that

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<sup>151</sup> Stéphanie Bonvicini, *Louis Vuitton, une saga française* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 256, 263 & 272. "A partir de janvier 1941, les restrictions se font durement sentir. Un décret proscriit la fabrication des sacs en cuir qui disparaissent du commerce au grand désespoir des coquettes...Pour contourner l'interdiction, les maroquiniers se mettent à travailler des peaux plus rares en apparence, mais plus facile à se procurer en réalité ; le python, le lézard, le crocodile. La maison Vuitton utilise déjà des cuirs luxueux, qu'elle a importés en grande quantité durant les années folles afin de satisfaire les commandes des clients les plus prestigieux ou les plus capricieux." Bonvicini, *Louis Vuitton*, 273.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 269. According to Pol Pilven, this bar was "un repaire de collaborationnistes et de gestapistes." Cited in Bonvicini, *Louis Vuitton*, 278.

<sup>153</sup> They also encouraged artists from everywhere to produce various items to the glory of Pétain.

<sup>154</sup> When exactly this manufacture started to operate is unknown: "Les premiers courriers retrouvés dans les archives datent de décembre 1941, mais laissent entendre qu'à cette période l'usine est montée et active depuis un certain temps. D'autres sources permettent d'affirmer que l'activité est avérée en 1942 et 1943. Tout laisse à penser qu'elle traversera la guerre. L'usine *Vuitton & Vuitton* de Cusset n'a jamais été enregistrée auprès du Tribunal de commerce de cette commune, bien que ses dirigeants aient voulu le laisser croire." Bonvicini, *Louis Vuitton*, 282.



le Chef-lieu de l'arrondissement présentait cette particularité de n'être ni au centre géographique ni au centre administratif principal... N'ayant auprès de lui ni fonctionnaires, ni inspecteurs de police, ni représentants des organisations professionnelles, le sous-préfet est à l'écart de toutes les sources d'action et d'information.<sup>155</sup>

On June 13, the *préfet* officially asked for the *sous préfecture* to be transferred to Vichy.<sup>156</sup> On August 28 of the same year, Marshall Pétain and Pierre Pucheu, *Ministre secrétaire d'état à l'intérieur*, signed the decree, thereby rendering the transfer effective.<sup>157</sup>

By 1942, the city's ambitions had further grown. Why should Vichy not become *préfecture* local leaders thought? In order to support this new claim, local leaders wanted to increase the city's size by absorbing the three smaller neighboring cities, Cusset, Bellerive and Abrest. The latter, however, did not want to disappear, so they opposed the project and Vichy remained *sous-préfecture*, even though it continued to invest time and money in the city's future development. On March 4, 1943 the "Grand Vichy" project, under the leadership of the architect Gaston Bardet, and for which the municipal council had voted a credit of 100,000 francs, was presented to Pétain.<sup>158</sup> With the situation worsening as the war progressed, nothing concrete emerged from this effort. In the 1950s, however, Vichy's mayor, Pierre Coulon, drew inspiration from Bardet's urban plan to construct a "plan d'eau" and a multi-sport recreational center.<sup>159</sup>

The government's proximity also meant that the police forces established in the city were very numerous, active, and well equipped, thereby enhancing Vichy's climate of security. In Vichy, "l'on ne déplorait que des vols de bicyclettes et de lapins," Michèle Cointet observed.<sup>160</sup>

Furthermore, the presence of the government in town allowed for many unexpected encounters with high-ranking people. The local bourgeoisie regularly mingled with members of the government during dinner dances, card games and outings to the countryside, out of a desire to get to know high-ranking politicians, out of "habits of caste,"<sup>161</sup> or out of ideological affinities

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<sup>155</sup> AD (Allier), 981 W 1. Report from the *sous-préfet* of Lapalisse (undated).

<sup>156</sup> AD (Allier), 981 W 1. Letter from the *préfet* to the *Amiral de la Flotte*, *Ministre secrétaire d'État à l'intérieur* (June 13, 1941).

<sup>157</sup> AD (Allier), 981 W 1. Copy of the decree. Published in the *Journal Officiel* on September 1, 1941.

<sup>158</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 97-99.

<sup>159</sup> Wirth, *Vichy capitale*, 79.

<sup>160</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 95.

<sup>161</sup> Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 203.

– Vichy was indeed home to a small conservative population, who strongly supported Pétain’s National revolution.<sup>162</sup>

To be sure, not all the population interacted with the members of the government. In fact, most residents, according to Georges Frélastre, “se contentai[ent] d’enregistrer cette présence insolite d’une noblesse de bureaux, qui tenait à garder ses distances... Il fallait vivre à côté de cet univers administratif et politique.”<sup>163</sup> Despite the lack of opportunities to interact with their high society neighbors, the *Vichyssois* enjoyed witnessing the perpetual motion of official cars and the agitation of civil servants in the *quartier thermal*, the small neighborhood where the government had established itself.<sup>164</sup> Mrs. B. had a job that required her to sometimes go to the ministries and she remembers loving nothing more than seeing and experiencing all the activity around her. She also very much appreciated, as did many *Vichyssois*, being able to see Pétain weekly, if not daily.<sup>165</sup> Madame Pétain herself was also regularly spotted in Vichy. On August 24, 1941, for instance, she attended the premiere of the film *La vénus aveugle* in a local cinema.<sup>166</sup>

The *hôtel du Parc* never failed to deliver an entertaining show for all those who were authorized to enter. Members of the government could regularly be seen in the main lounge, drinking champagne and socializing, “en prenant des poses de grands laborieux qui se détendent quelques instants après un écrasant labeur d’état.”<sup>167</sup> Social climbers and political opportunists, who gravitated towards powerful figures, offered further distraction. According to Lucien Rebatet, “le hall de l’hôtel du Parc était de l’aube à la nuit tombée, une volière... une ruée toujours renouvelée de perruches en faux blond ou en faux roux, de mirliflores vernissés, de cabots, de plumitifs, d’abbés élégants et de douairières.”<sup>168</sup> The *Vichyssois* who were not allowed in the hotel could observe high society during the day when the rich and the powerful relaxed in the shade of the *Parc des Sources*.<sup>169</sup>

Politicians were not the only celebrities in Vichy. Singers and actors were also commonly seen in town. In 1941 and 1942, Jean Giraudoux was spotted several times. George Frélastre

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<sup>162</sup> Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 71 & 195.

Vichy’s conservative population was mostly made of rich land owners with noble decents, rich doctors, and rich industrialists and entrepreneurs.

<sup>163</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 67.

<sup>164</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 94.

<sup>165</sup> Mrs B., interview with author (December 19, 2013).

<sup>166</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 43.

<sup>167</sup> Yves Pourcher, *Pierre Laval vu par sa fille* (Paris: le Cherche Midi éditeur, 2002), 197-198.

<sup>168</sup> Rebatet, *les Décombres*, 291.

<sup>169</sup> Pourcher, *Pierre Laval vu par sa fille*, 197-198.

remembers also seeing Marthe Richard, a spy during the First World War, who had become a hero in the 1930s following the publication of her book, *Ma vie d'espionne, au service de la France*,<sup>170</sup> and the release of a film adaptation of it in 1937 (*Marthe Richard, au service de la France*). “Grande silhouette élégante, pleine d’autorité, elle arborait un couvre-chef original... À lui seul, le résultat de ce croisement distingué et coquin empêchait qu’elle ne passât inaperçue,” Frelastre recalls.<sup>171</sup> In Rebatet’s words, the city “bourdonnait, comme un Deauville des plus heureux jours. De la gare à l’Allier, c’était un flot de robes pimpantes, de négligés savamment balnéaires, de vestons des grands tailleurs d’Hollywood... Les gazettes locales n’arrivaient plus à tenir le compte de tant de célébrités.”<sup>172</sup> Vichy’s racetrack was another favored place for high society gatherings.<sup>173</sup>

Another asset of living in the capital was the access to entertainment and culture. The heart of the cultural life in Vichy was the *Opéra-Casino* and its annex, the *Casino des fleurs*, which, during the prewar period, had become cultural landmarks in France and in Europe. Although the financial means granted to the Casino and the *Casino des Fleurs* had now been reduced, manpower and material facilities were nonetheless provided to it. Thus, it was able to welcome numerous artists throughout the war: Paul Claudel, Sacha Guitry, Serge Lifar and Maurice Chevalier all performed in Vichy at least once during the war. Lyrical creations, operas, operettas, exhibitions were also regularly presented in Vichy.<sup>174</sup> In 1942, there were forty-three evening events, and forty-one ballet performances, making a total of 130 hours of entertainment.

La saison lyrique 1942 a été brillante et féconde. Outre les œuvres du répertoire, d’intéressantes reprises et de remarquables ballets, il faut noter la belle création du *roi de Lahore*, donnée à l’occasion du centenaire de la naissance de Massenet. Les meilleures vedettes du moment se sont succédées sur le plateau du Grand Casino et chaque spectacle a fait salle comble. La satisfaction du public n’est donc pas à démontrer.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Marthe Richard, *Ma vie d'espionne, au service de la France* (Paris: Les Éditions de France), 1935.

<sup>171</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 57.

<sup>172</sup> Rebatet, *Les décombres*,

<sup>173</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 57.

<sup>174</sup> On this see: Josette Alviset, “La programmation musicale à Vichy: les apparences de la continuité,” in *La vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed., Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2001).

<sup>175</sup> Georges Coustal, “La saison lyrique de l’été 1942,” in *Vichy medical* (1942), 751-756.

Out of respect for prisoners of war and for all the French who were suffering from the Occupation, the members of the government could not enjoy themselves too much in public.<sup>176</sup> As a consequence, entertainment had to remain within limits, yet for the *Vichyssois*, who were only used to being entertained in the summer, it was as if the spa season had not come to an end.

Commemorations and official ceremonies provided the population with another welcome distraction. France's national days and special events related to the Vichy regime, such as July 14 (renamed *Cérémonie en l'honneur des Français morts pour la Patrie*), ceremonies in honor of Joan of Arc, November 11 (although this ceremony always happened without much fanfare to avoid hurting the sensibilities of the Germans), and ceremonies in honor of the *Légion française des combattants*, amongst others, were often celebrated in Vichy in the presence of the government's officials, including Pétain himself.<sup>177</sup> Charitable activities, which were highly recommended by the government, provided the *Vichyssois* with other opportunities to change their minds and enjoy themselves.<sup>178</sup> Sports events were also very popular among the population: rugby, football, cycling, track, gymnastics, golf, tennis, and horse racing.<sup>179</sup>

### 3. The drawbacks amid the advantages

As soon as Vichy became capital, profiteers rushed to the city. Privileged witnesses, such as Robert Aron and Lucien Rebatet, have described the hotels as employment agencies, where all sorts of people were waiting for a chance to meet someone who could offer them a job or a promotion. According to Aron, in the hotel lobbies, "régnait une atmosphère pénible de courtisanerie... Il y avait... dans les couloirs et les bureaux, un grouillement de profiteurs du régime, teints fleuris, boutonniers empourprées, complets à la dernière mode, et, aux lèvres, les slogans de la Révolution Nationale."<sup>180</sup> In Rebatet's words,

Une fois franchie la volière du hall [de l'hôtel du Parc], on se heurtait dans chaque escalier, chaque ascenseur, chaque couloir - et il y en a plusieurs kilomètres - aux plus ahurissants solliciteurs. La moindre

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<sup>176</sup> Bonvicini, *Louis Vuitton*, 279.

<sup>177</sup> On the ceremonies organized by Vichy, see: Dalisson Rémi, "La propagande festive de Vichy. Mythes fondateurs, relecture nationaliste et contestation en France de 1940 à 1944," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 3/2002 (n° 207), 5-35.

<sup>178</sup> On September 27, 1941, for instance, during a fundraising gala, Pétain's cane was auctioned and sold for 144,000 francs. Pétain himself was in attendance. Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 44.

<sup>179</sup> Wirth, *Vichy capitale*, 170.

In 1941, the French athletics cup was organized in Vichy, with medals and trophies presented by Pétain. Wirth, *Vichy capitale*, 174.

<sup>180</sup> Aron, *Fragments d'une vie*, 158-159.

encoignure en abritait des grappes têtues. Des fonctionnaires inamovibles, huissiers, garçons de bureau, larbins de tout genre, traînaient dans ce va-et-vient perpétuel leur paresse rogue et leur affreux débraillé.<sup>181</sup>

Local residents made similar observations. “Tous les quémandeurs de prébendes, tous les préfets en disponibilité, tous les gens de lettres, en mal de sinécures à la censure ou à l’information, l’assièg[eait] du matin au soir,” Maurice Constantin-Weyer wrote in *Vichy et son histoire*.<sup>182</sup>

One example of these profiteers was the Parisian M. Hild. In the summer of 1940 Hild arrived in Vichy, where he presented himself as an advisor to Pétain and a friend of Ménétreel and Darlan. None of this was true, but Hild was intelligent and charming and he soon captured the attention of the municipality and that of the *préfet*, which put him in charge of managing the food supplies that were allotted to the city’s restaurants and grocery stores. Although he swindled dozens of people, buying and selling supplies and fields according to his own rules and personal objectives, the authorities failed to realize the extent of Hild’s scheme, and in 1942, he scored an even bigger coup. In 1942, the increasing difficulties of thousands of second-class civil servants in obtaining food led to the creation of a civil servant cooperative, a *Société Coopérative de Consommation des Administrations Repliées* (SCAR). Building on the SCAR model, Vichy’s unionized hotels also created their own cooperative society, in order to cut out intermediaries. Hild was involved in both projects. More than 18,000 civil servants had adhered to the SCAR, each contributing one hundred francs. In addition to these 1,800,000 francs, the state had advanced 4,000,000 francs. Hild managed to squander all this money in eighteen months.<sup>183</sup> All the profiteers who rushed to Vichy were not as ‘successful’ as Hild, yet, all held aspirations of easy wealth and privilege.

Although there is little doubt that some of these profiteers were *Vichyssois*, most, like Hild, appear to have been individuals from outside of Vichy. This situation irritated Vichy’s population, in large part because these profiteers represented hundreds of additional people to accommodate and feed. Maurice Constantin-Weyer gives a more philosophical explanation to the *Vichyssois*’ annoyance: “Nous déambul[ions] en philosophes désabusés, mon vieil ami André de

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<sup>181</sup> Rebatet, *Les Décombres*, 294.

<sup>182</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire: des origines à nos jours* (Vichy: Szabo, 1947), 149.

<sup>183</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 71. “Affaire SCAR.”

A police investigation concluded that Hild was a swindler. Yet the national police leadership did not want to proceed with the investigation, because the government and thousands of civil servants were involved. Eventually Hild was interned in December 1943 and put under house arrest in February 1944.

Lorde et moi, observant mélancoliquement la sarabande des appétits et des bassesses déchainées.”<sup>184</sup>

This drawback, however, was minor compared to other inconveniences. One significant disadvantages for Vichy to be capital concerned spa tourism. Spa tourism had long been the crux of everything for the city of Vichy, which, for decades, had defined its existence entirely through its relationship with the springs. On August 1, 1914, following the general mobilization in France, the spa season came to an abrupt halt, mostly because many employees in the spa industry, artists, as well as *curistes*, had been drafted. As the war progressed a debate emerged in Vichy about whether it was possible for the city to continue to be an entertaining spa resort despite the horror endured by the soldiers in the trenches and despite the presence of thousands of wounded soldiers in town – temporary hospitals had been set up in several of the city’s hotels. Eventually, the economic motivation proved the strongest and on April 23, 1915, the *Société du Casino* addressed a formal request to the military commander in Vichy for the city to be allowed to open its Casino. The authorization was granted. Every summer throughout the Great War tourists willing to come for a *cure* or simply to rest were therefore free to do so.<sup>185</sup> While the tourist traffic remained very limited between 1914 and 1918, it quickly recovered in the postwar years. The two decades following the armistice were extraordinary, with more than 100,000 tourists every summer in the 1930s.

Unfortunately, spa tourism soon suffered another blow when on June 30, 1940, the requisitions of Vichy’s most sumptuous hotels started. To their great displeasure, the owners of the requisitioned hotels had to ask their rich clients to leave.<sup>186</sup> During its general meeting in 1940, the *Société des grands hôtels de Vichy* (SGHV), in charge of the *hôtel du Parc*, *hôtel Carlton*, *hôtel Majestic*, *hôtel Thermal* and *hôtel Radio* noted that out of its 1,100 rooms, 1,020 had been requisitioned by the French government.<sup>187</sup> Unsurprisingly, this situation sounded the death knell of the spa season. As early as the winter of 1941, Vichy started to think about a way to bring in *curistes* despite the presence of the government.

Yet, the context was much different than during the First World War, especially because

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<sup>184</sup> Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire*, 191.

<sup>185</sup> Josette Alviset, *1914 – 1918, Vichy, les théâtres et la guerre* (Vichy: Imprimerie La Source d’or, 2014), 7-10.

<sup>186</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 27.

<sup>187</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy*’s general assembly (September 27, 1941).



the crossing of the demarcation line was severely restricted by German authorities. Traffic was even sometimes cut off entirely to put pressure on the French authorities.<sup>188</sup> On February 3, 1941, a meeting of the *Bureau de la Société des médecins de Vichy* was held in Vichy, in the presence of the deputy mayor, the chief executive of the *Compagnie fermière*, and the president of the union of hotelkeepers. Despite the existence of the demarcation line and many transport problems, it was estimated that about twenty percent of the regular clientele should be able to come to Vichy. The participants considered the creation of special medical certificates, which would allow patients to cross the demarcation line and obtain a twenty-one day residence permit in Vichy (the usual length of a *cure*). Amongst the other issues tackled during the meeting were accommodation and shortages. In order for a spa season to be somewhat successful, twenty percent of the requisitioned hotel rooms would have to be un-requisitioned, that is about 2,000 (out of about 11,000) and 150 tons of coal and 100 kilograms of soap would have to be sent to Vichy every month to operate the spa resort.<sup>189</sup>

Due to the government wanting to avoid problems with the city, and because the local doctors, whose clients included some ministers and diplomats, constituted an important lobby group, the ministers showed consideration for the city's concerns and agreed to measures that enabled Vichy's spa tourism to slowly resume. To demonstrate their solidarity and support towards the *Vichyssois*, some high officials even decided to *faire une cure*. Pierre Laval, a real *Auvergnat*, set an example: every day, he went to the *Pavillon des Sources* and drank ten grams of *Chomel* water. A few bored diplomats, including the American ambassador, Admiral Leahy, and his wife, were easily convinced to follow Laval's lead.<sup>190</sup> Finally, in order to make rooms available for *curistes*, the government agreed that every year between June 1 and September 30, all the people from outside Vichy who wanted to stay in town for five days or more had to obtain a special permit, which could only be granted under special circumstances.<sup>191</sup>

Despite the government's support, the municipality's efforts to boost spa tourism remained largely unsuccessful. Very few *curistes* came to Vichy between 1940 and 1944. To make matters even worse, many of those who did come left disappointed. Some women said that they found "compensation aux inconvénients de la ville d'eaux devenue siège du gouvernement

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<sup>188</sup> Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France*, 7.

<sup>189</sup> AN, 2 AG 79. "Projet de saison thermale à Vichy 1941." Minutes of the meeting of the *Bureau de la Société des Médecins de Vichy* (February 3, 1941).

<sup>190</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 109-110.

<sup>191</sup> AD (Allier), 724 W 1 A 4. Note from the Allier *préfet* (June 1, 1943).

dans la satisfaction de résider dans la ‘capitale provisoire’ et d’assister aux défilés avec uniforme et musique, ... dont Vichy ‘a l’exclusivité’.”<sup>192</sup> Most *curistes*, however, lamented “l’inconfort,” “[le] manque de distractions de la station thermale,” the presence of “trop de profiteurs et de quémandeurs autour des ministères ; trop de monde dans les cinémas, trop de ‘zazous’ dans les rues, trop de police partout.” They also accused civil servants and ministers of only being “décoratifs” and of having invaded the whole resort.<sup>193</sup> The poor condition of some of Vichy’s thermal facilities only made things worse. In 1943, Vichy physicians vehemently complained:

(...) What have [the members of the government] brought in return? The ruin of hotels and the impossibility of repairing them any time soon, the halt of the thermal season due to abusive requisitions and police measures. (...) Our brand new thermal establishments have been ransacked, (...) and at the Grand Casino, next to an inter-ministerial club for *Messieurs les fonctionnaires*, you’ll find a Ministry drowning in dust (...).<sup>194</sup>

The population was as infuriated by the situation as the *curistes* and the local physicians were; the situation caused a public outcry (“tollé général”) in June 1943. Postal control reports observed that local residents very much looked forward to the government, “ces indésirables,” leaving the city so that spa seasons could resume as before. According to these reports, the *Vichyssois* often complained in their correspondence that “malgré le désir qu’en a exprimé le Maréchal, les saisons n’[ont] pu se dérouler que dans des conditions bien difficiles.”<sup>195</sup> The population’s frustration with the situation made many of the retailers and hotel keepers “hargneux,” in the opinion of the civil servants.<sup>196</sup> The decline in spa tourism was especially hard on the spa employees (*donneuses d’eau*, masseurs, *lingères*, *garçons de bains*), who made their living from the spa industry, and who found it hard to deal with an important loss of income.<sup>197</sup>

Another important drawback of the government’s close proximity was the presence of big contingents of Germans and *miliciens* from late 1942 onwards. While a privileged section of Vichy’s base population remained unworried throughout the war, many *Vichyssois* feared both the Germans and the government’s police.

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<sup>192</sup> AD (Allier). 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (July 1943).

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Words pronounced by Dr. Mathieu de Fossey, President of the *Société des Sciences Médicales de Vichy* at a conference of physicians held in the Grand Casino in 1943. Translation by Kirrily Freeman. Cited in Freeman, “A Capital Problem,” 134.

<sup>195</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Reports from the *contrôle postal* (April and June 1943).

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 109-110.

The first German ‘agents’ established themselves in Vichy as early as 1940. Prior to 1940 German spying operated primarily out of Germany (especially from Münster, Wiesbaden, and Stuttgart). After the 1940 occupation, the Germans sent out Nazi agents to the southern zone and installed surveillance equipment in the area.<sup>198</sup> Under the official pretext of establishing links with all the government agencies in Vichy, the Germans carried out many espionage tasks and surveillance missions there.<sup>199</sup>

Hugo Geissler arrived in Vichy at the end of 1940. Born in 1908 in Strasbourg, Geissler left Alsace after it was reconquered by France in 1918. He joined the SS in 1934. He became a police inspector in 1937, and commissioner in 1939. At the end of 1940, Knochel, the head of the Gestapo in France, sent Geissler, who was fluent in French, to Vichy with five colleagues. There he was appointed chief of the *Deutsche Polizei-Delegation* (the delegation of the German police). His cousin, Robert Roth, joined him in the *Deutsche Polizei-Delegation*. Roth describes their activities in Vichy in 1940 and 1941 as follows: “Nous n’étions que trois ou quatre fonctionnaires allemands, dont Detering et Richter, remplacé en 1942 par Kronke. Nous n’avions alors qu’une activité restreinte : liaisons avec le ministère français de l’intérieur et avec la police française, délivrance de laissez-passer, liaisons téléphoniques.”<sup>200</sup> The activity of the Germans in Vichy was, in fact, not as restricted as suggested by Roth. Detering, for instance, is reported to have often given specific instructions to the head of Pétain’s personal guard, and to have been in regular contact with Pétain’s secretariat.<sup>201</sup> In his memoirs, Joseph Barthélémy deplored the fact that “les Allemands ont toujours su, quelques minutes après chaque séance du conseil des ministres, ce qui s’y était dit et fait.”<sup>202</sup> According to him, Pucheu was only partially responsible for the leaked information from Vichy; many German agents gravitated around the government, making it impossible to efficiently keep information confidential.<sup>203</sup>

In 1940 and 1941, the German presence in Vichy was much more constraining for the government than it was for the population. The occupation of the whole of France in November 1942, however, changed the situation in a significant way. The Germans could now operate

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<sup>198</sup> Simon Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis : 1940-1942 : complexités de la politique de collaboration* (Paris: Autrement, 2005), 11-12.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 18; Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 15.

<sup>200</sup> Cited in Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 15.

<sup>201</sup> Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 20.

<sup>202</sup> Barthélémy, *Ministre de la Justice*, 80.

<sup>203</sup> Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis*, 26.

everywhere they wanted in France without restriction or hindrance.<sup>204</sup> The main Gestapo detachment in the Allier was located in Vichy, with branch offices in Montluçon and Moulins.<sup>205</sup> Himmler appointed Geissler *Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienstes* (head of the SIPO-SD) for the Auvergne region. As a result, Geissler became head of the powerful KdS-Vichy, composed of about eighty German policemen. In Vichy, Geissler was the representative of Karl Oberg, the SS and SD leader in France. All along the Allier river, every 100 meters, a German sentinel stood, automatic rifle in hand.<sup>206</sup> The time when the Germans were discreet and respectful towards the local population was over.

In the *quartier thermal*, the German presence also became increasingly visible. In total, twenty-five buildings were requisitioned for the Germans, most of which were located on the beautiful *Boulevard des États-Unis*.<sup>207</sup> Konrad-Adrian, a member of the SD-Vichy, provides a detailed description of the German quarter in Vichy:

Au début de l'avenue des Etats-Unis une villa servait d'habitation à des officiers du SD. Attenante à cette villa une autre villa était occupée par Geissler, puis Bömelburg. Suivait une grande maison aménagée en bureaux pour l'Abteilung VI avec Detering et Marnitz. A côté de cette maison s'élevait un autre immeuble avec des chambres réservées aux visiteurs allemands et aux officiers de passage qui avaient à faire avec nos services. Toujours en suivant l'avenue des Etats Unis, il y avait l'hôtel du Portugal, bâtie de cinq ou six étages. Le rez-de-chaussée servait de salle à manger et le sous-sol de cuisine. Aux étages logeaient les membres du SD. Attenante à l'hôtel du Portugal, une villa de deux étages était occupée par l'Abteilung 1 (...). Au delà d'une cour, une autre villa où se tenaient Batissier et Altmann, ce dernier étant le chef de l'équipe Batissier. Voilà pour le pâté de maisons de l'avenue des Etats Unis. Un mur de deux mètres de haut, s'étendant sur les quatre cinquièmes de cette voie, protégeait les immeubles. Derrière il y avait un grand jardin au milieu duquel avait été construit un blockhaus et un mur entourait cette partie de la propriété. De plus des barbelés et des chevaux de frise empêchaient tout passage. Il existait trois autres blockhaus, pouvant contenir trois gardiens chacun : l'un à l'angle de la villa habitée par les officiers, l'autre devant celle occupée par Batissier et le troisième dans la rue transversale à l'angle de deux rues. (...) Des cellules pour les détenus avaient été construites sous la villa de l'équipe Batissier.

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<sup>204</sup> Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis*, 12 ; Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 20.

<sup>205</sup> *La libération du département de l'Allier* (Moulins: Conseil Général de l'Allier, 1994), 17.

<sup>206</sup> Archives IHTP, Arc 092. Françoise de Boissieu's memoir: *Souvenir du pays retrouvé (1940-1944)*.

<sup>207</sup> AD (Allier), 773 W 8. List of the buildings requisitioned for the Germans (June 1, 1944).

Other *Abteilungen* had their offices on a small street parallel to the *Boulevard des États-Unis*, close to where the dossiers and reports of the French police were centralized. On the other side of the street, there was:

une maison de plusieurs étages, réservée aux familles des membres du kommando français du SD. Quelques mètres plus loin, ... le SD occupait aussi l'hôtel Magenta dont le rez-de-chaussée était constitué par un poste de garde, et un foyer où nous trouvions toutes les consommations désirables. Les étages supérieurs étaient utilisés comme habitations seulement. Deux ou trois villas faisant suite à l'hôtel Magenta étaient également occupées par le SD de Vichy. Voilà quelle était l'importance de la police allemande de Vichy. Je précise que les détenus étaient, pour la plus grande partie, emprisonnés à Moulins, à la prison militaire allemande. Certains se trouvaient aussi à la prison militaire du 92<sup>e</sup> à Clermont-Ferrand. Seuls séjournèrent dans les cellules de Vichy, les prisonniers dont l'affaire était en cours. Ils ne restaient pas longtemps à Vichy car le chef exigeait qu'il y ait toujours des cellules vides en cas de besoin.<sup>208</sup>

The 'German district' was protected by several *blockhaus*, with three guards in each of them.<sup>209</sup> A little further away, on *rue de Paris*, a placing bureau, attached to the *Arbeit-seinsatzstab* Clermont-Ferrand, opened its doors to facilitate the recruitment of the workforce for the Reich.<sup>210</sup> According to a nominative list dated from 1944, the German detachment in Vichy was composed of 139 individuals, amongst whom, Renthe Fink, Struwe (both worked in the German embassy), Von Neubronn (from the army), Bömelgurg, Sterzing et Geissler (all three of whom worked in the police forces).<sup>211</sup>

Still, the Germans were not the only ones who struck terror in Vichy. By 1940, Vichy had set up a solid legislative shield without any German pressure, allowing them to revoke civil servants and judges with no motive, to annul some of the naturalizations granted since 1927, to dissolve masonic lodges, to discriminate against the Jews, to arrest and intern the communists, the Gaullists, and all other people deemed dangerous for France.<sup>212</sup> While such measures did not affect Vichy in any specific way, the creation of parallel police forces, well before the creation of the milice, did: Groussard's *Groupes de protection* (GP), the anti-communist police, and the

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<sup>208</sup> Konrad-Adrian's questioning (November 20, 1944), cited in Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 22-24.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Georges Rougeron, "La présence allemande à Vichy," *Les Cahiers Bourbonnais* 107 (1984), 47.

<sup>211</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. List of the German authorities in Vichy (June 3, 1944).

<sup>212</sup> Denis Peschanski, "Exclusion, persécution, répression," in *Vichy et les Français*, eds., Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Paris, Fayard, 1992), 211.

police charged with surveillance of secret societies, amongst others, had important contingents in Vichy.<sup>213</sup> During the summer of 1942, Pierre Nicolle observed that “Vichy est de plus en plus surveillée par la police,” with the *Majestic* and the *Parc* closely guarded by mobile-armed units.<sup>214</sup> Identity verification in hotels and rented apartments and villas became more and more frequent.<sup>215</sup> Visitors often mentioned the haunting presence of the police in Vichy, on the streets, in hotels, but also in restaurants and cafés.<sup>216</sup>

Conditions became increasingly tense in 1943 and 1944. The police’s disobedience, of which the government was aware, led to the transformation of security bodies and the incorporation of non-state agencies into the more traditional public bodies. The creation of the *Service d’ordre légionnaire* (SOL), which shortly after became the milice, and a second *Service pour le renseignement et l’action* in 1943, were the most essential elements of this transformation. Most leaders and members of these groups worked closely with the Gestapo.<sup>217</sup> In Vichy, the milice established its offices and torture chambers on rue Nationale and rue Foch (at the *Petit Casino*), and its prison at the *Château des Brosse*. There were about 110 established and powerful members of the milice in the capital.<sup>218</sup>

In May 1944, Pierre Poinot also arrived in Vichy. In May 1944, Poinot was appointed head of the *Troisième sous-direction des renseignements généraux*, which by the spring of 1944 had become a key player in the fight against the enemies of Vichy and Germany. Poinot had already spent two years in Bordeaux, where his team had successfully tracked down Jews, communists and resisters from the Gironde department.<sup>219</sup> According to a first-hand witness interviewed in 1945, the people arrested by Poinot were “frappées sans distinction d’âge, de sexe, ou de situation sociale, à coups de poing, de pied, de cravache, de nerf de bœuf, (...) Certaines [des victimes] eurent la tête plongée dans l’eau jusqu’à évanouissement, d’autres furent pendues par les mains ou le cou et frappées en même temps avec un acharnement sauvage.”<sup>220</sup> Interrogations could last several days. “Aucun sentiment ne semblait pénétrer [les tortionnaires],

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<sup>213</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 176.

<sup>214</sup> Nicolle, *Cinquante mois d’armistice*, 13 (entries August 7 and 8, 1942).

<sup>215</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the regional police on the events of the past twenty-four hours in the Allier (August 9, 1942).

<sup>216</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 174.

<sup>217</sup> Jacques Delarue, “La police,” in *Vichy et les Français*, eds., Azéma and Bédarida, 309.

<sup>218</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Document stating the address of the milice; Eugène Martres, *L’Auvergne dans la tourmente 1939-1945* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 1998), 166.

<sup>219</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 107 W 321-324. “Affaire brigade Poinot.”

<sup>220</sup> AD (Allier), 612 W 23. “Brigade Poinot.”



si ce n'est une méchanceté terrifiante. Il ne voyait que le but à atteindre et utilisait tous les moyens.”<sup>221</sup>

In a postwar statement, the municipality of Vichy noted that “Vichy [avait été] encombrée d’une foule de miliciens (2,000) de SS (3,000) et de Gestapo (600) qui jusqu’à l’heure de la libération [tinrent] la ville sous le régime de l’inquisition et [poursuivirent] sans la moindre relâche leurs arrestations.”<sup>222</sup> According to Dr. Colomb, president of Vichy’s *Comité de Libération* in 1944, there would have been 7,000 *miliciens* in the capital.<sup>223</sup> These figures seem exaggerated as a nominative list of the German detachment in Vichy indicates that there were a slightly more than 110 Germans in town in June 1944.<sup>224</sup> Although it is possible that this list only includes the names of the German officials, and that the number of Germans and *miliciens* was revised upward during the summer of 1944, it is nonetheless unlikely that the figures were close to the ones cited by Colomb or the municipality. Regardless, the German and milice contingents in Vichy were still very big, and extremely violent, and they created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, and made any opposition to the government or the occupying forces in Vichy particularly dangerous.

As the war intensified, fear grew among Vichy’s population. Georges Frélastre remembers how, after the Germans invaded the southern zone, “il n’était plus possible de vivre sans crainte... La morosité s’était muée en angoisse... Sur les cours [à Cusset], les promeneurs étaient moins nombreux. Les groupes spontanés, friands de blagues et de bavardages anodins, se firent plus rares.”<sup>225</sup> In December 1942, the announcement of the coming of Marshall von Rundstedt to Vichy “apporta un surcroît d’inquiétude.”<sup>226</sup> The following year, firing exercises in Bellerives were reported to have caused somewhat of a stir in the population.<sup>227</sup> The arrest of French officers and civil servants by the Germans in 1943 and early 1944 was another source of

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<sup>221</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 107 W 321. “Brigade Poinot (cours de justice).” Report from the police commissioner (May 18, 1945).

<sup>222</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d’Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Communiqué de la mairie de Vichy à la société française des historiens locaux à Roannes (undated).

<sup>223</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d’Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

<sup>224</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. List of the German authorities in Vichy (June 3, 1944).

<sup>225</sup> Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 68-99.

<sup>226</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (December 1942).

<sup>227</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire divisionnaire Chef du district de Police de l’arrondissement de Vichy* to the *sous-préfet* in Vichy (September 21, 1943).

worry for the *Vichyssois*.<sup>228</sup> Surveys conducted in the hotels and the city halls in January 1943 suggested that the arrests might soon be extended.<sup>229</sup> If people working for the government were at risk, ordinary people were quite possibly even more so. Finally, the blood-curdling screams arising from the milice's or the Gestapo's basements traumatized all those who heard them: "J'prends mon boulot à 5 heures du matin. J'y vais en vélo. En passant devant l'hôtel du Portugal, ça a été terrible. J'ai entendu des hurlements de douleur qui provenaient, c'est sûr, de la cave. I d'vaient torturer quelqu'un. C'était atroce."<sup>230</sup>

## Conclusion

In June, when the *Clermontois* learned that the French government was coming to their city, "people clean[ed], polish[ed], wash[ed], mend[ed] their rugs..."<sup>231</sup> When, after two days, the ministers left, people consoled themselves by saying that it would be from "Clermont-Ferrand-Vichy, double capitale," that Pétain's government would undertake the task of rebuilding France.<sup>232</sup> In 1940, the *Clermontois* had good reasons to be envious of Vichy, which had been chosen to become France's substitute capital.

In 1940 and 1941, the majority of Vichy's grassroots population indeed significantly benefited from their city's new status as capital. Requisitions earned innkeepers and property owners money; employment opportunities rose; and the city became a *sous préfecture*. In 1940 and early 1941, however, nobody in France could have foreseen the events that would unfold in the following years. Although some local residents continued to benefit from the close proximity of the government throughout the war, the early enthusiasm kept on declining, especially when it became clear that the situation was a major blow for the spa seasons. With the worsening of the situation everywhere in France and the establishment of large contingents of Gestapo and *miliciens* in Vichy in early 1943, the *Vichyssois* realized that they actually had more to lose than to gain. "The occupation put the whole of French society to the test. It gave rise to contrary reactions and to unclear, uncertain and ambivalent attitudes. Nobody was dispensed from making

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<sup>228</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the Allier préfet to the l'Ambassade de France Secrétaire d'État auprès du Chef du gouvernement (February 13, 1943). Nicolle, *Cinquante mois d'armistice*, 346, 350 & 355 (entries from January 26, 1944, January 31, 1944, and February 4, 1944).

<sup>229</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (January 1943).

<sup>230</sup> Testimony of a *Cussétois* employed in a ministry, cited in Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois*, 22.

<sup>231</sup> *La Montagne*, (July 1, 1940). Cited in Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France*, 4.

<sup>232</sup> *Le Moniteur* (July 3, 1940). Cited in Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France*, 5.

a choice,” Philippe Burrin writes in *France under the Germans*,<sup>233</sup> not even the *Vichyssois*, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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<sup>233</sup> Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 4.

## CHAPTER 2 – Collaborationism, Collaboration, Resilience and Resistance

The studies by Philippe Burrin, Pierre Laborie, and Denis Peschanski (amongst others) have shown that the behaviors and responses of the French population to the Vichy regime need to be assessed with caution and nuance. Analyzing the evolution of public opinion between 1940 and 1944 in any city or department requires (1) an investigation into the nature and scale of the occupation in this particular place, (2) an exploration into the system of representations that emerged amongst the long-term residents, and (3) an investigation into the prewar history of the community under study.<sup>234</sup> Although this chapter borrows from the methodology and insight of the above-mentioned scholarship, it does not provide a detailed analysis of the evolution of public opinion – or social imaginary, to use Pierre Laborie’s expression,<sup>235</sup> in Vichy. This chapter’s objective is more modest.

Continuing Chapter 1’s discussion, Chapter 2 examines grassroots collaborationism, collaboration and resistance. It reveals how the local obsession with spa tourism, the weak level of politicization of the *Vichyssois*, the government’s close proximity to the population, Pétain’s kindness and availability, and the significant presence of Gestapo and *miliciens* all played major roles in the evolution of the population’s behavior during the war.

### 1. Grassroots collaborationism

Among those who opted for a voluntary collaboration with Germany, one must differentiate the collaborators from the collaborationists. Collaboration with Germany took on different forms depending on whether it was inspired by the fascist ideology (collaborationism) or by the belief that collaborating was the best way to defend national interests (collaboration) or individual goals. The ‘collaborator’ label applies to the politics of collaboration with Germany that were conducted by the different Vichy governments between 1940 and 1944 (the *collaboration d’Etat*), whereas the ‘collaborationist’ label applies to the French people who

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<sup>234</sup> Philippe Burrin, *La France à l’heure allemande 1940-1944* (Paris : Seuil, 1995); Pierre Laborie: *L’Opinion française sous Vichy. Les Français et la crise d’identité nationale, 1936-1944* (Paris: Seuil, 2001); Denis Peschanski, “Résistance, résilience et opinion dans la France des années noires.” *Psychiatrie française*, vol. XXXVI, 2/05 (2006), 194-210; Denis Peschanski and Thomas Fontaine, *La Collaboration 1940-1945. Vichy, Paris, Berlin* (Paris: Tallandier, 2015).

<sup>235</sup> Pierre Laborie, “De l’opinion publique à l’imaginaire social,” *Vingtième siècle. Revue d’histoire* 18 (1988), 101-117.

argued in favor of a large-scale alliance with Nazi Germany.<sup>236</sup>

The two main collaborationist parties were the *Parti populaire français* (PPF) and the *Rassemblement national populaire* (RNP). The PPF, which was founded by Jacques Doriot in 1936, was the biggest fascist-inspired party in prewar France. Although the party was forbidden in 1940, it continued its activity within other collaborationist movements until April 1941, when Doriot officially reformed it. The RNP was founded in 1941 by Marcel Déat, a former member of the SFIO. The RNP was mostly run by men from the pacifist Left. The *Parti franciste*, founded in 1933 and directed by Marcel Bucard, was the third biggest collaborationist party in France. Other collaborationist organizations include, but are not restricted to, the *Mouvement social révolutionnaire* (MSR), the *Collaboration* group, the *Jeunes de l'Europe nouvelle*, and the *Ligue française*.

The relentless quest to reach their ideals led some collaborationists to engage in behaviors that were at once extreme and absurd, as was, for example, the enrolment of Frenchmen in the Waffen-SS, via the *Légion des volontaires français contre le bolchévisme* (LVF), in the name of nationalist and patriotic ideals. The LVF was born of a collaboration between Marcel Déat, Jacques Doriot, Pierre Constantini (from the *Ligue française*) and Eugène Deloncle (from the *Mouvement social révolutionnaire*) shortly after the beginning of the Operation Barbarossa.<sup>237</sup> The LVF went on to fight on the eastern front against the Soviet army. In the summer of 1944, the LVF was disbanded and its members were incorporated with the Waffen-SS.<sup>238</sup>

Although the great majority of collaborationist activity occurred in Paris, some organizations succeeded in setting up a local presence. The *Collaboration* group, for instance, had thirty-three committees in the southern zone.<sup>239</sup> In a document dated September 21, 1943, the

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<sup>236</sup> Although different, collaborationism and state collaboration are not entirely separate. In 1943 and 1944, some collaborationists succeeded in integrating the government (which they had strongly criticized in 1940 and 1941, and which they would further radicalize); in 1944, the *milicien* Philippe Henriot was named head of information and propaganda, while Marcel Déat became *Ministre du Travail et de solidarité nationale*. Moreover, while the milice emerged out of a collaborationist initiative, it was officially created by Vichy in January 1943. On the milice, see: Pierre Giolitto, *Histoire de la Milice* (Paris: Perrin, 2002); Michèle Cointet, *La milice française* (Paris: Fayard, 2013).

<sup>237</sup> Operation Barbarossa was the code name for Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, which began on June 22, 1941.

<sup>238</sup> On the collaborationist parties and organizations, see: Pascal Ory, *La France allemande, 1933-1945 : paroles du collaborationnisme français* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); Pascal Ory, *Les Collaborateurs (1940-1945)* (Paris: Seuil, 1980); Bertram M. Gordon, *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), Philippe Burrin, *La dérive fasciste. Doriot, Déat, Bergery, 1933-1945* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>239</sup> Ory, *Les Collaborateurs*, 63.

*Commissaire Chef du District de Police de l'Arrondissement de Vichy* mentioned that the group *Collaboration* and its youth section *Les Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle*, the PPF and its youth section *Les Jeunesses Populaires Françaises*, and the *Parti Franciste* all had local branches in Vichy. The LVF was also reported to have successfully established itself in the new capital.<sup>240</sup>

In Vichy, like elsewhere in France, citizens' motivations for joining collaborationist groups were varied. While some members and sympathizers of these groups shared the same ideological views on the war and on France more generally as those of the groups' leaders, it was not always so. In fact, people often joined collaborationist organizations for other (less ideological) reasons. For instance, many saw collaborationism as a means to integrate a society that had rejected them and thus to obtain social vengeance. According to Philippe Burrin, one out of four supporters were from working and middle classes.<sup>241</sup> In Vichy, there are many examples of struggling men and women who joined collaborationist groups. Simone Jacoby joined the *Parti franciste* after she lost her job as a waitress and her friend suggested that she adhere to the organization.<sup>242</sup> Jany Batissier, a former policeman from the nearby city of Moulins, whose career was not as good as he had hoped, befriended Hugo Geissler, chief of the Gestapo in Vichy immediately after the German officer had arrived in town. When in January 1944 Geissler decided to collaborate with a French team after observing that his German team had difficulty tracking and repressing the opposition they were meeting, he naturally chose Batissier to create a brigade of French agents. Batissier willingly accepted and renamed himself Captain Schmitt for the occasion.<sup>243</sup> Batissier was also a sympathizer, and probably a member, of the *Parti franciste*, the meetings of which often took place at his home.<sup>244</sup> In addition to working for Geissler, Batissier also worked for François Darlan and Pierre Poinot.<sup>245</sup> Batissier's sister, who was Geissler's mistress, engaged in propaganda activity for the PPF and was suspected to work as a

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<sup>240</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire Chef du District de Police de l'Arrondissement Vichy* to the *sous-préfet* (September 21, 1943).

<sup>241</sup> Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 427.

The socio-professional composition of the milice is telling in that regard: while the milice was headed by partisans who almost exclusively came from the extreme right, many sympathizers were unpoliticized youth from popular classes.

<sup>242</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Minutes of Simone Jacoby's hearing (December 5, 1944).

<sup>243</sup> Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent: Auvergne – Bourbonnais* (1940-1945) (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 20-22.

<sup>244</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Information note about the *Parti franciste* by Vichy's police commissioner to the investigating judge at Cusset's tribunal (December 6, 1944).

<sup>245</sup> Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 20; Jean Débordes, *L'Allier dans la guerre (1939-1945)* (Romagnat: De Borée, 2000), 288 & 314.



German intelligence agent.<sup>246</sup>

Another common motivation for joining these organizations was fear. Gaston Drijard, for instance, explained that he had joined the milice in April 1944 out of fear of being sent to Germany as a forced worker.<sup>247</sup> Other explanations are to be sought within the member's entourage, especially in the case of the enrolment of very young (wo)men. Charles Groudin joined the *Parti franciste* in 1943, at the age of sixteen, because he was attracted by the "costume, uniforme et bottes, que l'on me promettait et par les perspectives d'indépendance que l'on me faisait entrevoir." According to a police report, it was Groudin's promiscuous friends, "versant dans le genre 'zazeu' et se croyant tout permis," that had pushed him into the arms of the *parti franciste*.<sup>248</sup> André Cantelaube also joined the *Parti franciste* at the age of 16, and he "est aussitôt [devenu] un propagandiste et un recruteur acharné... apposant des inscriptions sur les murs, collant des papillons, vendant sur la voie publique, en 'tenue de chemise bleue' le journal franciste." In 1944, Cantelaube joined the Gestapo. His motivations for joining the collaborationist group are unclear. At the liberation he simply stated that he had joined the Gestapo because Batissier had asked him to.<sup>249</sup> While there could have been many reasons for teenagers such as Groudin and Cantelaube to be strongly involved in the milice, such a desire to quench sadistic desires, in most cases, it appears that the influence of older friends or family members played a significant role in their enrolment.

Other advantages of these organizations included the erasure of some, often lengthy, criminal records,<sup>250</sup> and the very good remuneration. A soldier from the LVF, for example, earned up to 3,000 francs if he were fighting on the front lines.<sup>251</sup> The average salary of a *milicien* was equally attractive: between 2,500 and 3,000 francs for a member from the *Franc-Garde*.<sup>252</sup> In comparison, in 1938, a Parisian worker earned about 1,000 francs a month.<sup>253</sup> The easiest way to

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<sup>246</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the Allier Préfet to the *Secrétaire Général pour la Police* in Vichy about clandestine meetings organized by the PPF (September 1, 1942).

<sup>247</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Minutes of Gaston Drijard's hearing (undated).

<sup>248</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Minutes of Charles Groudin's hearing (December 3, 1944); Report from an inspector about Groudin's hearing (December 4, 1944).

<sup>249</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 69. Information note on André Cantelaube (March 5, 1946). At the end of 1943, his zeal landed him the appointment head of the local branch of the *Légion Franciste*. In late July 1944, he was part of Darnand's escort in Lyon.

<sup>250</sup> Cointet, *La Milice*, 76.

<sup>251</sup> Krisztián Bene, *La collaboration militaire française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Talmont St Hilaire: Editions Codex, 2012), 60.

<sup>252</sup> Jean-Pierre Azéma and Olivier Wieviorka, *Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Perrin, 2004), 326.

<sup>253</sup> Alfred Sauvy, "Les salaires dans l'économie française," *Revue économique* 1:5 (1950), 514.

acquire wealth was to become an agent for the Germans, as the latter disposed of virtually unlimited funds due to their economic exploits in France.<sup>254</sup> This lucrative aspect was particularly important given that since the defeat, the country had been confronted with a high rate of unemployment. Like elsewhere, several men and women in Vichy did not resist the temptation to take the easy way out and became informants to the Gestapo or the milice in order to supplement their income.<sup>255</sup>

The branches of the collaborationist organizations established in Vichy were reported to engage in various propaganda activities: tracts, *papillons*, posters and public inscriptions.<sup>256</sup> The association *Collaboration du Bourbonnais*, the local branch of the *Collaboration* group, also organized several public talks at the *Grand Casino* in Vichy. Georges Claude, a member of the honorary committee of *Collaboration*, the propagandist Dr. Manfred Zapp, and Philippe Henriot were amongst the most notable guest speakers they received. Many other events, like banquets, were organized in Vichy under the initiative of the association.<sup>257</sup>

In spite of the propaganda, however, the collaborationist parties failed to make a significant impact on Vichy's population. Proportionally, collaborationism was not more developed in Vichy than it was in the rest of France. The collaborationists accounted for a very small portion of the French, with approximately 100,000 adherents, "parmi lesquels certaines adhésions étaient de pure circonstance."<sup>258</sup> In Vichy, the local section of the *Parti Populaire Français* only had about 100 members.<sup>259</sup> The *Parti franciste* was even less successful, with only twenty-four members.<sup>260</sup> Similarly, the RNP was reported to only have existed "à l'état embryonnaire" in the Allier department.<sup>261</sup> The number of contributing members to the PPF in the Allier and in Vichy is unknown, although we know that about 100 sympathizers attended a

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<sup>254</sup> Simon Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis : 1940-1942 : complexités de la politique de collaboration* (Paris: Autrement, 2005), 194.

<sup>255</sup> For examples of people in Vichy who enrolled in the milice or worked for the Gestapo, see: Jean Débordes, *Le temps des passions : l'Allier dans la guerre* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005).

<sup>256</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Report from the *Commissaire de police de Vichy* to the investigating judge in Cusset about the *Parti franciste* (December 6, 1944); Letter from the *Commissaire de police de Vichy* to the *Commissaire divisionnaire chef du district de police de Vichy* (April 22, no year specified).

<sup>257</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Report from the *Commissaire de police de Vichy* to the investigating judge in Cusset about the *Collaboration* group (November 6, 1944).

<sup>258</sup> Peschanski and Fontaine, *La Collaboration 1940-1945*, 10.

<sup>259</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Lettre du Commissaire Chef du District de Police de l'Arrondissement Vichy* to the *sous-Préfet* in Vichy (September 21, 1943).

<sup>260</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Letter from the *Commissaire de Police de Vichy* to the *Juge d'instruction de Cusset* (December 6, 1944).

<sup>261</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Information note from the *Service des Renseignements Généraux de l'Allier* (July 29, 1943).

PPF congress in Vichy in May 1943.<sup>262</sup> A German bureau attached to the *Arbeit-seinsatzstab* and charged with recruiting the workforce for the Reich opened *rue de Paris* in downtown Vichy. According to George Rougeron, however, it never had many clients.<sup>263</sup>

Furthermore, many of the documents stored in the archives do not specify whether the individuals who were prosecuted during the *épuration* had long been established in Vichy, making it extremely difficult to discriminate between the transient and long-term residents. Amongst the small number of people in Vichy who had adhered to one of the collaborationist organizations, some, of course, were *Vichyssois*. Long-term residents Henri Grissomanche, George Thomas, Hugues Danielli, Henri Boyet, and André Jacquenet, for instance, were members of the PPF, the LVF, the Waffen SS and/or the milice.<sup>264</sup> George Gouverneur, a native from Cusset, in the suburbs of Vichy, was a particularly violent, cunning, and a perverse *milicien*. In early 1944, Gouverneur succeeded in infiltrating the *maquis de la Pourrière* in Châtel-Montagne. He facilitated the arrest of twenty-four resisters, who were later deported to Dachau, where nine of them perished. During his trial in 1945, Gouverneur was also accused of having initiated procedures leading to several other arrests in the region of Vichy, including that of Alain Joubert, a regional leader of the Resistance, who died in deportation. His actions extended beyond the department; Gouverneur was, for example, also involved in operations against some *maquis* in the Puy-de-Dôme.<sup>265</sup> Francis Desphelippon is another local resident to have been found guilty of collaborationism at the liberation. After fighting through the Great War, he committed to antimilitarism and became involved in the *Association républicaine des anciens combattants à Vichy*. In 1924, he joined the PCF. Four years later, he left the party, but remained part of the communist sphere of influence after becoming Chief Executive of *Monde*, the magazine directed by Henri Barbusse. He joined the SFIO in 1930 and became member of the party's administrative

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<sup>262</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the *Conseiller d'État Secrétaire Général à la Police* and to the regional *préfet* (May 21, 1943).

<sup>263</sup> Georges Rougeron, "La présence allemande à Vichy," *Les Cahiers Bourbonnais* 107 (1984), 47.

<sup>264</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 71. Report from the sous-préfet of Vichy to the Allier *préfet* (October 9, 1945); 1289 W 57. Report from a police inspector to the police commissioner (November 25, 1944); Débordes, *Le temps des passions*, 295-296.

<sup>265</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 12. "Georges Gouverneur"; André Serezat, *De Vichy... à Valmy ou de la défaite de la Libération de l'Allier* (Saint-Bonnet-de-Tronçais: Foyers ruraux de l'Allier, 1995), 135 & 144. On Gouverneur, see also: Aurélie Duchézeau, "Quelques aspects de l'épuration dans le département de l'Allier (1944-1945)," *SHAVE* 159 (2012), 7-33.

In 1945, the Court condemned Gouverneur to death. Shortly after, though, he was pardoned by de Gaulle, and we lost track of him.

commission in 1936. Four years later, he joined Marcéal Déat's *Rassemblement national populaire* and worked for various collaborationist newspapers and organizations.<sup>266</sup>

Although some members of the local branches of the collaborationist groups were *Vichyssois*, collaborationism in Vichy appears to have occurred more frequently amongst the wartime residents than amongst long-term residents. Jacoby, Groudin, Cantelaube and Batissier, about whom we talked earlier in the Chapter, were not *Vichyssois*; all of them had come to Vichy in 1940 or later hoping to profiting from the close proximity of the government. Georges Rougeron, who conducted an extensive survey about the *épuration* in the Allier in the 1970s and 1980s, as part of the large scale study conducted by the *Institut du temps présent* about France at the liberation, argues that very few members of the local collaborationist groups in Vichy, including the milice, were long-term residents.<sup>267</sup> My own archival and field research supports Rougeron's conclusion.

## 2. The population's response to the Vichy regime

Everywhere in France, the mass arrests of Jews in the unoccupied zone, the German occupation of the Vichy zone from November 11, the narrower collaboration between France and Germany, the STO, and the *relève* led to growing popular opposition.<sup>268</sup> In many cities in the Auvergne region, and in the southern zone more generally, the growing popular frustration with the regime was often expressed during the ceremonies organized in celebration of France's national holidays. Following a joint appeal from the southern movements for people to hold demonstrations on July 14, 1942 wearing the national color, sixty-six demonstrations took place, two thirds of which occurred in the unoccupied zone,<sup>269</sup> including in towns close to Vichy. In Gannat, for example, "plusieurs centaines de personnes s'étaient rassemblées devant le buste de la

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<sup>266</sup> Justinien Raymond, "Entry on Francis Desphelippon," in the online version of the *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*, Jean Maitron, ed.(Paris: Editions Ouvrière, the first volume was published in 1964). (Accessed from the Bibliothèque Sainte Genevière, Paris, August 23, 2016).

Anticommunism was one of the main political/ideological motivations to join collaborationist organizations. Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans. Collaboration and Compromise*, trans., Janet Llyod (New York: The New Press, 1996), 424.

<sup>267</sup> Georges Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier: 1943-1946* (Moulins: Conseil Général de l'Allier, 1982), 54.

<sup>268</sup> Laborie, *L'opinion française*.

<sup>269</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 439.

République auquel un manifestant [avait passé] un ruban tricolore,” with people chanting “Vive la France! Vive la République!”<sup>270</sup>

In the city of Vichy, however, all the official ceremonies throughout the war went relatively smoothly. In a letter to the *Ministère de l'Intérieur* about the upcoming May 1, 1941,<sup>271</sup> the Allier *préfet* noted that the authorities did not fear the outbreak of anti-governmental demonstrations in Vichy.<sup>272</sup> In preparation for May 1, 1942, the police chief in Vichy observed that “si menace il y a, elle vient d'éléments étrangers à Vichy.”<sup>273</sup> On May 8, during the Jeanne d'Arc celebration, a small group of eight people was heard chanting “Vive la France, Rendez-nous Madagascar, À bas Roosevelt !” in front of the American embassy, and a few leaflets were reported to have been pasted onto buildings and stores, but nothing more.<sup>274</sup> Similarly, on Bastille Day of 1942, a few people gathered at the *Monument aux Morts* and sang the *Marseillaise* “pour montrer leur disapprobation,” but no major incidents were reported.<sup>275</sup> The other celebrations of 1942 and 1943 went just as smoothly and few troublemakers were reported.<sup>276</sup> Following an investigation to assess the risk of incidents on May 1, 1943 in Vichy, the *commissaire spécial des renseignements généraux* told the *commissaire divisionnaire chef régional des renseignements généraux* that there was no sign of agitation, despite much discontent, especially among workers: “Le moment n'est pas encore venu où nous verrons une marche sur Vichy.”<sup>277</sup> The celebrations of May 1, 1944 also unfolded calmly.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale, 1940-44* (Le Coteau: Edition Horvath, 1983), 416-417.

<sup>271</sup> May 1 is Labor Day in France. May 1 was chosen as the official Labor Day during the second congress of the Socialist International held in Paris on June 20, 1890. The date was chosen in honor of the American unions that had launched a massive strike movement on May 1, 1886, to obtain the eight-hour working day. Labor day was officially recognized only in 1941, by Pétain, who sought to get support of the working class.

<sup>272</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (April 24, 1941).

<sup>273</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire divisionnaire Chef de le circonscription de Police de Vichy* to the Allier *préfet* (April 28, 1942).

<sup>274</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from a policeman to the *Commissaire de Police* in Vichy (May 10, 1942); *Procès verbal* of the policeman (May 10, 1942); Report from the *Commissaire de Police* in Vichy to the *Conseiller d'État - Secrétaire général à la police* (May 10, 1942); Report the *Commissaire principal des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy to the *sous-préfet* in Vichy (May 10, 1942).

<sup>275</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *Commissaire spécial des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy to the *sous-préfet* in Vichy (July 15, 1942).

<sup>276</sup> See for instance: AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire divisionnaire, chef de la police de Vichy* to the *Conseiller d'État - Secrétaire général à la police* (November 11, 1942); Report from the Allier *préfet* to the *Secrétaire d'état à l'intérieur* (November 12, 1942); Telephone communication from the *Renseignement Généraux* in Vichy to the Allier *préfet* (July 14, 1943).

<sup>277</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire spécial des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy to the *Commissaire divisionnaire, chef de la police de Vichy* (April 27, 1943).

<sup>278</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *sous préfet* of Vichy to the Allier *préfet* (May 2, 1944).



The biggest public opposition to the government in Vichy was the housewives' demonstration against the food shortage in the summer of 1943 (see Chapter 1). In the spring of 1943, frustration had increased amongst the population, who was outraged by "la priorité donnée aux popotes et restaurants," and by the fact that the members of the government could "profiter des produits frais disponibles dans les campagnes selon leur bon vouloir."<sup>279</sup> This popular discontent culminated in the housewives' protest a few weeks later. According to Denis Peschanski and Thomas Fontaine, the anti-governmental sentiments released within the lines that formed in front of empty stores, the housewives' protests, the strikes for the demand of better salaries, listening to the BBC, and the compassionate and solidary actions in favor of the victims of the occupying force and of Vichy all reveal the capacity of individuals to rise against the blows inflicted upon them and to rebuild and heal. The two historians use the term "résilience" to describe these behaviors. Although not acts of resistance in themselves, these forms of rejection were essential "pour une Résistance qui trouve là un terreau favorable, de plus en plus favorable avec les années."<sup>280</sup> While the local population's complaints with regards to the food situation, the housewives' demonstration, and the distribution of tracts during the ceremonies can legitimately be considered as signs of a grassroots opposition to the regime, one is forced to acknowledge that the opposition of the Vichy's population to the government was limited.

The minimal impact of the communist anti-Vichy propaganda in Vichy further suggests that the local population was not really being receptive to anti-Vichy discourse.<sup>281</sup> In the Allier department, the communists were the strongest political force. Following the arrests of many of them in the fall of 1940, the party quickly – and clandestinely – reorganized.<sup>282</sup> The PCF was particularly well adjusted to life in the shadows, since the party had already turned to clandestine activities in the past, such as when it resisted repression by the Daladier and Reynaud

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<sup>279</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Reports from the *contrôle postal* (February, March, and April 1943).

<sup>280</sup> Peschanski and Fontaine, *La Collaboration 1940-1945*, 10; see also: Peschanski, "Résistance, résilience et opinion dans la France des années noires."

<sup>281</sup> Initially, the communist propaganda exclusively targeted the Vichy regime, which was described as a capitalist and bourgeois regime. In 1940 and 1941, the Nazis and the USSR were allies.

<sup>282</sup> One of Vichy's earliest obsessions and priorities was the neutralization of communists. In the fall of 1940, anti-communist operations were launched throughout the country, although at first, the repression was stronger in the unoccupied zone than in the occupied regions. On this, see: Denis Peschanski, "Exclusion, persécution, répression," In *Vichy et les Français*, eds., Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 213-218. The communists arrested in the Allier were gathered in Montluçon, before being interned in the department of the Puy-de-Dôme, from where they were sent to the Nexon internment camp in the Haute-Vienne. Many were later transferred to Bossuet, south of Oran. Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 387.



governments.<sup>283</sup> At the end of 1940, le *Commissaire spécial des Renseignements* in Montluçon noted that in the Allier, “la propagande communiste, ... hésitante pendant les premiers mois de la période d’armistice, [était] réorganisée depuis le mois d’octobre... De la forme discrète et individualiste, elle est passée à la forme publicitaire et générale.”<sup>284</sup> The communist propaganda, which often took the form of leaflets, underground newspapers, posters, and anti-Vichy graffiti on public walls, intensified. Following the breach of the German-Soviet pact and the Nazi invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, the communists began an armed resistance against both the Vichy regime and the Germans. From 1942 onwards, these groups were referred to as the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français* (FTPF or FTP). According to Georges Rougeron, the first signs of FTP activity in the Allier were observed at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943.<sup>285</sup> In total there were twelve FTP maquis in the Allier.<sup>286</sup>

In Vichy, the communists’ influence had always been limited and the war did not increase their authority. Along with the housewives, as well as the blue-collar workers or the immigrants, the PCF found itself in its traditional historical role of integrator and enhancer among the groups on the fringes of society.<sup>287</sup> Vichy’s social structure, however, was different: the working class and immigrant population was smaller there than in the rest of the department. Some communist propaganda was recovered by the police forces in Vichy.<sup>288</sup> Most of the time though, this propaganda was produced and distributed by communist sympathizers from Montluçon, where the headquarters of the Allier-Creuse-Cher communist group was located.<sup>289</sup>

Arguing that the PCF had no influence at all in Vichy would be wrong. Indeed, some *Vichyssois* were involved in the PCF and actively engaged in the early anti-Vichy opposition. For instance, Hélène and Édouard Le Cadre, respectively the treasurer and secretary of the PCF’s local section in Vichy, were strongly engaged in the production and distribution of communist

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<sup>283</sup> John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 205.

<sup>284</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 390.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

In the occupied zone, the first armed groups were established in July 1941, under the direction of Charles Tillon. Similar groups started to operate in the unoccupied zone the following year.

<sup>286</sup> Débordes, *L’Allier dans la guerre*, 111.

<sup>287</sup> Jean-Marie Guillon, “Les manifestations de ménagères : protestation populaire et résistance féminine spécifique,” in eds., Mechthild Gilzmer, Christine Levisse-Touzé and Stefan Martens, *Les femmes dans la Résistance en France* (Paris: Tallandier, 2003), 107-133.

<sup>288</sup> The discovery of communist tracts and inscriptions were often reported in notes and reports from the police in Vichy. AD (Allier), 996 W.

<sup>289</sup> In many of the notes mentioned in the previous footnote, it was stated that many of the tracts that were found in Vichy had been produced in Montluçon.

propaganda in Vichy. Both were arrested in the winter of 1943; their house was searched and “un étui contenant un révolver à barillet et six cartouches à broche, une boîte métallique contenant des caractères d'imprimerie en caoutchouc, un tampon encreur” were found.<sup>290</sup> The Le Cadres, however, were not representative of the general population in Vichy.

The absence of a publicly organized opposition to the Vichy regime in Vichy should not only be read as a consequence of the limited influence of the PCF in Vichy. It shall also be understood within the context of the government's close proximity to the population. By living so closely with the government, Vichy's populace became sympathetic towards some members of the government. Pétain was especially well liked.

In the spring and summer of 1940, Pétain's popularity extended throughout France. Until the beginning of June, the French believed that the German army would be defeated. Pétain's radio speech on June 17, however, illuminated the extent of the catastrophe. The overwhelming disillusion that followed produced resignation and an increasing disinterest for politics. Against this background, and based on Pétain's past prestige, it is easy to understand why many French greeted the armistice with relief and supported the ascendancy of Pétain to head of the State.

Furthermore, as argued by Pierre Laborie in *L'opinion française sous Vichy*:

A la fois protecteur et autoritaire, patriote insoupçonnable, il est le garant de l'identité menacée. Il voit clair, il énumère, il classe, il condamne, il exclut, il décrète, il rassure par le gouvernement des certitudes. Il fixe les lignes de partage entre les bons et les mauvais Français puis, une fois le nettoyage nécessaire effectué, il opère en chirurgien de la reconstitution. Il ressoude, rassemble et protège aussi bien des menaces extérieures que des démons intérieurs. Il sait la vérité et face à la détresse commune il s'affirme, lui, capable d'expliquer l'inexplicable ; une compétence, on s'en doute, particulièrement appréciée par une opinion qui réclame qu'on lui désigne les causes et surtout les responsables de son malheur. Au total, un enchevêtrement de jugements sentencieux et d'interdits puise dans les facilités de l'irrationnel et s'appuie sur une culpabilisation qui conduit à tout accepter. Les méfaits de l'internationale judéo-maçonnique, la chasse aux boucs émissaires, les fantasmes de la décadence, les mirages du repli sur la France seule captent les dérives et les peurs antérieures.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Edouard was later liberated. Upon his liberation he joined a maquis. Hélène was interned and later transferred to the Romainville Fort, before being deported to Ravensbrück. She survived. On the Le Cadres, see their profile on the website of the *Amis de la Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation de l'Allier* (AFMD): <http://afmd-allier.oxatis.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=767271> (Accessed January 3, 2016).

<sup>291</sup> Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, 230.

Furthermore, the compassion and solicitude Pétain had expressed for the refugees, a couple of weeks earlier, had touched millions of people, who had been plunged into hopelessness and despair.<sup>292</sup>

Signs of popular disagreement with the official Anglophobia and the choice of collaboration were present as early as the fall of 1940, but many French remained sympathetic to Pétain. In Jean Marie Flonneau's words, "l'opinion dissocie son refus de la politique gouvernementale de son attachement au Maréchal."<sup>293</sup> By the end of 1941, however, Pétain had become largely unpopular in many places, including the Auvergne region.<sup>294</sup> In Vichy, however, a large section of the population continued to differentiate between Pétain and the government until the war's end.

Many of those who knew Pétain personally or who had interacted with him on a regular basis have underlined the old man's charisma. In his memoirs, Pétain's minister of justice, Joseph Barthélémy, reminisces about the Marshall.

Dans la cathédrale de Vichy ... l'entrée du Maréchal était un spectacle dont je ne me suis jamais lassé ; cette démarche lente, aisée, souple, sans aucune raideur ; ce regard posé sur l'assistance, le salut bienveillant au corps diplomatique, le salut nuancé de familiarité à ses ministres, et, une fois arrivé dans le chœur, le regard à de rares familiers auxquels il entendait faire savoir qu'ils n'étaient pas inaperçus. Ce qui frappe le plus, quand on se trouve pour la première fois en présence du Maréchal, c'est le rayonnement qui se dégage de sa personne. D'abord, par son regard. Le regard est, chez les chefs, un des facteurs les plus efficaces de l'influence personnelle. Et cette sorte de magnétisme, la photographie ne le traduit pas. Le regard bleu du Maréchal s'adresse bien tout droit à l'interlocuteur. Il est souvent bienveillant et alors d'un charme prenant. Il peut être aussi froid, et alors l'interlocuteur en est glacé.<sup>295</sup>

François Mitterrand felt the same way towards Pétain. On March 13, 1942, he wrote to his sister: "j'ai vu le maréchal au théâtre [...] il est magnifique d'allure, son visage est celui d'une statue de marbre."<sup>296</sup> Many *curistes* shared Barthélémy's and Mitterrand's views. In 1943, postal control

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<sup>292</sup> Jean Marie Flonneau, "L'évolution de l'opinion publique de 1940 à 1944," in *Vichy et les Français*, eds, Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 507; Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 120-121.

<sup>293</sup> Flonneau, "L'évolution de l'opinion publique," 507.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 508.

<sup>295</sup> Joseph Barthélémy, *Ministre de la justice : Vichy, 1941-1943 : mémoires* (Paris: Pygmalion, 1989), 63.

<sup>296</sup> Cited in Pierre Péan, *Une jeunesse française: Français Mitterrand, 1934-1947* (Paris: Fayard, 1994),

reports reveal that in their letters, *curistes* often wrote that if the French could see Pétain, “le grand homme,” with their own eyes, it is certain that they would support him more.<sup>297</sup> The *Vichyssois*, who saw him weekly were also enamored by his charm. André Gueslin goes as far as to argue that the presence of Pétain in Vichy gave rise to a cult.<sup>298</sup>

According to many reports from the Vichy *sous préfets* and the Allier *préfets*, every Sunday morning throughout the war, a large crowd congregated in front of the *hôtel du Parc* to attend the ceremonial changing of the guard. After the ceremony the Marshall always mingled with the people, while children wearing their finest clothes ran towards him to offer him their bouquets of flowers.<sup>299</sup> Throughout the rest of the week, residents were frequently seen congregating near the *hôtel du Parc* in the hope of spotting and maybe exchanging a few words with Pétain during one of his daily walks in the nearby park, which he took with his friend Bernard Ménétrel (and without body guards). The fact that he always politely and nicely returned people’s salutations contributed to his public persona of being a likeable old man and a grandfather figure. Pétain was not only polite and courteous towards Vichy’s population, he was also compassionate. According to local historian Jean Débordes, Pétain made several donations to local institutions. He, for example, donated 5,000 francs to the school canteens, which helped serve 900 meals a day to children and needy adults. He also donated 5,000 francs and cigarette packages to the local hospital, as well as 2,000 francs to a religious association.<sup>300</sup>

The fact that the opposition to the Vichy regime remained limited in Vichy, however, does not make all the *Vichyssois* Vichyites. Some long-term residents were, as the justice records from the *épuration* suggests.<sup>301</sup> This conservative population, however, was a minority in Vichy, which had long been dominated by the *radicaux-socialistes*. There are many factors explaining the city’s absence of opposition towards the government. In *La France à l’heure allemande*, Philippe Burrin reminds us of the extent to which the behaviors exhibited during the war were improvised in function of the evolution of the war and of people’s own beliefs, capacities, and needs. Burrin uses the term of “accommodation” to account for the attitude of the majority of

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<sup>297</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the *contrôle postal* (June 1943).

<sup>298</sup> André Gueslin, ed., *De Vichy au Mont-Mouchet : l’Auvergne dans la guerre : 1939-1945* (Clermont-Ferrand: Institut d’études du Massif central, 1991), 14.

<sup>299</sup> Thierry Wirth, *Vichy Capitale* (Lyon: Les Trois Roses, 2015), 63.

<sup>300</sup> Jean Débordes, *À Vichy, la vie de tous les jours sous Pétain* (Thionne: Edition du Signe, 1994), 66.

<sup>301</sup> Both the Allier and Puy-de-Dôme departmental archives hold many dossiers about the *épuration* in Vichy.

French people in the face of the collaboration and the occupation.<sup>302</sup> In July of 1940, the *Vichyssois* had welcomed with hope the promotion of the city to the status of capital of the new *État français*. Thanks to the promotion, it was expected that the city would be well protected from the inevitable damage to befall France following the defeat. The citizens took advantage of all the economic opportunities that followed the installation of the government in Vichy. This is not surprising behavior. The future did not look so bright, it was important to capitalize as much as possible while the possibility lasted. While the circumstances of the summer of 1940 can explain the population's behavior in the early months of the Vichy regime, they are not insightful with regards to the *Vichyssois*' behavior later in the war.

The *Vichyssois*, who were regarded as accommodating and respectful hosts, were not accustomed to protesting. The war did not lead to their developing a strong sense of agency and activist culture. To Marc Ferro, a first hand witness and a renowned historian of the Second World War, the absence of an organized local opposition to Vichy in Vichy was indicative of the population's desire to remain spectators rather than being actors: "J'ai manifesté dès 1941/1942 à Grenoble. À Lyon, c'était pareil. Tandis qu'à Vichy, quand j'y suis allé, c'était le calme plat, avec des soldats français à vélo qui défilaient. Totalement ridicule, surréaliste. [Les Vichyssois] passaient... Ils étaient comme des passants."<sup>303</sup> In *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, Laborie explains how the French people's ambivalent sentiments towards Pétain facilitated a "paralysie attentiste":

L'ambivalence de la représentation du maréchal Pétain dans l'opinion facilite (...) le processus de dissociation avec le régime de Vichy, mais elle contient aussi les germes d'une paralysie attentiste particulièrement ambiguë. L'attachement irrationnel à la personne du chef de l'Etat a joué, concrètement, un rôle de double frein à l'action contre l'occupant et aux prises de conscience qui s'y attachent.<sup>304</sup>

Laborie pushes his argument further, explaining how such "attentisme" results from "l'imaginaire Pétain":

-Agir contre l'Allemagne, c'est bien entendu agir contre la volonté du premier des Français et contre la confiance qu'il demande, mais qui plus est, c'est entraver la réussite d'un plan dont les voies impénétrables sont supposées échapper aux possibilités du sens

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<sup>302</sup> Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*.

<sup>303</sup> Marc Ferro, interview by author (March 4, 2014).

<sup>304</sup> Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, 296.

commun. S'engager dans la lutte c'est, au-delà de l'argument de la dissidence, combattre contre la renaissance de la nation. -Ne rien faire, à l'inverse, si ce n'est affirmer sa fidélité au chef de l'Etat, est précisément le meilleur moyen d'exprimer, avec efficacité et de manière responsable, son sens national et son hostilité au vainqueur. C'est se préparer au futur sans rien compromettre du présent, c'est, en quelque sorte, après le temps du pacifisme patriotique des années 1930, celui de l'attentisme patriotique, avec les mêmes effets obliques d'aveuglement.<sup>305</sup>

This reasoning appears particularly relevant in the case of Vichy. Other considerations nonetheless need to be taken into account.

Some of these considerations are very pragmatic. Whether it was harder or easier to protest in Vichy is certainly open to debate. However, one is forced to acknowledge that the behaviors of some local residents were heavily constrained. If the hotel owners and staff, the restaurateurs, and the shop owners had initially viewed favorably the extension of the season, they quickly realized that it also had many inconveniences. From 1942 onwards, hotel managers, for examples, were required to help the government in their tracking of suspicious people. Each of their clients had to fill in two police forms, in addition to showing their identity papers. If someone looked suspicious, the hotel manager was required to report him/her to the police within the next twelve hours.<sup>306</sup>

Finally, the close proximity of the government had led to the creation of affective links between the population and the members of the government (not only Pétain). Shopkeepers and hoteliers, for example, had many opportunities to interact – and sometimes befriend – members of the government. M. Maingonat, the owner of the *hôtel Algeria*, where the *Commissariat aux Questions Juives* had been set up, established close ties with Xavier Vallat. Maingonat recalls “an awfully nice guy,” always ready to help; “if we needed anything at all, we went to see him about it. Because he had connections, let me tell you. It’s always the same, you know – it’s the connections that do it. Oh yeah, he really helped out. He didn’t hesitate at all, whatever you needed. He did whatever it took.”<sup>307</sup> Although not all the members of the government may have been as nice and helpful as Vallat reportedly was, and although Maingonat might have shared

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<sup>305</sup> Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, 296-297.

<sup>306</sup> Michèle Cointet, *Vichy capitale. 1940-1944* (Paris, Perrin, 1993), 100.

<sup>307</sup> Cited in Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel. France, Memory and the Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001), 189.



some of Vallat's beliefs with regards to the Jewish question,<sup>308</sup> these everyday relationships helped to humanize the Vichy men in the eyes of many *Vichyssois*, who, under different circumstances, would have likely criticized (and, in some cases, opposed) them. As Marc Ferro again rightly observes, to a certain extent, Vichy "était d'un pétainisme sans idée."<sup>309</sup>

An investigation into the population's response to the Vichy regime would not be complete without an examination of the municipal council's own response to it. Pétain's choice to maintain Vichy's mayor, Pierre-Victor Léger, in office throughout the war raises legitimate questions about the position of the municipality towards the Vichy regime. Léger was a *radical socialiste*. His continued functioning as mayor was therefore far from obvious. Léger, however, had a tremendous asset. In office since 1929 (and a municipal councilor since 1919), he was a leader well-respected and very much appreciated by his population.<sup>310</sup> The government, who wanted to avoid popular discontent and social trouble, found Léger, whose capacity to contain his population was certain, to be an ideal candidate. This, in part, explains why in the Allier department the municipality of Vichy was the only one to have been treated with tolerance.<sup>311</sup>

The position of the radical socialists toward the Vichy regime was not unanimous. The war that broke out in 1939 had the same disruptive effect as the 1914-1918 war had had on the party. If the radical majority, of republican political views, considered that the values they upheld were incompatible with the national revolution,<sup>312</sup> a part of the neoradical tide favorably welcomed the national revolution, either by pacifism, anti-Marxism or nationalism. Some of its members, including Jean Mistler, Georges Bonnet, Albert Chichery or Lucien Lamoureux even tried to engage in a policy of presence within the government by proposing to Pétain to revive the radical party within the framework of the Vichy regime.<sup>313</sup> While Léger's discourses and behaviors do not give much indication as to which side of the party he

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<sup>308</sup> M. Maingonat's son told Nossiter that his father might be a little anti-Semite. Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 189-192.

<sup>309</sup> Marc Ferro, interview by author (March 4, 2014).

<sup>310</sup> His radical-socialist list won almost all seats at the 1929 municipal elections. He was easily reelected in 1935, with twenty municipal councilors from his list out of a total of twenty-seven.

<sup>311</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 112.

<sup>312</sup> A great number of *radicaux-socialistes*, such as Édouard Herriot, Henri Queuille, Pierre Mendès France and Jean Moulin, opposed the Vichy regime.

<sup>313</sup> Pétain decided not to proceed with this suggestion. Serge Bernstein, "Les Radicaux, dans Histoire des gauches en France," in *Histoire des Gauches en France*, eds., Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 21.

identified, archival documents nonetheless provide some insight into the mayor's ambivalent position toward the Vichy regime.

In a confidential information document, Léger is described as “soutenant le gouvernement” and as being “loyal envers le Maréchal.”<sup>314</sup> An unidentified information note from 1941 further stated that in the summer of 1940 Léger had rallied Laval, a former *socialiste*, with whom he had supposedly collaborated before the war in cases related to local politics: “Dès l’arrivée au pouvoir du Maréchal, M. Léger se rallia rapidement à M. Pierre Laval avec lequel il avait été en combinaisons ‘commerciales’ dans diverses affaires du Massif Central.”<sup>315</sup> In July 1940 and April 1941, the municipality of Vichy expressed its solidary, respect, and trust towards the government. In 1940, the council offered Pétain and his ministers the city’s warmest greetings and “l’assurance de ses sentiments respectueux et dévoués... et de sa confiance pour redonner au pays meurtri sa puissance et sa prospérité dans l’ordre du travail.”<sup>316</sup> The year after, the new city council (still under the leadership of Léger) stated that it would focus all its energy on the “redressement économique et moral du pays, dans le travail, l’ordre et la discipline.”<sup>317</sup> In August 1941, a poster affixed in Vichy, the text of which had been written by the mayor, invited the population to uphold the city’s reputation as a friendly and welcoming city and to give a warm welcome to the *légionnaires* from the unoccupied zone, who were about to be received by Pétain, and as such, to express their gratitude towards the Marshall and their confidence in the government’s work.<sup>318</sup> During an April 1944 meeting, the municipal council voted a budget of 10,000 francs for the purchase of a painting by Galin that depicted the changing of the ceremonial guard on Sunday mornings at the *hôtel du Parc*.<sup>319</sup> In

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<sup>314</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 901 W 308. “Notice de renseignements” (1942). The folder contains individual sheets about the department’s most important men. The following information is included on each sheet: ‘Nom et prénom’, ‘Age et situation de famille’, ‘Domicile actuel et antérieur’, ‘profession actuelle et précédente’, ‘Situation militaire’, ‘Situation de fortune’, ‘Décorations françaises’, ‘Confession religieuse’, ‘Mandats publics exercés avant le 11 juillet 1940’, ‘Partis ou groupements auxquels l’intéressé a appartenu avant le 11 juillet 1940 et, le cas échéant, les fonctions exercées, le rôle joué et les tendances manifestées au sein de ces partis sur le plan social’, ‘Partis ou groupements auxquels l’intéressé a appartenu depuis le 11 juillet 1940 et, le cas échéant, les fonctions exercées, et le rôle joué au sein de ces groupements’, ‘Mandat public exercé depuis le 11 juillet 1940’, ‘Loyalisme à l’égard du Maréchal’, ‘Position à l’égard du Gouvernement sur le plan intérieur et extérieur’, ‘Influence conservée à l’intérieur du département’, ‘observations générales’.

<sup>315</sup> AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Unidentified information note (March 8, 1941).

<sup>316</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 97.

<sup>317</sup> Cited in Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 113.

<sup>318</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. “Police - manifestations.” Poster (August 25, 1941); Letter from the mayor to the Allier *préfet* (August 29, 1941).

<sup>319</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 97.

June 1942, the city of Vichy had already considered creating a “île du Maréchal-Pétain” in the Allier river:

Un des nombreux bancs de sable qui entravent le cours de l’Allier à la hauteur des parcs de Vichy va être transformé en une île artificielle qui portera le nom d’île Maréchal-Pétain. [Ce] projet prévoit la création d’un port pour yachts et canots, d’une plage, d’un solarium et même l’aménagement d’un terrain de sports. En outre, un vaste plan d’eau permettra la pratique de tous les jeux nautiques.<sup>320</sup>

Whether this initiative was aimed at pleasing the *Vichyssois* or at making a good impression on Pétain, or at both, is hard to tell. Ultimately the island was not created, perhaps due to a lack of funds.

Some might argue that sending good wishes to a government and contemplating creating an island in the latter’s honor is more than mere politeness, and that his acceptance to serve as mayor under Pétain makes him a collaborator.<sup>321</sup> However, there is evidence that Léger was not a hardcore supporter of the government and of the National revolution – the fact that Léger never officially received Pétain at the city hall, for example, may be interpreted as his distrust towards the Vichy regime.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, in July 1944 he opposed the government’s proposal to rename the *rue Wilson* ‘*Boulevard Philippe Henriot*’, in honor of Henriot, who had been killed by resisters. Léger told Laval that he would rather resign than agree to the renaming, which required the municipality’s consent. The events of the summer of 1944 and Vichy’s liberation at the end of August 1944, permanently settled the issue and Léger did not have to negotiate further with the government. The street was never renamed.<sup>323</sup>

Criticism and complaints by Vichyites and collaborationists further indicate that Léger was not a strong and active supporter of the regime. On February 26, 1941, an unidentified document criticized the mayor of Vichy for having collaborated with the SFIO and the communists in 1935.<sup>324</sup> On March 17, 1941, a report revealed the existence of increasing discontent amongst the *légionnaires* towards the cities of Vichy and Bellerives. This discontent,

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<sup>320</sup> *La Semaine de Vichy* (June 6, 1942).

<sup>321</sup> Léger’s son once revealed that his father had wanted to resign in 1942, but because London reportedly rejected his resignation, he remained in office. “Être maire en cette époque : un exercice de corde raide,” *La Montagne* (July 10, 1990). This information, however, remains unproven.

<sup>322</sup> “Être maire en cette époque : un exercice de corde raide,” *La Montagne* (July 10, 1990).

<sup>323</sup> Cointet, *Vichy capitale*, 114.

<sup>324</sup> AN 2AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Unidentified document (February 26, 1941).

the report explains, was caused by “les bruits circulant sur le maintien à la tête des délégations municipales de M. Léger et M. Rives. Il semble inadmissible, pense-t-on dans ces milieux Légionnaires, que ces deux personnages soient maintenus, car leur passé politique ... ne justifi[e] plus leur présence à la tête d’une municipalité.”<sup>325</sup> In January 1941, a *légionnaire* also wrote to the Marshall complaining about the dirt in the city, before adding that Vichy needed “un maire plus imbu de l’esprit de la Révolution Nationale.”<sup>326</sup> The discontent was such that some of the most prominent *légionnaires* considered resigning as a sign of opposition to Pétain’s choice of keeping Léger in office.<sup>327</sup> The mayor’s private life was also attacked for no other reason than further destroying his credibility: “Sa vie privée a toujours étalé les moeurs les plus répréhensibles, maitresses nombreuses, scenes d’ivrognerie ou de débauches, etc.”<sup>328</sup>

Another source of concern for some of Léger’s opponents was the mayor’s alleged membership in the Masonic Lodge of Montluçon.<sup>329</sup> It is surprising that pressure was not brought to bear on the Vichy regime to bar Léger from office because of his alleged masonic connection. Indeed, the Germans were especially interested in tracking down Masons, as suggested by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg’s actions to seize all materials belonging to Jews and Freemasons.<sup>330</sup> Pétain, however, who had good reasons to want to keep Léger as Vichy’s mayor may have acted in the latter’s favor. Regardless of whether Léger was a Freemason, he had many other characteristics that the most hardcore Petainists and collaborationists very much despised, and in 1942 the PPF branch in Vichy was discovered planning a conspiracy against Vichy’s mayor.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Unidentified information note (March 17, 1941).

<sup>326</sup> AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Letter from a “légionnaire révolutionnaire” to Marshall Pétain (January 16, 1941).

<sup>327</sup> AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Unidentified information note (March 8, 1941).

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Unidentified information note (March 8, 1941); AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Letter from an unidentified person to the managing editor of *Candide* (January 20, 1941).

<sup>330</sup> Norman Ingram, “Selbstmord or Euthanasia? Who Killed the Ligue des droits de l’homme?,” *French History* 22:3 (September 2008), 340-341. The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) was an organisation of the Nazi state dedicated to pursuing the war on an intellectual and cultural level; in practice, this usually meant no more than appropriating cultural property from those with ideas contrary to the Nazi ideology.

<sup>331</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the *Secrétaire Général pour la Police* in Vichy about clandestine meetings organized by the PPF (September 1, 1942). AN 2 AG 515. “État français 1940-1944. Cabinet civil. Affaires départementales et locales (Ain à Creuse).” Unidentified information note (March 17, 1941).

Most of the wartime and postwar testimonies highlight the mayor's great human qualities and his genuine concern for his population. That almost all the city council minutes during the war focused on local issues reveals both the municipality's desire to be as little involved as possible in what was going on in the government and its concern for local issues. Although it is impossible to know exactly what Léger thought of Pétain and the Vichy regime, it is possible that he chose to remain in office to protect his population and his city.

In any case, the city's ambivalent relationship with Pétain, and its absence of opposition to the Vichy regime should not make one underestimate the role of many *Vichyssois* in the resistance.

### 3. Being a resister in Vichy

As was true everywhere else in France, in Vichy, Charles de Gaulle's appeal of June 18, 1940 did not generate immediate enthusiasm for the Gaullist resistance. Few people had actually heard it. And most of those who had were not psychologically and physically ready to fight an enemy that had just defeated the French army.<sup>332</sup> As early as the fall of 1940, however, reports from the Allier *préfet* and the police in Vichy started to mention the discoveries of many Gaullists tracts in Vichy.<sup>333</sup> As was the case for the communist propaganda, most of the Gaullist propaganda discovered in the capital was not locally produced - the Gaullist tracts were usually dropped from the air by British planes.<sup>334</sup> Nonetheless the local population identified with de Gaulle's discourse of continuing the fight against the occupiers more than with the communists' message of class struggle and the people's exploitation by the Vichy regime. On October 21, 1940, the director of the *préfecture de la Seine* complained to Pétain about the "mauvais esprit" in Vichy, where "quantité de gens stupides y utilisent de façon insidieuse les arguments fournis par la radio anglaise."<sup>335</sup>

Several *Vichyssois* were involved in Gaullist organizations, especially *Combat*. *Combat* was one of the three biggest resistance movements in the southern zone. It was born of the merger between François de Menthon's movement *Liberté* with Henry Frenay's *Mouvement de*

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<sup>332</sup> Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale. 1940-1944* (Horvath, 1983), 396.

<sup>333</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Several reports and information notes report the discovery of Gaullist tracts in Vichy.

<sup>334</sup> Some of the notes mentioned in the previous quotes indicated that the recovered tracts had been dropped by British airplanes.

<sup>335</sup> AN 2 AG 515. "État français 1940 - 1944." Letter from the *directeur de la préfecture de la Seine* to Marshall Pétain (October 21, 1940).

*libération nationale* (MLN). Headed by Frenay, *Combat*'s contribution to the resistance was diverse: from forged documents and propaganda to military action, especially through *the Armée secrète* (AS). In the spring of 1943, *Combat* merged with *Libération* and *Franc-Tireur* to form the *Mouvements unis de la Résistance* (MUR). Roger Kespy, who owned a company specializing in radio sets and spare parts in Vichy, was an active member of *Combat*. As early as August 1940, he constituted a small group of trustworthy people, who collected the weapons abandoned by the French army and hid them in secured locations in Vichy-Cusset: in total, they gathered fifty rifles, cartridges and hand grenades. During the winter, Kespy built several portable radio receivers for the *Petites Ailes* network. He left his company in 1941 to dedicate himself to his resistance activities. In 1942, he organized the first maquis in the *Bois Noirs*, in the Auvergne region. He later joined the regional section of the MUR, under the leadership of Henry Ingrand, and was appointed a sector leader.<sup>336</sup>

The *Vichyssois* Antoine Desormière, a railway worker and a member of the SFIO, joined the AS in January 1943. Prior to that, he had created and organized several groups of resistance around Vichy, with which he hid arms in the train station at Saint-Germain-des-Fossés and did railway sabotage operations. In 1942, he organized a network of military research intelligence under the services of the station. On January 1, 1943, he joined the Didier group in the *Armée secrète* under the pseudonym 'Delorme'. He quickly recruited many volunteers, including his son Pierre. Both men helped the *maquisards* who were on a mission in the region, and STO deserters, whom they housed and fed, before taking them to the Châtel-Montagne maquis.<sup>337</sup>

Other members of the *Armée secrète* included Dr. Colomb, a local doctor and the future president of Vichy's *Comité de Libération*, as well as Fernand Lafaye, a teacher at the *École Carnot* in Vichy. Colomb established a branch of the AS in Vichy, the early mission of which was to help hide *maquisards*. Its range of action quickly extended to include recruitment and coordinate actions around Vichy.<sup>338</sup> Tired of serving a regime with which he had little in common, Lafaye availed himself of his status as veteran of war and, though only fifty-five, opted

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<sup>336</sup> AM (Vichy). Brief summary of Kespy's life (likely done by an archivist).

<sup>337</sup> Jean Débordes, *Vichy, capitale à l'heure allemande : au temps de Pétain et de François Mitterrand* (Paris : Godefroy de Bouillon, 1998), 200-221; Profiles of Antoine Desormière and his son, Pierre Saurou, on the AFMD's website: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=784820> & <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=786747>

He was arrested in February 1944 and deported to Auschwitz and Buchenwald. He survived.

<sup>338</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).



for an early retirement. Little by little, he engaged in the Resistance. He particularly helped in the transport of firearms delivered by air and made contacts with other resisters. At the end of 1943, Lafaye joined the *maquis d'Auvergne*.<sup>339</sup> There, he was in charge of radio newscasts and in May of 1944, he joined the health services of the Mont-Mouchet, where he died.<sup>340</sup>

Some *Vichyssois* were also involved in non-Gaullist movements or paramilitary groups, such as the *Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée* (ORA), which was created in January 1943 following the German invasion of the southern zone in November 1942.<sup>341</sup> M. Aymard, the chief physician in the radiology department of the *établissement thermal* was the regional delegate for the ORA army. Amongst other things, he forged identification papers for fugitives, resisters and those who wanted to avoid the STO. He was also in direct contact with the Saint-Rémy en Rollat *maquis*.<sup>342</sup>

Everywhere, the engagement in the resistance was a matter of opportunities. "Within the working class there were early opportunities for rail and postal workers to disrupt communications and transport. For the peasantry, opportunities only presented themselves in 1943," Julian Jackson writes in *France The Dark Years*.<sup>343</sup> In Vichy, it was not the movements that created the most opportunities within the resistance, it was rather the intelligence networks, many of which had local branches in Vichy.

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<sup>339</sup> Lafaye's son-in-law, Max Menut, played an essential role in the creation of this *maquis*, first as a *Combat* leader for the Riom section, then as chief of the First Bureau de l'état-major des M.U.R. in the Puy-de-Dôme. Lafaye's daughter, Anne Marie Menut, a pharmacist, ensured that the delivery of mail from the clandestine organization was carried out and she supplied medicine, bandages and other care products to several *maquis* of the region. Realizing that she was under the close watch of some militiamen, and feeling like the net was tightening around her, she joined the *maquis* along with her father at the end of 1943. Charles Guyotjeannin, "Une héroïne de la résistance : Anne-Mary, Jeanne Menut, pharmacien à Riom (1914-1944)," *Revue d'histoire de la pharmacie* 85:313 (1997), 7-16; Maurice Sarazin, *Les Bourbonnais célèbres et remarquables des origines à la fin du XXème siècle. Arrondissement de Vichy* (Charroux en Bourbonnais: Editions des cahiers Bourbonnais, 2009), 133.

<sup>340</sup> Charles Bérénholc, "Le service de santé de l'état-major des *maquis* d'Auvergne : un épisode des combats de Margueride-Truyère," *Revue de la Haute-Auvergne* (April – September, 1994), 241-249; Henri Ingrand: *La Libération de l'Auvergne* (Paris : Hachette), 1974; Guyotjeannin, "Une héroïne de la résistance." Lafaye was killed on the spot. His daughter was arrested and transferred to the Gestapo headquarters in Clermont-Ferrand, where she was atrociously tortured. She was executed in July 1943. Guyotjeannin, "Une héroïne de la résistance."

<sup>341</sup> Although the ORA merged with the AS and the FTPs to form the FFIs in 1944, it had initially rejected de Gaulle and had recognized Giraud as its chief instead.

For a brief overview of the difference between de Gaulle and Giraud, see "Giraud, de Gaulle : deux options concurrentes," in *Vichy, 1940-1944*, eds., Jean-Pierre Azéma and Olivier Wieviora (Paris: Perrin, 2004), 90-92.

<sup>342</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of M. Aymard (March 14, 1951).

<sup>343</sup> Jackson, *France The Dark Years*, 478.

The networks' roles within the Resistance were varied: from the collection of information, sabotage, to the organization of escape routes. In total, 150,000 agents were engaged in resistance action within one or several of the 266 intelligence networks operating in France. Most of these networks were linked to the intelligence networks of the Allies (SOE, MI6, OSS) or the Free French (BCRAM). While "some networks developed from spontaneous local initiatives, such as efforts to help British soldiers stranded in France after the Armistice," others "were set up from scratch by intelligence agents sent out from London."<sup>344</sup> Because one of the networks' objectives was to supply Free France and the Allies with intelligence reports, Vichy was a prime location for them. In 1942, Christian Pineau created the network *Phalanx*, with a local branch in Vichy, the mission of which was to gather political and economic information. After only one day in Vichy, they reportedly obtained the minutes from the Council of Ministers and sent it to London.<sup>345</sup> *Brutus*, *Goélette*, *Kléber*, *Marco-Polo*, *Copernic*, and *Alliance* are other networks that established local branches in Vichy.<sup>346</sup> The *Alliance* network, probably the most active network in the capital, had approximately fifty active members in and around Vichy, under the leadership of the lawyer Jacques Labit.<sup>347</sup> Given that these networks were usually small and secretive, and given the city's small size, this figure is not insignificant. These resistance organizations included both permanent agents (agents P2), who received a salary, and temporary and volunteer agents (agents P1).<sup>348</sup>

Amongst the *Vichyssois* who made the biggest contribution to the networks are Pierre Berthomier, Jean Sabatier, and the Pequet couple. Pierre Berthomier, a civil aviation pilot in charge of distributing the government's mail in the unoccupied zone, was one of the first recruits of Vichy's *Alliance* branch. As Berthomier traveled across France, he collected information and documents gathered by other *Alliance* members and brought them back to the capital. He also identified fields that could be used to airdrop arms, money, radio transistors, and warm clothes.<sup>349</sup> Jean Sabatier, a dental surgeon in Vichy, first joined the *Marco Polo* network before becoming a member of *Alliance*. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed head of section. His home and his dental office were used as a meeting point for the network. Before his arrest in September 1943,

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<sup>344</sup> Jackson, *France The Dark Years*, 408-409.

<sup>345</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 448.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 446-448.

<sup>347</sup> Débordes, *L'Allier dans la Guerre*, 175; Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 445.

On the *Alliance* network, see Marie Madeleine Fourcade, *L'Arche de Noé. Réseau Alliance 1940-1945* (Paris: Plon, 2003).

<sup>348</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 442.

<sup>349</sup> For a more detailed account of Berthomier's, see his profile of the AFMD's website : <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1128155> (Accessed February 24, 2016).

Sabatier managed to provide the network much valuable information.<sup>350</sup> So did Andrée Pequet, who, through her job as a “voyageuse de commerce,” had access to some ministries, allowing her to glean information here and there. As an *Alliance* member since October 1942, she also transported mail, transmitters and made forged documents. Édouard, her husband, a pilot and director of the Vichy-Rhue airfield, was also a liaison officer for *Alliance*. Both were arrested in April 1943.<sup>351</sup>

Vichy’s mayor, Pierre-Victor Léger, was also reportedly part of a resistance network through his membership in *Mithridate*.<sup>352</sup> My archival research yielded little about Léger’s participation and role within this specific network, or in the resistance more generally. However, several testimonies mention the mayor’s underground activities. According to Maurice Constantin-Weyer, Léger was “l’un des rouages du service de contre espionnage franco-britannique.”<sup>353</sup> In a newspaper article published in 1947, Léger is reported to have hidden the files on those sought by the Gestapo.<sup>354</sup> In *Vichy, capitale à l’heure allemande*, local historian Jean Débordes explains how Léger used the municipality’s ration cards department to help these people. Léger, he writes, “avait donné son accord pour que soit mis sur pied un véritable et discret service qui procurerait des cartes d’identité et d’alimentation à ceux qui étaient l’objet de recherches de la part des Allemands et des services français.”<sup>355</sup> Georges Frélastre, another primary witness, cites a conversation he overheard on the street:

On est pas les seuls à douter d’nos gouvernants. À c’qui paraît, Pierre Victor Léger, il est pas mal du tout avec les Amerlocs... Un d’mes copains l’a vu déposer à la sauvette, et même pas qu’une fois, une lettre dans la boîte du 56, une belle maison avec des colonnes, à une bonne dizaine d’immeubles de celui où i crèche, sur le côté droit quand on va vers le stade. T’sais que c’est l’appartement privé de l’ambassadeur des Etats-Unis. Sûr qu’il lui refile des renseignements qu’il a appris et qui peuvent servir aux Ricains. P’t-être qu’un jour i nous libérerons.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> See Sabatier’s profile on the AFMD’s website: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=675968> (Accessed February 24, 2016)

<sup>351</sup> See information on the the Pequets, see Andrée Pequet’s profile on the AFMD’s website: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1073915> (Accessed March 2, 2016). Both survived.

<sup>352</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 448.

<sup>353</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire: des origines à nos jours* (Vichy: Szabo, 1947), 175.

<sup>354</sup> “Ce qu’on ne dit pas,” *L’avenir de Vichy* N3 (1947).

<sup>355</sup> Débordes, *Vichy, capitale à l’heure allemande*, 194.

<sup>356</sup> Georges Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois sous Vichy* (Nonette: Editions Créer, 2002), 61.

Although the role played by Léger in the resistance remains unclear, the many anecdotes alluding to his involvement in resistance groups or networks, as well as his postwar membership to the *Union nationale de la Résistance française* and to the *Amicale du réseau de la France combattante*, suggest that he was, in some manner, engaged in the resistance.<sup>357</sup>

The *Goélette* and *Kléber* networks also included several long-term Vichy residents. In 1943, Yvonne Guinard, a dental surgeon in Vichy, offered *Goélette* to use her mailbox. Guinard also sheltered agents on mission in the capital so that they did not have to fill in the hotels' identification forms.<sup>358</sup> Abbé Berthe, a priest in Cusset, is another *Vichyssois* reported to have been involved in *Goélette*. Despite the many controversies surrounding the position of the Church during the war, "Catholics, especially those with Christian Democratic backgrounds, were prominent in resistance from the start," Julian Jackson explains.<sup>359</sup> According to Jacques Sevel, the former mayor of Chevagnes, Berthe ran the *Yatagan* network, a local branch of *Goélette*.<sup>360</sup> Mrs France Cousin was an informant for the *Kléber* network. Her position as the manager of the *hôtel de Paris*, which had been requisitioned for Nazi senior officers, allowed her to gather some valuable information.<sup>361</sup>

Other *Vichyssois* participated in the Resistance without officially belonging to any resistance movements or networks. At the liberation Dr. Colomb said that he had been fortunate to have been able to rely on many local residents for specific missions:

Nous avons en ville plusieurs maisons où l'on pouvait donner asile pour une, deux ou trois nuits... Et je dois vous dire que j'[ai] pu, personnellement, avoir parmi les braves gens – bien souvent des clients – la possibilité, sans donner d'explications, de demander des services importants... Il est évident que dans notre ville de Vichy, où j'étais médecin depuis plus de vingt ans... [je savais] sur qui je pouvais compter.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> "Être maire en cette époque : un exercice de corde raide," *La Montagne* (July 10, 1990).

<sup>358</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Mrs Yvonne Guinard (undated).

<sup>359</sup> Jackson, *France The Dark Years*, 418.

<sup>360</sup> Jacques Sevel, "Vieux souvenir," (unpublished document). See also "L'Anac se penche sur les Vichyssois qui ont résisté dans la capital de l'État français," *La Montagne* (May 7, 2013).

<sup>361</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 447.

<sup>362</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

The *Vichyssois* on whom the resisters could rely were of different social classes and different political backgrounds: small business owners, doctors, hotel owners, railway workers, and so on. The *hôtel Flore*'s manager, for example, once hid Alfred Salvatelli, the departmental chief of the *Armée secrète* in the Haute-Loire, after he escaped from the Gestapo. The hotel manager later put him on a bus to Saint-Yorre, a suburb of Vichy, where he was cared for by a mechanic who had been forewarned about Salvatelli's arrival.<sup>363</sup> In July 1942, local railway workers built a hiding space in the locomotive of Pierre Laval's train, which enabled resisters and messages to travel between Vichy and Paris.<sup>364</sup>

The *Compagnie fermière* is also reported to have helped the resistance, although this information should be treated with caution. According to Ivan Loiseau, a governing member of the company, the company helped hide drug stocks from the Germans.<sup>365</sup> *Compagnie fermière* members are further believed to have hidden documents, arms, and material, and to have planned an attack against the milice (which occupied the *Établissement des bains*) in 1944. That attack, however, was never launched because the milice left hastily at the end of August.<sup>366</sup> As the archives of the *Compagnie fermière* are not accessible, it is, unfortunately, difficult to ascertain much about its wartime activities.<sup>367</sup> What is certain, however, is that the *Compagnie*'s involvement in the resistance – if there was indeed any – was both late and very limited. Not only were the activities of the company constrained by the fact that it was (is) funded by the state, but Loiseau's own position towards Vichy raises questions with regard to the company's actual involvement in the resistance. The portraits that Loiseau paints of Pétain and Laval in his book *Souvenirs et Témoignages*, published in 1974, resemble special pleading more than anything else.<sup>368</sup> Loiseau also mentions his friendship with Fernand de Brinon, despite their "conceptions opposées sur la politique européenne,"<sup>369</sup> and implicitly defends the Vichy regime, arguing that

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<sup>363</sup> Débordès, *Vichy, capitale à l'heure allemande*, 188.

<sup>364</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 440-441.

<sup>365</sup> Ivan Loiseau, *Souvenirs et témoignages : Raguse, Moulins, La Sauge, Paris, Rome, Vienne, Varsovie, Londres : un témoin naturel et quotidien du gouvernement de Vichy, 1940-1945* (Moulins: Edition des Cahiers Bourbonnais, 1974), 226-227.

<sup>366</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 69. Letter from the Allier *préfet* about two prominent members of the *Compagnie fermière* to the *Ministre de la Marine* (April 25, 1945).

<sup>367</sup> Pascal Chambriard, a local teacher and historian, has done research about the *Compagnie fermière* and the spa history of Vichy for decades. Yet, he, too, has been unable to find much information about the *Compagnie* during the war. Even finding the list of the society's shareholders during the war has proved impossible. Pascal Chambriard, conversation with author (July 2014)

<sup>368</sup> Loiseau, *Souvenirs et témoignages*, 167-171.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

the French laws were, in fact, the transcription of German orders, and that the government had no other choice but to be “attentiste.”<sup>370</sup>

The fact that the Allier department was crossed by the demarcation line made it an ideal place for the escape networks to develop. In almost all cities and villages across France there were smugglers and people willing to help the fugitives, refugees, and resisters, by accommodating them, making them forged identification papers, and giving them clothes. In Vichy, the boot maker Joseph Pancerzinski and his wife organized a secret reception center in their home for the escaped prisoners and all those who were fighting against the Germans. After providing them food, clothes, and comfort, the Pancerzinskis drove them to the Haute-Loire department from where they started their journey to Spain, Switzerland or London.<sup>371</sup> René Ancel is another *Vichyssois* who is believed to have helped refugees on a regular basis. Ancel sold beverages to restaurants, bars, and coffee shops all around the department and every week he went to Moulins in the occupied zone. Ancel often aided refugees and resisters who were willing to cross the demarcation line. In order to divert the guards’ attention, he offered them beers. Even when he had no-one to help, he left a free case of beer at the border, “de telle sorte que son camion était toujours bien accueilli et jamais contrôlé.”<sup>372</sup>

On several occasions, explosives were recovered in the Vichy region. Since the end of the year 1942, throughout the Allier department “on était entré dans l’ère des attentats, à l’aide de crayons chimiques, de charges explosives, d’abord assez rudimentaires puis devenant presque scientifiques.”<sup>373</sup> On May 8 and 21, 1942, two explosive devices were found near Vichy, including one located 100 meters away from the Vichy-Paris railroad. The two devices were defused and destroyed by army bomb disposal experts and the police.<sup>374</sup> On September 4, 1943, a bomb exploded on a train occupied by German soldiers and René Bousquet. Contrary to the

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<sup>370</sup> Loiseau, *Souvenirs et témoignages*, 222 & 78.

In *Fernand de Brinon, l’aristocrate de la collaboration*, Gilbert Joseph talks about the relationship between de Brinon and Loiseau: “La ville thermale disposait de quelques fortins de luxe : théâtre du Casino, grands hotels, bars, restaurants, piscine (...) que fréquentait Mme de Brinon. La Compagnie fermière qui gérât la plupart de ces établissements était devenue une manière d’hôtellerie gouvernementale. Ivan Loiseau, le secrétaire général, préposé aux mondantés (...), semblait fabriqué pour l’emploi. Pratiquant le langage du Grand Siècle, il aimait ‘les vrais gentilshommes’ et ‘les dames de qualité’... On se souvient que la future Mme de Brinon l’avait prié d’obtenir du Saint-Siège, par ses relations familiales, l’annulation de son premier mariage.” Gilbert Joseph, *Fernand de Brinon, l’aristocrate de la collaboration* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), 242.

<sup>371</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 440-441.

<sup>372</sup> Débordes, *L’Allier dans la Guerre*, 91-92.

<sup>373</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 420.

<sup>374</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report from the police inspector in Vichy (June 3, 1942).



bomb-maker's intent, nobody was hurt.<sup>375</sup> On September 17 of the same year, several explosive devices were discovered by the highway leading from Vichy to Châteldon, Pierre Laval's hometown. Two burlap sacks, containing approximately 30 kilograms of explosives were found in a pile of sand.

Des fils électriques d'une longueur de 540 mètres partaient de cette charge d'explosifs, traversaient la voie ferrée, sous les rails, traversaient un champ et aboutissaient à une haie, bordant un terrain... sur lequel prenait naissance un sentier. Les fils électriques, en contact avec la charge d'explosifs, étaient reliés à un détonateur électrique... Il n'est pas douteux que ce soit la voiture du Président Laval qui ait été visée en la circonstance... La charge d'explosifs était suffisante pour projeter la voiture du Président Laval lorsqu'elle serait passée à hauteur du tas de sable.<sup>376</sup>

In 1942 and 1943, the offices of collaborationist parties in the department were regularly attacked: those of the *Légion française des Combattants* and the group *Collaboration* in Montluçon; those of the milice in Commentry; those of the LVF in Moulins; and the PPF propaganda center in Vichy, whose window had already been smashed in April 1941.<sup>377</sup> However, because the identity of most of those involved in these sabotages and attacks are unknown, it is impossible to know whether these aggressions were the work of *Vichysois*, resisters from elsewhere in the department, or a collaborative effort amongst different Allier organizations.

The presence of important contingents of *miliciens* and Gestapo in Vichy (see Chapter 1) made the participation in the resistance a very risky business. In early 1943, in full agreement with the government, Darnand launched his *miliciens* and repressive forces against the resisters. In April of the same year, the *commissaire spécial des renseignements généraux* in Vichy noted that: "À Vichy, les forces policières importantes qui y stationnent donnent à réfléchir à ceux qui auraient des velléités de faire 'quelque chose'. 'Qu'est-ce que vous voulez qui se passe ? Il y a

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<sup>375</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire divisionnaire chef du district de Police de l'arrondissement de Vichy* to the sous-préfet in Vichy (September 4, 1943).

<sup>376</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire de police, chef de la Sûreté* to the *Chef du district de Police de l'arrondissement de Vichy* (September 17, 1943).

<sup>377</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Information note from the Ministry of the Interior (May 2, 1941); Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale*, 422.

des flics partout' avons nous entendu dire à ce sujet."<sup>378</sup> And yet, "things" did occur, as we just saw. Many local resisters paid their participation in the resistance with their lives.

The Gestapo made regular arrests in Vichy: from a couple to more than thirty every month.<sup>379</sup> Repression was particularly severe against the *Alliance* network, which was very active in Vichy. Pierre Berthomier was arrested on September 1943 in the vicinity of Volvic, fifty kilometers away from Vichy. Like all other *Alliance* members, he was later transferred to the prison in Fresnes, before being deported to the camp of Schirmeck in Alsace in May 1944. During the night of September 01-02, 107 members of the network (including Sabatier) were taken to the camp in Struthof-Natzwiller, where they were executed by being shot in the back of the head. Sabatier was arrested by the Gestapo on September 22, 1943 in his apartment, while he was having a meeting with fifteen other *Alliance* members. While they were being taken to the Gestapo's headquarter at the *hôtel du Portugal*, a second brigade arrested Emile Pradelle, the leader of the Vichy sector, and his wife. The Nazis monitored Sabatier's house, and for a week, every time a resister came to Sabatier's (s)he was arrested. In December 1943, Sabatier and his comrades were condemned to death by the Freiburg im Breisgau tribunal.<sup>380</sup> Other *Vichyssois* who were arrested and tortured by the Gestapo in Vichy included Jean and Jeanne Bouteille, also from the *Alliance* network, Marc Juge, Yvette Poucy, René Chabrier, Henri and Yvonne Moreau, from the *Marco-Polo* network, amongst others.

The people arrested by (or handed to) the Gestapo in Vichy did not stay in Vichy very long. Only the prisoners whose cases were being examined were kept in the basement of the Gestapo's headquarters, at the *hôtel du Portugal*. Most were transferred to the military prison in Moulins or in Clermont-Ferrand, before, in certain cases, being sent to Fresnes. The head of the Gestapo required that some cells always be available in the *Portugal*, in case of an emergency.<sup>381</sup>

The resisters arrested by the milice were usually taken to the basement of the *Petit Casino*, which had been transformed into interrogation and torture chambers, effectively shielded from the outside. Maurice Constantin-Weyer's brother and son-in-law, who were arrested in April 1944, had to deal with the *miliciens* in the *Petit Casino*:

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<sup>378</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from the *Commissaire spécial des renseignements généraux* in Vichy to the *Commissaire divisionnaire chef régional des renseignements généraux* (April 27, 1943).

<sup>379</sup> AD (Allier), 996W. "Occupation allemande."

<sup>380</sup> See the AFMD's profiles, cited above; Fourcade, *L'arche de Noé*.

<sup>381</sup> Konrad-Adrian, hearing from November 20, 1944, cited in Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 22-24.

[Ils] furent, pendant trois jours, enfermés dans les latrines, pendus par les poignets ; toutes les demi-heures, un milicien leur jetait sur le corps un seau d'eau glacée. Ce n'était rien auprès des supplices de l'étage supérieur, où un milicien astucieux avait imaginé la torture électrique. L'appareil se composait de quatre boucles de cuivre qui prenaient aux poignets et aux chevilles le corps du patient suspendu en l'air, on faisait passer un courant électrique ; un judas ménagé dans la cloison permettait aux tortionnaires de suivre la passion du malheureux.<sup>382</sup>

Jean Débordes provides further information about the practice of torture:

À l'un, on écrasa un orteil ; un autre fut enfermé pendant seize heures dans un réfrigérateur... les poings liés ; les interrogatoires étaient ponctués de coups de ceinturon... Parfois, en plus du ceinturon, on utilisait un gourdin ou un tabouret pour vous taper dessus. Il y eut [aussi] le supplice de la dynamo. Un fil de celle-ci était branché sur les menottes, l'autre au lobe de l'oreille. La dynamo tournait et le prisonnier s'évanouissait. On lui plongeait la tête dans un bac plein d'eau pour le ranimer... Concernant les prisonnières, les tentatives de viol furent innombrables.<sup>383</sup>

Prisoners were often sent to the milice's prison, at the *Château des Broses* to recover from the torture suffered in the *Petit-Casino*, before being taken back there or being transferred to the military prison in Moulins. Dr. Colomb, future president of Vichy's *Comité de Libération*, was treated with respect in the prison because he was the family doctor of one of the miliciens.<sup>384</sup> This type of well-mannered treatment, however, was reserved for a few privileged individuals. Although prisoners were not tortured or killed at the *Brosses*, there was still abuse. Yvonne Guinard, from the *Goélette* network, described her short stay at the Broses:

Arrêtée le 24 mai 1944 avec mes camarades, j'ai été traitée d'une façon indigne au Château des Broses, par les miliciens... J'ai été laissée pendant quatre jours dans une cave sur le ciment, sans manger, sans robe, sans soulier, sans manteau, puis montée dans une cellule sans aération où j'ai presque étouffée pendant cinq jours. Nous fûmes ensuite livrées aux Allemands.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire*, 159.

<sup>383</sup> Débordes, *L'Allier dans la Guerre*, 315.

<sup>384</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

<sup>385</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Mrs Yvonne Guinard's witness statement (undated).

Although most of the early partisan activity against the Vichy regime and the Germans taking place in the capital was initiated by non-locals, some *Vichyssois* did participate in the Resistance. While some of these resisters were Gaullists, communists, or not affiliated to any organizations, the main resistance trend in Vichy appears to have been Giraudist. Whether such affiliation was a matter of opportunity (the Giraudist network *Alliance* was one of the networks which had fast developed in Vichy) or a matter of opinion is hard to determine.

Many historians have pointed out how difficult it is to estimate the resistance's size. This is even truer in the case of civilian resistance helping intelligence networks, as was the case in Vichy. This type of resistance was less visible, and therefore less easily quantifiable, than partisan resistance and the maquis. That said, as this section has shown, the resistance in Vichy was not as marginal as one might have thought.

### Conclusion

The *Vichyssois*' response to Vichy was everything but straightforward, evolving to the rhythm of the war and according to their own concerns and worries. Considering the accommodating and opportunistic behavior of Vichy's population towards the government, and the *Vichyssois*' fondness towards Pétain as evidence of a broad acquiescence to the regime makes little sense. That said, the population's ambivalent behavior toward the Vichy regime has to be acknowledged. Although most of the population did not actively support the regime, there was no organized and public opposition to the regime. Such behavior originates from several causes, one of which was the sentiment of sympathy and respect the population felt for Pétain (the kind, grandfatherly man, who had, himself, shown respect and consideration for the city). Many historians differentiate between "maréchalistes" and "Pétainistes." The latter term refers to those who adhered to the ideology of the National revolution and the regime's policies, whereas the former accounts for an attachment to the person of Marshal Pétain.<sup>386</sup> In Vichy, the general trend was more *maréchaliste* than *Pétainiste*.

According to Pierre Laborie, "la compréhension des comportements collectifs passent moins par leur mise en relation avec des faits réels que par l'analyse des représentations mentales à travers lesquelles ces idées et ces faits sont perçus, vécus, commentés et jugés par les

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<sup>386</sup> On this see, "Les ambivalences de l'opinion," in *Vichy, 1940-1944*, eds., Azéma and Wieviorka, 189.

contemporains.”<sup>387</sup> The fact that the *Vichyssois* shared their living environment with the government gave them no special insights about what was really going on. If anything, the opposite was probably true. Their judgment and discernment of the situation was largely biased by their position as privileged spectators of the Vichy regime and their frequent encounters and interaction with the ministers.

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<sup>387</sup> Laborie, *L'opinion française*, 18.

### CHAPTER 3 – Being Jewish in Vichy

In his preface to the book *Vichy, la Pègre et les Nazis*, Serge Klarsfeld called for more regional studies on the experience of Jews in France during the war, arguing that “Il n’y a pas une seule solution française de la question juive, au ‘singulier’. La ligne gouvernementale émanant de Vichy n’a pas été constante et son application n’a pas été uniforme à travers les départements et les communes.”<sup>388</sup> While there might still not be enough micro studies about the Jewish experience of Vichy, one has to acknowledge that many regional studies about Jews during the war have recently been published, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the variety and complexity of the Jewish experience in both the occupied and unoccupied France.<sup>389</sup> None of these works, however, has focused on the city of Vichy. The work of leading historians of the life of Jews in France during the Second World War, such as Renée Poznanski, Serges Klarsfeld, Robert Paxton, and Michael Marrus, have provided some insight into the experience of Jews in France’s substitute capital.<sup>390</sup> These scholars, however, have only touched on this particular topic. Amongst the histories written by local historians, the question of how Jews lived, and survived, in Vichy has also only been partially tackled.<sup>391</sup>

This chapter begins to fill in this historiographical gap. It reveals how unique the Jewish experience in Vichy was. Thousands of Jews rushed to Vichy in 1939 and the first half of 1940. While many of these refugees hoped to be protected by the new French government, the city of Vichy eventually proved to be anything but a safe haven. Jewish refugees in Vichy were the first Jews in the unoccupied zone to be officially discriminated against. By 1944, only a small number of French Jews, most of whom had been established in Vichy since before the war, remained in Vichy.

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<sup>388</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, preface to Isaac Lewendel and Bernard Weisz, *Vichy, la Pègre et les Nazis: La traque des Juifs en Provence* (Paris: Nouveau Monde; 2013).

<sup>389</sup> See for instance: Alexandre Doulut, *La spoliation des biens juifs en Lot-et-Garonne 1941-1944* (Agen: éditions d’Albret, 2005); Jacques Durin, *Nice la juive. Une ville sous l’occupation 1940-1942* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2010); Nicolas Mariot and Claire Zalc, *Face à la persécution. 991 Juifs dans la guerre* (Paris: Odile Jacob, Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah, 2010); Nelcy Delanoë, *D’une petite rafle provençale* (Paris, Seuil, 2013). See also, Claire Zalc, Ivan Ermakoff, Nicolas Mariot and Tal Bruttman, *Pour une micro histoire de la Shoah* (Paris: Seuil, 2012).

<sup>390</sup> Renée Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1997); Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz Volume 1. La ‘solution finale’ de la question juive en France* (Paris: Fayard, 2011); Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs* (Paris: Calmann-lévy, 2015).

<sup>391</sup> See for example Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale 1940-1944* (Le Coteau: Horvath, 1983); Jean Débordes, *Vichy, capitale à l’heure allemande* (Paris: Godefroy de Bouillon, 1998); Georges Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois sous Vichy* (Nonette: Créer, 2002).



## 1. Expelling the Jews from Vichy, from the summer of 1940 to the summer of 1941

Following France's defeat in June 1940 and the ensuing German occupation of northern France, many Jews from the newly occupied zone migrated southward to the free zone. Between July and November 1940, thousands of Jews from Alsace-Lorraine, Germany, Luxembourg, as well as German Jewish refugees living in Bordeaux, were ordered to relocate south of the demarcation line.<sup>392</sup> In addition to these forced relocations, many other Jews from northern France fled in anticipation of the risks of German occupation. Some of these refugees went south hoping to enter Spain or Italy, while others sought resettlement in southern France. Still others went to Vichy.

The exact number of Jewish refugees who went to Vichy is unknown, yet it easily ran into the thousands,<sup>393</sup> thereby greatly increasing Vichy's resident Jewish population beyond its preexisting 300 souls.<sup>394</sup> The decision to resettle in Vichy was particularly easy for the many affluent Jews who were accustomed to vacationing there during the spa season and who owned an apartment in town. Many less wealthy Jews, who were knowledgeable about the city's incredible accommodation potential, also came to Vichy, hoping for refuge. For them, however, finding accommodation proved a difficulty. Although the accommodation potential of Vichy was real, by the end of June 1940 it had become extremely difficult to find room (see Chapter 1). Ginette de Toledo recalls how her parents rented a store in Cusset, a few minutes away from Vichy, and used it as an apartment, where fifteen people crammed themselves together.<sup>395</sup>

Another reason why many Jews journeyed to Vichy is that the city was known for its flexible labor market. Before the war, Vichy's employment opportunities were known to be excellent, especially in the textile sector, and the garment and fur industry. Jewelry artisans were also plentiful.<sup>396</sup> When the government established itself in Vichy, many refugees thought that the

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<sup>392</sup> On July 16, 3,000 Jews were expelled from Alsace ; on August 8, 1,400 German Jewish refugees from Bordeaux were forced to leave, while the following week, the Germans expelled Jews from Lorraine. As were thousands of more Jews from the Baden region, Saarland, Palatinate and Luxembourg in the fall of 1940. A certain number of them were interned in camps in the south of France, such as Saint-Cyprien. The others tried to find accommodation in towns and villages south of the demarcation line. Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 26-27.

<sup>393</sup> This estimation has been deduced from lists established in the fall of 1940. AD (Allier). 996W. Files "Mesures anti-Semites." The estimation is vague. However, due to a lack of lists established in the summer of 1940, it is impossible to determine exactly the number of Jewish refugees in Vichy who came to Vichy between 1939 and the summer of 1940.

<sup>394</sup> Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 103.

<sup>395</sup> Interview of Ginette de Toledo, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 4, 2014).

<sup>396</sup> Jean Débordes, *Vichy, capitale à l'heure allemande* (Jean-Cyrille Godefroy, 1998), 227.

arrival of thousands of people would increase employment opportunities. This did happen, yet as we shall see, these opportunities were not available to everyone.

To an interviewer who pointed out the strangeness of Jews' decision to go to Vichy during the exodus, survivor Renée Hatem underlined the anachronism of his remark, explaining that at the time of the exodus, Vichy was nothing more than a spa resort, with many hotels and boarding houses.<sup>397</sup> Even when Vichy became capital in July of 1940, the flow of Jewish refugees did not stop. The fact that Marshall Pétain was in town was not considered a hindrance, but was actually appealing. André Kaspi estimates that in addition to the tens of thousands of Jews who went to the Allier department, about 60,000 others went to the nearby (and bigger) department of the Puy-de-Dôme, "attirés par la proximité de Vichy et la nécessité d'être en contact avec le gouvernement français."<sup>398</sup> Gaby Neely remembers that his family went straight to Vichy believing that Pétain would "protect" them.<sup>399</sup> Survivors Lise Delbes, René Klein, Madelein Nathan and Edith Perlman recall how amazed they were each time they saw the Marshall in Vichy. Lise remembers having been "éblouie par sa prestance," whereas René explains that when Jews happened to come across Pétain in the park adjacent to the *hôtel du Parc*, "ils étaient très fiers lorsque le Maréchal leur rendait leur salut." Every Sunday morning, Madelein and Edith went to the ceremonies organized in front of the *Parc*. Madelein even recalls singing "Maréchal, nous voilà !," with the crowd. "On pensait que [Pétain] étaient un rempart," says Edith.<sup>400</sup> "Pourquoi vouliez-vous qu'on mette en doute la parole de ce grand homme ?," asks René Ulmann, whose family arrived in Vichy during the exodus.<sup>401</sup> Ulmann's rhetorical question echoes the remark of France's Grand Rabbi, Isaïe Schwartz, who, in the summer of 1940, commented that Pétain was "au dessus de tout soupçon."<sup>402</sup> Although Rabbi Schwartz did fear the Germans and the most hardcore anti-Semitic members of the *Action française*, like most Jewish notables, he had full confidence in Marshall Pétain.<sup>403</sup> The early Jewish enthusiasm, however, quickly declined.

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<sup>397</sup> Interview of Renée Hatem, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 1, 2014).

<sup>398</sup> André Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l'Occupation* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997), 156.

<sup>399</sup> Interview of Gaby Neely, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 1, 2014).

<sup>400</sup> Interviews of Lise Delbes, René Klein, Madelein Nathan and Edith Perlman, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed between June 1-4, 2014).

<sup>401</sup> Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel, *L'année dernière à Vichy* (Julianto Films, 2007).

<sup>402</sup> Cited in Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 51.

<sup>403</sup> Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 51.

The first warning signs of the tragedy to come occurred very early on. First, during the exodus of June 1940, Rabbi Schwartz was forbidden to add his voice to that of the archbishop and express his sympathy, over the radio, to those who were on the roads. Second, the law of July 22, 1940, which required that all the naturalizations granted since 1927 be revised led to the denaturalization of thousands of Jews: out of the 15,154 citizens who lost their French citizenship, about forty percent were Jewish, while Jews only represented about five percent of the naturalizations since 1927.<sup>404</sup> Third, on August 27, the government repealed the Marchandreau law, which punished any defamation of a group of persons belonging to a particular ethnic community or religion,<sup>405</sup> thereby allowing anti-Semitism to spread freely in the media. These measures clearly reveal the anti-Semitic climate that reigned in France during the war's early days.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated how this anti-Semitism was only partially a result of the war, arguing that it extended back to the Dreyfus Affair and even beyond. Yet historians have also noted that Vichy's racial laws of 1940-1941 had to be understood within the particular context of June 1940. While the anti-Jewish legislation, implemented by Vichy in 1940 and 1941, was meant to reduce the Jewish influence in the public, cultural, and economic spheres, it was also meant to provide relief to the current domestic situation by getting rid of the many refugees who had arrived in France since the outbreak of the war and by preventing others from coming.<sup>406</sup>

The expulsion of thousands of Jews from Germany, Austria, and the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and their ensuing relocation to France's unoccupied zone in the summer and fall of 1940 was poorly received by the government. From the government's perspective, these Jews were illegal because they had crossed the border in violation of the armistice agreement, and, as such, constituted a direct infringement of the sovereignty right of the French government, which was being prevented from exercising control over the entry of foreigners into the free zone.<sup>407</sup> These mass arrivals were further believed to have significantly increased

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<sup>404</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 21-22.

<sup>405</sup> A decree-law passed on April 21, 1939 amended the previous law regarding the freedom of the press (dated from July 29, 1881) and provided a means for prosecution when insult or defamation against people, based on their origin, race or religion, was designed to arouse hatred amongst citizens.

<sup>406</sup> On Vichy's antisemitism, see: René Rémond, *Les droites en France* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982); Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs, de 1789 à nos jours*, Paris: Seuil, 2004); Michel Winock, *La droite, hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Perrin, 2012); Serge Bernstein and Michel Winock, *Fascisme français ? La controverse* (Paris: Edition CNRS, 2014); Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy and the Jews*.

<sup>407</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 26-27; Eric Alary, *La ligne de démarcation* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 185-186.

tensions within French society and destabilized public order. As a consequence, on July 5, 1940, the minister of the Interior, Adrien Marquet, closed France's borders "afin que les étrangers ne puissent troubler l'ordre public."<sup>408</sup> Getting rid of these Jews was deemed all the more essential as the country felt that it could not even feed and provide work to its own population. The costs of internment, which were to be covered by France was another major concern for the French government. In November 1940, General Paul Doyen, France's representative at the Armistice Commission, stated that the French government could no longer offer asylum to these foreigners and asked the Germans to take them back and to pay for their stay in France.<sup>409</sup> In August 1940, Vichy negotiated the emigration of about 150,000 Spanish republican refugees to Mexico.<sup>410</sup>

A German law issued at the end of the summer of 1940 forbade most Jewish refugees who were in the free zone (either by obligation or by choice) from returning to the occupied zone, which created a situation that was impossible for Vichy to resolve.<sup>411</sup> On September 20, 1940, Hans Speidel, a German lieutenant and future Chief of Staff of the military commander in France (as of August 1940) had German and French messages, painted at different crossing points on the demarcation line, warning Jews of the risks associated with illegal crossings: "Avis aux juifs : Il est défendu aux juifs de franchir la ligne de démarcation pour se rendre dans la zone occupée de la France... Toute infraction au présent arrêté sera punie d'emprisonnement ou d'une amende. La confiscation des biens pourra en outre être prononcée."<sup>412</sup> Eventually the French government was trapped into dealing with this on its own. In November 1940, the minister of the Interior, Marcel Peyrouton, proposed an emigration program, whereby a great number of Jews would be sent to the French Antilles. In 1941, Admiral Darlan considered a massive deportation of Jews to the island of Madagascar.<sup>413</sup> None of these initiatives, though, was carried out. Others were.

Pétain's government perceived the city of Vichy to be the showcase of the regime. It was therefore essential that important measures be taken there as early as possible. On August 15, 1940, Pierre Laval complained to Robert Murphy, the American *chargé d'affaires*, that the Jews, whose number had reached alarming proportions in Vichy, risked creating public disorder and

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<sup>408</sup> *Le Figaro*, July 6, 1940, Cited in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 35.

<sup>409</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 35.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>411</sup> Even the Jews, who, in theory, were allowed to go back north, were, in reality, turned back at the border. Alary, *La ligne de démarcation*, 183-184.

<sup>412</sup> Alary, *La ligne de demarcation*, 184.

<sup>413</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 35-36.

giving the city a bad reputation. He said he wanted to get rid of them.<sup>414</sup> Two weeks before, on July 31, 1940, Pierre Nicolle, the representative of the *Fédération des Associations régionales*, had written the following entry in his diary: “Le seul fait saillant de la soirée est la décision prise par le Maréchal d’épurer la ville de Vichy. Les vérifications d’identité vont être faites dans tous les hôtels, des rafles opérées jour et nuit et enfin renvoi de tous les étrangers indésirables séjournant dans la capitale Provisoire.”<sup>415</sup> Nicolle does not make any direct reference to Jews being specifically targeted, yet they clearly were. By the end of October, the government had already expelled more than 3,000 Jews from Vichy. An October 28, 1940 letter from Vichy’s police commander to the *gendarmerie* in Lapalisse reveals that of the 3,500 foreigners successfully expelled from the city between August 7 and late October, ninety-five percent, or 3,325 people, were Jewish.<sup>416</sup>

Jewish survivors have vivid memories of the disillusion instigated by these early expulsions from the new capital. Pierre Haber, Olga Fink, Renée Hatem, and Claire Jossot initially settled in Vichy hoping that they would be safe there. They soon realized, however, that the new capital was everything but safe for them; “One of Pétain’s first regulations was that Vichy should be *judenrein*, [so Jewish refugees had to leave],” Pierre explains, before adding that only the Jews who had been in Vichy prior to the war were allowed to stay. In Olga’s words, Pétain “a chassé les Juifs” from the new capital. In the fall of 1940, thousands of Jewish families chose to leave Vichy, travelling to Lyon, Toulouse, or Nice.<sup>417</sup>

The city of Vichy was, most certainly, not consulted in the decision to expel these 3,500 refugees, though it is likely that this decision was well received by local authorities. From a political perspective, these measures may have been favorable to Lucien Lamoureux, a prominent

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<sup>414</sup> Letter from Robert Murphy to the State Secretary (August 15, 1940). Cited in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 35-36.

Pierre Laval did not have an anti-Semitic background. In the prewar period, although he might have put forth a few anti-Semitic remarks he never appealed to the easy expedient of the Jewish scapegoat, which was so common in the 1930s. Nevertheless, during the summer of 1940, Laval did adapt to the new climate. It would have been surprising if the many trials of that summer had not occasioned the emergence of certain tendencies amongst some people. The frictions of this terrible summer were made increasingly sharper by the generalized search for the ‘responsible ones’; with the search seldom going beyond than unpopular and unfamiliar figures. Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 43, 48 and 329.

<sup>415</sup> Pierre Nicolle, *Cinquante mois d’armistice : Vichy, 2 juillet 1940-26 août 1944. Journal d’un témoin Tome I*. (Paris: Edition André Bonne, 1947), 47.

<sup>416</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W 123. Letter from the commander of the brigade police in Vichy to the *Gendarmerie* in Lapalisse (28 October 1940).

<sup>417</sup> Interviews of Pierre Haber, Olga Fink, Renée Hatem and Claire Jossot, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed between June 1-4, 2014).

figure in Vichy's local political scene, a former deputy of the Allier department who had been minister several times between 1926 and 1940, and a member of the *Conseil national* under Pétain. In 1938, Lamoureux had defended the policies of rapprochement between France, Germany, and Italy, and had expressed some concerns about the warmongering of Jews, who were willing, he claimed, to advocate war so as to take revenge on Hitler. In prewar France, as anti-Semitic sensibilities were common amongst Daladier's parliamentary majority (to which Lamoureux belonged), Lamoureux's comments did not necessarily stand out – they reflected popular views. Nevertheless, according to Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, “dans sa conviction du bellicisme juif,” and “dans son appel au ‘redressement intérieur’,” Lamoureux “préfigurait la Révolution nationale avant l’heure.”<sup>418</sup>

From a more practical point of view, the municipality of Vichy likely experienced the early expulsions of Jewish refugees as a small relief in an otherwise aggravating situation. Since the exodus of June 1940, Vichy had been dealing with the arrival of tens of thousands of people, from Jewish and non-Jewish refugees to members of the government and civil servants. While the city was used to welcoming masses of tourists in the summer, the 1940 summer guests were of a completely different nature and the city was overtaken by the lack of housing, services and jobs. Additionally, the city was striving to keep a few rooms available for potential tourists and *curistes*.

According to the Allier *préfet*, Joseph Porte, whose own position on the management of France's Jewish problem was clearly in line with that of the government, the measures taken in the summer and the beginning of the fall of 1940 were not enough. Although it was now clear that the government was acting to reduce the influence of Jews in French public life, the Allier *préfet* still asked that further measures be taken quickly in Vichy. On 9 December 1940, Porte wrote to the *Ministre Secrétaire d'État à l'Intérieur* in the hope of blocking the establishment of Jewish businesses in Vichy: “En raison du nombre déjà élevé d'Israélites dans cette region (...) j'ai l'honneur de vous demander s'il n'y aurait pas des inconvénients sérieux à laisser s'installer dans la ville-siège du Gouvernement, de nouvelles entreprises commerciales juives.” He further explains that he took the lead and ordered “une enquête discrète” in order to identify those that managed to obtain an authorization through their military records.<sup>419</sup> But the minister, busy with

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<sup>418</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 87-88.

<sup>419</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W 124.01. Correspondence between the Allier *préfet* to the *Ministre Secrétaire d'État à l'Intérieur* (December 1940).



many other concerns and problems, was unable to give Porte an immediate and clear answer. He therefore suggested to the *préfet* that he put all demands on hold until a decision was made.<sup>420</sup>

By the fall of 1941 the status of Jewish artisans and small entrepreneurs remained unclear<sup>421</sup> due to the difficulties the Vichy government had in managing the measures of aryanization. The following extract from the *Mission d'étude sur la spoliation des Juifs de France* reveals the nature of the difficulties involved:

Les premières mesures d'aryanisation... sont allemandes et, par conséquent, concernent la seule zone occupée. Le gouvernement de Vichy, dans son obsession de souveraineté sur tout le territoire national, se bat pour la maîtrise et la responsabilité de la politique d'aryanisation ... Le premier commissaire aux questions juives, Xavier Vallat, entreprend dès sa nomination de formuler cette politique dans le domaine des personnes d'abord, avec le second statut des Juifs du 2 juin 1941, puis dans celui des biens, avec la loi du 22 juillet 1941, étape capitale dans le processus de spoliation... La collaboration [française-allemande] se fait quotidienne... [Mais] cette collaboration n'est pas exempte de divergences entre les deux partenaires et chez chacun d'eux... Ces conflits ne doivent pas masquer l'objectif conjoint des autorités allemandes et françaises : l'exclusion de la vie économique nationale des Juifs, chassés de leurs affaires et dépouillés de leurs biens. Mais ces luttes d'influence ne sont pourtant pas sans conséquences. Elles contribuent à compliquer des procédures lourdes et à les allonger.<sup>422</sup>

Despite the challenges met by the government with regards to the aryanization of Jewish goods, most of the issues concerning Jewish businesses in Vichy were relatively quickly resolved. At the end of February 1941, the Allier *préfet* received an answer to his query: “il convient de ne réserver une suite favorable à de telles demandes que si elles répondent à un intérêt économique réel.” Besides, the *Ministre secrétaire d'état à l'intérieur* added,

De ces autorisations, de caractère exceptionnel, devront justifier d'antécédents militaires satisfaisants, ou de services rendus à la collectivité, ou avoir la qualité de réfugié d'Alsace ou de Lorraine.

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<sup>420</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W 124.01. Correspondence between the Allier *préfet* to the *Ministre Secrétaire d'État à l'Intérieur* (December 1940).

<sup>421</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 162.

<sup>422</sup> *Mission d'étude sur la spoliation des Juifs de France* (directed by Jean Mattéoli) (Paris: La Documentation française, 2000), 45-49.

On economic aryanization, see also: Henry Rouso, “L'aryanisation économique. Vichy, l'occupant et la spoliation des Juifs,” in *Vichy L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 110-147.

(...) Vichy étant le siège du Gouvernement il convient d'apprécier de la façon la plus sévère les considérations qui précèdent.<sup>423</sup>

Following the aryanization law of July 1941, seventy local businesses in Vichy were assigned temporary non-Jewish administrators.<sup>424</sup> As only a few of these businesses were allowed to open after the fall of 1940, one can assume that most of them had been established prior to the war, or during the chaotic summer of 1940.

Under François Darlan, head of government after February 1941, Vichy's anti-Jewish program took off. Although in 1940, he had accused Jews and Freemasons of being responsible for the defeat, like Laval, Darlan was not known to be a hardcore anti-Semite. In fact, Darlan had little interest in domestic policy issues, preferring instead to focus his efforts on achieving a satisfactory agreement with the Germans and on ensuring France's colonial and maritime future. Darlan, however, easily let himself be drawn onto a path of anti-Semitism (albeit he appears to have been rather pleased to later refer the touchy Jewish issue to Xavier Vallat). A clever strategist, Darlan believed that anti-Semitic policies might help him to re-establish the authority of the *État français* in the southern zone and to obtain concessions from the Germans.<sup>425</sup> As German pressure increased and as it became more and more obvious that the occupation was going to last longer than expected, Darlan thought it essential to be more pro active and reaffirm the sovereignty of France in many domains, especially in the management of the Jewish problem. A new legislation was passed on June 2, 1941, further restricting Jews' legal status and depriving them of many of their civic and economic rights.<sup>426</sup> The indifference of most French people facilitated the government's new trajectory.<sup>427</sup>

From late March 1941, the anti-Semite Xavier Vallat held the new position of commissioner-general for Jewish affairs. Vallat did not tolerate civil servants who were too slow at prosecuting and punishing those who were helping the Jews. As a result of this, he created a counter intelligence program, involving mail interception and telephone tapping, to better

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<sup>423</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Letter from the *Ministre Secrétaire d'État à l'Intérieur* to the Allier *préfet* (February 1941).

<sup>424</sup> Débordes, *Vichy capitale*. 233

<sup>425</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 117 & 128.

<sup>426</sup> See the second Statute on Jews (June 2, 1941), as well as the law enacted on 22 July 1941, which placed Jewish property in the unoccupied zone under *administrateurs provisoires*. Within three years, the CGQJ 'aryanized' several thousands of Jewish businesses.

<sup>427</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 127-128.

monitor the activity of Jews.<sup>428</sup> From the start, Vallat proved very engaged in pursuing his anti-Jewish policy everywhere in the unoccupied zone, and in Vichy in particular. Vallat, who was unsatisfied with Vichy's strict regulations that monitored the arrival and departure of Jews in Vichy,<sup>429</sup> further restricted settlement in the capital. In May 1941, he asked the police to expel Jews (without differentiating between foreign and French Jews) from the capital, where "leur seule présence au siège du gouvernement était fâcheuse en soi."<sup>430</sup> Vallat's desire to expel all Jews from Vichy proved impossible to achieve. However, a new piece of legislation aimed directly at the Jews residing in Vichy was passed in early June 1941: from then on, all Jews, except those well established in the city, and those to whom a residence permit had been granted, were to be banned from the city.<sup>431</sup> From July 16, 1941, sentences, ranging from fines of a maximum of 1,000 francs to incarceration, were applied to the Jews who did not comply with the eviction order.<sup>432</sup>

According to the Jewish statute of October 3, 1940, "est considéré comme Juif, toute personne issue de trois grands-parents de race juive ou de deux grands parents de la même race si son conjoint lui-même est Juif." In Vichy, however, individuals whose grandparents were not Jewish, but who had at least one Jewish ancestor from within five generations, also appear to have been at risk of being expelled. Annette Dennery recalls how Jews in Vichy suddenly got obsessed with their genealogy:

Bien évidemment, comme l'exigeaient les lois anti-juives de Vichy de septembre 40, nous avons été recensées. La ville de Vichy avait un statut spécial... Pour y vivre, il fallait une autorisation, un « permis de séjour ». Tous les Juifs se sont frénétiquement penchés sur leur arbre généalogique pour y trouver les cinq générations « françaises » exigées.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 157.

<sup>429</sup> Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l'Occupation*, 157. Since January 1941, Jews required a special authorization to settle in Vichy.

<sup>430</sup> Letter from Vallat to Chavin (20 May 1941), cited in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 157.

<sup>431</sup> While Renée Poznanski talks about an "arrêt" dated from 3 June 1941 – Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 103, Adam Nossiter mentions a "measure," taken on 6 June 1941 – Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel. France, Memory and the Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001, 195). I have not been able to locate the documents cited by Poznanski or Nossiter, maybe because the said documents have been moved.

<sup>432</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Departure order to M. Kottek (26 August 1941).

<sup>433</sup> Annette Dennery's testimony, published online by the association *Anonymes, Justes et Persécutés durant la période Nazie dans les communes de France* (AJPN): <http://www.ajpn.org/personne-Annette-6174.html> (Accessed May 29, 2016).

While the Jewish refugees who had managed to demonstrate the ‘Frenchness’ of their ancestry were initially allowed to remain in Vichy, the respite was short-lived. Liliane Klein-Leiber’s family, who arrived in Vichy in 1940, easily proved that their French lineage extended back at least five generations. They expected this information to be sufficient to appease officials, yet Liliane’s family was expelled from Vichy in December 1941. They went to Grenoble.<sup>434</sup> Some Jews, whose French ancestry extended five generations, were allowed to remain in Vichy, but they were not given permission to work. Annette recalls: “Mon père n’a pas eu de grandes difficultés pour trouver [les cinq générations de Français], mais, si les états de services de ses ancêtres lui ont permis d’obtenir le permis convoité, il n’a pas reçu l’autorisation de travailler.”<sup>435</sup>

In Vichy, the harassment of Jews was constant; police frequently raided, in the early morning hours, hotels, rented rooms, and apartments searching for Jews. When ‘undesirable’ Jews were found, their residency permits were seized, and they were summoned to the police station later in the day so that authorities could give them their official expulsion notice.<sup>436</sup> Survivor John Kafka recalls that his family was told to avoid hotels and boarding houses in Vichy because they risked being arrested and interned. They ended up leaving Vichy altogether and went to Brives-la-Gaillarde.<sup>437</sup>

## 2. Tracking down the last Jews in Vichy, from the summer of 1941 to the war’s end

The summer 1941 census reveals that 250 foreign Jews and 1,800 French Jews remained in Vichy and its surroundings, while one year earlier there were several thousands of them.<sup>438</sup> According to the *Commissariat général aux questions juives* (CGQJ) archives, by September 15, 1941, there were 109,244 Jews living in what had been the unoccupied zone, including 57,000 French and 53,000 foreign, amongst whom, 9,250 were interned.<sup>439</sup> Vichy’s 2,050 Jews were just a drop in the bucket. It is further significant to note that in the unoccupied zone, French Jews were hardly more numerous than foreign Jews, while in the city of Vichy, the latter only

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<sup>434</sup> Interview of Liliane Klein-Leiber, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 2, 2014).

<sup>435</sup> Annette Dennerly’s testimony, published online by the association *Anonymes, Justes et Persécutés durant la période Nazie dans les communes de France* (AJPN): <http://www.ajpn.org/personne-Annette-6174.html> (Accessed May 29, 2016).

<sup>436</sup> Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 103.

<sup>437</sup> Interview of John Kafka, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 2, 2014).

<sup>438</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W 121.01 & 1941.01. Censuses.

<sup>439</sup> Cited in Éric Alary, *La Ligne de démarcation (1940-1944)* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 203.

represented 7,2 percent of the total Jewish population.<sup>440</sup> This figure clearly shows that the government had been particularly harsh towards the city's foreign Jews. Although by the census of 1941, the number of Jews in Vichy was already very low, it continued to drop dramatically until 1944, as we shall see shortly.

During the summer of 1941, the Vichy government became aware of a growing popular discontent in the villages where Jews had relocated following their expulsions from nearby cities. Local populations, who were commonly suspicious of foreigners, complained that the Jews stole their meager resources. As these Jews were quite wealthy,<sup>441</sup> they could buy food and goods on the black market, while most local residents could not.<sup>442</sup> In September 1941, for example, small towns in the Nice area complained that the expulsion of Jews from certain cities had translated into massive arrivals in villages, where the Jewish refugees were reported to be repeatedly buying and selling goods on the black market.<sup>443</sup> In total, eleven *préfets* reported of such complaints in their monthly reports to the government.<sup>444</sup> In some cases, new measures were taken to address the challenges faced by the mayors, *sous-préfets*, and *préfets*. Following Lyon's regional *préfet* conclusion that the diet of Lyon's population had deteriorated because of the massive arrival of Jews, for example, 3,100 Jews were expelled from the city.<sup>445</sup>

While concerns about the arrival of expelled Jews were raised in many departments in the southern zone, the municipalities close to Vichy were particularly sensitive to this demographic shift. While many Jews, who were forced to leave Vichy, went to the *Côte d'Azur*, emigrated to other countries,<sup>446</sup> or returned home to the occupied zone, either because they believed that they would be better off in a familiar environment and/or because they had nowhere else to go, a great number of the expellees tried to resettle in nearby Allier villages, thus giving birth to an important Jewish problem amidst Vichy's surroundings. Although in the summer of 1941 the city

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<sup>440</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Censuses.

<sup>441</sup> These Jews were Jews who had enough money, often derived from the sale of their properties and businesses, to support their family. Otherwise they would have been interned.

<sup>442</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter to the CGQJ about Jews in Lapalisse (although no sender is specified, one may assume that it was written by Lapalisse's mayor).

<sup>443</sup> Centre de Documentation du Mémorial de la Shoah (Paris). Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, CCXXX V III 75-002.

<sup>444</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 251.

<sup>445</sup> Monique Lurard, "Les Juifs dans La Loire pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale," *Cahiers d'histoire* XVI (1971): 193-194.

<sup>446</sup> The testimonies stored in the Visual Archive of the Shoah Foundation reveal that many Jews who were in Vichy went to Nice. Until the summer of 1943, Jews in Nice were protected by the Italians. Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, trans. Nathan Bracher (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2001), 377.

of Vichy was the only city in the Allier department to be ‘forbidden’ to Jews,<sup>447</sup> the expulsion measures from the capital came with the prohibition from resettling in certain cantons of other departments, as stipulated by prefectural decrees. Such decrees, however, were often unknown to Jews and confusion resulted, particularly as the police were reportedly unconcerned about where the expelled Jews would go next. Intent on expelling the Jews from Vichy, the city police regularly forgot to inform them that they were not allowed to resettle anywhere they wanted.<sup>448</sup>

Several mayors of villages close to Vichy requested the measures already applied in the capital be extended to the entire Allier department.<sup>449</sup> As of October 17, 1941, the Jews expelled from Vichy were no longer allowed to resettle, or even to temporally reside anywhere in the Allier department, unless they had a special permit.<sup>450</sup> Less than a year later, most Jews (and foreigners), who had arrived in either the Allier or the Puy-de-Dôme departments after January 1, 1938 were expelled. Only a few exceptions applied.<sup>451</sup> Another law was passed on November 9, 1942 forbidding Jews from leaving the city where they were residing without a special permit granted by the police.<sup>452</sup>

During a visit to Vichy at the end of July 1942, the Chief Rabbi Hirschler understood that even more trouble was brewing. In March 1942 the first convoys to Auschwitz had left France’s occupied zone. In the Vichy zone, although some Jews were wondering if similar measures might be applied south of the demarcation line, many of them were reassured by Darlan’s January 1942 decision to not require Jews within the southern zone to wear the yellow star. This optimism however, was soon crushed.

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<sup>447</sup> AD (Allier) 996W. Letter from the director of the State Police to the Allier *préfet* (25 September 1941).

<sup>448</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Letter from the director of the *Département du Service des Réfugiés* to the Allier *préfet* (September 17, 1941); Report from the expulsion of the Cerf family (September 30, 1941).

<sup>449</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Letters from local authorities in Gannat, Saint-Pourçain, Néri-les-Bains, Bourbon l’Archambault (September and October 1941).

<sup>450</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Allier *préfet* (17 October 1941).

<sup>451</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Letter from the Vice-admiral, Charles Platon, *Secrétaire d’état près le Chef du gouvernement* to the Allier *Préfet* (6 August 1942). Below is the list of exceptions mentioned in the document: “fonctionnaires juifs français s’ils sont dans la situation prévue par la loi du 2 juin 1941, Juifs français, Alsaciens-Lorrains, expulsés ou réfugiés des départements du Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin ou Moselle, étudiants juifs français ou étrangers régulièrement inscrits à une faculté des unités de Clermont-Ferrand ou de Strasbourg et bénéficiaires du *numerus clausus*, Juifs français ayant une autorisation de séjour (délivrée par le vice Amiral Platon), personnes accréditées auprès des Ambassades ou dont les Ambassades demandent le maintien pour des relations impérieuses, main d’œuvre irremplaçable et personnes dont la présence est absolument indispensable.”

<sup>452</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 217.



In the late spring of 1942, the Nazis demanded that tens of thousands of Jews from all over France be handed over to them.<sup>453</sup> On July 2, René Bousquet, secretary-general of the *Police Nationale*, told the Germans that although the French were ready to transfer Jews from the southern zone, they would start by deporting only stateless and foreign Jews.<sup>454</sup> The Germans did not have to engage in difficult negotiations for Laval to agree on the deportation of foreign Jews. Not only had Vichy been trying for years to get rid of these refugees, but popular discontent for this particular issue was also increasing.<sup>455</sup> The first convoy of Jews from the unoccupied zone departed the camp of Gurs on the night of August 5-6, 1942.

On the night of August 25-26, 1942, a large-scale operation was conducted everywhere in the unoccupied zone though the outcome was disappointing for the government. In the Auvergne region, more than fifty percent of the foreign Jews escaped arrest; only 170 were arrested out of an anticipated 400. In the Allier department, sixty-seven out of eighty were arrested, but sixteen were subsequently released. In the Vichy agglomeration, only six men, eight women, and three children were arrested.<sup>456</sup>

Still, in less than a month, about 10,000 Jews were transferred from the southern zone to Drancy by the French police.<sup>457</sup> Those Jews who had been arrested in the Allier were deported to Auschwitz in convoy N° 32. Only three of them survived.<sup>458</sup> Anticipating disruptions in upcoming deportations due to the winter, the Germans required that the transfers and deportations continue.<sup>459</sup> The Allier *préfet* therefore required the searches to intensify.<sup>460</sup> On September 3, 1942, 144 additional Jews were transferred from the Allier to the occupied zone.<sup>461</sup> In February 1943, 2,000 additional Jews were deported from France in retaliation for the assassination of two German officers in Paris on February 13.<sup>462</sup> At least fourteen of them came from Vichy: on

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<sup>453</sup> On the negotiations between the French and the Germans, see Serge Klarsfeld, "Les négociations franco-allemandes de juin 1942," in *Vichy-Auschwitz* Volume 1, 69-93.

<sup>454</sup> Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz* Volume 1, 97.

<sup>455</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 332.

<sup>456</sup> Cited by the *Amis de la Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation de l'Allier* (AFMD): <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1292283> (Accessed November 2, 2015).

<sup>457</sup> Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz* Volume 1, 174.

<sup>458</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, *Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France* (Paris: Association des Fils et Filles des Déportés Juifs de France, 2012); *AFMD de l'Allier*: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1292283> (Accessed November 2, 2015).

<sup>459</sup> Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz* Volume 1, 182-183.

<sup>460</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Telegram from the Allier *préfet* to the *sous-préfets* and the police heads in Vichy and Montluçon (28 August 1942).

<sup>461</sup> Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 199.

<sup>462</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 432.

January 29, 1943, nine Jews were arrested during a roundup in Vichy (out of the twenty-one being looked for),<sup>463</sup> while on February 25, 1943, five were arrested (out of the thirty-one looked for).<sup>464</sup>

In the summer of 1943, as the Resistance was gaining ground and the reliability of the police was declining, the Germans sought to increase the number of deportees. They demanded that recently naturalized French Jews also be deported, reasoning that if they could get the Vichy government strip these recent immigrants of their citizenship then further large-scale roundups could be conducted. Laval and Pétain, however, refused to cooperate. According to Paxton and Marrus, “cette apparente volte-face venait moins de la sollicitude de Vichy à l’égard des Juifs que d’une transformation dans ses relations avec les Allemands, qui n’apparaissaient plus invisibles.”<sup>465</sup> The growing popular concerns and worries, in France and abroad, with regard to the expanding deportations further contributed to this decision.<sup>466</sup> Roundups, however, continued until the summer of 1944. In August 1943, instructions were given to arrest all the foreign Jews aged between eighteen and fifty-five.<sup>467</sup> Yet, only those enrolled in the *Groupements de travailleurs étrangers* were found.<sup>468</sup> The results were, once again, disappointing for the authorities. In Vichy, by the summer of 1943, almost all foreign Jews had already departed the city, thus accounting for the small number of arrests there between January and August 1943.

For months Jews residing in the capital had been unceasingly – and successfully – tracked down. A 1943 census reveals that less than two years after the enactment of the decree aiming to expel most Jews from Vichy, only about 650 remained. Amongst them, 594 were French, including 353 refugees from the departments of Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle.<sup>469</sup> The number of Jews in Vichy had declined seventy percent between 1941 and 1943, whereas it had remained about the same in the rest of the department, as revealed by the following graph.

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<sup>463</sup> Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale 1940-44* (Éditions Horvath, 1983), 262.

<sup>464</sup> Nossiter, “Vichy and the Pleasures of Forgetting,” 197-198.

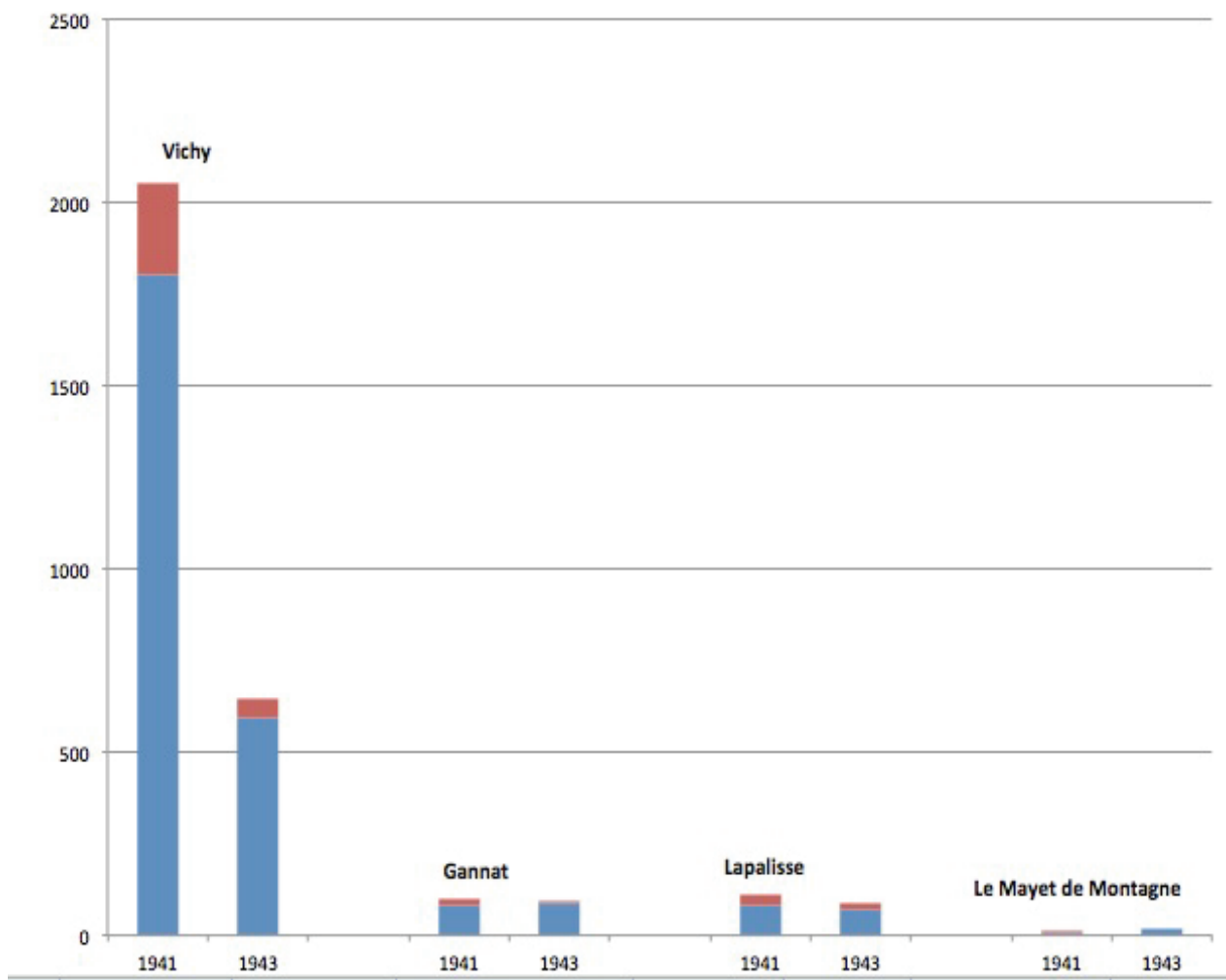
<sup>465</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 457.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid., 457, & 460-2.

<sup>467</sup> In August 1943, the total population of foreign Jews in the Allier were about 300. Rougeron, *Vichy Capitale à l’heure allemande*, 262.

<sup>468</sup> That is, those who had no money and already were under the authority of the state. Marrus and Paxton explain how these Jews became the first targets of the government: “Après les arrestations humiliantes de notables israélites français en décembre 1941, Vichy réorienta sa politique antijuive pour cibler davantage les étrangers. Le 2 janvier 1942, tous les Juifs entrés en France depuis le 1er janvier 1936 durent être regroupés en Groupements de travailleurs étrangers (GTE), ou, pour les plus fortunés, assignés à résidence. Lors de l’été 1942, ces groupements juifs fournirent de gros contingents de candidats à la deportation.” Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 324.

<sup>469</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W 194.01. Lists of registered Jews (1943).



In blue: the number of French Jews  
 In red: the number of foreign Jews.<sup>470</sup>

Not all the Jews were arrested during round ups. Many were arrested in between round ups. Sometimes these arrests were more a matter of luck than calculation. Jacques Kahn, Chief Rabbi in Paris, took refuge in Vichy at the beginning of the war. In 1940, Chief Rabbi Isaïe Schwartz entrusted him with the delicate task of becoming the Rabbi of the then very important Jewish community in Vichy. However, in the summer of 1943, while he was in a shop in Vichy he gave his name to one of the employees, without knowing that an agent for the Gestapo was

<sup>470</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Lists of registered Jews.

just behind him. He was arrested on the spot. On May 12, 1944, he and his wife were transferred to Drancy, where he received the number 21616. He was amongst the sixty-five Jews deported on July 23, 1944, in the convoy n° 80 from Drancy to Bergen-Belsen, where he perished.<sup>471</sup>

Other times, these arrests were the result of thorough searches. In the previous chapter, we saw how the brigade Poinot spared little effort in tracking down the resisters. Poinot also targeted the Jews. He and his team arrested any Jews they could find, whereupon they had them deported, and looted their apartments.<sup>472</sup> Lilly Rosa Wahl's family, German citizens, who had moved to Strasbourg shortly before the beginning of the war, arrived in Vichy in 1939. Although they never had a normal life, until 1944, they somehow managed to hide and survive in Vichy. But as German citizens they were actively sought due to having registered at the local *commissariat* when Jews were required to do so. On July 22, 1944, Poinot finally found them. They were immediately interned at the local milice prison, before being sent to the military prison in Moulins a few days later. On August 25, the day Paris was liberated, the last sixty-six prisoners were put on a train occupied by soldiers trying to reach Germany. Lilly's husband was later deported to Buchenwald, where he was killed in February 1945. Lilly, her son, her mother-in-law and her grandmother were sent to Ravensbrück, where the latter two were executed. Lilly and her son survived and they were later transferred to Bergen Belsen from where they were liberated in April 1945.<sup>473</sup>

The Vichy regime had become caught in its own trap. While at first, the government's measures were not intended to kill the Jews, in 1942 the government began massively deporting Jews from France. Eventually, nearly 76,000 Jews were deported, only three percent of whom returned at the end of the war.<sup>474</sup> In Vichy, few Jews perished as a result of the 1942, 1943 or

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<sup>471</sup> Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale 1940-1944* (Le Coteau: Editions Horvath, 1983); Jacques Kahn's profile on the website of the AFMD de l'Allier: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1068299> (Accessed August 24, 2015).

<sup>472</sup> According to Jean Débordes, "Poinot et son équipe ont organisé un véritable pillage des biens. Ils furent aidés en cela par le groupe Batissier et par l'inspecteur Paul Vidal, avec comme appoint le transporteur vichyssois Chalduc. Tout était entreposé dans les locaux de ce dernier, qui recherchait des acheteurs dénués de scrupules pour enlever le produit des vols. L'inspecteur Paul Vidal, alias Bormann, surnommé « le tueur » était un ancien coiffeur à Thiers. Il fut un trafiquant du marché noir et pilla les appartements des juifs. Arrêté, il fut condamné aux travaux forcés à perpétuité, le 17 mai 1945, par le tribunal militaire de Lyon." Jean Débordes, *L'Allier dans la Guerre (1939-1945)* (Romagnat: De Borée, 2000), 314.

<sup>473</sup> Lilly Wahl's profile on the website of the AFMD de l'Allier: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=935066>; Jacques's Wahl's profile: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=935054> (Accessed August 26, 2015)

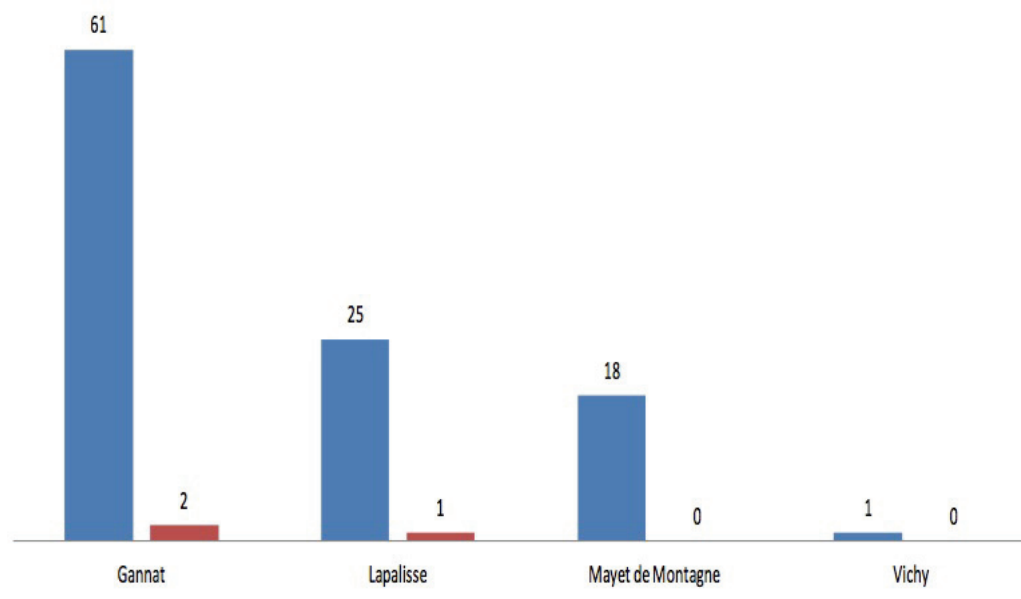
<sup>474</sup> For more statistics on the Jews' survival, deportation and death, see Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy Auschwitz* Volume 1 and 2.

1944 roundups. In total, about 140 Jews died following their arrest in the capital in 1941, 1942, 1943 or 1944. This figure is relatively small given the high number of Jews who flocked into Vichy in the summer of 1940. This small figure can easily be explained by the fact that those most likely to be deported from 1942 onwards had already been expelled from the city.

A final census done at the request of the *Secrétariat au maintien de l'ordre* reveals that by June 30, 1944, only one Jewish man remained in Vichy (see table below).<sup>475</sup> It is, of course, hardly imaginable that there was only one Jew left in Vichy in the summer of 1944 – many (like the Wahl family, mentioned above) were probably there in hiding. Regardless of whether there was one, ten, or fifty Jews remaining in Vichy, on the eve of its collapse, the government had nearly achieved Vallat's goal of ridding the city of Jews. This census further reveals how well anchored the politics of exclusion was within the Vichy government. By the summer of 1944, the outcome of the war was no longer in doubt, yet the government continued counting Jews, taking pride in finding that only one Jew reportedly remained in Vichy. The drafting of this list in the summer of 1944 – when the members of the government had many more urgent priorities – appears as a desperate attempt to leave evidence of the success of the government's policies of 'purification'. It is also possible that more Jews were found in Vichy but were not reported on the list. Internal propaganda was fundamental to the functioning of the Vichy regime. In order to prove how effective the milice had been in clearing the capital of Jews, numbers may have been consciously altered.

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<sup>475</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Census June 1944.



In blue: the number of French Jews  
In red: the number of foreign Jews.<sup>476</sup>

### 3. Local response to the anti-Jewish legislation of the government

Because most people who lived in Vichy between 1940 and 1944 were not originally from Vichy, it is as difficult to determine the level of grassroots anti-Semitism and the degree of the grassroots help provided to the Jews as it is to assess the level of grassroots collaboration and resistance (see Chapter 2).

As with many other French cities, Vichy experienced incidents of anti-Semitism both before and during the war. In 1935, for instance, stones were thrown at the local synagogue and Jewish visitors from Egypt were insulted.<sup>477</sup> Three years later, the Jewish community complained to the mayor that one of his collaborators had professed insults towards the community, a behavior deemed largely unfair in view of their efforts in promoting the city amongst the European Jewish community.<sup>478</sup> During the war, anti-Semitism did not disappear.

In the second half of 1940 the number of anti-Semitic inscriptions increased everywhere in France, including in Vichy. Slogans such as, “A bas les juifs,” hurriedly scribbled on the walls of houses, shops or public buildings, had been replaced by more elaborated slogans, such as “Les

<sup>476</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. “Recensement des Israélites” (June 30, 1944).

<sup>477</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the Jewish community to Vichy mayor (August 18, 1935).

<sup>478</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the Jewish community to Vichy’s mayor (August 5, 1938).



juifs sont notre malheur,” “Les juifs et les anglais assassinent nos enfants à Mers-El-Kebir.”<sup>479</sup>

Letters of frustration and denunciation were regularly sent to the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* from all over France. In December 1941, a group of Vichy inhabitants penned a letter to Xavier Vallat, in which they complained about the presence of “sales youpins” and “pourriture juive internationale, gaulliste, anglophile” in the city. “Les Juifs devaient tous quitter Vichy pour le 15 septembre ... [mais] ils sont encore là,” they wrote, “Il faut que tout cela parte avant le 1<sup>er</sup> Janvier 1942 à coups de balais dans les camps de concentration, ou alors les bons Français s’en chargeront de la faire. Donnez des ordres, Monsieur Vallat, c’est plus qu’urgent. Signé ‘un groupe de vrais Français’.”<sup>480</sup> In an undated document from the Vichy branch of Doriot’s *Émancipation Nationale*, the authors violently attacked Jews:

La question juive est plus que jamais d’actualité. Il lui faut une solution immédiate. La puissance juive provient de l’apathie du peuple de France... Certains considèrent qu’être antisémite, c’est être germanophile. Les mesures défensives prises par les Rois de France, par Napoléon I, l’action menée par Drumont, ne démontrent-ils pas que l’antisémitisme est nécessaire à la France ? ... Il faut défendre la communauté Française contre l’invasion Juive. Les juifs conspirent, répandent les bobards de la propagande Gaulliste... Il FAUT EN FINIR ! ... Les Juifs ont voulu la guerre – Ils doivent payer !<sup>481</sup>

The biggest anti-Semitic incident in Vichy occurred in August 1941, when a bomb exploded in the Synagogue, causing minor damage, but claiming no casualties. The perpetrators were young local residents from Vichy and its suburbs, who wanted to show that young people agreed with the measures taken against the Jews.<sup>482</sup> In total, ten men, all members of the local branch of the PPF, were arrested. Fifty kilograms of explosive were found at their homes.<sup>483</sup> French authorities disavowed the attack. The Vichy Consistory was even authorized to bring civil proceedings before the criminal court at Cusset. The court found the men guilty and required that one franc be given to the Consistory as symbolic compensation for the attack. Short prison sentences were also prescribed.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 53.

<sup>480</sup> Centre de documentation du Mémorial de la Shoah (Paris). Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, CCXXX V III 175. Letter (December 26, 1941).

<sup>481</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. “Mesures anti-Semites. Mesures d’éloignement 1.”

<sup>482</sup> René Germain, “De l’attentat contre la Synagogue de Vichy à la politique antisémite du gouvernement.” *Cahiers Bourbonnais* 139 (1992), 54-57.

<sup>483</sup> Débordes, *Vichy, capitale*, 235.

<sup>484</sup> Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 184 ; Germain, “De l’attentat contre la Synagogue de Vichy.”

There were also instances of more moderate anti-Semitism incidents occurring in Vichy. Some Jewish survivors from Vichy, for example, reported experiencing anti-Semitism at school.<sup>485</sup> That the local residents wrongly rumored to be Jewish felt the need to clarify their personal situation offers further evidence of the climate in Vichy. In June 1941, for instance, a local restaurateur, whose name, M. Jacob, sounded Jewish, published a note in the newspaper *Le Progrès de l'Allier* stating that he and his family were not Jewish, and that they had no Jewish ancestry.<sup>486</sup> Even individuals with no public profession felt the need to demonstrate that they were not Jewish. Their statements were often loaded with more or less implicit anti-Semitic assumptions. In February 1944, Madame Lazard-Darval, who had lived in Vichy since 1937, wrote to the Allier *préfet* because “[elle] craignai[t], un jour ou l’autre, être considérée comme [juive].” In her four-page letter, she meticulously demonstrates that she is “Aryan.” She explains that her father was Jewish, and her mother was Catholic, and that

dès le début du mariage, la différence de race et de religion s’est fait sentir et un ménage affreux, un véritable enfer a obligé ma mère, qui avait deux enfants, à partir et à divorcer. Elle a continué à nous élever religieusement et chrétiennement. Par la suite, j’ai toujours été fâchée avec mon père que je voyais plus. Toujours pour le même motif : il ne me pardonnait pas d’aller à l’Eglise assidûment et de ne pas vouloir fréquenter les Juifs. Il me faisait des scènes épouvantables, et moi, étant très croyante, j’en souffrais tant que je cessais de le voir.

Mrs Lazard-Darval goes on telling her life story. She explains how she followed the same marital pattern as her parents and she, too, married a Jewish man. Like her mother, she divorced soon after and later founded “une famille aryenne.” Although everybody knew that she was Aryan, she writes, because of her Jewish sounding name, she was still afraid that people would be mistaken, and therefore asked the *préfet* to be saved from such a nightmare:

(...) Vous voyez, Monsieur le Préfet, que nous n’avons rien de Juif ni autour de nous, ni surtout en nous, bien au contraire. Alors je vous en conjure, sauvez-moi. Faites que je puisse être considérée comme Non Juive, ce qui est juste et vrai sur la foi du serment. Que je sois sauvée de ce cauchemar immérité. (Words underlined in the original document)

In the end, though, what she concretely asked for is unclear. Given that she explained that she had been unable to find the birth certificate of her mother, she may have hoped that the *préfet*

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<sup>485</sup> Interview of Mickael Darmon. *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 1, 2014).

<sup>486</sup> Débordes, *Vichy, capitale*, 231.

might send her an official document stating that she was not Jewish, so that she did not have problems in the future.<sup>487</sup>

Despite evidence of anti-Jewish sentiments amongst the population (both grassroots and transient), it does not seem that the specific anti-Jewish laws applied in Vichy exacerbated popular anti-Semitism in Vichy. Vichy has a long tradition of tolerance towards religious minorities, not so much (or maybe not only) out of humanist concerns, but rather (also) out of economic considerations. In 1881, 400 Jewish families were reported to visit Vichy every summer, either for pleasure or for work.<sup>488</sup> In order to make sure that these Jews returned the following summers the city offered the local Jewish community municipal funds to help provide accommodation for the supplementary rabbis during the spa season.<sup>489</sup> In the early 1870s, a place of worship had been built for Jewish tourists and Jewish shopkeepers to help make them feel at ease.<sup>490</sup> In 1933, Jews were encouraged to avoid German spa-towns because of the growing anti-Jewish persecutions in Germany and to rather come to Vichy, where they “trouveront toutes les facilités pour observer les prescriptions de leur religion,” amongst which, a newly built synagogue and kosher restaurants.<sup>491</sup>

During the war, whereas some Jewish survivors recall having felt isolated in school, if not discriminated against, others felt very much the opposite. According to René Ulmann, for instance, “il n’y avait pas de traces d’antisémitisme chez [ses] profs, au contraire même.”<sup>492</sup> Georges Frélastre, a non-Jewish local resident, has recounted in *Un Vichyssois sous Vichy* how it was for him to work and play with the children of Jewish refugees. The main concern for local students, he explains, was not so much that these newcomers were Jewish, but that most of them were from Paris and were probably smarter than they were, which produced both admiration and envy.<sup>493</sup>

Most of the Jewish refugees, who were not wealthy enough to go on with their lives without looking for a job or asking for help and who were therefore easily identifiable as Jews,

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<sup>487</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Letter from Mrs Lazard-Darval to the Allier *préfet* (February 11, 1944).

<sup>488</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the Jewish community to Vichy’s mayor (date illegible, 1881).

<sup>489</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the departmental rabbi to Vichy’s mayor (January 28, 1889); AM (Vichy). Letter from the Jewish community to Vichy’s mayor (August 31, 1892).

<sup>490</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the departmental rabbi to Vichy’s mayor (January 28, 1889).

The parcel had been made available to the Jewish community free of charge by the *Compagnie fermière*.

<sup>491</sup> AM (Vichy). Unidentified document (possibly, a note written by the municipal council for advertising purposes) (June 10, 1933).

<sup>492</sup> Solliers and Muxel. *L’année dernière à Vichy*.

<sup>493</sup> Georges Frélastre, *Un Vichyssois sous Vichy* (Nonette: Edition Créer, 2002), 72.

had been expelled in 1940 and 1941. Many of the Jewish refugees who were still in Vichy after 1941 belonged to the traditional bourgeoisie from Paris or Strasbourg; most were more French than they were Jewish.<sup>494</sup> As the war went on, there were fewer and fewer visible signs of Jewishness on the streets of the capital, which may have contributed to keeping popular anti-Semitism within moderate bounds. The statement from a report about the August 1942 roundups in Vichy sums up the population's state of mind: "l'antisémisme en général n'[était] pas très accentué, bien qu'il existe incontestablement."<sup>495</sup>

As in many other places, 'moderate' anti-Semitism often only provoked indifference, compassion at best, to the fate of Jews. In *Le Ressentiment dans l'histoire*, Marc Ferro argues that

Quant aux mesures prises contre les juifs, tant qu'elles n'ont pas pris la forme d'arrestations, d'internements, de déportations dès 1942, femmes et enfants compris, tout s'est passé comme si la question n'existait pas, comme si personne ou presque n'était au courant. L'eût-on-été qu'on n'en était pas plus ému car, en 1940, longue est la cohorte des réprouvés : parlementaires, francs-maçons, fonctionnaires évincés ou destitués, préfets et sous-préfets, républicains espagnols de même ; ce qui l'emporte : silence et indifférence.<sup>496</sup>

In Vichy, however, like elsewhere in France, there were several instances of locals risking their lives to help their Jewish neighbors. In many testimonies of Jews who had lived in Vichy (for a few days, a few months or a few years), survivors mention having received help from the locals. The grandson of Rabbi Gugenheim, for instance, recalls that their neighbors had offered to hide him in the event that his parents were arrested. Mickael Darmon and his siblings lived with their aunt in Vichy, but slept at a non-Jewish friend's. Madeleine Nathan also lived at her aunt's and uncle's in Vichy. Yet during the roundups she stayed with a non-Jewish neighbor, "une très vieille dame qui avait un lapin," she recalls. Later during the war, Madeleine was hidden by a priest in his church. His uncle, who was a theologian, had established good relationships with the local priests, and had managed to secure a safe hiding place for his niece before it was too late.<sup>497</sup>

Jewish refugees in Vichy could also count on the *Éclaireurs de France*, headed by Pierre and Elisabeth François. Pierre, who had been mobilized in 1939, was quickly made prisoner. He

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<sup>494</sup> Interview of Rene Klein, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed June 2, 2014).

<sup>495</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Report about the roundup of August 26, 1944 in Vichy (August 29, 1942).

<sup>496</sup> Marc Ferro, *Le ressentiment dans l'histoire: Comprendre notre temps* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 2007), 107.

<sup>497</sup> Interviews of David Gottlieb, Mickael Darmon, Madeleine Nathan, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation. (Accessed between June 1-4, 2014).

managed to evade and to make it to Vichy, where his wife Elisabeth was the co-owner, with her brother Jean-François, of the *Pavillon Sévigné*. Given that most of the building had been requisitioned by the government, Elisabeth's family retreated into three rooms on the ground floor. They managed to keep a room at the rear of the *Pavillon*, which they made available to the national board of the *Éclaireurs de France*, whose members had taken refuge in Vichy after the German invasion of northern France.

Appalled and outraged by the injustice and intolerance of the Vichy regime, under the guise of working for the association, some *éclaireurs* helped Jews and STO deserters. When the *Éclaireurs Israélites de France* were forbidden in November 1941, the *Éclaireurs de France* helped some of their members to join the maquis in the Tarn department, where they formed an underground association, through which they would later save thousands of Jewish children and be involved in various operations at the liberation.<sup>498</sup> At the *Pavillon Sévigné*, the *Éclaireurs* forged false identity papers for Jews and refugees, amongst other clandestine activities. Pierre Déjean, one of the leaders, in charge of coordinating the underground activities of the association in the southern zone, was arrested, tortured, and deported to Mauthausen, where he died. Louis François, Pierre's brother, was also deported, to Dora, where he went on to survive.

Doctor Annette Jacob née Dennerly, one of the Jewish children rescued by the *Éclaireurs*, shares her memories of Vichy. She lived there with her family from September 1940 to February 1945.

Je m'appelle Annette Dennerly ; née à Paris en 1929, j'ai, jusqu'en septembre 1939, vécu dans le X<sup>e</sup> arrondissement une vie bourgeoise, sans histoire, dans une famille juive peu pratiquante. Mes ancêtres sont originaires d'Alsace-Lorraine... Mes soeurs et moi ... avons, dès 1937, fait partie des Éclaireuses du quartier. Après quelques va-et-vient entre Paris et le Lot, Biarritz, de nouveau le Lot... , nous avons abouti en septembre 1940 à ... Vichy ; le bureau de mon père [financier] [avait été] replié à Vichy, sous le camouflage protecteur d'un autre cabinet financier, « aryen » celui-là.

Shortly after having resettled in Vichy, Annette and her two sisters joined the *Éclaireurs de France*. Young scouts were often involved in "les manifestations du Maréchal," she explains:

Il m'est arrivé de lire à la radio des lettres adressées à Pétain par des enfants et, comme tous les enfants de France, nous avons chanté

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<sup>498</sup> On this see: Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 20; Jean Débordes, *L'Allier dans la guerre*; Alain Michel, *Les Éclaireurs israélites de France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale: septembre 1939-septembre 1944* (Paris: Édition des E.I.F., 1984)

‘Maréchal, nous voilà !’ Cela peut ressembler à de la collaboration, mais [c’était] une collaboration très superficielle, qui sert à camoufler des actions inverses plus importantes.

Although the Jews of Vichy had to deal with specific discriminatory laws, as descendants of at least five generations of French citizens, the Dennerys were initially allowed to stay in the capital. In 1943, however, the situation became more dangerous, and the parents decided to leave for the nearby village of Le Mayet de Montagne. The Dennerys used false identities to keep their ration card. “Le problème des cartes d’alimentation [était] difficile à résoudre,” Annette recalls.

Il [était] délicat de présenter, chaque mois, de fausses cartes pour obtenir les tickets nécessaires. Les E.D.F. nous [trouvèrent] la solution : par l’intermédiaire des François, nous [avons fait] la connaissance d’une dame travaillant au service des cartes d’alimentation de la Mairie de Vichy. Je venais, chaque mois, chercher les tickets de toute la famille, et je les répartissais ensuite. J’occupais personnellement ce rôle de messenger car j’étais la seule à pouvoir circuler sans trop de risques : en effet, les cartes d’identité n’étant obligatoires qu’à partir de treize ans, je n’avais donc pas fait établir de vraie carte et ma photo n’était pas dans les fichiers de la Police. J’ai donc circulé, à 14 ou 15 ans, sous des identités diverses sans contrôle possible.

In October 1943, a large-scale round up of Jews took place at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, where Lise, the family’s oldest daughter, was studying. Lise escaped arrest, but the family decided to go into hiding. At the initiative of Elisabeth François, three families involved in the *Éclaireurs* movement, including his brother’s and the Duphils couple, helped the family by taking the children in.

Ma sœur aînée, 19 ans, est devenue nurse des enfants Risler, neveux de Pierre François, et habitait avec eux au Pavillon Sévigné, où elle côtoyait journallement le Maréchal, [qui, un jour, s’enquit auprès d’elle de savoir si ‘les enfants avaient bien dormi’]. Mon autre sœur, 17 ans, a occupé les mêmes fonctions auprès des enfants Basdevant. Quant à moi, 14 ans, ce sont les Duphil qui ont eu la gentillesse de me recevoir chez eux. Je ne pouvais rendre aucun service, ils ont refusé toute participation financière de mes parents... et ils prenaient des risques. Je m’appelais alors Jeannette Le Touzé... Je sortais le moins possible.

During the spring of 1944,

[la dame travaillant au service des cartes d’alimentation de la Mairie] a été arrêtée à notre sujet, le jour même où je devais venir chercher mes tickets. Un réseau E.D.F. s’est immédiatement mis en place pour essayer de me retrouver et de me prévenir du danger... Miracle... J’ai été prévenue à temps. Il fallait ensuite que je quitte la ville alors que



mon identité du jour était connue de la police et que toutes les issues étaient contrôlées. Grâce à l'aide des personnes chez qui j'étais, déguisée en fille de la famille, accompagnée de tous les enfants, bébé compris, j'ai quitté Vichy par le train en direction du Mayet de Montagne... J'ai donc pu aviser mes parents du danger, ils ont quitté provisoirement le village et, dès le lendemain, je regagnais Vichy sous une autre identité. Tout s'est donc bien terminé, et [la dame de la mairie] a été relâchée ...

The example of the Denner's children was not unique. *The Éclaireurs* helped many other children, often at their own expenses.<sup>499</sup> René and Henriette Duphil, as well as Pierre and Élisabeth François were later granted the status of Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>500</sup>

A legitimate question to ask about the popular response to the anti-Jewish legislation applied in Vichy concerns the position, behavior, and action of the local Jewish leadership and the small group of privileged local Jews.

According to Robert Weiner and Richard Sharpless, "Dijon's Jews, natives and immigrants alike, suffered the same bitter experiences."<sup>501</sup> The situation was different in Vichy, where the survival of some local Jews provides a striking contrast with the plight of Jewish refugees. The Jews who had been established in Vichy long prior to the war were exempt from many laws that specifically targeted the Jews in Vichy, allowing several members of the small local Jewish community to live relatively normally under the Vichy government. As it was important for the government to keep the city under control, it is possible that in order to avoid popular criticism and potential problems with the municipality the ministers opted to leave the local Jewish community in peace.

Some local Jews even managed to establish good relationships with members of the government. The Jewishness of the pharmacist, Maurice Benhamou, and that of the tailor, Rapaport, for instance, was well known in Vichy, yet their clients included some of the most

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<sup>499</sup> René and Henriette Duphil's story, File 11878A (Righteous among the nations), Yad Vashem : <http://www.yadvashem-france.org/les-justes-parmi-les-nations/les-justes-de-france/dossier-11878a/> (Accessed September 15, 2015)

Pierre et Elisabeth François's story, File 11878 (Righteous among the nations), Yad Vashem: <http://www.yadvashem-france.org/les-justes-parmi-les-nations/les-justes-de-france/dossier-11878/> (Accessed September 15, 2015)

<sup>500</sup> The François and the Duhpils were honored posthumously by Jean-Charles Levyne, délégué de Yad Vashem at the Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental in Paris on May 31, 2011. See also: Sarah Gensburger, "Les figures du Juste et du résistant et l'évolution de la mémoire historique française de l'Occupation," *Revue française de science politique*, 52:2 (2002), 291-322.

<sup>501</sup> Robert I. Weiner and Richard E. Sharpless, *An Uncertain Future: Voices of a French Jewish Community, 1940-2012* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), xxi.

prominent members of the government, including Laval and Pétain. Just as some high-ranking Jews were protected by the government,<sup>502</sup> so were some well-established Jews from Vichy.

To be sure, the arrival of the Germans in Vichy in November 1942, and that of the milice in 1943 made the lives of all Jews more dangerous. In November 1942 Germany invaded the unoccupied zone. While it took the German police some time to deploy their forces throughout the entire territory,<sup>503</sup> detachments of German police were very quickly stationed in Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, Toulouse and Vichy, making the environment in these cities increasingly hostile to Jews.<sup>504</sup> In early 1943, the milice also settled in Vichy, establishing its headquarters a few meters away from the synagogue. The milice soon became the main instrument of the French in persecuting the communists, the resisters and the Jews. If until then, some local Jews and a few privileged refugees had been able to live almost normally in Vichy, the presence of the Gestapo and the milice complicated their lives greatly. While many local Jews may have been somewhat protected by the government until the end of the year 1942, as months went by, Pétain had less and less room to manoeuvre, thereby significantly threatening their survival too.

There are almost no testimonies of Jews who had been long established in Vichy by the time the war started, making it extremely difficult to assess what the war experience had been for them. Yet, there is evidence that a few well-established Jews remained in Vichy, if not until the very end of the war, at least well into the year of 1944, and continued to benefit from the close proximity of the government. Benhamou, for instance, was arrested twice in 1943 and 1944, once by the milice, and once by the Gestapo. His connection to high-ranking people, however, saved him. Each time, he was released following a short interrogation.<sup>505</sup>

How did local Jews respond to the discriminatory measures affecting most Jewish refugees in Vichy? A document from the departmental archives reveals that at the end of 1940, Vichy was one of the five “centres principaux centre de la réaction juive” in the unoccupied zone (with Toulouse, Montpellier, Marseille et Nice):

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<sup>502</sup> Archives IHTP, Arc 092. In her memoir, *Souvenir du pays retrouvé (1940-1944)*, Françoise de Boissieu points out the presence of many “fonctionnaires israélites avec de bonnes relations” in Vichy. See also, Robert Aron, *Fragment d’une vie* (Paris: Plon, 1981).

“The more established French Jews were usually fortunate in having most of their family members survive, sometimes as a result of collaborating with [the regime],” Robert Weiner and Richard Sharpless writes in their study about the Jewish community in Dijon. Weiner and Sharpless, *An Uncertain Future*, xxii.

<sup>503</sup> In Saint Etienne, for example, they did not arrive until February 1943. Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 428.

<sup>504</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, 428.

<sup>505</sup> Débordes, *Vichy, capital* 250.

Cette réaction se manifeste par une campagne de bouche à oreille contre le Gouvernement, que l'on s'attache à distinguer du Maréchal Pétain. Les intéressés, sachant que toute l'opinion est derrière le Chef de l'État, se plaisent à louer sa modération. (...) Laval et Alibert, par contre, sont visés de façon particulière, le premier en tant que promoteur de la collaboration franco-allemande, le second comme auteur du statut des Juifs. (...) Les Israélites utilisent, non sans habileté, le courant anglophile et tirent profit du sentiment national de la population, qui réagit en présence des exigences des autorités d'occupation ou de certaines mesures draconiennes prises par le Reich (comme l'expulsion des Lorrains de langue française). (...) Les relations entre les divers groupes juifs sont aisément maintenues par journalistes ou banquiers, qui font de fréquents déplacements. On signale également des voyages nombreux d'agents de l'OSE et de l'ORT, (...) organisations qui ont des rapports avec les pays anglo-saxons, soit directement, soit via le Portugal.<sup>506</sup>

In June 1940, the Chief Rabbinate of France had relocated to Vichy.<sup>507</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that official criticism from the Jewish leadership originated from Vichy. As the war went on, however, the “Jewish reaction” in Vichy became more and more silent.

On August 29, 1942 the *Consistoire Israélite de Vichy* reportedly stated that the Jews who had been arrested were to be handed to their executioners and that such measures constituted as “a crime against humanity.”<sup>508</sup> Yet, apart from this statement, the local leadership appears to have been mostly silent about the plight of Jewish refugees in Vichy. Why? Could an agreement have implicitly been concluded between the local Jewish leadership and the government? Was the Jewish leadership asked to remain quiet in exchange for the ‘protection’ of the established local community? It is not ridiculous to imagine that the local Jewish community may have negotiated with the government, especially on certain matters directly relevant to them. However, I have not found evidence supporting this hypothesis. So one should be careful to not come to quick conclusions. It is also, of course, possible that the Jewish leadership was involved in rescue operations or protest actions, which left no traces in the archives. That the Jewish leadership left Vichy shortly after their statement in 1942 is equally plausible. Furthermore, as years went by, it

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<sup>506</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Note from the *Inspection générale des Services de police administrative* about “une réaction juive” (November 21, 1940).

<sup>507</sup> The central Consistory, however, quickly resettled in Lyon, after its members had been strongly advised to leave Vichy. Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 51.

<sup>508</sup> AD (Allier) 996 W. Report on the roundup in Vichy on August 26, 1944 (August 29, 1944): “D’après les renseignements recueillis, le Consistoire Israélite de Vichy aurait déclaré que ces opérations sont un crime contre l’Humanité et qu’on va livrer ces Juifs aux bourreaux.”

became increasingly dangerous to speak up against the government everywhere in the unoccupied zone, let alone in Vichy.

As far as the privileged local Jews who did not belong to the Jewish leadership are concerned, it is interesting to note that while there is evidence of their action in favor of the Resistance,<sup>509</sup> there is no evidence of them showing much interest in the plight of Jewish refugees in Vichy (although it is almost certain that some local Jewish residents did provide help to their Jewish neighbors). At least two explanations appear plausible in understanding this behavior. First, until 1942, Jewish refugees were ‘only’ expelled from Vichy, their lives were not yet threatened, so local Jews may have not felt a sense of urgency about this specific matter. And by the time that Jews’ lives were indeed threatened in Vichy, there were very few Jewish refugees left in the city anyway. Another explanation may be selfishness. The massive expulsions of Jewish refugees may have well suited the local Jewish community. Vichy was overcrowded, so expulsions likely provided the population – Jewish and non-Jewish alike – with some relief. There most certainly was no single reason why local privileged Jews showed little interest in the plight of Jewish refugees. It was probably a combination of these two reasons, amongst several others.

## Conclusion

In *Être juif en France pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, Renée Poznanski reminds us of the need to take into account the plurality of the experiences of Jews in France during the war. In addition to the most obvious differences between the occupied and unoccupied zones, the situations in the south were diverse, varying greatly from one region to another, even from one city to another.<sup>510</sup> In Vichy, the presence of the government led to a strict application of the anti-Jewish legislation.<sup>511</sup> After the summer of 1940, trying to find refuge in Vichy had become a very risky gamble for Jewish refugees.

As the showcase for the regime, the new capital was under great scrutiny by the members of the government. Fortunately for the government, the Allier *préfet* until February 1943, Joseph

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<sup>509</sup> According to local historian Jean Débordes, Maurice Benhamou was an agent of the special services within the Brutus network. His duties were various: to send drugs to the maquis, to provide help – and false identity papers – to two escapees of the Todt organization, to help a young man reach Spain, amongst others. Débordes, *Vichy, capitale*, 252-253.

<sup>510</sup> Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, 12-13.

<sup>511</sup> Many documents written by the authorities to the Allier *préfet* of the police in Vichy underlined the importance of strictly respecting the laws and decrees regarding the Jews in the city of Vichy.

Porte, appeared completely committed to his anti-Jewish mission, even sometimes anticipating the problems likely to arise and letting the government know in advance. These various elements made life in Vichy significantly more difficult and dangerous for Jews than the latter had previously expected.

## CHAPTER 4 – The *épuration* in Vichy: success or failure?

While the *épuration* has yet to be fully illuminated, recent large-scale studies – Marcel Baudot’s “L’*épuration* : bilan chiffré,”<sup>512</sup> Henry Rousso’s “L’*épuration* en France, une histoire inachevée,”<sup>513</sup> and Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon’s *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*,<sup>514</sup> to mention only the most important – have corrected many of the errors and inaccuracies of earlier studies, such as those by Robert Aron, who published the first major work on the *épuration*, *Histoire de l’*épuration**, between 1967 and 1975,<sup>515</sup> or Peter Novick, whose 1985 book, *L’*Épuration* française (1944–1945)* had long been a reference on the topic.<sup>516</sup> The *épuration* in the Allier department is tackled in most of the above-mentioned works. Yet, once again, the specific case of the city of Vichy has been omitted. While George Rougeron, a former member of the *Comité départemental de Libération* of the Allier department, and Aurélie Duchezéau, the head archivist at Vichy’s municipal archives, have successfully initiated research on the purging process in Vichy,<sup>517</sup> the history of the *épuration* in the former capital of the *État français* remains to be written.

In this chapter I offer a brief, yet somewhat detailed, account of the *épuration* in Vichy. Throughout France, the purge proved to be delicate and not easily monitored.<sup>518</sup> This was all the more true in the former capital, where thousands of alleged collaborators still lived and where

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<sup>512</sup> Marcel Baudot, “L’*épuration* : bilan chiffré,” *Bulletin de l’Institut d’histoire du temps présent* 25 (September 2009): 37-53.

<sup>513</sup> Henry Rousso, “L’*épuration* en France, une histoire inachevée,” *Vingtième siècle – Revue d’histoire* 33:1 (1992): 78-105.

<sup>514</sup> Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération* (Paris: Belin, 1994).

<sup>515</sup> Robert Aron, *De l’indulgence aux massacres, novembre 1942-septembre 1944* Tome 1 (Paris: Fayard 1967); Robert Aron, *Des prisons clandestines aux tribunaux d’exception, septembre 1944-juin 1949* Tome 2 (Paris: Fayard 1969); Robert Aron, *Le monde des affaires, 1944-1953* Tome 3-1 (Paris: Fayard, 1974); Robert Aron, *Le monde de la presse, des arts, des lettres, 1944-1953* Tome 3-2 (Paris: Fayard, 1975).

<sup>516</sup> Peter Novick, *The Purge of Collaborators in Liberated France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). The book was translated into French in 1985: Peter Novick, *L’*épuration* française. 1944-1946*, trans., H. Ternois (Paris: Balland, 1985).

For a critical assessment of Novick, see Rousso, “L’*épuration* en France,” 78, 88, 90 & 94.

<sup>517</sup> Georges Rougeron, *L’*épuration* en Allier: 1943-1946* (Conseil Général de l’Allier, 1982); Aurélie Duchezéau, “Quelques aspects de l’*épuration* dans le département de l’Allier (1944-1945),” *SHAVE* 159 (2012), 7-33.

<sup>518</sup> For general works on the *épuration* in France, see Baudot, “L’*épuration* : bilan chiffré,” Novick, *The Purge of Collaborators*; Rousso, “L’*épuration* en France,” but also, Jean Paul Cointet, *Expier Vichy 1943-1958* (Paris: Perrin, 2008); Jean-Claude Farcy et Henry Rousso, “Justice, répression et persécution en France de la fin des années 1930 au début des années 1950. Essai bibliographique,” *Les Cahiers de l’IHTP* 24 (1993); Jean-Pierre Azéma and Wiewiorka Olivier, *Les libérations de la France* (Paris, Éd. de la Martinière, 1993). Marc-Olivier Baruch, ed., *Une poignée de misérables. L’*épuration* de la société française après la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris, Fayard, 2003).



“une sérieuse répression s’imposait.”<sup>519</sup> While one might have expected the city to try and turn the page on the war quickly, and as a result shift its interest away from the *épuration*, this was not so. Quite the contrary, actually. Through the punishment of traitors, the *épuration* performed a reparation and justice function without which the social fabric and national identity could not have been repaired and reconstructed.<sup>520</sup> In Vichy, where “les esprits étaient des plus échauffés,”<sup>521</sup> the stakes of the *épuration* appeared even higher. A successful purge would hopefully rehabilitate the city by demonstrating to the rest of France that the *Vichyssois* were not to be mistaken with the real culprits and that the city was not guilty of ‘collective collaboration’. Overall, however, the *épuration* proved to be a huge disappointment for local residents, who felt that the authorities failed to punish those most responsible for what had happened between 1940 and 1944, thereby allowing doubts to persist about a possible ‘collective guilt’ of Vichy’s grassroots residents.

### 1. The extra judicial *épuration*

At the liberation, the respect for human rights was, in theory, required both during the arrests of alleged collaborators and the latter’s internment.<sup>522</sup> Yet, because the *épuration* was also “un exutoire qui répondait à un besoin de violence d’une partie de l’opinion,”<sup>523</sup> in practice many abuses occurred. On a regular basis, the resisters, often supported by the local population, took direct action against alleged collaborators, whose misconducts were not within the remit of the courts or who had benefitted from unjustified clemency from the tribunals. Their motivations were not so much to challenge the authorities. Their actions were rather seen as “a supplement, or sometimes corrective, to the official purge from above.”<sup>524</sup> Summary executions and the throwing of bombs were all common in France in 1944 and 1945. The Allier department and the city of Vichy were no exception.

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<sup>519</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85 Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior, December 12, 1944.

<sup>520</sup> Denis Peschanski, “Les camps français d’internement (1938-1946)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Université Panthéon Sorbonne, Paris 1, 2000), 762.  
Peschanski’s dissertation was published in 2002: Denis Peschanski, *La France des camps. L’internement de 1938 à 1946*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2002).

<sup>521</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report related to a survey on public opinion in the Allier department sent by the Allier *préfet* to Minister of the Interior (1946).

<sup>522</sup> The repression of collaboration was based on prewar republican texts

<sup>523</sup> Peschanski, “Les camps français d’internement,” 762.

<sup>524</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 583.

In total, between ninety-four and 123 summary executions – including that of sixty-seven people identified as “notorious collaborators” by the authorities - were recorded in the Allier department.<sup>525</sup> As was the case in many places in France,<sup>526</sup> most of these executions occurred after the Normandy landing and during the liberation fights of the summer of 1944 and were perpetrated on the orders of the resisters (see following table<sup>527</sup>).

Nature of the allegations	Before 1943	1943	Before June 6, 1944	Between June 6, and the liberation of the Allier	After the liberation of the Allier	Total	Executions on the order of resisters	Personal or indeterminate initiatives
Military collaboration				5	2	7	5	2
Political collaboration			4	62	31	97	67	30
Economic collaboration				1		1	1	
Others				7	2	9	6	3
Indeterminate				6	3	9		9
Total	0	0	4	81	38	123	79	44

The assassination of Hugo Geissler, head of the German police in Vichy, is probably the most notable act of extra judicial violence perpetrated by the resisters in the Allier. On June 12, 1944, in Murat, sixty kilometers away from Vichy, *maquisards* who were trying to free a dozen Gestapo captives, recognized Geissler and shot and killed him.

In Vichy, in the hours and days following the city’s August 26 1944 liberation, a great number of alleged collaborators found themselves at the mercy of resisters. According to Marc-

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<sup>525</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 1. Data report of the summary executions perpetrated in the Allier. Document sent by the *Directeur départemental des services de Police de l’Allier* to the Allier *préfet* (February 11, 1948). Different documents cite different figures with regard to the total of summary executions in the Allier. The police report reported 94 executions, while Rougeron uses the figure of 123.

<sup>526</sup> For national estimations, see: Rouso, “L’épuration en France,” 83. About eighty percent of these executions occurred after the Normandy landing and during the liberation fights of the summer of 1944.

<sup>527</sup> Rougeron, *L’épuration en Allier*, 29.

André Fabre, a former prisoner at the *Château des Brosses*, in Vichy, “Des FFI ... forçaient les portes des prisons et se faisaient livrer les détenus pour les fusiller.”<sup>528</sup> When the collaborators were not killed (most of the time, they were not), they were often poorly treated by the resisters who had arrested them. According to a witness in Vichy,

Ceux qui furent arrêtés par les FFI, et surtout par les FTP, connurent des moments et des interrogatoires musclés, pour ne pas dire plus, pratiqués à l’Hôtel Henri II, rue Jean Jaurès (...) et à l’hôtel Mondial, rue de Paris. On vit des prévenus, à moitié déshabillés, obligés de s’agenouiller sur une règle et de ne pas devoir quitter cette pose pendant des heures sous peine de recevoir des coups. L’atmosphère était pesante et l’individu maltraité.<sup>529</sup>

The most significant acts of extra judicial violence in Vichy did not occur in the summer of 1944, but in June 1945, despite the fact that the FFIs had left Vichy by then.<sup>530</sup> That most extra judicial violence occurred in 1945 is not quite surprising; everywhere in France that year was marked by an outbreak of popular violence, often initiated by former prisoners and deportees who had just returned from Germany. This popular rage “coincided with a government directive to wrap up the legal purge, meaning that accused collaborators returned to their homes simultaneously with the deportees,” inflaming the already tense situation.<sup>531</sup> At least four individuals (three men and a women) were killed in Vichy during the ‘settling of scores’ of the summer of 1945.

At late August and early September 1944, while the number of arrests kept on increasing in Vichy, a few of the men whom the population desperately wanted to see imprisoned or dead, were gone. The much hated Pierre Poinot, *sous-directeur des renseignements généraux* in Vichy, two of the most infamous *miliciens* and Gestapo agents in Vichy, George Gouverneur and Jany Batissier, the head of the milice prison, Edmond Ebner, and the *sergent chef à la gestapo de Vichy*, Adam Eissenger, had all slipped away. The assassination of Geissler and the arrest of two guards at the milice prison at the *Château des Brosses*, Pierre Senati and Raymond Soleilland, in the summer of 1944, offered the population cold comfort.

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<sup>528</sup> Marc-André Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice: la brigade Poinot, le Château des Brosses, la libération de Vichy* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 218. Fabre’s book was first published in 1944.

<sup>529</sup> Jean Débordes, *L’Allier dans la guerre 1939-1945* (Romagnat: Editions De Borée, 2001), 394.

<sup>530</sup> In a report dated from April 1945, the Allier *préfet* noted that only about forty FFIs were still in Vichy. AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period 15 March – 15 April. Their main task was to ensure the security of German soldiers hospitalized in Vichy and to manage security in the train station. AD (Allier), 774 W. Monthly report from the *Commissaire principal – Chef des renseignements généraux à Vichy* to Vichy’s *sous-préfet* (March 1945).

<sup>531</sup> Megan Koreman, “The Collaborator’s Penance: The Local Purge, 1944-5,” *Contemporary European History* 6:2 (1997), 188.

Poinsot and his brigade fled to Germany in late August 1944. After a short stay in Belfort, Poinsot and his family travelled to Lorrach, near the German-Switzerland frontier. In April 1945, the *milicien* was successfully smuggled into Switzerland. Aware that the battle was lost, he surrendered himself to the French military services and offered them his assistance with the hopes of being saved. Things, however, did not go as planned and Poinsot was arrested on May 1, 1945. He was transferred to the prison in Cusset a few days later.<sup>532</sup> Gouverneur had also managed to flee with the occupying troops shortly before the liberation of Vichy. However, he, too, was arrested in May 1945 and interned at the prison in Cusset.<sup>533</sup> The *Vichyssois*, who had hoped that the case of the two men had been settled immediately after the city's liberation, were not willing to wait any longer.

On June 2, 1945, a crowd of *Vichyssois*, led by a group of resisters and former prisoners and deportees who had recently returned to Vichy, gathered at the prison in Cusset. The door of Gouverneur's cell was smashed in with an axe. People grabbed the prisoner out of his cell and took him to the *place de l'Église*, where he was hung upside down and beaten up. After a few minutes, the rope broke and Gouverneur fell from about five meters. He was rescued by policemen and taken back to his cell in a very bad state. The crowd then returned to the prison and dragged Poinsot out. Despite the intervention of the *sous-préfet* of Vichy, M. Ferrand, the group refused to let Poinsot go, although they promised not to kill him. "Jeté du haut en bas de l'escalier," Marc-André Fabre remembers, "Poinsot fit connaissance ... avec les méthodes qui lui furent chères."<sup>534</sup> After beating him for thirty minutes, they returned him to the prison.<sup>535</sup>

The same day, another group of *Vichyssois* sought out Senati, who was being treated at the hospital. On August 23, Senati and Soleilland, two guards at the milice prison, had run out on the head of the *Château des Broses*, Edmond Ebner. With the assistance of accomplices, the *miliciens* had managed to reach the village Le Mayet-de-Montagne, where they had hoped to negotiate with the resisters. After having initially refused to have any interaction with Senati and Soleilland, the FFI group *Didier* had eventually agreed to hear what the two men had to say. Showing no tolerance towards Senati, who was accused of violently mistreating his former

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<sup>532</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 107 W. Individual case records of Pierre Poinsot; AD (Allier), 612 W 23. "Brigade Poinsot (1945-1946)."

<sup>533</sup> AD (Allier), 612 W 23. "Georges Gouverneur (1945)."

<sup>534</sup> André Sérézat, *De Vichy... à Valmy ou de la défaite de la Libération de l'Allier* (Saint-Bonnet-de-Tronçais: Foyers ruraux de l'Allier, 1995), 142; Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 226.

<sup>535</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 107 W. Individual case records of Pierre Poinsot; AD (Allier), 612 W 23. "Brigade Poinsot (1945-1946)."

prisoners, they had immediately driven him to the prison in Cusset.<sup>536</sup> In 1945, the *milicien* had been transferred to the hospital in Vichy, from where, in the summer, he was dragged out, beaten up, and hung upside down from an electric pole.



Figures 4 & 5. Screenshots from Patrick Rotman's documentary *L'Été 1944*, using archival footage (2004). Senati is being hung upside down on the public square.<sup>537</sup>

<sup>536</sup> Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 208-209.

<sup>537</sup> Some of the events of June 2, including Senati's lynching, were filmed. Extracts from the video were first included in Patrick Rotman's documentary *Été 1944* (2004). In the documentary, Senati's lynching was



When the police arrived on the scene, it was already too late. Although Senati was in agony, the crowd refused to lower him. He died shortly after. While his corpse was transported to the morgue, some people went back to the prison and beat up Gouverneur again. The mob also hung him upside down. In exchange for a promise that both Gouverneur and Poinot would be judged quickly, condemned to death, and executed in the public square, Henry Ingrand, the regional commissioner of the Republic and the *préfet*, Robert Fleury, had the *milicien* taken down. The crowd dispersed shortly thereafter.<sup>538</sup>

Poinot was judged and condemned to death a few days later. He was executed in Riom on July 12, 1945.<sup>539</sup> Gouverneur, who had already been condemned to death in abstencia on February 12, 1945, was also sentenced to death. Charles de Gaulle, however, later commuted the death sentence and he has disappeared from the historical record.<sup>540</sup>

Three days after the event at the prison in Vichy, as internees from the internment camp at the *Concours Hippique*, located in the downtown of Vichy, were being transferred to Aigueperse, about twenty former prisoners and deportees from Buchenwald and Dachau broke into the camp and shaved three women.<sup>541</sup> “À Vichy, comme ailleurs, le langage populaire s’enrichit des interpellations vengeresses contre les ‘filles à Boches’, quitte à ne pas faire la distinction entre les réelles coupables et les bougresses qui eurent la seule faiblesse de pratiquer la ‘collaboration horizontale’,”<sup>542</sup> Philippe Bourdel writes in *La grande débâcle de la collaboration*. There is little archival information about the shavings in Vichy, although there are some photographs.<sup>543</sup> While most of the shavings of alleged female collaborators occurred in August and September of

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presented as having taken place in the summer of 1944. After realizing that the lynching had in fact occurred the year after, Daniel Schneidermann investigated the case and released another documentary, *Jour de Pendaison au Village* in 2005.

<sup>538</sup> AD (Allier), 612 W 23. “Incidents du 02 juin 1945 à la Maison d’Arrêt de Cusset”; AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the “enquête sur l’épuration et sur les réactions de l’opinion publique à cet égard”; AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period 15 May – 15 June; Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 226-227.

<sup>539</sup> Philippe Bourdel, *La grande débâcle de la collaboration* (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi, 2007), 147-149.

<sup>540</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the “enquête sur l’épuration et sur les réactions de l’opinion publique à cet égard”; Sérézat, *De Vichy... à Valmy*, 144. For the testimonies by Gouverneur’s family, victims and acquaintances, gathered during the investigation, see: AD (Allier), 654 W 12.

<sup>541</sup> Duchézeau, “Quelques aspects de l’épuration dans le département de l’Allier,” 18.

<sup>542</sup> Bourdel, *La grande débâcle de la collaboration*, 146-147.

<sup>543</sup> See for example Thierry Wirth’s book, *Vichy capitale*, which includes many pictures: Thierry Wirth, *Vichy Capitale* (Lyon: Les Trois Roses, 2015).



1944,<sup>544</sup> the shock caused by the return of deportees from the German camps provoked a second wave of shavings in May and June 1945.<sup>545</sup>

Joined by about forty additional *Vichyssois*, the crowd then went to the hospital where Soleilland, Senati's accomplice, was being treated, after having initially been interned at the *Concours Hippique*.<sup>546</sup> When the two *miliciens* were negotiating with the FFIs in the Mayet-de-Montagne in late August 1944, the FFIs had initially demonstrated understanding for Soleilland who, they said, deserved leniency.<sup>547</sup> But before the Soleilland's case could be settled, other resisters, who had recognized him, grabbed him and took him to Vichy.<sup>548</sup> Ten months later, a group of people led by former prisoners and deportees dragged him from hospital, beat him, strangled him, and hung him from a tree. He died before the police were even notified of the incident. In a report bound for the Minister of the Interior, the *préfet* explains that he had met with those responsible for the lynching and that the responsible parties, who had passed through the hands of Soleilland at the *Brosses*, had told him that they could not understand why, one year after his arrest the *milicien* had not yet be judged and condemned.<sup>549</sup>

Two days after Soleilland's lynching, the Gaurut couple was found hanging on their porch, in Vichy's suburbs. The Gauruts, who were accused of having benefitted from their son's relationships with the Gestapo, had been interned after the liberation of Vichy but, to the great displeasure of many residents, they had been liberated on May 17, 1945, without being brought before a judge.<sup>550</sup> While there is no evidence of legal proceedings having been taken against those responsible for the other killings in and around Vichy, the murder of the Gauruts did go to trial. In July 1946, five individuals suspected of having been involved in the killing, including the deputy mayor of Hauterive, were referred to the court. More than two thousand people, including

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<sup>544</sup> In many cities and villages in France, the first act of many liberation committees was to order the shaving of 'guilty' women. Jackson, *France The Dark years*, 580-581.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the "enquête sur l'épuration et sur les réactions de l'opinion publique à cet égard"; AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period 15 May – 15 June.

<sup>547</sup> According to Fabre, Soleilland "fit preuve, à notre égard, de beaucoup de mansuétude." Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 227.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 208-209.

<sup>549</sup> Duchézeau, "Quelques aspects de l'épuration dans le département de l'Allier," 18.

<sup>550</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the "enquête sur l'épuration et sur les réactions de l'opinion publique à cet égard."

some prominent resisters from Vichy and the Allier, gathered in their support.<sup>551</sup> A support committee was created. It published several press statements, including the following one:

Les époux Gaurut libérés du Concours Hippique, vinrent narguer par leur présence les familles des victimes (...). 400 personnes indignées se rendirent dans la nuit du 7 juin chez les Gaurut et les pendirent. Et la justice se saisit, en otages, de cinq habitants d'Hauterive, dont l'adjoint au maire, tous résistants authentiques et les chargea de la responsabilité de l'action collective de la population. Les voilà donc devant la cour d'assises. Certes ces 5 résistants vont être acquittés, mais le scandale, c'est de voir des patriotes traduits devant la justice alors que des collaborateurs sont libérés ou graciés. Ce sont des faits que des français ne peuvent tolérer.<sup>552</sup>

The trial took place on July 12. All the defendants confirmed their participation in the murder, which they described as the result of a collective outburst of anger. All of the Hauterive residents who took the stand defended them. After a few hours, the Court, convinced that it was the Gauruts' provocative behavior that had triggered the village's desire for revenge and brought about their execution, gave up listening to the last witnesses. All the accused were acquitted.<sup>553</sup>

Comparisons between cities or departments are difficult to make. The extra-judicial *épuration* was not of the same magnitude everywhere. The departments of Ille et Vilaine, Mayenne and Manche, for example, only experienced few summary executions (less than fifteen).<sup>554</sup> Similarly, statistics for the Calvados only show twelve summary executions.<sup>555</sup> On the other hand, there were more than 250, only during the liberation period, in the Ardèche, and 316 in Haute-Savoie.<sup>556</sup>

With its ninety-four (or 123) summary executions, the department of the Allier is in the national average. In Vichy, the presence of hundreds of people during the events of June 2,

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<sup>551</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the "enquête sur l'épuration et sur les réactions de l'opinion publique à cet égard."; Duchézeau, "Quelques aspects de l'épuration dans le département de l'Allier," 18-21.

<sup>552</sup> Cited in Duchézeau, "Quelques aspects de l'épuration dans le département de l'Allier," 21.

<sup>553</sup> "Ce verdict s'imposait... La Cour d'Assises a acquitté les 5 résistants d'Hauterive," *Le Centre Républicain*, July 13, 1946.

<sup>554</sup> Jacqueline Sainclivier, "Le retour à la paix dans l'Ouest, de 1944 à ?", *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 104:1 (1997), 99-111.

<sup>555</sup> Herbert Lottman, *The Purge: The Purification Of The French Collaborators After World War II* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1986), 61.

<sup>556</sup> Lottman, *The Purge*, 61 & 113.

1945<sup>557</sup> reveals the popular enthusiasm for the *épuration* and the people's desire that the culprits be punished, whatever the cost.



Figure 6. Screenshot from the documentary *L'été 44* (Patrick Rotman). The crowd rushes to take part in Senatti's hanging in the suburbs of Vichy

However, in view of the stakes involved in the *épuration* in Vichy, the number of summary executions there remained limited. In Montluçon and Moulins, twenty-one and sixteen summary executions were reported, whereas in Vichy, there were only seven.<sup>558</sup> Furthermore, although the lynchings in Vichy were somewhat violent, they cannot be compared to the several incidents in other parts of France, where women were raped, men sadistically tortured, and children murdered.<sup>559</sup>

Several explanations exist for the limited scope of the extra-judicial *épuration* in Vichy.

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<sup>557</sup> 300 according to the *préfet*. AD (Allier), 1289 W 85: Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the “enquête sur l’*épuration* et sur les réactions de l’opinion publique à cet égard”; 500 according to André Sérézat. Sérézat, *De Vichy... à Valmy*, 142; 1,000 according to Maurice Constantin-Weyer. Maurice Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire: des origines à nos jours* (Vichy: Szabo, 1947), 191.

<sup>558</sup> Rougeron, *L’*épuration* en Allier*, 33.

<sup>559</sup> In *The Purge*, Lottman gives examples of these barbarous acts: “people stabbed in their eyes, genitals torn off, flesh ripped off with pincers, people forced to walk barefoot in pits filled with broken glass, women forced to copulate with animals, etc.” Lottman, *The Purge*, 94 & 17.

First, in August 1944, Walter Stucki, the Swiss minister, received a commitment from the FFIs that during and immediately after the liberation of Vichy, the resisters would behave and follow his instructions. This commitment came after the municipality and the remaining Vichy officials had asked Stucki to do everything he could to spare the city from fighting and from destruction (on the liberation of Vichy, see Chapter 5).<sup>560</sup> Secondly, the hundreds of arrests that occurred in the first weeks after the liberation of Vichy, the quick internment of hundreds of alleged collaborators, as well as the establishment of a court martial in Vichy on September 5, 1944, even before Moulins, the *préfecture* of the Allier, was liberated, gave the population the impression that the *épuration* was being conducted quite effectively. Finally, the former capital provided people with other – more legal – opportunities to be involved in the purge, especially through the internment of suspects, which employed several hundred local people.

## 2. The internment in Vichy

At the end of the 1944 summer, the upcoming task for the authorities in the Allier department was enormous. In Vichy alone, 600 people were arrested between August 27 and August 30.<sup>561</sup> Among them were several members of Pétain's government, military personnel, *miliciens*, policemen, industrialists, journalists, intellectuals, hotel employees, secretaries, cooks, wait staff, and nurses.<sup>562</sup> A commission whose functions were similar to the future *commissions de criblage* was created in Vichy very early on.<sup>563</sup> This, however, did not make the proceedings relating to the arrests and internment easier to manage. The first weeks were marked by a great deal of improvisation. According to Jean Débordes, “dès les premiers jours après la Libération, les arrestations de tous ordres et de toutes les façons se multiplièrent sans que l'on sut bien qui

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<sup>560</sup> On this, see for instance: Walter Stucki, *La Fin du régime de Vichy* (Neuchâtel: Editions De La Baconnière, 1947).

<sup>561</sup> Estimation by the *préfet*. Cited in Duchézeau, “Quelques aspects de l'épuration dans le département de l'Allier,” 7.

<sup>562</sup> AD (Allier), 253 W 193. “État des internés administratifs à la date du 21 avril 1945.”

<sup>563</sup> AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 15, 1945 – February 15, 1945. The *commissions de criblage* “étaient chargées de faire le tri, tant faire ce peut, entre les internés qui devaient être transmis à la justice, ceux qui devaient être libérés et ceux qui devaient rester internés”- Peschanski, “Les camps français d'internement,” 775.

Although a departmental *commission de criblage* was later created in Moulins (October 1944), the *préfet* nonetheless decided to keep the one operating in Vichy. AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Letter from the *Secrétaire régional pour la police* in the region of Clermont-Ferrand to the Allier *préfet* (October 14, 1944); AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 15, 1945 – February 15, 1945.

commandait qui ou quoi.”<sup>564</sup> The liberation committee was completely overtaken by the very large number of people arrested daily. Not only was the new administration not yet properly organized at any level of society, but the local authorities in Vichy also had to deal with the staffing reduction among the police, after the *Police de Sûreté* were sent back to Paris.<sup>565</sup> The *préfet* estimated that at least five more police inspectors and a lot of policemen would have been needed in Vichy.<sup>566</sup> Not only did the shortage of staff delay proceedings, but it also made the task overwhelming for the remaining authorities in and around Vichy.

One of the most pressing issues in Vichy was the management of the thousands of people who had recently been rounded up and who had to be interned somewhere, pending further investigation. Within a few days, four camps were set up. The people who had been arrested were interned at the *Château des Brosses* (former prison of the milice), the *hôtel du Portugal* (former headquarters of the Gestapo), or the *Concours Hippique* (former military compound for the GMR). The municipality also made the city hall’s basements available to the resisters, whose need for space was critical in early September.<sup>567</sup> The campground *Limagne*, also formerly used by the GMR and the milice, was used for German internees.<sup>568</sup>

In the weeks immediately following the liberation, the internment camps across France were managed principally by the FFIs. But as soon as the new authorities were established, the latter strove to take control of the *épuration* and of the internment, which became regulated by the *préfet* and the commissioner of the Republic. Not only was it necessary for legality to be restored as quickly as possible so as to avoid social chaos, but taking charge of the *épuration* was also a way for the new authorities to establish their legitimacy.<sup>569</sup> In the fall of 1944, the Minister of the Interior, Adrien Tixier, worked to ensure that administrative internment was in line with the laws of the Republic. It had to be strict, but also fair and human: “Le Gouvernement provisoire de la République entend diriger avec vigueur la répression des faits de collaboration et des activités antinationales, mais il entend aussi sauvegarder la liberté individuelle dans le cadre de la légalité républicaine.”<sup>570</sup> The *préfet* and the commissioner of the Republic, who were the

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<sup>564</sup> Jean Débordes, *A Vichy la vie de tous les jours sous Pétain* (Thionne: Edition du Signe, 1994), 278.

<sup>565</sup> AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 15, 1945 – February 15, 1945.

<sup>566</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the commissioner of the Republic in Clermont-Ferrand (December 16, 1944).

<sup>567</sup> Débordes, *A Vichy la vie de tous les jours sous Pétain*, 278-279.

<sup>568</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W. Notes and observations on the camps 1944-1946 – *Limagne* camp.

<sup>569</sup> Peschanski, “Les camps français d’internement,” 765.

<sup>570</sup> Circular of November 3, 1944.

two main authorities in charge of the internment, were under obligation to make sure that the camp conditions met the standards prescribed by democratic laws prior to the war, which laid down rules for the administrative penal system and regulated internment. The three reference texts relating to administrative repression were the decree law of November 12, 1938, the court order of April 11, 1944 and the court order of October 4, 1944. The regulatory and legislative system was further reinforced by the circular of December 21, 1944, which allowed the internment of nationals of enemy powers.<sup>571</sup>

While the internment was, in theory, only destined to those who posed a serious threat to society and peace, in reality, things were more complex. Tens of thousands of people who did not threaten society were interned for differing lengths of time, from a few hours to several weeks.<sup>572</sup> According to Denis Peschanski, as had been the case in 1940, “l'internement administratif [de 1944-1945] fut un outil majeur dans la politique de l'état. En font foi les chiffres qui sont comparables. Mais la logique était toute différente : on gérait dans l'urgence et l'éphémère une conjoncture d'exception en système démocratique.”<sup>573</sup> Eventually, despite many irregularities, mass internment proved essential for at least two reasons: it appeased the public, and it prevented vigilante justice.

On September 1, 1944, the Minister of the Interior sent the instructions for the organization and monitoring of the camps to every *sous-préfets* and every head of camps. All the camps in Vichy followed the same general lines, with some variations in detail, depending on the type of inmates and the type of building. All prisoners were searched upon arrival at camp. Identity papers, ration cards, cash, letters, tobacco and all objects of value, likely to be stolen, sold, or used as weapons within the camp, were confiscated. To deter escape attempts, the guards were required to use their weapons after a single warning. Visits were strictly prohibited except at *Concours Hippique*, where certain prisoners were allowed to meet some of their relatives, or friends, for half an hour every week.<sup>574</sup>

One characteristic of the internment in Vichy was the heterogeneity of the interned population. Ordinary people lived side-by-side with celebrities like Xavier Vallat, Henri Massis,

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<sup>571</sup> Peschanski, “Les camps français d'internement,” 767-768.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., 768.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 780.

<sup>574</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 3. Report from the head of the camp at the *Concours Hippique* to the *Commandant des Gardes* (November 7, 1944). Other minor differences are noted. For example: at the *Concours Hippique*, internees were allowed to keep 200 francs in cash.



the author of *Défense de l'Occident*, Jacques Chevalier, a member of the Darlan government, André Demaison, former director of the Radio, Commandant Féat, and General Blasselle, amongst others.

### *The camp at the Concours Hippique*

The main camp in Vichy and in the Allier was the equestrian center, the *Concours Hippique*, used by the city in 1940 as a reception center for refugees and then, between 1941 and 1944, by Pétain's GMR as a military campground. In the fall of 1944, expansion work was undertaken. In order to enhance the camp's safety, two watchtowers and barbed wire were added.<sup>575</sup> The camp had a capacity of about 700 individuals. The number of internees increased steadily until December 1944, as revealed by the following table.<sup>576</sup>

Dates	Number of male internees	Number of female internees	TOTAL
30/09/44	323	138	461
28/10/44	326	145	471
21/11/44	468	161	629
25/12/44	403	142	545
30/01/45	413	173	586
28/02/45	383	189	522
19/03/45	339	111	450
27/04/45	267	74	341
31/05/45	140	47	187
06/06/45	1	1	2

<sup>575</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 12. Campsite plan dated October 21, 1944.

<sup>576</sup> The chart was created from the camp's daily reports. AD (Allier), 1289 W.

The prisoners were divided into fourteen wooden barracks (ten for men and four for women), each of which contained metal beds, straw mattresses or mattresses, blankets and a chamber pot. There were forty-four internees per barrack. Only one barrack was an exception to the rule with eighty-eight internees and double beds. Heating was scheduled for installation, yet because of the fuel shortage only the women's barracks were partially heated. Six barracks contained washbasins, and ten showers with hot water operated daily, except on Saturdays and Sundays.<sup>577</sup>

The *miliciens*, Gestapo agents and other 'serious' internees were separated from the rest of the prisoners. The barracks 13 and 15, subjected to special supervision, were reserved for them: "Le commandant des gardes prendra les dispositions pour que son personnel soit disposé de façon que toute fuite soit rendue impossible," the camp commander ordered. "Jusqu'à nouvel ordre," he added, "la promenade, dans la cour, des individus logeant dans les baraques 13 et 15 est interdite. Ces internés ne seront autorisés à se rendre aux WC et aux lavabos que par groupe fortement encadré."<sup>578</sup>

Despite some isolated incidents and frequent insults from the guards, there was little violence against the internees. According to a former internee, "Il faut dire, pour être impartiale que les gardiens du Concours Hippique étaient corrects ; notre arrivée ne donnait pas lieu de leur part à des insultes, des crachats ou autres gestes brutaux."<sup>579</sup> Although the food was "médiocre et fade,"<sup>580</sup> and insufficient for people "se trouvant (...) dans des conditions sanitaires déficientes,"<sup>581</sup> each prisoner received three meals a day, including 400 grams of bread and some meat on Sundays.<sup>582</sup>

In nearby camps, the internment conditions were much worse. In Aigueperse, for example, according to Robert Aron, "des gardiens improvisés multipliaient les sévices : [les détenus étaient] mis nu jusqu'à la ceinture [et] flagellé à coups de ceinturons et de crosses."<sup>583</sup> In November 1944, the physical and psychological state of the internees arriving at the *Concours Hippique* from the camp in the *Forêt de Tronçais*, suggested that the internment conditions were even worse in Tronçais than they were in Aigueperse: "pouilleux, hâves, fatigués, hagards,

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<sup>577</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 4. "Concours Hippique." Report from November 20, 1944.

<sup>578</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 3. Report from the head of the camp at the *Concours Hippique* to the *Commandant des Gardes* (November 7, 1944).

<sup>579</sup> Nicole Gauthier-Turotski, *J'étais à Tronçais* (Montluçon, 1988), 47.

<sup>580</sup> Gauthier-Turotski, *J'étais à Tronçais*, 49.

<sup>581</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 4. "Concours Hippique." Report from November 20, 1944.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Aron, *Histoire de l'épuration* (tome1), 578-579.

encore sous le coup des horreurs qu'ils avaient ou subies ou vu infliger."<sup>584</sup> Some internees said they had witnessed a woman being "déshabillée par ses tortionnaires, qui lui arrachèrent les seins avec une tenaille, la balafrèrent avec un rasoir et lui écrasèrent les orteils à coups de marteau."<sup>585</sup> Others reported humiliating situations: "des malheureux attelés à un lourd chariot et obligés de gravir au pas de course une côte abrupte, sous le fouet de leur conducteur."<sup>586</sup> This is not to mention the executions ordered by the camp commander.<sup>587</sup> Aron's privileged position during the war, thanks to acquaintances with high social standing in Vichy, makes him a biased observer, to be read with caution. Yet, other sources suggest that the internment in Tronçais was particularly harsh.<sup>588</sup> In comparison, the *Concours Hippique* almost looked like a resting camp.

Despite the relatively smooth operation of the camp, in April 1945, the *sous-préfet* considered that keeping such a large camp in the center of Vichy was not a good idea. Not only did the close proximity with the general population foster gossip, but the fact that the guards often knew the internees (sometimes because they had been their prisoners), and/or the residents who lived nearby the camps, was also believed to have created an unhealthy and potentially dangerous situation in the surrounding area of the *Concours Hippique*, all the more as the situation in late spring 1945 was extremely tense, with regular popular violence.<sup>589</sup>

To make matters worse, the camp was confronted with health problems. Due to its geographical location near a river and because of frequent heavy rains, the camp was always wet, which led to the outbreak of many diseases, such as bronchitis. This was aggravated by the fact that most internees had poor footwear.<sup>590</sup> The arrival of internees from other camps exacerbated the spread of diseases, all the more as the camp lacked the necessary products for disinfection and

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<sup>584</sup> Aron, *Histoire de l'épuration* (tome1), 578-579.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> "A la Libération, beaucoup de gens sont arrêtés à Montluçon (...) puis acheminés sur le camp de Tronçais. (...) Beaucoup de prisonnières sont tondues et se voient marquées d'une croix gammée colorée sur le crâne. Les interrogatoires sont musclés et le groupe qui contrôle le camp fait figure de « kapos », digne des camps de concentration. Le chef est une brute qui encourage ses subordonnés à mieux taper ; son second est un spécialiste des coups de pieds au ventre. L'adjudant du camp est un ancien de la Légion, un ivrogne qui se révèle un peu plus humain. Tous sont munis de revolvers, matraques, fouets et cravaches. Les hommes sont attelés à des chariots et les femmes subissent la loi du plus fort, avec des viols parfois collectifs." Francis Koerner, *L'épuration en Auvergne, 1944-1948* (Vertaizon: Galipote, 2009), 54 & 58. See also: Gauthier-Turotski, *J'étais à Tronçais*, and Débordes, *L'Allier dans la guerre*, 461-474.

<sup>589</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946) about the "enquête sur l'épuration et sur les réactions de l'opinion publique à cet égard"; AD (Allier) 1289 W 61. Report from Vichy's *sous-préfet* to the Allier *préfet* (25 avril 1945).

<sup>590</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 4. "Concours Hippique." Report from November 20, 1944.

sanitation.<sup>591</sup> Finally, some camp staff were perceived to be incompetent. In March 1945, for instance, the camp administrator, Guy Pigaudon, was arrested for alleged embezzlement of several thousand francs.<sup>592</sup> As a result, the camp closed in early June 1945.<sup>593</sup>

### *The Château des Broses*

Although the former milice prison lacked adequate accommodation space, in October 1944, ninety-one prisoners were nonetheless interned there. Most of them were *miliciens*, members of the Waffen SS, members of the *Légion des Volontaires Français*, or French Gestapo agents.<sup>594</sup> Ironically – though it was the case in many other places – some of the guards were former prisoners at the *Broses*, whereas some of the inmates were former guards.<sup>595</sup> Unquestionably, the most famous prisoner of the *Broses* was Xavier Vallat. After he was found in his office at the *Légion française des combattants* on August 27, he was kept prisoner in various hotels before being sent to the *Broses*. Vallat stayed there for two months. He was later transferred to the *Concours Hippique*, and then to Fresnes.<sup>596</sup>

According to Marc-André Fabre, who had been detained at the *Château des Broses* shortly before the liberation of Vichy in August 1944, the conditions of internment had significantly improved since a couple of weeks ago:

29 août 1944: Je suis allé, au début de l'après midi, faire une visite aux Broses, en compagnie du lieutenant Bescand... C'est l'heure de la soupe. Les 'cellulards', leur gamelle à la main, font la queue devant la cuisine. Ils en reviennent avec une louche de bouillon de légume, un plat de pommes de terre et un morceau de viande. De la viande ! J'en ai mangé une fois, et deux fois du mou, durant mon séjour ici. Au second étage (...) de temps à autre, une détenue frappe. On lui ouvre et on lui permet d'aller au cabinet, sur le palier. Alors que, souvent, nous n'avions même pas à notre disposition un seau de toilette ! J'aperçois, sur une table du bureau, des bouteilles de bière et de limonade, que les détenus peuvent acheter, et une trousse de pharmacie. Monica s'indignerait, elle qui n'avait que ses mouchoirs et de l'eau chaude pour nettoyer les plaies des victimes de Poinot et de ses adjoints.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 9. Inspection report from Vichy's *sous préfet* (October 11, 1944).

<sup>592</sup> AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period March 15, 1945 - April 15, 1945.

<sup>593</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 61. Report from Vichy's *sous-préfet* to the Allier *préfet* (25 avril 1945).

<sup>594</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 9. Inspection report from Vichy's *sous préfet* (October 11, 1944).

<sup>595</sup> Security in the camp was also assured by the policemen students from the school of Gendarmerie in Mamers and some assistant inspectors. AD (Allier), 1289 W 9. Inspection report from Vichy's *sous-préfet* (October 11, 1944).

<sup>596</sup> Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon, *Vichy en prison : Les épurés à Fresnes après la Libération* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 37.

<sup>597</sup> Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 210.

Fabre's description is echoed in Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon's book *Vichy en prison*, in which she describes the camp as "très correct."<sup>598</sup>

These positive descriptions, however, need to be nuanced. According to the *préfet*, the rooms were not only overcrowded, but also unhealthy. If the rooms on the first floor, mostly occupied by female internees, were in decent conditions, the cells located in the basement, where the men were interned, were very wet and lacked ventilation. Days of continual rainfall made some of them unusable. In addition to the unhealthy internment conditions, the *préfet* observed too many other problems for the camp to continue to operate. The presence of women in the vicinity of the *Château*, "qui, de loin, échangeaient des signaux avec les internés lors de la promenade," was one such problem. Another problem concerned the geographical location of the camp. If the *Concours Hippique* was considered too close to the city center, the *Brosses* had the opposite problem. Its remote location made it vulnerable to a sudden attack. Finally, as was the case at the *Concours Hippique*, some camp staff were deemed incompetent. As a consequence, the camp closed at the end of 1944, only a few months after the first alleged collaborators had been interned there. The last eighty-four internees were transferred to the *Concours Hippique*.<sup>599</sup>

#### *The camp at the Hôtel du Portugal*

The first entry of the daybook of the camp at the *hôtel du Portugal*, the former headquarters of the Gestapo in Vichy, dates back to October 1, 1944.<sup>600</sup> The camp began to be used later than the other camps in Vichy, as it opened as a response to the problems faced by the already operating camps (primarily the *Concours Hippique*), especially problems relating to medical and disciplinary issues.<sup>601</sup> The *Concours Hippique* and the *Château des Brosses* lacked the infrastructure needed for proper medical procedures. As a consequence, a new unit was created at the *Portugal*, in order to accommodate and treat sick, injured, old, and pregnant prisoners. Soleilland, for example, who was lynched by the crowd in the summer of 1945, was treated at the *Portugal* in January of the same year.<sup>602</sup> About thirty prisoners in need of medical

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<sup>598</sup> Vergez-Chaignon, *Vichy en prison*, 37.

<sup>599</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 9. Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (December 5, 1944).

<sup>600</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 12. Camp's daybook.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> He arrived on January 13, 1945. AD (Allier) 654 W 12. Camp's daybook.

care could be treated at the same time. The health unit at the *Portugal* was led by Dr. Lacarin, who went on to become Vichy's mayor in the 1960s.<sup>603</sup>

The internment camp at the *Portugal* had a twofold mission: to serve as a hospital camp (with rooms), and to serve as a punishment camp for dangerous and difficult prisoners (with cells). Six guards ensured the safety of this small hotel.<sup>604</sup> Although escapes from the *Concours Hippique* were rare, they did occur.<sup>605</sup> When the fugitives were found, they were first taken to the *Portugal* before being sent back to the *Concours Hippique*.<sup>606</sup> Prisoners who had misbehaved in other camps were interned there as punishment. The entry of January 3, 1945, for instance, reads: "Arrivée du détenu Renaud transféré du Concours Hippique pour une punition de 15 jours aux locaux disciplinaires – ordre de transfert n° 30 de M. le Commissaire Pal Andrey."<sup>607</sup> What happened in these "locaux disciplinaires" is unknown. However, neither in the archives nor in testimonies, is there evidence of bad treatments. On the contrary, families and lawyers reportedly passed through the hotel's corridors bringing food, clothes, and comfort to an internee or to help them prepare for a forthcoming hearing at the tribunal in Moulins or in Cusset. During the month of October, for instance, the following visits were reported:

October 1, 1944 :

15h20 – Maître Rome, avocat à Vichy, communique avec ses clients Sanchez Eugène et Parraud Marcel. Permis de communiquer fourni.

15h40 – Maître Epinat, avocat à Vichy communique avec son client Laborie. Permis de communiquer fourni.

17h15 – Maître Epinat, avocat à Vichy communique avec son client Berthet. Permis de communiquer fourni.

18h10 – Maître Rothenbach, avocat à Vichy, communique avec sa cliente Doucet Paulette. Permis de communiquer fourni.

18h15 – Maître Bouron, avocat à Vichy, communique avec ses clients Bourgougnon et Camion.

Permis de communiquer fourni.

18h40 – Maître Lavaud, avocat à Vichy communique avec son client Glacet. Permis de communiquer fourni.

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<sup>603</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 9. Inspection report from Vichy's *sous-préfet* (October 11, 1944).

<sup>604</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 9. Inspection report from Vichy's *sous-préfet* (October 11, 1944).

<sup>605</sup> For example, there were three escapes during the night of March 14-15. AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period February 15, 1945 – March 15, 1945.

<sup>606</sup> See for instance the entry of December 31, 1944: "12h35 – Le Brigadier chef Perrin, accompagné de 3 gardiens nous amènent les internés Petit Pierre et Esculier Jean, évadés du Concours Hippique et repris par la police"; AD (Allier), 654 W 12. Camp's daybook.

<sup>607</sup> Other internees received longer sentences: January 10, 1945: "17h00 – Le nommé Esquillet Paul est transféré du Concours Hippique pour être interné en cellule afin d'y subir une punition de 90 jours." AD (Allier), 654 W 12. Camp's daybook.



October 14, 1944:

14h30 – Mrs Dory et Sauven sont autorisés à rendre visite à Mlle Dory Suzanne (Autorisation jointe)

17h30 – L'inspecteur de police Lecoq vient interroger le détenu Vallin (Autorisation fournie)

October 27, 1944:

15h15 – Madame Tuloup rend visite à Madame Miossec (Autorisation fournie) n° 474

Madame Arrazat rend visite à Mr Arrazat (interné), (Autorisation fournie n° 470)

17h30 – L'inspecteur Lecossois vient interroger le détenu Vallin (Autorisation fournie)

October 28, 1944:

14h30 – Mr et Mme Gimel sont autorisés à rendre visite à Mr et Mme Gimel (Autorisation fournie)

15h45 – Mr Boudaud est autorisé à rendre visite à Mme Boudaud (Autorisation fournie)

16h25 – Mme Arrazat est autorisée à rendre visite à Mr Arrazat (Autorisation fournie).<sup>608</sup>

That some internees were in communication with people outside of the camp is also revealing of the camp's rather permissive practices. On November 19, 1944, an agent wrote in the daybook that he had to close the rooms's windows on the first and second floor because "certains détenu(ue)s se montr[aient] aux fenêtres et convers[aient] avec des passants." The same observation was made the following day: "Surpris Mme Diot [internée] parlant au balcon du premier étage à une personne venant chercher du linge sale et se tenant sur le trottoir du Boulevard des Etats-Unis."<sup>609</sup> The following incident further demonstrates not only the lack of effective control in the camp, but also the surprisingly good relationships between some prisoners and camp staff. In early February 1945, the internee M. Blanchin bet camp inspectors that he could easily escape if he wanted to. He successfully escaped and shortly thereafter, he rung the *Portugal*'s bell to announce that he had won his bet: "l'interné Blanchin a réussi à s'évader, puis il est revenu sonner à la porte du camp et après avoir fait constater qu'il avait gagné son pari, il a réintégré le camp."<sup>610</sup> Following this incident, Vichy's *sous-préfet* shut the camp down.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 12. Camp's daybook.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 98. Report about the escape from the *sous-préfet* to the *préfet* (February 10, 1945).

<sup>611</sup> Ibid.

As far as the city of Vichy was concerned, Robert Aron's statement that "un pays concentrationnaire s'ajoute et se superpose au pays réel" appears exaggerated.<sup>612</sup> Despite problems and irregularities, the Vichy camps had very little to do with concentration camps. On the other hand, his comment that "Vichy... fut dans l'ensemble, plus cruelle que meurtrière" and that "beaucoup d'internés furent protégés du pire par le fait même de leur incarcération" is accurate.<sup>613</sup>

### *The camp Limagne*

The camp *Limagne*, formerly used by the GMR and the milice, was converted to a transit camps for individuals from Germany and Saarland.<sup>614</sup> In August 1945, there were 1,240 internees at the *Limagne* camp (including many women and children),<sup>615</sup> making it the most populated camp in Vichy, although comparing this camp with the three others would make little sense as its function did not concern the *épuration* of French society.

By the winter of 1946, the number of internees had decreased significantly. On February 1, 1946, there were less than 500 of them, including about 350 women.<sup>616</sup> In October 1945, 258 internees from Saarland (including 168 women) were transferred to Pithiviers, before being sent back to Saarland.<sup>617</sup> The internees from the German territories, occupied by the French and the British after Germany's surrender, had also departed. Those from the German territories occupied by the Americans and the Russians, as well as those from Alsace-Lorraine were to leave soon.<sup>618</sup>

The adult internees at *Limagne* were required to perform maintenance and drainage work, alongside other German prisoners from nearby cities.<sup>619</sup> For misbehavior, the internees were given sentences ranging from one day in a cell, to two months for caught escapees. As there were no cells in the camps, those found guilty of misconduct were transferred to the *Château des Broses*. Aside from the escape of a woman, who was found a few hours later, the camp report of

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<sup>612</sup> Aron, *Histoire de l'épuration* (tome 1), 576.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., 579.

<sup>614</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 12. "Liquidation du centre de séjour surveillé de Limagne à Bellerive/Allier de 1947 à 1950."

<sup>615</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 27. Report from the camp director to the Allier *préfet* (4 août 1945).

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.; AD (Allier), 774 W 1. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 11 – 26, 1946.

<sup>617</sup> Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent: Auvergne-Bourbonnais (1940-1945)* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 301.

<sup>618</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 89. Letter from the *Chef du Service Régional de la Main d'oeuvre* to the Allier *préfet* (January 26, 1946).

<sup>619</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 89. Letter from the *Commissaire de la République de la Région de Clermont-Ferrand* to the Allier *Préfet* (February 16, 1946).

August 4, 1945, indicates that until then, “aucun cas d’indiscipline notoire est à enregistrer.” “Vol de matériel appartenant au camp,” “insultes,” “vol de pommes de terre” were the most common offences amongst a population, “[dont] l’état d’esprit... est bon, à part quelques éléments qui essayent parfois de continuer leur besogne pour la propagande nazie.”<sup>620</sup> In many camps in France, German civilians did not experience conditions of captivity in accordance with the grand principles outlined in the legal texts.<sup>621</sup> For the *Limagne* camp, however, there is no evidence of mistreatment.

*Limagne* was shut down on February 28, 1946. The remaining prisoners were transferred to the camp in Ecrouves (in the Meurthe et Moselle department).<sup>622</sup>

### 3. Overview of the judicial *épuration* in the Allier department and in Vichy

The four main judicial bodies, the military tribunal, the court-martial, the “cour de justice,” and the civic court, were present in the Allier department. At the end of the summer and at the beginning of the autumn 1944, the military tribunals were organized in all the newly liberated regions. As France had never officially ceased to be at war, and because many collaborators had been captured following fighting against the FFIs, many cases were under the jurisdiction of the military justice system.

The court martial for the Allier department was established on September 5, 1944, despite the entire Allier department not yet being liberated. Henry Ingrand, Commissioner of the Republic for the Auvergne region, hoped that this quick initiative would ensure that the mob did not carry out its own justice.<sup>623</sup> The deliberations took place between October 2 and October 15 in a highly symbolic building: the great hall in the *hôtel du Parc*. The court martial pronounced eight death sentences (two were later commuted), six were sentenced to hard labor, one *confiscation accessoire*, and three were acquitted.<sup>624</sup> Two days after the last session of the court martial, a military tribunal had already replaced it, in the *hôtel des Ambassadeurs* this time.<sup>625</sup> It

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<sup>620</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 27. Report from the camp director to the Allier *préfet* (4 août 1945); AD (Allier), 654 W. Notes and observations on the camps 1944-1946 – *Limagne* camp. Monthly report from March 1945.

<sup>621</sup> Peschanski, “Les camps français d’internement,” 768.

<sup>622</sup> AD (Allier), 774 W 1. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period February 25 – March 10, 1946

<sup>623</sup> Report by Ingrand (March 23, 1946). AN 72 AJ 524. “Papiers Ingrand.” Cited in Lottman, *The Purge*, 70.

<sup>624</sup> Rougeron, *L’épuration en Allier*, 19-20.

<sup>625</sup> AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 15 – February 15, 1945.

sat from October 17 until November 2 and pronounced four death sentences – three were sentenced to hard labor, and two were imprisoned.<sup>626</sup>

As soon as the *cours de justice*, which had been instituted by the ordinance of June 26, 1944, were in place and ready to operate, they replaced the military tribunals and courts martial.<sup>627</sup> The sentences pronounced by the courts were the same as the ones pronounced by the criminal *cours d'assises*. They ranged from death penalty to national degradation,<sup>628</sup> to prison sentences and hard labor. There was at least one such court in each department.<sup>629</sup>

The court of the Allier department officially opened in the courthouse in Moulins on November 3. By December 4, it was ready to hear cases. It was closed down on April 26, 1946.<sup>630</sup> According to the local press, the court received 4,059 cases, 392 of which were referred to other cases, because they went beyond its expertise. In total, 646 individuals were tried, with the same individuals often involved in several different cases. Among the harshest sentences were twenty contradictory death sentences, seventy-seven death sentences in absentia, 192 sentences to forced labor or contradictory imprisonment (or imprisonment in absentia), and 186 sentences to contradictory imprisonment. Many of these sentences would later be commuted. 101 individuals were acquitted and 1,269 cases were not prosecuted.<sup>631</sup>

In his contribution to the *Institut d'histoire du temps présent*'s nationwide survey about the *épuration*, Georges Rougeron observes that the figures found by his team of researchers are slightly different from those cited in the local press of the time. Based on a thorough examination of official records “en mauvais état [ou] de tenue assez incertaine, mais constituant les seules sources authentiques,” Rougeron argues that the *cour de justice* received 3,410 cases, amongst

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<sup>626</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 19-20 ; AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 15 – February 15, 1945.

<sup>627</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 577; Rousso, “L'épuration en France,” 87-88. The courts of justice consisted of one magistrate who sat with four jurors drawn from lists of citizens who had participated in the Resistance. Jurors were often resisters, who had suffered at the hands of the people they were trying, making them both jurors and witnesses and therefore raising questions of objectivity. Rousso, “L'épuration en France,” 87.

<sup>628</sup> The national degradation was instituted by the ordinance of August 26, 1944. It brought (amongst other things) the loss of civic rights.

The “indignité nationale” was not a crime in the legal sense of the word, “[il s'agissait] d'un ‘état’ dans lequel le citoyen, en participant aux activités du régime et de ses organisations, en adhérant aux partis de la collaboration ou en écrivant dans la presse contrôlée par les Allemands, s'était de lui-même exclu de la nation... [La dégradation nationale] toucha tous ceux qui furent condamnés à des peines pénales, les parlementaires qui avaient voté les pleins pouvoirs à Pétain et tous les ministres et secrétaires qui l'avaient servi.” Rousso, “L'épuration en France,” 87.

<sup>629</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 577; Rousso, “L'épuration en France,” 87-88.

<sup>630</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 20-21.

<sup>631</sup> Figures cited in Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 21-23.

which 163 were referred to other courts.<sup>632</sup> The figures put forward by Rougeron are slightly below those cited in the press in the 1940s. Historians have regularly revised the figures of the *épuration*, so this gap is not surprising (although the revised figures are usually higher than the old ones, not lower). Furthermore, Rougeron's evaluations do not reveal a fundamentally different trend from that revealed by the figures used by the press.

Civic courts, instituted by the ordinance of August 28, 1944, dealt with less serious cases of unpatriotic behaviors and activities, such as having belonged to a Vichy cabinet, a collaborationist organization or having written in favor of the enemy. The main sentence pronounced by the civic court was that of national degradation.<sup>633</sup> Like the *cours de justice*, there was one civic court per department. In ninety-five audiences, the civic court of the Allier completed 996 cases related to members of anti-national groups, people who voluntarily went to Germany for work, citizens who worked with the Germans, citizens who made antinational statements, women who had social relationships with Germans, people involved in the black market, and people who had indulged in such activity as hunting with members of the occupying forces.<sup>634</sup>

As of May 26, 1946, all the unfinished proceedings started by the Allier courts were transferred to the court of justice in Riom.<sup>635</sup> After the dissolution of the *cours de justice*, the final cases were processed by the military tribunals.<sup>636</sup>

The most notable trials in the Allier department were those of Pierre Poinot, Jany Batissier and Edmond Ebner, who were all working in Vichy in the last few months of the Occupation. Poinot's trial was held at Moulins' court between June 14 and June 16, 1945. He was found guilty of the arrest of about 2,000 people, the execution of at least ninety-two others,

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<sup>632</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 21.

However, for an unknown reason, in his book *L'épuration en Allier*, he used the press's figures rather than his own, which only appear in footnotes.

<sup>633</sup> Rouso, "L'épuration en France," 87-88

The sentence of national degradation could be for life or for a given period of time. The sentence could also be overturned in the case of proven acts of resistance (Rouso, "L'épuration en France," 87-88).

<sup>634</sup> According to Rougeron, in total, the following sentences were pronounced: "368 condamnations à indignité contradictoires, 404 à indignité par contumace, 29 confiscations contradictoires accessoires, 374 confiscations par contumace accessoires, 4 acquittements avec dégradation accessoire, 210 acquittements (dont une vingtaine de mineurs comme ayant agi sans discernement), 9 dessaisissements en faveur d'une autre chambre." Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 23-24.

<sup>635</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 28.

<sup>636</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 577; Rouso, "L'épuration en France," 87-88.

Although the courts of justice were removed by the law of July 29, 1949, they nonetheless continued to sit until January 31, 1951. Rouso, "L'épuration en France," 88.

and of deporting hundreds of resisters.<sup>637</sup> Poinot and two members of his brigade, René Évrard and André Célérier, were condemned to death and executed on July 12, 1945 in Riom.<sup>638</sup> Jany Batissier was judged the following year. Batissier had followed the retreating German troops in August 1944 and by December he had settled in Baden-Baden. His name, however, was on the Allied war criminals list and he was arrested and taken to the Allier department, where he was judged by Moulins' court on April 18, 1946. He was sentenced to death and shot on July 18, 1946 in Nevers, in the Nièvre department. The *milicien* and head of the milice prison at the *Château des Broses*, Edmond Ebner, had left Vichy on August 22, 1944 with a convoy of Germans and *miliciens*. Although there is less information available on Ebner in the archives I consulted, the fact that he did not beat-up the prisoners himself, but had them beaten up,<sup>639</sup> may explain why the court only condemned him to ten years of hard labor.<sup>640</sup>

How the *épuration* was carried out varied widely across the departments. While some cities experienced the end of the war as a “village fete,”<sup>641</sup> others struggled with violence, and faced daily challenges (with regards to the availability of food, for example). Each department and each city experienced the *épuration* in its own way, yet some comparisons are nonetheless possible and can be quite informative. A comparison between the figures of the *épuration* in the Allier department and the national averages are particularly telling in that they reveal both similarities and differences and suggest that the *épuration* in the Allier occurred on a larger scale than in many other departments.

As far as the penalties are concerned, the *épuration* in the Allier concurs with the national average. The main penalty for the civic court was that of national degradation, whereas “prison” was the most common sentence given to people judged by the *cour de justice*. The other sentences were also distributed in more or less the same proportion as the national average.<sup>642</sup> At the national level, more than 7,000 death penalties were pronounced by the various *cours de*

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<sup>637</sup> AD (Allier), 612 W 23. “Affaire brigade Poinot”; Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire*, 191-192; Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 226-7.

<sup>638</sup> Bourdel, *La grande débâcle de la collaboration*, 147-149.

<sup>639</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Report from the president of the *Comité d'épuration* in Vichy to the president of the *Commission départementale de Contrôle – Épuration et Sélection de l'Aude à Carcassonne* (March 17, 1945).

<sup>640</sup> Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice*, 228

<sup>641</sup> Megan Koreman, *The expectation of justice: France 1944-1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>642</sup> For the figures for the Allier, see: Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 32. For the national figures, see Rouso, “L'épuration en France,” 93.



*justice*, 767 of which were executed (about eleven percent).<sup>643</sup> While the rate varied greatly from one region to another, with about 13,7 percent of the pronounced death penalties executed, the Allier is in the national average.

In most departments, judicial repression affected primarily the working and middle classes. In *Expier Vichy*, Jean-Paul Cointet cites the local example of Amiens, which he considers representative of the local average. In Amiens, 34,3 percent of the people who had been sentenced by the *cour de justice* and the civic court were employees, workers or low-ranking civil servants, while 26,4 percent were craftsmen, shopkeepers or smallholders.<sup>644</sup> The same pattern emerges from the statistics on the *épuration* in the Allier: the socio-professional categories the most affected by the purge were the “employees, workers, low-ranking civil servants, low clergy, etc.” (35,11 percent) and the “craftsmen, shopkeepers, smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, etc.” (17,28 percent).<sup>645</sup>

Despite the similarities between the figures reported locally and the national averages, some noticeable differences do appear. Contrary to the national average, the Allier “cour de justice” judged more cases than the civic court,<sup>646</sup> suggesting that the number of serious cases in the Allier department was rather high. This can be explained by the presence in Vichy of many people who had worked for, or with, the Vichy government. In March 1945, the *préfet* noted that about sixty important cases relating to the milice, the *Légion* or the *Commissariat général aux Questions Juives* were being dealt with by the courts of the Allier.<sup>647</sup> The most notorious cases, though, were eventually judged by the High court in Paris.<sup>648</sup> Headed by a chief justice of the appeals court and two other magistrates, assisted by twenty four jurors, previously chosen from lists drawn up by the Consultative Assembly (of Algiers), the High court tried the Vichy leadership, including Marshall Pétain, the head of State, Pierre Laval, the head of government, as well as other prominent members of the Vichy government, such as Joseph Darnand, Marcel Déat, Étienne Flandin, Fernand de Brinon or Xavier Vallat.<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Cointet, *Expier Vichy*, 325-326.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>645</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 24.

<sup>646</sup> Rouso, “L'épuration en France,” 90-93.

<sup>647</sup> AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period February 15 – March 15, 1945.

<sup>648</sup> Instituted by the ordinance of November 18, 1944.

<sup>649</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 577; Rouso, “L'épuration en France,” 87-88; Lottman, *The Purge*,

Another difference between local and national statistics concerns the number of dismissals, which appears to have been much lower in the Allier department than the national average. The reasons for the discontinuation of cases were various. Many proceedings had to be discontinued because they were “non établis,” “insuffisamment établis ou caractérisés,” “non motivés,” because no crime or offense had actually been committed, or because no evidence had been found against the defendant. Indeed, many complaints from resisters, local committees, and unions were often only based on speculations and rumors.<sup>650</sup> In the winter of 1945, the Allier *préfet* complained that “les comités locaux de libération me font de nombreuses propositions d'internement. Celles ci ne reposent souvent sur aucun fait probant. Je dois, toutefois, faire procéder à des enquêtes, ne serait-ce que pour ne pas donner à ces comités l'impression que les pouvoirs publics se désintéressent de leurs efforts.”<sup>651</sup> In other instances, cases were discontinued because the person on trial had already been condemned, or judged, or had died.

In his article “L'épuration en France: une histoire inachevée,” Henry Roussio emphasizes the importance of sources rarely used by historians, most notably the 1952 penal code, according to which some sixty percent of the cases were closed without any investigation or after a quick preliminary investigation.<sup>652</sup> In the Allier, however, whether one relies on Rougeron's figures or the press's, the closure-rate of the cases by the different courts is between 30,4 percent and 34,1 percent,<sup>653</sup> which is two times less than the national average. It is, of course, difficult to draw a conclusion from this observation, all the more as there are different statistics about the number of cases received and reviewed by the various French courts. According to Marc Bergère, a high rate of judicial proceedings is as much evidence of the strictness of the prosecuting authorities as it is a sign of a weak legitimacy. Given the pressure of the *Comité départemental de libération* (CDL), of the prefectural authorities, and of the public opinion, some judges found it wiser to proceed with the cases rather than taking the risk of being accused of leniency.<sup>654</sup> The relatively low rate of *sans-suite* and *non-lieux* in the Allier could be the result of the judges' fear of being accused of leniency; yet it could also indicate a high number of ‘serious’ cases in and around

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<sup>650</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 21-22.

<sup>651</sup> AN F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* for the period January 15 – February 15, 1945.

<sup>652</sup> Roussio, “L'épuration en France,” 93.

<sup>653</sup> 30,4 percent if we use the figures cited in the press: 1,014 + 254, that is 1,268 out of 4,059; 34,1 percent if we use Rougeron's figures: 966 + 197, that is 1,163 out of 3,410.

<sup>654</sup> Marc Bergère, “La justice à l'épreuve de la Libération. L'exemple du district judiciaire d'Angers,” *Bulletins de l'IHTP. Usages politiques du droit et de la justice* 80 (2002).  
<http://www.ihtp.cnrs.fr/spip.php%3Farticle352&lang=fr.html> (Accessed June 1, 2016).

Vichy, and/or greater caution in the treatment of cases (although this second hypothesis is less likely).

In Vichy, the city's high expectations that the arrest and punishment of the 'real' culprits would free the *Vichyssois* from collective guilt may explain the strictness of the local courts. Whether this is the main reason for the small number of dismissals, however, is hard to prove.

Maybe even more revealing of the scale of the *épuration* in the Allier department and in Vichy more specifically, is the fact that when put in approximate proportion to the population of the Allier (about 370,000 inhabitants in the prewar period<sup>655</sup>), the total of 1,812 sentences was equivalent to one sentence for every 200 people, whereas the national ratio was one sentence for every 430 people (95,252 sentences in total).<sup>656</sup> Another illuminating figure of the scale of the *épuration* in Vichy is that about 600 people were arrested in Vichy between August 27 and August 30.<sup>657</sup> At the end of that week, the figure probably reached at least 700 or 800. In Paris, 4,000 arrests were made in the first week after the liberation of the city, that is, between five and six times more than in Vichy.<sup>658</sup> Yet, in 1944, even with its 60,000 or 70,000 temporary residents, Vichy had forty times less inhabitants than Paris.<sup>659</sup> In proportion then, there were at least eight times more arrests in Vichy than in Paris. These figures are not indicative of the number of proven collaborators, who were still in Vichy in late August 1944, nor are they indicative of the scale of the grassroots collaboration, but they do give an idea of the scale of the *épuration* in Vichy.

#### 4. The (in)effectiveness of justice in clearing the city from collective suspicion?

In the report he wrote for the IHTP, Rougeron underlines the specific circumstances in the Allier department:

À considérer seulement la pesanteur courante du Département de l'Allier dans l'ensemble démographique français l'on se trouve amené à y découvrir un courant 'collaborationniste' présentant une densité

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<sup>655</sup> In 1936, the Allier's population was of 368,778. It was of 373,924 in 1946.

<sup>656</sup> There were 41,500,000 people in France in 1936 (40,287,000 in 1946). 124,613 individuals were judged, 6,724 were acquitted by the courts of justice, 19,453 were acquitted by the civic chambers, 3,184 had their sentence overturned because they managed to prove their participation in the resistance (Rousso, "L'épuration en France," 93), making the national ratio of 95,252.

<sup>657</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Vichy *sous-préfet* (March 1946). According to Aron, there were 800 arrests within forty-eight hours in Vichy. Aron, *Histoire de l'épuration* Tome 1, 574. This figure, however, seems to be exaggerated.

<sup>658</sup> Vergez-Chaignon, *Vichy en prison*, 36.

<sup>659</sup> The census of 1946 indicates that there were 2,725,374 habitants in Paris.

particulièrement marquée. Mais il convient tout aussitôt de corriger, tenant compte de l'état de choses unique représenté par la présence du Gouvernement à Vichy ... Avec les pouvoirs de l'État dans la capitale provisoire était venu à parti de juillet 1940, en Bourbonnais, un flux de peuplement circonstanciel, touchant les Services du Chef de l'État, des Ministères, des grandes Directions, publiques et privées, des Administrations nouvellement créées, de l'Armée, des Polices françaises et allemandes, des Unités permanentes de la Franc Garde, de la Presse écrite et parlée, de la Propagande, de l'Économie, des Institutions auxiliaires à caractères politique ou social et parmi lequel bon nombre se retrouverait en internement ou en inculpation.<sup>660</sup>

More than fifty-two percent of the cases examined by the *cour de justice* set up in the Allier department concerned people who resided in Vichy during the war. Moulins, the department's *préfecture*, comes in second with 18,7 percent.<sup>661</sup> Only half of the cases examined by the Allier department's *cour de justice* concerned local residents.<sup>662</sup> Out of these local cases, how many concerned long-term *Vichyssois*? In the opening remarks of his IHTP study, Rougeron notes that the presence of the government in Vichy created an environment loaded with temptations: “De surcroît se virent ainsi offertes à la population autochtone de plus nombreuses tentations, incitant à faillir.”<sup>663</sup> But to what extent did they “faillir”? What kind of ‘collaboration’ did the grassroots population indulge in? How does the grassroots collaboration in Vichy compare to the grassroots collaborations in nearby cities, such as Moulins or Montluçon, and more generally, to collaboration in the southern zone? Although very useful, Rougeron’s analysis does not answer these questions. My own overview of grassroots collaboration in Chapter 2 does not allow us to draw accurate conclusions either, although it demonstrates that despite the absence of opposition to Vichy, the population did not altogether support the regime.

Only through a thorough examination of each individual case could we have a more accurate view of the nature and extent of the grassroots collaboration in Vichy. Such a study would, unfortunately, go well beyond the scope of this dissertation. It might, in fact, be impossible to conduct as in many documents from the *épuration* and from the wartime period, the prewar place of residence of the people under investigation (or about whom a note was being written) was not specified, thereby making it impossible to know precisely who the grassroots

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<sup>660</sup> Rougeron, “L’*épuration* en allier,” 18-19.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

population was. Although the place of birth is often mentioned, this is unhelpful, as not all the long-term *Vichyssois* were born in Vichy.

What matters most here is to underline how important the *épuration* in Vichy was for both France and the city of Vichy. It was essential for France because some of the cases initially treated in Vichy became key to the wider national *épuration*.<sup>664</sup> According to Denis Peschanski, the *Concours Hippique* was the sixteenth most populated camp in France, out of a total of 170,<sup>665</sup> thus making Vichy an important player in the purge apparatus in France. The *épuration* was equally essential for Vichy, whose population hoped that a successful purge would lead to the national acknowledgment of the city's innocence. According to the *sous-préfet*, the *épuration* "présent[ait] un intérêt particulier du fait que ses habitants accusent le gouvernement de Pétain, (...) la milice et les acolytes, dits français, de la Gestapo, d'avoir entaché le bon renom de leur ville."<sup>666</sup>

Officially, the purge was considered effective in the Vichy region. George Rougeron, the secretary of the *Comité départemental de Libération* of the Allier department, has found that the investigations conducted by the different courts set up in the Allier were rigorous and protected the rights of a defense. The courts, he noted, did not disregard any testimonies. Besides,

aucun fait ne se vit être minoré ou négligé. [En outre,] Tous les examens médicaux ou psychiatriques demandés par la Défense se trouvèrent sans réticences accordés et il arriva que le Juge d'Instruction commit plusieurs experts pour appréciation collégiale. Les renvois pour information complémentaire étaient également octroyés avec libéralité.<sup>667</sup>

While his analysis of the situation may be biased given his prominent role in the committee, similar conclusions were reached by the *préfet*. In a report to the Minister of the Interior, dated from 1946, the Allier *préfet* noted that in the department, "[l']épuration] a été faite aussi bien que cela pouvait se faire, étant donné les circonstances."<sup>668</sup> This assessment was also quite possibly

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<sup>664</sup> Xavier Vallat, as well as the Vichy State police director, the GMR commander, the commander of the forces for the peace, the director of Pétain's guard, and the staff in Pétain's high civil and military cabinets remaining in Vichy, were all interned in Vichy. "L'épuration à Vichy," *Valmy*, September 16-17, 1944.

<sup>665</sup> Peschanski, "Les camps français d'internement," 783-786. His comparison is based on the December 1944 figures. The biggest camp was Drancy with almost 4,500 internees.

<sup>666</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from Vichy's *sous préfet* to the Allier *préfet* (March 6, 1946).

<sup>667</sup> Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier*, 26.

<sup>668</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report related to a survey on public opinion in the Allier department sent by the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946).

biased, as it was in the interest of the *préfet* to report an effective purge. Whether the purge in and around Vichy was indeed successful is certainly open to debate. Inconsistencies from both Vichy's *Comité de liberation* and the *Comité départemental de libération* were noted by an inspector from the *Renseignements Généraux* and by the *préfet*.<sup>669</sup> However, when compared to the rest of France, the Allier department did not fare so poorly. The population of Vichy, however, thought otherwise.

In the weeks following Vichy's liberation (August 26, 1944), several factors gave the population the impression that many of the culprits were being dealt with. First, hundreds of alleged collaborators were arrested and interned. Second, several commissions and committees started to operate very shortly after August 26. Furthermore, mass internment in Vichy allowed more than 400 local people to be legally and concretely involved in the *épuration* through employment in one of the internment camps located in Vichy (see table below<sup>670</sup>), thus giving the population an impression of hands-on action in the purification of France, as well as in the local enterprise aiming to prove the city's innocence and rehabilitate the *Vichyssois* in the eyes of French people.

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<sup>669</sup> In a report dated from December 16, 1944, the Allier *préfet* noted that Dr Colomb, president of Vichy's *comité d'épuration* "a pris des initiatives 'fâcheuses', [en proposant] la libération de membres du cabinet Laval, de conseillers nationaux, de pontifs de la Légion, etc. Toutes ces affaires ont du être revues par la commission de criblage départementale, certaines doivent être examinés sur le plan national." AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the Allier *préfet* to the Commissioner of the Republic in Clermont Ferrand (December 16, 1944).

Dr. Colomb gave his own version of the events and circumstances on November 15, 1950: "Dès le début entre socialistes et communistes cela n'allait pas... [Tous les membres du comité de liberation] ont donné leur démission et je suis resté Président, tout seul... Je suis donc resté 8 jours avec tout le monde, et 15 jours tout seul. Mais il y avait cette question d'épuration que je ne voulais pas lâcher... J'ai alors fait paraître dans la presse la note suivante: 'Toute personne ayant été arrêtée d'une façon irrégulière... doit venir en faire la déclaration elle-même ou par personne interposée... J'ai pensé que des gens étaient en prison injustement.'" AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

<sup>670</sup> AD (Allier), 654 W 2. List of personnel working in the camps.



	Concours hippique	Limagne	Les Brosses	Centre Vichy <sup>671</sup>	Portugal	Total
Men	207	70	41	14	17	349
Women	64	9	4	1	3	81
	271	79	45	15	20	430

Soon, however, the *Vichyssois* started expressing their discontent with the process and the purge's results. They were angry, for example, that the *Comité départemental de l'Allier* did not include any *Vichyssois*, although Vichy was the Allier's *sous préfecture* and one of its main cities. The CDL, initially composed exclusively of people from Montluçon, slowly accepted people from outside of Montluçon. Yet no *Vichyssois* was ever included in the committee,<sup>672</sup> "comme si la résistance [n'avait pas existé à Vichy]," Jean Débordes deplored.<sup>673</sup> Some long term residents were also infuriated by the illicit enrichment of certain of their fellow *Vichyssois*, who had remained unpunished: "il reste, à Vichy, de petits comptes de comptoirs qui n'ont pas encore été réglés," J. Saint-Amand wrote in his piece "Vichy-Résistance."<sup>674</sup> This observation is unsurprising as the *préfet* noted in 1946 that the means available to the committee for addressing the cases related to illegal profits were insufficient.<sup>675</sup> Whether there was more illicit enrichment in Vichy than in the rest of France awaits investigation. In any case, "pour le bon renom de l'ensemble de Vichy," the population wanted "que ces derniers comptes-là soient apurés et que les profiteurs (...) soient mis hors d'état de poursuivre leurs ignobles tractations."<sup>676</sup>

The local population was similarly greatly dissatisfied with how the *épuration* had been conducted at the national level. In general, the *Vichyssois* found that the purge had been partial, and partisan, and that the sentences had been "trop douces."<sup>677</sup> The population further criticized

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<sup>671</sup> This document is the only one that mentions this camp. Either it is an error, or this camp was a very small camp, only used from time to time. This 'camp' could actually refer to the City Hall's basement, which was used immediately after Vichy's liberation.

<sup>672</sup> André Touret, *Montluçon après la tourmente : 1944 – 1977* (Nonette : Edition Créer, 2033), 30.

<sup>673</sup> Jean Débordes, *Le temps des passions. L'Allier dans la guerre* (Romagnat: Édition De Borée, 2005), 242.

<sup>674</sup> J. Saint-Amand, "Vichy-Résistance," in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy* (Vichy, 1946), 20.

<sup>675</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the president of the *Comité départemental de Confiscation des Profits Illicites* to the Allier *préfet* (March 8, 1946).

<sup>676</sup> Saint-Amand, "Vichy-Résistance," 20.

<sup>677</sup> AD (Allier) 774 W. Monthly report from the Allier *préfet* (March 1945).

the authorities for not giving the necessary attention to the cases it received.<sup>678</sup> More than a year after the beginning of the *épuration*, “une répression plus complète et énergique” was still expected by the *Vichyssois*.<sup>679</sup> Their complaints resonated with those expressed in many other French cities.

Many French people were indeed dissatisfied with the purge’s outcome. While “les peurs des derniers mois, l’amplification de la répression, prodrome d’une guerre civile, avaient augmenté le désir, impérieux et urgent, de voir s’exercer la justice,”<sup>680</sup> eventually, “the purge made everybody unhappy, because it had proved impossible to strike a satisfactory compromise between traditional justice, which was what most moderates (as well as those with the most to lose politically) were calling for, and the need to root out fascism.”<sup>681</sup>

In Vichy, the dissatisfaction with the *épuration* was both similar to and different from that in the rest of France. In the former capital, the frustration went beyond the usual problems, shared by many cities, albeit on a different scale. By failing to punish *all* the culprits the *épuration* contributed to keeping the boundaries between the perpetrators and the victims blurred, making it difficult for the *Vichyssois* to include themselves in the latter category. Thus the *épuration* failed to provide the population with the honorary justice to which they believed themselves entitled. In her book *The Expectation of Justice*, Megan Koreman refers to honorary justice as the process “that regulates the distribution of honor among the living and the dead of a community.”<sup>682</sup> I, on the contrary, understand “honorary justice” to mean rather a symbolic type of justice, which would have acknowledged the damaging impact of the alleged national stigmatization of the city and recognize that *Vichyssois* were more victims than perpetrators. If the city had hosted Pétain’s government, it was not because the people had wanted to, but rather because it had been imposed on the population, *malgré elle*. The *Vichyssois* were quick to remind everyone who may have harbored suspicions that living so close to the government was not enjoyable. Instead, their forced proximity to the political power caused them fear and harm, due to often encountering repression (on the victimhood discourse, see Chapters 5 and 6).

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<sup>678</sup> AD (Allier) 774 W. Monthly report from the Allier *préfet* (March 1945).

<sup>679</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report related to a survey on public opinion in the Allier department sent by the Allier *préfet* to the Minister of the Interior (1946).

<sup>680</sup> Vergez-Chaignon, *Vichy en prison*, 60.

<sup>681</sup> Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 21.

<sup>682</sup> Koreman, *The Expectation of Justice*, 189.

A year after the beginning of the purge in Vichy, despite the population demanding ever-strict measures against the alleged culprits, the *Vichyssois* were recognizing that the *épuration* was not concerned with symbolic justice and that they would not be obtaining symbolic justice. As a consequence, they became largely disinterested in the matter. The same newspaper which had enthusiastically announced the establishment of the *cour de justice* on its front page in 1944 reported on its closing with only a few words on the last page; as rightly noted by Georges Rougeron, “l’opinion avait cessé de s’intéresser et les Résistants de réagir à l’*épuration*.”<sup>683</sup>

The trial of the members of Vichy’s SIPO-SD in the early 1950s marked a revival of popular interest for the *épuration* and renewed hope in the power of justice to clear Vichy from collective suspicion. Would justice be done this time? Was the victimhood of the population finally officially established? The *Vichyssois* most certainly hoped so. Shortly before the beginning of the trial, the mayor of Vichy wrote to the Government Commissioner on the permanent military tribunal in Lyon, where the trial was going to be held: “La population vichyssoise a suffisamment souffert des agissements de ces criminels pour qu’elle puisse (...) exprimer le désir de présenter ses accusations dans les débats qui vont se dérouler devant le Tribunal Militaire de Lyon.”<sup>684</sup> As a result, the city sent a delegate to represent the municipality and the population of Vichy at the trial.<sup>685</sup>

After the end of the war in Europe, the former members of the Gestapo in France, including the men from the Vichy team, were actively sought by the French justice. Many of them were difficult to find, either because they had emigrated to South America or the Middle East, or because they had anonymously returned to Germany. Research and arrests continued until the 1950s, despite many legal obstacles.<sup>686</sup>

In February 1950, the trial commonly referred to as “le procès de la Gestapo de Vichy et de Montluçon” started in Lyon. After one or two years in operation, the regional “cours of justice” had ceased to sit. Pending cases were taken over by the few courts that had been

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<sup>683</sup> Rougeron, *L’*épuration* en Allier*, 28.

<sup>684</sup> Letter from the mayor of Vichy, Pierre-Victor Léger, to the *Commissaire du gouvernement*. Cited in “M. Gustave Bordet au procès de la Gestapo de Vichy,” *La Montagne* (February 24, 1950).

<sup>685</sup> “M. Gustave Bordet au procès de la Gestapo de Vichy,” *La Montagne* (February 24, 1950).

<sup>686</sup> “Lorsqu’une équipe de la Sipo avait déjà été jugée, que faire si un autre agent de cette équipe était découvert ? Le juger seul ? Joindre son cas au procès en préparation d’une autre équipe ? Il apparut aussi que certains inculpés, en instance de jugement en France, avaient déjà été jugés ailleurs, au Luxembourg ou en Sarre. Pour de multiples raisons les enquêtes étaient longues... les témoignages peu précis.” Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 91.

maintained. Cases related to the Auvergne region, for instance, were sent to Lyon.<sup>687</sup> Thirty individuals were to be judged, yet only thirteen were in the dock (nine for Vichy, and four for Montluçon). Although most of the accused denied the charges against them, the tribunal pronounced death sentences for eight of them, three were sentenced to forced labor, one to prison, and one was acquitted. The defense, however, appealed the decision and the judgment for nine of the defendants was overturned. The case was referred to the military tribunal in Marseille where seven men were condemned to death (including Adam Eissenger, *sergent chef à la gestapo de Vichy*), and two to a lifetime of forced labor.

The trial, which began in 1950, was widely reported in the local media. Between 1950 and 1951, the trial generated more than 100 articles in the local press.<sup>688</sup> The media often emphasized the scale of the repression perpetrated by the Gestapo in Vichy. Journalists liked reminding their readers that the German contingent in Vichy had included about 200 individuals, and that it was responsible for more than 400 deportations, 100 lootings, 120 summary executions, and for burning forty houses and buildings.<sup>689</sup> Many testimonies from local victims or their parents, who had been called to testify in the trial, were cited in the press, thereby highlighting the victimhood of the whole population.<sup>690</sup> The death sentences came as a relief for the population in Vichy. Not only did the verdict “[rendait] justice à la mémoire des centaines de victimes, déportés, torturés et assassinés de notre région par les ‘illisibles’ de la Gestapo de Vichy,”<sup>691</sup> but it also clearly established the city’s victimhood.

But to the bitter disappointment of *Vichyssois*, of the victims, and that of their families, after several appeals, the judgment was once again overturned. The case was referred to the military tribunal in Paris where the judge proved very lenient: no death penalty was pronounced. Two men were given lifetime sentences of forced labor, two received five years of forced labor, one received eight years in prison, two received five years in prison, and one was acquitted. “Les monstrueux assassins de la Gestapo de Vichy ont sauvé leur tête !” was the headline used by the local newspaper, *La Tribune*, on October 1, 1957.<sup>692</sup> More than ten years after the end of the war,

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<sup>687</sup> Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 92.

<sup>688</sup> This figure is based on the articles available at the municipal archives.

<sup>689</sup> *Liberté* (September 22, 1951), *L’Espoir* (January 11, 1951).

<sup>690</sup> See for instance: “Le procès de la Gestapo de Vichy,” *La Montagne* (January 19, 1951); “Jugement implacable pour les membres de la Gestapo de Vichy,” *La Montagne* (January 25, 1951); “Audience du procès de la Gestapo,” *La dépêche* January 19, 1951; “Le procès de la Gestapo de Vichy,” *Patriote* (January 1, 1951).

<sup>691</sup> *Valmy*, January 25, 1951.

<sup>692</sup> “Les monstrueux assassins de la Gestapo de Vichy ont sauvé leur tête !,” *La Tribune* (October 1, 1957).

few people, in France, still cared about these late trials. In *Le Monde*, a journalist stated that the trials of the Gestapo in Paris “n’intéressait personne.”<sup>693</sup> In the France of the early 1950s, the people’s interest had shifted away from the *épuration* to contemporary issues, such as Indochina. As rightly observed by Eugène Martres, at best such trials provoked “un étonnement exaspéré en montrant qu’après sept ans il reste encore en prison des hommes qu’on n’a pas jugés. ... L’indignation a le souffle court. Les trains remplis de cadavres, les morts squelettiques ont fini de faire recette.”<sup>694</sup> However, there was one group of people who did care about the trial: the *Vichyssois*, for whom the outcome further reinforced their disillusion with the capacity of justice to punish the real culprits and to establish Vichy’s victimhood.

### Conclusion

It is common, although not obligatory, for war criminals to be judged by courts established in the city where the crimes were perpetrated. The 1947 Auschwitz trial, for instance, was held in Krakow, not in Warsaw. In France, Lyon’s commissioner Yves Farge managed to have Charles Maurras, a prominent figure of French ultra nationalism, tried in Lyon, where he had been arrested in 1944, although Charles de Gaulle was vocal about his preference for the trial to be held in Paris - “It’s important that he not be tried in some hole; the country wouldn’t understand that,” de Gaulle reportedly said to his Minister of Justice, François de Menthon.<sup>695</sup> Following this logic, Vichy could have been the site of some of the most important trials of the twentieth century. And yet, only one major trial was held in the Allier department, that of Pierre Poinot. It is, of course, impossible to tell whether the city would have acquired a new symbolic meaning, like Nuremberg did in 1945 and 1946, if more significant “hommes de Vichy” had been tried in Vichy. In any case, it would have certainly helped the population to better come to terms with the legacy of the war.

Coming out of the *épuration*, the population of Vichy appeared largely disillusioned. That many people arrested in Vichy were prominent members of the government had initially given the impression to the population that their city was actively participating in the national *épuration*. Yet, the fact that the most important cases were transferred to Paris, for practical or symbolic reasons, may have been taken as a sign that the city had no significant role to play in

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<sup>693</sup> Cited in Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 94.

<sup>694</sup> Martres, *Les archives parlent*, 92-94.

<sup>695</sup> Cited in Lottman, *The Purge*, 152.

the national purification and reconstruction. On top of that, the population felt that the fact that the justice had not been properly served had been largely detrimental to the city. In the spring of 1946, with much bitterness, a local newspaper, setting itself as the spokesperson for the *Vichyssois*, expressed its disappointment at the realization that the people who had not been rightly punished were the ones most likely to spread wicked rumors about the city of Vichy: “Ce sont [ceux] qui étaient à Vichy, à l’abri du besoin qui, remontés à Paris, ont raconté les plus méchantes histoires sur Vichy.”<sup>696</sup>

The number of denunciations made to the local *comité de libération*,<sup>697</sup> the posters against the policies and decisions of the Minister of Justice M. Teitgen, which hung from shop windows and public buildings in the town’s centre,<sup>698</sup> and the popular craze for the lynchings of *miliciens*, suggest a strong local involvement in the *épuration*. Fearing for the city’s reputation, the population hoped that an intensive, severe and large-scale purge in Vichy, the Allier, but also everywhere in France, would have shown that although many of the culprits were indeed in Vichy, and although the city, like most French cities, had had its own collaborators, *miliciens*, and informers, the grassroots population was, in its great majority, innocent.

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<sup>696</sup> “Vichy hier... Vichy aujourd’hui... Vichy demain,” *France libre* (April 9 & 10, 1946).

<sup>697</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W.

<sup>698</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 85. Report from the *sous-préfet* to the Allier *préfet* (March 6, 1946).



## CHAPTER 5 – Establishing Vichy as a city of resisters (from 1944 to 1947)

In a 1983 survey aimed at determining the kind of relations the French people have entertained with their recent past, fifty-one percent of the respondents picked the liberation as the most significant event of the preceding forty years.<sup>699</sup> According to Henry Rousso, the formation of flattering and comforting myths about the liberation and the Resistance in the immediate postwar period produced this result. Shortly after the end of the war, a collective memory crystallized around de Gaulle's idyllic and abstract vision of the Resistance, which underplayed the role of the Allies, denied the legitimacy of the Vichy regime, and overlooked all actions and sufferings that did not fit in his own interpretation of the war.<sup>700</sup>

Despite the crystallization of a national Gaullist memory of the war, many small towns drew limited interest from the Gaullist pattern of commemorations. Each town and village possessed their own rituals, based on their locales' specific history, their political orientation, and their own wartime experience.<sup>701</sup> While Vichy also developed its own myths and rituals, focusing primarily on the local resisters' victimhood and martyrdom (rather than on their fight), most of the city's commemorations followed the Gaullist commemorative pattern. As the city feared being vilified and excluded from the national community, it strove to organize celebrations that fit into the Gaullist narrative. This twofold dynamic reveals both the city's self-perception as a victim as well as its strong desire to be integrated within the national community.

### 1. The liberation of Vichy and the first postwar municipalities

Following the Allied invasion of Normandy at the beginning of June 1944, there was little doubt that the Vichy regime was on the verge of collapse. What was less certain was the state in which the city of Vichy would emerge from the war. The *Vichyssois* worried that resisters and Allied troops might attack the city and that the Germans might make the population pay for the

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<sup>699</sup> Survey published in the *Express-Gallup* (August 19, 1983). Cited in Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 29.

<sup>700</sup> Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 29-30; Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, trans., George Holloch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 32.

<sup>701</sup> Megan Koreman, *The expectation of justice: France 1944-1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 198.

failure of collaboration.<sup>702</sup> On August 20, Pétain was arrested by the Germans in his *hôtel du Parc* apartment, and, together with Vichy government members, was sent to Belfort, and then to Sigmaringen. While the departure of the government may have reduced the likelihood of an Allied offensive on Vichy, the presence of very large contingents of *miliciens* and Gestapo in town (see Chapter 1) caused the population to fear about a possible urban confrontation between the resisters and the collaborationist/German organizations.

Residents of Vichy eagerly awaited, and simultaneously dreaded, the FFIs' entry into the city. The members of the diplomatic corps who were still in Vichy were equally worried. On their behalf, General Blassel, a former member of Pétain's military cabinet, asked the Swiss ambassador, Walter Stucki, if he would agree to act as an intermediary between the various stakeholders. Although Stucki did not decline the request, he told Blassel that, as the ambassador of a neutral country, he would only accept if the municipality of Vichy, the resisters, and the Germans agreed to negotiate with him. All did.

After inquiring about the military and political situation in Vichy and its surroundings, Stucki learned that the *maquisards* were fast approaching the city and that large German detachments remained stationed in Clermont-Ferrand, as well as on the Riom-Gannat-Lapalis-Digoin-Dijon fallback line.<sup>703</sup> On August 22 Stucki met with the FFIs in their headquarters at Le Mont-Dore, where they had a "très amicale et très franche" discussion. Stucki left the meeting having been assured that the FFIs would enter Vichy as calmly as the situation would warrant.<sup>704</sup>

On August 24, 1944, most of the Germans and the *miliciens* stationed in Vichy left the city with a convoy of two hundred and fifty trucks carrying personnel and equipment.<sup>705</sup> The population's relief, however, was short-lived; later in the day, other Germans coming from southern France entered the city. The German officers asked Stucki to take about thirty seriously wounded Germans under his protection. In exchange, Stucki asked the German commander to promise that his men would not disarm any police or French military forces that they might encounter in and around Vichy. The Germans agreed and left Vichy shortly after. Hardly had they left when another German column from Clermont-Ferrand approached Vichy. Stucki went

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<sup>702</sup> On the population's worries, see the various reports from the Vichy *sous-préfet* and the Allier *préfet*. AD (Allier); AN. F/1cIII/1136.

<sup>703</sup> Walter Stucki, *La fin du régime de Vichy* (Neuchâtel: Edition de la Baconnière, 1947), 136-137. Stucki's account of the events might not be entirely objective; yet it is similar to that of many *Vichyssois*. See for instance, Georges Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale 1940-1944* (Le Coteau: Horvath, 1983).

<sup>704</sup> Stucki, *La fin du régime de Vichy*, 160.

<sup>705</sup> Jean Débordes, *A Vichy la vie de tous les jours sous Pétain* (Thionne: Edition du Signe, 1994), 268.

south, intercepted them, and convinced the troop's commander to go around the city.<sup>706</sup> On August 26, 1944, he FFIs entered Vichy without having to engage in combat.

But shortly after the FFIs' entry in Vichy, there was yet another complication: at 06:00 pm, Colonel Pontcarral, the leader of the FFIs, let Stucki know that a third column of Germans was heading towards Vichy. Although the Swiss ambassador found no signs of a German presence near Vichy, in agreement with the resisters, he contacted the German headquarters in Clermont-Ferrand to ensure that no unnecessary blood would be shed. Stucki advised the Germans to avoid Vichy, "bouillonnante de la fièvre de la libération," at all costs, otherwise "de graves incidents seraient à prévoir."<sup>707</sup> The following day, it was confirmed that all the Germans south of Vichy were now gone.

The resisters grasped power in most of the villages and cities that they had helped liberate.<sup>708</sup> It was not uncommon that the resisters also seized local power in places where the liberation had required little contribution from them. This was especially true in localities where the existing political power had been discredited and revoked following the fall of the Vichy regime. The *Comité français de Libération nationale* (CFLN) issued a decree on April 21, 1944 prescribing that local councils elected before 1939 be restored, except when the latter had been retained by Vichy and were found to have been accommodating and helpful to the enemy. In such cases, a new council was to be nominated by the *préfet* in consultation with the *Comité départemental de Libération* (CDL).<sup>709</sup> Having been maintained in office during the four years of the war, Vichy's mayor, Pierre Victor Léger, was unsurprisingly removed.<sup>710</sup>

At the end of the summer, Léger was replaced by Jean Barbier, a school director in Vichy.<sup>711</sup> Barbier's appointment was somewhat surprising, for at least two reasons. First, Barbier was not one of Vichy's most prominent resisters. According to Dr. Colomb, the president of the

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<sup>706</sup> Stucki, *La fin du régime de Vichy*, 179, 183 & 187.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., 191 & 193.

<sup>708</sup> Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération* (Paris: Belin, 1994), 47.

<sup>709</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 573.

<sup>710</sup> Léger would later provide evidence of his involvement in an intelligence network of the Resistance, and would thus become eligible again; in 1944, however, a new city government had to be installed in Vichy. Georges Rougeron, *L'épuration en Allier: 1943-1946* (Moulins: Conseil Général de l'Allier, 1982), 53.

<sup>711</sup> Barbier was appointed mayor by a decree from the Commissioner of the Republic on August 30, 1944. AM (Vichy). Copy of the order.

*Comité local de liberation* (CLL), Barbier did not engage at all in the Resistance.<sup>712</sup> Given the tension and jealousy that existed at the time, as well as the thrust for power of many resisters, one should be cautious of how resisters characterized each other. In this particular case, however, I have not found evidence proving Colomb wrong. If Barbier was indeed involved in the resistance, his participation left little trace in the historical record. Second, Barbier was a member of the SFIO.<sup>713</sup> While the SFIO emerged from the war strengthened,<sup>714</sup> in Vichy, the party had been significantly shaken by Francis Desphelippon's scandal. A former member of the PCF, the *Vichyssois* Desphelippon joined the SFIO in 1930, before joining Déat's party, the *Rassemblement national populaire* ten years later (see Chapter 2).<sup>715</sup>

Thus, in August 1944, Barbier was not the most obvious choice for Vichy's mayorship. However, his appointment is comprehensible given that the *Parti Radical* and the PCF, the two other parties that, in theory, could have claimed power in the former capital, were ruled out for different reasons. First, the city of Vichy was utterly anticommunist. At the liberation, some cities and villages with little prewar communist influence let themselves be seduced by the Resistance credentials of the PCF. According to Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon, "la progression [des] seuls effectifs [du PCF] (...) impressionne, même là où il part de presque rien."<sup>716</sup> In Vichy, however, the PCF's postwar successes were far from impressive. For a few months, the party was described as particularly active in town, often organizing meetings and political events.<sup>717</sup> Their propaganda, however, came to naught (albeit the communists were not altogether absent from the public life, as we shall see later).

Second, the *Parti Radical*, which was the best-established party in Vichy, emerged from the war discredited. On the one hand, the party did not benefit from the postwar heroization of the

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<sup>712</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

<sup>713</sup> Barbier had won the legislative election of 1936 in the Allier.

<sup>714</sup> "À la fois parti de clientèle et parti de masse, parti d'ordre et parti de progrès, anticommuniste et alliée du bout des lèvres avec le PCF," the SFIO enjoyed its greatest success at the cantonal elections of 1945. Buton and Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, 55.

<sup>715</sup> He was condemned to fifteen years of "indignité nationale pour atteinte à la sûreté extérieure de l'état." Justinien Raymond, "Entry on Francis Desphelippon," in the online version of the *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*, Jean Maitron, ed. (Paris: Editions Ouvrière, the first volume was published in 1964). (Accessed from the Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève (Paris), August 23, 2016).

<sup>716</sup> Buton and Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, 39.

<sup>717</sup> AN. F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* (February 15 – March 15, 1945).

Left.<sup>718</sup> Indeed, as we briefly saw in Chapter 2, the more than accommodating attitude of some radicals towards the Vichy regime affected the party's credibility in a significant way. Besides, the party also embodied the Third Republic and the embarrassing defeat of June 1940, which the French wanted to forget. According to Serges Berstein, "pour une grande partie de l'opinion, pour les intellectuels comme Camus, pour le personnel politique nouveau issu de la clandestinité, le PR portait à lui seul le péché de la défaite de 1940 et paraissait promis à la disparition."<sup>719</sup> Unsurprisingly, at the cantonal elections in 1945, the party lost many departments.<sup>720</sup> On the other hand, the fact that Léger had been maintained by Pétain throughout the war had cast a shadow over Vichy's entire radical group.

Throughout France, most of the men chosen at the end of the summer of 1944 to replace those who had been removed from office were elected in the 1945 local elections, and therefore reappointed.<sup>721</sup> This was not the case in Vichy, although some municipal councilors did remain in their position. At the municipal elections of April 29, 1945, two lists were presented in Vichy: one labeled "républicaine d'Union pour la défense de Vichy et de la liberté," led by the independent and former resister Louis Moinard, and composed of *indépendants*, *radicaux-socialistes*, members from the *Alliance démocratique*, the MRP, and the *Front Républicain*, and a second list "d'Union Républicaine antifasciste," led by the outgoing mayor, Jean Barbier (SFIO) and composed mainly of members from the PCF and the SFIO. The participation rate was of 69,3 percent. With about sixty percent of the votes cast, Louis Moinard's list won the twenty-seven seats after the first round. Barbier was far behind.<sup>722</sup> In France, the SFIO had failed to regenerate itself: "Malgré la promotion de résistants incontestables à sa tête, la SFIO n'en pâtit pas moins, dans son face à face avec le PCF, d'une image ternie, en ces temps où la jeunesse, l'action, la force constituaient le symbole de la liberté et de la victoire toute neuve."<sup>723</sup> In Vichy, the SFIO also declined quickly (albeit not in favor of the PCF), and at the elections of 1947, Moinard easily won again, with a list including *indépendants*, *Radicaux-Socialistes*, as well as members from the UDSR, the MRP and the RPF.

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<sup>718</sup> Laurent Douzon, "La gauche, Vichy et la résistance," in *Histoire des gauches en France*, eds., Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 387.

<sup>719</sup> Serge Berstein, "Les Radicaux," in *Histoire des gauches en France*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 21.

<sup>720</sup> Buton and Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, 55.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid., 15 & 48.

<sup>722</sup> AN, F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* (March 15 – April 15, 1945).

<sup>723</sup> Buton and Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, 46.

Moinard's election in 1945 (and his reelection in 1947) is not only a sign of the SFIO's decline, it is also revealing of the population's strong desire to belong to the victorious national community. In 1945, the city was craving for a candidate with strong Resistance credentials, and Moinard was the ideal candidate. While Barbier's contribution to the Resistance was undetermined, Moinard's was well established. A few months after his election, Moinard was *cité à l'ordre du régiment* and awarded the *Croix de Guerre avec Etoile de Bronze*.<sup>724</sup> Moinard was also named to the *Ordre National de la Légion d'honneur* and promoted to the rank of *Chevalier*:

Magnifique patriote qui a rendu les plus beaux services à la Résistance. Résistant de la première heure, s'est distingué de 1941 à 1943, tant pour abriter et aider de nombreux résistants traqués par la Gestapo, que pour assurer avec des Chefs de la Résistance des liaisons difficiles et dangereuses.

N'a pas craint d'organiser dès fin 1943 un important dépôt d'armes, de munitions, d'équipements et de vêtements pour le besoin des formations régionales F.F.I.

Aidé de sa femme et de ses deux fils, a dirigé personnellement les livraisons à ces formations au cours des mois qui ont précédé la Libération. Dans la période du 15 au 30 août 1944, ayant transformé sa demeure en véritable poste de commandement des maquis régionaux, a été l'un des meilleurs animateurs du harcèlement des colonnes allemandes en retraite dans la région.<sup>725</sup>

Proclaiming oneself a resister was an essential component of Vichy's immediate postwar politics. While this was also true elsewhere in France, it was especially so in Vichy, where many people were concerned about the city's reputation. During the municipal campaign of 1945, the great majority of candidates underlined their connections to a Resistance organization. During the 1947 elections, Moinard frequently reminded the population that his main opponent, Pierre-Victor Léger (who presented a list very similar to his own), was untrustworthy because he had been maintained by Pétain for four years, and was, therefore, not a resister, no matter what he may have claimed at the liberation.<sup>726</sup> Léger had been a beloved mayor, yet the memory of the

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<sup>724</sup> AN. Base Léonore. File "Louis Moinard" 19800035/421/56309. "10 juillet 1945 - Vu l'ordonnance du 7 Janvier 1944, relative aux décorations décernées pendant la Guerre. CITÉ A L'ORDRE DU REGIMENT, Les membres de l'O.R.A. dont les noms suivent : MOINARD Louis. Document signé par Le Général de Corps d'Armées KOENIG - Gouverneur Militaire de Paris."

<sup>725</sup> AN. Base Léonore. File "Louis Moinard" 19800035/421/56309. Decree of July 31, 1953. Published in the *Journal Officiel* on August 1, 1953.

<sup>726</sup> AM (Vichy). "Dossier Moinard."  
Moinard's list won twelve seats, Léger's list won nine, and the communists won six.



war and the growing concerns with the city's capacity to rebound from those four years were too present for the population to elect the mayor who had been maintained by Pétain.

Once the defeat of the Vichy regime was certain, many people who had started to help the Resistance used so-called Resistance credentials to claim their share of power. A few weeks after the liberation, a report from the *renseignements généraux* observed that: “Dans les jours qui suivirent la libération de Vichy, il y eut beaucoup de flottement, car de nombreux RMS (‘résistants du mois de septembre’), désireux de se mettre en vedette et de s’attribuer tous les honneurs, se démenaient désespérément. On a parlé d’une libération ‘carnavalesque’.”<sup>727</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer remembers that when the FFIs entered the city at the end of August 1944, “Nous eûmes la surprise de voir nombre de ‘résistants’ qui, quelques mois auparavant, léchaient ignominieusement les bottes allemandes.”<sup>728</sup> What power the *résistants du mois de septembre* eventually succeeded in acquiring is unknown for it is unclear who exactly these RMS were. Regardless of who they were (and although this situation was not specific to Vichy), the fact that many people claimed to be connected to the Resistance offers further evidence of the symbolic and political importance of the legacy of the Resistance in Vichy.

In *The Vichy Syndrome*, Henry Rousso argues that “in the first postwar elections, the winners were largely the same men who had been politically prominent before the war, regardless of whether they had played an active role in opposing the Germans. The Resistance changed the composition of the upper strata of France’s political class but had no apparent effect on the lower levels.”<sup>729</sup> This was not true for the city of Vichy. Because the city was afraid of being stigmatized by the national community, the Resistance credentials of its leaders were essential. A widespread acknowledgement of the local participation in the Resistance (and of the city’s victimhood) was thought to be a necessary requirement for the city’s rehabilitation.

## 2. Commemorating the resistance

On August 26, 1944, shortly after the entrance of the FFIs in Vichy, throughout the city, people took out their patriotic uniforms from their “enveloppe antimite,” and came out of their

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<sup>727</sup> Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent: Auvergne-Bourbonnais (1940-1945)* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 229.

<sup>728</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire: des origines à nos jours* (Vichy: Szabo, 1947), 175.

<sup>729</sup> Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, Trans., Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 19.

homes to celebrate the end of the war.<sup>730</sup> In the words of a local journalist, “à coup de hache, à coup de pied, les vitrines où s’étaient les brochures et photos de propagande de la révolution nationale furent démolies sous les cris joyeux et les applaudissements et l’assistance. Et soudain, ce fut un cri général : les FFI !”<sup>731</sup> There was a palpable sense of elation and relief amongst the population. The secretary of the *Comité de Libération de l’Allier*, George Rougeron, remembers: “La liesse était immense. Les balcons, les fenêtres fleurissaient de drapeaux tricolores et alliés, des cortèges de jeunes se répandaient dans les rues chantant la Marseillaise en convergeant vers l’Hôtel de Ville.”<sup>732</sup> Similar scenes of jubilation are described by Marc-André Fabre in his book *Dans les prisons de Vichy*:

Dans le courant de l’après midi, une première auto des FFI avec, de part et d’autre du capot, sur les ailes, le petit drapeau et la Croix de Lorraine qui vont devenir de règle, débouche dans la rue de Paris. Elle est prise d’assaut par la foule qui acclame et couvre de fleurs ces hommes des bois et de la montagne (...).<sup>733</sup>



<sup>730</sup> Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire*, 175.

<sup>731</sup> “Il y a 5 ans, le 26 août 1944, Vichy, libérée, cessait d’être ‘Captiale’ pour redevenir ‘Reine des villes d’eaux’,” *L’Espoir* (August 26, 1949).

<sup>732</sup> Rougeron, *Quand Vichy était capitale. 1940-1944*, 373.

<sup>733</sup> Marc-André Fabre, *Dans les prisons de la milice: la brigade Poinot, le Château des Brosses, la libération de Vichy* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 207.



Figures 7 & 8. The liberation of Vichy (August 26, 1944).<sup>734</sup>

Vichy's liberation gave the city its first opportunity to identify with the victorious nation. Building on these early celebrations, the population gathered around the common goal of belonging to the national community.

The first ceremony of the after war period, though, did not honor the resisters. Instead, it celebrated the courage, patience, and empathy of Walter Stucki and Valeri Valerio, whose contribution to the city's peaceful liberation was known to all. The degree of consensus around these figures, especially Stucki, was so large in Vichy that the fact that their diplomatic skills were honored before the heroism and martyrdom of resisters did not raise any particular concerns or problems.

On August 29, 1944, Walter Stucki was awarded the honorary citizenship of the city of Vichy in a moving and very well attended ceremony. Many *Vichyssois* had come to express their gratitude, reverence, and admiration for the Swiss ambassador: "La foule massée autour de l'hôtel de ville manifestait son affectueuse sympathie," a journalist wrote in his report of the

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<sup>734</sup> Picture taken from the online article "Il y a soixante dix ans, le 26 août 1944, la ville de Vichy se réveillait libre," *La Montagne* (August 26, 2014). [http://www.lamontagne.fr/auvergne/actualite/departement/allier/vichy/2014/08/26/il-y-a-soixante-dix-ans-le-26-aout-1944-la-ville-de-vichy-se-reveillait-libre\\_11120267.html](http://www.lamontagne.fr/auvergne/actualite/departement/allier/vichy/2014/08/26/il-y-a-soixante-dix-ans-le-26-aout-1944-la-ville-de-vichy-se-reveillait-libre_11120267.html) (Accessed June 25, 2016).

ceremony.<sup>735</sup> “Quand l’automobile de l’ambassadeur de Suisse s’arrêta devant les marches de la Mairie,” he added, “des bravos frénétiques couvrèrent les accents de la Musique de la Police.”<sup>736</sup> A street was also renamed in his honor on October 13, 1944,<sup>737</sup> and a *Comité de la Reconnaissance* was created shortly after. Although there is little information about what the purpose of the committee was, a press article praises a “magnifique service de table” offered by the committee to the Swiss man, who returned to Vichy in 1947 to thank the committee members in person.<sup>738</sup>

The Apostolic Nuncio to France, Monseigneur Valerio Valeri, with whom the *Vichyssois* had interacted for four years and who had collaborated with Stucki in August 1944 to make sure that the city’s liberation would be peaceful and that the Diplomatic Corps, still in town, would be safe, was also honored during the ceremony of August 29.<sup>739</sup> Like Stucki, Valeri was made an honorary citizen of Vichy.<sup>740</sup> Although Valeri had complied with the Vatican’s advice throughout the war and had not compromised himself with the Vichy regime, the interim government, whose legitimacy was based on the illegitimacy of the *État français*, refused to collaborate with a diplomat who had been accredited by the latter.<sup>741</sup> In his *Mémoires*, de Gaulle explains that despite the Vatican’s wish to maintain Valeri as the Apostolic Nuncio in France, his endorsement of the Vichy regime made it impossible for the new government to maintain him in office.<sup>742</sup> Valeri was therefore removed as Apostolic Nuncio to France. Regardless of de Gaulle’s decision, the city of Vichy never reversed its position towards Valeri, who continued to be referred to as a friend of the city throughout the postwar period.

In response to the honors they had received, the two men made a speech in front of Vichy’s town hall. Valeri said how much he loved and admired the French people, and how

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<sup>735</sup> “Le Nonce Apostolique et le Ministre de Suisse cityoen d’honneur de la ville de Vichy,” newspaper unidentified (date unknown, most likely in late August 1944 or early September 1945).

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> The *Avenue des Cygnes* was renamed Avenue Stucki.

<sup>738</sup> “Un entretien avec M. Walter Stucki,” *Liberté* (June 28, 1957).

<sup>739</sup> Stucki, *La fin du régime de Vichy*, 134 & 160.

Following the apprehension of the members of the government, the diplomats that remained in Vichy feared for their safety and they asked for help from the Apostolic Nuncio Valeri. Valeri collaborated with Stucki, who had obtained a pass for him, valid for all the zones occupied by the FFI. Stucki was also given the promise that the diplomatic community in its entirety would be treated according to the rules of human rights and of international comity.

<sup>740</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of Valeri’s speech (August 29, 1944).

<sup>741</sup> Buton and Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, 124-125.

<sup>742</sup> Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. Le Salut 1944-1946* Tome 3 (Paris: Plon, 1989), 59.



courteous the *Vichyssois* had always been toward him.<sup>743</sup> The day after, he made a donation of 10,000 francs for the poor of Vichy.<sup>744</sup> Stucki's speech was in the same vein as Valeri's. Amongst other things, Stucki explained how he had felt during the critical days leading to the city's liberation:

Il est exact que j'aurais dû quitter votre ville dès le 20 août au matin. Les messages que m'adressait, par la radio, mon gouvernement, devenaient de jour en jour plus pressants, et j'ai dû expliquer, lui expliquer ainsi qu'à ma famille, que j'étais à Vichy pour y vivre les plus belles journées de ma vie, car j'avais le sentiment que je pouvais prouver ainsi, une dernière fois, mon amour pour la France. (...) J'ai mis tout en oeuvre pour que le changement de régime auquel nous avons assisté dans une ville qui était particulièrement menacée se passât (...) sans effusion de sang. J'ai veillé à ce que, jusqu'au dernier moment, les colonnes de la puissance occupante ne provoquent dans Vichy innocente et paisible, des bagarres et des incidents qui auraient pu devenir extrêmement dangereux.<sup>745</sup>

Valeri's and Stucki's laudatory speeches undoubtedly flattered the *Vichyssois*' ego. Stucki's statement, that he needed to be in Vichy to prove his love for France, may have been especially flattering to them for it demonstrated that Vichy had been a supporter of the 'true' France, rather than the cradle of collaboration.

Soon, however, the city lost interest in Stucki and Valeri and began celebrating the local resistance. The first year following Vichy's liberation was marked by an exaltation of the memory of the Resistance, with dozens of commemorative ceremonies. Only a few days after the liberation of the city in late August 1944, a thirty-five-minute film on the liberation of Paris played in continuous loop in Vichy's local theaters. The film provoked a frantic reaction amongst the population. A journalist, who had attended one of the screenings, described the scene: "La grande attraction de Vichy depuis quelques jours, c'est le film sur la libération de Paris. Il passe par roulement dans les divers cinémas de la ville... Les gens s'identifient au film... La salle pleure de joie, les bras en l'air. Trente cinq minutes qui vous vengent de quatre années de silence et de honte." In the journalist's words, "jamais un film n'établira une communion aussi totale, aussi profonde entre ses acteurs et ses spectateurs."<sup>746</sup> The population's response to these images

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<sup>743</sup> "Le Nonce Apostolique et le Ministre de Suisse cityoen d'honneur de la ville de Vichy," newspaper unidentified (date unknown, most likely in late August 1944 or early September 1945).

<sup>744</sup> AM (Vichy). Valeri's letter to the municipality of Vichy (August 30, 1944).

<sup>745</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of Stucki's speech (August 29, 1944).

<sup>746</sup> "À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n'est plus qu'une sous prefecture," *Valmy* (September 25, 1944).

extended beyond a demonstration of admiration for the people of Paris. What transpires from the observations of this journalist is the *Vichyssois*' craving to be part of the grand national narrative in the making.<sup>747</sup> The local fervor surrounding the celebrations of November 11, 1944, which was a key moment in the recreation of a national unity around the figure of de Gaulle, is equally telling.



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<sup>747</sup> The liberation of Paris, or rather how the liberation of Paris was presented to France – mostly as a city which had liberated itself – marked a crucial moment in the crystallization of the national myth of the Resistance.





Figures 9 & 10. November 11, 1944 celebration in Vichy.<sup>748</sup>

Marc Juge is the first resister whose memory was inscribed in Vichy's urban environment. Juge, a police commissioner, who had been transferred to Vichy during the war, came to the resistance through his relationship with Anne Yvette Poucy, with whom he was having an affair. Poucy was a member of the *Marco-Polo* network, whose local branch was led by her partner, René Chabrier, and their friends, Henri Moreau, a flight sergeant major, and his wife, Yvonne. Juge's mission within *Marco-Polo* was to gather information on Gestapo agents and informants, and to prosecute them for non-political crimes, such as theft, looting, fraud or debauchery. Juge was arrested in January 1944. After almost two months in detention, on March 13, 1944, Juge, Moreau and Chabrier, were sentenced to death by the Gestapo,<sup>749</sup> and the three men were executed on March 25, 1944. In early October 1944 their corpses were transported to Vichy. A funeral mass was celebrated at the *Église Saint Louis* in the presence of the families, friends, and colleagues of the three men, military commanders, as well as political representatives, including

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<sup>748</sup> Courtesy of Vichy's municipal archives. N°4 planche N° 28 et N° 2 planche 31 - Photographies MOUGINS. 1 Fi 1.

<sup>749</sup> "Depuis toujours, il servait la Résistance," newspaper unknown (September 23, 1944).

Vichy's mayor, Vichy's *sous-préfet* and the Allier *préfet*.<sup>750</sup> A *prise d'armes* in Juge's honor was organized on October 31, 1944, in front of the City Hall, where a large crowd of *Vichyssois* had gathered to honor him.<sup>751</sup> The ceremony was followed by the inauguration of a commemorative plaque, hung in Juge's former office, at Vichy's police station: *Marc-Roland Juge, Commissaire de Police de Vichy. Héros de la Résistance, fusillé par les Allemands le 24 Mars 1944, à Clermont-Ferrand. Il est mort en Français, la tête haute, le regard droit. C'est de ce bureau qu'il a dirigé pendant un an et demi son action contre la Gestapo et ses agents*.<sup>752</sup> Juge was later *cité à l'ordre de la nation* and made a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*.<sup>753</sup> The following year, on October 28, 1945, plaques were erected on the graves of Juge, Chabrier and Moreau. Others were also erected on Moreau's and Chabrier's houses.<sup>754</sup>

Prior to the ceremonies, the coffins of the three men were exhibited in the *Galerie Napoléon*, in the heart of Vichy's *quartier thermal*<sup>755</sup> - one of Vichy's most popular places – thereby enabling a more intense communion between the dead heroes and the population. Reports on the ceremony mention that everybody was in awe of the resisters' courage, especially Juge's. Several press articles cited comments made by audience members: “Malgré les tortures sans nom qui lui ont été infligées, Juge a gardé (...) son aspect de grand seigneur (...). Autour de [sa] bouche, un baillon. On l'a baillonné avec un foulard pour étouffer sa Marseillaise vengeresse.”<sup>756</sup> Some spectators reportedly wept. The population's response indicates its strong identification with the resister's martyrdom. Ironically, Juge was not a *Vichyssois*. But this biographical data mattered little for a population in search of martyrs capable of personifying the city's own (self-perceived) heroism and victimhood. The letters Juge wrote to his family before being executed were often cited in commemorative discourses and in the press. His words contributed emotion to the story and struck a chord with the audiences.

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<sup>750</sup> “Les corps de Juge, Moreau et Chabrier ont été transportés samedi à Vichy,” newspaper unknown (October 2, 1944).

<sup>751</sup> “Une Prise d’Arme eut lieu hier en l’honneur du commissaire Marc Juge fusillé par les Allemands,” *Le Patriote* (November 1, 1944).

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> AM (Vichy). Note from the *Directeur départemental des Services de Police de l’Allier* to the mayor of Vichy (1945).

<sup>754</sup> AM (Vichy). Press release (December 11, 1945).

<sup>755</sup> “Les corps de Juge, Moreau et Chabrier ont été transportés samedi à Vichy,” newspaper unknown (October 2, 1944).

<sup>756</sup> Cited in “Les corps de Juge, Moreau et Chabrier ont été transportés samedi à Vichy,” newspaper unknown (October 2, 1944).

-Mon cher Papa, ma chère Maman,  
 Je ne regrette rien pour moi, la mort ne me fait pas peur (...) mais je vous demande pardon (...) de la peine immense que je vais vous causer. C'est là mon seul regret. (...) Quand vous recevrez ce petit mot, je serai fusillé. (...) Mais vous pouvez (...) être fiers de votre fils, je n'ai rien à me reprocher et je mourrai la tête haute. (...) Je vous embrasse bien tendrement.

-Mon petit Jean-Paul chéri,  
 Voici la dernière lettre que tu recevras de moi, mon grand chéri, car dans quelques jours, dans quelques heures peut être, je serai fusillé. (...) [J]e ne veux pas partir sans t'affirmer que tu n'as pas à rougir de ton père, au contraire. J'ai toujours fait ce que j'ai considéré comme mon devoir (...), je meurs la tête haute, sans que ma conscience ne me reproche rien. J'espère que dans la vie tu suivras mon exemple. Sois toujours loyal et bon. (...) [E]t que le mensonge et la trahison soient toujours pour toi un objet d'horreur. (...) Je t'aime mon petit Jean-Paul chéri, je t'embrasse en te disant adieu.<sup>757</sup>

The celebrations honoring Marc Juge constituted a founding commemorative act in several respects. First they established the tone of the local narrative of the resistance, dwelling both on heroism and martyrdom, with a special focus on the latter. Second, it established a commemorative ritual. Most celebrations in honor of local resisters organized in the mid and late 1940s would follow the same pattern, with a procession, a *prise d'armes*, the erection of plaques, and official discourses emphasizing the courage of these men who dared oppose the Germans and Pétain's government despite the fact that they were living in the lion's den.

Another significant commemorative event organized under the mayorship of Barbier was that paying tribute to Fernand Lafaye, who, with his daughter and son-in-law, had joined the *maquis d'Auvergne* (see Chapter 2). Fernand Lafaye was killed in the attack launched by the German troops at the Mont Mouchet and La Truyère Maurines. He died after being ambushed with his daughter.<sup>758</sup> On December 15, 1944, the municipality approved a proposition by the *Conseil des Maîtres* to rename the *école Carnot* (one of Vichy's main schools), where Lafaye had worked until 1941, after the fallen hero and to affix a commemorative plaque on the wall of his

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<sup>757</sup> See for instance: *La Patrie* (September 26, 1944).

<sup>758</sup> Lafaye's daughter was made prisoner, atrociously tortured, and later executed.

On the Lafayes, see: Charles Guyotjeannin, "Une héroïne de la résistance : Anne-Mary, Jeanne Menut, pharmacien à Riom (1914-1944)," *Revue d'histoire de la pharmacie* 85:313 (1997), 7-16; Charles Bérénholz, "Le service de santé de l'état-major des maquis d'Auvergne : un épisode des combats de Margueride-Truyère," *Revue de la Haute-Auvergne* (April – September, 1994), 241-249; Henri Ingrand, *La Libération de l'Auvergne* (Paris: Hachette, 1974), 101.

former classroom.<sup>759</sup> Fernand Lafaye and his daughter received the *Légion d'Honneur* posthumously.

The last three to four months of Barbier's term were a little quieter in terms of memorialization. The mayor had other priorities: the *épuration* was not over yet and many practical problems remained unsolved, especially regarding food supplies (see Chapter 6). Barbier's successor, Moinard, however, benefitted from an environment more conducive to the construction of a strong local memory of the Resistance. Not only was the war over in Europe, but the population was displaying increasing disappointment in the *épuration*, which had failed to punish the 'right' culprits and restore the city's reputation (see Chapter 4). The population was therefore particularly receptive to Moinard's ambition to turn Vichy into a commemorative site for the Resistance, hoping that such initiatives could compensate the *épuration*'s failure to establish the city's innocence, heroism and victimhood.

The summer and fall of 1945 were particularly rich in terms of commemoration. The greatness of the Resistance was honored through parades, military processions, *prises d'armes*, and concerts of military music, organized jointly by the municipality and local resisters. For the fifth anniversary of the *Appel du 18 juin 1940*, for instance, with three days of commemorations, the city saw things big. On June 15 and 16, the ninety-second Infantry Regiment performed two concerts featuring military music. On Sunday June 17, the anniversary of de Gaulle's Appeal was celebrated "avec éclat," with the official procession featuring local authorities, civil and military delegations, former war prisoners, deportees, resisters and victims from Vichy. It left the Town Hall and meandered through the city to the *Monument aux Morts*, where wreaths were laid, a minute of silence was observed, and the *Marseillaise*, the *Marche Lorraine* and the anthem of the Allied countries were played. Following was a reception with the delegates of the *Confédération nationale des maquis de France et de la Résistance*, who were in congress in Vichy.<sup>760</sup>

Two months later, for the city's first anniversary of the liberation and in honor of the cessation of fighting in Europe, a demonstration of the famous Normandie-Niemen squadron was organized at the local airfield. In Moinard's words, "notre grande cité thermale qui a échappé de justesse à la destruction et à la ruine ne saurait oublier... la date de sa libération, celle qui a été

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<sup>759</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (December 15, 1944).

<sup>760</sup> AM (Vichy). Program of the ceremonies, and note from the municipal council (date unknown, likely the week before the ceremonies).



pour elle la fin d'une détestable occupation."<sup>761</sup> An exhibition on the resistance, with a focus on its means of military action, its equipment, and "and its mysterious activity," was held simultaneously in the Opera House from August 24 to September 2, 1945.<sup>762</sup> Similar commemorative efforts were put in celebrating the second anniversary of the liberation of Vichy at the end of August 1946. A *quinzaine résistante*, featuring exhibitions, conferences, a *prise d'armes*, concerts, parades, etc., was held simultaneously.<sup>763</sup>



Figure 11. *Prise d'armes* during the *Quinzaine résistante* at the *Monument aux morts*.<sup>764</sup>

According to the local chief of the FFIs, General Pontcarral, this event offered a representation of the resistance "puisée dans les maquis de France."<sup>765</sup> In 1945, the city also allocated 10,000 francs to the creation of a national movement honoring the maquis.<sup>766</sup> The year after, it

<sup>761</sup> AM (Vichy). Moinard's appeal to the *Vichyssois* (August 26, 1945).

<sup>762</sup> AM (Vichy). Poster of the event.

<sup>763</sup> AM (Vichy). Event brochure.

<sup>764</sup> Courtesy of Vichy's municipal archives. N° 2 planche N° 89 - Photographie MOUGINS. 1 Fi 1

<sup>765</sup> AM (Vichy). Pontcarral's letter to Vichy's mayor (August 1, 1946).

<sup>766</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (September 27, 1945).

contributed 5,000 francs to the *Congrès National des Maquis de France et de la Résistance active*, which the city was hosting.<sup>767</sup>

In parallel to the commemorations celebrating France's victory and the city's liberation, other ceremonies that honored local resisters, continued to be regularly organized. Roger Kespy was the first local hero commemorated under Moinard's mayorship. After having significantly contributed to the *Armée secrète*, in January 1943, Kespy was appointed sector chief of the MUR in the Allier. He was arrested on January 24, 1944 by the milice and was immediately given to the Gestapo. He was executed on July 25 in the Marcenat forest, seventeen kilometers away from Vichy. A few days before the April 1945 elections, Barbier's municipal council had voted to contribute 1,000 francs for the placement of a commemorative plaque on Kespy's former house on Durand Street.<sup>768</sup> However, Barbier could not complete the project because he was defeated in the elections. Moinard assumed responsibility and organized the ceremony in the summer of 1945, in collaboration with the local associations of resisters. Several guests exalted "la foi patriotique ... de ce martyr qui sut mourir afin que la France revive." Many personalities attended the ceremony, which "[devait] perpétuer le souvenir du plus pur héros de la résistance locale,"<sup>769</sup> including M. Ferrand, chief of staff of the *Commissaire régional de la République*, M. Mazerolles, deputy mayor, members of the municipal council, the Commander Janicot, various civil and military guests, as well as many *Vichyssois*. A parade by three detachments of the *Centre de préparation du personnel navigant* (CPPN) closed the "émouvante" ceremony.<sup>770</sup> In 1947, Kespy's corpse was buried in the space reserved for the Resistance in Vichy's cemetery.

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<sup>767</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (December 23, 1946).

<sup>768</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (April 13, 1945).

<sup>769</sup> "Une plaque commémorative à la mémoire de Roger Kespy," newspaper unknown (date unknown, most likely July 26 or shortly after).

<sup>770</sup> "Une plaque commémorative à la mémoire de Roger Kespy," "À la mémoire de Roger Kespy," "Pour perpétuer le souvenir de Roger Kespy," newspapers unknown (date unknown, most likely July 26 or shortly after).





Figures 12, 13 & 14. Ceremony in honor of Roger Kespy (July 25, 1945).<sup>771</sup>

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<sup>771</sup> Photographs from press articles. AM (Vichy).

Similar ceremonies were organized for Jean Bouteille, from the *Alliance* network. Bouteille was arrested with his daughter at their home, 36 rue du Sénateur Gacon in Vichy, on April 22, 1943. Both of them were taken to the Mal-Coiffée, the German military prison in Moulins, and later transferred to the Fort of Romainville. On October 2, 1943, the Germans chose fifty hostages amongst the internees. Jean Bouteille was one of them. He was executed at the Mont-Valérien, the main site of execution in France during the Second World War.<sup>772</sup> On September 18, 1945, a plaque was placed on his former house: *Ici habitait Jean Bouteille, Héros et Martyr de la Résistance, 1875 – 1943*. Jean Sabatier, another member of the *Alliance* network, was commemorated in 1949.<sup>773</sup>



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<sup>772</sup> See Jean Bouteille's profile on the website of the *AFMD de l'Allier*: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1264164> (Accessed March 12, 2016).

<sup>773</sup> "Vichy a célébré le 14 juillet," *Le Journal de Vichy* (July 16, 1949).



Figures 15 & 16. Ceremony in honor of Jean Bouteille (September 18, 1945).<sup>774</sup>

While an impressive number of plaques honoring fallen local resisters were mounted under Louis Moinard's terms,<sup>775</sup> streets were seldom renamed, contrary to what one might have thought. The streets that had been renamed under Vichy (such as the *rue du Maréchal Pétain*) were given back their prewar names, however, only a limited number of streets were renamed after resisters. The reason for this was clearly stated during a municipal council in the summer of 1945, during which the councilors studied a request to rename a street after Jean Sabatier. The request was rejected and transferred to a special commission for further study because the council

<sup>774</sup> Photographs from press articles, made available to me by the archivists in Vichy's municipal archives.

<sup>775</sup> In addition to the plaques previously mentioned, other plaques were also placed on the house of René Gabard (February 8, 1946), that of Gabriel Vernet (September 14, 1946), that of René Royal (September 18, 1945). Another one was positioned on the house where the *Mouvement National des Prisonniers de Guerre et Déportés* had planned its clandestine actions. *L'espoir* (December 16, 1946).

On the *Mouvement National des Prisonniers de Guerre et Déportés*, see Yves Durand, "Mouvement national des prisonniers de guerre et déportés," in *Dictionnaire historique de la Résistance*, ed., François Marcot (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006).



feared that changing too many street names might “dérouter les nombreux touristes et curistes.”<sup>776</sup>

What the resisters that the city of Vichy chose to commemorate all had in common was that they all suffered greatly at the hands of the Germans, or the French; the majority of them was killed. In most commemorations, the resisters’ suffering was prominent and often overshadowed their motivations for joining a Resistance organization, or their roles within it. The plaques commemorating Kespy are revealing in that respect. The one on his house reads: *Ici habitait Roger Kespy, créateur de la résistance dans la région de Vichy, héros et martyr, assassiné par les Allemands le 25 juillet 1944 dans la forêt de Marcenat, 1908-1944*, while the one affixed on his tombstone states: *Kespy Roger (1908-1944) – Héros et Martyr – Pionnier, animateur inlassable de la Résistance en Bourbonnais – Arrêté par la Milice – Livré à la Gestapo – Torturé et sauvagement assassiné le 25 juillet 1944 en forêt de Marcenat – MORT POUR LA FRANCE*.

The commemorations’ focus was mostly on the resisters’ martyrdom as it echoed the city’s self perceived victimhood. Since August 1944, the city’s representatives repeatedly presented Vichy’s population as a victim of misfortune (in 1940, Vichy was chosen – beyond its free will – to become France’s substitute capital), as well as a victim of the Germans and of the Vichy regime. Local leaders often underlined how Vichy’s promotion to the status of France’s capital in the summer of 1940 was not the city’s responsibility and how local citizens had suffered from this position. In November 1944, the municipal council deplored that “Vichy s’est vue imposer la résidence du Gouvernement de l’ex-État Français et a dû subir sa présence et celle de nombreux fonctionnaires civils et militaires souvent avides de places, d’avancement et de prébendes.”<sup>777</sup> In 1947, during the commemorative ceremony in honor of the eighty parliamentarians who voted ‘no’ on July 10, 1940, Moinard noted that such a commemoration “sera particulièrement agréable aux Vichyssois qui ont dû supporter ... la présence du gouvernement de fait pendant quatre ans.”<sup>778</sup> Similarly, the hazardousness of life in Vichy was frequented pointed out. In Maurice Constantin-Weyer’s words, Vichy was “harcelée par plus de

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<sup>776</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council’s meeting (June 21, 1945); AM (Vichy). Letter from Sabatier’s friends to the mayor of Vichy (June 3, 1949).

<sup>777</sup> “Vichy n’est pas le Siège d’un Gouvernement Traître à la Patrie mais la ‘REINE DES VILLES D’EAUX’.” (November 20, 1944).

<sup>778</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from Louis Moinard to Jean Odin (1947).

police qu'il n'y en avait nulle part ailleurs en France."<sup>779</sup> According to Louis Moinard, there was one policeman for every eight residents in Vichy.<sup>780</sup> The focus on the (exaggerated) size of the police, and the German and the milice contingents reveal how a strong desire existed to convey the city as a nexus of terror.

In the local media reports about the commemorations, the journalists spilled much ink describing the resisters' ordeal after they had been arrested. A series featuring four articles about Marc Juge was published in the local newspaper *La Patrie* in September 1944.<sup>781</sup> While these articles detailed his work in the resistance, they more widely focused on his martyrdom. The second article of the series, for instance, focuses on Juge's suffering in the Gestapo prison in Moulins and in the milice headquarters in Vichy.<sup>782</sup>

The shared identification with suffering was reinforced by a photographic exhibition on the milice, organized in September 1944. Entitled *Hygiène et salubrité milicienne*, the exhibition featured horrendous photographs documenting the crimes committed by the milice:

Voici la presse qui servait à écraser les mains et les pieds des suppliciés, le casque barbare muni de vis avec lesquelles on pouvait déformer leur crâne, la salle de torture avec ses appareils de suspension, ses électrodes, sa corde pour les pendants, des cellules sordides où l'on voit encore des traces de sang, des restes de cheveux, une cabine de waters où le prisonnier était contraint de tremper ses pieds dans un bain d'eau glacée pendant des jours, un monte-charge criblé de balle qui servait aux exécutions, un repas à l'hôtel du Portugal : deux ou trois pommes de terre crues. (...) <sup>783</sup>

In addition to the photographs, instruments of torture were also exhibited.<sup>784</sup> The population "rushed" to the exhibition.<sup>785</sup> This enthusiastic response not only reveals audiences' popular curiosity about the tortures committed on their doorstep, but it also suggests a strong desire to identify, not just with the heroes, but also – and above all – with the victims. The narrative of suffering was reinforced by the publication of local residents' testimonies, such as Denyse

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<sup>779</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, "Vichy-Vérité," in *Nouveau mémorial Vichy* (Vichy: Editions des Montagnes Bleues, 1946), 09.

<sup>780</sup> Cited in "Vichy a retrouvé son vrai visage," *La Tribune de Genève* (May 21, 1946).

<sup>781</sup> Series published in *La Patrie* between September 23, 1944 and September 28, 1944.

<sup>782</sup> Second article from the Series published in *La Patrie* between September 23, 1944 and September 28, 1944.

<sup>783</sup> "À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n'est plus qu'une sous préfecture," *Valmy* (September 25, 1944).

<sup>784</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

<sup>785</sup> "À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n'est plus qu'une sous préfecture," *Valmy* (September 25, 1944).

Dorville, who personally witnessed this terror. Dorville lived in the building adjacent to the *Petit Casino*, the milice's headquarters:

Tous les deux ou trois soirs, vers 23h, un clairon sonnait le branle-bas de combat. C'était l'avant coureur d'une nuit d'épouvante. (...) Une nuit particulièrement angoissante, restera pour toujours gravée dans ma mémoire : celle du 4 juillet 1944. (...) De grands coups de crosse étaient assénés sur la porte de la maison d'en face. (...) Ces messieurs étaient à la recherche de deux résistants. (...) À l'intérieur, personne ne bougeait. (...) Enfin tout rentra dans l'ordre. (...) À 2 heures, les camionnettes revinrent de leur chasse à l'homme : on ramenait des victimes. Je me levai; mais le hurlement qui déchira l'air, à ce moment, me cloua sur place. (...) Bientôt sortirent du Petit Casino de tels hurlements de souffrance et d'horreur qu'il n'y a pas de mots pour les décrire... Vers 5 heures du matin les cris de la femme n'étaient plus que des râles de mourantes. (...) J'ai vécu ainsi, pendant des mois, et comme résistante, m'attendant chaque matin, à voir surgir ces monstres sur le seuil de ma porte.<sup>786</sup>

Although at first sight the victimhood of the Vichy Jews (see Chapter 3) might appear as a potentially fruitful complement to the city's narrative, it was not considered so and Jews were excluded from the local narrative from the very early days of the postwar period. In France, there is a widespread belief that the Jewish genocide was long silenced after the war. Recent scholarship, however, has demonstrated that this was not the case. According to François Azouvi, some intellectuals, as well as some Catholics and Protestants, started to reflect upon the Jewish specificity of the genocide as early as the 1940s. It was only shortly after that the genocide also penetrated the French collective consciousness.<sup>787</sup> This, of course, does not mean that every community remembered the Holocaust in the same way. In Vichy, the fate of the Jewish refugees was not publicly discussed or remembered. Not only was the great majority of Jews in Vichy during the war refugees with no prewar ties to the city, but the city's myth of victimhood has also required that the focus not be shifted away from the population's suffering to that of another group.

The construction of a strong local memory of the Resistance, based on a shared identification with the resisters' heroism and martyrdom, also required that the complex reality of the local experience of the war in Vichy, which was marked by heroism, courage and repression,

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<sup>786</sup> Denyse Dorville, "La grande nuit du Petit Casino," in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 39-41.

<sup>787</sup> François Azouvi, *Le Mythe du grand silence. Auschwitz, les Français, la mémoire* (Paris: Fayard, 2012). See also the book of the exhibition *Après la Shoah. Rescapés, réfugiés, survivants (1944-1947)*. Temporary exhibition by Henry Roussio at the *Mémorial de la Shoah*, Paris, January 27 to October 30, 2016.



but also accommodation, opportunism, and collaboration, be silenced. The differences and tensions between and within the different Resistance organizations were similarly kept in the background. The development and growth of a simplified and sanitized memory of the Resistance in Vichy was achieved through the organization of a great number of commemorations honoring the Resistance, as we saw throughout this chapter, as well as through the erasure of all the visible traces left by the presence of Pétain's government in Vichy.

Most of the buildings that had been requisitioned were quickly restored. In July 1947, for instance, the first postwar equestrian competition successfully took place in the *Concours Hippique*, where, Vichy's main internment camp had been established during the *épuration*.<sup>788</sup> Immediately after the departure of the last German internees from the internment camp *Limagne* in 1946, all the barracks were removed and the space became a wasteland. Some barracks were transformed and reused by the municipality, while others were destroyed, the furniture given to a professional training center in Bellerive.<sup>789</sup> In the *Petit Casino*, the basements of which had been used as torture chambers, now "[reignait] le silence."<sup>790</sup> In 1956, the city purchased the building and turned it into a 'cultural center'.<sup>791</sup>

Although the war left Vichy's hotels greatly damaged, they retained their prewar charm. None bore indelible marks from the wartime period. Only the *hôtel Algeria*, the headquarters of the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives*, was renamed (*hôtel Carnot*).<sup>792</sup> All the others were simply restored. After a couple of years they reopened or were resold through shared ownership. In 1954, giving up a disappointing operation, the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy* (SGHV) decided to rent out the rooms of the Majestic on an annual basis and to put the hotel's great reception hall, as well as the rooms and some of *hôtel du Parc*'s premises up for sale.<sup>793</sup> The city council bought the reception hall of the Majestic and many parts of *hôtel du Parc* where it set up the Tourism Bureau, the Radio Broadcasting Service, the Air Traffic Information Service

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<sup>788</sup> At the end of 1947 the minister of the war considered purchasing the land of the equestrian arena to make it the new site of the military hospital of Vichy. The project, however, was not carried out and the equestrian arena remained an equestrian arena. Jacques Legendre, *Un siècle de Concours hippiques à Vichy – 1887-1993* (Vichy: Imprimerie Copie Express, 1994), 145.

<sup>789</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W 2. Letter from the Allier *préfet* to the *Ministre du Travail et de la Sécurité Sociale* (December 11, 1948).

<sup>790</sup> "À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n'est plus qu'une sous préfecture," *Valmy* (September 26, 1944).

<sup>791</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (February 2, 1959).

<sup>792</sup> Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel. France, Memory and the Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001), 181.

<sup>793</sup> "Quels changements pour cette saison sur le domaine de la Société des Grands Hôtels ?," *La Montagne* (May 5, 1954).

for the aerodrome, as well as the Festivities Committee.<sup>794</sup> Through the complete erasure of the traces of the government in Vichy (and the establishment of a strong local memory of the Resistance), the city most likely hoped to break the conflation between the city and the regime.

### 3. Remembering the Resistance beyond political cleavages

At the heart of the Gaullist narrative was the acknowledgement and celebration of the military exploits of France's heroes. The fact that three quarters of the men awarded the *Croix de la Libération* were from the *Forces Françaises Libres* (FFL) clearly reveals the importance given to the military aspect of the Resistance by De Gaulle.<sup>795</sup> Despite the Vichy commemorations' strong focus on victimhood, many of them nonetheless bore Gaullist overtones. The heroism of the fighter, so dear to de Gaulle, was regularly underlined in the city's official discourses. In November 1944, for example, the municipal council wrote in a public note that "Les Vichyssois ont manifesté l'admiration et la reconnaissance qu'ils éprouvent à l'égard de notre magnifique jeunesse qui s'est battue dans tout le pays et continue à refouler l'ennemi hors de nos frontières."<sup>796</sup> The many military commemorations further mirrored the Gaullist exaltation of a memory of combat.

That few women were officially honored in Vichy is further indicative of the Gaullist influence. Men were overwhelmingly honored in the memorial services of the immediate postwar period, in large part because "men were usually the victims in most Resistance deaths that fit the military model of patriotic tradition and Gaullist myth, either because they died in battle or because the Germans generally executed men but deported women to a slower, more obscure end."<sup>797</sup> Jeanne Bouteille, the daughter of Jean Bouteille, publicly criticized the lack of official consideration the women were receiving from public authorities, both locally and nationally. After being interned at the Fort de Romainville with her father, she was deported to the internment camp in Compiègne. On January 31, 1944, she was transferred to Ravensbrück with 958 other women. Czech partisans liberated her on May 5, 1945 and she returned to France on

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<sup>794</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (August 10, 1954).

Total value of the purchase: 31,600,000 francs + 5,400,00 francs in material and equipment expenses.

<sup>795</sup> Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 27.

<sup>796</sup> "Vichy n'est pas le Siège d'un Gouvernement Traître à la Patrie mais la 'REINE DES VILLES D'EAUX'." Public text drafted by the municipal council on November 20, 1944.

<sup>797</sup> Koreman, *The expectation of justice*, 190. Another explanation is that most memorial services "drew on the gestural and rhetorical tradition that conceptualized patriotism as the military endeavors of men and that had been most recently embodied in the cult of the male poilus of the First World War."

May 24. In 1946, she published *Infernal rébus*, in which she recounts her life in the Ravensbrück concentration camp.<sup>798</sup> The same year, she returned her *Croix de Guerre* to protest against the awarding of medals to some who did not deserve one, at the expense of others, including women, “qui l'ont réellement méritée.”<sup>799</sup> Bouteille’s protest was public knowledge after she explained her reasoning by news release.

That many of the resisters commemorated in Vichy had belonged to a Gaullist movement is yet another sign that Vichy was willing to follow the Gaullist memorial pattern. Kespy, for example, as a key member of the movement *Combat* and of the *Armée secrète*, and as the departmental leader of the MUR was a good representative of the Gaullist resister. So was Fernand Lafaye, albeit in a different way. Of course, his involvement within the MUR, and his friendship with Henri Ingrand, the regional leader of the MUR, made him a valuable Gaullist resister.<sup>800</sup> But maybe more important in the choice to commemorate Lafaye, who was not the most iconic local resister of the *maquis d’Auvergne*, was his former position as a teacher, therefore as a fierce defender of republican principles. The city’s attachment to the Republic, which constituted a key element of the Gaullist myth,<sup>801</sup> was also expressed during the ceremonies of July 14. Posters asking the population to “participe[r] à tous les défilés, à tous les cortèges” and to “décore[r] [leurs] balcons de drapeaux, guirlandes, fleurs, plantes vertes” were hung in the streets of Vichy. “Notre Ville doit être belle, joyeuse, vivante pour montrer son attachement à la Liberté et à la République.”<sup>802</sup> Echoing what had already been highlighted by the municipal council the previous month,<sup>803</sup> in a letter he wrote to de Gaulle, Barbier further emphasized the *Vichyssois*’ profound attachment to the Republic:

De cette présence qui nous a été imposée, nous avons souffert car elle avait pour corollaire l’instauration d’un impitoyable système policier, le déchainement d’une propagande qui rendait l’air irrespirable à ceux qui conservaient malgré toutes les pressions, malgré toutes les menaces, leurs sentiments républicains et patriotiques. (...) Très nombreux sont nos concitoyens dont la foi en l’avenir de la France et de la République n’a jamais été ébranlée et qui l’ont prouvé par leurs actes. Nous avons

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<sup>798</sup> Jeanne Bouteille-Garagnon, *Infernal Rébus* (Moulins: Edition Crépin-Leblond, 1946).

<sup>799</sup> Cited by the AFMD: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1264164> (Accessed December 20, 2015).

<sup>800</sup> Guyotjeannin, “Une héroïne de la résistance,” 8.

<sup>801</sup> Rouso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 41.

<sup>802</sup> Poster reproduced in *Le Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 67.

<sup>803</sup> “Vichy n’est pas le Siège d’un Gouvernement Traître à la Patrie mais la ‘REINE DES VILLES D’EAUX’.” Public text draftet by the municipal council on November 20, 1944.

eu nos Combattants de la Résistance, nos héros et nos martyrs.<sup>804</sup>

Equally central to the Gaullist myth was the figure of de Gaulle himself: “La mémoire gaullienne voulait rassembler autour de la geste menée par l’homme du 18 juin,” Jean-Pierre Azéma writes in *Vichy-Paris, les collaborations*.<sup>805</sup> Since the end of the war, according to the municipality, not only had the *Vichyssois* continuously expressed their republican and patriotic feelings,<sup>806</sup> but “ils ont, à maintes reprises, proclamé leur dévouement au Général de Gaulle.”<sup>807</sup> The large-scale ceremony for the fifth anniversary of the *Appel du 18 juin 1940*, described earlier, is further evidence of the city’s celebration of de Gaulle.

Vichy’s attachment to de Gaulle is also clearly perceptible in the city’s plea to the General to visit Vichy. In September 1944, looking for the support and backing of the French people, de Gaulle had embarked on a tour of France’s main liberated cities. The timing could not have been better as the French were craving to see him. During his radio address on August 29, after the liberation of Paris, “l’enthousiasme était délirant. [L]’auditoire n’attendait pas la fin des phrases et acclamait sans relâche à n’importe quel moment. (...) Le public ne désirait que le voir et l’applaudir pour lui marquer sa gratitude et l’encourager à continuer.”<sup>808</sup> As has been underlined earlier, the liberation of Vichy on August 26 was not the result of a fierce struggle conducted by the resisters and as such, it was not the most romantic event of the war. And yet, the liberation of the former capital was nonetheless highly symbolic, as suggested by the resisters’ haste to establish their hold on some of the city’s most iconic places.

On August 29, Henri Ingrand, who had been appointed Regional Commissioner of the Republic, was escorted to the *hôtel du Parc*.<sup>809</sup> In the days that followed, local resisters occupied many other symbolic places in the city. The *Front National* established offices in the former office of the German police in Vichy, and in the official store for Pétain’s propaganda items.<sup>810</sup> The *Mouvement de Libération Nationale* moved into the former headquarters of the *Légion des*

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<sup>804</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of Barbier’s letter to Charles de Gaulle (December 4, 1944).

<sup>805</sup> Jean-Pierre Azéma, *Vichy-Paris, les collaborations : histoire et mémoires* (Bruxelles: A. Versaille éditeur, 2012), 204.

<sup>806</sup> “Vichy n’est pas le Siège d’un Gouvernement Traître à la Patrie mais la ‘REINE DES VILLES D’EAUX’.” Public text drafted by the municipal council on November 20, 1944.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

<sup>808</sup> Georges Bidault, president of the CNR, Cited in Pierre Bourget, *Paris année 1944 : occupation, libération, épuration* (Paris: Plon, 1984).

<sup>809</sup> Jean Débordes, *Le temps des passions : l’Allier dans la guerre* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 243.

<sup>810</sup> “À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n’est plus qu’une sous préfecture,” *Valmy* (September 25, 1944).

*Volontaires Français*,<sup>811</sup> whereas the FFIs set up their headquarters in the *Thermal-Palace* hotel, with their chief, Colonel Pontcarral, using Joseph Darnand's former office.<sup>812</sup> It is likely that a speech delivered by de Gaulle in the *hôtel du Parc* would have had strong emotional and symbolic effects not only on the French people but also, and above all, on the *Vichyssois*. Yet the General did not show up. So in December 1944, the municipality sent an official request to de Gaulle to make a short stop in Vichy during the Auvergne tour he was expected to do the following year:

Mon Général,  
Au nom de tous mes concitoyens, je viens vous demander de nous faire  
le grand honneur de vous arrêter dans notre Cité au cours du voyage  
que vous projetez d'entreprendre au Centre de la France. (...)  
... [Permettez-nous] de manifester, d'une manière éclatante, notre  
loyalisme à votre égard, nos sentiments républicains et notre  
Patriotisme.<sup>813</sup>

A visit by de Gaulle would, most certainly, have underscored the image of Vichy as a city of Resistance. However, de Gaulle, who remained largely unmoved by the city's plea, did not come.

Despite the fact that the municipality was not predominantly Gaullist, the emphasis on the Gaullist attributes of the resisters commemorated, and the 'calling out' to the General himself to come to Vichy and endorse the city's narrative suggests a clear leaning towards the Gaullist mythology. That said, the city of Vichy also organized commemorations that did not fit well in the Gaullist myth. A few of the commemorated resisters, for example, had belonged to the intelligence networks, which were much despised by de Gaulle, whose "vision of the war excluded the French who were involved in networks and movements that had favored civilian action over military operations."<sup>814</sup> Marc Juge, as shown earlier, belonged to the *Marco Polo* network, whereas Jean Bouteille was a member of the *Alliance* network, the affiliation of which was Giraudist, rather than Gaullist. Although Juge's and Bouteille's membership in these networks were never brought to the forefront during commemorations, they were not presented as Gaullist fighters either.

In 1946, Vichy officially participated in the first commemoration honoring the eighty parliamentarians who voted 'no' on July 10, 1940, despite the fact that it was organized and

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<sup>811</sup> "À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n'est plus qu'une sous préfecture," *Valmy* (September 25, 1944).

<sup>812</sup> Jean Débordes, *L'Allier dans la Guerre (1939-1945)* (Romagnat: De Borée, 2000), 387.

<sup>813</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of Barbier's letter to Charles de Gaulle (December 4, 1944).

<sup>814</sup> Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 26-27.

presided over by anti-Gaullists. At the end of 1943, a large proportion of the eighty parliamentarians, including Jean Odin, had made themselves “à la disposition de la Résistance française pour coordonner avec elle leurs forces aussi bien pour l'organisation de la Victoire que pour l'élaboration des mesures politiques qui doivent accompagner la libération.”<sup>815</sup> On August 25, 1944, Jean Odin and Joseph-Boncour founded the *Comité parlementaire de la Résistance* on behalf of the eighty parliamentarians of July 10 and the twenty-seven deputies who went onboard the Massilia on June 20. The committee officially supported de Gaulle and the provisional government. They recognized the prominent place occupied by the General, and they offered to work with him. For different reasons, however, things did not go as planned,<sup>816</sup> and in 1946, Odin published *Les Quatre-Vingts*, prefaced by Emile Muselier, a former Gaullist, who had become one of de Gaulle's main opponents in 1943 and 1944.<sup>817</sup> That Odin invited him to write the preface of his book is telling of his view on de Gaulle. Odin's position on the General, however, was not a source of concern for Vichy's local leaders, who involved themselves in the commemoration every year.

Other commemorations had some clear communist overtones, even though the PCF influence was limited in Vichy. In fact, while the communists never succeeded in gaining political power, they would soon establish themselves as the main memorial actor in Vichy, not so much because their narrative was better constructed and more convincing than other groups, but rather because, from the late 1940s onwards, they were the only organization that tried to keep the memory of the resistance alive in Vichy.

In France, the PCF's mystique of the Resistance was often shaped in opposition to the Gaullist narrative. Gaullism found its footing and drew inspiration for its action in the passionate attachment to France's greatness, while communism knew (knows) nothing other than classes – the proletarian solidarity prevails over national sentiments.<sup>818</sup> Amongst the commemorations that bore some communist characteristics was that in honor of Kespy. Of the four people who made a speech, one was from the PCF (M. Besset) and one from the FN (M. Nivelles). The former, a friend of Kespy, stated, on behalf of the Party: “Lui, n'eût jamais pactisé avec les amis de Pétain.

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<sup>815</sup> Report from Jean Renard (Jean Odin), sent to London by Albert Kohan (December 17, 1943). Jean Odin, *Les Quatre-vingts* (Paris, Tallandier, 1946), 63-65.

<sup>816</sup> Jean Sagnes, “Le refus républicain : les quatre-vingts parlementaires qui dirent ‘non’ à Vichy le 10 juillet 1940.” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 38:4 (1991), 555-589.

<sup>817</sup> Odin, *Les Quatre-vingts*.

<sup>818</sup> Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, eds., *50 ans d'une passion française. De Gaulle et les communistes* (Paris: Balland, 1991), 14.



C'était un résistant, un vrai ! Un de ceux qui souhaitaient l'émancipation du peuple dans une véritable démocratie."<sup>819</sup> Another favored theme for the communists when reminiscing about the Resistance was clandestineness.<sup>820</sup> Through the exhibition of the Resistance organized in the summers of 1945 and 1946, which highlighted the setting up of underground networks and communications, the clandestine actions of the resistance were clearly on display.

In an effort to belong to the victorious nation many commemorations organized by Vichy's leaders had a Gaullist component. Some, however, did not. The ambivalent nature of the ceremonies in Vichy can be explained by several factors. First, even at the national level, there was no strict dichotomy between the different memories of the resistance, even between the Gaullist memory and the communist memory. The communist and the Gaullist memory portrayed the French people as unanimously resistant since 1940, either in response to the appeal issued by a providential man, temporary custodian of France's soul, or in response to the appeal issued by an avant garde party, "défenseur du drapeau national que la grande bourgeoisie avait laissé choir dans la boue du déshonneur."<sup>821</sup> Kept alive by rampant commemorative practices, both memories exploited the recent past by fiercely condemning all of the forms of accommodation and *a fortiori* of complicity with the enemy.<sup>822</sup> The Gaullist and communist memories were thus both opposite to each other and complementary.

Second, the fact that the national narrative was presented as an epic made it difficult to reproduce locally. While the military parades, the military concerts, and the laying of wreaths could be mirrored locally, the very nature of the epic – national in essence – made a complete appropriation impossible. Many local communities, therefore, developed their own Resistance memories, celebrated their own heroes and mourned their own martyrs.<sup>823</sup> In Pierre Laborie's words,

le modèle abstrait, instable et souvent conflictuel d'une mémoire collective de la Résistance censée traduire le sentiment général ne correspond que de façon approximative à ce qui peut être constaté à une échelle plus restreinte ... Les espaces locaux ou régionaux, ou encore des aires culturelles de superficie modeste, à forte identité, offrent d'autres cas de figure. En effet, à la différence de ce qui est avancé à

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<sup>819</sup> "Une plaque commémorative à la mémoire de Roger Kespy," newspaper unknown (date unknown, most likely July 26 or shortly after).

<sup>820</sup> Rouso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 26.

<sup>821</sup> Buton and Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, 10.

<sup>822</sup> Azéma, *Vichy-paris*, 204.

<sup>823</sup> Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 602.

l'échelle de la nation, les mémoires de la Résistance des populations concernées par des événements particuliers auxquels elles avaient été confrontées (présence de maquis, représailles, conditions de libération) semblent témoigner de formes d'adhésion plus consensuelles, moins segmentées. À l'intérieur de limites territoriales de nature et de dimension diverses, mais caractérisées par la géographie et/ou les pratiques culturelles, les processus d'identification avec la Résistance se sont affirmés et exercés au delà des clivages habituellement recensés. La mémoire de la Résistance y transcende des oppositions décrites par ailleurs comme irréductibles et semble perdurer de façon plus stable.<sup>824</sup>

In Vichy, there is another explanation for the ambivalent nature of the commemorations and their lack of a clear political line. All leaders and resisters worked towards the city's (and their own) rehabilitation. To be sure, tensions between resisters were not insignificant. The implosion of Vichy's first *Comité local de libération* (which included both Jean Barbier and Louis Moinard) shortly after its creation on August 30, due to internal feuds amongst resisters and communist pressure, is the most obvious sign of friction amongst those vying for power.<sup>825</sup> Another cause of tension may have been the appointment of Dr. Pierre Nigay in the CLL. Indeed, Nigay had been maintained by Pétain in 1940 and who, according to a survey conducted by the government in 1942, had strongly supported the regime, had been "devoted" to the Marshall, and had entertained good relationships with members of the government.<sup>826</sup> Although Nigay may have helped the resistance, one can only imagine that his appointment provoked outrage. Yet, most leaders and resisters in Vichy – if not all – were animated by a common project (the rehabilitation of the local Resistance and of the city, more generally), which required looking beyond political ideologies. Hence the existence of some (fragile) consensus about the construction of the memory of the Resistance in Vichy, based on a shared memory of courage, heroism, victimhood and injustice.

## Conclusion

After the liberation, each city and village celebrated their fallen heroes and constructed their own memory of the Occupation. In Vichy, the various commemorations and the plea to Charles de Gaulle to visit the city and endorse its narrative reveal the prominence of the national

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<sup>824</sup> Pierre Laborie, "Mémoire de la Résistance," in "Les résistants, leur temps et le nôtre," in François Marcot (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la résistance et de la France libre* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 832-823.

<sup>825</sup> Débordes, *L'Allier dans la guerre*, 390.

<sup>826</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 901 W 308. Information Sheet on Nigay (1942).

frameworks of memory. Yet, a closer look at the various memorial initiatives organized between 1944 and 1947 suggests that the city was also very eager to reframe its local memory around the self-perceived uniqueness of its experience during the war.

The direction of the local memory of the war should be understood within the wider context of the immediate postwar period in Vichy. Emerging from the war, the city started to express worries of ostracism from France. Vichy's status as the capital of Pétain's treacherous government had led to the *détournement* of the word 'Vichy', provoking obsessive fears in Vichy for the city's reputation, upon which the local economy largely depended. As noted by Louis Moinard, "la réputation de notre ville ... conditionne sa prospérité."<sup>827</sup> Local leaders were worried that the misappropriation of the city's name might lead the French, who, following de Gaulle's lead, now only swore by the Resistance, to consider Vichy's population as guilty of 'collective' collaboration.

Until the late 1940s, the battle for rehabilitation was, in large parts, conducted on memorial grounds, through intensive commemoration that honored local fallen resisters, and through the construction of a victim discourse. This rhetoric presented the city not only as a victim of the Germans, Pétain's governments, and 'History' (for making Vichy Pétain's capital), as we have seen in this chapter, but also as a victim of the postwar governments, which were accused of not doing anything to break the conflation between the regime and the city, thereby allegedly reinforcing the stigmatization.

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<sup>827</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (May 6, 1945).

## CHAPTER 6 – The crystallization of a twofold victimhood myth and the decline of the Resistance myth (from 1944 to the mid 1950s)

In Chapter 1 and 2, we saw how the population's behavior towards Pétain's government was largely influenced by the city's long experience as a spa resort – the city's dependency on spa tourism had shaped the population's social behavior and attitudes in a significant way, turning the *Vichyssois* into accommodating and welcoming hosts. In the postwar period, it was again the city's intricate relation with spa tourism that determined the direction of war memory. While current local leaders have shown an obsessive concern with regard to the problem of the linguistic *détournement* of the word 'Vichy', such a problem is not new. The misappropriation of the name 'Vichy' has been a consistent source of anxiety in the former capital since 1944. In the immediate postwar period, the *Vichyssois*, who hoped that the name of Vichy would remain positively connoted, constructed a dual war narrative focusing on the city's heroism and victimhood (see Chapter 5). Yet fearing that the city might still be stigmatized in spite of their efforts in framing a 'favorable' narrative about wartime Vichy, the city framed another narrative, this time emphasizing the responsibility of the postwar governments in allegedly ostracizing Vichy's population. The city presented itself as a twofold victim: (1) of the Germans and Pétain's government, and (2) of the governments of the Fourth Republic.

Three to four years into the postwar period, however, the city's dynamic of remembrance changed significantly. In France the memory of the war "[began] to recede into the past" in the mid 1950s. By then, France was embarking on its first period of economic expansion, a peaceful German Republic had emerged, and postwar passions had started to ease."<sup>828</sup> In Vichy, this shift occurred almost a decade earlier. Spa tourism's recovery in the late 1940s indeed led to a major shift in how the war was remembered in Vichy, with the memory of the war, and of the Resistance more particularly, quickly disappearing from the public stage. Only the victimhood discourse continued to be mobilized, albeit much less frequently than before.

### 1. Fabricating a myth: Vichy's imagined stigmatization

Life did not immediately return to normal after the city was liberated in August 1944. Until the summer of 1945, there were many visible signs in Vichy to remind the population that

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<sup>828</sup> Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 60.

the war was not over yet. Many soldiers were still in town, most notably soldiers and officers from the *Régiment de Marche Corrèze-Limousin*, who had set up camp at the local racetrack,<sup>829</sup> and armed groups from the Resistance, who had been required to remain stationed in Vichy until the summer of 1945, with a mandate to protect the hospitalized Germans, whose protection and medical care had been negotiated by the Swiss ambassador, Watler Stucki (see Chapter 5), and to manage security in the train station.<sup>830</sup> Moreover, many hotels were requisitioned again by the provisional government, mostly for health and military services (as had already been the case during the First World War). In the *hôtel du Parc*, for instance, one floor was used by the military tribunal, while the other four were transformed into a military hospital.<sup>831</sup> Health units were also set up in the *hôtels Radio*, *hôtel des Bains*, *hôtel International*, *hôtel des Célestins*, *hôtel du Globe*, *hôtel Majestic*, *hôtel Helder*, and *hôtel Thermal*.<sup>832</sup> Between 1,200 and 1,800 wounded men were treated in Vichy. Additional hotels were made available to the returnees.<sup>833</sup>

Vichy embraced its postwar health mission with determination and resolve, as if to prove to France its worthiness and good will. The municipal council even voted a 100,000 francs subsidy for the creation of a repatriation center for former prisoners and deportees.<sup>834</sup> The city also proposed spa treatments for sick returnees (whose cost was covered by the *Entr'aide aux prisonniers*). 112 rooms (sixty-three at the *hôtel France-Pasteur* and fifty at the *hôtel Lafayette*) were reserved for the returnees with liver problems, who needed a *cure*. The former prisoners reportedly received a daily consumption of coffee with milk, bread and jam, meat, vegetables, cheese, and fruits, a feast at the time!<sup>835</sup>

Although caring for the wounded gave the population the impression that they were participating in the national war effort, the new requisitions were both a psychological and pragmatic burden for the city, which, at the time was encountering structural and economic

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<sup>829</sup> This regiment, created in 1944, was made of resisters from the Limousin. They later joined De Lattre de Tassigny's army in Belfort and Colmar (where most of them died). "Les maquis à Vichy," unidentified newspaper (September 25, 1944).

<sup>830</sup> The *hôtel Lafayette* was one of them. AD (Allier), 774 W 2. Report from the Allier *préfet* (March 30, 1945).

<sup>831</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy*'s Board of directors (December 8, 1944).

<sup>832</sup> Pierre Broustine, Claude Delbergé, Jean Gouat and Léon Maupertuis. *Vichy réquisitionné, 1870-1871, 1914-1918, 1939-1945* (Vichy: Musée de Vichy, Section Philatellie, 1993).

<sup>833</sup> L.N., "Le centre thermal des prisonniers et des déportés," in *Nouveau mémorial Vichy* (Vichy: Editions des Montagnes Bleues, 1946), 68.

<sup>834</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (April 21, 1945).

<sup>835</sup> L.N., "Le centre thermal des prisonniers et des déportés," 68-69.

difficulties. In the spring of 1945, the situation was particularly bleak in Vichy. The population, that believed that the war's end would bring with it an improvement of food supplies, grew disillusioned. This situation led to a big demonstration on March 1945, with the *Union des Femmes Françaises* (UFF) threatening to take charge of the management of food supplies in the city, if no improvement was observed:

Le ravitaillement est des points les plus importants de la vie économique de notre ville. Les critiques sont nombreuses et le mécontentement toujours grandissant. L'U.F.F. a organisé, dernièrement, le 11 mars 1945, une grande manifestation en vue d'améliorer le ravitaillement de notre ville et d'exiger le renvoi des responsables, qu'elle qualifie de criminels incapables. Un représentant de cette organisation vient de confirmer que si le 1<sup>er</sup> avril rien n'est encore intervenu, l'U.F.F. d'accord avec les organismes producteurs prendra en main, le ravitaillement de la cité.<sup>836</sup>

In *Destins d'Allier*, André Touret cites a call for solidarity by the *Comité départemental de Libération de l'Allier* to the “paysans patriotes Bourbonnais.” With the increasing scarcity of milk and fats, they said, “nous faisons appel à votre patriotisme pour le ravitaillement des villes et des cités urbaines, où beaucoup d'enfants, de mères, de malades, de vieillards souffrent cruellement du manque de ces aliments de première nécessité.”<sup>837</sup> In the winter of 1946, many problems remained and the population noted that in a number of areas, the situation was worsening instead of improving.<sup>838</sup> Not only had the bread-rationing card been reinstated and the wine ration reduced by half in the Allier department, but coat supplies also remained very inconsistent.<sup>839</sup> On top of that, one third of the former prisoners and half of the deportees were unemployed in Vichy,<sup>840</sup> which brought even more stress and worries to Vichy's population.

While obtaining food was a concern for many in Vichy, the main uncertainty and source of worry for the *Vichyssois* concerned spa tourism, which residents and business owners had hoped would recover quickly after the war. In fact, the city had been preparing for spa seasons to resume since 1943. After failing to have decent spa seasons in 1941 and 1942 despite the hard work that had been put into this project (see Chapter 1), the city resigned itself to waiting for the

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<sup>836</sup> AD (Allier), 774 W 2. Report from the Allier *préfet* (March 30, 1945).

<sup>837</sup> Cited André Touret, *Destins d'Allier 1945-2000 : population et économie : les grands événements et l'évolution de l'opinion* (Nonette: Edition Créer, 2005), 15.

<sup>838</sup> AD (Allier), 774 W 1. Report from the Allier *préfet* (December 26, 1945 – January 10, 1946).

<sup>839</sup> AD (Allier), 774 W 1. Reports from the Allier *préfet* (December 26, 1945 – January 10, 1946 and January 11 – January 26, 1946).

<sup>840</sup> AD (Allier), 774 W 1. Reports from the Allier *préfet* (February 10 – February 25, 1946).



war's end. But instead of ruminating over their problems, local leaders started to plan the postwar seasons. From 1943 onwards, the main issue tackled during the meetings of the local societies of medical sciences was the resort's postwar development.<sup>841</sup> In order to quickly rebound after the end of the war, the city undertook important groundwater abstraction work. In Vichy, there are both natural and drilled springs. The water coming out of the drilled springs is expelled through a pipe, while in the case of natural springs, the course of water is natural and therefore unknown. As early as the 1930s, local authorities emphasized the need to also direct the water of the natural springs through pipes, so as to exploit them to their full potential, but changing the course of water was no easy task. If the operation failed it could jeopardize the whole spa season. Given the small number of tourists during the war, the economic risks were limited. The city therefore took this opportunity to do archeological research and to start the practical work.<sup>842</sup> So, although the war led to the loss of earning relating to spa tourism, it also provided the opportunity to perform essential work for the future of the resort.

In 1945, the population was impatiently waiting for the recovery of spa tourism, even though the war in Europe was not yet over. The *préfet* noted in March 1945 that the *Vichysois*' main concern was to know whether there would be a spa season. With the arrival of sunny days, the *Vichysois* were eagerly waiting for the resort to rise from the war's ashes and to "retrouver, dans un jour prochain, sa splendeur passée de 'Vichy reine des villes d'eau'".<sup>843</sup> Worries increased, however, when sanitary problems, related to the sewage disposal, were discovered. The risk was high that the springs be contaminated if a solution was not found: "un tel incident risquerait de provoquer une épidémie générale par la dissémination des curistes venus de toute la France."<sup>844</sup> One may assume that a solution was found since there are no other mentions of this issue in any other reports by the *sous-préfet* or the *préfet*. Preparations for the season could therefore continue. In June 1945, the city made a request for classification as a 'ville à

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<sup>841</sup> The issue of July-August 1943 of the journal of the *Centre Médical* summed up the meeting's presentations and discussions. Private archive. Courtesy of Michel Laval.

<sup>842</sup> The archaeological work was documented in several local publications in the 1940s. It is, in great part, thanks to these studies that we know that some significant work was carried out during the war. Pascal Chambriard, Conversation with author (summer of 2014).

<sup>843</sup> AD (Allier), 774 W 2. Report from the Allier *préfet* (March 30, 1945).

<sup>844</sup> AN. F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* (January 15 – February 15, 1945).

*suppléments nationaux*’ so that it could receive additional allocations of food for tourists and *curistes*.<sup>845</sup>

Unfortunately though, the summer did not live up to the population’s expectations. Although the export of bottled water started to resume,<sup>846</sup> the season of 1945 was very disappointing. It lasted only three months, while prewar seasons had been twice as long, and the number of tourists was very low. With hindsight, it is logical that the 1945 season was not successful: the war was not finished everywhere when the season opened; many hotels in Vichy were still requisitioned; and those that were not were yet to be properly restored. The *établissements thermaux*, which had successively been occupied by the Red Cross, the milice and/or the Germans, were not ready either: beside the damage caused by the four-year occupancy, more than four thousand chairs, hairbrushes, shoehorns, as well as bed and bathroom linen – amongst many other things – had disappeared. Even the baths and some of the pipes had been stolen (or destroyed).<sup>847</sup> Realistically, it would have been impossible for the resort to have been fully restored by the spring of 1945. In 1945, however, the unsuccessful season was experienced as a major blow to both the population, who had in mind the fast recovery following World War I, and the local leaders, who had worked hard during the war to help instigate an almost immediate postwar spa recovery.

In 1946, the city’s future seemed as bleak as it had the previous year, and many *Vichyssois* started to wonder whether Vichy would succeed in becoming more than a mere shadow of its former self: “Que va devenir Vichy dans la Quatrième république ?”<sup>848</sup> Once again, the summer was disappointing with about 69,000 *curistes*.<sup>849</sup> Although the situation was improving, the improvement was too slow and too limited for the city’s liking. The city accused France of impeding its economic recovery by unfairly stigmatizing its population for having hosted the government for four years. As early as August 1944, there were growing concerns in

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<sup>845</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council’s meeting (June 20, 1945). Whether the council’s request was granted is unknown.

<sup>846</sup> Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (September 2, 1946). I warmly thank Pascal Chambriard for providing me with access to the general assemblies’ minutes of the *Compagnie*.

<sup>847</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, *Vichy et son histoire: des origines à nos jours* (Vichy: Szabo, 1947), 178-179.

<sup>848</sup> Louis Fournier, “Convalescence de Vichy,” in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 57-58.

<sup>849</sup> Touret, *Destins d’Allier*, 67.

In comparison, there were 2,780 *curistes* in Bourbon-l’Archambault, 3,300 in Nérès-les-Bains. Although 69,000 is a big figure compared to neighboring spa resorts, it was nowhere near what Vichy was used to (about 150,000 tourists/*curistes* had been registered in 1938).

Vichy that by failing to properly differentiate between Pétain's regime and the city of Vichy, the latter's future as a world renowned spa resort was at risk.

The obsession surrounding the (mis)use of the name 'Vichy' does not date back from the war, although, of course, the war brought a whole new dimension to the debate. Already in the nineteenth century, the name 'Vichy' was coveted by businessmen and entrepreneurs who wanted to have an exclusive use of it. In the late nineteenth century, the investments and initiatives of the *Compagnie fermière* (the company in charge of Vichy's thermal complex) enabled the resort to quickly develop. As a result of Vichy's rapid growth of popularity, the *Compagnie* strove to prevent the owners of private springs from using the name 'Vichy', which, they argued, was their property. Several owners were sued. Each time, however, the company lost the case, forcing its members to develop other strategies. One such strategy was the creation of a trademark for all the products made out of the water running from the springs the company managed. The brand "Vichy-État"<sup>850</sup> was registered on November 30, 1893. Owners of private springs responded by registering their own brands, such as 'Vichy-Prunelle' and 'Vichy-Lardy'.<sup>851</sup> In the early twentieth century, as the city grew more popular, further concerns were raised about the use of the name 'Vichy'. In June 1938, a group of merchants and patent-holders lobbied the municipal council demanding legislation to protect the name 'Vichy': "[we] must reserve for our [products and] residents alone, the advantages of [Vichy's] reputation ... and protect *l'appellation Vichy*."<sup>852</sup>

The name of 'Vichy' started to take on pejorative connotations during the war. A Gaullist tract, for instance, read: "À bas Vichy – Vive notre Chef de Gaulle."<sup>853</sup> Similarly in a 1942 leaflet edited by the resistance group *Combat*, 'Vichy' is described as a dictatorship, which betrayed the nation and its republican ideals. Those who serve 'Vichy', they wrote, "ont [aussi] servi Hitler."<sup>854</sup> The 'Vichy' metaphor was quickly taken further, and in several instances the Vichy water came to symbolize collaboration. In the last scene of the 1942 American movie

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<sup>850</sup> Since the French revolution, the state has been the owner of Vichy's thermal complex. Since 1853, the complex has been managed by the *Compagnie fermière*, a private company appointed by the state. For more on the history of Vichy's thermal complex and the *Compagnie fermière*, see Chapter 10.

<sup>851</sup> Pascal Chambriard, *Aux Sources de Vichy Naissance et développement d'un bassin thermal (XIXe-XXe siècles)*. (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 1999), 153-155.

<sup>852</sup> Cited in Kirrily Freeman, "A Capital Problem: The Town of Vichy, the Second World War, and the Politics of Identity," in *The Long Aftermath: Historical and Cultural Legacies of Europe at War, 1936-1945*, eds. Manuel Bragança and Peter Tame (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 136.

<sup>853</sup> AD (Nord), 1 W 4698. Digitalized tracts (undated).

<sup>854</sup> AD (Allier), 996 W. Series of tracts and leaflets from the Resistance.

*Casablanca*, an official is seen throwing away a bottle of Vichy water, a metaphor for his rejection of collaboration.<sup>855</sup> In his 1944 book, *Dans l'honneur et la dignité*, the French cartoonist Sennep used the bottle of Vichy water with the same symbolism.<sup>856</sup> The use of the name 'Vichy' to refer to Pétain's government continued in the postwar period. Between 1944 and 1949, out of forty-one occurrences of the word 'Vichy' in *Le Monde*, only eight were about the city of Vichy, the thirty-three others were about the regime.<sup>857</sup>

In the immediate postwar period, the fear over the possible consequences of the misappropriation of the name 'Vichy' and of a widespread stigmatization of the city was commonly expressed in the local press and in official discourses. In the newspaper *L'avenir de Vichy*, the political columnist and city councilor, M. Mazerolle, wrote:

'Vichy est en danger' : ... Vichy a perdu son caractère de Ville d'Eaux, sa clientèle, ses instruments de Travail. Vichy sans saison n'est plus Vichy. Tâche importante : retrouver les clients de Vichy, refaire de Vichy la reine des villes d'eaux. Voilà l'essentiel de notre politique municipale. Vichy sera capitale quand même... capitale thermale.<sup>858</sup>

"Devra-t-[elle], comme certains le prétendent, changer de nom, s'appeler Aix-en-Bourbonnais (Ex-en-Bourbonnais plutôt) pour effacer l'identification d'une ville charmante et d'un gouvernement sinistre ?," Louis Fournier asked in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*.<sup>859</sup> In November 1944, motivated by the growing fear of being increasingly ostracized in France, the municipal council drafted a long note about the city's experience during the war and its current concerns with what was perceived as an unfair stigmatization.

Le Conseil (...) ému de constater que le nom de Vichy est ainsi dénigré (...) proteste avec énergie contre ce discrédit immérité infligé à notre ville et à ses habitants. (...) Vichy, devenue malgré elle capitale provisoire de notre pays, ne s'est jamais laissée griser par ce titre et a su conserver, au milieu des malheurs de la France, sa dignité et son honneur. Vichy a eu, elle aussi, ses prisonniers, ses déportés, ses héros, ses martyrs. (...) [Les Vichyssois] réclament (...) compréhension et justice. Ils ne veulent plus que leur nom soit associé à la politique

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<sup>855</sup> Michael Curtiz, *Casablanca* (Warner Bros Entertainment, 1942).

<sup>856</sup> J. Sennep, *Dans l'honneur et la dignité : Souvenir de Vichy* (Paris: Société des Éditions de Franc-Tireur, 1944)

<sup>857</sup> Only articles with the word 'Vichy' in their titles have been reported.

<sup>858</sup> "Vichy est en danger," *L'Avenir de Vichy* 1 (Fall 1944).

<sup>859</sup> Louis Fournier, "Convalescence de Vichy," in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 57-58.

néfaste qui a été conçue et réalisée à l'intérieur des murs de leur Ville malgré eux et contre eux. (...).<sup>860</sup>

The local leaders argued further that failing to treat the city with due respect would not only be detrimental to Vichy, but it would be detrimental for France, which had long benefitted from the city's reputation. The recognized effectiveness of Vichy's water, as well as "la valeur artistique de ses spectacles et de ses concerts, (...) sa réputation d'accueillante hospitalité," had made the city one of the top spa resorts in the world, and therefore also a "messenger" for France. For the city to "continuer cette mission de messagère de la France, ... car elle en est toujours digne," municipal councilors said that its reputation had to be restored. So they requested France help them "effacer définitivement la souillure répandue sur la Ville par quatre années d'un régime détesté, de l'aider à redonner à la 'Reine des Villes d'Eaux', honneur de notre Pays, un rayonnement conforme aux intérêts du thermalisme Français." They also demanded that "un effort soit fait par tous ceux qui écrivent dans la Presse ou parlent à la radio pour que cesse cet état de choses qui ne porte pas seulement préjudice à la réputation de leur Ville, mais aussi à l'intérêt bien compris de la France toute entière."<sup>861</sup> In his December 1944 letter to de Gaulle, Vichy's mayor, Jean Barbier, asserted that France's full recovery could not be fully achieved unless Vichy regained its prewar glory. He proudly asserted: "[L]a renommée [de Vichy,] qui est mondiale sert la France, tout ce qui lui porte atteinte nuit aux Pays tout entier. Dans l'intérêt même de la collectivité nationale il faut que le nom de Vichy dont on fait actuellement un si triste usage soit réhabilité."<sup>862</sup>

In June 1945, echoing the arguments that had already been forwarded numerous times, Vichy's new mayor, Louis Moinard, promised to

rendre [à Vichy] son renom mérité que des circonstances malheureuses lui ont fait perdre. Nous engagerons immédiatement cette bataille et nous la gagnerons sur les sots et les malveillants qui continuent à faire une réputation infâme à notre cité. La réputation de notre ville lui sera rendue car elle conditionne sa prospérité.<sup>863</sup>

The notions of injustice and stigmatization were at the core of all the official discourses and press articles about the postwar situation in Vichy. "Où est l'âme de cette ville ? Que représente-t-elle

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<sup>860</sup> "Vichy n'est pas le Siège d'un Gouvernement Traître à la Patrie mais la 'REINE DES VILLES D'EAUX'." (November 20, 1944).

<sup>861</sup> Ibid.

<sup>862</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of Barbier's letter to Charles de Gaulle (December 4, 1944).

<sup>863</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (June 6, 1945).

maintenant aux yeux de la France et du monde ?” a journalist asked in September 1944. “Je connais de bons Vichyssois qui aiment Vichy et souffrent pour elle de l’injustice qu’on lui a faite,” he added.<sup>864</sup> In the above-cited newspaper *L’avenir de Vichy*, Mazerolle, complained that: “actuellement le nom de Vichy est synonyme de trahison. Nous n’avons pas, nous, Vichyssois, mérité ce déshonneur.”<sup>865</sup> This narrative and that about the city’s experience during the war often intertwined, feeding into one another. In a note dated from September 28, 1944, the local chief of the FFI, Dudenhoeffer (known as Pontcarral) stated that:

Aucune ville française, à ma connaissance, n’a eu à subir un tel régime de terreur. (...) Dans une telle atmosphère faire de la résistance en tant que fonctionnaire ou faire de la résistance militaire pour organiser un noyau capable, au mot d’ordre, de se lever et de chasser l’envahisseur présentait des dangers incontestables. Ainsi, dire *Vichy ville de traîtres* est une injustice flagrante et il convient de dresser une liste de tous ceux qui ont fait de la résistance active ainsi que des sympathisants. Ces chiffres donneront au monde et aux français, l’image réelle de ce qu’a été Vichy, ville résistante et où, peut-être, la résistance a été la plus belle.<sup>866</sup>

In 1946, the resisters and local leaders further voiced their anger and frustration in a small book entitled *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, locally edited and published. The authors complained about the so-called rumors and lies that the French were allegedly spreading about Vichy: “Vichy est, paraît-il, la cause de la collaboration ! C’est Vichy, n’est-ce pas ?, qui a supplié Pétain de venir s’installer dans un de ses palaces ! (...) Eh bien ! rien de tout cela n’est vrai... ‘Vichy collaborateur’ est une légende qu’il faut détruire”<sup>867</sup>; “Vichy est une ville aimable et jolie, une ville accueillante et animée. Ce n’est pas une ville qui a trahi... Vichy n’a pas succombé à la tentation. Ceux qui dans son sein se sont mal conduits étaient venus de partout, sauf de Vichy...”<sup>868</sup> According to Maurice-J Champel, another contributor to the book,

(...) Qu’est-il advenu de la libération de Vichy ? (...) Si les vipères ont disparu, les couleuvres sont restées ; et grâce à elles, Vichy continue à payer le tribut de l’occupation. Vichy n’est toujours pas libérée, parce que sur elle pèse le souvenir de quatre années odieuses et qu’à Paris, comme un peu partout on persiste à identifier Vichy à ceux qui en furent les tyrans. (...) Vichy en a assez d’être traitée comme

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<sup>864</sup> “À travers Vichy, la capitale provisoire n’est plus qu’une sous préfecture,” *Valmy* (September 27, 1944).

<sup>865</sup> “Vichy est en danger,” *L’Avenir de Vichy* 1 (Fall 1944).

<sup>866</sup> Cited in Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent: Auvergne-Bourbonnais (1940-1945)* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 229-230.

<sup>867</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, “Vichy-Vérité,” in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 09.

<sup>868</sup> Louis Fournier, “Convalescence de Vichy,” in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 60.



responsable du malheur qui étreignit, tout un lustre (et même un peu plus), la Patrie. Vichy, qui fut injustement frappée, veut une justice à la mesure de l'injustice dont il lui a fallu souffrir. (...) <sup>869</sup>

In 1947, Moinard introduced a bill to parliament aiming to officially end the confusion between the city and Pétain's government. <sup>870</sup> The same year, during the commemoration in honor of the eighty parliamentarians who voted 'no' on July 10, 1940, Moinard went as far as expressing his wishes that the name Vichy were used to evoke the Resistance, rather than collaboration:

nous autres, habitants de cette ville ... n'avons pas à rougir de ce que nous avons fait de 1940 à 1944 et [nous] pouvons être fiers du combat qu'ont mené bien des nôtres... Nous seuls avons la responsabilité de l'honneur de Vichy et permettez-moi de regretter devant vous que le nom de Vichyssois ... soit donné à ceux qui ont trahi et non pas à ceux qui comme vous se sont honorés par leur attitude dans notre ville. <sup>871</sup>

Moinard's bill was not successful and the name of Vichy continued to be used as a shorthand for Pétain's regime. In 1952, Vichy's deputy, Dr. Pierre Nigay, was infuriated by an incident that occurred at the French Assembly, where a deputy had called another a "Vichyssois." Nigay interjected:

Je tiens à protester contre l'usage abusif qui est fait du nom d'une ville située dans le département que j'ai l'honneur de représenter. Vichy a eu pendant la guerre ses victimes et ses déportés du nazisme. L'emploi systématique dans un but péjoratif de ce vocable constitue un propos injurieux à l'égard de la population vichyssoise qui ne saurait le mériter. <sup>872</sup>

How did the population respond to this victimizing discourse? To what extent was this discourse the result of a joint collaboration between the population and local leaders or the mere creation of the latter? As I was doing research in Vichy between 2012 and 2016, I interviewed several *Vichyssois* who had experienced the war and the immediate after war in Vichy. Mrs. B. remembers how the immediate postwar period was unpleasant for herself and her fellow *Vichyssois*:

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<sup>869</sup> Maurice-J Champel, "Ceux de Vichy," in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 13.

<sup>870</sup> "Hier Vichy a accueilli les parlementaires qui s'opposèrent aux pleins pouvoirs à Pétain," *La Montagne* (July 11, 1947).

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

<sup>872</sup> Nicole Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: A. Sutton, 2009), 162.

Question: après la guerre la vie a repris son cours normalement ?

Answer: ça a été un peu lent...

Q: Est-ce que Vichy avait mauvaise presse dès la fin de la guerre ?

A: très mauvaise presse. Comme si on avait fait quelque chose...

Comme si c'était de la faute des habitants. On nous appelait les Vichystes. On nous appelait plus les Vichyssois. C'était fini ça.

Q: Vous en avez souffert ?

A: Oui, ça m'a toujours embêté, parce que j'aime assez mon pays.

Alors ça m'embêtait. Je trouvais qu'on avait rien fait pour être qualifiés comme ça... c'est pas de notre faute s'ils sont venus chez nous...

Q: Vichy est devenue le bouc émissaire ?

A: Oui, voilà. Voilà. Vichy était très mal vue... On s'est laissés traiter de Vichystes... Ça me déplaisait beaucoup qu'on nous appelle comme ça. Ça m'a toujours déplu.<sup>873</sup>

Mrs Fiorin, a local bookseller, shares similar memories:

Q: Après la guerre, en tant que Vichyssoise, est-ce que vous aviez l'impression que l'on vous traite différemment ?

A: Pas dans Vichy même. Mais à l'extérieur oui, quand on sortait de Vichy. Quand j'allais à Toulouse et tout, on m'a zappée quelques fois. On m'a lancé des petites piques, gentilles, mais quand même.<sup>874</sup>

In *Les Complexes de Vichy*, written in 1975, Georges Frélastre also recalls the immediate postwar period as a brutal and painful period for *Vichyssois*, who felt that they were being unfairly judged by people unqualified to judge them, and that their voices were being denied:

Voilà que d'autres Français se mêlaient de sonder attentivement les intentions profondes des Vichyssois autochtones au cours de cette triste période ! On auscultait le pouls des habitants pour savoir s'ils avaient fait grise-mine aux 'occupants'. Comme si le pays tout entier n'était pas passible du même interrogatoire ? Les gens du cru trouvaient désobligeante cette attention particulière qu'on prêtait à leur attitude... Vichy souffrait de voir ainsi cristalliser sur son nom une parenthèse d'histoire peu glorieuse.<sup>875</sup>

Not only did the population have to deal with Pétain's much despised government for four years, he explained, the *Vichyssois* also had to deal with unreasonable suspicion from France: "On

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<sup>873</sup> Mrs B., interview by author (February 8, 2014).

<sup>874</sup> Mrs Fiorin, interview by author (April 14, 2014).

<sup>875</sup> Georges Frélastre, *Les Complexes de Vichy ou Vichy les capitales* (Paris: Éditions France Empire, 1975),

aurait dû épargner à Vichy cette épreuve de suspicion supplémentaire, après qu’il eut supporté en première ligne cette crise de conscience nationale !”<sup>876</sup>

In the introduction, I briefly talked about the pros and cons of testimonies in historical research. The three above-mentioned testimonies reveal some limits of oral testimony. Although their contents, which support the argument that there was an overall fear of – and obsession with – ostracism, are interesting, they actually reveal little about the immediate postwar period. The victimhood discourse has been so strong in the city since 1944, that most *Vichyssois* have now internalized it. In the absence of testimonies addressing this particular issue recorded in the immediate postwar period, it is impossible to assess whether the above-mentioned testimonies have largely been influenced by the ‘official’ discourse over these past seventy years, or whether they are representative of the sentiments of their authors in the 1940s. This question is all the more relevant when one knows that in the 1940s some people in Vichy were reported to have said that the amount of negative press the city was receiving might actually prove beneficial, for what mattered was that Vichy was being talked about, for good or ill: “plus on dira du mal de Vichy, plus le nom de Vichy se répandra.”<sup>877</sup>

## 2. Trying to prove the ostracism

The innocence and victimhood discourse became not only part of the local mythology about the war, but it also became its defining feature. Concrete examples of how the so-called stigmatization played out in Vichy were often provided by the press and local scholarship, thereby sustaining and strengthening the myth of Vichy as a victim. Striving to demonstrate how such ostracism was concretely experienced in Vichy, local leaders and local media magnified the slightest ‘incident’ involving the *détournement* of the name Vichy and its impact on the population.

Throughout its existence the *Comité départemental de Libération de l’Allier* (CDL) never included any *Vichyssois*. The CDL was initially composed exclusively of people from Montluçon. Following criticism, notably by Henri Ingrand who accused its members of wanting to create “une sorte de petite république locale [montluçonnaise], où il entend rester souverain (...),”<sup>878</sup> the committee opened its doors to people from outside Montluçon. No *Vichyssois*,

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<sup>876</sup> Frélastre, *Les Complexes de Vichy*, 222.

<sup>877</sup> Champel, “Ceux de Vichy,” 13.

<sup>878</sup> Henry Ingrand, *Libération de l’Auvergne* (Paris: Hachette, 1974), 161.

however, was incorporated within the committee. While some have argued that this was due to the “ostracisme à l’égard de la ville qui avait hébergé l’État français,”<sup>879</sup> this is far from certain. In fact, the reason for such a choice is likely to have been more political than a desire to punish Vichy for having been the capital of the *État français*. As the strongest political force in the department,<sup>880</sup> the communists unsurprisingly occupied a prominent role in the committee. Prior to the official establishment of the *Comité Départemental de Libération* in the Allier department on August 25, 1944, the tensions between the socialists and the communists were so high that no consensus could be reached, leading to the formation of two committees, one communist-led, the other, socialist-led. After a compromise was reached on August 10 1944,<sup>881</sup> the two groups merged. Following the national instructions, the newly created CDL comprised two members from the MUR, one from the *Front National*, one from the CGT, one from the socialist party, and one from the communist party.<sup>882</sup> Although the political representation was now a little wider, the committee’s main political orientation was clearly communist, with several members from organizations very close to the PCF (CGT, FN, UFF, etc.).<sup>883</sup> In Vichy, as was underlined in previous chapters, the communists remained on the margins of the local political life. Although there were prominent communists in Vichy, such as Jacques Guillaumin, the political orientation of the city might have worked against them. The absence of *Vichyssois* in the CDL might also have resulted from tensions between the resisters themselves, or from other factors.

In 1944, Vichy’s mayor, Jean Barbier noted that the national suspicion and hostility towards the *Vichyssois* had pragmatic consequences on the city, and that food supplies were particularly difficult to obtain because of that. At the moment that municipal councilors took office on September 13, 1944, he made a speech in which he observed that:

(...) Depuis trois semaines, (...) je me heurte dans tous les milieux étrangers à Vichy, à une espèce d’hostilité que nous a valu la présence d’un gouvernement dont les membres n’ont pas voulu voir les

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George Rougeron denies that the committee tried to constitute “ ‘une sorte de Comité de Salut public’ or to create ‘une sorte de petite république’ selon l’imagination malveillante d’un ancien Commissaire régional de la République.” Georges Rougeron, *L’épuration en Allier: 1943-1946* (Moulins: Conseil Général de l’Allier, 1982), 51.

<sup>879</sup> André Touret, *Montluçon après la tourmente : 1944 – 1977* (Nonette: Edition Créer, 2003), 22.

<sup>880</sup> In the fall of 1944, the Allier was one of the twelve departments in France with the biggest communist density. Philippe Buton, *Les lendemains qui déchantent. Le Parti communiste français à la libération* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1993), 146.

<sup>881</sup> Touret, *Montluçon après la tourmente*, 22.

<sup>882</sup> AN. F/1cIII/1205. Bulletin officiel du comité départemental de la Libération de l’Allier (August – September 1944).

<sup>883</sup> Touret, *Montluçon après la tourmente*, 22-23.

véritables intérêts de notre pays. Nous qui ne les acceptons pas, nous qui les réprouvons, nous qui les combattons dans toute la mesure où c'était possible, nous ne voulons pas que demeure sur notre ville cette suspicion à laquelle je me heurte d'une manière parfois violente, dans toutes sortes de milieux, qu'il s'agisse d'assurer notre ravitaillement ou de vouloir apporter des améliorations. Depuis trois semaines, que de difficultés soulevées qu'il a fallu réduire : je reconnais les adversaires de toujours, les trafiquants de la politique, je les reconnais à leur manière d'opérer, qu'ils sachent bien que fort des amis qui sont groupés autour de moi, je ne redoute rien de leur activité malsaine. Nous en triompherons.<sup>884</sup>

Barbier, however, remains rather unspecific about the nature of the difficulties he faced. While some workers from governmental agencies might have been suspicious of and critical towards Vichy, how such suspicion concretely affected the city remains to be proven. There is a big difference between being criticized by some people, and being the victim of organized ostracism. Besides, Vichy was far from being the only city in France to suffer from food rationing and supply difficulties between 1944-1946.<sup>885</sup> Furthermore, the fact that since 1945, the local farming community reportedly engaged in meat trafficking very likely did not help the food situation to improve in and around Vichy.<sup>886</sup>

In 1946, a local journalist wrote a long article about how Georges Bidault, the head of the interim government, had allegedly “opposed” the coming of foreign journalists to the former capital.

Il y a quelque temps, la municipalité, [en] accord avec les organismes importants de la station, envisagea d'inviter à Vichy les représentants de la presse étrangère qui assistant actuellement à la Confédération de la Paix de Paris. C'était là une initiative des plus heureuses. (...) Lors de cette visite, les journalistes étrangers se seraient rendu compte sur place que notre ville a fait peau neuve et que plus rien ne subsiste du Vichy capitale, dont les journaux et les radios du monde entier ont parlé en termes si désobligeants. [Les journalistes étrangers] auraient constaté l'effort exceptionnel fourni par tous nos concitoyens pour refaire de Vichy la reine des villes d'eaux et leurs articles auraient été pour nous la meilleure des publicités. Toute l'organisation de ce voyage avait déjà été envisagée. Le commissariat au Tourisme prenait à sa charge le

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<sup>884</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (September 13, 1944).

<sup>885</sup> “Shortages and economic difficulties had prolonged memories of the lean wartime years just as effectively as the political aftermath had done.” Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 60.

<sup>886</sup> AN. F/1cIII/1205. Report from the Allier *préfet* (February 15 – March 15, 1945); AD (Allier), 774 W 1. Report from the Allier *préfet* (February 10 – February 25, 1946).

voyage de ces personnalités depuis Paris jusqu'à Vichy. Chez nous ils auraient été les hôtes de nos grands hôtels.<sup>887</sup>

Many different activities had reportedly been organized for the foreign journalists to enjoy their short visit in Vichy, including visits of the old town and the *quartier thermal*, and a performance at the Opera House, amongst other things. However, according to the journalist, "Lorsque [Bidault] eut connaissance de ce projet, [il] s'opposa à ce voyage, sous prétexte que tous ces journalistes, dans leurs articles, ne manqueraient pas d'évoquer le nom de Pétain et de son gouvernement (...)." <sup>888</sup> This "serious" incident, he argued, demonstrated "combien est grande l'hostilité des pouvoirs officiels contre la ville d'eau éternelle." In the same article the journalist also mentioned another incident, related to the difficulties the city had faced in its quest to have part of the national lottery drawn in Vichy. According to him, the application and registration process was relatively straightforward for all the cities interested, except for Vichy: "Dans les hautes sphères administratives, on déclara même qu'une autorisation spéciale était nécessaire puisqu'il s'agissait de l'ancienne capitale."<sup>889</sup>

The fact that the international press did not come to Vichy and that the drawing of the national lottery was difficult to obtain were perceived as evidence of the national stigmatization affecting not only the city's pride, but also its economy. Yet there is no evidence of Bidault's involvement in the foreign journalist's 'controversy', or of the press's desire to even come to Vichy. Quite ironically, Bidault came *en cure* in Vichy in 1952, 1953 and 1954, and he gave a public talk in the Opera House in 1957.<sup>890</sup> Similarly, there is no evidence that the reason why it was difficult for the city to have part of the national lottery drawn in Vichy had anything to do with the fact that Vichy had been the capital between 1940 and 1944. While the statement that "une autorisation spéciale était nécessaire puisqu'il s'agissait de l'ancienne capitale" heads in this direction, whether this was actually the case is unknown.

In *Les Complexes de Vichy*, George Frélastre recounts a story that was meant to offer further evidence of the stigmatization suffered by the city. Shortly after the end of the war, as Vichy's football team was playing an away game, the players were reportedly greeted by insults and stones. In the words of the team leader, cited by Frélaste: "C'est honteux... Nous avons été

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<sup>887</sup> "Les pouvoirs officiels contre Vichy," *La Montagne* (August 13, 1946).

<sup>888</sup> Ibid.

<sup>889</sup> Ibid.

<sup>890</sup> Alain Carteret's website : <http://carteret.pagesperso-orange.fr> (Carteret is a local historian, whose main research focuses on the city's history). (Accessed May 14, 2016).



jouer en championnat à Florensac, dans l'Hérault. Nos gars ont été accueillis avec des bordées d'injures. Ils ont reçu des cailloux. Ils se sont fait traiter de Pétainistes et de collabos tout au long du match."<sup>891</sup> Once again, however, this does not provide evidence of a national ostracism towards the city. If anything, it shows that the supporters of the rival team allowed themselves to trite insults.

Given the insistence of the demands sent to de Gaulle to come to Vichy in 1945, the General's refusal to make a short visit to the former capital probably reinforced the local sentiment of exclusion. De Gaulle sometimes attended local commemorations. Most of the time though, it was because these places had a significant meaning for the national myth. De Gaulle was interested in local events only when the latter could serve the national myth, as suggested by the nationalization of Oradour-sur-Glane's memory, for instance: the French government used Oradour as a means to reinforce national cohesion around the shared memory of the Nazi's cruelty to French innocents.<sup>892</sup> That said, de Gaulle did attend a few local ceremonies that were of little interest to the national myth. In June 1948, for example, he visited Moulins at the invitation of the RPF mayor, Maurice Tinland, for the inauguration of the *Monuments aux Morts* in honor of the fallen soldiers of the Second World War.<sup>893</sup> That de Gaulle attended low-key local commemorations allowed small cities to insert themselves into the national narrative about the Resistance. Vichy was not given this opportunity. Once again though, this proves nothing about France's so-called 'exclusion' of Vichy. There is no way of knowing exactly why de Gaulle went to Moulins, and not to Vichy.

Perhaps he did not go to Vichy because he was simply not interested in the location. Perhaps he did not go because Vichy's mayor had belonged to a Giraudist Resistance organization (ORA).<sup>894</sup> More probable is that de Gaulle avoided the city because he feared that an official acknowledgement of the Resistance in Vichy might have undermined his efforts to

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<sup>891</sup> Cited in Frélastre, *Les complexes de Vichy*, 221.

<sup>892</sup> Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village : Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2000); Elizabeth Vlossak, "Remembering Oradour and Struthof: Struggles of Regional Memory and National Commemoration," in *Place and Locality in Modern France*, eds., Patrick Young and Philip Whalen (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

<sup>893</sup> "L'exposition des Imprimeries Réunies, à Moulins, revisite en images la vie et la ville d'autrefois," *La Montagne* (December 15, 2015).

<sup>894</sup> Like the *Alliance* network, the ORA repudiated the authority of de Gaulle. It was founded by the General Frere who had served as the president of the tribunal that had condemned de Gaulle to death in absentia in August 1940. While in February 1944, it merged with the *Armée Secrète* and the FTP to form the FFI, the ORA nonetheless kept its autonomy. On the ORA, see Terry Crowdy, *French Resistance Fighter: France's Secret Army* (Oxford: Osprey, 2007).

delegitimize Vichy (the government). Even though this was the case, once again, it would not provide evidence of any ostracism towards Vichy. For different reasons, de Gaulle refused many other invitations from cities and villages, which were also craving for his visit. In 1946, for instance, he did not go to the Mont-Mouchet ceremony, although the locals were ready and waiting for him.<sup>895</sup>

The biggest consequence of the alleged national ostracism against Vichy was considered to be in the spa industry. During a meeting of the municipal council, a councilor stated that the spa season would have been much better had the government done something to improve the situation, “hélas, nous avons dû faire face à une incompréhension totale de leur part. Vichy restait en quarantaine !”<sup>896</sup> As a result, he added, the city only obtained the right to licence public betting (an essential element of the city’s prosperity) at the end of September, when the main *établissement thermal* had already closed its doors.<sup>897</sup> The government was also harshly criticized for allegedly failing to allocate the financial aid the city was entitled to receive, and which would have helped it recover in time for the opening of the 1945 and 1964 spa seasons. In 1946, the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy* complained that they had not received any financial compensation for the restoration of its hotels following five years of requisition:

Malgré une exploitation des plus serrées du Majestic et du Carlton, nous avons perdu plus de 5,000,000. Le Parc et le Thermal entièrement réquisitionnés de 1939 à 1945, tour à tour transformés en hôpitaux, en bureaux de Ministère, en caserne puis de nouveau en hôpitaux, sont actuellement dans un état lamentable. On peut estimer à 90,000,000 Frs le coût de la remise en état de tous les immeubles.<sup>898</sup>

Due to the lack of financial assistance, only 300 of the *Majestic*’s 900 luxury rooms were available to tourists. The *Compagnie fermière* further complained about the termination of the sugar allocation, which stopped the manufacture of the Vichy *pastilles*.<sup>899</sup> In sum, the city’s argument in 1945 and 1946 was that if spa tourism had not resumed as expected, it was, in great part, because the state had blemished the city’s reputation and hindered its administrative and financial capabilities.

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<sup>895</sup> On de Gaulle and the Mont Mouchet, see Gilles Vergnon, “La construction de la mémoire du maquis du Vercors commémoration et l’historiographie,” *Vingtième Siècle, revue d’histoire*, n°49 (1996), 85.

<sup>896</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council’s meeting (October 13, 1947).

<sup>897</sup> Ibid.

<sup>898</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy*’s Board of directors (June 30, 1947).

<sup>899</sup> Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (September 2, 1946).

Once again, however, this argument is largely inconsistent. Indeed, all municipal councils regularly have to deal with opposition from the state, because of political incompatibilities between the municipal councilors and the government, because of personal reasons, or due to financial cuts, which render the demands of the councils impractical. This is especially true in complicated times like the immediate postwar period. It makes little doubt that Vichy's hotels faced many financial problems following the end of the requisitions. As the hotel industry was one of the biggest industries in town, the postwar situation might have been especially difficult to manage for the city and the *Compagnie fermière*. Yet, it was probably not easier for the state, which was constantly sought out for problem resolutions not just by Vichy, but by all cities in France.

Not only does there appear to be no convincing evidence that Vichy was ostracized by the national community, but there is, in fact, evidence showing otherwise. Representatives of the government were sometimes in attendance at the commemorative events organized in Vichy, suggesting that the government was not altogether insensitive to the *Vichyssois*' concerns. For the commemoration of Roger Kespy, for instance, the office director of head of the *Commissaire régional de la République*, M. Ferrand, was there, alongside local dignitaries and Kespy's family.<sup>900</sup> At the end of June 1950, a stele and a monument honoring Jean Zay, a former minister of Education, were inaugurated near the spot where he was killed by the milice in 1944 (a few kilometers away from Vichy), with the then minister of Education, Yvon Delbos, in attendance.<sup>901</sup> For several decades after 1947, ceremonies honoring the eighty parliamentarians who voted 'no' on July 10, 1940, were organized in Vichy, bringing several deputies and parliamentarians to Vichy every summer, including the President Vincent Auriol in 1954. Many associations of resisters also organized national congresses in the former capital, thereby showing support to their fellow *Vichyssois* resisters. In June 1945, 650 resisters were in Vichy to attend

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<sup>900</sup> "Une plaque commémorative à la mémoire de Roger Kespy," newspaper unknown (date unknown, most likely July 26 or shortly after).

<sup>901</sup> "L'inauguration des monuments à la mémoire de Jean-Zay," *La Montagne* (June 26, 1950); "Il y a six ans Jean Zay était assassiné par la milice," *Le Patriote* (June 21, 1950); "Programme de la cérémonie d'inauguration du monument à la mémoire de Jean Zay," *L'espoir* (June 24-25, 1950).

the congress of the *Confédération Nationale des Maquis de France*.<sup>902</sup> Other congresses of *maquisards* and resisters were organized the following years.<sup>903</sup>

During the commemorative ceremonies and congresses, the government and associations' representatives often emphasized the innocence of the city in the events of 1940-1944. In 1947, for instance, Paul-Boncour, addressing the mayor of Vichy and the population, said: "Vous êtes les résistants de Vichy et vous avez raison de ne pas vouloir qu'on associe le nom de Vichy à celui du gouvernement qui (illisible)." <sup>904</sup> In 1947, the minister of the Education, Marcel-Edmond Naegelen, who had come to Vichy for a short visit, made a speech at the City Hall:

Lorsque vous avez appris que je passerais cette journée à Bellerive, vous avez exprimé le souhait qu'avant de repartir vers Paris, je vienne passer quelques instants dans votre Hôtel de Ville. J'ai répondu avec empressement à ce désir, car je pensais marquer ainsi que le Gouvernement de la Quatrième République n'a jamais confondu quelques hôtes de passage d'une équipe transplantée en cette Ville, avec la population de cette Cité laborieuse, de cette Cité patriotique... Vous êtes, vous-même, Monsieur le Maire, un vivant exemple de ce patriotisme vichyssois. Le Gouvernement de la République ne confond pas ceux qui, ici comme ailleurs, n'ont jamais cessé de travailler, de croire à la Patrie et à l'avenir de la France, avec ce que vous avez appelé le 'Gouvernement passager' de la France. Vichy n'a jamais été la capitale de la trahison.<sup>905</sup>

Feeling sympathy for the *Vichyssois*, Naegelen also promised that he would act in order to substitute the expression "gouvernement de Vichy" with "gouvernement de l'abdication de la trahison,"<sup>906</sup> although such a promise was probably more rhetorical than anything else. Whether such compassionate discourses were at the initiative of the guests or at the request of the municipality is unknown. Regardless, the fact that representatives of the government and of Resistance associations came to Vichy and publicly endorsed the city's efforts at underlining the heroic actions that occurred in Vichy suggests that the city was not treated any differently than any other cities.

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<sup>902</sup> AM (Vichy). Program of the ceremonies. And note from the municipal council (date unknown, likely the week before the ceremonies).

<sup>903</sup> In 1946, 1947 and 1948, there were at least one every year. AM (Vichy). List of events organized in the city.

<sup>904</sup> "Hier Vichy a accueilli les parlementaires qui s'opposèrent aux pleins pouvoirs à Pétain," *La Montagne* (July 11, 1947).

<sup>905</sup> Speech by Marcel-Edmond Naegelen in Vichy (May 25, 1947). For a copy, see Pascal Frasnetti, *La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (MA thesis, Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille III, 1998), 121-123.

<sup>906</sup> Speech by M. Naegelen in Vichy (May 25, 1947).

Despite the postwar difficulties, by the late 1940s, spa tourism had completely recovered. Less than five years after the liberation of the city, the *curistes* had turned out en masse again. Even though the frequentation of the resort was far lower than prior the outbreak of the Second World War, it nonetheless increased steadily from one year to another. Furthermore, in 1947, the exports of bottled water increased by 140 percent from 1945.<sup>907</sup> In 1950, for the first time since 1938, the frequentation surpassed the 100,000 visits mark, in spite of the backlash caused by several international events, such as the Belgian crisis or the Korean War, and the ensuing decline in foreign tourists.<sup>908</sup> This is another proof that the name ‘Vichy’ had not lost its prewar appeal. The coveted figure of 150,000 tourists/*curistes* (achieved for the first time in 1938) was reached again in 1956.<sup>909</sup> Paralleling restoration work, the city had engaged in a “vaste programme de propaganda,”<sup>910</sup> the objective of which was to

rappeler dans tous les pays du monde et dans tous les coins de France, que Vichy, débarrassée de ses hôtes indésirables, était redevenue la grande station thermale qu’elle avait toujours été, bienfaisante et accueillante et que, malgré les difficultés de l’heure, nos hôtes de la saison prochaine seraient sûrs d’y retrouver le Vichy qu’ils avaient connu autrefois.<sup>911</sup>

In 1947, three million francs had been spent advertising Vichy to audiences in France and abroad, particularly in North Africa, where Vichy had a large clientele (especially amongst the European community in Algeria).<sup>912</sup> Although it makes little doubt that such advertising initiatives were fruitful, they alone cannot explain how the resort was restored so quickly.

As noted earlier, while it is very likely that the city faced problems related to the financial reparation for the wartime requisitions, I did find evidence of the payment of indemnities in 1945, 1946, 1947 and 1959. According to the *Compagnie fermière*’s records, at the end of 1945 (thus, shortly after the war), it had received requisition allowances amounting to a total of 6,520,290 francs.<sup>913</sup> Furthermore, in November of 1946 the French Equine Society received a 2,000,000-franc advance payment from the commissariat to be put toward the transfer indemnities on

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<sup>907</sup> Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (August 29, 1947); Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (September 4, 1948).

<sup>908</sup> Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (August 31, 1951).

<sup>909</sup> Pascal Chambriard, *Les rythmes de la saison vichyssoise (1853-1960)* (Vichy, 1992), 5.

<sup>910</sup> Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (September 2, 1946); AM (Moulins), 774 W 1. Report from the Allier *préfet* (February 25 – March 10, 1946).

<sup>911</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes from the municipal council’s meeting (October 13, 1947).

<sup>912</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council’s meeting (March 4, 1947; October 16, 1950).

<sup>913</sup> Minutes of the *Compagnie fermière*’s general assembly (September 4, 1945).

Vichy's equestrian stadium. Another payment worth 1,000,000 francs was made in May 1947, with the provision of a total compensation of 4,000,000 francs.<sup>914</sup> In 1959, the minutes from the municipal council reported a reimbursement of 5,000,000 francs for the *Petit Casino*, the headquarters of the milice, paid by the *Direction des dommages de guerre du ministère de la reconstruction*.<sup>915</sup> Two years later, the city had received a complementary compensation of 2,829,000 francs for the *Petit Casino*.<sup>916</sup>

These are probably only a few examples of financial compensation received by the city, the *Compagnie fermière*, or hotels/buildings owners. A new law that made all the hotels in the unoccupied zone that had been requisitioned in their entirety by the French army subject to the war damages regime was enacted in 1949. Some hotels in Vichy were thus, in theory, included.<sup>917</sup> In the archives I have consulted, however, nothing concerned the financial compensation, which was (or was not) granted to the hotels. Furthermore, locating the archives of former hotels has proven infeasible to do, making it impossible to determine the extent to which the hotels may have been financially wronged.<sup>918</sup> Similarly, it is hard to determine the extent to which the city's seventy-six million claim for war damage in 1949 was overestimated.<sup>919</sup>

Public speeches, the minutes from the *Compagnie fermière*'s general assemblies and the minutes from the city council's meetings reveal a great degree of self-satisfaction at the city's economic recovery, at times implying that they had made it despite being obstructed in their efforts by the state. In fact, if anything, the state rather contributed to the city's postwar success. As one of the main spa resorts in the world, Vichy's success was also in the state's interest. In 1947, the Minister of the Education, M. Naegelen, even stated that:

Une des gloires de notre Pays sont nos sources thermales. Parmi elles, il n'y en a pas de plus efficaces que Vichy. La renaissance de Vichy sera, pour l'étranger, le symbole de la Renaissance française et je suis convaincu qu'après avoir séjourné dans votre ville, les étrangers rentrant chez eux, seront les propagandistes les meilleurs pour dire que la France ne désespère pas d'elle-même et que sa résurrection est

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<sup>914</sup> Jacques Legendre, *Un siècle de Concours hippiques à Vichy – 1887-1993* (Vichy: Imprimerie Copie Express, 1994), 146.

<sup>915</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (February 2, 1959).

<sup>916</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (June 2, 1961).

<sup>917</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy*'s Board of directors (September 1949).

<sup>918</sup> Answering that question would require further research in the dossiers "Dommages de guerre" and "Tourisme" of the national archives.

<sup>919</sup> Freeman, "A Capital Problem," 139.



proche ; qu'elle sera, dans l'avenir, ce qu'elle a été dans le passé : une des plus glorieuses parmi les plus glorieuses.<sup>920</sup>

Thus, while the *détournement* of the name Vichy was a reality, the concrete consequences of such *détournement* were limited.

In the postwar period, some French people, especially those who had greatly suffered during the war, looked at the *Vichyssois* suspiciously and accused Vichy's population of having profiting from the government's presence.<sup>921</sup> According to Kirrily Freeman, the common belief that Vichy had been a safe and enjoyable place was due to the "deliberate image of decadence, of luxury and indulgence, that Vichy has always attempted to project."<sup>922</sup> Yet, while sentiments of resentment (anger, and jealousy) against (towards) the *Vichyssois* existed, there is no obvious evidence of a postwar widespread and organized ostracism.

### 3. Turning the page on the war

In Chapter 5, we saw how the resisters' commemorative initiatives initially enjoyed considerable popularity amongst the local population. Very soon, however, the population (and to a certain extent, the resisters, too) lost interest in the memory of the Resistance. By the late 1940s, the *Vichyssois* had definitively turned the page on the war.

The first obvious sign of the decline of the local interest in the memory of the war was the re-election of Pierre-Victor Léger in 1949. In small cities, the candidates' personality and their involvement in local affairs often count more than their political affiliation. In the case of Léger, many *Vichyssois* also considered that during the war he had protected the population the best he could. An open opposition toward the regime, one gladly acknowledged in Vichy, could have had serious consequences on its residents. People were thus thankful to him for not having shown an overt opposition to the government. Furthermore, he had given evidence of his participation in the resistance (see Chapter 5). This alone, however, fails to explain why the population who, only two years before had expressed the need to surround themselves with leaders possessing Resistance credentials, was now voting en masse for the mayor who had been maintained by Pétain. The main reason why this shift happened was because the population was eager to turn the page on the war. Either by shame or modesty, Léger publicly discussed the war legacy only

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<sup>920</sup> Speech by M. Naegelen in Vichy (May 25, 1947).

<sup>921</sup> Freeman, "A Capital Problem," 134-135.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid., 134.

on rare occasions, leaving no doubt as to what his position on the war memory would be once in office. In his electoral campaigns, the war was hardly ever mentioned, whereas Moinard capitalized upon the memory of the 1940-1944 period (see Chapter 5). Léger's candidacy in the 1947 municipal elections was harshly criticized by his opponents, one of whom even argued that "Vichy ne [pouvait] accepter, sans en recevoir les éclaboussures, la candidature de Léger."<sup>923</sup> In 1949, however, his re-election brought no (or little) controversy, suggesting that an important shift had occurred in the electorate's values.

Although the vote for Léger was more a vote for the man than for his party, we can see in the triumphant return of the radical party, the only party to support the continuation of the Third Republic, another sign of the popular will to turn the war page and to establish continuity with the prewar period.<sup>924</sup>

The smooth return of Lamoureux to the vichyssois political stage, offers further evidence that the war chapter was closed as early as the end of the 1940s. A radical deputy of the Allier from 1919 to 1936 and from 1937 to 1940, Lucien Lamoureux served as minister several times.<sup>925</sup> Under the occupation, after voting to grant full constitutional power to Pétain on July 10, 1940, he became member of the newly implemented *Conseil national*. Lamoureux was part of the *radicaux* who tried to practice a policy of presence within the government (see Chapter 2).<sup>926</sup> In 1942 an investigation into the personalities of l'Allier revealed that the "*loyauté [de Lamoureux] envers le Maréchal parai[ssai]t certaine,*" and that he maintained "*relations suivies*" with the members of several ministries.<sup>927</sup> Lamoureux was arrested at the liberation and interned at the equestrian stadium, from where he would nevertheless be quickly released. He was declared ineligible and excluded from the radical party until 1947. Shortly after being let back in the party in 1950, he was elected *conseiller général de Vichy* (he remained in the position until 1961). If his liberation in the fall of 1944 had outraged a certain part of the population, notably from the left,<sup>928</sup> his return to the local political scene in 1950 gave, in contrast, rise to very little controversy.

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<sup>923</sup> "Une tête de liste !..." *Le Patriote* (September 26, 1947).

<sup>924</sup> Serge Bernstein, "Les Radicaux," in *Histoire des gauches en France*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 22.

At the Referendum in October 1945, 96% of those who voted were against the maintenance of the Third Republic.

<sup>925</sup> He was, for example, finance minister between March 21 and June 5, 1940 in Paul Reynaud's government.

<sup>926</sup> Bernstein, "Les Radicaux," 21.

<sup>927</sup> AD (Puy-de-Dôme), 901 W 308. "Notice de renseignements" (1942).

<sup>928</sup> Touret, *Montluçon après la tourmente*, 54.

The improving economic situation and the realization that the weight of the war heritage had not prevented the resumption of thermalism provided the ideal conditions for the memory of the war to stop being mobilized. Fearing that its status as capital of the *État français* might stigmatize the city, tarnish its reputation, and therefore affect its economy, immediately after the liberation Vichy had striven to create a convincing narrative of heroism and victimhood, while also framing a powerful innocence myth. But as soon as spa tourism and the economic situation improved, the population no longer felt the need to entertain a local memory of the war.

The anniversaries of the city's liberation in the early 1950s provide insight into this shift in popularity and significance of the Resistance in Vichy. The anniversaries of Vichy's liberation, which were widely celebrated in the immediate postwar years, now lacked both official and popular enthusiasm. One local journalist who covered the event in 1951 talked about "une cérémonie du souvenir ridiculement étriquée, sans tambour ni trompette," with local dignitaries laying a wreath "à la sauvette" at the *Monument aux morts*, and with more policemen than spectators: "C'est ainsi que fut commémorée la Libération de Vichy, en présence de moins de spectateurs que d'agents de police."<sup>929</sup> Another journalist mentioned "une très brève manifestation... sans discours et sans musique, pas même un tambour."<sup>930</sup> In France, a law enacted in 1954 designated the last Sunday of April as the national day for remembering the victims and heroes of the deportation. In spite of the statement of goodwill of Léger's successor, Pierre Coulon, who stated that the city "[s'associait] de tout coeur à cette journée commémorative,"<sup>931</sup> every year the April commemorations remained very low-key and not well attended.<sup>932</sup> The Appeal of June 18 also stopped being celebrated.<sup>933</sup>

If in 1950 the city accepted to financially participate in the project to build a monument to the memory of those who lost their lives helping the Resistance at the Vichy cemetery,<sup>934</sup> it did not concern itself with the commemorative plaques erected in 1944 and 1945 in honour of the local resisters. Such disinterest did not visibly disturb the citizens, given that it was not until 1967 that their deterioration was noticed, following a request by a sister of one of the resister that her

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<sup>929</sup> *Le Patriote* (August 30, 1951).

<sup>930</sup> *La Montagne* (August 27, 1951).

<sup>931</sup> Cited in Frasnetti, *La mémoire de la ville de Vichy*, 40.

<sup>932</sup> See reports from the local press.

<sup>933</sup> On the events list done by the municipality, the celebration of June 18 is reported to have resumed in 1958. AM (Vichy).

<sup>934</sup> The city contributed 75,000 francs. AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (September 11, 1950).

brother's plaque be cleaned. An examination of the different plaques was thus undertaken by M. Praille, from the special events office of the municipality. His conclusion was clear: "toutes ces plaques [ont été] laissées à l'état d'abandon."<sup>935</sup>

The four-day celebration organized for the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Vichy in August 1954 was an exception in the memorial landscape of the early 1950s, marked by forgetting and silence. In addition to the placement of a plaque to the *combattants de la Résistance et de la Libération* on the *Monument aux morts* on August 30 and the usual wreath layings and processions, featuring local leaders, resisters, civilian, and military personalities, some public buildings were illuminated and decorated, and people were invited to participate in a big *bal populaire*.<sup>936</sup> According to local media, "la population a célébré avec ferveur le 10ème anniversaire de la libération... Les trottoirs et le terre-plein de la place Maréchal-Leclerc étaient envahis par la foule."<sup>937</sup> There are three plausible explanations to this sudden revival of interest for the memory of the war.

First, milestone anniversaries (such as tenth anniversaries) are always celebrated with more fervor than the previous and following years. Second, many personalities, including presidents of associations and important figures of French Algeria, such as M. Chergui, a delegate of the Algerian Assembly, and the bach-agma Ben Chiha, senator of Oran, were present in Vichy to mark the occasion.<sup>938</sup> While the anniversary of the city's liberation was probably used as a pretext to invite important people to Vichy so that they could see how the city had successfully recovered from the war, the city could not afford to only organize low-key ceremonies. Third, 1954 also marked the tenth anniversary of the murder of the former Minister of Education, Jean Zay, by *miliciens*, at the Malavaux, six kilometers away from Vichy. Zay's corpse was discovered at the Malavaux by two hunters in 1946.<sup>939</sup> In 1948, the confessions from the *milicien* Charles Develle, who had been arrested in Naples earlier in the year, had provided the opportunity to shed more light on the circumstances of Zay's death.<sup>940</sup> The investigation had largely been covered by the local media, which had left the population in suspense for several

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<sup>935</sup> AM (Vichy). Note from M. Praille to the *Secrétariat général à la mairie de la ville de Vichy* (June 3, 1969).

<sup>936</sup> *La Montagne* (August 25, 1954); *La Montagne* (August 30, 1954).

<sup>937</sup> *La Tribune* (August 30, 1954).

<sup>938</sup> "La commémoration du Xème anniversaire de la libération de Vichy," *La Montagne* (August 30, 1954).

<sup>939</sup> "Les miliciens avaient leur charnier," newspaper unspecified (date unspecified, 1946); "Le corps de Jean Zay est identifié," newspaper unspecified (date unspecified, 1946); "Il y a six ans Jean Zay était assassiné par la milice," *Le Patriote* (June 21, 1950).

<sup>940</sup> "Il y a six ans Jean Zay était assassiné par la milice," *Le Patriote* (June 21, 1950).

months. The ceremonies for Jean Zay at the end of June 1954 revived the memories of the police inquiry. The renewed interest for the anniversary of the city's liberation a few weeks later may have been the result of a domino effect. Whatever the reason, this initiative lacked follow-through.

While the local resisters, who attempted to maintain enthusiasm for the local Resistance, were at the initiative of – or at least involved in – all the commemorations of the resistance organized in Vichy, even they appeared to be willing to move on. While the city continued to host congresses about the resistance, they did not generate much interest locally. None unleashed specific initiatives from local associations (albeit their members were often involved in the congresses, either as spectators or participants). In 1948, Moinard vainly suggested creating the *Association des Amis des 80* [parliamentarians who voted 'no' on July 10, 1940].<sup>941</sup> On the sixth anniversary of the victory, on May 8, 1951, the FFI/FTP section of Vichy organized a small cinematographic festival, featuring various films, including the patriotic film *Le Troisième Coup*. This event, however, left little trace in the press, or in people's memory, suggesting that it went unnoticed.

Most historians who have investigated World War II memory in France have argued that France began losing interest in the Resistance in the mid 1950s, following the country's economic recovery.<sup>942</sup> According to Henry Rousso, although the resisters started to lose political ground early on, the population continued to emotionally identify with the Resistance.<sup>943</sup> This was not true for Vichy, where the population detached itself from the myth of the Resistance almost as quickly as it had adhered to it in the late summer of 1944.

That the *Vichyssois* shifted their interest away from the resistance so early is one thing. That this memory never really came back is another. In France, it would not be long before the memory of the war came alive again. The memory of the Resistance resurfaced in the early 1960s, following the return of de Gaulle to power. A decade later, the unresolved issues about the *épuration* also reemerged, “fostering memorial disputes for long years thereafter.”<sup>944</sup> The city of

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<sup>941</sup> Frasnetti, *La mémoire de la ville de Vichy*, 6-7.

<sup>942</sup> See for instance: Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1987) or Olivier Wieviorka, *La mémoire désunie* (Paris: Seuil, 2010).

<sup>943</sup> In *Le syndrome de Vichy*, Henry Rousso talks about an ambivalence between “l’adhésion sentimentale à la vision rétrospective d’un peuple en résistance et le rejet des résistants.” Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy de 1944*, 34.

<sup>944</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, trans. George Holloch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 30.

Vichy, however, remained impervious to the national revival of interest for the Resistance and the war more generally. The national controversies over the failures of the *épuration* to punish the likes of Touvier or Papon did not even stir up memories of the unsatisfactory trial of the trial of the Gestapo of Vichy in the early 1950s, although it would have only been ‘natural’ for the memory of the *épuration* to resurface in Vichy, given the frustrations it brought about at the time.

There is at least three different causes for the failure of the crystallization of the Resistance memory in Vichy in the immediate postwar period: (1) the type of Resistance that was commemorated was too different from the experience of most *Vichyssois*, (2) the commemorations lacked creativity, and (3) the resisters’ narrative was plagued with paradoxes. In the early postwar period, there was a widespread sentiment amongst French resisters that the ‘true’ resisters belonged to an elite, and had to be commemorated as such. De Gaulle nationalized the Resistance and subsumed the resisters into an abstraction: “the Gaullist resistancialist myth did not so much glorify the Resistance (and certainly not the résistants) as it celebrated a people in resistance, a people symbolized exclusively by the ‘man of June Eighteenth’, without intermediaries such as political parties, movements, or clandestine leaders.”<sup>945</sup> Although de Gaulle was very aware that the resisters had been a tiny minority, he found it wiser to ignore this truth “in the cause of healing the divisions of the nation and restoring France’s reputation abroad.”<sup>946</sup> The Gaullist vision of the Resistance was ill received by resisters wanting to sustain the sentiment of belonging to an elite.<sup>947</sup> As a former resister wrote in 1955, “it is time to unmask a pious myth which has not really deceived anyone. The great majority of the people of this country played only a small and fleeting part in the events. Their activity was passive, except at the last moments.”<sup>948</sup> As a result, in many places the resisters felt the need to write their own history.

In Vichy too, the resisters hijacked the local narrative and chose to only commemorate the men they considered the most outstanding representatives of the history they wanted to write. While in some places, the population managed to relate to the commemorations of the few men (and to a lesser extent, women) the resisters had chosen to turn into heroes/martyrs, in Vichy, this was less the case. In Vichy, the resisters who were heroized and martyred were the ones most

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<sup>945</sup> Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 18.

<sup>946</sup> Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years 1940-1944* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 606.

<sup>947</sup> Ibid.

<sup>948</sup> Cited in Jackson, *France the Dark Years*, 606.



likely to clear the city from national suspicion, not those who best represented the local experience. Although the local resistance was not commemorated uniformly, as we saw in Chapter 5, much focus was nonetheless put on the Gaullist myth, which celebrated military combat. Yet, in Vichy, the grassroots resistance was much less of a combat and much more of an intelligence nature than in the rest of the department, with many local residents involved in networks, most notably *Alliance*. Amongst the *Vichyssois* who made the biggest contribution to the networks are Pierre Berthomier, Jean Sabatier, and the Pequet couple, yet none of them was commemorated in the immediate postwar period.

In 1950, Dr. Colomb, former president of Vichy's *Comité de Libération* de Vichy, observed that too much focus had been put on the armed struggle of resisters, overlooking the role played by unarmed resisters: "On a trop souvent oublié ceux qui, en place, ont pu, justement en raison de leur situation, être des agents utiles à la Résistance et qui avaient toutes possibilités, au contact du gouvernement, de faire savoir, immédiatement, ce qui se disait et ce qui se faisait."<sup>949</sup> Ironically, while his criticism appears to have been expressed towards France, it was all the more relevant for the local myth of the Resistance in Vichy, which Colomb very likely helped shape.

Further, by only heroizing resisters who had been killed (and whose suffering and martyrdom was meant to symbolize the city's own suffering), the local narrative alienated the resisters who had survived, and who felt their own fight and ordeal was not being properly acknowledged. Some limited efforts were nonetheless made to honor 'all' local resisters. The small book the municipality and resisters published in 1946, *Nouveau mémorial de Vichy*, is revealing of those efforts. By including testimonies from 'everyday' resisters who survived the war, such as that of Roger Brunet, a mechanic at the SNCF, who helped to smuggle escaped prisoners and spies,<sup>950</sup> the book conveyed the idea that one did not have to have been a *maquisard*, to have chased alleged collaborators, and to have been killed to be a 'valuable' resister. Listening to the BBC and the "Voice of America" was also presented as a worthy act of resistance.<sup>951</sup> Even fainting upon seeing German uniforms was described as "Resistance":

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<sup>949</sup> AD (Allier), 1289 W. Testimonies (and documents) collected by the local section of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Witness statement of Dr. Colomb (November 15, 1950).

<sup>950</sup> Roger Brunet, "Paris-Vichy," in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 29-36.

<sup>951</sup> J. Saint-Amamd, "Vichy-Résistance," in *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, 21.

La résistance, à Vichy, n'est pas le fait d'un épisode isolé. Elle forme un tout continu : depuis cette brave commerçante qui, sur le pont de Bellerive, s'évanouissait de rage à la vue des uniformes vert-de-gris, jusqu'à ce beau dimanche de septembre où, autour du kiosque de la Source-de-l'Hôpital, la population vichyssoise reprenait en chœur, avec la Musique de la Police ... l'Hymne de la Libération.<sup>952</sup>

In the chapter "Vichy-Vérité," Constantin-Weyer further underlines the courage of the local population, arguing that "la plus grande partie des habitants de Vichy, la quasi totalité, ... a refusé de s'associer au gouvernement qui était venu s'implanter dans ses hôtels. 'Vichy collaborateur' est une légende qu'il faut détruire."<sup>953</sup> He adds:

Rappelez-vous un certain dentiste torturé affreusement, jusqu'à la mort, par la Gestapo ; l'héroïque petite Madame Guinard, emprisonnée à la Mal-Coiffée de Moulins, avec cette admirable Suzanne Bertillon, aux côtés de laquelle je m'honore d'avoir travaillé pendant quatre ans dans l'ombre ; le commissaire Juge, fusillé... Nous n'en finirions pas s'il fallait citer tous les Vichyssois et Vichyssoises qui furent soumis à la terrible inquisition de la Gestapo, à l'hôtel du Portugal, ou de la Milice, au Parc Lardy, au Petit Casino, au Château des Brosses et tous les déportés à Dachau, à Buchenwald, à Dora (...).<sup>954</sup>

Although this book presented the *Vichyssois* as having all participated in the Resistance, according to their skills and capabilities, leaving aside possibly disturbing questions about accommodation and opportunism, it nonetheless proved insufficient to create a common memory that connected the *Vichyssois* across their different wartime experiences.

Initially, the Vichy population strongly supported the construction of a local memory of the resistance regardless of whether it was somehow relevant to its own experience of the war, mostly because it went in tandem with the people's desire to prove that the *Vichyssois* were not guilty. With the euphoria of the victory diminishing and spa tourism resuming (and therefore with the decreasing need to prove the city's innocence), however, the narrative framed by the resisters lost its initial appeal. Many scholars have shown how collective memory is not simply imposed from above, but is instead a complex process that requires the participation of populations. With no audience, the resisters' (hi)story failed to make a lasting impact on the local historical consciousness.

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<sup>952</sup> J. Saint-Amamd, "Vichy-Résistance," 26.

<sup>953</sup> Constantin-Weyer, "Vichy-Vérité," 09.

<sup>954</sup> Ibid., 11.

Second, the lack of creativity of commemorations organized in Vichy further reduced their long-term impact. The main commemorations only consisted of the placement of plaques on the homes formerly occupied by the fallen resisters, speeches by fellow resisters and local leaders, and a procession to the cemetery and to the *Monument aux Morts*. Through affixing plaques, the resisters sought to physically inscribe the memory of the Resistance and, as such, appropriate the territory. While these ceremonies helped anchor the memory of local heroes in the urban environment, these observances may have too firmly anchored the resisters “in the patriotic tradition epitomized by the poilus,”<sup>955</sup> instead of creating their own specific tradition.

Third, although the local resisters probably did not realize it at the time, they placed the city in a tricky situation, ridden with contradictions and ambiguities. While on the one hand, they desperately wanted Vichy to belong to de Gaulle’s new France, and therefore strongly aligned their narrative on the national framework of memory, they also rejected this new France, under the pretext that it unfairly stigmatized the *Vichyssois* and damaged the city’s economy. In the long term, the resisters’ narrative was plagued by their inability to overcome this paradox.

## Conclusion

The four-to-five years after the war’s end were founding years for the construction of the war memory in Vichy. The accusations against France, albeit unfounded, have (until now) remained a leitmotiv in local memorial politics. Largely diffused beyond the political and ideological allegiances, the idea of the culpability of France was crystallized in the local collective memory – an idea that, while adapted differently by the left and the right, was so pervasive that it acquired the characteristics of a fact.

The spa industry’s recovery in the late 1940s, and the ensuing growing disinterest for the memory of the war, did not make this legend obsolete. Yet, from then on, the war was no longer considered more than as a parenthesis in an otherwise very positive history. Vichy stopped considering the commemoration of the Resistance as potentially useful and beneficial for the city in that it might contribute to demonstrate the role played by the city in the Resistance. Instead, reminiscing about the Resistance was now considered potentially damaging, because it kept alive the link between the war and Vichy. The situation of the late 1940s and early 1950s established a

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<sup>955</sup> Megan Koreman, *The expectation of justice: France 1944-1946* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2000), 191.

long-lasting tradition of silence and non-memorial intervention in the former capital. Every single mayor since Louis Moinard has continued the politics of silence, initiated by Léger, thus turning Vichy into a site of World War II non-memory.

This does not mean that the memory of the war never resurfaced in one way or the other in the decades that followed—as the dissertation’s subsequent chapters will show. However, from then on, this memory would mostly be borne by the city, rather than controlled by it. On several occasions, the association of former resisters strove to keep the local memory of the Resistance alive, with little success, though. In the long term, the disappearance of resisters, the lack of impetus and support from the municipality, and the population’s increasing lack of interest weakened the local memory of the resistance even more. Only the victimhood myth survived.

## CHAPTER 7 – Vichy and French Algeria: The city moves to the right

Until the 1960s, Vichy was a renowned spa and entertainment center, with thirteen cinemas, three theaters, several dancing halls, and many luxury outlets. Television reports and the press articles from the pre 1939 and post 1950 periods presented Vichy as a happy, vibrant, and dynamic resort.<sup>956</sup> This came to an end after the loss of French Algeria in 1962. Because Vichy owed much of its prewar and postwar success to colonial tourism from North Africa, the decolonization of Algeria was a major blow for the city. The former colony's independence not only affected the city's economy and impacted its demography and political orientation, but it also shifted how the Second World War was locally remembered. Understanding the importance of French Algeria and the consequences of the colony's loss for Vichy is therefore essential to understanding the evolution of Vichy's World War II memory.

This chapter explores the relations between Algeria and the city of Vichy during the great days of the French empire and the local responses to the 1954-1962 war of independence. Although the *cures* had long been cornerstones of the colonial life, the link between colonization and *thermalisme* has been underestimated by historians, with the notable exception of a few historians, including Eric Jennings, whose book *À la cure les coloniaux !* has significantly contributed to a better understanding of the spa resorts' role in the colonial enterprise.<sup>957</sup>

### 1. Vichy and the empire

In the early eighteenth century, many Enlightenment intellectuals, such as Buffon and Montesquieu, were very optimistic about the ability of Europeans to adapt to tropical life.<sup>958</sup> This optimism, however, soon declined and throughout the colonial period, "susceptibility to specific diseases became one of the primary means by which differences between peoples were conceptualized."<sup>959</sup> Several studies on tropical climates, wildlife, and diseases were conducted in

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<sup>956</sup> For television reports, see the INA archives. For a collection of press articles, see the municipal archives in Vichy.

<sup>957</sup> Eric Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux ! Thermalisme, climatisme et colonisation française, 1830-1962* (Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011).

<sup>958</sup> Anne Marie Moulin, "Expatrié français sous les tropiques : Cent ans d'histoire de la Santé" (paper presented at the second *Journée française de médecine des voyages*, Institut Pasteur, Paris, Mai 3, 1996).

<sup>959</sup> Alan Dewell, *Romanticism and colonial Disease* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 6.

Susan Sontag talks about the "link between imagining disease and imagining foreignness." Susan Sontag, *Aids and its metaphors* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), 48.

order to determine how white men might best adapt to the life conditions in the colonies and avoid falling sick with diseases such as the yellow fever, diphtheria, malaria, and the typhoid fever.<sup>960</sup> These early studies, however, proved mostly inconclusive as in the 1830s, the mortality rate of French soldiers in Algeria was still seven times higher than that of soldiers the same age in metropolitan France, leading to growing worries and concerns within the medical community.<sup>961</sup> During the nineteenth century, many physicians dedicated themselves to this problem, hoping to eventually “resolve this medical conundrum of imperialism.”<sup>962</sup> Soon, spa treatments became considered by physicians as one of the best – if not the best – cure for tropical ailments.

Immediately after its creation in 1894, the *Ministère des Colonies* regularly published bulletins in which it accredited spa resorts, where the French colonizers were encouraged to go to treat their colonial diseases.<sup>963</sup> Vichy’s water was believed to be particularly useful against malaria: “Sagement administrée, l’eau de Vichy rend au foie, touché par le paludisme, mais encore capable de réagir, son fonctionnement normal. Sous son influence, la cellule hépatique est profondément modifiée, ses fonctions se régularisent et... le foie hypertrophié diminue de volume.”<sup>964</sup> Intensive advertising for Vichy followed:

Vous n’en pouvez plus. Le climat africain vous use lentement. Il faut vous retremper. Allez à Vichy (...) ! Votre sang est empoisonné, il véhicule des toxines en quantité suffisante pour miner votre santé et vous rendre la vie difficile ; Prenez y bien garde ! Contre le poison de l’Afrique, il n’y a qu’un contre poison : c’est Vichy.<sup>965</sup>

After ten or eleven months of hard work, many Europeans living in tropical climates sought treatment for their colonial illnesses but also for their exhaustion. Many came to Vichy, often with their family and their friends. Not only did Vichy’s thermal military hospital, which opened in 1847, provide sick settlers with ideal facilities for a successful recovery, but the resort also provided excellent opportunities for the families and friends to have fun and enjoy themselves.

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<sup>960</sup> Warwick Anderson, “Climates of Opinion: Acclimatization in Nineteenth-Century France and England,” *Victorian Studies* 35: 2 (Winter, 1992), 134.

<sup>961</sup> Moulin, “Expatrié français sous les tropiques.”

<sup>962</sup> Warwick Anderson, “Disease, Race and Empire,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70.1 (1996) 62-67, p.63

<sup>963</sup> Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 18.

<sup>964</sup> Edmond Vidal, *Le Paludisme chronique et son traitement par la cure de Vichy* (Alger: Imprimerie orientale Fontana Frères & Cie, date unknown), 6.

<sup>965</sup> Example of an advertisement published in magazines in 1924. Cited in Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 55.



Following the 1929 financial crash and the ensuing economic hardships, the number of foreign *curistes* in Vichy declined. Conversely, the Europeans coming from the colonies became more numerous. While in 1928, the African colonies had provided a little more than one sixth of the total of non-metropolitan *curistes*, in 1932, they accounted for more than thirty-eight percent of them. In an article investigating the urban geography of Vichy, E. Mauve shows the evolution of the frequentation of foreign and non-metropolitan French *curistes* in Vichy between 1928 and 1932<sup>966</sup>:

	UK	North America	Brazil	Spain	Egypt	Belgium	North Africa
<b>1928</b>	5 671	5 613	2 603	2 426	1 420	1 624	5 810
<b>1932</b>	1 156	952	231	644	396	1 060	6 018

These figures may appear small, but it is only because they do not take into account the family, friends and other visitors who did not take a *cure*. If the accompanying visitors had been taken into account, the numbers could likely have been multiplied by four or five. The decline in the number of foreign tourists after 1929 made the city more and more dependent on colonial tourism in general, and tourism from North Africa more specifically. According to Christian Jamot, between the two world wars, almost twenty percent of all the visitors in Vichy came from the French colonies in North Africa.<sup>967</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, the colonial clientele in Vichy was so large that the city became known as the *capitale d'été de l'Afrique du Nord*.<sup>968</sup>

In the hope of benefitting from the colonial reputation of Vichy, smart entrepreneurs made colonial by-products or sold colonial-related services. In the late nineteenth century, some *Vichyssois* created a liquor with exotic flavors, which they named the *Colonial Vichy*, reportedly the best “protection contre le soleil et l’anémie des Colonies,” whereas others chose to rename

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<sup>966</sup> E. Mauve, “L’agglomération vichyssoise. Essai de géographie urbaine,” *Revue de géographie alpine* 24: 4 (1936), 905.

<sup>967</sup> Christian Jamot, *Thermalisme et villes thermales en France* (Clermont-Ferrand: Université de Clermont-Ferrand II, Institut d’études du Massif Central, 1988), 41.

<sup>968</sup> Jean Débordes, *Pierre Coulon, La trop courte chance de Vichy* (Charroux en Bourbonnais : Edition des Cahiers bourbonnais, 1991), 178.

their spring *Saint-Yorre coloniale*.<sup>969</sup> In 1948, a local resident, M. Grassion, opened a Franco-colonial library, through which the francophone Europeans living abroad could order French books:

Dans le but de remédier à [leur] isolement [intellectuel], j'ai créé une Librairie-Papeterie d'un genre tout à fait spécial, uniquement destinée à la satisfaction des besoins coloniaux. Chaque mois, à des centaines d'exemplaires, partent aux colonies des listes des derniers ouvrages les plus intéressants, romans, études, histoire, musique, etc... policiers même bien entendu, et aussi des listes des dernières éditions de disques. Ces listes sont accompagnées de bulletins de commande qu'il suffit à mes correspondants de poster après les avoir complétées. Les expéditions se font, au choix du client, par avion ou par poste normale. Les règlements s'effectuent contre-remboursement ou par imputation sur un compte personnel ouvert par la Librairie.<sup>970</sup>

Grassion further explains the role of his bookstore, which

permettra aux représentants de la métropole dans nos colonies et protectorats, qu'ils soient fonctionnaires, colons ou commerçants, trop souvent décriés et toujours étroitement observés par les indigènes, de maintenir et de fortifier leur santé intellectuelle, hier encore très menacée. En des heures graves pour le maintien de la France dans les territoires d'outre mer, maintien dont le plus sûr garant reste et restera de plus en plus son rayonnement intellectuel, cette création participera dans la mesure de ses moyens à la Renaissance Française.<sup>971</sup>

Even though a large part of the clientele in Vichy was wealthy, the city was not a resort reserved for the rich and powerful settlers. Vichy was a cosmopolitan resort open to all Europeans living in their respective empire, including businessmen, soldiers, and missionaries, who wanted to maintain their 'Europeanness' and 'whiteness', and have a good time.<sup>972</sup> Until the early 1910s, the missionaries who wanted to take a cure were entitled to financial assistance from the state. The separation of church and state in 1905, however, generated significant changes and after 1911 the missionaries were no longer eligible for state financial help.<sup>973</sup> In 1923, a *Maison*

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<sup>969</sup> Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 224-225.

<sup>970</sup> "Une librairie Franco-coloniale à Vichy," *Mémorial d'Allier* 4 (January-February 1948).

<sup>971</sup> Ibid.

<sup>972</sup> Bertram Gordon, "Reinventions of a Spa Town: The Unique Case of Vichy," *Journal of Tourism History*, 4:1 (April 2012), 48.

<sup>973</sup> In his thesis about the *Maison du Missionnaire* in Vichy, Éric Bertin gives additional information about this shift: "En 1911, une circulaire du Ministre des Colonies, Adolphe Messimy, ordonne que cesse le système dit des Réquisitions, qui rendait gratuits les voyages en mer pour les missionnaires. En fait, cette mesure n'était qu'une conséquence de la loi de séparation de l'Église et de l'État. En effet, les prêtres n'étaient plus considérés comme des fonctionnaires, l'État n'avait plus à prendre en charge les voyages et les soins des missionnaires, comme il le faisait

*du Missionnaire*, which enabled missionaries to come *en cure* for a low cost, opened in Vichy, under the initiative and leadership of Père Henri Watthé, a Lazarist missionary in Asia, who had been ordered to come to Vichy to treat a disease that he had contracted in China. He arrived in Vichy in 1919. Three years later, he created the *Maison du Missionnaire* to help missionaries finance their own *cure* in Vichy and to provide them with support and service once they were in the resort.<sup>974</sup>

Père Watthé's work, which contributed to making Vichy's water and the resort known all around the world, was highly valued and greatly appreciated by the city. Not only did he receive help and encouragement from the Pastor of the Saint-Blaise Church and local charity organizations, but he also received assistance from the municipality, who granted him subventions and cancelled the missionaries' residency tax in 1931.<sup>975</sup> Another gesture of goodwill came from the *Compagnie fermière*, which lent him facilities and space, and offered discounted and free treatments to the missionaries.<sup>976</sup> In addition, Père Watthé received private donations. The main financial contributors were from the region of Paris (twenty-three percent), from the north, the region of origin of Père Watthé (seven percent), and from the Allier department (five percent). According to Eric Bertin, the Allier, which was a rural and anti-clerical department, contributed very little to Père Watthé's charitable cause. In my opinion, these statistics reveal the opposite: despite being a rural and anti-clerical department, the Allier was one of the departments that most contributed to Watthé's work. Amongst the contributors from the Allier, it is very likely that most of them were from Vichy.

The *Maison du Missionnaire* was an immediate success. Between 1923 and 1931, it welcomed about 1,600 priests and missionaries, amongst whom, about forty-one percent came from Africa – the others were working elsewhere in the world (as far as Hawaii, Greenland, and Mongolia).<sup>977</sup>

According to the Père Watthé's wishes, the *Maison du Missionnaire* did more than just help the missionaries, until the 1950s it also acted as a propaganda organ in favor of colonialism

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pour tout fonctionnaire des colonies... Une cure thermale était bien souvent un luxe que ne pouvaient s'offrir les missionnaires." Éric Bertin, "La Maison du Missionnaire de Vichy, 1922-1952" (MA thesis, Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), 19.

<sup>974</sup> Bertin, "La Maison du Missionnaire de Vichy, 1922-1952," 8.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid., 20-21 & 49.

<sup>976</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>977</sup> Ibid., 52.

and evangelical missions.<sup>978</sup> Yearly conferences were organized “afin de combattre l’ignorance des Français en matière coloniale,”<sup>979</sup> and a colonial museum was constructed. After a few years, the museum had gathered a large number of objects. In 1934, there were 2,740 of them, including items with great ethnological value, such as a Chinese bed, a gorilla from Gabon, the shoes that Père Jozeaud had worn during his martyr in Korea in 1824, and the camel saddle of Michel Foucault’s father (who died in 1916). In the museum, the missionaries served as guides. According to Père Watthé, they succeeded in generating vocations amongst the visitors, as suggested by children who reportedly found “le germe de [leur] vocation de missionnaire” and also by Protestants who were said to have converted to Catholicism following their meeting with the missionaries.<sup>980</sup> In 1934, Père Watthé was appointed *Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur* by the *Ministère des Colonies* for having conducted “une active et utile propagande en faveur de nos possessions d’outre-mer.”<sup>981</sup>

In addition to the *Maison du Missionnaire*, some hotels in Vichy also became favored meeting points for Europeans living in the colonies: the *hôtel britannique*, a few meters away from the military hospital, and the *hôtel Algeria* were especially popular amongst the city’s colonial clientele.<sup>982</sup> The richest settlers resided in the city’s most luxurious hotels, such as the *hôtel du Parc* or the *hôtel Majestic*.

In order to satisfy its colonial clients, in the 1930s, Vichy devised a colonial high school, where special classes were designed to prepare high-ranking officials’ children for colonial careers abroad. The declining empire, however, meant such project never materialized. In the late 1950s, the colonial school proposal was dropped and in 1964 a traditional high school opened instead.<sup>983</sup>

In the 1950s, the construction of an international airport with direct flights to and from Algeria was another means by which Vichy solidified its clientele from North Africa. Jean

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<sup>978</sup> Bertin, “La Maison du Missionnaire de Vichy, 1922-1952,” 8.

<sup>979</sup> Ibid., 65.

At that time, museums were not centers of memorialization and education, as many are now, they were rather instruments of propaganda.

<sup>980</sup> Ibid., 68-70.

<sup>981</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>982</sup> Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 225-226.

<sup>983</sup> “Pour le plus grand et le plus beau Vichy. Des projets séduisants qui seront bientôt des réalités. Le lycée colonial,” *Liberté* (April 15, 1946) ; AM (Vichy). Minutes of the meeting of the municipal council (October 31, 1952). Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 110 ; Jacques Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989. Un quart de siècle entre les deux mondes* (Molinet : Edition Neuville, 1994), 169 ; Michel Boulicaut, interview by author (June 18, 2015).

Débordes recalls the motivations for proceeding with such a large scale project: “C’étaient des voyages qui demandaient des heures et des heures et beaucoup de fatigue... Il fallait permettre aux Français d’Afrique du Nord de pouvoir rallier rapidement Vichy afin qu’ils ne soient pas tentés d’aller ailleurs.”<sup>984</sup> The outbreak of revolt in Algeria in 1954 strengthened the municipality’s resolve to have this airport built. Within a hundred days, the *entreprise Industrielle et Routière de Paris* constructed the airstrip and on August 21, 1954 the first plane landed at the new aerodrome. The French and Algerian press reported on the event.

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<sup>984</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 179-183.





Figure 17. Example of advertising in a tourism magazine – July 1955.<sup>985</sup>

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<sup>985</sup> This poster was provided to me by the archivists in Vichy's municipal archives.



Relationships between Vichy and French Algeria were so good that prominent members of French Algeria were sometimes invited to local commemorations, even when the latter were unrelated to either tourism or Algeria. A delegation from Algeria (including the delegate of the Algerian Assembly (M. Chergui), the president of the patriotic societies in Algeria (M. René Amar), and the Bachagha Ben Chiha, the senator from Oran, for instance, came to Vichy for the tenth anniversary of the city's liberation on August 26, 1954.<sup>986</sup>

The link between Vichy and North Africa was further strengthened by Joseph Aletti, who, in the 1930s, had a hotel reminiscent of those in Vichy built in Algiers. Aletti, the owner and manager of several outstanding hotels in such prominent French cities as Nice and Monté Carlo, arrived in Vichy in 1901, at a time when Vichy's hotels lacked comfort and luxury. As the resort's reputation was growing quickly, in order to attract top tiered clients the city needed to improve its accommodations significantly. Aletti undertook to renovate a few of Vichy's hotels and within a few years, he had transformed the *hôtel du Parc* into one of the most distinguished palaces in France. This marked the beginning of Vichy's journey to becoming one of the top spa resorts in the world.<sup>987</sup> In 1930, aware of Vichy's popularity in Algeria, Aletti brought a little bit of the city to Algiers, where he built a palace that resembled those in Vichy. An expensive and luxe destination, it was inaugurated by Charlie Chaplin in the summer of 1930 while France celebrated the hundredth anniversary of its presence in Algeria. The hotel's Art deco style, made it prominent in the city, and made it one of Algiers' most famous hotels.<sup>988</sup>

Another sign of the tight economic relationship between Vichy and the colonies is the takeover of the *Compagnie fermière* by the *Brasseries et Glacières d'Indochine* in 1954. This society belonged to the Denis brothers from Bordeaux, who had earned a colossal fortune in Indochina through trade.<sup>989</sup> The French defeat at Diên Biên Phu, however, prompted them to leave southeast Asia and they invested their billions of piasters in another colonial project in

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<sup>986</sup> "La commémoration du Xème anniversaire de la libération de Vichy," *La Montagne* (August 30, 1954).

<sup>987</sup> On this, see: Catherin Labbaye, *Joseph Aletti le temps des palaces à Vichy* (Paris: Edition des Écrivains, 2003).

<sup>988</sup> "Dîner en tête à tête avec Charlie Chaplin," *Le Soir d'Algérie* (November 9, 2008). The hotel was named after Joseph Aletti: the *hôtel Aletti*. It was renamed *Hôtel Es-Safir* in 1984.

<sup>989</sup> For a history of the maison Denis Frères in Indochina, see Delphine Boissarie, "La maison Denis Frères (1862-1954) : trajectoire d'un réseau commercial et social entre Bordeaux et l'Extrême-Orient" (Ph.D. dissertation, Université Bordeaux 3, 2015).

metropolitan France: the resort of Vichy provided them an ideal opportunity. They remained the owners of the *Compagnie fermière* until 1966, when Perrier took over.<sup>990</sup>

Vichy's colonial clientele was not limited to the population of European origins. The city frequently welcomed kings, princes, and notables from the Middle East and northern Africa, such as Pasha T'hami Glaoui, one of the most powerful men in Morocco in the early 1950s, as well as influential men from Fez, Meknès, Rabat, or rich Egyptians.<sup>991</sup> During the Algerian War, the city strove to continue to be an appealing site for all those who wanted to come *en cure*, including the native elite. In the late 1950s, many native personalities, who were often close to the French power, continued to come *en cure* in Vichy. Mohammed Ben Arafa, former Sultan of Morocco, who the French had placed on the throne on August 20, 1953, came to Vichy in September 1957.<sup>992</sup> Other personalities threatened by the FLN in Algeria moved to Vichy permanently. Caïd Belkacem Asloum de Bou-Saada, for instance, moved there in 1957.<sup>993</sup>

The places most frequented by the Muslim elites, such as *La Colombière* hotel, where Ben Arafa stayed, were considered as sensitive places and were the object of particular surveillance.<sup>994</sup> Several suspicious individuals found around those places were removed or locked up, in accordance with the order of October 7, 1958, which relates to the fight against the activities of the Algerian rebellion in the metropolis.<sup>995</sup> Such increased surveillance was able to prevent several outbursts in Vichy. Throughout the war, only one serious incident was recorded in Vichy: on August 28, 1959, at 19:40, Chérif Benhabyles was shot seven times in front of the *hôtel Carlton*, in the *quartier thermal*, by two members of a Parisian radical FLN branch. Another person was killed and three others were injured. The following day, a tribute was paid to

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<sup>990</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 146; Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 222. This taking over was a failure. Coulon explains this failure as follows: "Son directeur général M. Labat était le type même du technocrate. Homme jeune, de haute taille, fort mince, très intelligent mais fort peu intéressé par Vichy et les problèmes de la station qu'il voulait mettre en équation. Ils eurent Vichy en charge pendant quelque douze ans tout en ne sachant trop par quel bout prendre la situation. Ils étaient plus préoccupés d'activités périphériques beaucoup plus rentables." Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 146

<sup>991</sup> Ibid., 9 & 177-178.

<sup>992</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 9. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy (September 17, 1957).

<sup>993</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 9. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy (date unknown).

<sup>994</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 32. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy (October 12, 1960).

<sup>995</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 32. Letter from the *Commissaire Police Chef du Service des Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy to the Allier *préfet* (July 13, 1960).

Benhabyles in the hospital's church, in the presence of Dr. Colomb, deputy mayor. The corpse was then transferred to Algiers.<sup>996</sup>

In addition to being a refuge for the Muslim elites who looked for French protection, the city also became a favoured meeting point for some prominent partisans of French Algeria, who, between the late 1950s and 1962, used it as a strategic place for the planification of the defence of the colony. Naturally, there remain few documents detailing the secret meetings of the pro French Algeria partisans – and later, of the OAS – in Vichy. Nonetheless, newspaper clippings and background notes coming from the *Renseignements généraux* give us some information on these underground reunions. For instance, we learn that during summer the Vichy military hospital was a favoured meeting place for *Front national pour l'Algérie française* (FNAF) members, who made contacts and maintained activist relationships. During winter the activity decreased. However, the remaining members in Vichy regularly engaged in exchanges with the FNAF's national office via M. Valais (janitor at the military hospital) and the commander Nauroy (pharmacist of the military hospital, and member of the *Anciens Combattant de l'Union Français*).<sup>997</sup> General Salan was often sighted in Vichy, where he frequented the *hôtel Royal*.<sup>998</sup> Some of his visits were likely to be of a private nature, as his parents-in-law were from the region and ran a bakery on Carnot street in Vichy.<sup>999</sup> His other visits, however, were of a professional nature. In the summer of 1958 and the spring of 1959, for example, he came to Vichy with his military staff only for a few hours; in 1959, he also attended a meeting at the military hospital lasting (April 30, 1959).<sup>1000</sup>

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<sup>996</sup> “La dépouille mortelle du Sénateur Benhabyles a reçu un dernier hommage avant de regagner Alger par avion,” *La Montagne* (August 31, 1959).

<sup>997</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 24. Note d'orientation (November 4, 1960).

The FNAF was created in 1960 with the objective to “promouvoir et défendre dans un apolitisme absolu et dans le respect de la légalité la vocation imprescriptible des départements de l'Algérie et du Sahara à demeurer au sein de la patrie et l'urgence d'intégrer dans la communauté nationale les Français qui y résident, quelles que soient leurs origines ethniques ou leurs confessions.” Description of the organization given to the Préfecture in Paris on July 27, 1960.

On the FNAF, see: Jean-Pierre Rioux, “Des clandestins aux activistes 1945-1965,” in *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France*, ed. Michel Winock (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 215-241; James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 113.

<sup>998</sup> “Le général Salan a passé quelques heures à Vichy” *Tribune* (July 12, 1958).

<sup>999</sup> Unidentified press article (July 4, 1984).

<sup>1000</sup> “Le général Salan a passé quelques heures à Vichy” *Tribune* (July 12, 1958); “Général Salan,” *Liberté* (August 11, 1958); “Le Général Salan à Vichy,” *Tribune* (April 30, 1959).

## 2. The rightward shift of the municipality

Following the outbreak of the insurrection in Algeria in November 1954, politicians across the political spectrum argued favorably for an immediate and firm response. At the time, not only was the independence considered out of line with French interests, but also unthinkable for the simple reason that “l’Algérie, c’est la France,” as François Mitterrand declared on December 1, 1954. Pierre Mendès France, who had negotiated the peace settlement in Indochina, saw Algeria as integral to the unity and integrity of the French Republic and deemed Algerians to be irreversibly French. On November 12, 1954, during a speech at the national assembly, he stated that:

Il n’y aura aucun ménagement, aucun compromis avec la sédition. (...) Il s’agit de défendre l’intégrité de la République. Les départements d’Algérie font partie de la République. (...) Jamais la France, jamais aucun gouvernement ne cédera sur ce principe fondamental.<sup>1001</sup>

In the same year, Michel Debré said that Algeria and the Sahara were France’s “last major assets,” without which the country would “cease to have any prospects as a world power.”<sup>1002</sup> Three years later, he argued that “the abandonment of French sovereignty in Algeria [was] an illegitimate act,” and that “those who oppose[d] it, by whatever means, [were] legally defending a legitimate cause.”<sup>1003</sup> Although the argument of territorial integrity had initially appealed to a large variety of people,<sup>1004</sup> the increasingly bloody reality of the war eventually led large segments of France’s population, including politicians whose position had been unequivocal in 1954, to argue in favor of the independence. By the early 1960s, only the extreme right continued to work tirelessly to save French Algeria.

French Algeria was essential for Vichy, as the colony constituted a large part of the city’s livelihood. The city’s economic dependency towards, and its sentimental attachment to the colony led to important economic, social and political shifts in Vichy. While the city of Vichy was never strongly leftist, for nearly a century it was dominated, without major disruption, by the radical party. This changed in the 1950s. Unlike the Second World War, the Algerian War

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<sup>1001</sup> Cited in Éric Roussel, *François Mitterrand : De l’intime au politique* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2015), 223.

<sup>1002</sup> Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 91.

<sup>1003</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1004</sup> French nationalism had long been expressed historically in territorial terms (Alsace Lorraine, the empire, etc.).

The Algerian war provided a powerful mobilizing cause, “appealing not just to nationalist but to simple patriotic sentiment.” Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 5 & 90.

marked a significant rupture in the city's political orientation, which quickly and sustainably shifted to the right. Fears of an economic collapse have the power to transform communities, often for the worst.

Pierre Coulon was Vichy's mayor during the entire 1954-1962 period. In 1947, Coulon adhered to de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF). He was elected municipal councilor the same year. Three years later, he became mayor. De Gaulle himself sent him a letter of congratulations.<sup>1005</sup> In 1952, however, Coulon left the RPF and joined the *Action républicaine et sociale* (ARS),<sup>1006</sup> a parliamentary group who voted for the investiture of Antoine Pinay at the *présidence du Conseil*. In 1954, this group joined the *Centre national des indépendants et paysans* (CNIP). The CNIP supported de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. Shortly after, however, the *indépendants* and the Gaullists split over several issues, including French Algeria.<sup>1007</sup>

From September 1959, the CNIP opposed the principle of self-determination for Algeria and strengthened its ties with the extreme right and the activist circles of Algiers. The more the Gaullists evolved in favor of independence, the more the CNIP, which was then largely financially supported by big colonial businesses as well as agricultural and colonial lobbyists, appeared to be the last political party still working towards the defense of French Algeria. During the week of the barricades in January 1960 and after, in the face of the coup of Algiers in April 1961, the CNIP took on an ambiguous attitude and refused to condemn the rebels.<sup>1008</sup> During his campaign for the legislative election of November 1958, Coulon insisted on the CNIP's dedication to the fight in favor of French Algeria:

Nous voulons que l'Algérie reste française. Il faut que l'Algérie reste française. Il le faut pour l'Algérie elle-même, pour la France, pour l'Europe et l'Occident, pour la Paix dans le monde. Depuis 1954, les Indépendants ont subordonné toute leur politique au maintien de l'Algérie française. Au cours de la grande crise d'avril-mai, ils n'ont agi que pour sauver l'Algérie. Au plus fort de l'impasse et du désarroi des autorités de la IV<sup>e</sup> République, les Indépendants tinrent ferme leurs

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<sup>1005</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of the letter (August 23, 1950).

<sup>1006</sup> Maurice Sarazin, *Les Bourbonnais célèbres et remarquables des origines à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Arrondissement de Vichy* (Charroux en Bourbonnais: Editions des cahiers Bourbonnais, 2009), 77.

<sup>1007</sup> In November of 1962, the former CNIP members who clung on to a Gaullist majority founded the dissident group of the *Républicains indépendants*, behind Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

<sup>1008</sup> Mathias Bernard, *Histoire politique de la Ve République de 1958 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2008), 39-40. On this, see also: Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La France de la IV<sup>e</sup> République* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

positions. Les voies sont maintenant ouvertes pour faire prévaloir dans la paix retrouvée l'union des diverses population d'Algérie.<sup>1009</sup>

While Coulon remained affiliated to the CNIP, he also drew closer to Pierre Poujade, although many things opposed the two men. First and foremost, Coulon was an industrialist and a business owner, who embodied the values against which Poujade fought. At the legislative elections of January 1956, according to Jean Débordes, Coulon's collaborator and friend, some Poujadist candidates violently opposed Vichy's mayor.<sup>1010</sup> In September 1957, however, Pierre Poujade met with Pierre Coulon and the two men realized that they had more in common than they had initially thought. Jean Débordes remembers the meeting:

Par un dimanche ensoleillé de septembre Pierre Coulon me demanda de l'accompagner. Direction la Saône et Loire où Pierre Poujade avait, pour quelques jours, élu domicile sur une péniche à deux pas du Creusot. Ce fut une entrevue très décontractée, en bras de chemise. La table du déjeuner n'avait pas encore été entièrement débarrassée. Là sur le pont, à l'abri du soleil, grâce à une toile tendue, la conversation se déroula dans le meilleur des climats. C'est là que fut conclu le soutien à Pierre Coulon.<sup>1011</sup>

As promised, the newly radicalized UDCA supported Coulon during the legislative elections of November 1958.<sup>1012</sup> That Coulon and Poujade became closer at this specific time suggests that Coulon's support of Poujadism was primarily motivated by Poujade's position on Algeria. Indeed, as France became mired in the Algerian War, Poujade increasingly defended the cause of French Algeria.<sup>1013</sup> While Poujade first supported de Gaulle's investiture in 1958, he later withdrew his support, in part because of an ideological incompatibility about Algeria.<sup>1014</sup> Some Poujadists even went on to support the OAS. In 1961, it was former Poujadists, for example, who committed the deadliest pro-OAS attack in metropolitan France: the derailment of the Paris-

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<sup>1009</sup> Coulon's electoral program (legislative election of November 1958).

<sup>1010</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 246-248.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., 246-248.

<sup>1013</sup> Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 78 & 80.

<sup>1014</sup> Romain Souillac, *Le mouvement Poujade. De la défense professionnelle au populisme nationaliste (1953-1962)* (Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), 20.

Another reason for severing ties with the Gaullists was because the latter went on to "preside over precisely the developments against which the Poujadists had campaigned so vigorously: economic modernisation, commercial concentration, industrialization." Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 77.



Strasbourg train. In southwest France, another former Poujadist, Marcel Bouyer, founded the *Résurrection-Patrie* network, which provided local competition for the OAS-Métro.<sup>1015</sup>

While there is no evidence that the relationship between Coulon and Poujade continued throughout the war, archival documents nonetheless suggest that until shortly before the independence, the municipality of Vichy supported French Algeria. In December 1959, the FLN sent Coulon a brochure that listed the names of some of the French considered enemies of the Algerian people to his personal Vichy address.<sup>1016</sup> Although the mayor's name was not on the list, along those of Soustelle and Bidault, the fact that the FLN deemed it useful to send him their brochure suggests that he was considered an enemy of the Algerian cause. In 1960, a note from the *Renseignement Généraux* indicated that Dr. Pierre Colomb, deputy mayor, was vice president of the *Association des Officiers de Réserve de Vichy*,<sup>1017</sup> known for its strong pro French Algeria position.<sup>1018</sup> Colomb was also reported to be in direct contact with the *Front National pour l'Algérie française* (FNAF).<sup>1019</sup> Perhaps just as disturbing is the fact that the municipal council did not oppose the decision of prominent figures of the FNAF, Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jean-Robert Thomazo and Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, to hold a national meeting in Vichy on September 20, 1960, a few days after de Gaulle had stated that "Il y a une Algérie, il y a une entité algérienne, il y a une personnalité algérienne," thus rejecting the argument according to which "l'Algérie c'est la France."<sup>1020</sup> Initially planned in the city's *salle des fêtes*, the meeting finally took place in a private room in the *Brasserie Royal*, after groups of local opponents had voiced their discontent.<sup>1021</sup>

The municipality's relationship with Raoul Salan raises further questions about the degree of the city's support for French Algeria. In April 1957, a delegation from Vichy was invited to Algiers, where the *Vichysois* were greeted by Salan himself.<sup>1022</sup> This visit, Coulon later declared

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<sup>1015</sup> Rémi Kauffer, "OAS, Le terrorisme dans la confusion," in *La France en guerre d'Algérie*, eds., Laurent Gervereau, Jean-Pierre Rioux, Benjamin Stora (Paris: BDIC, 1991), 158-159.

<sup>1016</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 9. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (February 1960).

<sup>1017</sup> AD (Allier), 1790 W 5. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (November 4, 1960).

<sup>1018</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 24. Information note (November 4, 1960); AD (Allier) 1876 W 14. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the *Renseignement Généraux* in Lyon about the activist organizations in Vichy (August 24, 1962).

<sup>1019</sup> AD (Allier) 1790 W 5. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (November 4, 1960).

<sup>1020</sup> Press conference of September 5, 1959.

The "entité" was defined in his speech of November 4, 1960, in which Algeria was declared as "un état en devenir."

<sup>1021</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 24. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (September 20, 1960).

<sup>1022</sup> "Le général Salan a passé quelques heures à Vichy," *Tribune* (July 12, 1958).

“à le caractère d’un symbole d’amitié et de confiance.”<sup>1023</sup> How the Salan-Coulon relationship evolved during the war is unknown. The fact that after his 1968 liberation from the prison in Tulle, Salan regularly went to Vichy for a *cure*,<sup>1024</sup> and that he chose to be buried there,<sup>1025</sup> suggests that the General likely remained on good terms with Coulon’s municipal councils and with those of Coulon’s successor, Jacques Lacarin. That until very recently, the municipal council sent an official representative to the yearly ceremony in memory of the former General, organized by the local branch of the ANFANOMA, alongside former OAS militants, members of the extreme right and those nostalgic for French Algeria, further indicates that Salan was respected by local leaders.

Despite his flirting with the extreme right, Coulon, however, cannot be labeled a far-right politician. Coulon was not anti parliamentarian,<sup>1026</sup> ultra nationalist or xenophobic. The violent confrontation he had with Faurisson in 1958,<sup>1027</sup> as well as his local politics proves it. It should also be noted that neither Coulon nor Lacarin publicly supported the OAS and in the referendum of April 1962, Coulon favored independence.<sup>1028</sup> Coulon’s position with regards to the extreme right was unclear to say the least. Yet, no matter whether his relationships with prominent individuals from the extreme right were either ideological or were mainly strategic – a convenient alliance forged within the very specific context of the Algerian war, or both, the fact remains that Vichy’s municipality significantly shifted to the right during those troubling times.

Interestingly, it is in large part Coulon’s friendship with right wing and extreme right wing individuals that saved the city from economic disaster in the post Algeria era. The friendship he entertained with André Bettencourt, a former sympathizer of the fascist organization *La Cagoule* (who, during the Second World War wrote articles for the collaborationist and ultra anti-Semitic newspaper *La Terre française*) and François Dalle (who had worked for Eugène Schueller, the principal financial officer of *La Cagoule* and a prominent

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<sup>1023</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 184.

<sup>1024</sup> “Symbole de la révolte de l’Algérie française... Salan enterré à Vichy,” unspecified newspaper (date unknown).

<sup>1025</sup> In 1956, he bought a concession at Vichy’s local cemetery. The document is available in the municipal archives in Vichy.

<sup>1026</sup> In 1962, he opposed the election of the President of the Republic by direct popular vote, which gave more power to the executive power. Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 231.

<sup>1027</sup> Valérie Igounet, *Robert Faurisson: portrait d’un négationniste* (Paris: Denoël, 2012), 80-82.

<sup>1028</sup> AD (Allier), 1790 W 5. Note from the *Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy to the *Renseignements généraux* in Moulins (March 19, 1962).

member in the creation of the *Légion des volontaires français* in 1941)<sup>1029</sup> proved especially providential for the city.

In 1955, *L'Oréal's* founder, Eugène Schueller, who had decided to invest in the Vichy water, purchased the Vichy cosmetics. The Vichy cosmetics, made with unique minerals from the Vichy water, were invented in Vichy in the early 1930s. Eight facial skin care products were sold under the brands "Secrets de Vichy." They remained extremely popular until the 1970s, when they stopped being marketed.<sup>1030</sup> While there is no evidence that Coulon was friend with Schueller, his friendship with André Bettencourt (Schueller's son-in-law and *L'Oréal's* main shareholder after Schueller's passing) and François Dalle (the firm's chief executive) is certain; and it is this friendship that enabled the establishment of *L'Oréal's* international center of production (LIDV) in 1969.<sup>1031</sup> Encompassing an area of over fifteen hectares, the facility significantly enhanced the local economy's future sustainably. To this day, the *L'Oreal* complex remains the city's biggest economic achievement in the post Algeria era.<sup>1032</sup>

### 3. Grassroots support/opposition to the war

In Vichy, the strongest advocates for French Algeria regrouped within the local section of the FNAF, which held meetings and office hours every Saturday in Vichy at the restaurant *Le Royal*. Unsurprisingly most of the members of the local FNAF were also members of extreme right groups, such as the MP 13, the *Association des Anciens Combattants de l'Union française*, the *Amis de Robert Brasillach*, the ADMP, *Jeune Nation*, the *Association des Officiers de*

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<sup>1029</sup> None of them were prosecuted, in part thanks to the help provided by François Mitterrand, who was a close friend of Bettencourt and who was employed by Schueller in 1945 and 1946, and in part because Bettencourt claimed that he had helped the resistance since 1943, although many historians have expressed doubts on this information.

On the history of *L'Oréal*, see: Michael Bar-Zohar, *Une histoire sans fard : L'Oréal, des années sombres au boycott arabe*, trans. Serge Moran (Paris: Fayard, 1996); Jacques Marseille, *L'Oréal : 1909-2009* (Paris: Perrin, 2009).

<sup>1030</sup> Pascal Chambriard, *Aux Sources de Vichy Naissance et développement d'un bassin thermal* (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 1999), 170-171; François Dalle, *L'Aventure L'Oréal* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 2001), 182.

<sup>1031</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 120; Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989*, 41.

<sup>1032</sup> "Les LIDV se redéployent pour croître," *Moulins Vichy Economique, Magazine de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Moulins-Vichy* (June 2003), 15; Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989*, 41.

*Réserve de Vichy*, or of Poujadist or royalist organizations.<sup>1033</sup> After the Second World War, some of these individuals had been prosecuted for intelligence with the enemy.<sup>1034</sup>

Grassroots propaganda favoring French Algeria intensified after the failure of the coup of December 13, 1960.<sup>1035</sup> This propaganda mostly consisted of distributing leaflets and setting up posters. An information note from September 22, 1960 refers to an order of 3,000 tracts placed by the local branch of the *Association Nationale des Combattants de l'Union Française*.<sup>1036</sup> A few weeks later, several posters inviting the population to support French Algeria were posted in the city's center, at the initiative of Marceau Valais (the Vichy military hospital's janitor, the ACUF's departmental secretary, the treasurer of the local section of the FNAF, and a member of the association *Les Amis de Robert Brasillach*), Jean Lalle (a MP13 and FNAF member), and Robert Hadjab (a former soldier in Indochina and an extreme right sympathizer).<sup>1037</sup> On November 1960, new Vichy resident Robert Faurisson was caught distributing pro French Algeria leaflets at the *monument aux morts*.<sup>1038</sup> In the winter of 1962, an investigation about the printing of pro OAS flyers was conducted against M. René Sauvannet, the MP13 regional representative, who was also involved in royalist organizations as well as in the FNAF, the *Amis de Robert Brasillach*, and the ADMP.<sup>1039</sup> The pro French Algeria local enclaves became more active following the coup attempt in Algiers in April 1961 and they were, consequently, subject to constant surveillance.<sup>1040</sup> While the police operations did not always allow for finding irrefutable proof of the activity of certain individuals,<sup>1041</sup> they did lead to the identification of the

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<sup>1033</sup> AD (Allier), 1851 W 7. Information note (undated); AD (Allier), 1876 W 19. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the Allier *préfet* (March 10, 1962); AD (Allier), 1876 W 24. Information note (November 4, 1960).

<sup>1034</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 19. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the Allier *préfet* (March 10, 1962).

<sup>1035</sup> In December 1960, the FAF and its metropolitan allies attempted a coup similar to the one of May 13. While in Algeria, Charles de Gaulles faced very violent demonstrations of Europeans. The coup, however, was a failure. On this, see: Rioux, "Des clandestins aux activistes 1945-1965," 237.

<sup>1036</sup> AD (Allier), 1851 W 3. Information note (September 22, 1960).

<sup>1037</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 24. Note from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (December 1960).

<sup>1038</sup> Igounet, *Robert Faurisson*, 83. Faurisson moved to Vichy in 1957.

<sup>1039</sup> AD (Allier), 1851 W 3. Information note (September 22, 1960).

<sup>1040</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 19. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the Allier *préfet* (March 10, 1962).

<sup>1041</sup> Ibid.

most dangerous individuals, who were stopped and confined to supervised residences or committed to the Montluçon's CRS.<sup>1042</sup>

Although after independence was granted to Algeria the Vichy branches of the FNAF and the MP 13 were officially dissolved,<sup>1043</sup> some members pursued their action and advocacy work. Ten individuals were listed as potentially dangerous in Vichy, amongst whom the president of the *Amicale des Officiers de Réserve*, a Poujadist militant, a former paratrooper, and Marceau Valais, considered the leader of local pro-French Algeria activism and described as an ardent support of Salan.<sup>1044</sup> In June 1962, a few days before independence, Valais was arrested with three OAS members and prosecuted for conspiracy against the state by Cusset's *Tribunal de Grande Instance*. The prosecutor pleaded in favor of lenient sentences, arguing that very harsh sentences against those OAS partisans would not be relevant given that many amnesties had already been granted to FLN activists. The sentences ranged from two to three months in prison.<sup>1045</sup>

A few other isolated incidents were recorded in Vichy after the proclamation of independence: an attempted robbery at the local agency of the *Foncier d'Algérie et de Tunisie* by three armed men on August 17, 1962<sup>1046</sup>; a gathering of extreme right sympathizers and former members of the local branch of the FNAF for the signing of René Rieunier's book, *Réquisitoire contre le mensonge: juin 1940 – juillet 1962* at the restaurant *Le Royal* on December 26, 1962. A dozen people, including Robert Faurisson, René Sauvannet, already mentioned above, René Dillenseger (a member of the ADMP) and Marcelin Brière (a delegate of the national association *Ceux de Verdun*, member of the bureau of the *Association d'Anciens Chasseurs Alpins et à pieds 'La Sidi-Brahim'* in Vichy) came to get autographs.<sup>1047</sup>

Despite the establishment of violent pro French Algeria organizations in Vichy, the latter's influence on the population, however, remained limited. Only eighteen *Vichyssois*, for

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<sup>1042</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 14. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the *Renseignements Généraux* in Paris (March 16, 1962); AD (Allier), 1876 W 19. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the Allier *préfet* (March 10, 1962).

<sup>1043</sup> AD (Allier), 1851 W 7. Information note (undated).

<sup>1044</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 14. Letter from the *Renseignements Généraux* in the Allier to the *Renseignements Généraux* in Lyon (August 24, 1962).

<sup>1045</sup> Press article, illegible title (June 26, 1962).

<sup>1046</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 19. Information note from the *Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy (November 18, 1962).

<sup>1047</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 24. Information note from the *Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy (December 26, 1962).

instance, joined the FNAF.<sup>1048</sup> Besides, some of the local branches of extreme right associations, such as that of the *Amis de Robert Brasillach*, fell into oblivion while the war was not even over.<sup>1049</sup>

While the influence of the most hardcore pro French Algeria sympathizers on Vichy's population remained limited, there is nonetheless evidence of a widespread support for French Algeria amongst the local population. The great enthusiasm brought about by de Gaulle's short visit to Vichy in April 1959, during his tour of the department, evidences this. De Gaulle was reelected in 1958, in large part thanks to the pro-French Algeria sympathizers, who believed that he would handle the crisis with firmness.<sup>1050</sup> Thousands of *Vichyssois* braved the rain to see and hear the famed general.<sup>1051</sup> Despite the weather,

Charles de Gaulle vint 'se planter au beau milieu du parvis' de l'hôtel de ville pour faire son discours. Aussitôt les micros tombèrent en panne. Le général essaya bien de se passer des haut-parleurs, mais sa gorge fragile ne lui permit pas, et la foule, gentiment, pour meubler cette interruption technique, scanda : 'Vive de Gaulle !'<sup>1052</sup>

If such enthusiasm may have, in part, been motivated by the population's desire for their innocence and heroism during the Second World War to be finally acknowledged, given the circumstances, it is more likely that it was primarily motivated by the Algerian question. De Gaulle's speech on self-determination (September 16, 1959), which marked a significant departure from his early approach to the Algerian question, had not yet occurred. Furthermore, according to a journalist, the phrase the General had uttered earlier in Montluçon - "Nous sommes dans une période où la paix, et vous savez de quelle paix je parle, et la liberté vont être assurées" - had raised many hopes amongst those who were hoping for a rapid and victorious end of the war.<sup>1053</sup> In Vichy, the main issues addressed were agriculture, industry and the

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<sup>1048</sup> AD (Allier), 1851 W 3. Observation note from the *Renseignements Généraux* in Vichy (March 15, 1962).

<sup>1049</sup> AD (Allier), 1851 W 7. Information note (undated).

<sup>1050</sup> On this, see Martin Evans, "Complex Violence: December 1957 to September 1959," in *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 226-257.

<sup>1051</sup> "Malgré le mauvais temps au rendez-vous du président de Gaulle," *Tribune* (April 18, 1959).

<sup>1052</sup> "Le président de Gaulle dans l'Allier," *Liberté* (April 18, 1959).

<sup>1053</sup> Ibid.



economy.<sup>1054</sup> This neutral intervention was likely disappointing for the *Vichyssois*, who would have probably preferred to hear more about his strategy with regard to Algeria.



Figure 18. The *Vichyssois* listening to de Gaulle (April 1959).<sup>1055</sup>

The popular support for Poujade is further indicative of the view of some *Vichyssois* on French Algeria. In March 1955 the UDCA opposed a fiscal control in Broût-Vernet, a village close to Vichy. Eight days later, an information meeting, presided over by Poujade himself, was held in Vichy. About 1,500 people were in attendance.<sup>1056</sup> At the time, this support was likely mainly motivated by Poujade's original socio-economic objectives, which had seduced shopkeepers, artisans, small farmers, and others, across France.<sup>1057</sup> As a tourist based resort, Vichy had many small businesses, the owners of which would have benefitted from the reforms proposed by Poujade. Interestingly, the support of Vichy's population did not diminish, even when Poujade's economic and social ambitions proved unattainable. Poujade came back to Vichy in August 1957. Like in March 1955, about 1,500 people came to hear him speak,<sup>1058</sup> whereas in

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<sup>1054</sup> "Le voyage du Général de Gaulle en Bourbonnais," *La Montagne* (April 18, 1959); "Le président de Gaulle dans l'Allier," *Liberté* (April 18, 1959); *Malgré le mauvais temps au rendez-vous du président de Gaulle*, *Tribune* (April 18, 1959).

<sup>1055</sup> Photograph by the journalist of *La Montagne* (April 18, 1959).

<sup>1056</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 246-248.

<sup>1057</sup> Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 73.

<sup>1058</sup> Débordes, *Coulon: La trop courte chance de Vichy*, 248.

other cities in France, Poujade no longer drew the crowd.<sup>1059</sup> One plausible explanation for the *Vichyssois*' continuing support for and confidence in Poujade is that Poujade's local support base shifted between 1955 and 1957: in 1957, the local support for Poujade likely came from pro French Algeria sympathizers, rather than people concerned with economic issues (as it was the case in 1955).

Pierre Coulon's reelections offer further evidence of the pro-French Algeria position of the majority of the population. Coulon was reelected in 1959 and in 1965, respectively with 60,9 percent and 69,99 percent of the votes in the first round. At the legislative elections in 1962, he topped the other departmental candidates in Vichy, whereas he was easily beaten in the rest of the department.<sup>1060</sup> Coulon modernized the city, diversified its economy by creating a big artificial lake for rowing and kayak competitions, developed new urban districts, constructed social housing, a large high school, and the *Centre omnisport*, a park with sports facilities. Given the dominance of Algeria on national and local affairs, however, it seems likely that his position on the Algeria question played a major part in his reelections.

Another sign of the popular support towards French Algeria occurred after the murder of the Senator of Constantine, Chérif Benhabyles in August 1959, when the angry crowd attempted to obtain one of the two murderers (who had just been arrested) to lynch him.<sup>1061</sup>

Yet after years of hearing of the bloody war, the *Vichyssois* had become resigned at the prospect of losing Algeria. At the 1961 self-determination referenda and in the 1962 independence referendum, like everywhere in France, the 'yes' side won to a large margin in Vichy. The gap between the results in Vichy and the national results, however, is significant. In 1962, for instance, the rate of absenteeism/void/no represented almost fifty percent of the population of voting age, while the national average was less than thirty-eight percent.<sup>1062</sup> A high abstention rate was expected in Vichy: a pre-electoral information note about the situation in Vichy underlined that because of the "nombre relativement élevé de sympathisants en faveur de l'Algérie française," the abstention rate was likely to be rather high in the city.<sup>1063</sup> While many *Vichyssois* resigned themselves to the independence of Algeria, the above-cited figures

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<sup>1059</sup> Souillac, *Le mouvement Poujade*, 304.

<sup>1060</sup> Because he was beaten in the rest of the department, he lost the seat he had had since 1951.

<sup>1061</sup> "La dépouille mortelle du sénateur Benhabyles a reçu un dernier hommage avant de regagner Alger par avion," *La Montagne* (August 31, 1959).

<sup>1062</sup> AD (Allier), 1790 W 5. Statistics of the referenda in Vichy.

<sup>1063</sup> AD (Allier), 1790 W 5. Information note about the pre-electoral situation (April 8, 1962).

nonetheless reveal that half of the population chose to abstain from voting, or had voted ‘against’ Algerian independence.

Unsurprisingly, given the specific history between Vichy and Algeria, the pro-FLN activity was extremely limited in Vichy. This activism concerned only the Muslim circles, which were few in the city. Briefing notes reveal that in 1955, only sixty-five North Africans were registered on Vichy voters’ lists; there were eighty-seven in 1958 for a Muslim population of 370 individuals.<sup>1064</sup> About twenty-five percent of the North African workers in Vichy were thought to be FLN sympathizers,<sup>1065</sup> that is a few dozens, an insignificant number compared to the 135,000 contributing members of the French Federation of the FLN.<sup>1066</sup> A survey nonetheless revealed the existence of a network of FLN and MNA collectors in Vichy. Money was taken from the wages of the Muslim employees of the *Société Commerciale des Eaux Minérales du Bassin de Vichy* and forwarded to the independence organizations.<sup>1067</sup> The coerced contribution to the FLN was common practice in France. It did not depend on the action of local Algerians, but it was rather determined and managed by wider networks. The latter also engaged in intensive propaganda activity. In Vichy this propaganda mostly consisted of the distribution of the *Résistance Algérienne* newspaper, the organ of the French Federation of the FLN.<sup>1068</sup> Between 1954 and 1962, the Muslims in Vichy who were suspected to be FLN sympathizers or members were either excluded from the department, interned in the *Camp du Larzac*, the main internment camp for Algerians in metropolitan France, or sent back to Algeria.<sup>1069</sup>

The fact that only one major incident occurred in Vichy (the murder of Chérif Benhabyles) can also be explained by the wish of local personalities, who were FLN sympathizers but seldom involved in politics, to keep the resort quiet. According to M. Belabed,

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<sup>1064</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 6. Information notes and surveys from October and November 1958.

The difference between the number of individuals residing in and around Vichy and the number of individuals registered on the electoral lists can be explained by Vichy’s specific structural features. Because the city’s economic activity was the most important during the spa season (from May to October), a large seasonal workforce was hired every year. These people did not reside in Vichy permanently and were therefore not registered on the electoral lists.

<sup>1065</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 6. Departmental survey about the Muslim community in the Allier (date unknown).

<sup>1066</sup> Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La bataille de Paris 17 octobre 1961* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 31.

<sup>1067</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 9. Notes from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (August and October 1957).

<sup>1068</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 9. Notes from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (August 1957).

<sup>1069</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 32. Unspecified note (January 4, 1962).

On the Larzac, see Jean Philippe Marcy, “L’aide aux internés : La Cimade au camp du Larzac (1959-1961),” in *La France en guerre 1954 – 1962 : expériences métropolitaines de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, eds., Raphaëlle Branche and Sylvie Thénault (Paris: Autrement, 2008), 381.

who was vice president of the *délégation spéciale de Bedeau*, as well as *conseiller général* in the Oran department, and *conseiller de l'Union française*), caïd Belkacem Asloum de Bou-Saada, who had been settled in Vichy since May 1957, was saved from being murdered by the FLN by Abdelkader Francis, a lawyer born in the region of Oran and settled in Vichy, whose brother was Dr. Francis, the leader of the FLN in Cairo. Abdelkader Francis reportedly convinced the killer not to carry out his mission “en lui faisant valoir que Vichy jusqu’ici avait été tenu à l’écart des opérations d’exécutions du FLN et qu’il convenait de lui conserver sa réputation de calme et de tranquillité.”<sup>1070</sup>

Although Vichy’s grassroots population showed no support for the FLN, some criticism against the war was voiced by local unions’ and left-wing parties’ members. In 1956, the Algerian War entered the life of French people like never before.<sup>1071</sup> In order to ‘pacify’ Algeria, France decided to intensify its military effort. Calling up several years of conscripts (1952-1953-1954), and lengthening the duration of military service to twenty-seven months ensured a doubling of the military force in Algeria, from 200,000 men in January 1956 to about 400,000 at the year’s end.<sup>1072</sup> Like elsewhere in France, in Vichy, some young men were drafted again. Upon hearing the news, some of the draftees’ coworkers stopped working for half an hour. According to the journalist who reported on the ‘strike’, “les travailleurs ont pris la résolution de tout mettre en œuvre pour l’arrêt des hostilités en Algérie.”<sup>1073</sup> In 1958, Vichy’s most active communist, Jacques Guillaumin, complained that “cette guerre d’Algérie s’éternise, apportant dans notre région aussi, son cortège de deuils, de souffrances et de haines.” The PCF, he added, “considère que la domination des capitalistes est la cause profonde de la misère, du colonialisme, et de la guerre, et que la seule solution complète à ces problèmes, c’est le socialisme.”<sup>1074</sup> Although the Vichy communists had little political influence in the city, they nevertheless continued to publicly argue against the Algerian war.

In the fall of 1960, the representatives of local unions (CGT, CFTC, FO, etc.), members from the PC, PS, SFIO and the *Mouvement de la Paix* pressured the city into cancelling the far-

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<sup>1070</sup> AD (Allier), 1876 W 9. Notes from the *Direction des Renseignements Généraux* (Illegible date).

<sup>1071</sup> Gil Emprin, “Militants de la décolonisation en Isère : Entre divergences politiques et solidarités,” in *La France en guerre 1954 – 1962*, 178.

<sup>1072</sup> Guy Pervillé, “L’armée au combat de 1956 à 1962,” in *La France en guerre d’Algérie*, 46.  
 “C’était un effort militaire sans précédent pour une guerre coloniale depuis la conquête de l’Algérie.”

<sup>1073</sup> “Nouveau débrayage à l’imprimerie Wallon à Vichy,” *Patriote* (May 25, 1956).

<sup>1074</sup> Cited in Claude Poulet, “La quatrième circonscription de l’Allier. Contribution à l’étude de la vie politique de l’Allier sous la Vème République (1958-1985)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, 1979), 45.

right meeting initially planned to be held in the local *salle des Fêtes*. If no agreement was reached, they threatened to organize “une puissante manifestation de rues.”<sup>1075</sup> In his review of this incident, the journalist for the communist newspaper *Les Nouvelles de l'Allier* wrote that the organizers

oubliaient une seule chose. A Vichy, il y a ... des travailleurs, des républicains qui n'ont pas oublié ce qu'est le fascisme. L'annonce d'une telle réunion a été ressentie comme une intolérable provocation par l'ensemble des travailleurs et des républicains de la station thermale. (...) Dans l'union la plus complète, se rassemblaient à la Bourse du Travail, les représentants des Unions locales syndicales (CGT, CFTC, FO, etc.), les partis politiques (PC, PS SFIO) auxquels se joignait également le Mouvement de la Paix. C'est d'un commun accord que toutes ces organisations décidèrent d'agir contre les factieux. (...) Non, les républicains, les patriotes de Vichy ne laisseraient pas les fascistes parader à la salle des Fêtes de la ville.<sup>1076</sup>

The meeting was finally held in a private room of the restaurant *Le Royal*. “Un succès [pour les] forces républicaines,” concluded the journalist.<sup>1077</sup> The success, however, was only partial since the “forces républicaines” in Vichy failed to mobilize the population. Nevertheless, they continued to speak up against the prolongation of the war. The following year, in April 1961, the unions and the left-wing political organizations and associations met and adopted the following motion unanimously:

Les républicains de Vichy et sa région, devant le coup d'État militaire fasciste en Algérie, proclament leur attachement à la République ; regrettent que le gouvernement qui devait être au courant des activités subversives, n'ait pas pris en temps voulu les mesures susceptibles de leur faire échec ; exigent qu'une action énergique soit entreprise d'urgence pour faire respecter la légalité républicaine.<sup>1078</sup>

The left-wing representatives also spoke out against the liberation of some participants of the *Procès des barricades*. The presence of almost 4,000 people, according to a local journalist,<sup>1079</sup> who had come to demonstrate in favor of peace, offers evidence of a widespread local opposition against the OAS. On the other hand, though, the fact that this initiative had no precedent or follow-through shows that the public involvement in the fight against the war was limited. It is

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<sup>1075</sup> “Dans l'unité réalisée. Échec aux factieux,” *Les Nouvelles de l'Allier* (September 11, 1960).

<sup>1076</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1077</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1078</sup> “Près de 4,000 personnes ont manifesté leur attachement à la République,” *La Montagne* (April 25, 1961).

<sup>1079</sup> Ibid.



also possible that a large part of the participants came from elsewhere in the department, as the scope of meeting went beyond the sole city of Vichy.

#### 4. How the arrival of a large community of *pieds noirs* changed the city's demographic structure.

With the arrival of more than 600,000 *pieds noirs* to the mainland,<sup>1080</sup> the year 1962 proved an eventful time in France. In Marseilles, like in many other cities, social tensions escalated quickly. In July 1962, during an interview with a journalist from *Paris-Presse*, Marseilles' mayor, Gaston Defferre, declared: "Que le *pieds noirs* aillent se réadapter ailleurs!"<sup>1081</sup> In the Phocian city, many luggage were either thrown in the ocean by unionized dockers or stolen - one quarter of the returnees' goods unloaded in Marseilles were apparently stolen.<sup>1082</sup> In Paris, the situation was also very tense. *Préfet de police* Maurice Papon argued in favor of banning the *pieds noirs* from settling in the capital: "L'arrivée dans la capitale et sa banlieue [de rapatriés] ne semble pas opportune. L'atmosphère de certains quartiers rendrait l'adaptation difficile."<sup>1083</sup>

Vichy, as a world-famous resort, was accustomed to interacting with a wide range of people (especially Europeans from the colonies). In 1883, the *Guide de l'étranger* stated that "Tous les peuples de l'Univers y sont représentés."<sup>1084</sup> Vichy "assumait une capacité romaine d'assimilation et de pluralisme," Eric Jennings writes in *À la Cure les Coloniaux!*.<sup>1085</sup> Vichy's tolerance was, of course, not without limits. M. Bennejean, a *pied noir* who arrived in Vichy in the early 1960s remembers incidents he and his friends faced upon arrival, revealing a certain level of misunderstanding and sometimes racism from the local population.<sup>1086</sup> While not every returnee arriving in Vichy had a happy experience, the incidents remained largely insignificant in comparison to what happened in many other cities. The integration of *pieds noirs* in Vichy was overall extremely successful.

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<sup>1080</sup> Abderahmen Moumen, "De l'Algérie à la France. Les conditions de départ et d'accueil des rapatriés, *pieds-noirs* et harkis en 1962," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 99:3 (2010), 60.

<sup>1081</sup> *Paris-Presse* (July 22, 1962).

<sup>1082</sup> Estimation by the historian Jean-Jacques Jordi. Cited in "les *pieds noirs* : 50 ans après," *Libération* (February 8, 2012).

<sup>1083</sup> Cited in Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, "'Paris les a pris dans ses bras !' La politique d'accueil des Français d'Algérie dans le département de la Seine," in *La France en guerre 1954-1962*, 454.

In the end, the policy put in place in Paris succeeded in pacifying and organizing the integration of more than 130,000 returnees, who had settled in and around Paris.

<sup>1084</sup> Cited in Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 221.

<sup>1085</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1086</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015).



Emile Gahnassia and Élie Chekroun reflect on their successful integration in Vichy. “Je suis arrivé au mois de juin 1962,” Gahnassia remembers. “Pour travailler ce n’était pas facile,” he adds, “mais très rapidement j’ai créé une maison de retraite et ensuite je me suis lancé dans les appartements meublés... Nous sommes arrivés à nous intégrer... Je tiens à dire que nous avons tous été très bien accueillis ici, notamment par le maire, M. Coulon.” Chekroun, who became one of the city’s most famous butchers, is equally satisfied with his post 1962 life and career in Vichy: “Ici j’ai réussi dans les affaires, j’ai épousé une Vichyssoise, j’ai fondé une famille. Je n’ai pas à me plaindre.” Chekroun also expresses gratefulness towards his family friends:

On m’a averti le 26 juin 1962 que je devais quitter le pays... Je n’avais aucun point de chute en métropole. Seulement des amis hôteliers que mon père connaissait. Comme beaucoup de pieds noirs il venait souvent à Vichy. Ce couple, M. et Mme Davray, tenait l’hôtel de l’Europe et m’a accueilli à mon arrivée.<sup>1087</sup>

While not all the *pieds noirs* who tried to settle in Vichy had come to take a *cure* before, most knew someone with acquaintances in the city. Such networks often proved very helpful for finding a hotel room, a furnished room, or a house to rent.<sup>1088</sup>

While many French cities, like Marseilles, may not have been ready or willing to deal with the arrivals of so many *pieds noirs*, Vichy most certainly was. The city had requisitioned two hotels with a total capacity of accommodation for 500 people, and set up a municipal restaurant, which offered free meals to the newcomers. It had also created a welcome committee with one branch at the train station and another at the airport, and organized a help desk to counsel the newcomers and assist them with the administrative steps linked to their exile.<sup>1089</sup> In addition, Pierre Coulon allocated 200 units from a newly constructed housing infrastructure to the *pieds noirs*.<sup>1090</sup> During a general assembly of the ANFANOMA in 1963, Coulon, assured the returnees that the city’s efforts in helping them to find accommodation was only a first step: “nous ferons tout le nécessaire pour mettre sur pied un plan rapide et efficace, qui donnera

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<sup>1087</sup> “Quelle place pour la guerre d’Algérie ?,” *La Montagne* (March 17, 2002).

<sup>1088</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015); Mrs. Bertrand, interview by author (June 6, 2015).

<sup>1089</sup> “Le Bourbonnais, terre d’accueil. Deux points de vue sur les problèmes des rapatriés d’Algérie dans notre département,” *La Montagne* (March 3, 1963); “Aux représentants rapatriés d’Algérie,” *La Montagne* (April 12, 1963); Untitled article, *La Montagne* (April 17, 1962).

<sup>1090</sup> “Pieds noirs : la mémoire en éveil de William Bennejean,” *La Montagne* (March 17, 2002).

satisfaction au maximum de personnes.” The city, Coulon added, “n’a pas oublié qu’elle a été pendant de nombreuses années l’espace vert de l’Afrique du Nord.”<sup>1091</sup>

Beyond the mere sentiment of respect, gratefulness and sympathy for a community who had boosted Vichy’s economy for years, the municipality was astutely aware of the electoral weight of these newcomers. By the mid-to-late 1960s, the *pieds noirs* represented about ten percent of Vichy’s electorate, according to the president of the ANFANOMA, William Bennejean.<sup>1092</sup> About 3,000 families of *pieds noirs* are reported to have come to Vichy.<sup>1093</sup> The *pied noir* community was not only an electoral target for local leaders, it was also economically and socially important, with prominent figures found in many fields, including medicine. That Coulon’s successor, his former vice mayor, Jacques Lacarin, added a *pied-noir* representative to the municipal council is further telling of the community’s power and influence. Jean Bennejean held this position for many years. He was a municipal councilor for eighteen years, before also acting as Lacarin’s *adjoint aux travaux et aux finances* until the latter’s death.<sup>1094</sup> Bennejean was later elected national president of the ANFANOMA in 1996 (until 2002).

Since the 1960s, the municipality has attended most of the events organized by the *pied noir* community, such as the commemorative ceremonies or the ANFANOMA’s general meetings. Since the early 1970s ceremonies of remembrance for the returnees, for the military and civilian victims of the Algerian War, as well as for the victims of the shooting of the *Rue d’Isly* in Algiers on March 26, 1962,<sup>1095</sup> have been conducted yearly in Vichy, under the initiative of the ANFANOMA, and with the support of the municipality.<sup>1096</sup> Like has been mentioned earlier, until recently the municipality also attended the ceremonies in honor of Raoul Salan.<sup>1097</sup> Finally, the municipality has always supported the ANFANOMA in its demand that March 19

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<sup>1091</sup> “Près d’un millier de pieds noirs ont assisté à l’Assemblée Générale de la délégation de l’Allier de l’AMFANOMA,” *La Montagne* (April 22, 1963).

<sup>1092</sup> “Pieds noirs : la mémoire en éveil de William Bennejean,” *La Montagne* (March 17, 2002).

<sup>1093</sup> Valérie Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d’une ville – Le cas de Vichy” (Ph.D. dissertation, EHESS, Laboratoire de Psychologie sociale, 1999), 41.

<sup>1094</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015); “Pieds noirs : la mémoire en éveil de William Bennejean,” *La Montagne* (March 17, 2002).

<sup>1095</sup> On this see Benjamin Stora, “26 mars 1962 : La fusillade rue d’Isly,” in *La France en guerre d’Algérie*, 165.

<sup>1096</sup> See the list of events maintained by the municipal archives in Vichy.

<sup>1097</sup> See the press articles reporting on this ceremony. Most of them include a list of the personalities in attendance.

stop being commemorated.<sup>1098</sup> In Vichy, only the much less powerful FNACA has chosen to commemorate March 19, despite the city's disapproval.<sup>1099</sup>

The successful integration of the *pied noir* community in Vichy resulted from different factors. First, although the *Vichyssois* and the returnees had experienced the war very differently, both communities had hoped that French Algeria would survive, and this created common ground for understanding and dialogue. Second, many of the *pieds noirs* who settled in Vichy were retirees. As such they were not in competition with local residents for employment, which may have facilitated their integration. In Vichy, there were few jobs available other than seasonal jobs. So most of the workers and young families who had initially come to Vichy quickly emigrated again, to the South of France, for the most part.<sup>1100</sup> Those wanting to remain within and near Vichy found jobs elsewhere in the department (often in manufacturing or agriculture, thereby significantly contributing to the region's economic development<sup>1101</sup>). Third, many of the *pieds noirs* in Vichy were relatively wealthy;<sup>1102</sup> they therefore brought important capital to the city.

Thankful for the warm welcome they received, the *pieds noirs* have regularly acknowledged the city's efforts at integrating them in their public speeches. In 1966, they further expressed their gratitude through the erection of a stele in memory of those who died in the colonies at Vichy's cemetery, featuring a hand reaching down to the ground, symbolizing the community's successful adoption by the "terre vichyssoise." The artist "en figurant en relief sur le monolithe une main tendue vers la terre, a voulu exprimer que la terre vichyssoise les a accueillis dans leur ville d'adoption et qu'ils sont, là, bien présents parmi nous."<sup>1103</sup>

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<sup>1098</sup> March 19, the day of ceasefire that was pronounced the day following the signature of the Evian treaty, was proposed for the first time by the Mitterrand in the 1981 presidential campaign. Yet it was contested because it brought back the memory of the defeat too much. The burden of remembrance, bore by the militant associations, themselves relayed by political organization, was crystalized around the memory of October 17, which became a sort of "métaphore métonymique" of the Algerian war in the 1990s. Henry Rouso, "Les raisins verts de la guerre d'Algérie," in *La guerre d'Algérie (1954-1962)*, ed., Yves Michau (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004), 142. See also: Henry Rouso, "Le Double fardeau: Vichy et l'Algérie," in *Face au Passé* (Paris: Belin, 2016), 117-142. The date of March 19 was officially chosen as the *journée nationale du souvenir et de recueillement à la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires de la guerre d'Algérie et des combats en Tunisie et au Maroc* on December 6, 2012.

<sup>1099</sup> See the articles from the local press reporting on the official commemorations of March 19 and October 17.

<sup>1100</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015).

<sup>1101</sup> "Le Bourbonnais, terre d'accueil. Deux points de vue sur les problèmes des rapatriés d'Algérie dans notre département," *La Montagne* (March 3, 1963).

<sup>1102</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015).

<sup>1103</sup> "Erection d'une stèle au cimetière de Vichy à la mémoire des morts laissés en terre d'Afrique du Nord et d'Outre Mer," *La Tribune* (July 7, 1966).

Recent work on the Algerian War has shown that historians tend to caricature the *pieds noirs* by assigning them exclusively to the category of conservative right or extreme right, and to overlook the fact that in French Algeria there was “une tradition politique de gauche et une tradition politique de droite. Cela provenait de la diversité d’origine des pieds noirs.”<sup>1104</sup> While most political parties/tendencies did indeed have an audience in French Algeria, there was nonetheless a strong right-wing tradition amongst the expatriates.<sup>1105</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the Europeans’ fight against Muslim nationalism and metropolitan rule led many French settlers to succumb to the temptation of the extreme right leagues. The policies that supported political and racial hierarchy were well received by most of the French community. According to Samuel Kalman, colonial fascism had become “ingrained in a good portion of the settler population.”<sup>1106</sup> The latter’s response to the Vichy regime further proves it. During the Second World War, many *pieds noirs* rejoiced over the promotion of the National revolution, which strongly resonated with their own ideological beliefs, and supported the government’s policies that were meant to “preserve European economic predominance while protecting colonial wealth, and bolstering racial inequality through the suppression of Muslim separatism and assimilationist doctrine.”<sup>1107</sup> Tens of thousands of settlers joined Vichy organizations, such as the *Légion française des combattants*, or the *Chantiers de la jeunesse*.<sup>1108</sup> During the Algerian War, while only the most radical fringe of the settler population had gone on to support the OAS, many *pieds noirs* had proved sensitive to the arguments of the far-right organizations, which “echoed many of the settlers’ early demands.”<sup>1109</sup> Although one should not generalize, M. Bennejean had made it clear to me that the *pied noir* community of Vichy was “très à droite.”<sup>1110</sup> The arrival of a large community of *pieds noirs* with strong right-wing political views inevitably reinforced the rightward shift of the city.

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<sup>1104</sup> Emmanuelle Comtat, “La Question du vote pied noir,” *Pôle Sud* 24 (2006), 78.

<sup>1105</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015).

<sup>1106</sup> Samuel Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism: The Extreme Right in Algeria, 1919-1939* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), 177.

<sup>1107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1109</sup> Ibid., 181.

According to James Shields, the FAF was “very successful at federating the different French Algeria currents, becoming the most important pied noir activist group in Algeria, with a membership estimated at 100,000 (and even as high as 200,000).” Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 112.

<sup>1110</sup> William Bennejean, interview by author (July 7, 2015).

The results of the 1965 legislative elections confirm the rightward shift of Vichy. The results of the second ballot were in the national average, with 46,78 percent of the votes for Mitterrand and 53,22 percent for de Gaulle.<sup>1111</sup> The first ballot is more interesting. In Vichy, the result of the extreme right was two times better than the national average (11,26 percent against 5,20 percent). Tixier's campaign revolved around the memory of Algeria, with former OAS officers regularly invited to his rallies,<sup>1112</sup> therefore appealing to those nostalgic for French Algeria.<sup>1113</sup>

## Conclusion

While Marseille, Bordeaux and Paris played key roles in the colonial matrix of power,<sup>1114</sup> the thermal cities – with Vichy more than any other – also fulfilled an important function, long neglected, in the French colonial enterprise.<sup>1115</sup> The tropics were long seen as “unhealthy” places, which could affect the health of white men in the long term, hence the need to heal the tropical diseases (real or imaginary) in spa resorts – often in the metropolis – from which water with unmatched qualities gushed out. Every summer, thousands of colonizers came to Vichy to heal, to rest, to maintain their ‘Frenchness’, and to be entertained, thereby contributing to the city's prosperity. In 1947, a journalist rightly observed that “il n'y a sans doute pas de ville en France où, plus qu'à Vichy, l'on aime l'Afrique du Nord.”<sup>1116</sup>

The historical ties between Vichy and Algeria and the city's economic dependency on colonial tourism led the city to support French Algeria. Although establishing a distinction between the position and politics of Vichy's mayor, Pierre Coulon, and those of the extreme right remains essential for understanding the dynamics of Vichy in the late 1950s and early 1960s, one is forced to notice how permeable the boundaries were and how, as a result, the municipality made an unprecedented rightward shift on the political spectrum. While the initial support of a great part of the local population for French Algeria was likely primarily motivated by the fear of a rapid economic decline, the profound implications of the Algerian war eventually led Vichy's population to move sharply to the right. The arrival of an influential community of *pieds noirs*,

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<sup>1111</sup> The national average was: 44,8 percent for Mitterrand and 55,2 percent for de Gaulle.

<sup>1112</sup> Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism*, 182.

<sup>1113</sup> Full results of the first round in Vichy : de Gaulle: 39,22 percent; Mitterrand: 25,20 percent; Lecanuet: 19,36 percent; Tixier-Vignancour: 11,26 percent; Marcihacy: 3,45 percent; Barbu: 1,50 percent.

<sup>1114</sup> Most notably through their port or trade activity

<sup>1115</sup> Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux !*, 202.

<sup>1116</sup> “Redécouverte de Vichy,” *TAM* (June 7, 1947).

whose political affiliations were clearly more right wing than left wing, reinforced that shift. The city's shift to the right has proven to be lasting and to this day Vichy remains on the right. This transformation affected many aspects of the social and political life in Vichy, including how the Second World War was remembered. Amongst other things, it facilitated the unabashed expression of a pro-Pétain memory, as the following chapter discusses in greater detail.



## CHAPTER 8 – Remembering the Second World War during and after the Algerian War (from the late 1950s to the 1970s)

In Vichy, the current obsession with the misappropriation of the word ‘Vichy’ and the municipality’s politics of silence pertaining to the memory of the Second World War recall the discourses and memorial strategies of the post-1947 years. This gives the false impression that the war has disappeared from the city’s collective memory since the late 1940s. This interpretation, however, fails to consider the transformations that occurred in Vichy in the late 1950s and 1960s. After a few years marked by the memory of the resistance (from 1944 to 1947), followed by many years of silence (from the late 1940s throughout the 1950s), a pro-Pétain memory gathered strength in the late 1950s and encompassed audiences beyond the extreme right. Although in France Algeria’s independence signified the rapid decline of the extreme right and the return of the Gaullist myth, in Vichy the pro-Pétain memory continued to be expressed publicly until the 1970s.

The politics of silence that dominated the period from 1947 to the late 1950s created a memorial vacuum to be filled. However, this alone cannot explain why it was the Petainist memory that filled this vacuum. While Robert Aron’s comforting thesis<sup>1117</sup> – and the latter’s relative popularity in 1950s France – most certainly contributed to make the rehabilitative theses with regards to Pétain more acceptable, this chapter shows that the arguments of the likes of Aron actually did little to account for the shift that occurred in Vichy in the late 1950s and 1960s. The loss of Algeria, on the other hand, counted for a great deal. Decolonization is almost always presented as a crucial event in the formation of a more critical World War II memory in France, especially due to the social, cultural, and political changes that the decolonizing process brought about. Yet what happened in 1960s Vichy suggests that, in some cases, the process of decolonization also had an opposite effect. This was especially true in the city of Vichy, which shifted to the right in response to the Algerian War, as Chapter 7 detailed.

During the Algerian war, false analogies between the Second World War and what was happening in the colony were often used to vilify and demonize de Gaulle. Simultaneously, Pétain’s role in preserving the empire was systematically emphasized by Pétain’s supporters.<sup>1118</sup>

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<sup>1117</sup> Aron developed the shield and sword thesis. According to the French historian, Pétain acted as a shield, which allowed de Gaulle to act as a sword. Robert Aron, *Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1954).

<sup>1118</sup> Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans., Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 79.

As a ripple effect, many of those with strong views on French Algeria were often attracted by the Petainist discourse. In Vichy, this is, in large part, what made the crystallization of the Petainist memory possible. While the local resisters attempted to counter this trend, their influence on the population remained limited.

### 1. Remembering Pétain in Vichy in the late 1940s and early 1950s

In France, many of Pétain's supporters kept a low profile in the immediate postwar years. Soon, however, the most dedicated of them spoke out in defense of the former Marshall. Pétain sympathizers argued that in addition to striving for the upholding of French values and standards, Pétain had acted as a shield against Germany, saving France from a more severe and constraining occupation. Pétain's advocates accused de Gaulle of conveying a distorted and simplified version of what had happened between 1940 and 1945, and of consciously silencing the Vichy regime's shadow struggle. Following Pétain's death on the *Île d'Yeu* on July 23, 1951, his most faithful supporters founded the *Association pour Défendre la Mémoire du Maréchal Pétain* (ADMP).<sup>1119</sup> The goals of the association were multiple: to protect Pétain's memory; to have his remains transferred to Douaumont, near Verdun; to restore the 'historical truth' about Vichy; and, to have Pétain's trial reviewed. Their arguments found expression in the extreme-right press of the time, such as *Les écrits de Paris* (launched in 1947) or *Rivarol* (launched in 1951), and in the association's journal *Le Maréchal*, first published in 1952.

In 1953, a local branch of the ADMP opened in Vichy – Vichy was one of the first three cities outside of Paris where the association established itself.<sup>1120</sup> Of course, the ADMP rejoiced over these local initiatives. Commentating on the Vichy branch, they proudly asserted: "Les Vichyssois eux-mêmes tiennent à réusciter cette époque, comme si elle appelait la nostalgie. Ils auraient pu chercher paresseusement le repos dans l'oubli. Non pas. Avec noblesse, ils s'attachèrent à proclamer la vérité historique, bien plus, à réclamer les honneurs au nom de leurs vertus."<sup>1121</sup> That some *Vichyssois* pushed for the creation of a local branch of the ADMP is not surprising as a portion of Vichy's population was very conservative. Still, as has already been

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<sup>1119</sup> Some prominent former Gaullists converted to Petainism, such as Colonel Rémy, who was one of the ADMP's founders.

In 1948 a *comité d'honneur* had already been set up by Pétain's lawyers to campaign for his release from prison. The committee had, however, quickly been banned.

<sup>1120</sup> The other two cities were Montpellier and Perpignan. *Le Maréchal* 2ème année N6 (October 1953).

<sup>1121</sup> *Le Maréchal* 2ème année N6 (October 1953).

noted in Chapter 2, this ultra-conservative segment of the population was a minority, and the postwar defense of Pétain was not a prevailing attitude in the city, contrary to what the ADMP implied in the quotation above. In 1957, 392 people were registered in the newly created Allier section of the ADMP (an expanded version of the Vichy branch). Although the ADMP considered this a “success,”<sup>1122</sup> the figure was, in fact, extremely small when compared to the department’s total population of approximately 375,000 people.<sup>1123</sup> How many members each city of the Allier contributed is unknown. Although it is likely that the city of Vichy provided the largest number, whatever this number was (maybe around 200), it was still very small.

What is interesting is not so much that the ADMP successfully established itself in Vichy and that a few *Vichyssois* adhered to it, but that such an establishment did not cause any particular trouble despite the fact that the city of Vichy had been striving to differentiate itself from the Vichy government. As shown in earlier chapters, during the war, the population’s position with regard to Pétain was ambivalent. While many residents disagreed with the policies implemented by the government, the Marshall nonetheless remained popular amongst a large section of the population throughout the war. Pétain’s trial and the anti-Pétain rhetoric of the postwar era did not alter their perspective. On the contrary, how Pétain was (mis)treated by the new governments might have even reinforced their sentiment of empathy towards the old man. A closer look at the postwar commemorations in Vichy reveals a very high degree of grassroots tolerance toward Pétain. To be sure, there are some instances of criticism directly addressed at Pétain in the postwar local press and official speeches, especially from left-wing sympathizers. In the *Nouveau Mémorial de Vichy*, for instance, Maurice Constantin Weyer talked about the “règne de Philippe-Illégalité.”<sup>1124</sup> Such occurrences, however, were more limited than one might have expected given the specific context in which the city found itself. While the Vichy regime was almost always presented as an antinational regime, very much despised by the population, Pétain himself was rarely targeted.

Some prominent (non communist) resisters in Vichy even established a clear dichotomy between Pétain and Laval (resonating with the arguments later put forward by the likes of Robert Aron, as we will see shortly). Amongst other things, they underlined how Pétain’s entourage had

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<sup>1122</sup> *Le Maréchal* 5ème année N20 (April 1957).

<sup>1123</sup> 372,689 people in 1954 and 380,221 people in 1962.

<sup>1124</sup> Maurice Constantin-Weyer, “Vichy-Vérité,” in *Nouveau mémorial Vichy* (Vichy: Editions des Montagnes Bleues, 1946), 9.

helped them. During the summer of 1944, some resisters in and around Vichy collaborated with members from Pétain's personal guard (see Chapter 2). On August 25, 1944, a joint operation to recover some arms and material, which had been hidden in the *château de Lonzat*, ended tragically. Five men from Pétain's guard were ambushed by the Germans near the village of Billy, fifteen kilometers from Vichy. They were shot on the spot.<sup>1125</sup> Despite the tensions that had existed between the resisters and the guards, a ceremony in the latter's honor was nonetheless organized. The funeral was held in Vichy on August 29, 1944, in presence of a large section of Pétain's personal guard, and some FFI representatives:

Les catafalques des martyrs, recouverts du drapeau tricolore et flanqués d'une haie de gendarmes de l'unité sont suivis par le colonel Barré. Pour la dernière fois rassemblée, la musique de la garde personnelle joue la 3<sup>ème</sup> symphonie... Derrière, sur quatre rangs, suit la garde personnelle au complet y compris les éléments venus au maquis, reconnaissables à leur tenue F.F.I. (culottes, leggings, ceinturon à plaque chromée et brassard F.F.I.). Ces gardes sont les seuls à avoir revêtu cette tenue. Leurs camarades se battant sous leur uniforme revêtu de la francisque, bien qu'ils en aient ôté la plaque de ceinturon jugée trop brillante.<sup>1126</sup>

A monument to the memory of the men executed in Billy was erected by the *Amicale des résistants de l'Allier* early in 1945. Additionally, their names were inscribed on the commemorative plaque honoring the gendarmes killed in action that had been erected in the courtyard of Vichy's police station.<sup>1127</sup> In a note dated September 28, 1944, the local chief of the FFIs, Dudenhoefter (known as Pontcarral), called for a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the Resistance. He stated that France should stop treating 'Vichy' as a whole, and should rather apply nuances and investigate case studies:

'Vichy, ville de traîtres,' entend-on dire partout en France, ce qui fait suspecter tous ceux qui ont habité ou travaillé à Vichy. Une mise au point urgente est nécessaire pour faire cesser cette accusation injustifiée. Si la résidence du maréchal a été à Vichy, le gouvernement, surtout après novembre 1942, s'est porté et a agi en presque totalité à Paris. (...) La majorité des fonctionnaires de Vichy, à ma connaissance, sauf milice et entourage Laval, a été résistante et a couru des dangers

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<sup>1125</sup> Xavier Aiolfi, *La garde personnelle du chef de l'état* (Nouvelles Editions Latines (16 janvier 2008), 138-9.

<sup>1126</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>1127</sup> Ibid., 140.

pour contrecarrer les ordres reçus. Travail ingrat et périlleux accompli dans l'ombre (...).<sup>1128</sup>

In the postwar period, some *Vichyssois*, who had easily lived through the war, recalled the wartime period as a happy and exciting time, a time when balls were forbidden, yet tolerated, when France's favorite signers came to perform at the Opera, and when one could interact with the country's most powerful men.<sup>1129</sup> Pétain was often prominent in these happy memories. The nostalgia of this period was often expressed through the keeping of small objects reminiscent of the Marshall. Mrs B., for instance, kept a small picture of Pétain, whom she often saw during the war, in her purse. Recently though, her children forced her to throw it away, a demand she still does not fully understand. She knows that many people suffered during the war, and she has expressed sympathy for them and their families. In her view, however, life would have been worse without Pétain, who "a évité le pire." *What's so wrong in keeping a picture of Pétain?*, she asked me.<sup>1130</sup> Some shopkeepers also kept Pétain's portrait in their shops, especially when they had had the opportunity to meet him, either because he had stopped by to greet the employees or to buy something.<sup>1131</sup> In *Le syndrome de Vichy*, Henry Rousso shows how nostalgia often

relève moins de l'idéologie, de la référence à des valeurs, que du sentiment, du comportement, voire du réflexe. Elle est une forme de résistance au temps qui passe, un refus de l'altérité ou encore un désir de retrouver une certaine jeunesse, indépendamment du contenu idéologique et du caractère parfois tactique de certaines réactions de ce type.<sup>1132</sup>

How many *Vichyssois* looked back on Pétain at the time fits perfectly this definition of nostalgia.

The fact that the Petainist cause gained some legitimacy in France in the late 1940s and especially in the early 1950s likely reinforced the positive opinion that many *Vichyssois* had developed towards Pétain. The publication of some academic works on World War II in France, such as Louis Dominique Gérard's *Montoire: Verdun diplomatique*, Robert Aron's *Histoire de Vichy*, and André Siegfried's "Le Vichy de Pétain, le Vichy de Laval," provided some historical 'evidence' to the Petainist theses. In these works, Pétain is presented as having played out a

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<sup>1128</sup> Cited in Eugène Martres, *Les archives parlent: Auvergne-Bourbonnais (1940-1945)* (Romagnat: Edition De Borée, 2005), 229-230.

<sup>1129</sup> Mrs B., interview by author (December 19, 2013); Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel. *L'année dernière à Vichy* (Julianto Films, 2008); Paul Liégeois, "Vichy sans chagrin, ni pitié," *L'Unité* (November 22, 1974)

<sup>1130</sup> Mrs B., interview by author (December 19, 2013).

<sup>1131</sup> Mrs Fiorin, interview by author (April 20, 2014).

<sup>1132</sup> Henry Rousso, *Vichy. L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 351-352.

subtle double game: by accepting a certain degree of collaboration, he reassured the Germans of his good faith, while waiting for an opportunity to resume the struggle against the Nazis. Pierre Laval, on the other hand, is often described as the villain, therefore providing a counter balance to Pétain's good will and honest attempts at sparing France.<sup>1133</sup>

The arguments forwarded by Aron have been harshly criticized and meticulously deconstructed by historians since the 1970s and this criticism has caused some historians to overlook how popular his thesis was in the early 1950s. According to Olivier Wieviorka, such arguments "could not help but attract a majority of the French," who "having joined neither the Resistance nor the collaboration, could recognize themselves in the essentially reassuring portrait of a Marshal subjected to pressure from the Third Reich, having like them negotiated around constraints, bending though not breaking."<sup>1134</sup> To believe that in June 1940 France needed both a shield (Pétain) and a sword (de Gaulle) was further reassuring and politically convenient for the French people because it gave them the impression that no matter what their position had been, in the end, all the French had fought for the same goal: the survival of France. While Aron's thesis was comforting for many French, it was particularly so for the *Vichyssois*: if Pétain and his government were not guilty, neither was the population for not having opposed the regime.

In the 1950s, the attitude of some former Gaullists, such as Colonel Rémy, towards the Vichyites and their fight in favor of Pétain's rehabilitation gave the Petainists even more visibility and credibility.<sup>1135</sup> Although de Gaulle disavowed Rémy,<sup>1136</sup> the General himself had mobilized the Petainist memory at several occasions in the late 1940s. In June 1948, for instance, he referred to "le grand chef de la Grande Guerre emporté, sous l'effet de l'âge, par le torrent des abandons." In March 1949, he stated that although Pétain's condemnation was justified, one should not forget that he had "rendu de grands services à la France." The following year, he denounced the fact that "un homme qui va avoir 95 ans" was kept in prison.<sup>1137</sup> De Gaulle was well aware of the fact that Pétain's supporters represented a significant part of the population.

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<sup>1133</sup> Louis Dominique Gérard, *Montoire: Verdun diplomatique* (Paris, Editions André Bonne, 1948); Aron, *Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944*; André Siegfried, "Le Vichy de Pétain, le Vichy de Laval," *Revue française de science politique*, 6:4 (1956), 737-749.

<sup>1134</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, trans. George Holoch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 110.

<sup>1135</sup> On Colonel Rémy see: Rémy, *Dix ans avec de Gaulle 1940-1950* (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1971); Guy Perrier, *Rémy - L'agent secret no 1 de la France libre* (Paris: Perrin, 2001). François Broche, *Une histoire des antigauillismes, des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Bartillat, 2007).

<sup>1136</sup> Rémy resigned from the RPF and was excluded from the *Association des Français libres*.

<sup>1137</sup> Cited in Rouso, *Vichy. L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire*, 394-395.



Hence, in order to avoid tension and division, he multiplied the “ambiguïtés, de plus en plus marquées, à l’égard de souvenirs non plus de la Résistance mais de Vichy.”<sup>1138</sup>

The political strategy of the independent right in the 1950s further contributed to demonizing the Vichy regime and made support for rehabilitation more acceptable and legitimate than it ever had been. After the Second World War, regardless of the choices made during the Occupation, “règn[ait] au sein de la droite française, (...) une solidarité militante ou politique antérieure à 1940 que l’avènement du régime de Vichy n’avait pas fondamentalement remise en cause.”<sup>1139</sup> Such solidarities led the independent right to warmly welcome former Vichy sympathizers within its party.<sup>1140</sup> Even the government worked for appeasement, as suggested by the amnesty laws passed in January 1951 and July 1953, under Vincent Auriol, which reduced the numbers in prison for crimes committed under Vichy from 40,000 to sixty-two.

It is, of course, extremely difficult to quantify how widespread the support towards Pétain, beyond the Marshall’s tradition support base, was in France in the early 1950s. This observation is also true for the city Vichy, even though the scale of analysis is much smaller. The population’s response to the ADMP (or lack thereof) and the maintaining of a positive memory of Pétain within private circles suggests that although the city was offering a neat/polished window to the world, more *Vichyssois* than commonly acknowledged might have actually held Pétain dear to their heart. If the number of hardcore Petainists was likely small, the number of *maréchalistes* was most likely not that small, although few *Vichyssois* were willing to admit it. In 1946, Sennep observed that: “Aujourd’hui, les mauvais jours sont déjà oubliés... [Les Vichyssois] ont été avec [Pétain] dans les jours heureux. Ils n’y sont plus dans les jours sombres... Personne à Vichy ne se souvient d’avoir vu de près ou de loin le maréchal.”<sup>1141</sup>

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<sup>1138</sup> Rousso, *Vichy. L’événement, la mémoire, l’histoire*, 394-395.

<sup>1139</sup> Jérôme Cotillon, *Ce qu’il reste de Vichy* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003), 231.

<sup>1140</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

The integration of UNIR’s elected members, all of whom were Petainist, to the CNIP, the ascendancy of Antoine Pinay Prime Minister in March 1952 although he had sat on Vichy’s *Conseil National*, Pinay’s close collaboration with Jean Jardin, a former member of Laval’s Cabinet – offer good examples of this trend. On this, see: Mathias Bernard, *La Guerre des droites : de l’affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007), 115; Rousso, *Vichy. L’événement, la mémoire, l’histoire*, 371 & 377.

Poujadism, which drew support mostly from the established right but also amongst the Left, also contributed to the project of rehabilitation of Pétain in the 1950s, although the movement did not claim to adhere to Petainism. On this, see: James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 70-84.

<sup>1141</sup> Sennep, “Vichy 1946: Maréchal Dorin, nous voilà...,” *Samedi Soir* (July 27, 1946).

This attitude was not surprising. As the city was fighting for its rehabilitation and was seeking to belong to de Gaulle's victorious France, there was no public space for the expression of a pro-Pétain memory in Vichy. In the early 1950s, although the Petainist cause drew understanding and support from various sections of the Vichy's population, the ADMP provided local Petainists their only platform to publicly discuss Pétain's legacy. This changed in the late 1950s and 1960s, when a more unabashed (as well as more widely shared and more complex) local Petainist memory crystallized. Until the late 1950s, in Vichy the pro Pétain memory was twofold. It resulted either from an ideological belief in the principles of the *Révolution nationale* (the *Pétainistes*) or from a personal attachment to the figure of Pétain (the *maréchalistes*), or from both. During and after the Algerian War, new paradigms emerged.

## 2. Remembering Pétain in Vichy from the late 1950s to the 1970s

With the loss of Indochina and the outbreak of the revolt in Algeria, the year of 1954 saw the emergence of a French nationalism "defined this time not in relation to Germany, as it had historically been, but in relation to France's colonies and the perceived threat of global communism."<sup>1142</sup> The degeneration of the situation in Algeria gave the extreme right a golden opportunity to get its voice more widely heard and to increase its support base.<sup>1143</sup> The deadly action of the OAS and eventually, the loss of Algeria, however, stopped dead the extreme right's hopes of rehabilitation and power.<sup>1144</sup> Decolonization resulted in a significant and long lasting decline of the extreme right.<sup>1145</sup> Inevitably, the fight for Pétain's rehabilitation suffered greatly from this evolution. At the same time, de Gaulle's new mandate as president of the Republic revived the Gaullist memory of the Resistance, which reached a new level of intensity in 1964, when Jean Moulin was *panthéonisé* with great pomp. In contrast, the memory of Vichy and collaboration was more strongly silenced than ever before.<sup>1146</sup> In Vichy, however, the Petainist memory evolved differently.

In the 1950s a local exhibition on Pétain was set up in a side room of the Chastel Franc, the local museum owned and run by the *Compagnie fermière*. Unfortunately, little information is

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<sup>1142</sup> Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 65.

<sup>1143</sup> Jean-Pierre Rioux, "Des clandestins aux activistes 1945-1965," in *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France*, ed., Michel Winock (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 232-234.

<sup>1144</sup> Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 93.

<sup>1145</sup> Rioux, "Des clandestins aux activistes 1945-1965," 239.

<sup>1146</sup> Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 90-93; Jean-Pierre Azéma, *Vichy-Paris, les collaborations : histoire et mémoires* (Bruxelles: A. Versaille éditeur, 2012), 210-211.

available on this exhibition. Following the museum's closure in 1984,<sup>1147</sup> many items of the Pétain exhibition were kept or sold at flea markets by greedy employees.<sup>1148</sup> Only a few objects were salvaged and stored in the archives of the *Compagnie fermière*. The catalogue referencing these objects and unauthorized pictures taken by a local researcher are the only written and visual records of the exhibition.<sup>1149</sup> The absence of archival documents makes interviews particularly important in our quest to recover this exhibition's history. I located three people who visited this exhibition or who had heard about it, and who agreed to discuss it with me: Robert Liris and Jacques Corrocher, two local historians, who saw these objects by accident while they were researching another topic at the museum in the early 1980s, and Pascal Chambriard who has done extensive research on the *Compagnie fermière* and who was a tour guide in Vichy during the 1980s.

Items bearing Pétain's photograph or the *francisque* symbol, the property of Vichy residents, were collected in the 1950s under the initiative of the president of Vichy's *Société d'Archéologie*, who wanted to exhibit them. They would then have been entrusted to the museum curator, who would have put them on display. This Pétain room was never officially part of the museum, however. The exhibition was not open to the public during the day, but people who were interested could have access during the city's nocturnal visits.<sup>1150</sup> Setting up an exhibition on Pétain does not necessarily mean that the investigators aim to rehabilitate the Vichy regime. It could also reveal a potential interest and growing curiosity from a population eager to look back on its past out of educational and historical concerns, as well as in the hope of getting some sort of closure. In the 1950s though, the trend was not yet to the critical exploration of the wartime period. Most memorial initiatives of the time subscribed to one of the postwar myths (Gaullist, communist, or Petainist), which were still going strong and which had yet to be properly deconstructed by scholars. So although the president of the *Société d'Archéologie de Vichy* might have gathered these objects simply because he considered this period inherently linked to the city's history,<sup>1151</sup> this exhibition nevertheless proved to be more (or less, depending on one's perspective) than a documentary exhibition on Pétain. To my knowledge, the exhibition did not

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<sup>1147</sup> The museum closed because of the lack of interest from the *Compagnie* and because the building no longer complied with safety standards. Pascal Chambriard, informal conversation with author (summer of 2014).

<sup>1148</sup> Pascal Chambriard, informal conversation with author (July 2014).

<sup>1149</sup> Catalogue of the items stored in the archives of the *Compagnie fermière*. Private archives of the *Compagnie fermière*. Unauthorized photographs of the items by Robert Liris.

<sup>1150</sup> Pascal Chambriard, informal conversation with author (July 2014).

<sup>1151</sup> Ibid.

provide any historical framework, or background information, about the Vichy regime or Pétain. By only displaying items in the honor of Pétain, the exhibit left visitors with no tools to contextualize and critically analyze what they were seeing. The small size of the room, the accumulation of objects, and the absence of explanatory panels, gave the impression of a shrine. Instead of encouraging a new narrative, the exposition celebrated and fostered the cult of the personality of Pétain.

While I have retrieved some information about the exhibition, the material is limited. I do not know, for instance, the exact year when it opened. Neither have I been able to precisely determine the motivations of the *Compagnie fermière* in supporting (or at least not opposing) the creation of such an exhibition, in the Châtel Franc, a landmark historic building in Vichy. The Châtel Franc, which was Vichy's City Hall between 1801 and 1822, became the city's official history museum in 1937, featuring art collections, engravings, historical pieces, items related to Napoléon III (such as an inkwell, a sedan chair offered to the empress Eugénie), and so on.<sup>1152</sup> As a window on to the city's history, one can only be surprised at the inclusion of an exhibition on Pétain, especially given the city's obsessive fears with being accused of having endorsed the Vichy regime. As evident in Chapter 2, the company's position during the war was ambivalent. It is possible that some of its pro-Vichy members pushed in favor of an exhibition honoring Pétain. It is also equally possible that the leading members of the *Compagnie* were not even aware of the creation of this exhibition, since the objects appear to have been presented to the museum's curator, not to the executive team, whose members, for the most part, did not even live in Vichy.<sup>1153</sup>

This exhibition was not more controversial than the establishment of the ADMP had been a few years earlier. Although both initiatives were grassroots, the second one was of a different nature. Not only did it, for the first time, inscribe the memory of Pétain in Vichy's public space, but it also appealed to a much wider audience, beyond the usual far-right circles, suggesting a growing popular acceptance of the public expression of a Pétainist memory in Vichy.

The setting up of a Pétain exhibition is not the only sign of a shift in the local memory of the Second World War and of Pétain more specifically. The commemoration in honor of Walter Stucki in 1957 is also revealing of the changes underway in Vichy in the late 1950s. Stucki was

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<sup>1152</sup> Marcel Monmarché, ed., *Vichy et ses environs* (Paris: Hachette, 1937).

<sup>1153</sup> Pascal Chambriard, informal conversation with author (July 2014). Jacques Corrocher, interview by author (February 13, 2014).

re-invited by the city in June of 1957 to mark the Franco-Swiss friendship Day. The *Vichyssois* gave Stucki a warm welcome: “Une foule considérable emplissait le parc à cette occasion et applaudi[ssait] chaleureusement [Stucki].”<sup>1154</sup> A journalist noted the audience/spectators numbered into the thousands.<sup>1155</sup> The local media reported widely on the event. More than a dozen articles, including very long ones of two full pages or more, were published in the local press. In addition to describing the ceremony, one journalist with Vichy’s most popular newspaper cited long extracts of Stucki’s 1947 book, *La fin du régime de Vichy*.<sup>1156</sup> In this book, Stucki sympathetically talks of Pétain:

J’ai participé à des défilés et à des revues de toutes sortes, qui nous fatiguaient, nous simples spectateurs, et qu’il supportait, comme personnage principal actif, sans signe apparent de lassitude. Intellectuellement aussi, il était la plupart du temps d’une lucidité et d’une fraîcheur étonnantes. Il pouvait être vraiment spirituel.<sup>1157</sup>

Stucki later notes how he is certain that Pétain only acted to save France:

Je m’étais (...) aperçu déjà, bien auparavant, qu’il y avait en outre chez [Pétain], consciemment ou inconsciemment, une certaine volonté en même temps qu’une certaine coquetterie de rester au pouvoir. Mais aujourd’hui encore, il n’en reste pas moins évident pour moi qu’il ne voulait que le bien de son pays et qu’il haïssait les Allemands plus que tout autre nation.<sup>1158</sup>

In his 1970 book, *Histoire de la neutralité Suisse*, the Swiss historian Edgar Bonjour wrote that Pétain “avait une confiance illimitée dans ce représentant loyal et intelligent de la Suisse et [que] Stucki le lui rendait par sa fidélité.”<sup>1159</sup>

What is interesting here is not so much that Stucki felt some sympathy for and understanding towards Pétain, but that his views on Pétain were now publicly underlined, while they had been silenced twelve years earlier. During the August 29, 1944 ceremony organized in Stucki’s and Valéri’s honor, Stucki paid tribute to the head of the *État français*, stating that “Je

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<sup>1154</sup> “Vichy a fait un chaleureux accueil à Son Excellence l’Ambassadeur Stucki et aux jeunes ‘cadets de Genève’,” *La Montagne* (June 17, 1957); “Les cadets de Genève et S.E.M. Walter Stucki,” *Liberté* (June 17, 1957); AM (Vichy). Program of the ceremony (June 15, 1957).

<sup>1155</sup> “Les cadets de Genève et S.E.M. Walter Stucki,” *Liberté* (June 17, 1957).

<sup>1156</sup> “S.E. Walter Stucki, citoyen d’honneur de Vichy, sera aujourd’hui et demain dans notre ville,” *La Montagne* (June 15, 1957).

<sup>1157</sup> Walter Stucki, *La fin du régime de Vichy* (Neuchâtel : Edition de la Baconnière, 1947), 22.

<sup>1158</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>1159</sup> Edgar Bonjour, *Histoire de la neutralité Suisse* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1970), cited in “Nouvel éclairage sur le ‘sauveur’ suisse de Vichy”: <http://www.swissinfo.ch/fre/nouvel-éclairage-sur-le-sauveur-suisse-de-vichy/29958074> (Accessed March 14, 2016)

resterai toujours un admirateur du grand Français qui a fait don de sa personne à la France.”<sup>1160</sup>

This sentence, however, was deemed problematic to the city’s official discourse and was therefore omitted from the media’s coverage. Furthermore, the press reporting on the 1947 ceremonies honoring Stucki seldom mentioned Stucki’s book, which had just been published (see Chapter 5).

In the immediate postwar period, Stucki’s position on Pétain was silenced because talking favorably about Pétain risked endangering the city’s pleas for rehabilitation. In the late 1950s though, the situation was different, and the ‘official’ acknowledgment of Stucki’s positive view on Pétain likely provided a much-welcomed impetus for the *Vichyssois* to boldly express their own positive views on the Marshall. Although Stucki was full of admiration for the Marshall’s personality, he was not a supporter of the policies conducted by the government: “Stucki avait peu de sympathie pour la démocratie autoritaire du régime Pétain et continuait de défendre ses idées libérales,” Marc Perrenoud argues.<sup>1161</sup> His position therefore resonated with that of many *Vichyssois*, who were more *maréchalistes* than Petainist.

The establishment of a Pétain exhibition and the unabashed formulation of Stucki’s sympathetic views on Pétain marked the beginning of a new phase in the management of Pétain’s memory in Vichy. This counter memory further developed and crystallized in the 1960s. Increasing numbers of *Vichyssois* now dared to publicly express, if not their burning desire to see Pétain be rehabilitated, their skepticism towards the Gaullist myth, which had, in large part, dominated the narrative of the immediate postwar period in Vichy (see Chapter 5).

In the 1960s, several famous Petainists were invited to Vichy to preside over events or to give public talks. Each event attracted many people and won unanimous approval from the audience. During the summer of 1960, Jean Borotra, the vice president of the ADMP, attended the Galéa Cup, a prominent tennis event in Vichy. As the president of the International Federation of Tennis Borotra was invited to make a speech. He reminded audiences of the work he had done for sport and the youth when he was in Pétain’s government, and he claimed that his accomplishments under Vichy “resterait l’honneur de sa vie.”<sup>1162</sup> This discourse was well

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<sup>1160</sup> AM (Vichy). Copy of the speech by Walter Stucki on August 29, 1944.

<sup>1161</sup> Marc Perrenoud, *Banquiers et diplomates suisses* (1938-1946) (Lausanne: Editions Antipodes, 2011), cited in “Nouvel éclairage sur le ‘sauveur’ suisse de Vichy”: <http://www.swissinfo.ch/fr/nouvel-éclairage-sur-le-sauveur--suisse-de-vichy/29958074> (Accessed March 14, 2016).

<sup>1162</sup> *Le Maréchal* N15 (September 1960).



received by the large audience who had come to hear him speak.<sup>1163</sup> Should Borotra have done a speech on his role in the Vichy government and the pride he felt from working for Pétain in the decade following the end of the war, it would have likely been less attended, and certainly less applauded.

In the summer of 1966, two other significant events revealed the growing local interest in and adherence to the rehabilitative discourse on Pétain. Pétain's lawyer Jacques Isorni was invited to give a public talk in July. The room was crowded. Isorni's talk drew on the trial of Jesus, marred with its many irregularities, as a metaphor for Pétain, whose trial, Isorni explained, mocked justice. Prior to his talk, Isorni had consented to do an interview with the most popular newspaper in Vichy, *La Montagne*. Reflecting on his meeting with the lawyer, the journalist wrote: "déjà conquis par son talent fougueux qui en fait un des premiers orateurs de notre temps et par son courage, je fus très surpris de trouver un homme dont la pensée profonde semble illustrer l'indépendance souveraine de ses opinions." The journalist later observed that the year 1966 was definitely "l'année Pétain."<sup>1164</sup> In Vichy 1966 could indeed be described as "l'année Pétain"; across France, however, Pétain's memory kept on declining.

A month later yet another pro-Pétain conference took place in Vichy. The speaker was André Brissaud, who had just published *La dernière année de Vichy 1943-1944*, which included a preface by Robert Aron.<sup>1165</sup> According to *La Tribune* journalist who covered the event, André Brissaud provided "d'intéressants renseignements" about the Vichy regime in general, and about the years 1943 and 1944 in particular.<sup>1166</sup> Another journalist observed that drawing on "unique" sources, he "retra[ça], objectivement, l'histoire peu connue, souvent défigurée du premier acte d'une tragédie nationale qui fut à la fois celle d'un peuple, le peuple français, et celle d'un homme illustre, le maréchal Pétain."<sup>1167</sup> Brissaud finished his conference by speaking out against the governments of the Fourth Republic, "qui ont laissé le maréchal en prison," and by asking that Pétain's remains be transferred to Douaumont.<sup>1168</sup> Once again, the event drew many

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<sup>1163</sup> *Le Maréchal* N15 (September 1960).

<sup>1164</sup> "Me Isorni a relevé vingt-sept irrégularité dans le procès d'un illustre accusé nommé Jésus," *La Montagne* (July 21, 1966).

<sup>1165</sup> André Brissaud, *La dernière année de Vichy 1943-1944* (Paris: Perrin, 1965).

<sup>1166</sup> "André Brissaud a donné d'intéressants renseignements sur la dernière année du régime de Vichy et l'exil du Maréchal," *La Tribune* (August 25, 1966).

<sup>1167</sup> "La dernière année du maréchal Pétain à Vichy et son exil forcé," *La Montagne* (August 20, 1966).

<sup>1168</sup> Cited in "André Brissaud a donné d'intéressants renseignements sur la dernière année du régime de Vichy et l'exil du Maréchal," *La Tribune* (August 25, 1966).

*Vichyssois*, who offered Brissaud sustained applause.<sup>1169</sup> Quite ironically, Brissaud's and Isorni's talks took place in the former milice's headquarters, turned into a cultural center in 1961.

In 1974, Costa Gravas shot his film *Section S* in Vichy,<sup>1170</sup> and hired 500 local residents as extras. This event gave the *Vichyssois* the opportunity to further express their pro-Pétain sentiments. The motivations to act in the film were varied, according to Jean-Paul Liégeois, who wrote a long article about the making of the film in Vichy. Some extras were motivated by the daily seventy-franc allowance each extra was entitled to or by the excitement of working for Gravas and with famous actors, such as Louis Seigner (Joseph Barthélémy), Ivo Garrani (Joseph Darlan), François Maistre (Fernand de Brinon) and Michael Lonsdale (Pierre Pucheu). Others were motivated by "la nostalgie, le besoin de revivre l'atmosphère du gouvernement de Vichy." One participant, for instance, explained to Liégeois how during the war he was a scout, and that, thanks to Costa Gravas, "j'ai pu retrouver ma jeunesse, ma guerre d'adolescent." A desire to see the historical 'truth' about Pétain finally restored was another motivation for joining the film.<sup>1171</sup> According to M. X.:

Les hypocrites et les trouillards n'ont pas le courage de leurs opinions.  
Moi, si. Aujourd'hui, on classe les Français en collabos et en résistants.  
Ce n'est pas si simple... Le double jeu a été notre vie. Pétain l'a joué. A  
bord de sa voiture personnelle, il y avait une radio qui servait aux  
résistants. Il y avait parfois des réunions de la Résistance dans les  
salons mêmes du Maréchal à l'Hôtel du Parc, et il le savait. Pétain  
savait ce qu'il faisait ; mais par mesure d'efficacité et de prudence,  
personne n'était au courant. Pétain a permis aux Français de tenir le  
coup. Sans lui nous aurions été envahis dès 1939. Mais pour que sa  
politique soit crédible, il fallait bien que certains passent à la casserole.  
C'est sans doute ce qui s'est passé pour la Section spéciale...<sup>1172</sup>

Mrs D., another participant, explained to Liégeois how Gravas, like many other people in France, was wrong about Pétain:

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<sup>1169</sup> "André Brissaud a évoqué la dernière année du maréchal Pétain à Vichy," *La Montagne* (August 25, 1966); "André Brissaud a donné d'intéressants renseignements sur la dernière année du régime de Vichy et l'exil du Maréchal," *La Tribune* (August 25, 1966).

<sup>1170</sup> The film, based on Hervé Villeré's book, *L'affaire de la Section spéciale* (1973), is about the special jurisdictions passed by the Vichy government in response to the murder of a German naval officer by a group of Communists in Paris in August 1941. This *loi d'exception* allowed the government to retroactively execute suspects without trials.

Despite early controversies, the film went on to win the Best Director prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975.

<sup>1171</sup> Paul Liégeois, "Vichy sans chagrin, ni pitié," *L'Unité* (November 22, 1974).

<sup>1172</sup> Ibid.

Pour le film, j'ai recruté des amis... Nous ne sommes pas d'accord avec [l]es idées [de Gravas], mais son souci du détail et le sérieux de son travail sont des garanties. Vous savez, si Costa Gravas a des idées fausses, c'est parce qu'on ne lui a pas dit la vérité. Nous ne pouvons pas lui en vouloir. Par exemple, tout le monde raconte que le Maréchal était senile et gâteux. Moi, en allant chercher mon lait, je le croisais qui se promenait seul dans le parc. Il avait une très bonne mine et paraissait en pleine santé.<sup>1173</sup>

As has been previously underlined, many *Vichyssois* believed that because they had lived close to the government and had often seen Pétain and his ministers, they had been unique observers of the latter's true selves, and therefore knew better what was really going on in the government than the other French did. Madame D. goes on:

Tous les reproches faits au Maréchal sont injustifiés : il a essayé de faire la meilleure politique avec les cartes dont il disposait. En réalité, le Maréchal a beaucoup aidé les résistants, il a aussi aide à cacher beaucoup de Juifs. Je trouve un peu triste qu'après l'avoir fait condamné, on ait laissé mourir en forteresse un maréchal de France. De Gaulle lui devait beaucoup. Dans une situation inverse, Pétain n'aurait pas envoyé de Gaulle en Haute Cour. De Gaulle est un traître... Pourquoi l'a-t-il condamné après s'être appuyé sur lui ? Mes parents étaient de grands amis du général Leclerc. Je suis bien placée pour savoir que tout cela n'est pas très net. La seule solution possible a été suggérée par Winston Churchill, qui a dit qu'à la place de de Gaulle, il aurait pris Pétain par le bras et aurait descendu les Champs-Élysées avec lui...<sup>1174</sup>

The wife of a local doctor was also interviewed. Originally from Russia, she was not in Vichy during the war and therefore formed her opinion about the war based on what her *vichyssois* friends had told her: "À l'époque, j'étais dans la region de Kiev. Après, j'ai été deportée à Auschwitz. D'après ce qu'on m'a dit, pour de Gaulle, qui était planqué à Londres, c'était facile. Pour Pétain, c'était difficile."<sup>1175</sup> While a sample of a few hundred *Vichyssois* cannot be taken as representative of the whole population, it nonetheless shows that the Petainist trend persisted well into the 1970s.

That the Pétain exhibition, mentioned earlier, lasted until the early 1980s is further indicative of the special relationship Vichy entertained with Pétain. Pascal Chambriard's observations over many years led him to conclude that the residents' and tourists' interest in

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<sup>1173</sup> Liégeois, "Vichy sans chagrin."

<sup>1174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1175</sup> Ibid.

Pétain was deeply linked to their rudimentary knowledge about the Vichy regime. According to Chambriard, most people that demonstrated an interest in Pétain and Vichy were not hardcore Petainists, but rather people who did not have strong views on this subject and were eager to know what had really happened between 1940 and 1944.<sup>1176</sup> As the topic of the Second World War was rarely publicly discussed in Vichy, local residents were very much in demand of factual information about the wartime period.

Nevertheless, retired history teacher, Robert Liris, has noted that the rudimentary knowledge about the Vichy regime was insufficient to explain people's interest in Pétain. Popular attraction to the figure of Pétain, he argues, was often steeped in religious tradition. Many Catholics, who did not always identify with the extreme right, were receptive to Pétain's sacrificial destiny - sacrifice being a founding notion of Christianity.<sup>1177</sup> Although religion began to slowly decline in the 1950s, in 1952, eighty-one percent of the French people still identified themselves as Catholics.<sup>1178</sup> That the masses commemorating the anniversary of Pétain's death at Vichy's Saint Louis Church, from 1957 onwards, were particularly well attended, confirms that religion was an important element in understanding the attraction of some *Vichyssois* towards Pétain.<sup>1179</sup> Liris' observation resonates with what Henry Rousso has underlined in his book *Vichy. L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire*:

La permanence en France d'un système de valeurs traditionaliste, se réclamant de manière plus ou moins avouée du pétainisme et de la Révolution nationale, et qui ne touche pas simplement les franges minoritaires de l'extrême droite, ne peut se comprendre qu'à travers le mythe Pétain, une construction imaginaire, fondée sur la légende dorée du 'Sauveur de la France' et de son 'martyre'.<sup>1180</sup>

Popular fascination for Pétain's legacy in Vichy was also brought about by the city's deceitful physical appearance. The question of the power of deceitful physical sites in entertaining questions and fantasies is addressed in further detail in later chapters, for now it is

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<sup>1176</sup> Pascal Chambriard, informal conversation with author (July 2014).

<sup>1177</sup> Robert Liris, *L'ordinaire de Vichy, 1940-1942* (Belgrade: Pesic and Sinovi, 2011), 110.

<sup>1178</sup> "Qui sont les Catholiques de France?," *Le Monde* (January 24, 2014). Electronic version: [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/01/24/qui-sont-les-catholiques-de-france\\_4354161\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/01/24/qui-sont-les-catholiques-de-france_4354161_3224.html) (Accessed March 14, 2016).

<sup>1179</sup> The attendance was especially high between 1957 and 1970. "Une foule considérable," "une assistance considérable," "une foule très nombreuse" are some of the expressions used to describe the event. See for instance *Le Maréchal* 6ème année N22 (October 1957), *Le Maréchal* Nouvelle série N5 (August 1959), *Le Maréchal* N14 (August 1960), *Le Maréchal* N24 (October-November 1961), *Le Maréchal* N68 (October-November 1968).

<sup>1180</sup> Rousso, *Vichy. L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire*, 351.

sufficient to say that the absence of physical markers (explanatory plaques or exhibitions) about the Second World War and the Vichy regime in particular has shrouded the place in mystery and has turned Vichy into “[un] lieu de hantise maréchaliste,” where one could legitimately expect to “apercevoir, aux fenêtres de l’hôtel du Parc le fantôme sans âge de Pétain.”<sup>1181</sup> One retired bookseller remembers how annoying it was for her to explain to visitors how to get to the *hôtel du Parc* (which, until recently, was not listed as a site of interest in tourist brochures) over and over again: “combien de personnes s’arrêtaient [dans ma librairie], rue de Paris, et disaient ‘Madame, l’hôtel du Parc, c’est où ?’ Combien, hein, combien ?!”<sup>1182</sup> While this remark specifically targets the tourists, Vichy’s deceitful landscape, has also impacted long term residents’ popular imagination and given birth to irrational behaviors and obsessions. Liris has noticed how a “culte de l’objet Pétain” emerged from too many silences and unspoken words: “on a prétendu me présenter au moins trois bureaux de Pétain à Vichy ! Tout le monde pensait qu’il y avait des bureaux de Pétain partout !”<sup>1183</sup> The Pétain exhibition at the local museum in part satisfied people’s curiosity, as suggested by the bigger tips the guides received when they took their groups to the Pétain room.<sup>1184</sup>

1960s and 1970s Vichy provided an ideal environment for the ADMP to transform Vichy into a national site of counter memory. Under the initiative of the local ADMP members, from the summer of 1957 onwards, the anniversary of the death of Marshall Pétain has been celebrated, not just in Paris and the Île d’Yeu, but also in Vichy, at the Saint Louis Church, where Pétain attended mass between 1940 and 1944. The commemoration of the sixth anniversary of his death was the first public celebration in honor of Pétain to take place in Vichy, in the presence of “une foule considérable,” as well as prominent Petainists, such as Jacques Isorni.<sup>1185</sup> In 1960, still on the initiative of the local branch of the ADMP, the association pulled off one of its biggest coups ever: the purchase of Pétain’s apartment at the *hôtel du Parc*. Since 1959, the *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy* was presided over by Roger de Saivre, a former employee in Pétain’s

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<sup>1181</sup> Liris, *L’ordinaire de Vichy*, 117.

<sup>1182</sup> Mrs Fiorin, interview by author (April 20, 2014).

<sup>1183</sup> Robert Liris, interview by author (January 28, 2014).

<sup>1184</sup> Pascal Chambriard, informal conversation with author (July 2014). In the early 1980s, Chambriard was also a tour guide. However, because he was not working for the *Compagnie Fermière*, he was not allowed to take his groups to the exhibition.

<sup>1185</sup> *Le Maréchal* 6ème année N22 (October 1957).

*cabinet civil*, as well as a member of the ADMP.<sup>1186</sup> De Saivre's privileged position likely facilitated the purchase. Although such acquisition brought the association financial problems,<sup>1187</sup> its members considered the risk too high that sooner or later the apartment might be purchased by someone, or an institution, with little consideration for the sacredness of the place, or worse with the ambition of turning it into an anti-Pétain site. In Hitler's hometown in Austria, for instance, the government has been renting Hitler's childhood house since 1972, so as to ensure that it does not become a place of remembrance.<sup>1188</sup> In Germany too, many Nazi-related sites in Germany have been managed and memorialized by state-funded organizations so that they do not become shrines.<sup>1189</sup>

While the idea of turning Pétain's apartment into a museum rapidly emerged within the ADMP, for lack of funds only a commemorative plaque was affixed on the door of the apartment. It was going to take decades for the association to make the apartment 'usable' again. Although the place has been visited by Pétain's sympathizers since 1960, it was only in the early 2000s that the ADMP finally managed to have it almost entirely restored, offering their visitors the opportunity to have a glimpse into Pétain's life in Vichy.<sup>1190</sup> The association's inability to transform the place in a museum suited the *Parc*'s residents well, as the latter wanted the *Parc* to remain a quiet private residence.<sup>1191</sup>

Maurice Halbwachs's reflection on religious sites are informative to understanding how sites are transformed into *lieux de mémoire*. In *La topographie légendaires des évangiles en Terre sainte*, he argues that:

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<sup>1186</sup> The executive board of the Society was composed of one member from the Aletti family, three or four rich and influential men from Vichy and business personalities from French Algeria. "Nouveau conseil d'administration à la Société des Grands Hôtels," *La Montagne* (March 14, 1959). The *Société des Grands Hôtels de Vichy* (SGHV) was founded by Joseph Aletti at the beginning of the twentieth century. The primary objective was the acquisition, the exploitation and the management of hotels in Vichy or the surrounding area. In about twenty years, Aletti had built an empire. Before the Second World War, with its thousand rooms, the society had 100,000 overnight stays per season.

On this, see: Catherine Labbaye, *Joseph Aletti le temps des palaces à Vichy* (Paris: Éditions des Écrivains, 2003).

<sup>1187</sup> While donations enabled the ADPM to purchase the apartment, the association complained about not having enough money to restore it and make it habitable. *Le Maréchal* N11 (Avril 1960); *Le Maréchal* N102 (Second trimester of 1976. Minutes of the annual meeting, which was held on March 20, 1976).

<sup>1188</sup> Radio documentary about Hitler's birth place, CBC (broadcast on October 24, 2014).

<sup>1189</sup> On this, see, for example: Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>1190</sup> Louis de Condé, informal conversation with author (August 2014).

In the 1990s, the ADMP bought Pétain's childhood house in Cauchy-la-tour and transformed it into a museum.

<sup>1191</sup> "Plus de 2,000 résistants et déportés du Massif Central ont manifesté dans la dignité leur hostilité à un muse Pétain à Vichy," *La Tribune* (April 25, 1960).



En dehors de son caractère sacré, le lieu du culte est une partie du sol dont la position dans l'espace est définie. Comme tout ce qui est matériel, cette position tend à demeurer ce qu'elle est. Il y a je ne sais quoi de mécanique dans la force qui retient les hommes autour d'un lieu sacré. Mais pour qu'un lieu joue ce rôle, il ne suffit pas que s'y rattachent quelques souvenirs individuels. C'est du jour où un culte est organisé, du jour où ce lieu devient le point de ralliement de tout un groupe de croyants, qu'il se transforme en lieu saint, et que la force d'inertie qui est en lui se manifeste au dehors, dans le monde des consciences humaines.<sup>1192</sup>

By becoming “un point de ralliement” for the Petainists not only in Vichy, but across France, Vichy has become “un lieu de culte.” The scope of Petainism is extremely limited compared to holy places. The former cannot be compared to the latter, yet the transformative process through which space is endowed with meaning is the same.

How did Vichy's municipal council respond to this shift? The council noted that the presence of the ADMP in Vichy might prove detrimental to the image of the city. Fearing for its reputation, it required that the commemorative plaque on the front door of Pétain's apartment be removed. The police carried out the order, despite violent opposition from Robert Faurisson, who had settled in Vichy in 1957.<sup>1193</sup> In spite of this intervention, the municipality did little to interfere with the ADMP's projects in Vichy. Not only did it rarely publicly speak against the ADMP, but every year throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the municipality sent a representative to the masses commemorating the anniversary of the death of Pétain at the Saint Louis Church. Lucien Lamoureux, former *conseiller général de Vichy* and a former member of the *Conseil national* under the occupation, was also regularly in attendance.<sup>1194</sup> When in 1970, *Vichyssois* and Allier deputy Gabriel Peronnet failed to attend because he was abroad, he sent his apologies directly to the president of the ADMP.<sup>1195</sup> The development of a popular memory of Pétain in Vichy was most likely facilitated by the ambivalent and tolerant position of the municipality towards the ADMP.

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<sup>1192</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaires des évangiles en Terre sainte* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), 126.

<sup>1193</sup> “Unis comme jadis, les Résistants et les Déportés montreront, le 24 avril à Vichy, qu'ils n'ont pas la ‘mémoire courte’,” *La tribune* (April 20, 1960); AD (Allier), 1851 W 7. Information note (source and date unspecified); Valérie Igounet, *Robert Faurisson: portrait d'un négationniste* (Paris: Denoël, 2012), 55 & 82. On Robert Faurisson and negationism, see: Henry Rousso's *Rapport sur le racisme et le négationnisme à Lyon III* (September 2004).

<sup>1194</sup> See the yearly reports on the mass in *Le Maréchal*.

<sup>1195</sup> *Le Maréchal* N79 (August-September 1970).

While many different factors facilitated the development of a pro-Pétain memory in Vichy, the Algerian War provided the main impetus, especially because the antigaullism born of the Algerian War led to a new wave of Petainism. In the immediate postwar years, the city of Vichy was looking for de Gaulle's endorsement of the local narrative of the Resistance. A certain degree of antigaullism was nonetheless noticeable amongst the population. In 1946, the cartoonist Sennep, observing store windows, noted that "l'art populaire vichyssois boude l'homme de Londres. (...) [In Vichy], le général de Gaulle n'a pas remplacé le maréchal."<sup>1196</sup> The antigaullism that developed in the immediate postwar years was twofold. It stemmed from both the former Vichy supporters' conviction that de Gaulle was disguising the wartime reality and from the sentiment of frustration felt by many *Vichyssois* following de Gaulle's refusal to visit Vichy. If the economic recovery of the early 1950s had contributed to drain off some of the bitterness against de Gaulle,<sup>1197</sup> antigaullism re-emerged even more strongly during the Algerian War.

Although antigaullism did not always translate into a reinterpretation of the history of the Second World War and of the role of de Gaulle and Pétain within it,<sup>1198</sup> in Vichy it facilitated the emergence of a default Petainism. A new generation of Petainists emerged during the Algerian War; it was composed of: (1) pro-French Algeria individuals who had never displayed any sort of adherence to Petainism, or the extreme right before the Algerian War, but who, in an anti-de Gaulle gesture, had become less critical towards the former head of the *État français*; (2) young people who became politicized during the Algerian War and who looked at Vichy and the Second World War exclusively (or mostly) through the prism of their position on Algeria. The Vichyite argument that Pétain saved the Empire and kept it free from German occupation (whereas de Gaulle was accused of selling it out) especially resonated with them. Some of these young men became very devoted Petainists. Louis de Condé, for example, who was sent to Algeria when he was nineteen, was politicized during his time in the colony. In 1962, as a member of the OAS, he participated in the failed assassination attempt against de Gaulle at the *Petit Clamart*. De Condé

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<sup>1196</sup> Sennep, "Vichy 1946: Maréchal Dorin, nous voilà..."

<sup>1197</sup> At the end of the 1940s and in the early 1950s, some MRP and later RPF members were elected to the municipal council.

<sup>1198</sup> In "Gaullisme et anti gaullisme des élites politique (1945-1969)," Frédéric Fogacci explains that antigaullism "était présent dans la plupart des familles politiques, mais souvent justifié par des motifs différents et incompatibles. Il existait un antigaullisme de gauche et un antigaullisme de droite qui n'avait guère en commun... De même, il existait un antigaullisme lié à la personne même du Général ... et un autre centré sur la doctrine de gouvernement gaulliste..." Frédéric Fogacci, "Gaullisme et anti gaullisme des élites politique (1945-1969)," in *De Gaulle et les élites*, eds., Serge Berstein, Pierre Birnbaum, Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: La découverte, 2008), 241.

later became an active member of the ADMP. Settled in Vichy since the 1980s, he has been responsible for the private visits of Pétain's apartment offered to the ADMP members and sympathizers. It is impossible to know how de Condé might have interpreted the history of the Second World War if the Algerian War had not occurred, yet private conversations with him clearly reveal that his time in Algeria was influential to his current views on Pétain and Vichy.<sup>1199</sup>

The presence of former settlers in Vichy and, since 1962, of a large community of *pieds noirs* further facilitated the crystallization of a local pro Pétain memory, at a time when it was declining in France. In Vichy, between the early twentieth century and the 1960s, many former colonial officers permanently settled in Vichy after the end of their military career in the colonies. During the Second World War, the officers who lived in Vichy yearlong and the board of management of the *Maison du Missionnaire* welcomed Pétain with open arms. The Marshall visited Vichy's colonial sites, including the *Maison du Missionnaire* and its museum on two occasions. In 1943, Pétain donated 1,000 of his own money to the *Maison*.<sup>1200</sup> In April 1944, on the occasion of Pétain's second visit, Père Aroud, the then director of the association, greeted Pétain with the following words: "Comment ne pas être conquis par l'autorité, la force morale, la bonté qui émanent d'un tel homme ? Comment ne par marcher aveuglément à sa suite."<sup>1201</sup> These old settlers constituted a privileged audience for the local fight in favor of Pétain's rehabilitation. Shortly after the independence, a large community of *pieds noirs* settled in Vichy (see Chapter 7). They, too, brought strong views on Pétain.

The figure of Pétain occupied an important place in post World War II French Algeria. Marc Ferro remembers a poster in 1948 Oran he initially misunderstood for communist propaganda: *Voter de Saivre, C'est voter Pétain !*. He soon realized, however, that de Saivre actually claimed an ideological and political affinity with Pétain and that he had made this the centerpiece of his campaign in the elections to the Algerian assembly in 1948.<sup>1202</sup> He obtained twenty percent of the votes. "Les oranais se disaient tous de gauche, mais un quart votait pour Pétain," Ferro remembers.<sup>1203</sup> While the *pieds noirs*' support for Pétain had been significant

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<sup>1199</sup> Louis de Condé, informal conversation with author (August 2014).

<sup>1200</sup> Éric Bertin, "La Maison du Missionnaire de Vichy, 1922-1952," (MA thesis, Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), 36 & 71.

<sup>1201</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>1202</sup> Marc Ferro, interview by author (March 4, 2014).

<sup>1203</sup> Marc Ferro, interview by author (March 4, 2014). During the war, the vast majority of the population of ORAN had supported the PPF. Samuel Kaplan, *French Colonial Fascism. The Extreme Right in Algeria, 1919-1939* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 179.

during the Second World War, Petainism even widened its outreach in French Algeria during the Algerian War. In reaction against de Gaulle, who was accused of selling out their homeland, many *pieds noirs* started to re-mobilize Pétain's memory to legitimate their fight against the independence. During this tense and uncertain period, the *pieds noirs* sought a figure to look up to. Pétain provided them with the model of a leader who had fought to save the French empire. Many *pieds noirs*, who had been rather moderate until then, were taken in by the Petainist arguments. In Ferro's words, "ils sont soudainement revenus à Pétain."<sup>1204</sup>

The *pieds noirs*' resentment against de Gaulle further reinforced their positive views on Pétain. In *La mémoire des droites françaises*, Henry Rousso underlines how resentment provides fertile ground for the development of political extremism. According to him, almost all extreme right tendencies share "une vision figée de l'Histoire," within which "se révèle une mémoire fondée sur le ressentiment : un ressentiment de nature ontologique qui entre par définition dans l'univers mental des réactionnaires, fascistes ou non, mais aussi un ressentiment historique."<sup>1205</sup> While the *Vichysois*' resentment towards de Gaulle was quite pronounced, it was not comparable to that felt by the returnees, who considered themselves to have been betrayed by the General. "On ne sera jamais assez antigaullistes," they would say.<sup>1206</sup> In Vichy, this resentment expressed itself in a variety of ways over a long period. In 1970, for instance, M. Graugnard, the former president of the local branch of the ANFANOMA and a city councilor, voted against renaming the *Place de la Poste* to *Place Charles de Gaulle*.<sup>1207</sup> The square was renamed because the majority of the council voted in favor of the resolution. This led to a few minor incidents: in the 1970s, for example, a *pied noir* who lived on the *Place de la Poste* moved out as he refused to change his address to *Place Charles de Gaulle*.<sup>1208</sup>

The returnees' nostalgia for the 'good old days' has also been expressed through their celebration of prominent OAS figures, most notably Raoul Salan (who is buried in Vichy). Although widely discredited in France for his radical position on (and action in) Algeria, and his involvement in the 1961 putsch against de Gaulle, Raoul Salan has remained an example of courage and loyalty to many *pieds noirs*, including those in Vichy. Every year since 1984, the local ANFANOMA has celebrated the anniversary of his death. Moreover, according to a long-

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<sup>1204</sup> Marc Ferro, interview by author (March 4, 2014).

<sup>1205</sup> Rousso, *Vichy. L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire*, 364.

<sup>1206</sup> Marc Ferro, *Le ressentiment dans l'histoire. Comprendre notre temps* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007), 184.

<sup>1207</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes from the municipal council's meeting (December 22, 1970).

<sup>1208</sup> Christophe Pommeray, informal conversation with author (August 2014).

term *Vichyssois*, yearly masses honoring the death of Bastien-Thiry, a fierce pro-French Algeria advocate, who was executed in 1963, after attempting to assassinate de Gaulle the previous years, were also reportedly organized in Vichy in the 1960s and 1970s. This resident further recalls a 1963 incident, during which the wreaths laid after a local demonstration in support of the anti-francoists in Spain were replaced over night by wreaths in honor of Bastien-Thiry.<sup>1209</sup>

While the development of a Petainist memory in Vichy originated from the grassroots population's own anti-Gaullism and rightward shift in the late 1950s, as seen in Chapter 7, the local settler and *pied noir* community unquestionably played a major role in the crystallization of this counter memory in the 1960s.

### 3. The reactivation of Resistance memory in response to the development of local pro-Pétain memory

In Vichy, the late 1940s and the following decade was particularly dire in terms of resistance memory. Few people continued to show interest in a memory that was not only not very representative of their own wartime experience, but that had also failed to rehabilitate the city (see Chapter 5 and 6). The 1960s nonetheless saw a revival in (left-wing) resistance commemorations aimed at countering the development of the local Petainist memory.

The first significant actions of local resisters since the summer of 1945 happened after the ADMP bought Pétain's apartment at the *hôtel du Parc* in 1960. After the acquisition was announced, the local associations of former resisters and deportees professed themselves ready to resume the fight. "Parfois divisés sur des questions politiques, les survivants se sont retrouvés fraternellement unis devant le danger," a journalist reported in March 1960.<sup>1210</sup> Drawing on the January 5, 1951 law that prohibited any acts and propaganda promoting collaboration, the resisters created a *Comité d'entente et d'action de la Résistance* with the aim of ensuring the decline of all those wanting to "redorer (...) le blason de la collaboration, des polices d'oppression et de la Milice."<sup>1211</sup> During the first meeting of the committee, the participants laid the groundwork for future initiatives, and called upon all resisters across France to join forces.

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<sup>1209</sup> Michel Boulicaut, interview by author (June 18, 2015).

<sup>1210</sup> "Les déportés et Résistants ne toléreront pas de 'Musée Pétain' à Vichy," *Liberté* (March 15, 1960).

<sup>1211</sup> "Contre un musée Pétain à Vichy," *La Tribune* (April 8, 1960); "Les anciens résistants constituent un comité 'contre l'apologie de la collaboration,'" *Liberté* (April 13, 1960).

They promised that “La résistance ne laissera sans réponse aucune injure, aucune provocation” done to “la mémoire de ceux tombés dans la lutte contre l’État mis en place par Pétain.”<sup>1212</sup>

On April 24, 1960 a large-scale demonstration was organized in Vichy, to coincide with the fifteenth anniversary of the concentration and death camps’ liberation. It brought together between 1,500 and 2,000 former resisters and deportees from the Massif Central, in presence of members from the *Fédération des anciens combattants volontaires des MUR et des maquis d’Auvergne*, as well as leading members from the national bureau of the FNDIRP.<sup>1213</sup> At the end of the ceremony, the secretary of the *Comité d’entente et d’action de la Résistance*, and the representative of the FNDIRP stated that the project of a Pétain museum was not only “une gifle à la résistance,” but also revealing of the social and political situation of the 1960s, marked by a return of anti-Semitism and the rise of neo-Nazism. They took the opportunity to propose that the documents used during Pétain’s trial be stored in the apartment.<sup>1214</sup> But as the apartment was the ADMP’s private property, this option was not considered.

The initiative of local resisters against the creation of a museum on Pétain in Vichy went well beyond the city’s boundaries, finally allowing a wider acknowledgment of their fight. Ironically, while Vichy’s resisters failed to have their voice heard in the 1940s, it was the ADMP that, fifteen years later, gave them the opportunity to acquire some visibility outside of Vichy. “C’est à Vichy ancienne capitale de la collaboration que le défi est lancé à la Résistance,” a former resister had proudly underlined during a meeting of their committee.<sup>1215</sup> Following the media-stunt surrounding their initiative against the museum project, they tried to maintain the momentum and to build on their recent achievement. They thus harassed with insistence those who were nostalgic for Pétain and who insisted on coming to Vichy on November 11, in order to lay a wreath in the memory of their hero. The masses for the anniversary of Pétain’s death were often disrupted by the distribution of anti-Pétain leaflets. The abbot Legout tried to appease the resisters: “Laissez-leur au moins les messes : ils en ont bien plus besoin que vous s’ils veulent

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<sup>1212</sup> “Unis comme jadis, les Résistants et les Déportés montreront, le 24 avril à Vichy, qu’ils n’ont pas la ‘mémoire courte’,” *La tribune* (April 20, 1960).

<sup>1213</sup> “Plus de 2,000 résistants et déportés du Massif Central ont manifesté dans la dignité leur hostilité à un musée Pétain à Vichy,” *La Tribune* (April 25, 1960).

In another paper the figure of 1,500 was put forward. “1,500 anciens résistants et déportés ont manifesté contre l’éventuelle création à Vichy d’un Musée Maréchal Pétain,” newspaper unspecified (April 25, 1960).

<sup>1214</sup> “1,500 anciens résistants et déportés ont manifesté contre l’éventuelle création à Vichy d’un Musée Maréchal Pétain,” *La Montagne* (April 25, 1960).

<sup>1215</sup> Cited in “Les déportés et Résistants ne toléreront pas de ‘Musée Pétain’ à Vichy,” *Liberté* (March 15, 1960).



aller au ciel !” But the resisters did not agree to this and they continued to disrupt the ceremonies, sometimes forcing the priest to interrupt the mass.<sup>1216</sup>

Motivated by their newly acquired credibility following the anti-Pétain fight, local resisters soon shifted their focus away from the ADMP to the commemoration of local martyrs. On June 27, 1965, to mark the end of the two-day *Fédération Nationale des anciens de la Résistance* (FNAR) congress in Vichy, a commemorative plaque was erected on the front of the *hôtel du Portugal*, the former headquarters of the Gestapo. The names of about forty residents who perished during the war were declaimed, with the crowd stating “Mort pour la France!” after each name. This plaque was the first one to be affixed on a building bearing a negative connotation. Until then, the majority of the plaques had been erected on resisters’ houses, but now that the ADMP had established itself in the *quartier thermal*, where Pétain’s ministries were housed, it was important for resisters to also leave their mark in this specific space.

A plaque with the inscription “Boulevard des Martyrs de la Résistance” was then unveiled a few meters from *Rue Ramber*, which was supposed to be expanded and renamed after those who had suffered in the basements of the *hôtel du Portugal*.<sup>1217</sup> On the same day, former resisters and deportees laid a red flag with a swastika on the floor of the new *Centre culturel Valéry Larbaud*, former *Petit Casino*, headquarters of the milice, for visitors to step on it.<sup>1218</sup>

From the late 1960s onwards, however, as had already been the case in the immediate postwar period (see Chapter 5), most of the resisters’ initiatives only consisted of erecting plaques in honor of individual resisters. The impetus provided by the fight against the ADMP five years earlier was clearly missing and popular interest was waning. On April 30, 1967, a plaque, featuring several names, including that of Marc Juge, was erected in the courtyard of the police station. A little less than two years later, a plaque honoring the local poet, Jacques Laurent, was attached to a school, which was renamed after him.<sup>1219</sup> Laurent, who was a student in Grenoble when the war began, joined the communist Resistance as early as November 1940. He was deported in 1943 to Buchenwald where he died on February 5, 1945.<sup>1220</sup> Laurent’s name was also added to the *monument aux morts* and on the stele that honored the FFI at the cemetery.

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<sup>1216</sup> Eric Conan, “Vichy, malade de Vichy,” *L’Express* (1992), 37.

<sup>1217</sup> “Les anciens de la Résistance n’oublent pas,” *La Montagne* (June 28, 1965).

<sup>1218</sup> Pascal Frasnetti, “La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours” (MA thesis, Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille III, 1998), 41.

<sup>1219</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council’s meeting (May 15, 1968).

<sup>1220</sup> Jacques Laurent’s profile on the website of the *Amis de la Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation de l’Allier*: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=671495>

These commemorations filled his mother with pride and gratitude:

Je ne saurais dire combien cette manifestation si bien réussie en tous points a comblé mon vœu le plus cher: voir le nom de mon fils au fronton d'une école. Aussi je remercie de tout mon cœur tous ceux qui ont participé à cette réalisation: les maîtres et les maîtresses auxquels est due en grande partie la réussite de cette journée du souvenir, les enfants de l'école dont la gentillesse et la sensibilité ont charmé tous ceux qui les ont entendus.

Je n'oublierai jamais ces quelques moments où je fus si bien entourée et réconfortée, et je remercie encore tous ceux à qui je dois cette immense satisfaction.

Le nom du jeune poète et résistant Jacques Laurent, qui, comme tant d'autres jeunes, s'est sacrifié pour la liberté de son pays, est désormais à sa vraie place et vivant pour les jeunes enfants de cette belle école.<sup>1221</sup>

Like all the other plaques in Vichy, the one honoring Jacques Laurent soon became forgotten. Inscribing the memory of these men in the city's environment did not prevent them from being quickly forgotten by the population.<sup>1222</sup>

The 1960s were marked by a return of the Gaullist myth in France. Memories of collaboration were repressed, leaving the entire limelight to the memory of the Resistance. The height of the Gaullist myth occurred in 1964, when de Gaulle enshrined Jean Moulin in the Panthéon, where France's great men are buried, and when André Malraux delivered his famous speech honoring Moulin and the Resistance, which has remained engraved in the memories of many French. Vichy's resisters, however, remained largely non-receptive to the national events in honor of the Gaullist resistance.

De Gaulle himself was not honored by local resisters. The General came to Vichy twice in three years, once in 1956 on the occasion of the second congress of the *Anciens de Dachau*, held in the *hôtel Le Majestic*, and a second time in 1959, during his *Bourbonnais* tour. These two visits created great excitement amongst the media. In 1956, as rumors about de Gaulle's return to politics circulated, his appearance in Vichy did not go unnoticed. Despite de Gaulle's decision to ban the media from the event, some journalists and photographers reportedly disguised themselves as waiters, whereas others hid under the tables or behind the curtains. The visit in 1959 (discussed in Chapter 7) was widely reported in the media, yet in a more traditional sense, as the journalists

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<sup>1221</sup> Letter by Jacques Laurent's mother (February 8, 1969), cited by the AFMD: <http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=671495> (Accessed June 2, 2016).

<sup>1222</sup> One conclusion I drew from my interviews and the survey I conducted between 2012 and 2016 is that very few *Vichyssois* know any of the local resisters honored by the city since 1944.

and photographers were allowed at the ceremony. Local resisters, however, demonstrated little excitement at the two visits of the famed General, as none of them were accompanied, or followed by, any local memorial initiatives. In the early 1960s de Gaulle's memory was not mobilized in the resisters' fight against the ADMP either. Still, in December 1970, one month after the General's death, Vichy's *Place de la Poste* was renamed *Place Charles de Gaulle*.<sup>1223</sup> This change, however, went largely unnoticed, as most *Vichyssois* continued to refer to the square as the *Place de la Poste*.

It is relatively easy to explain the reason for the resisters' disinterest toward de Gaulle. Since the 1950s, those most active in keeping the Resistance memory alive in Vichy have been the communists. The differences between the Gaullists and the communists, already very pronounced after the war, were deepened some more in the 1960s. In *Le fil rouge*, Marie-Claire Lavabre explains that since the end of the war and even more from 1958 to 1969, "se trouvaient cristallisés en de Gaulle tous les attributs de l'ennemi de classe et de l'adversaire politique."<sup>1224</sup> Not only did the communists accuse the Gaullist power of being anti-democratic and mystifying, they also accused him of having appropriated the memory of the Resistance and to use it to establish his own personal power.<sup>1225</sup>

The situation, however, significantly evolved in the second half of the 1970s. The year 1974 marked a clear break in the appreciation brought upon de Gaulle and Gaullism more generally. During the presidential campaign of 1974, the communist party, which called for voting for François Mitterrand (the only leftist candidate), invited the Gaullists to do the same and to find a place in a "large union du peuple français."<sup>1226</sup> Communist-Gaullist solidarity was vindicated in the name of the past, against a conservative right, which the communists presented as their (past and present) common enemy. According to Lavabre, "le rappel des convergences entre communistes et gaullistes alla crescendo pendant les derniers jours de la campagne."<sup>1227</sup> The year 1974 saw the multiplication of the commemorations and manifestations destined to

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<sup>1223</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (December 22, 1970).

<sup>1224</sup> Marie Claire Lavabre, *Le fil Rouge Sociologie de la mémoire communiste* (Paris: Presses de La Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1994), 169.

<sup>1225</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>1226</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>1227</sup> Ibid.

Laurent Salini urged voters to remember the fights that were fought together: "Il n'y a pas une seule des grandes affaires nationales, depuis un tiers de siècle, où gaullistes et travailleurs ne se soient pas trouvés du même côté. La droite conservatrice était... de l'autre. (...) Nous luttons pour la France (...)." Cited in Lavabre, *Le fil Rouge*, 183.

revive the memory of their converging fights. The Appeal of June 18 was even made on the same level as that of the communist leaders.<sup>1228</sup>

The commemorative efforts of the 1970s in Vichy reflect the broader evolution of the memorial practices of the PCF with regards to de Gaulle. In 1968, a social center, named after Jean Moulin, had been inaugurated amidst general indifference.<sup>1229</sup> In the late 1970s, however, things accelerated slightly: in 1975 a patchwork representing Jean Moulin was inaugurated in the hall of the above-mentioned center and in 1977 a large-scale commemoration honored Fred Scamaroni, a collaborator of de Gaulle. Scamaroni had joined de Gaulle in London immediately after the Appeal of June 18, 1940. Under de Gaulle's orders, he conducted several missions in France. During one of them, in Vichy, in 1941, Scamaroni met Marc Juge and his wife (on Juge, see Chapter 5). Later, Juge facilitated a meeting between Scamaroni and Georges Bidault in his house. Scamaroni was arrested in March 1943; shortly after he killed himself in order to protect his secrets.<sup>1230</sup> During the October 25, 1977 ceremony, a commemorative plaque honoring the three resisters was erected on the building where Juge and Scamaroni met for the first time, 11 rue de Paris, in the presence of members from local associations of resisters, Pierre Henri Teitgen, the former *vice président du Conseil*, Vichy's mayor, Jacques Lacarin and Georges Bidault.<sup>1231</sup>

Gravas' film, *Section S*, shot in Vichy in 1974, further provided local resisters with a platform to get their voice heard. While, as we saw earlier, some participants "parlaient avec suavité du 'Maréchal'," others "prononçaient sèchement 'Pétain' et avaient été amenés par les responsables locaux de l'ANACR. Car ils ont eu à subir dans leur chair les conséquences de ce que les pétainistes appellent 'le double jeu'." Doctor Jacques Guillaumin, director of the ANACR and a prominent communist politician in Vichy, explained why the participation of resisters was essential:

Dans nos rangs il y a eu des arrestations dès août 1940. Nos camarades emprisonnés et jugés ont refusé dès ce moment de signer un serment de fidélité à Pétain ; Pour nous Pucheu a tout de suite été l'ennemi numéro

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<sup>1228</sup> Ibid., 185-186.

<sup>1229</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (May 15, 1968).

<sup>1230</sup> On Scamaroni during the war, see: Marie-Claire Scamaroni, *Fred Scamaroni, mort pour la France* (Paris: France-Empire, 1999); Paul Silvani, *La Corse dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Ajaccio: Albiana, 2000) ; Jean-Louis Panicacci, *L'Occupation italienne : Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

<sup>1231</sup> "Les résistants ont inauguré une plaque commémorant la rencontre d'un des leurs, Fred Scamaroni, avec les combattants de l'intérieur," *La Montagne* (October 26, 1977).

un. C'est Pucheu lui-même qui avait essayé de faire signer une déclaration de reniement à Gabriel Péri dans sa cellule. C'est lui qui a tenté de dévoyer les plus faibles d'entre nous et qui a livré les plus durs aux nazis. Pour nous l'armée avait ouvertement livré la France aux hitlériens. En tant que maréchal, en tant que symbole de cet abandon, Pétain était l'homme à abattre. C'est pour témoigner de ce double combat contre l'occupant et contre Pétain que nos adhérents ont tenu à figurer dans [le] film de Costa Gravas.<sup>1232</sup>

While the film gave the (communist) resisters some public visibility, it did not enable them to increase their influence amongst Vichy's population, who was both profoundly anti-communist and no longer interested in the Resistance.

In the end, the resisters' actions proved largely ineffective in acting as a buffer against the Petainist memory. In addition to the lack of interest of Vichy's population, the resisters' initiatives often lacked a clearly defined historical framework, which could have helped people to better understand what the local experience of the Resistance had been. A greater understanding of the local experience of the war was especially needed in Vichy, where the Second World War was hardly discussed publicly, beyond the victimhood discourse. The violent tensions existing between Vichy's communist and non-communist resisters undoubtedly further undermined the resisters' actions.<sup>1233</sup>

Given the city's rightward shift and its lack of initiatives to counter the development of a local Petainist memory, it is interesting to examine whether the municipality invested itself in the re-mobilization of the local memory of the Resistance, opposed it, or remained uninvolved. Since the late 1940s, the city spent little energy or money to keep the memory of the resistance alive in Vichy. This became more and more obvious with time. For unknown reasons, the plaque erected on the *hôtel du Portugal* by the resisters in 1965 was later removed and the new boulevard – to be named 'boulevard des Martyrs de la Résistance' – was never constructed. No street was renamed in its place until three years later when, the *Boulevard du Stade* was renamed *Boulevard de Résistance et de la Déportation*.<sup>1234</sup> Further, in 1969, two years after a municipal employee had notified the city of the deterioration of the commemorative plaques (see Chapter 5), the person in

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<sup>1232</sup> Liégeois, "Vichy sans chagrin, ni pitié."

<sup>1233</sup> Christophe Pommeray, informal conversation with author (August 2014) and Joseph Bléthon, interview by author (summer of 2015).

<sup>1234</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (May 15, 1968).

charge of the renovation was still waiting for instructions from the municipality.<sup>1235</sup> Finally, neither the resisters nor the municipality used de Gaulle's visits in 1956 and 1959 as opportunities to revive the local memory of the resistance. It is true that neither in 1946 nor in 1959 was de Gaulle in Vichy to discuss the *Vichyssois'* experience of the Second World War. During his 1959 speech, the topic of the war was mostly glossed over; in that regard, he only underlined that: "il y a un peu d'émotion pour moi à me trouver dans cette ville pour les raisons que vous savez. Mais, nous enchainons. L'histoire le veut. Nous sommes un seul peuple, le grand, le seul, l'unique peuple français. Voilà pour le passé."<sup>1236</sup> Yet despite de Gaulle's limited comments with regard to the Second World War, the city could have easily capitalized on these visits. However, given the tensions between de Gaulle and Coulon,<sup>1237</sup> this is not surprising that it did not. Moreover, like Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who "felt no sentimental attachment to a cause [the Resistance] from which he and his circle had been distant,"<sup>1238</sup> Pierre Coulon, and his successor, Jacques Lacarin, had no connection to the resistance, and no interest in entertaining a local memory of the war. Their priorities were elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the municipality supported the resisters' initiatives and even initiated a few. It collaborated with the resisters for most of the traditional World War II commemorations, such as the *journées nationales en souvenir de la déportation*, May 8, the anniversaries of the city's liberation, the renaming of squares or streets (such as the renaming of the *Place de la Poste* in *Place Charles de Gaulle* in December 1970 or of a square in *Place du 08 mai 1945* in May 1972<sup>1239</sup>), and the erection of plaques in honor of fallen resisters or deportees. In addition to the ceremonies mentioned above, in July 1967, under the initiative of Lucien Lamoureux, Pierre Coulon awarded Louis Simon Domb the *grande médaille d'or de la ville*. In June 1940, Domb was in control of the armored train stationed in Vichy, carrying soldiers ready to shoot at the Germans once the latter would have entered the city. At the request of Pierre-Victor Léger and Lucien Lamoureux, he had agreed to declare Vichy an open city, although he had received no

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<sup>1235</sup> AM (Vichy). Note from M. Praile to the *Secrétariat général à la mairie de la ville de Vichy* (June 3, 1969).

<sup>1236</sup> "Le président de Gaulle dans l'Allier," *Liberté* (April 18, 1959).

<sup>1237</sup> On this see : Jean Débordes, *Pierre Coulon, La trop courte chance de Vichy* (Charroux en Bourbonnais: Edition des Cahiers bourbonnais, 1991),

<sup>1238</sup> Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 120.

<sup>1239</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (December 6, 1971).



formal order to do so, therefore sparing the city from fighting and potential destruction (see Chapter 1).<sup>1240</sup>

Although the municipality's investment in the memory of the war was limited, to say the least, local leaders nonetheless took every opportunity to reactivate the victimhood discourse. In 1956, for example, the deputy mayor told de Gaulle that "342 Vichyssois ont été déportés et 50 seulement sont revenus. En proportion, Vichy est l'une des villes de France ayant le plus souffert."<sup>1241</sup> The ceremonies in memory of the Resistance and the congresses of former resisters and deportees provided local leaders with other ideal platforms of expression. In 1965, during the FNAR congress in Vichy, the deputy mayor shared memories about the wartime period in Vichy and emphasized how the *Vichyssois* were not to be mistaken with those who had acted in favor of Pétain's government: "Vichy a bien souvent été calomniée : l'on a confondu avec mépris les habitants... Mais Vichy a eu aussi des résistants."<sup>1242</sup> When André Brissaud published *La dernière année de Vichy 1943-1944*, a local journalist observed that looking for the 'truth' was a good thing, but that there was no such thing as "la dernière année de Vichy," as "le vrai Vichy, lui, continue." He added:

Non ! Vichy n'est pas 'Vichy' ! Depuis vingt ans, dans le monde entier, l'histoire (et la légende) ont établi leur diagnostic : Vichy égale le sinistre régime de l'occupation... Les Vichyssois d'aujourd'hui sont profondément blessés... Malgré des rappels à l'ordre, malgré des requêtes formulées, le commun des mortels rejoint l'écrivain, l'homme d'État, l'historien pour dire 'le régime de Vichy'.<sup>1243</sup>

In 1977, during the ceremony in honor of Scamaroni and Juge, the mayor, Jacques Lacarin underlined once again how the city's name had long been tarnished: "Je voudrais témoigner de ma profonde gratitude, celle que ressent le premier magistrat d'une ville dont le nom est si injustement associé au gouvernement de l'époque. Cette plaque rappellera comment des Vichyssois participèrent à ce combat de l'ombre."<sup>1244</sup>

While the concerns with regards to the city's alleged stigmatization had decreased with the economic recovery of the early 1950s, they came back when the number of tourists started to decrease again. Decolonization indeed marked the beginning of a long decline for the city. In his

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<sup>1240</sup> "Monsieur Pierre Coulon a remis la grande médaille d'or de la ville à M. Louis-Simon Domb," *La Montagne* (July 15, 1967).

<sup>1241</sup> Cited in Pascal Frasnetti, "La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours," 58.

<sup>1242</sup> Cited in *La Montagne* (June 28, 1965).

<sup>1243</sup> "Un mot qui est un mal," *La Montagne* (March 4, 1965).

<sup>1244</sup> "Après l'inauguration de la plaque sur la Résistance," *La Montagne* (October 27, 1977).

book, *Vichy : 1965-1989 : un quart de siècle entre deux mondes*, Jacques Lacarin reflects on the postcolonial era for Vichy:

Les conséquences de la décolonisation et en particulier la perte de l'Afrique du Nord ainsi que les bouleversements mondiaux avaient amené une récession considérable de la fréquentation de la cité thermale... La baisse concomitante de fréquentation de la station, notamment par la clientèle d'outre mer, entraîna une chute des recettes spécifiques au thermalisme, à savoir : taxes de séjour, la redevance des jeux, la taxe sur les eaux minérales ainsi que la taxe professionnelle afférente à la fermeture d'hôtels.<sup>1245</sup>

In the late 1960s and 1970s, the economic downturn was all the more difficult to bear for Vichy as the city had an outstanding debt to service, because of the large scale projects that had been undertaken by Pierre Coulon.<sup>1246</sup> Undoubtedly, the stigmatization problem was reactivated as a justification to the decrease in spa tourism. It was easier for Vichy to hold the Second World War (rather than decolonization) responsible for the decline. Acknowledging the role of decolonization risked drawing unwanted attention to the city's past links with the empire and French Algeria more particularly. This strategy worked well and today many people from outside of Vichy wrongly attribute the city's decline to the fact that the Second World War tarnished its reputation.

## Conclusion

The somewhat 'favorable' period of the early 1950s in France, the existence of a small, yet influential, very conservative population in Vichy, the public acknowledgment of the positive views of Vichy's beloved Walter Stucki on Pétain, and the ambivalent position of the municipality regarding the management of Pétain's legacy, all contributed to the emergence of an unabashed pro-Pétain memory in Vichy. These factors does not explain, however, why this memory continued to develop and crystallized in the 1960s and 1970s when the extreme right experienced historically low support in France.

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<sup>1245</sup> Jacques Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989 : un quart de siècle entre deux mondes* (Molinet: Edition Neuville, 1994), 30.

Two établissements thermaux have closed.

<sup>1246</sup> According to Jacques Lacarin, "cette dette était importante en particulier du fait que Pierre Coulon avait préféré lancer rapidement les grands travaux sans attendre d'éventuelles subventions longues et difficiles à obtenir pour ne pas retarder les opérations, lesquelles, en raison de l'inflation considérable à l'époque, auraient obligatoirement subi une majoration des coûts." Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989*, 30.

In the 1960s, the crystallization of the Petainist memory in Vichy depended on a twofold dynamic. While its emergence in the early 1950s had been in the hands of local former Vichy supporters and Pétain's admirers, its development in the late 1950s and 1960s was facilitated by the emergence of a new trend of Petainism, born of the Algerian War. According to James Shields, the "Algerian War provided a recruiting ground expanded beyond the narrow circuit of Petainists, Vichy nostalgics and residual fascists towards army veterans, serving soldiers, colonial settlers, and those who saw the defense of the French Union as a patriotic imperative."<sup>1247</sup> In Vichy, the Algerian war also expanded the recruiting ground of Petainists towards those who were concerned about the economic impact of the loss of Algeria on Vichy's economy and whose political views were framed in response to this fear.

While until the mid 1950s Vichy was a modern and centrist city, the Algerian war exacerbated the extremes and the city became the theater for a battle between a population that was quickly leaning toward the right and the few communist resisters, who were still active in Vichy and who tried – with limited means – to prevent a Petainist drift. Despite a few notable actions by the local resistance in the 1960s, these remained very limited, and in the absence of a strong and united local left, the resistance rarely occupied the forefront of the public stage.

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<sup>1247</sup> Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 93.

## CHAPTER 9 - National obsession, local silence (from the 1980s to ...)

The Second World War's scholarly and memorial landscape has evolved significantly in the last forty years. Yet, the memorial strategies of Claude Malhuret, who has been Vichy's mayor since 1989, have mostly been an extension of his predecessors, causing increasing criticism from within and outside the city. In 2003, for example, the weekly magazine *Le Point* criticized Vichy for its memorial inertia:

Vichy lutte (...) contre le déclin du thermalisme en se muant en ville de congrès, cité sportive, station de la beauté et de la santé. Cette ville (...) craint de compromettre ses efforts en mettant en lumière sa face honteuse. Comme si cures de remise en forme et tourisme historique ne pouvaient aller de pair. Comme si Vichy n'avait pas intérêt à crever l'abcès, à dissiper l'ambiguïté.<sup>1248</sup>

This chapter explores the recent local debates pertaining to the problematic memorialization of the war in Vichy. While everybody on the local political spectrum agrees on the need to address the semantic problem surrounding the 'misappropriation' of the term 'Vichy', local leaders have been strongly divided over how the city should manage the war legacy.

This chapter pays special attention to the memory of the Resistance and that of the Holocaust. More specifically, it investigates how the resisters have capitalized on the memory of the July 10, 1940 vote, in a dual attempt to serve democratic goals and to establish Vichy as a city of Resistance. It further investigates why there is no established Jewish memory of the war in Vichy, only an underground - highly distorted – one, which conveys the myth that Vichy was a safe haven for Jews. How Jews experienced the war in Vichy depended on many different elements: whether they were French, whether they had money or acquaintances within the government, whether they had skills considered useful, and whether they had been living in Vichy prior to the war. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, for most Jews life in Vichy was difficult and frightening. The struggle of those Vichy Jews, however, has been largely erased from local consciousness.

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<sup>1248</sup> "Vichy : cette ville qui veut oublier Pétain," *Le Point* (January 31, 2003).

## 1. The city's response to the national obsession with the Vichy regime

In earlier chapters, we saw how the victimhood myth – presenting Vichy as a threefold victim (of the Germans, of Pétain, and of the postwar governments for allegedly failing to rehabilitate the population) – quickly took shape in the immediate postwar period. First conveyed by the resisters who were afraid that their fight might not be recognized, the victimhood myth was soon adopted by everybody, from the media and the population to local politicians from across the political spectrum. Within a few months, it became engrained in Vichy's collective consciousness. The victimhood myth has been regularly mobilized by the city and its inhabitants throughout the postwar period, however, its mobilization was briefly strongest in the late 1940s and subsequently since the 1980s.

In 1990, Malhuret stated that the city, which would have preferred “ne pas rentrer dans cette histoire là,” had become “l'exutoire de la mauvaise conscience de la France et les Vichyssois en souffrent. Vichy n'a pas à être considérée comme responsable de ce qui s'est passé pendant la guerre.”<sup>1249</sup> Similarly, local historian Nicole Périchon has complained that since the end of the war, “nous [les Vichyssois] sommes l'opprobre de la France, sans pouvoir nous défendre, nous sommes suspects, nous ne sommes plus les habitants de la reine des villes d'eaux !”<sup>1250</sup> Events such as the congresses of associations of former deportees and resisters, and the war-related commemorative ceremonies have provided the city with the best opportunities to underline its status of innocent victim and to accuse France of letting Vichy's population bear all of the war's burden.

In the 1940s, in response to those local concerns, when state representatives and members of the national bureau of prominent associations were invited in Vichy they often expressed their sympathy towards the *Vichyssois*. The same has happened in the post 1980 period. In May 1986, at the national meeting of the *Fédération nationale des combattants volontaires*, George Fontes, the *secrétaire d'état aux anciens combattants*, spoke about “le mauvais tour joué par l'histoire à la ville de Vichy.”<sup>1251</sup> At the ANACR's annual congress in 1993, one of the association's representative said that “Nous avons le souci de décharger la ville de Vichy de cette synonymie,

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<sup>1249</sup> “Jean Poperen rend hommage aux ‘80’,” newspaper unspecified (July 11, 1990).

<sup>1250</sup> Nicole Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: A. Sutton, 2009), 161.

<sup>1251</sup> Cited in Pascal Frasnetti, “La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours” (MA thesis, Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille III, 1998), 59.

tout à fait injuste et malencontreuse, avec l'État français."<sup>1252</sup> The same year, on the occasion of the inauguration of a plaque honoring the Jews who were deported from France, Serge Klarsfeld noted that "Nous avons toujours su que le choix de Vichy comme capitale de la France de Pétain et de Laval ne répondait pas à un appel des Vichyssois."<sup>1253</sup> In 2003, Hamlaoui Mekachera, *secrétaire d'état aux anciens combattants*, who was in Vichy for the commemoration of the July 10, 1940 vote, encouraged the French people to "éviter les assimilations, généralisations et approximations hâtives et blessantes."<sup>1254</sup>

Despite the many empathic speeches pronounced by associations and state representatives, the victim rhetoric has not diminished. Neither has the criticism toward the national leaders, the historians, and the public men, all accused of stigmatizing the city. As in the postwar period, such criticism has especially crystallized around the semantic problem. In many occasions, Malhuret complained that the war was, for the city, "une gigantesque injustice qui attache trop souvent depuis le nom de Vichy à celui de la collaboration."<sup>1255</sup> In 1996, the mayor even asked Maurice Druon, permanent Secretary of the *Académie française*, that the entry for Vichy be modified in the dictionary:

Je souhaite attirer votre attention sur une question de vocabulaire et exactitude historique et linguistique qui concerne spécialement la ville de Vichy. Cette question réside dans la fréquente confusion qui est opérée entre les adjectifs et noms « Vichyssois » et « vichystes ». Si le premier désigne sans nul doute les habitants de Vichy, l'autre se rattache au gouvernement de Vichy et à l'État français. Toutefois, il semble que cette distinction échappe à de nombreux ouvrages en principe qualifiés. J'en veux pour illustration la confusion encore entretenue par les éditions 1996 des dictionnaires Larousse et Robert. Il est regrettable que les habitants de Vichy aient à supporter les conséquences de décisions historiques de triste mémoire et prises bien contre leur volonté. (...) Je vous serais très reconnaissant si vous vouliez bien me faire part de votre point de vue sur ce point essentiel pour tous les Vichyssois. De même serait-il peut être souhaitable, à la faveur d'un prochain examen de ces termes, de nourrir une réflexion sur les éléments susceptibles de clarifier cette distinction dans l'esprit de nos concitoyens.<sup>1256</sup>

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<sup>1252</sup> Cited in Frasnetti, "La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours," 60-61.

<sup>1253</sup> Klarsfeld's speech in Vichy (April 25, 1993). Courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.

<sup>1254</sup> "Hamlaoui Mekachera, secrétaire d'état aux anciens combattants, rend hommage aux 80," *La Montagne* (July 11, 2003).

<sup>1255</sup> Claude Malhuret, *Vichy au coeur : Notre ville à l'aube du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Vichy: Association de financement de la campagne électorale de Claude Malhuret, 2001), 9.

<sup>1256</sup> Cited in Nicole Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: A. Sutton, 2009), 162-163.



While Malhuret has barely missed an opportunity to underline that Vichy is not ‘Vichy’,<sup>1257</sup> some of his political opponents from the *Parti Radical de Gauche* have been even more proactive in their fight to break the conflation between town and regime. Open letters to personalities have been one way to denounce the alleged abuses of language. In 2007 for instance, Radical city councilor, Christophe Pommeray, wrote to French philosopher, Bernard Henri Lévy, about his awkward use of the word ‘Vichy’. Pommeray expressed regret and disappointment that “someone like him,” who is “expected to use words intelligently,” had opted for convenience over rigor:

J’ai repéré que tu nous avais encore collé Vichy à la sauce nazillonne une fois toutes les deux pages. (...) Rappel donc : Vichy est une ville qui, pendant quatre années, a été choisie par le gouvernement de collaboration comme son siège. (...) Ce n’est donc que ça, Vichy : une ville. Et lorsque toi, tu écris ces cinq lettres, tu t’évites simplement d’écrire ‘raciste’, ‘xénophobie’ ou ‘dictature’ par exemple. Tu t’évites de qualifier. C’est une forme d’anti phrase, de ‘vous voyez ce que je veux dire’, de ‘j’me comprends’. (...) Pour un philosophe, c’est pas chouette. (...) Les philosophes, vous êtes là pour mettre des mots sur les choses ; résilience par exemple, ça c’était bien pour Vichy, la ville. Tes antiphrases, celles des autres, nous en sommes fatigués pour la ville, ahuris pour l’histoire et inquiets pour l’avenir.<sup>1258</sup>

In order to change the French people’s habit of using the word ‘Vichy’ to refer to things other than the city, Pommeray has also developed the website *Vichy, c’est une ville !* that indexes all the instances where the word ‘Vichy’ is used with the meaning of Pétain’s government in the media and in official discourses.<sup>1259</sup> Although the long-term objectives of this indexing remain unclear, the website has allowed its instigators to create an archive and has offered them some

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Malhuret got a positive answer from the *Académie Française*: “L’Académie française, dans la révision qu’elle accomplit pour la neuvième édition du dictionnaire, n’en est pas encore à la lettre V. Mais afin de répondre à votre émotion motivée, j’ai saisi la commission compétente du problème que vous soulevez. Je puis vous répondre que, lorsque viendra le temps de la publication des deux mots « Vichyssois » et « vichystes », ils feront chacun l’objet d’une entrée distincte où leur sens, l’un géographique, l’autre historique, seront nettement séparés. (...) Dès à présent, vos concitoyens et vous-mêmes peuvent se prévaloir de cette décision.” Cited in Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z*, 162-163. In the summer of 2014, they were working on the letter R.

<sup>1257</sup> Amongst many examples: During the ceremony in honor of de Gaulle in June 1990, Malhuret enjoined historians, politicians and journalists to stop confounding *Vichyssois* with *Vichystes*. “Le 17 avril 1959, Vichy recevait le général,” *La Montagne* (June 19, 1990). In 2003, Malhuret complained that the *Vichyssois* were “las des raccourcis qui parlent de ‘régime de Vichy’ quand ce n’est pas tout simplement de ‘Vichy’ pour désigner le régime de l’État français.” “Hamlaoui Mekachera rend hommage aux ‘quatre-vingts’,” *La Montagne* (July 11, 1990).

<sup>1258</sup> Reproduced in Christophe Pommeray, *Propos Irrévérrencieux* (Vichy: Allier République, 2007), 109-110.

<sup>1259</sup> <http://vichycestuneville.wordpress.com/>

visibility on the web.

Another, more offensive, strategy to free the city from its ‘unfair’ burden has been deployed by the Radical Allier deputy, Gérard Charasse. On three occasions, in 1998, 2003, and 2012, Charasse introduced bills to parliament aiming to have all mentions of the word ‘Vichy’ as a shorthand for Pétain’s government and France’s collaboration with the Third Reich removed from governmental, academic, and any other official discourse or document (see the 2003 bill below).

N 729

ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE

CONSTITUTION DU 4 OCTOBRE 1958 DOUZIÈME LÉGISLATURE

Enregistré à la Présidence de l’Assemblée nationale le 26 mars 200313 février 2003. PROPOSITION DE LOI  
visant à substituer, dans les communications publiques invoquant la période de l’État français, aux références à la  
ville de Vichy, l’appellation « dictature de Pétain ».

(Renvoyée à la commission des affaires culturelles, familiales et sociales, à défaut de constitution d’une commission  
spéciale dans les délais prévus par les articles30 et 31 du Règlement.)

PRESENTEE  
PAR M. GERARD CHARASSE,  
Député.

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EXPOSE DES MOTIFS

MESDAMES, MESSIEURS,

Depuis plus de cinquante années, diverses appellations utilisant le nom de la ville de Vichy servent à désigner le régime de l’État français né du vote du 10 juillet 1940.

Tandis que, d’année en année, l’opposition des quatre-vingts parlementaires ayant voulu défendre la République reçoit un hommage grandissant, l’utilisation du nom de la ville de Vichy dans un sens négatif s’étend, allant jusqu’à prendre des formes substantivées censées désigner la trahison ou l’esprit de capitulation.

Or, après l’appel du 18 juin du général de Gaulle, cette ville a accueilli le deuxième acte de résistance: celui des quatre-vingts parlementaires qui ont refusé d’installer un régime d’exception et xénophobe.

Afin que ce second événement prenne le pas dans l’expression, comme il l’a pris dans l’Histoire, sur la seule installation du régime de l’État français à Vichy, il convient d’inciter, dans les textes d’origine privée, et d’obliger, dans les textes officiels, la substitution d’une dénomination de nature à rappeler le mode d’avènement de ce régime et son caractère autocratique à celles se référant à la ville de Vichy.

Les travaux menés depuis plusieurs années par le Comité en l’honneur des quatre-vingts parlementaires du 10 juillet 1940, avec des historiens, des parlementaires et des citoyens, a permis de proposer l’appellation « dictature de Pétain ».

Tel est l’objet de la présente proposition.

## PROPOSITION DE LOI

### Article 1

La dénomination « dictature de Pétain », de nature à rappeler le mode d'avènement du régime de l'État français et son caractère autocratique, est destinée à remplacer, dans les communications publiques, les références à la ville de Vichy.

### Article 2

La dénomination « dictature de Pétain » est adoptée pour tous les textes officiels se référant à cette période.

### Article 3

L'utilisation d'une appellation du régime de l'État français faisant référence à la ville de Vichy ou à ses habitants permet à toute personne y ayant intérêt l'utilisation du droit de réponse prévu à l'article 13 de la loi du 29 juillet 1881.

### Article 4

Est considérée comme une imputation portant atteinte à l'honneur ou à la réputation, au sens de l'article 13-1 de la loi du 29 juillet 1881, toute appellation tendant à assimiler le nom de la ville ou de ses habitants à des comportements de trahison, de capitulation ou d'outrage au régime républicain.

### Article 5

Un décret en Conseil d'État fixe les modalités d'application de la présente loi.

According to David El Kenz and François-Xavier Nérard, the victims' status does not only serve for the protection of abstract values and building an identity, it also engages in an acknowledgement quest, often tied to the very concrete claim of rights.<sup>1260</sup> In the case of Vichy, it is the right to the ownership of a name that has been claimed. In his 2003 speech to Parliament, Charasse cited article 13-1 of the July 29, 1881 law regarding "toute appellation tendant à assimiler le nom de la ville ou de ses habitants à des comportements de trahison, de capitulation ou d'outrage au régime républicain."<sup>1261</sup> By citing this law Charasse aimed to demonstrate how his demand fit within French legislation, and how sanctions could legally be taken against those guilty of contempt towards the city. The 1881 law, however, is silent about what criteria should be used to determine whether an offense has been committed, as well as what sanctions should be taken against non-compliant people. Similarly, Charasse's bills lacked clear propositions as to how to ensure the enforcement of this law. All the *Vichyssois* I interviewed mentioned the so-called linguistic problem, even when my questions were unrelated to it,<sup>1262</sup> suggesting that this issue is more than a politicians' obsession and that it has deeply ingrained society.

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<sup>1260</sup> David El Kenz and François-Xavier Nérard, *Commémorer les victimes en Europe* (Seyssel: Champ-Vallon, 2011).

<sup>1261</sup> Cited in Dominique Dutilloy, *Impressions* (Paris: Editions Le Manuscrit, 2003), 34.

<sup>1262</sup> Interviews conducted between 2012 and 2016.

The victimhood myth has had a lot of success in Vichy for many reasons. First, victimhood myths are some of the easiest myths to identify with, mostly because they shift the responsibility and guilt (if any) away from a group or community to outside actors. In Vichy, it has been easier for long-term residents to think of themselves as victims rather than to reflect on the local population's high degree of accommodation and lack of agency during the war. Second, the sentiment of injustice and fears of stigmatization were very strong in the immediate postwar years (albeit not very well founded, as we saw in Chapter 6), thereby giving ideal ground for the victimhood myth to crystallize. Third, this myth offered the city a ready-made justification for the decline of spa tourism—*if the resort's economic activity is declining it is because of the city's tarnished reputation and the ongoing stigmatization*. Since the 1980s, the re-mobilization of the victimhood myth has also been a means for the city to 'defend itself' against the growing obsession of the French people with France's Vichy past.

The national obsession with Vichy translated into a boom in scholarship and a multiplication of press articles about the Vichy regime. It has also, at times, attracted negative attention to the city of Vichy itself, as shown by the following 2008 incident. That year, Brice Hortefeux, then UMP Minister of the Interior, organized an international summit on immigration in Vichy. The city hoped that this congress would help the city to "se libérer d'un passé qu'elle juge trop présent,"<sup>1263</sup> and would "mettre fin à soixante ans d'ostracisme."<sup>1264</sup> These hopes evaporated when a controversy emerged after the announcement of Vichy as the host city. Demonstrators took to the streets of Vichy to protest against Nicolas Sarkozy's immigration policies. During Sarkozy's five-year term, the comparisons between the French president and Pétain were common.<sup>1265</sup> The World War Two analogy was continued at the demonstration in Vichy. One of the anti-summit posters, for example, featured Pétain, Brice Hortefeux, barbed wire fences reminiscent of the concentration camps, and the slogan "Ils sont de retour – Organisons la Résistance." Some demonstrators were also dressed up as Auschwitz inmates. To a journalist who interviewed them for television, they complained about the choice of the city of Vichy as the host city for a summit on immigration:

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<sup>1263</sup> "Vichy ne veut plus d'histoire," *L'Express* (October 30, 2008).

<sup>1264</sup> "Immigration : Une manifestation dégénère à Vichy," *Le Figaro* (November 4, 2008).

<sup>1265</sup> See for instance Alain Badiou's pamphlet against Sarkozy: Alain Badiou, *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom ?* (Paris: Editions Lignes, 2007). According to Badiou, Sarkozy built on Pétain's political and social legacy. The book was a big success in bookstores.

Le choix de la ville est (...) extrêmement inquiétant. Ça nous rappelle les prémices des politiques qui ont mené à la déportation dans les années 1940. On se rappelle que la déportation n'est pas venue comme ça, tout d'un coup, sur une demande d'Hitler. Avant Pétain, il y avait une république française, qui, entre 38 et 39, a commencé à discriminer les étrangers, à prélever des empreintes digitales, à ouvrir des camps dans le sud et à les discriminer socialement, c'est ce qui a permis la déportation. On ne va pas laisser l'histoire se reproduire deux fois.<sup>1266</sup>

The city of Vichy, unprepared for such incidents, once again took refuge in inaction, while complaining about the unfounded comparisons used by the demonstrators. In the absence of a strong local memory and of a relevant historiography on the life in Vichy under the Vichy regime, the hammering of the victimhood discourse has appeared as the city's only means of defence in face of the over mediatization of the *Vichy* regime.

The victimhood myth has served another important function in Vichy; it has offered legitimization for Malhuret's politics of silence – *the Vichyssois, who are the victims of history, have no duty to 'manage' the war's legacy, it is rather the country's responsibility to release them from their unfair burden*. In 1992, the mayor stated: "Moi, c'est clair, je suis prêt à tout... Monument, musée de la collaboration, tout ce que l'on veut, mais à condition que cela vienne de Paris, de l'État, de la France."<sup>1267</sup> Ten years later, his views remained unchanged: "il n'y a aucun lourd passé à Vichy. Il y a un lourd passé en France. Personne à Vichy n'a jamais demandé au gouvernement de Pétain de s'y installer. Le problème, c'est à la France de le régler."<sup>1268</sup> In 2001, during the commemoration in memory of the July 10, 1940 vote, Malhuret highlighted the importance of the presence of a state representative so that the duty of memory did not rest solely on the hands of the *Vichyssois*.<sup>1269</sup> That year, Jean Pierre Masseret, *secrétaire d'état à la défense chargé des anciens combattants*, had made the move to Vichy. Yet, for many years, Paris had not sent any representative, an obvious sign, for Malhuret, of the failure of France to fulfill its duty of memory. Quite ironically when one knows of the mayor's refusal to work through the war's legacy, Malhuret asked "que chacun fasse son devoir comme nous le faisons ici... C'est un sujet

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<sup>1266</sup> [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8gjo2\\_vous-reprendrez-bien-un-peu-de-vich\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8gjo2_vous-reprendrez-bien-un-peu-de-vich_news) 4'03 (Accessed November 24, 2011).

<sup>1267</sup> Eric Conan, "Vichy, malade de Vichy," *L'Express* (1992), 38.

<sup>1268</sup> INA. Television news about the municipal elections. France 3 (February 10, 2001).

<sup>1269</sup> "Commémoration du vote des 80," *La Montagne* (July 11, 2001).

qui sera intégré dans l’histoire de France quand tous les Français et pas seulement les Vichyssois en auront tiré les leçons.”<sup>1270</sup>

Even more troubling is Malhuret’s comment that France has yet to come to terms with the Vichy past: “Cette période trouble n’est pas assumée par la France, ... le sujet est encore largement tabou,” he stated in 2001.<sup>1271</sup> According to him, “la force du tabou” est telle qu’elle rendrait toute entreprise de mémorialisation in Vichy risquée.”<sup>1272</sup> If arguing that Vichy was still taboo in French society at the beginning of his mandate (in the late 1980s) was probably more true than false, things have changed significantly since then. First, France’s complicity in the Final Solution and responsibility in the deportation of Jews from France was officially acknowledged in 1995 by then President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac. Chirac’s speech was received by many French people as the long-awaited recognition by the French State of France’s responsibility for the crimes committed between 1940 and 1944. Two years later, during a speech at the Bir-Hakeim memorial site, prime minister Lionel Jospin stated that the round up had been “décidée, planifiée et réalisée par des Français.”<sup>1273</sup> A *Mission d’étude sur la spoliation des Juifs de France* was also created in 1997. Its main mission was to investigate the extent of the expropriation of Jewish real estate, money, and art objects between 1940 and 1945.<sup>1274</sup> Jospin further modified the law of January 3, 1979 on access to Second World War archives.<sup>1275</sup> Finally, in 2000, the state founded the *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*, whose provision was made up by the escheat funds resulting from the dispossession of Jewish goods and kept by the administrations and the financial establishments.

The improvement of museums’ exhibitions about the war over the last thirty years has further contributed to bring new elements about the Vichy regime to the front line of the public debate. The *musée de la résistance et de la déportation* in Besançon, the *Mémorial de Caen*, the *Mémorial des Enfants d’Izieu*, the *musée d’histoire contemporaine des Invalides*, the museum at Oradour-sur-Glane are only a few examples of French museums, where the Vichy regime – its birth, its nature, its responsibility in the Final Solution, its legacy to the Fourth and Fifth republics

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<sup>1270</sup> “Hommage aux 80 et travail de mémoire,” *La Montagne* (July 11, 2000).

<sup>1271</sup> “Commémoration du vote des 80,” *La Montagne* (July 11, 2001).

<sup>1272</sup> Malhuret, *Vichy au coeur*, 54.

<sup>1273</sup> A copy of the speech is available on the following website : <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/973144898.html> (Accessed July 18, 2016)

<sup>1274</sup> It published its report in 2000. A copy of the report is available on the following website : <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/004000897/index.shtml> (Accessed July 29, 2016).

<sup>1275</sup> A copy of the law is available on the following website : <https://www.dgdr.cnrs.fr/bo/1998/01-98/433-bo0198-cirdu02-10-97.htm> (Accessed July 16, 2016).



– is addressed in detail, in exhibitions that have often been designed in collaboration with the most established historians on the topic. The question of Vichy is also widely addressed in the exhibitions set up in former camps, such as Riversaltes, Gurs, Les Milles or Drancy. Things have continued to evolve, as suggested by the recent acclaimed exhibition by Denis Peschanski and Thomas Fontaine *La Collaboration (1940-1945)* at the *Archives Nationales* from November 2014 to March 2015.<sup>1276</sup> Contrary to what Malhuret, as well as some journalists and to a lower extent, historians, continue to affirm, the war, the Holocaust and the Vichy regime are no longer taboo in France, even though certain topics remain sensitive in certain localities.<sup>1277</sup>

Malhuret's comment that historians should "se pencher sur ces problèmes"<sup>1278</sup> is as flawed as his statement that France has yet to come to terms with its Vichyite past. It is unlikely that the Vichy mayor has not heard of some of the scholarship about the Vichy regime, especially that of Robert Paxton or Henry Rousso, whose works have received much attention in France and abroad. Yet, confined, for nearly thirty years, in a position of denial, Malhuret has chosen to ignore the changes that have happened in France in the last twenty years or so. By asking for improvement in historical research, Malhuret has furthered a culture of suspicion, which fed (and legitimized) the city's victimization myth.

While the victimhood myth has been used by the mayor to justify his memorial inaction, it has also been mobilized by his opponents to call for the opposite strategy. According to some of his rivals, to own up to the past (ie. to assume the fact that Vichy was the capital of the *État français* and that this position has had repercussions on the city in the short and long run) would be the best way to respond to the reported stigmatization. Christophe Pommeray has even made the issue of the management of the legacy of World War Two an essential point of his political project for the city. During his campaign for the municipal elections in March 2014, the initial three of the seventeen electoral promises of his party concerned this specific issue:

(1) Créer un musée/centre de recherche sur toute l'histoire de Vichy (including the 1940-1944 period). *Radicaux* leaders have long expressed their wish for the construction of a museum and for the development of research on Vichy during and after the war: "*Le musée que j'appelle de mes vœux pourrait être conçu comme un hymne à la*

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<sup>1276</sup> On this exhibition, see: Denis Peschanski and Thomas Fontaine, *La Collaboration 1940-1945. Vichy, Paris, Berlin* (Paris: Tallandier, 2015).

<sup>1277</sup> The question over the responsibility of the *Alsaciens-Lorrains* in the Oradour massacre has long been a topic of heated debate in Oradour, whereas the Vichy regime remains taboo in Vichy. These are only two examples amongst several others.

<sup>1278</sup> "Hommage aux 80 et travail de mémoire," *La Montagne* (July 11, 2000).

*fraternité,”* deputy Gérard Charasse had already told a journalist from *the Point* in 2003.<sup>1279</sup>

(2) Installer un troisième cycle universitaire sur la Seconde Guerre mondiale;

(3) Accueillir une exposition et un colloque annuels sur la Seconde Guerre mondiale.<sup>1280</sup>

These initiatives, Pommeray argues, would work towards freeing the city from the national mythology about *Vichy*. In the *Radicaux*’s opinion, the continuation of the politics of silence have only contributed to entertain unfounded suspicions and reinforced the city’s stigmatization. While it is probably true that some people continue to have doubts with regards to the city’s position and action during the war, talking about stigmatization appears nonetheless exaggerated.

In a recent survey conducted in the French city of Amiens, social psychologist, Valérie Haas reveals that more than sixty-two percent of the interviewees consider Vichy primarily in terms of spa treatments, spring water, and beauty products, whereas only twenty-seven percent of them first think about the war and collaboration when they hear the name of Vichy.<sup>1281</sup> This survey suggests that the conflation between town and regime is far from obvious in the minds of many French people. On top of that, one may assume that those thinking about the war and collaboration when hearing the name Vichy know the difference between the regime and the city. Although one should conduct a wider study to assess the degree of stigmatization, my own informal research, over several years, largely confirms Haas’ findings about Amiens. The fact that the brand *L’Oréal-Vichy* is sold in over fifty countries<sup>1282</sup> further suggests that the name ‘Vichy’ is still positively connoted. In this context, it seems fair to wonder whether the ‘Vichy problem’ may not be locally self-sustained by the mayor and his opponents, albeit probably unconsciously.

The ‘rue de Vichy’ controversy is interesting in this respect. In 1998 the Montpellier socialist mayor, George Frêche, decided to rename a street leading to the Languedoc-Roussillon’s *Conseil régional* “rue de Vichy” to denounce the alliance between Jacques Blanc, president of the

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<sup>1279</sup> François Dufay, “Vichy: cette ville qui veut oublier Pétain,” *Le Point* (January 31, 2003).

<sup>1280</sup> Christophe Pommeray’s municipal programme (March 2014).

<sup>1281</sup> Valérie Haas, “Mémoires, identités et représentations socio-spatiales d’une ville. Le cas de Vichy” (Ph.D. dissertation, EHESS, Laboratoire de Psychologie sociale, 1999), appendices, 157. The sample was composed exclusively of people born after the war.

<sup>1282</sup> Pascal Chambriard, *Aux Sources de Vichy Naissance et développement d’un bassin thermal (XIXe-XXe siècles)*. (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 1999), 173.

region and the *Front National*.<sup>1283</sup> Malhuret and other city councilors, who fiercely denounced Frêche's initiative, went to Montpellier, where they imposed their presence during a city council meeting. "Ni moi ni aucune des dizaines de personnes ayant écrit à M. Frêche n'avons reçu de réponse, j'estime que la coupe est pleine," Malhuret explained to the media.<sup>1284</sup> Montpellier's mayor, who refused Malhuret the right to speak during the city council meeting, reminded the *Vichyssois* that in dictionaries and encyclopedias 'Vichy' was defined not only as a city, but also as "le gouvernement de collaboration," and that, as such, he was free to use the word the way he wanted. Although Montpellier's mayor eventually agreed to add "1940-1944" on the street signs, Vichy's representatives, who had suggested that the street be renamed "rue de l'État français" or "rue du Maréchal Pétain,"<sup>1285</sup> were not satisfied and the meeting quickly degenerated. Malhuret and his team were forced to leave.<sup>1286</sup> Given Frêche's strong personality,<sup>1287</sup> Malhuret probably expected the meeting to get out of hand and as such to receive wide media coverage. It is therefore legitimate to wonder whether this action was a communication coup or motivated by real concerns regarding the misuse of the term 'Vichy'.

The same question can be asked about the Malhuret's opponent, Christophe Pommeray, who, in 2013, sent 24,774 *pastilles de Vichy* to Yann Barthès, the presentator of the satirical television show *Le petit journal*, one of the most popular shows in France. A few weeks earlier, reporting on a demonstration by ultra conservative Catholics, Barthès had talked of "une manif qui sent bon la pastille de Vichy !" In his present to Barthès, Pommeray included a letter stating that "Vichy, c'est une ville, qui n'a ni appelé, ni soutenu, moins ou davantage, qu'aucune autre en France, le gouvernement de rencontre qui s'est installé dans ses murs en juin 1940."<sup>1288</sup> By always insisting on the fact that Vichy is not a regime or an insult but a city (and a brand), local leaders have likely contributed to entertain the confusion (if any) in the minds of French people, whereas their avowed objective has been the exact opposite. This observation not only raises questions about the strategy adopted, but it also forces one to wonder the extent to which the so-called linguistic problem might have become a communicative tool aiming to give visibility to the city.

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<sup>1283</sup> "Rue Vichy à Montpellier," *Libération* (June 17, 1998).

<sup>1284</sup> Cited in "Claude Malhuret dénonce l'insulte à sa ville de Vichy," *Libération* (June 26, 1998).

<sup>1285</sup> "Vichy veut laver l'insulte de Montpellier," *Le Parisien* (June 26, 1998).

<sup>1286</sup> INA. Television news. Chaîne 2 (June 27, 1998); INA. Soir 3 (June 29, 1998).

<sup>1287</sup> "Georges Frêche, un habitué des dérapages," *Le Monde* (January 28, 2010).

<sup>1288</sup> Extract from Pommeray's explanatory letter.

Finally, it is likely that Malhuret's decision to continue the de facto politics of silence have also, to a certain extent at least, been determined by his fears of losing the most conservative fringe of his electorate. The petainist memory has practically disappeared from the local public sphere since the end of the 1970s. The memory of Algeria has made way: the *pièdes noirs* have remade their lives. As a consequence, Pétain has been less talked about. This, however, does not mean that the population on the side of the conservative right, which revealed itself during the Algerian war, disappeared nonetheless. In this context, Malhuret's politics of silence may well be an electoral strategy aiming to not alienate this sector of the population, discrete but clearly present. While in 2014, Malhuret won the elections from the first round (54,5 percent), in previous years, he did not, making the votes from the extreme right particularly important for him – in 2001, for example, Malhuret obtained thirty-four percent of the first round votes while the *Front National* candidate garnered twenty-three percent.

## 2. The resisters' response to the national obsession with the Vichy regime

Like the *Radicaux* politicians, local resisters have been quite aggressive in criticizing the attitude of the municipality with regard to the war memorialization in Vichy. The city's failure to address this issue, they have argued, has seriously damaged the local memory of the resistance: “même les actes de résistance sont escamotés,” Jean Marielle, a former resister in the Veauce maquis (about forty kilometers from Vichy), deplored.<sup>1289</sup> In 2004, during the ceremony for the liberation of Vichy, with only a few people in attendance, some of the attendees were overcome by anger. Not only was the mayor not present, but there was no official speech, only a wreath. Alexander Kaczerginski, co president of Vichy section of the ANACR expressed his frustration and his feeling of isolation on television:

La ville de Vichy ne fait rien. Aujourd'hui on a fait notre petite cérémonie de merde. On était là, quatre pelés et trois tondus ! À Moulin, il va y avoir une cérémonie formidable. Mais Vichy a honte de son passé... C'est pas de l'histoire ancienne... Aujourd'hui avec les extrémismes, les négationnismes... Aujourd'hui qui est prêt à résister? Pas beaucoup. N'oubliez pas.<sup>1290</sup>

Despite the city's disinterest, the local associations of resisters have always striven to sustain the memory of the Resistance in Vichy. The resisters' memorial strategies changed

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<sup>1289</sup> “Vichy ne veut plus d'Histoire,” *L'Express* (October 30, 2008).

<sup>1290</sup> INA. Television news. France 2 (August 26, 2004).

throughout the postwar period depending on who chaired these associations, who the mayor was, and the national narrative's status. In the immediate postwar period, many individual resisters were commemorated in an attempt to construct a heroic memory of the city (see Chapter 5). In the 1960s, the resisters' fight was mostly framed in response to the emergence of a strong pro-Pétain memory in town (see Chapter 8).

Since the 1980s, Pétain has been mostly absent from the resisters' discourse and only a handful of resisters were commemorated. On July 7, 1983, a plaque honouring Reverend Dillard, who took refuge in Vichy in 1940 and who was known for his speeches that went against the ideals advocated by the government, was affixed on the house where he lived in Vichy. His name was also engraved on the *monument aux morts*, as well as on the stele of the *Réseaux France Combattante* at the cemetery.<sup>1291</sup> On November 16, 1988, a street was renamed in honor of Henri and Andrée Pequet, who had both resisted within the *Alliance* network.<sup>1292</sup> In 1994, a square was renamed after Roger Kespy, whom we mentioned several times previously.<sup>1293</sup>

In the 1980s, the energy of the resisters was no longer turned to the heroization of local resisters, but, instead, toward the perpetuation of the memory of the July 10, 1940 vote. After leaving a mark on the local memorial landscape in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the ceremonies honouring the eighty parliamentarians who had voted 'no' on July 10 ceased to attract the *Vichyssois* (as well as the national officials). A new breath was given to the event in the late 1980s. In 1987, there were no more than four parliamentarians left, of which only two attended the ceremony. Former resister Jean Marielle decided that it was necessary to act in order for the memory of the eighty parliamentarians to not fade. The ANACR, of which he was a member and of which Vincent Badie, the youngest of the eighty parliamentarians, was co-president, asked the municipality of Vichy that a commemorative plaque be placed on the Opera, where the vote had

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<sup>1291</sup> Frasnetti, "La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours," 31-32

Hostile to the STO, he left Vichy in 1943, disguised as an electrician, to continue his mission alongside the French workers in Germany, so that "les doctrines nazies ne s'incrument pas dans [leur] esprit." After he was denounced, he was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Dachau, where he died. "Un oubli à réparer," *La Montagne* (April 20, 1983); "Un juste d'entre les justes : Le Révérend Père Dillard," *La Montagne* (April 24, 1983)

<sup>1292</sup> "Henri Pequet réussit, en 1911, aux Indes, la première poste aérienne du monde," *La Montagne* (October 16, 1988).

The Pequets were arrested by Geissler in April 1943. While Henri was liberated at the end of the summer, Andrée was deported to Ravensbrück. Both of them survived.

Henri Pequet is mostly known for being the first aviator to have officially transported mail by plane on February 18, 1911. In 1934, Henri became a member of Vichy's Aéro-Club. After the war, he resumed his activity at Vichy's aerodrome.

<sup>1293</sup> "Un square porte le nom de Roger Kespy," *La Montagne* (June 8, 1994); "Inauguration du square Kespy," *La gazette des Champs Capelet* 19 (August 1994).

taken place. That request brings to mind the one formulated by Paul-Boncour in 1947, but which had had no follow up.<sup>1294</sup> Marielle's request was approved and a plaque honoring the eighty parliamentarians was inaugurated on July 10, 1988, in the presence of the last four living parliamentarians,<sup>1295</sup> as well as Jean Marielle, Jean Michel Belorgey (a socialist deputy from Vichy), Jean Cluzel (a senator from Moulins), and Vichy's mayor, Jacques Lacarin.

The inauguration of the plaque was followed by the creation of a *Comité en l'honneur des quatre-vingts parlementaires ayant refusé les pleins pouvoirs constituant à Pétain et des parlementaires du Massilia*, the objective of which was to pay tribute to the parliamentarians and to encourage the youth to draw inspiration from this "exemple de (...) citoyenneté républicaine."<sup>1296</sup> The committee was (is) composed of about a hundred members, including parliamentarians, former resisters from all around France, as well as several Vichy municipal counsellors, amongst which were the *radicaux* Pommeray and Charasse.<sup>1297</sup> Jean Marielle took on the role of president. The bureau was (is) composed of six ex-officio members and of fifteen members renewed annually.<sup>1298</sup>

The Committee's initiatives have not only been memorial, they have also been historical. Since the 1990s, through different publications, its members have tried to provide historical background to the vote, about which there are still many popular misconceptions.<sup>1299</sup> In 1992, Jean Marielle published a small book in collaboration with French historian Jean Sagnes. The *Conseil général de l'Allier*, Vichy's municipality, and the *Éducation nationale*, supported the initiative and 40,000 copies were published.<sup>1300</sup> The most active members of the association<sup>1301</sup> also designed leaflets and brochures for history teachers to help them educate their students about the vote and make them reflect on concepts such as 'republic' and 'democracy'.<sup>1302</sup> On July 10,

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<sup>1294</sup> Frasnetti, "La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours," 6-7.

<sup>1295</sup> Vincent Badie, Emile Fouchard, Maurice Montel and Philippe Serre.

<sup>1296</sup> "Jean Marielle président du Comité des 'Quatre-vingts'," *La Montagne* (July 7, 2001).

<sup>1297</sup> "Le comité des 80 pour la vérité historique," *La Montagne* (April 17, 2003).

<sup>1298</sup> <http://www.80-vichy.fr/les-80/page/le-comite-6?PHPSESSID=a7575b089e69b1d5e5ea47c605f86c99>

(Accessed August 3, 2015)

<sup>1299</sup> One of the most common misconceptions is that the vote gave Pétain's full powers, whereas it 'only' granted him power to change de constitution.

<sup>1300</sup> Frasnetti, *La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours*, 9 & 12.

<sup>1301</sup> Most members only have a representational role.

<sup>1302</sup> "Le 10 juillet 1940 en livret," *La Montagne* (March 13, 1992); "Jean Marielle président du Comité des 'Quatre-vingts'," *La Montagne* (July 7, 2001).

Since 2012, the committee has committed to support a graduate student's research about the vote (or about Vichy during the war) through a 10,000-euro fellowship. For lack of good applications, however, by 2016, they had only awarded one fellowship.



1996, a public preview of the historical film *L'honneur des 80*<sup>1303</sup> was organized in Vichy's Opera House, in the presence of Vichy's mayor, the Allier *préfet* and Hamlaoui Mekachera), *secrétaire d'État aux Anciens combattants*.<sup>1304</sup>

The words carved in the commemorative plaque, however, betray the historical cause the committee had set itself to serve. The plaque reads: *Dans cette salle, le 10 juillet 1940, 80 parlementaires ont par leur vote affirmé leur attachement à la République, leur amour de la liberté et leur foi dans la victoire. Ainsi s'acheva la III<sup>e</sup> République*. These two sentences, however, reveal nothing about the historical circumstances of the vote. The reference to the “victory,” whereas this vote emerged out of France's defeat to Germany, and the sole mention of the eighty ‘nos’ (out of 649 votes) are particularly disturbing. It also silences the fact that not all the eighty parliamentarians later joined the Resistance. According to a journalist from *Le Monde* newspaper, this plaque is “la plus choquante et incompréhensible pour une personne non avertie.”<sup>1305</sup> The words are “un raccourci aussi ahurissant qu’obscur,” Eric Conan wrote in “Vichy, malade de Vichy.”<sup>1306</sup>

Not only does this plaque leave visitors without basic information about who voted and what they voted in favor or against, but it also overlooks the event's complexity. While to a certain extent, this vote was a vote of circumstances (the trauma brought about by the defeat and the fear of Germany led many parliamentarians to put their trust in Pétain, considered the man of Providence), it was also a vote of ideological support; first because Laval had not hidden his intention to work along with the Reich, and second because a great part of the political staff subscribed to the objectives of the *État français*, be it with regard to anticommunism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, corporatism, or with regard to family policy, or the revision of the institutions. These themes circulated during the 1930s, and the State reform, to cite but one example, was vindicated by a large part of the society and its elites.<sup>1307</sup> Furthermore, while this

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<sup>1303</sup> Written by Pierre Miquel, produced by Robert Mugnerot, in collaboration with Gaumont Télévision and La cinquième.

<sup>1304</sup> “Un film en hommage aux 80,” *La Montagne* (July 2, 1996); “En l'honneur des 80,” *La Montagne* (July 12, 1996).

<sup>1305</sup> “Les Fantômes de Vichy,” *Le Monde* (June 16, 1992).

<sup>1306</sup> Eric Conan, “Vichy, malade de Vichy,” *L'Express* (1992), 37.

<sup>1307</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, “Le vote du 10 juillet 1940,” (paper presented at Les Colloques du Sénat - Les troubles de la mémoire française (1940-1962), Paris, December 10, 2010). The conference proceedings were published on line:

[http://www.senat.fr/colloques/actes\\_troubles\\_de\\_la\\_memoire\\_francaise/actes\\_troubles\\_de\\_la\\_memoire\\_francaise\\_mono.html#toc10](http://www.senat.fr/colloques/actes_troubles_de_la_memoire_francaise/actes_troubles_de_la_memoire_francaise_mono.html#toc10) (Accessed August 5, 2016).

vote was political by nature, Pierre Laborie has shown how it could not be properly understood in a solely political context:

Si l'adhésion massive qui entraîne la liquidation de la République relève bien du politique, elle est pourtant en partie étrangère au monde des idées politiques. Elle est de l'ordre de l'imaginaire, elle renvoie directement à l'univers des symboles et de l'irrationalité, avec toutes les équivoques qui s'y rattachent. L'imaginaire maréchaliste est un aboutissement et un sommet. (...) Dès les premiers jours et de manière significative, il porte les empreintes de quelques uns des symptômes majeurs qui influencent la sensibilité collective et vont la marquer profondément tout au long des années noires : la peur des vertiges du vide ; des attentes confuses fortement imprégnées d'affectivité et, parmi elles, la recherche mythique de l'unité perdue : l'ambivalence des images enfin, et son jeu inévitable des temporisations pusillanimes. La mise en évidence de leurs interférences nous éclaire sur les mécanismes mentaux du ralliement.<sup>1308</sup>

The plaque reveals nothing of this complexity. Blinded by their desire to turn Vichy into a site of resistance, the resisters ignored their own warnings with regard to historical shortcuts.

The phrasing of the plaque is particularly telling of the influence of the resistancialist myth on Vichy's resisters. The term 'résistancialisme' was framed by Henry Rousso in the 1980s to account for the De Gaulle's creation of consensual memory of the war, in which the Resistance was presented as the embodiment of the "vraie France". This myth, Rousso writes,

a cherché primo la marginalisation de ce que fut le régime de Vichy et la minoration systématique de son emprise sur la société française, y compris dans ses aspects les plus négatifs; secundo, la construction d'un objet de mémoire, la 'Résistance', dépassant de très loin la somme algébrique des minorités agissantes que furent les résistants, objet qui se célèbre et s'incarne dans des lieux et surtout au sein de groupes idéologiques, tels les gaullistes et les communistes; tertio, l'assimilation de cette 'Résistance' à l'ensemble de la nation, caractéristique notamment du résistancialisme gaullien.<sup>1309</sup>

The absence of any information about the birth of the Vichy regime on the plaque reveals the resisters' desire to downplay the wide support Pétain initially received (in Vichy and elsewhere in France). In addition, the fact that only the deputies who voted 'no' are mentioned, without any

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<sup>1308</sup> Pierre Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990), 229.

<sup>1309</sup> Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 19; Henry Rousso, *Face au passé : Essais sur la mémoire contemporaine* (Paris: Belin, 2016), 156-157.

reference to the total number of deputies who took part in the vote, gives the false impression that eighty was a big figure and that the ‘Resistance’ was more widespread than it actually was.

Many *Vichyssois* and *non-Vichyssois* alike tend to observe the local resistance through the prism of this vote.<sup>1310</sup> This, however, is both anachronistic and irrelevant, as this vote has nothing to do with the resistance that later unfolded in the city. Furthermore, none of the deputies who voted ‘no’ were from Vichy (the Vichy deputy— Lucien Lamoureux – voted ‘yes’). If anything, making the vote the cornerstone of the local narrative on the Resistance has significantly undermined the resisters and local leaders’ argument for the need to differentiate the city from the regime.



Figure 19. The plaque on the Opera’s main entrance.<sup>1311</sup>

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<sup>1310</sup> During the commemoration of July 10, 1991, for example, Kofi Yamgnane, *secrétaire d’état aux affaires sociales et à l’intégration*, stated: “c’est à Vichy, dans cette ville depuis lors si injustement maltraitée dans notre inconscient collectif, que s’est levé un des premiers actes de la résistance française.” The commemoration of 2003 offers another interesting example of the irrelevant link between the vote and the local experience of the war. When asked “Comprenez vous que les Vichyssois acceptent mal que le nom de leur ville soit régulièrement associé à ce régime ?,” Hamlaoui Mekachera, *secrétaire d’état aux anciens combattants*, answered: “au contraire, ils devraient être fiers... Regardez ces 80 parlementaires qui ont voté contre le régime de Vichy.” “Vote des quatre-vingts,” *La Montagne* (July 10, 2003).

<sup>1311</sup> Photograph by author.

As suggested by the above photograph, the plaque strikes as very tiny compared to the width of the Opera. Its small size is telling of the local malaise surrounding the memory of the war in Vichy and the municipality's desire to not inscribe the memory of the war too visibly in the city's urban landscape. This observation, however, should not make one overlook the fact that the presence of a commemorative plaque reminiscent of the war on Vichy's most important cultural landmark is significant; it is evidence that the city was not completely insensitive to the narrative the resisters were trying to frame. A few days after the plaque was stolen in August 1992, the municipality filed complaints in court and had a new one erected.<sup>1312</sup> Despite the overall disinterest of the municipality for the memory of the Resistance, it has not opposed the resisters initiative to memorialize the vote of July 10, because the resistancialist myth complements and enhances the victimhood myth. Furthermore, the resistancialist myth gives agency back to the *Vichyssois*, whose victimhood status often makes them appear like passive spectators of history (including their own). Regaining agency is especially important for Vichy, as the city has striven to get some local pride back; this, however, is impossible to achieve when one only identifies as a victim.

As had been the case in the postwar period, the resisters, and to a lesser extent the municipal council, have hoped for their recent initiatives to get resonance outside of Vichy. Since the late 1980s, every year a government representative has been invited to preside over the July 10 ceremony. In 1989, it was Prime Minister Michel Rocard who officiated at the ceremony. The following year, it was Jean Popperen, the minister in charge of the relations with parliament; in 1991, the *Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires sociales et à l'Intégration*, Kofi Yamgnagne; in 1992, the Minister for the Budget, Michel Charasse.<sup>1313</sup> For some years now, the ceremonies have regularly been presided over by the president of the Senate or that of the National Assembly. But despite the regular presence of a government representative, the memory of the vote has been of little interest to people and media outside of Vichy. There are several reasons for this. In the post-1970 period, the resistancialist myth was significantly damaged by the decline of Gaullism and communism, the release of cinematographic works that offered a new reading grid of the

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<sup>1312</sup> Lacking proof, it is impossible to know the culprit's motives or to determine if this act was committed by a *Vichyssois* or by someone from outside. "On a volé la plaque des 'quatre-vingts'," *La Montagne* (August 28, 1992); "Acte de vandalisme," *La Montagne* (August 25, 1992).

<sup>1313</sup> Frasnetti, "La mémoire de la ville de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours," 9 & 11.

Occupation,<sup>1314</sup> the discourse of the 1968-generation who strove to deconstruct their parents' myths, including those related to the Second World War, and the publication of groundbreaking studies (most notably by Robert Paxton), which put light on Vichy's agency in the implementation of its discriminatory policies. In the mid 1990s the resistancialist myth was further compromised by the controversies surrounding the Aubrac couple.<sup>1315</sup> The resistancialist myth has now been outdated for more than forty years; it is therefore unsurprising that Vichy's narrative has been unattractive to French people outside of Vichy.

Another reason for the widespread disinterest in the vote of July 10 lies in the polysemy of the event, which can be considered both a day of shame, marked by the defeat of the Republic, and a day of glory, when eighty parliamentarians voiced their opposition against the anti-democratic measures proposed by Laval. This ambivalence has made the event difficult to incorporate within the French collective memory of the war. Olivier Wieviorka sums up the problem:

Faut-il considérer le 10 juillet 1940 comme un jour de gloire, en raison de l'opposition déployée par les 80 ? Cette fonction semble plutôt assumée par le 18 juin 1940 et le célèbre Appel que Charles de Gaulle lança de Londres. Faut-il plutôt l'assimiler à un jour de honte ? La signature de l'armistice dans le wagon du maréchal Foch, le 22 juin, remplit plus sûrement cet office. Le 10 juillet 1940 bénéficie par conséquent d'une place tout à la fois confuse et ambiguë dans la mémoire collective.<sup>1316</sup>

The complexity of the vote facilitated the emergence of diverse memories, which blocked the creation of a consensual memory of the event. The fact that the Republic was buried under relative indifference, without great speeches or celebration, has further complicated its memorialization.<sup>1317</sup>

Even within the city, the interest has been limited. In 2002, the shortfall of youth attending and participating in the ceremony was deplored.<sup>1318</sup> About the myth of the Resistance, Henry Rousso writes that

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<sup>1314</sup> Such as Marcel Ophüls' *Le chagrin et la pitié* (1971) and Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974)

<sup>1315</sup> On the Aubrac affair, see: Susan Suleiman, "History, Heroism, and Narrative Desire: The 'Aubrac Affair' and National Memory of the French Resistance," *South Central Review* 21:1 (2004), 54-81; Henry Rousso, "Prolongements II: 1996-2013," in *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, eds., Eric Conan and Henry Rousso (Paris: Fayard, 2013), 311-340.

<sup>1316</sup> Wieviorka, "Le vote du 10 juillet 1940."

<sup>1317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1318</sup> "Hommage au non des 'quatre-vingts'," *La Montagne* (July 12, 2002).



Dans ce récit à vocation unitaire, l'héroïsme de cette minorité [de résistants] devait rejaillir sur l'ensemble de la nation, quels qu'aient été les comportements réels des uns et des autres. C'est le sens même d'un mythe politique, qui ne consiste pas à dire le vrai ou le faux de l'histoire mais à offrir une représentation à laquelle une majorité pourra s'identifier et qu'elle pourra s'approprier.<sup>1319</sup>

As we saw in earlier chapters, Vichy's population never identified with the myth that the local resisters proposed to them. Their latest initiatives have not changed the situation. Quite the opposite, as today's narrative of the resistance is more abstract and detached from the actual experience of local resisters than ever before, making any identification impossible.

### 3. Remembering the Jewish experience of the war in Vichy

No events commemorating the Holocaust were organized in Vichy prior to the establishment of official Holocaust commemorations in France, or to such a limited extent that they left no traces either in the press, the municipal archives or people's memory. Now, small-scale ceremonies are organized every January 27, for the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and on the last Sunday of April, for the *Journée nationale du souvenir de la déportation*.<sup>1320</sup> Although the purpose of this commemorative day was to pay tribute to all the deportees indiscriminately, in many cities and villages, including in Vichy, greater focus has been put on Jewish victims. Yet, so few *Vichyssois* have attended these ceremonies or those on January 27 that these events have been mostly insignificant in the city's memorial landscape. Although the local Jewish community wishes that these commemorations were more engaging and inspiring,<sup>1321</sup> nothing concrete has been done to make them more interesting and relevant to the audience. Similarly the municipality has expressed no interest whatsoever in establishing a strong memory of the Holocaust in town.

Following the institution of a national day to the memory of the victims of racist and anti-Semitic persecutions committed under the Vichy regime in February 1993, plaques in honor of

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<sup>1319</sup> Rousso, *Face au passé*, 159.

<sup>1320</sup> At the beginning of the 1950s, the former deportees and the relatives of those dead in deportation had expressed the wish to see a national celebration, meant to preserve the memory of the deportation, officially registered on the calendar. The April 14, 1954 law, unanimously adopted by Parliament, named the last Sunday of April "Journée nationale du Souvenir des victimes et héros de la déportation." This day was chosen, mostly because many camps were liberated at the end of April 1945.

<sup>1321</sup> Samuel Mechoulam, interview by author (February 27, 2014).



the victims were supposed to be set up in every department.<sup>1322</sup> A plaque in honor of the Jews who died in deportation after having been arrested in Vichy was erected in the synagogue in 1994. By the early 1990s, however, Vichy and the Allier department had conducted little research on the Jews who had been arrested in the Allier and deported to camps, or those who had perished in local prisons, and the hastily designed 1994 plaque was soon found to be incomplete. In 2010, a new plaque was erected, following the intensive research by François Demaegdt, the son of a local (non-Jewish) deportee.<sup>1323</sup>

Although rarely mentioned in the studies on the formation and evolution of Holocaust memory in France, in the early 1990s the city of Vichy was one of the key sites in Serge Klarsfeld's fight to force the government to acknowledge France's responsibility in the deportation of Jews from France. In 1992, for the fiftieth anniversary of the Vel' d'Hiv roundup, Klarsfeld's association *Fils et Filles de Déportés Juifs de France* (FFDJP), went to Vichy for a silent ceremony in front of the *hôtel du Parc*. They took advantage of this visit to erect a temporary plaque in the hall of the hotel, highlighting the responsibility of the Vichy regime in the deportation of more than 6,500 foreign Jews from the unoccupied zone during the August 26 roundup. Klarsfeld underlined the symbolic value of the site: "Nous sommes ici à Vichy, car l'ordre est parti d'ici. Nous voulons que nos concitoyens le sachent et nous ne voulons pas qu'ils l'oublient."<sup>1324</sup> By erecting this plaque, "qui aurait dû être posée par un gouvernement français," without first asking permission to state and local authorities, Klarsfeld wanted to see if "des mains officielles" would dare remove it.<sup>1325</sup>

Nobody in Vichy dared remove it, although presenting the city of Vichy as the place where the nightmare was born undoubtedly brought unwanted attention. Malhuret, who was criticized for his poor management of the war memory in Vichy, was not in a position to oppose Klarsfeld. Removing the plaque risked raising suspicion about his own position on the history of the war in France and the place of the Holocaust in the latter. Furthermore, to a certain extent, Klarsfeld's initiative supported the point of Vichy's mayor that France needed to take this burden off the city's shoulders by assuming responsibility for what had happened between 1940 and 1945.

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<sup>1322</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 125-126.

<sup>1323</sup> "Au nom des déportés juifs," *La Montagne* (July 19, 2010).

<sup>1324</sup> Klarsfeld's speech in Vichy (August 26, 1992). Copy of the speech given by Serge Klarsfeld.

<sup>1325</sup> "6500 juifs vers nuit et brouillard," *La Montagne* (August 27, 1992).

On 25 April 1993, the FFDJF members came back to Vichy, where a permanent commemorative plaque was unveiled, replacing the temporary one affixed the previous year.<sup>1326</sup>

Le 26 août 1942,  
le gouvernement de l'État Français,  
installé dans cet immeuble à Vichy,  
a déclenché sur tout le territoire de la zone libre  
une gigantesque rafle de Juifs étrangers.  
Plus de 6500 d'entre eux,  
dont des centaines d'enfants,  
ont été arrêtés ce jour là  
et livrés aux Nazis en zone occupée,  
d'où ils ont été aussitôt déportés sans retour  
vers le camp d'extermination d'Auschwitz.  
Au total ce fut le sort tragique  
de plus de 10,000 Juifs étrangers  
vivant en zone libre.  
Dans leur ensemble la population française  
et les clergés catholique et protestant  
se sont immédiatement opposés à ces mesures  
qui violaient les traditions et l'honneur de la France.  
Qu'ils en soient remerciés.  
N'oublions jamais.

Echoing the speech he had made in 1992, Klarsfeld underlined how “aberrant” it was that more than half a century after the establishment of Pétain’s government in the *hôtel du Parc*, “pas une seule plaque ne le rappelait.” This memorial lacuna, he added, “exprimait une incapacité à affronter et à juger moralement un passé récent, tragique et controversé.”<sup>1327</sup> As has often been the case with Klarsfeld’s initiatives, the commemorative ceremony in Vichy was widely documented in the media, giving Vichy a double-edged visibility.<sup>1328</sup> While this event provided the city with an opportunity to join an important national memorial fight and to work through its own difficult legacy, neither the Jewish community nor the municipality used this momentum to establish a strong Holocaust memory in Vichy or to recover the memory of the thousands of Jewish refugees who passed through the city.

The decision not to continue Klarsfeld’s work in Vichy was probably received favorably by many *Vichyssois*, especially those living in or close to the *hôtel du Parc*, many of whom were fiercely opposed to the inscription of this memory in their neighborhood, let alone on their own

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<sup>1326</sup> *Bulletin de liaison de l'Association des Fils et Filles de Déportés Juifs de France* N41, April 1993.

<sup>1327</sup> Klarsfeld’s speech in Vichy (April 25, 1993). Copy of the speech given by Serge Klarsfeld.

<sup>1328</sup> “6500 juifs vers nuit et brouillard,” *La Montagne* (August 27, 1992).

building: “C'est une atteinte à la propriété privée,” a neighbor said, “c'est comme les gens de l'Association pour la Défense de la Mémoire du Marché Pétain, quand ils [veulent] visiter [l'hôtel].”<sup>1329</sup> Concerns regarding the memorialization of living spaces had also been raised in Drancy's *Cité de la Muette*. “Être à la fois un lieu de mémoire de la Shoah et un lieu voué à l'habitat social (...), tel est le défi qui se pose à la cité de la Muette, à Drancy,” Nicolas Weill summarizes in an article published in *Le Monde* in 2012.<sup>1330</sup> Under the impetus of Jean-Christophe Lagarde, Drancy's mayor since 2001,<sup>1331</sup> and supported by the *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*, which funded the entire project, the site has successfully become a *lieu de mémoire* (museum and documentation center), while remaining a *lieu de vie*.<sup>1332</sup> In Vichy, both a willingness to change the memorial status quo and money appear to be missing.

Klarsfeld's plaque was vandalized several times. Some individuals first tried to blow it up and then it was smeared with all kinds of colors. In 2000, it was placed on a stele across the street. Shortly after, it was again vandalized: the inscription parts about the responsibility of the Vichy government had been chiselled out.<sup>1333</sup> This act was carried out day by day fifty-six years after the execution of Laval (October 15, 1945). This was probably not a coincidence, yet we cannot be sure given the inconclusive investigation. Were those vandalism acts carried out by *Vichyssois*? Once again, it is impossible to say. However, those acts clearly bear witness to the discomfort in the face of the memory of the Holocaust that exists in the city. Although the municipality, the Jewish community, the other religious communities, as well as the majority of the population expressed “sadness over such vandalism,”<sup>1334</sup> little was done (beside cleaning the

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<sup>1329</sup> INA. Television news. France 2 (August 26, 1992).

<sup>1330</sup> Nicolas Weill, “Drancy, Mémoires à Vif,” *Le Monde* (September 13, 2012): [http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2012/09/13/drancy-memoires-a-vif\\_1759966\\_3246.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2012/09/13/drancy-memoires-a-vif_1759966_3246.html) (Accessed May 14, 2015)

<sup>1331</sup> Already in the 1970s, the then Communist mayor, Maurice Nilès, had been involved in the association of Jewish Deportees' initiative for the erection of a commemorative monument in the *Cité des Muettes*. The action was eventually spearheaded by both Nilès and the president of the association, Henry Bulawko. Caroline Wiedmer, *The Claims of memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 62.

<sup>1332</sup> Nicolas Weill, “Drancy, Mémoires à Vif,” *Le Monde* (September 13, 2012); Pascale Nivelles, “Drancy, la mémoire est dans l'escalier,” *Libération* (September 11, 2001): [http://next.liberation.fr/culture/2001/09/11/drancy-la-memoire-est-dans-l-escalier\\_376707](http://next.liberation.fr/culture/2001/09/11/drancy-la-memoire-est-dans-l-escalier_376707) (Accessed May 14, 2015). See also: Annette Wiewiorka and Michel Laffitte, *A l'intérieur du camp de Drancy* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2012).

<sup>1333</sup> Nathalie Combaret, “La mémoire de la période de l'occupation dans la ville de Vichy” (MA thesis, Université Clermont-Ferrand, 2003); “Vichy : cette ville qui veut oublier Pétain,” *Le Point* (January 31, 2003): <http://www.lepoint.fr/actualites-region/2007-01-19/vichy-cette-ville-qui-veut-oublier-petain/1556/0/52489> (Accessed February 4, 2014).

<sup>1334</sup> “Profanation de la stèle : les communautés religieuses unies,” *La Montagne* (October 18, 2001); “Des vandals profanent une stèle à la mémoire des Juifs déportés,” *La Montagne* (October 16, 2001).

plaque) to address this issue. The fact that the plaque stands on the pavement with no historical information is further telling of the city's malaise with regard to this memory as well as its desire to add as few urban markers about the war as possible.



Figure 20. Serge Klarsfeld's plaque in front of the *hôtel du Parc*.<sup>1335</sup>

The *hôtel Algeria*, former headquarters of the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives*, is another essential site in the local (as well as national) Holocaust memorial landscape. This site, however, is even more a *non lieu de mémoire* than the *hôtel du Parc* is (although some Jewish tourists from outside Vichy have expressed interest in the place). While he was in Vichy, Adam Nossiter, the author of *The Algeria Hotel*, already mentioned in earlier chapters, told Vichy's consulting architect that the Algeria Hotel had been the headquarters of the regime's anti-Jewish agency. "Ah, I didn't know," the man answered. In Nossiter's words, "the ignorance

<sup>1335</sup> Photograph by author.

was pervasive, extending even to those who had once worked there,” or who were supposed to know about the hotel’s history.<sup>1336</sup> British Journalist Paul Webster had the same type of experience:

À l’Office du Tourisme, la préposée à l’accueil accorde un minimum d’attention à nos questions sur les sites historiques dans le contexte 1940-1944 et nous tend un plan sommaire des différents lieux... Nous sommes particulièrement intéressés par l’ancien hôtel Algeria où des fonctionnaires élaborèrent la législation qui allait justifier la déportation de 75,000 juifs. Le plan s’avère inutile, ne concordant pas avec la réalité mais nous permet de tester la réaction des passants interrogés sur ce patrimoine sensible. La plupart des réponses se limitent à un ‘connais pas’.<sup>1337</sup>

The locals’ lack of interest, the Jewish community’s lack of initiative, and the municipality’s refusal to be involved in the memorialization of the war has ensured that the current status quo around the non-memorialization of the Holocaust and the Jewish experience of the war more broadly to remain unchallenged.

In 2010, three Gentiles (Jean-Pierre Toquant and Henri and Henriette Julien) were awarded the medal of the Righteous among the Nation posthumously. The ceremony took place in Vichy, in the presence of Vichy’s mayor, Michel Harel, *Ministre aux affaires administratives près l’Ambassade d’Israël*, and Annie Karo, Yad Vashem’s representative. Yad Vashem titled the article reporting on the ceremony “Tout un symbole : Trois justes à Vichy” et parle d’une “cérémonie exceptionnelle en ces lieux marqués par l’histoire de l’Etat dit Français.”<sup>1338</sup> In fact, although the ceremony moved those directly concerned by both stories,<sup>1339</sup> it went largely unnoticed in Vichy, the tenuous link between the honoured *Justes* and the city not allowing for any identification with the population – the Jewish family rescued by Toquant was indeed from Vichy, yet neither Toquant, nor the Juliens were from Vichy or residing in Vichy during the war.

Although Vichy lacks any widespread memory of the Holocaust, some stories about Jews in Vichy during the war have nonetheless quietly circulated amongst local residents. These tales are especially present amongst older generations, who possess direct memories of the wartime

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<sup>1336</sup> Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel. France, Memory and the Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001), 182.

<sup>1337</sup> Paul Webster, “Mémoire fléchante,” in *Vichy toujours* (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 2004), 43.

<sup>1338</sup> <http://www.yadvashem-france.org/les-justes-parmi-les-nations/articles-et-documents/tout-un-symbole-trois-justes-vichy/> (Accessed November 18, 2015).

<sup>1339</sup> “Flore et Viviane parmi tant d’autres...,” *La Montagne* (February 17, 2010).



period. This underground memory, however, is significantly distorted. One favorite theme of local stories has been the help provided by *Vichyssois* to Jews. When, during his fieldwork, Nossiter told local residents about the difficulties faced by the thousands of Jewish refugees who had initially hoped to be safe in Vichy, many “immediately shot back,” and underlined that “Jews were sheltered in Vichy, you know!”<sup>1340</sup> “There were Jews who were saved... Are you going to talk about the ones who were saved?,” some asked. At a party, a *Vichyssois* came up to him and asked, “And what point are you adopting? You know, at my school we had Jews, and believe me, nobody told the Germans about it.” Another woman shared with him the story of “the prostrate Jew on their doorstep one day during the war.” Upon seeing the yellow star, this woman explained, her father decided to give him shelter.<sup>1341</sup> The story of the ‘saved Jews’ “often came at the beginning of conversations. It was, understandably, the preferred touchstone for remembering the Jews,” Nossiter recalls.<sup>1342</sup>

These stories of help and heroism were given more visibility and legitimacy, when, in 2010, during his visit to Vichy for the day of the deportation, Gilles Bernheim, France’s great rabbi, paid tribute to the former tenants of the apartment number 5 in the impasse Mombrun, where his mother in law was hidden during the war along with fifteen members of her family, thus confirming the goodwill and the goodness of some locals. “C’est un moment très émouvant pour moi. La mère de mon épouse doit sa vie, et la famille qu’elle a pu constituer après la guerre, pour mon plus grand bonheur, au fait qu’elle a été cachée ici pendant la guerre,” he declared.<sup>1343</sup> This event was widely covered by the local media (press and television).

The survival of local Jews is another favorite theme of Vichy’s wartime stories. The most famous of these stories is that of Maurice Benhamou. As the eldest person in Vichy (106 years old when he passed away in 1999), Benhamou became a local celebrity. Born in Algeria in 1893, Benhamou arrived in Vichy in 1930, where he opened a pharmacy. The outbreak of the war made no significant change in Benhamou’s life. Conveniently located at the corner of Wilson and Burnol streets, in the neighborhood where the government had established its headquarters, his pharmacy attracted many civil servants, including prominent members of the government, such

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<sup>1340</sup> Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 200-201.

<sup>1341</sup> Ibid., 193-194.

<sup>1342</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>1343</sup> Cited in many local press articles reporting on the event (April 25 and 26, 2010).



as the Vallats, Louis Darquier-de-Pellepoix, Madame Laval and Madame Pétain herself.<sup>1344</sup> After the Aryanization law, his pharmacy was given a provisional Aryan administrator, very much to his disliking. Benhamou complained to Xavier Vallat and, within twenty-four hours, had his administrator removed. Benhamou was arrested twice, by the Gestapo first, and then by the milice. Each time, however, he was liberated following a basic routine questioning.<sup>1345</sup> Mlle Lucet, Pétain's loyal secretary, recalls seeing Benhamou in her office on a regular basis; he liked to come pour "se montrer," she says.<sup>1346</sup> Benhamou, whose Jewishness was a secret to no one, did not live as a recluse, but was instead known to be social.

The argument that Jews were in relative security in Vichy is reinforced by the common belief that the synagogue had stayed open throughout the war.<sup>1347</sup> This belief, however, appears unfounded. Indeed, I have found a document showing that the synagogue's water consumption between 1942 and 1943 was zero. While one may argue that the zero water consumption in 1942 and 1943 does not prove that the synagogue was closed (water may have simply been cut down), it nonetheless indicates that the synagogue was not functioning properly. While the document does not say anything about it being close in 1942 and 1943, the leadership had been deported anyway (see Chapter 3), so it is very likely that it stopped being used quite early on. The document further reports that between April 1944 and the liberation of the city, in August 1944, the synagogue was looted by the milice and the Gestapo, whose members left open the taps, accounting for the almost 1000 cubic meters of water consumption for the year of 1944, while prior to the war the consumption was of less than 100 cubic meters per year.<sup>1348</sup> The argument that the synagogue remained opened until the end of the war is therefore largely inconsistent.

The extent to which the above-mentioned rescue stories are true is unknown. Although I have found evidence of the help provided by some local residents towards their Jewish neighbors in the testimonies of Jewish refugees recorded for the US Shoah Foundation between 1994 and 1999, none refer to the stories told to Nossiter. Similarly, little information is available on Benhamou, beyond the information provided by local historians, often only based on Benhamou's own testimonies. What is interesting though is that none of the stories circulating in

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<sup>1344</sup> Jean Débordes, *Vichy Capitale à l'heure allemande* (Paris: Godefroy de Bouillon, 1998), 249-250; Thierry Wirth, *Vichy capitale (1940-1944)* (Lyon: Les Trois Roses, 2015), 103.

<sup>1345</sup> Débordes, *Vichy Capitale à l'heure allemande*, 249-250.

<sup>1346</sup> Cited in Wirth, *Vichy Capitale*, 103.

<sup>1347</sup> This information is often reported in local scholarship. See for example: Débordes, *Vichy Capitale à l'heure allemande*, 235. Several of my interviewees also mentioned it.

<sup>1348</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from Vichy's Jewish community to Vichy's mayor (December 6, 1944).

Vichy about the local Jewish experience of the war refers to the special legislation applied in the substitute capital – from which thousands of Jewish refugees suffered. Similarly, very few stories feature memories of the 1942, 1943, and 1944 roundups, or of the frequent searches in the hotels and rented apartments, which had contributed to make Vichy one of the most unsafe place for Jews in the entire unoccupied zone (see Chapter 2). “Even some Jews were surprised when I mentioned that roundups had occurred in Vichy itself,” Nossiter underlines.<sup>1349</sup>

The image of Vichy as a safe place for Jews was first conveyed by a few local Jews for whom the proximity of the government proved indeed beneficial. Their own experience deformed their vision of the war, just like Robert Aron’s own experience in Vichy, where he maintained good relationships with powerful people,<sup>1350</sup> influenced how he later analyzed the Vichy regime. In the 1950s, his monumental *Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944* helped to popularize the argument according to which Pétain’s government had saved the French – including the French Jews – from a much worse evil.

#### 4. Understanding the absence of a ‘decent’ Jewish memory of the war in Vichy

Anti-Semitism can be one explanation for the absence of Holocaust memory. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, some anti-Semitic actions were reported in Vichy both before and during the war. Nossiter’s own experience in 1990s Vichy reveals that anti-Semitism did not disappear with the end of the war. “The Jews! But there’s too much talk of them! And they make such a fuss,” a local resident told him, while a “cultivated antiquarian of the war generation” exclaimed angrily that “they weren’t as hunted down as people say. I never saw the yellow star in the southern zone.”<sup>1351</sup> Jews in the Vichy zone were indeed not required to wear the yellow star. This, however, does not mean that they were not persecuted, as this person implies. That the ascendancy of a Jew to the local Rotary Club reportedly “created a stir” further evidences the existence of anti-Jewish feelings.<sup>1352</sup> So is the arrest, in 1995, of a man who wrote anti-Semitic slogans on the local synagogue.

It would be easy to take these examples of anti-Semitism as a justification for the refusal to memorialize the Holocaust, but anti-Semitism is not a distinguishing feature of Vichy. Anti

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<sup>1349</sup> Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 200.

<sup>1350</sup> On Aron’s experience in Vichy, see: Robert Aron, *Fragments d’une vie* (Paris: Plon, 1981).

<sup>1351</sup> Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 177-178.

<sup>1352</sup> Ibid.

Semitism exists everywhere, even in places where the Holocaust has been effectively memorialized. Anti-Semitism appears no more developed in Vichy than in most other French cities (although, according to Nossiter, in Vichy, there is little “reserve about expressing it”<sup>1353</sup>). As seen in Chapter 3, the city has a long tradition of tolerance towards religious minorities, especially Jews who constituted an important clientele for Vichy. In the late nineteenth century, a synagogue was built and municipal funds were offered to the local Jewish community to help provide accommodation for the supplementary rabbis during the spa season.<sup>1354</sup> More recently, local authorities have provided the city’s Jewish community with financial assistance for the opening of a community center: “Nous avons été très bien aidés par la commune, les conseils général et régional,” Hubert Peretz, president of the association Anne-Frank has stated.<sup>1355</sup> So, although the anti-Semitism of some *Vichyssois* may have facilitated the continuance of the actual memorial status quo, it fails to convincingly explain the absence of a Holocaust memory in Vichy. One must therefore look elsewhere.

In the immediate postwar period, the city of Vichy turned in on itself and chose to forget about the war. During that period, very few wartime memories were embraced by the public sphere, except those of the Resistance, which were locally acknowledged and celebrated. Holocaust-related memories were particularly silenced because they risked generating competition to the city’s innocence and victimhood myth. This appears to still be the case: the city’s victimhood myth, which had been remobilized from the 1980s, requires that no groups shift the focus away from the *Vichyssois*’ (real and exaggerated) suffering during (and after) the war by exhibiting their own ‘worse’ victimhood. From this perspective, stories of eviction, deportation, fear, suffering, and death are better kept silenced.

Although the long tradition of non-memorial intervention and the fear of jeopardizing the local myth of victimhood have been good reasons not to bring back Jewish memories to Vichy, these are not the only ones. The absence of a proper Holocaust memory in town has been further facilitated by the absence of visual cues. Most of the Holocaust related sites that have been memorialized in France are camps, that is, sites with visual remains that evoke specific Holocaust memories. With the number of first-hand witnesses diminishing every year, these sites have

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<sup>1353</sup> Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 177-178.

<sup>1354</sup> AM (Vichy). Letter from the departmental rabbi to Vichy’s mayor (January 28, 1889); AM (Vichy); Letter from the Jewish community to the Vichy’s mayor (August 31, 1892).

<sup>1355</sup> “Il n’existe qu’une synagogue pour l’ensemble des Juifs du département,” *La Montagne* (29 April 2015).

become the memory's main physical repositories. In Vichy, there is no physical locale for this memory to entrench itself within. Furthermore, most Holocaust sites in France and in Europe are primarily locations of victimhood. The camps, which have the power to "demonstrate the continental scale of what happened," top the list of Holocaust memorialized sites.<sup>1356</sup> In Vichy, the sites most associated with the persecution of Jews, the *hôtel du Parc* and the *hôtel Algeria*, are sites of power and decision, making them more difficult to memorialize.

Another explanation for the absence of a Holocaust memory in Vichy is to be sought in the shifts that occurred during the Algerian War. The image of Vichy as a protective place for Jews is a natural follow up to the development of the pro-Pétain memory, which gathered strength in Vichy in the 1960s. One argument often forwarded by Pétain's supporters has been that although Pétain was forced to deliver Jews to the Germans, he nonetheless strove to protect French Jews, therefore accounting for the relatively high rate of survival among the French Jewish population. In many of the stories about Jews circulating in Vichy, the positive role of the government in making Vichy a safe place for Jews is implied, if not explicitly stated. The story of Benhamou, who benefited from the help of the government, offers a good illustration of this.

The various stories of Jews reported in local scholarship tend to support the argument that the government helped Jews to survive. In *Vichy, capitale allemande*, for instance, local historian Jean Débordes tells the story of the Lewistky couple, of Romanian and Lithuanian origins, who had settled in Paris in 1916. After the defeat of 1940, they decided to settle in Vichy, where they bought a tailor shop. In September 1942, Darlan's wife, who was one of their clients, let them know that more roundups to arrest Jews were being organized and advised them to leave.<sup>1357</sup> Both survived the war.<sup>1358</sup> In *Les complexes de Vichy*, Georges Frélastre explains how the 'fortunate' relationships of a Jewish tailor probably saved him trouble. Rapaport was a Jewish tailor of Polish origins who excelled in dressing the ladies and had an excellent reputation among the wives of ministers and senior officials. One thing leading to another, he reportedly became the unofficial tailor of some of the most important women in Vichy and the lover of the wife of a high-ranking member of the CGQJ. Although he had been hired by a non-Jewish employer – a

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<sup>1356</sup> Martin Winstone, *The Holocaust sites of Europe: a Historical Guide* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 2.

<sup>1357</sup> Although in theory none of them should have been concerned by the upcoming roundups for they had been in France since 1916, the fact that they were in Vichy only since 1940 made them ideal preys under the legislation stating that only local Jews and Jews with a valid permit were allowed to live in Vichy (see Chapter 3).

<sup>1358</sup> Débordes, *Vichy capitale allemande*, 242-243.

friend of Frélastre's mother – his Polish origins made him more vulnerable to arrest and deportation. And yet, Rapoport continued to dress the wives of Vichy's powerful men throughout the war. It would not be surprising should he have benefited from the close relationship he entertained with Vichy's powerful women.<sup>1359</sup>

The above-mentioned stories have provided valuable material for local Petainists, who are seemingly always seeking further evidence of the Marshall's benevolence. In an interview published online, for example, Holocaust-denier Robert Faurisson talked about Benhamou:

Un juif en tant que tel était certes tenu par l'Etat pour un citoyen potentiellement dangereux. Il vivait en quelque sorte en liberté surveillée. Il pouvait avoir de bonnes raisons de se tenir sur ses gardes. Ses mouvements et ses droits étaient l'objet de sévères restrictions, mais il n'a pas manqué de juifs qui, pendant toute l'Occupation allemande, ont vaqué à leurs occupations au vu et au su de tous et en tenant même une activité commerciale ou artisanale. Toujours à Vichy, le pharmacien attitré du Maréchal Pétain et de son épouse était un juif du nom de Maurice Benhamou et la boucherie casher de la rue Bardiaux semble avoir fonctionné pendant toute la durée de l'Occupation.<sup>1360</sup>

It is true that some members of the Vichy government did help individual Jews. "Presque tous les dirigeants de Vichy firent, une fois ou l'autre, une intervention en faveur de certains Juifs," Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton write in their book *Vichy et les Juifs*.<sup>1361</sup> More generally, the government also asked that small privileged groups, such as the Jewish soldiers who fought during the 1939-1940 campaign, and who had been liberated from prisoners' camps and arrested again in 1942, be exempted.<sup>1362</sup> Recent scholarship has, however, demonstrated that (1) the project of Vichy had an anti-Semitic component at its core, (2) the anti-Jewish legislation implemented in 1940 and 1941 had been decided upon by Vichy, autonomously from the Germans, (3) it concerned foreign and French Jews alike,<sup>1363</sup> and (4) the final toll – the death of twenty-five percent of the Jews who were in France, including fifteen percent of French citizens, would have been lighter without the participation of the French administration and of some

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<sup>1359</sup> Georges Frélastre, *Les Complexes de Vichy* (Paris: France-Empire, 1975), 180.

<sup>1360</sup> Interview with Robert Faurisson, cited here: <http://www.interet-general.info/spip.php?article18098&artpage=9-34> (Accessed July 12, 2015).

<sup>1361</sup> Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs* (Paris: Calmann-lévy, 2015), 47.

<sup>1362</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>1363</sup> Ibid., 12-13, 24-25 & 434-435.

French citizens.<sup>1364</sup> The fact that in Vichy many of the stories circulating about Jews support the belief that the government acted for the good of French Jews suggests that the formation of a Pétainist memory in the 1950s and 1960s has not only survived but bestowed a much bigger imprint on local consciousness than commonly acknowledged.

The changes among the local Jewish community following the arrival of Sephardic Jews after the Algerian War ended is yet another element to consider in why the Jewish memory of the war is so limited in Vichy. Following the Suez crisis and the decolonization of Morocco and Tunisia in 1956, and that of Algeria in 1962, many North African Sephardic Jews immigrated to France, thus significantly altering the country's Jewish population. About 225,000 North African Jews had settled in France by the end of the 1960s, forming almost half of the French Jewish population of 535,000 people in 1970.<sup>1365</sup>

In Vichy, Sephardic Jews arrived in relatively high numbers, although some had to leave shortly after because of the limited number of jobs. Vichy was an attractive city to the Jewish population fleeing Algeria. Indeed, although the local Jewish community was rather small, the city was well equipped for the many Jewish tourists who came to Vichy every summer. Elie Chekroun shares his memories: "Vichy était une ville connue en Algérie [parmi les Juifs]. Ma sœur, [par exemple], y venait tous les ans en cure. [Et] il y avait une boucherie cachère."<sup>1366</sup> As were the *pieds noirs*, the Jewish community was well received by the municipality: "Je tiens à dire que nous avons tous été très bien accueillis ici, notamment par le maire M. Coulon," Chekroun underlines.<sup>1367</sup> By the late 1970s, the newly settled Jews had become prominent within France's Jewish organizations, giving the latter a public visibility that they had not previously had.<sup>1368</sup> Although to a much smaller extent, the same happened in Vichy; and since the 1970s, the local Jewish community has been mostly led by Sephardic Jews from Algeria.

In Vichy, the Sephardic community has been involved in the local commemorations of the Holocaust, and has highlighted the importance of remembering the past crimes in order to better

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<sup>1364</sup> See: Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*; Renée Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1997); Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz Volume 1. La 'solution finale' de la question juive en France* (Paris: Fayard, 2011).

<sup>1365</sup> Doris Bensimon and Sergio Della Pergola, *La Population juive de France: Socio-démographie et identité* (Paris: Edition du CNRS, 1984), cited in Rebecca Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust: the Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60.

<sup>1366</sup> "Quelle place pour la guerre d'Algérie ?," *La Montagne* (March 17, 2002).

<sup>1367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1368</sup> Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust*, 60.



fight current anti-Semitism and racism, more generally. Yet, it has not been pro active in pushing towards the creation of a strong Holocaust memory in the city in the 1980s and 1990s.

Contrary to common beliefs, the Algerian Sephardic community suffered during the war. The law of October 7, 1940, revoked the Cremieux decree (October 24, 1870), which had granted to Algerian Jews French citizenship. Those Jews thus found themselves impacted by the restrictions imposed on other Jews on French territory. However, because they did not live in Europe, their experience was very different from that of the Jews in metropolitan France and Europe. Unsurprisingly then, the members of Vichy's Sephardic community have felt little connection to the history of Vichy's Jewish refugees. The local prevailing silence about the war has probably only contributed to entertain their disinterest. Furthermore, many of the Sephardic Jews who settled in Vichy after the Algerian War have been assimilated and have portrayed little interest in interacting with the Jewish community, either religiously, culturally, or for memory work.

In "L'intégration des Sépharades en France et en Israël (1948-1992)," Véronique Poirier writes that "confrontés à l'expression culturelle dynamique des Sépharades, les Ashkénazes, devenus minoritaires au sein de la communauté juive, ont cherché à réaffirmer leur identité, refoulée par la génération des survivants, autour de deux pôles: la renaissance du yiddish et le souvenir de la Shoah."<sup>1369</sup> This has not really been the case in Vichy. Although Benhamou was considered an 'accommodationist' by many local Ashkenazim Jews,<sup>1370</sup> the local Jewish survivors have done little to shift the focus away from the famous stories of survival and to give a voice to the local Jews for whom survival had been a constant struggle and to the thousands of refugees who had hoped to find shelter in Vichy, but who ended up being the most affected by the anti-Jewish legislation implemented in the city.

One might have expected that the local Jewish community would have intervened to counter Vichy's inactivity. Yet, this has not been the case. The Jewish community did not voluntarily erase the memory of the Holocaust from the city. It rather subscribed to the collective amnesia. Recently, however, some local Jews, both Ashkenazim and Sephardic, have shown a growing interest in recovering the forgotten history of the Vichy Jews.<sup>1371</sup> Yet, the local Jewish

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<sup>1369</sup> Véronique Poirier, "L'intégration des Sépharades en France et en Israël (1948-1992)," *Cahiers d'anthropologie religieuse* volume 4 (Paris: Presses Paris Sorbonne, 1996), 107.

<sup>1370</sup> Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel*, 200-201.

<sup>1371</sup> Members of Vichy's Jewish community, interviews by author (Winter 2014).

community, which now only has only a few active members, lacks resources and outside help (to locate and access documents, for example).

## Conclusion

Despite the significant work done by historians and memory activists, the emergence of a larger European trend in working through difficult heritage, and the decline of the national obsession surrounding the Vichy regime Vichy's mayor has remained firm in his refusal to have anything to do with this 'poisoned' legacy. The remobilization of the victimhood myth, which has been made easier by a wider trend shifting the focus away from the hero to the victim,<sup>1372</sup> has legitimated the city's politics of silence: Vichy's population, perceived solely as victim, is considered as having no duty to deal with this legacy. Even if the resisters and some of Malhuret's political opponents wish to end the status quo, their efforts (often well-meaning, but sometimes clumsy) have largely been hindered by the passivity of the current municipal council. In the early 2010s, municipal passivity on the Vichy question was still the order of the day, in direct opposition to activism at the national level.

In the past thirty years, one of the most noticeable shifts in the memory of the war has been the development of a more critical Holocaust memory everywhere in France, and especially in those places where history is closely related to the Holocaust. In the popular mindset, the city of Vichy, as the seat of the Vichy government, is a symbolic site in the French memory of the Holocaust. Yet, Vichy remains a *non lieu de mémoire* in this regard, too. Neither the Jewish refugees nor the local Jewish victims have left any significant traces in Vichy. And no one, except a few isolated individuals, has shown any interest in recovering their memory. To this day, the memory of the Vichy Jews is stored in many places but Vichy. Some are in Paris at the *Mémorial de la Shoah*, others are in Jerusalem at Yad Vashem and still others are in Los Angeles at the US Shoah Foundation.

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<sup>1372</sup> El Kenz and Nérard, *Commémorer les victimes en Europe*.

## CHAPTER 10 – The architectural illusion

“Associating events with the places where they occurred,” Maoz Azaryahu and Aharon Kellerman argue in their article about Zionist mythical geography, “confers extraordinary symbolic meaning on them. Having been identified as the setting of history, the places ... acquire mythical distinction, and their ultimate meaning is construed as a legacy.”<sup>1373</sup> Recently, there has been an increasing awareness of the power of place to assert one’s identity, to inform others about the past, or simply to make money. Battlefields and concentration camps are only two examples of so-called ‘authentic’ sites that have been massively memorialized in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

As the capital of Vichy France, the city of Vichy belongs to the category of ‘authentic historical sites’. But contrary to the situation in many European cities, Vichy was spared any visible traces of the war. Not only did Pétain not share the same architectural ambitions as Hitler or Mussolini, but the city also had the good fortune of escaping bombardment (see Chapter 2). Has this lack of wartime destruction been a blessing in disguise or a poisoned chalice for the city?

This chapter investigates how the superimposition of different historical layers in Vichy’s *quartier thermal*, where most of Pétain’s ministries were located, has made it easier for the city to remain impervious to the new European trend aiming of commemorating difficult heritage. According to Umberto Eco, “on n’oublie pas par la suite d’un effacement mais d’une superposition, non pas en rendant absent mais en multipliant les présences.”<sup>1374</sup> The imperial beauty of the *quartier thermal*, whose positively charged architecture contributes to a rhetoric of stability and continuity from the mid nineteenth century to today, has been a great asset in diverting the residents’ and visitors’ focus away from the Second World War’s legacy. Vichy’s collective forgetting about the more recent past, however, was not inherent in the mere superimposition of historical layers. The population actively reinforced the *Second Empire* and *Belle Époque* significance of spa neighborhood to better convey a positive image to the outside world and assert its identity.

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<sup>1373</sup> Maoz Azaryahu and Aharon Kellerman, “Symbolic places of national history and revival: a study in Zionist mythical geography,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 24:1 (1999), 111.

<sup>1374</sup> Cited in Valérie Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d’une ville – Le cas de Vichy” (Ph.D. dissertation, EHESS, Laboratoire de Psychologie sociale, 1999), 371.

## 1. A short history of the *quartier thermal*

Vichy's thermal history is more than two thousand year old. Vichy's water was first exploited by the Gallo-Romans in the 50s BC. Over the decades, the Gallo-Romans transformed the site into a popular spa town and an important center for ceramic production. The dismantling of the Roman Empire in the West in the fifth century marked the decline of Vichy. In the Middle Ages, the springs, which were no longer widely exploited, were the property of the Duc de Bourbon. In 1523, the Duke betrayed King François 1<sup>st</sup>, who ordered him to forfeit all his goods and properties, including Vichy's springs, which thereafter became the king's property. The royal family owned the springs until the French Revolution, following which the Crown lands and assets became the property of the nation. As a consequence, Vichy's springs passed into the hands of the state.<sup>1375</sup> In 1853, the State subcontracted the development of Vichy's hot springs and spa complex to the *Société Lebobé, Callou et Cie* (Parisian public works contractors), which, in 1862, became a public limited company, the *Compagnie fermière de l'établissement thermal de Vichy*.<sup>1376</sup>

Pursuant to the thirty year agreement signed with the state, the *Lebobé, Callou et Cie* society was required to perform major construction work. In addition to the opening of a new *établissement thermal* in 1858, over a short period of time, the society increased the total water production of the site and built 200 supplementary therapeutic booths,<sup>1377</sup> several operation buildings (linen rooms, laundry, wastewater treatment facilities), coffee shops, restaurants, and band stands. The agreement also foresaw the construction of a Casino, the first to be built at a French thermal station.<sup>1378</sup> At the same time, the development of the city was considered one of the most urgent matters: a new urbanization project, which included the construction of urban spaces and streets, as well as the extension of existing streets, was quickly put together by the City Council.<sup>1379</sup> In addition, sumptuous villas were built in the spa neighborhood, in the style of the *Chalet de la Compagnie* and the Strauss Villa. The *Chalet de la Compagnie* was built in 1857

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<sup>1375</sup> On this, see: Pascal Chambriard, *Aux sources de Vichy-Naissance et développement d'un bassin thermal (XIXe et XXe siècles)* (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 1999); Paul Delaunay, *La vie médicale aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Slatkine, 1935).

<sup>1376</sup> Chambriard, *Aux sources de Vichy*, 48.

The word "fermière" comes from "fermage," which indicates the grantee of the company.

<sup>1377</sup> Until then, there were only 100 showers; the construction of 200 additional showers tripled the resort's thermal capacity. Chambriard, *Aux sources de Vichy*, 48.

<sup>1378</sup> For a copy of the agreement, see: Chambriard, *Aux sources de Vichy*, 49.

<sup>1379</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes from the municipal Council's meeting (February 10, 1855).

by the architect Charle Badger for the *Compagnie fermière*'s parties.<sup>1380</sup> During the same period, the Strauss Villa was built for Isaac Strauss, waltz composer and orchestra conductor in Vichy from 1844 to 1859.

In June 1861, the newspaper *Le Figaro* made a detailed description of the mansion:

... C'est un pavillon style Louis XIII, élevé de deux étages ... On accède au rez-de-chaussée par un perron circulaire, orné de quatre statues en pierre, du temps de Louis XIV, et provenant d'un château princier d'Allemagne... Le plafond est une grande toile de Jouvenet, représentant un sujet mythologique... Le jardin ... a été transformé en une charmante miniature de parc anglais. On y a dessiné une rivière, comme au bois de Boulogne, et des eaux vives jaillissant des rochers entretiennent sous ces ombrages une douce fraîcheur.<sup>1381</sup>



Figure 21. The *Villa Strauss*<sup>1382</sup>

<sup>1380</sup> Fabienne Gélín and Martine Chosson, *Dans les pas de Valéry Larbaud et de ses contemporains célèbres à Vichy* (Vichy: Médiathèque Valéry Larbaud, undated).

<sup>1381</sup> Cited in "Il y a 154 ans... Le Figaro révélait le loyer estival de Napoléon III à Vichy," *Le Figaro* (July 1, 2016). Online version: [http://immobilier.lefigaro.fr/article/il-y-a-154-ans-le-figaro-revelait-le-loyer-estival-de-napoleon-iii-a-vichy\\_173e8a98-3f65-11e6-bb9d-32bb60d9937e/](http://immobilier.lefigaro.fr/article/il-y-a-154-ans-le-figaro-revelait-le-loyer-estival-de-napoleon-iii-a-vichy_173e8a98-3f65-11e6-bb9d-32bb60d9937e/) (Accessed July 1, 2016)

<sup>1382</sup> Picture from *Le Figaro* article, "Il y a 154 ans..."



While Vichy begun to significantly transform itself in the 1850s, it was under the initiative of Napoléon III, who visited Vichy on several occasions in the early 1860s, that the spa industry and the *quartier thermal* really expanded. The emperor issued a decree in July 1861 requiring that new roads, a new park, a church, a new City Hall, and a train station be built, so that the spa activities could expand faster.<sup>1383</sup> Napoléon's decision to urbanize and develop Vichy fit into a wider political agenda aiming to boost France's economy through the development of *thermalisme*, with the long-term objective of supplanting Germany's spa industry.<sup>1384</sup> The emperor's interference in local affairs was initially not well received by local leaders, who expressed worries about the tremendous work to be done. Although most of the expenditures were covered by the *Compagnie fermière*, the rapid development of the *quartier thermal* (as well as the population's increase) nonetheless generated substantial additional costs for the city, which had to hire further administrative staff, police personnel, and sanitation workers. A municipal council's deliberation from 1862 reveals that the city's financial situation did not allow it to undertake some of the requested work.<sup>1385</sup> Regardless of these complaints and worries, most of the work was eventually done, allowing Vichy to embark on its journey to stardom.

Napoléon's strong involvement in Vichy's development resulted in the construction of buildings that became landmarks in the city's urban landscape. The most iconic of these buildings are located in the *quartier thermal*. The emperor's five cottages – “chalets” – are amongst the most beautiful mansions in the neighborhood. He initiated their construction during his first visit in 1860. Until they were finished, Napoléon stayed at the Strauss villa, whereas his suite – about sixty people – stayed at the *hôtel des Thermes*.<sup>1386</sup>

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<sup>1383</sup> The decree was signed in Vichy on July 27, 1861. Antonin Mallat, *Histoire Contemporaine de Vichy de 1789 à 1889* (Vichy: Imprimerie Wallon, 1921), 403-404.

<sup>1384</sup> Chambriard, *Aux sources de Vichy*, 49.

“Il fallait trouver, parmi les stations thermales française, celle qui serait capable de devenir la championne face aux stations thermales d'outre-Rhin [qui avaient] su depuis longtemps associer thermalisme et distractions de toutes sortes... Vichy est choisie pour devenir le fer de lance français de ce secteur d'activité.”

<sup>1385</sup> “Améliorations et Embellissements dus à la Munificence de l'Empereur... La ville de Vichy qui, placée dans des conditions exceptionnelles par suite du rapide accroissement de la population, des exigences de ses thermes, de son concours dans les embellissements dont elle est l'objet, de l'augmentation obligée de son personnel administratif et de police, des frais d'entretien, de nettoyage et d'éclairage des voies publiques, etc., se trouve en présence d'un arriéré qui dépasse 75 000 francs, et qui ne saurait trouver place dans un budget dont les recettes ne peuvent couvrir... En résumé, il demeure incontestablement établi que la situation financière de la ville de Vichy est obérée ; qu'elle ne permet d'entreprendre actuellement aucune des améliorations qui sont justement réclamées, et qu'ainsi l'administration communale échappe aux blâmes dont elle a pu être l'objet.” Cited in Antonin Mallat, *Histoire Contemporaine de Vichy de 1789 à 1889* (Vichy: Imprimerie Wallon, 1921), 421-422.

<sup>1386</sup> “Il y a 154 ans... Le Figaro révélait le loyer estival de Napoléon III à Vichy,” *Le Figaro* (July 1, 2016).





Figure 22. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring one of Napoléon III's mansions<sup>1387</sup>

Napoléon's biggest contribution to Vichy is by far the Opera House, which was built between 1863 and 1865, according to the plans of the architect Charles Bagder (who had done the Strauss Villa). At the start of the twentieth century, the Casino was a vital economic force to the development of any resort.<sup>1388</sup> The one in Vichy was internationally renowned. It was expanded in 1898 to comprise several game rooms, a billiard room, a large hall and the largest theater venue outside of Paris. In the interwar period, a 100-musician orchestra, a dancers and singers troupe were in residence in Vichy every summer. The musical repertoire included on average ninety concerts per summer in addition to ballets, theater presentations, and variety shows. In 1935, the German composer, Richard Strauss, presided over an international congress of

<sup>1387</sup> All the postcards included in this chapter are widely available online under the search "Vintage posters Vichy."

<sup>1388</sup> Bernard Toullet, "Architecture des villes d'eaux. Stations thermales et stations balnéaires" (paper presented at a conference about spa towns, France, Salies-de-Béarn, 1994).

composers at Vichy's Opera. While in Vichy, he also directed the orchestra for the play *Salomé*, for which he had composed the music in 1905.<sup>1389</sup>

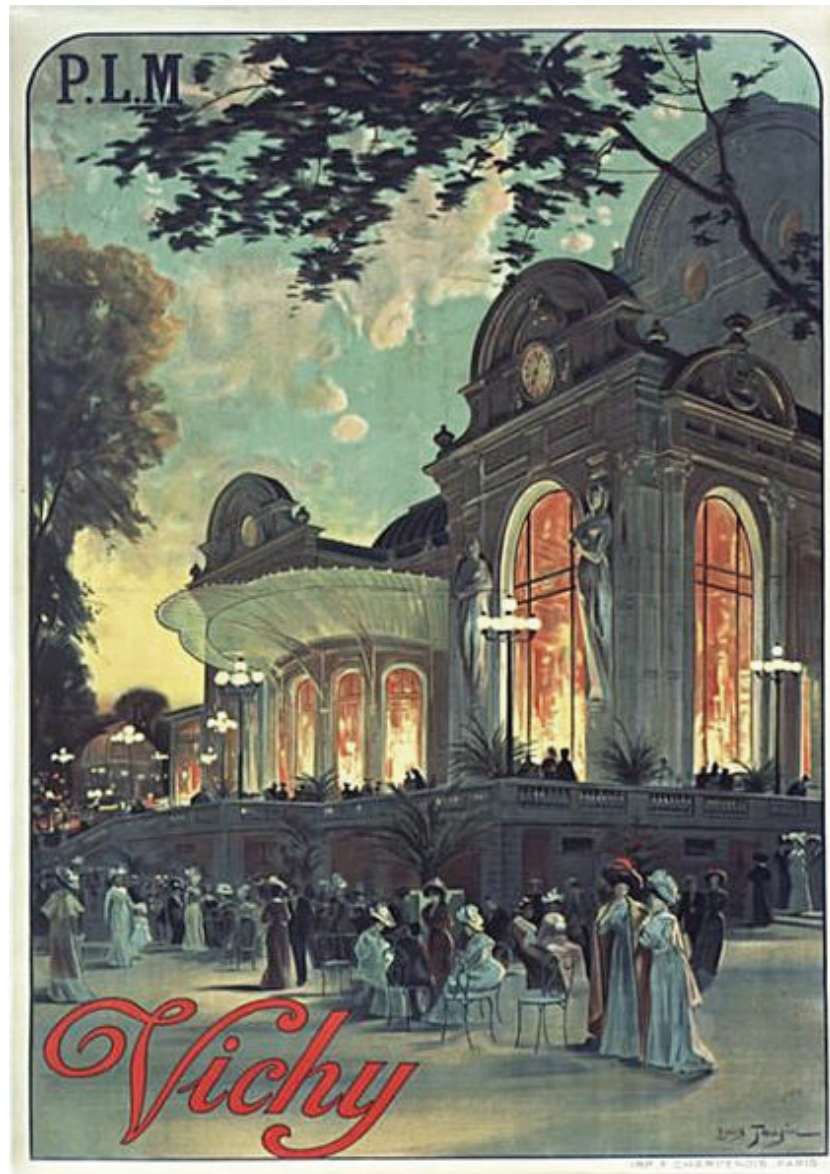


Figure 23. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring the Opera House

<sup>1389</sup> For a brief history of the Opera, see: Vichy's official website: <http://www.vichy-tourisme.com/opera.html> (Accessed June 15, 2016) and Dyane Polya, *Opéra de Vichy : Album-programme 3 juin-15 octobre 1995* (Vichy: Editions Opéra de Vichy, 1995).



By the early twentieth century, the *quartier thermal*'s reputation was well established. The neighborhood attracted the rich, the famous, and the powerful, from France and abroad, who came to Vichy to heal digestive problems, to relax, or to be seen.



Figure 24. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring the *établissement thermal première classe*





Figure 25. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring the interior of the *sources Lucas and Mesdames*

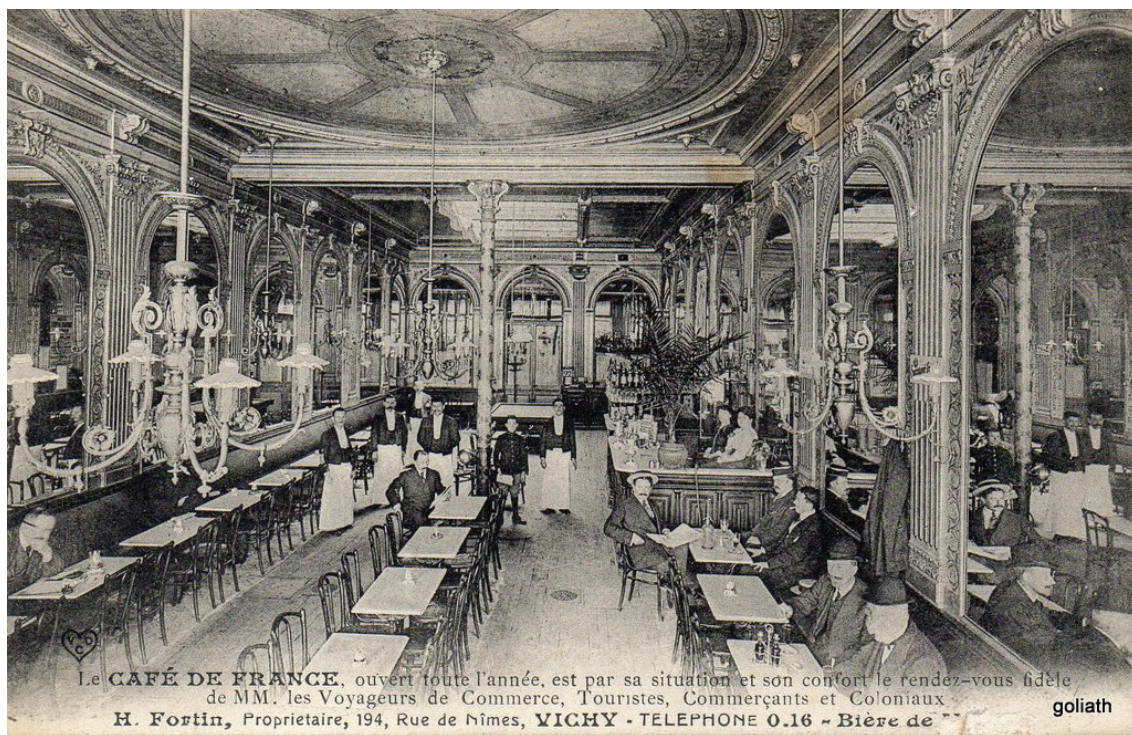


Figure 26. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring the *café de France*, a privileged place of socialization

The neighborhood continued to expand rapidly. At the end of the seventeenth century, there were only five hotels in Vichy. In 1825 there were twenty-six hotels; in 1858, there were fifty-two of them. The number increased to 143 in 1858, and 250 prior the Great War. Despite its small size, the city had the third biggest hotel capacity in France, behind Paris and Nice.<sup>1390</sup> In the early twentieth century, to meet the increasing demand of a rich, international, and discerning clientele, Vichy invested in the construction of luxurious palaces. Under the initiative of Joseph Aletti, a real hotel empire was created in Vichy, with hotels such as *Le Parc*, *Le Majestic*, *Le Carlton*, *Les Ambassadeurs*, *Le Thermal*, which were considered amongst the most prestigious in Europe. Their facades made up only of balconies in the nineteenth century became increasingly ornate, with sculptures, mouldings and indoor balconies and galleries, which often varied depending on the floor.<sup>1391</sup>

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<sup>1390</sup> Jacques Cousseau, *Palaces et Grands Hôtels de Vichy. L'hôtellerie triomphante des XIXe et XXe siècles dans la reine des villes d'eaux* (Olliergues: De la Montmarie, 2009), 11.

<sup>1391</sup> Cousseau, *Palaces et Grands Hôtels de Vichy*, 8-11.





Figure 27. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring the *hôtel des Ambassadeurs*



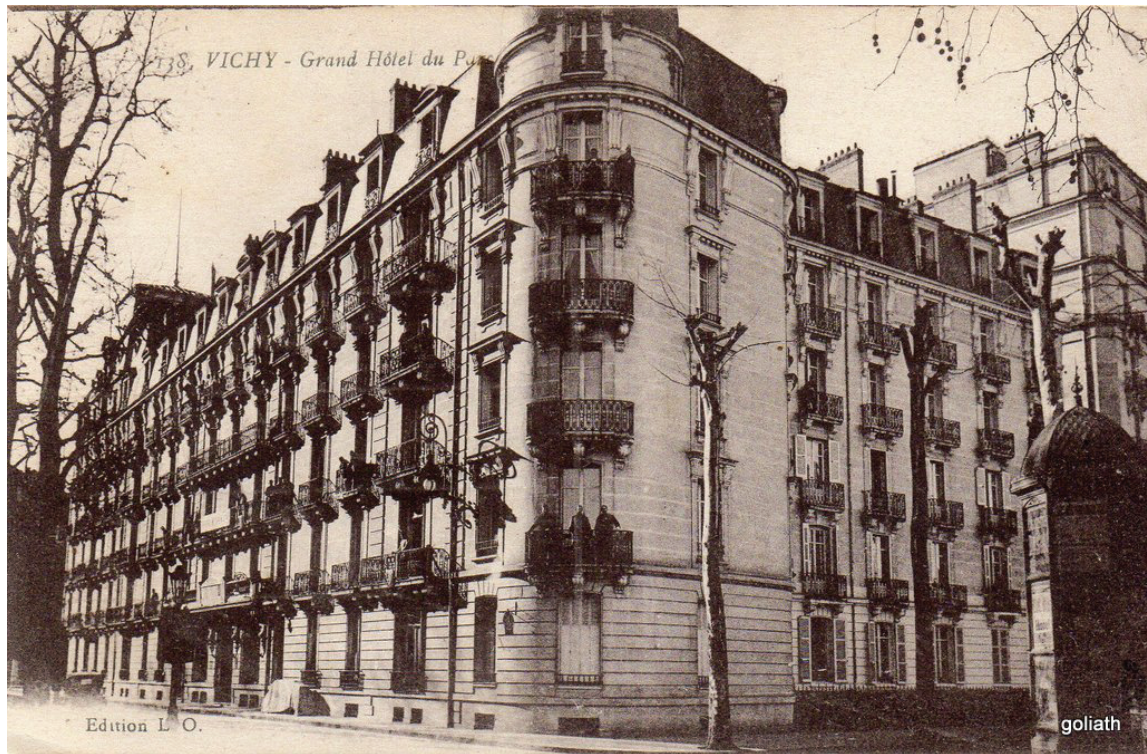


Figure 28. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century postcard featuring the *hôtel du Parc*

On July 10, 1940, the Opera House served as the backdrop for the (in) famous vote, which had granted Pétain exceptional powers. Shortly after, Pétain established his government's headquarters in the spa neighborhood, where all the hotels were requisitioned. The majority of the neighborhood's most iconic sites therefore belong both to the city's glorious prewar history and to the history of the Second World War.



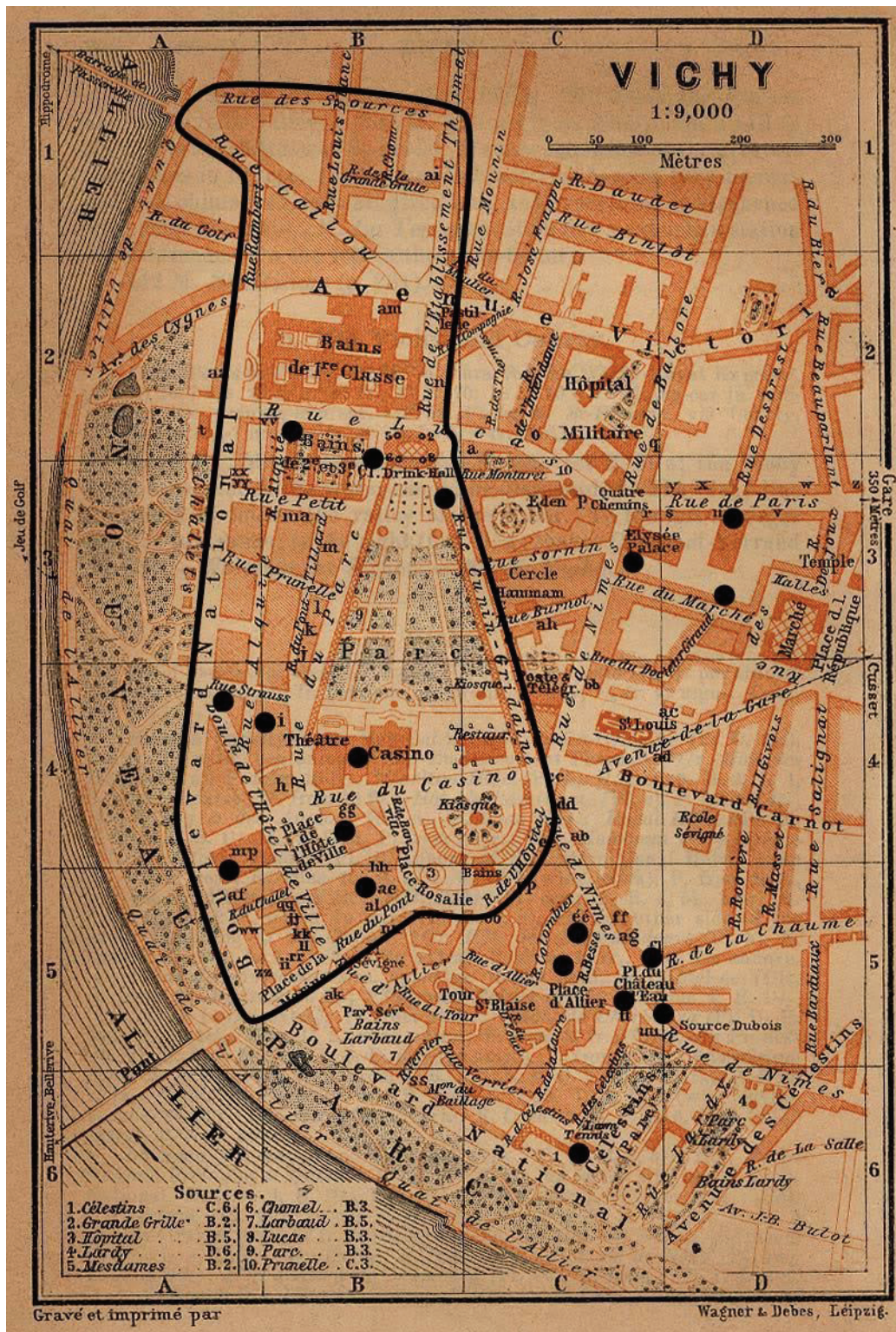


Figure 29. Early twentieth century map of Vichy

The black circle indicates the space of the spa neighborhood

The back dots mark the location of some of the most important sites of Pétain's government

The presence of the Vichy government in the *quartier thermal*, however, has left few traces. In *The Algeria Hotel*, Adam Nossiter underlines how the past of the *hôtel Algeria*, the former headquarters of the *Commissariat aux Questions Juives*, located in the city center, “had not been the object of any particular cover up... Its mere place in Vichy’s gently moldering landscape was enough to guarantee it a beneficent concealment.”<sup>1392</sup> This was even more accurate for hotels in the *quartier thermal* whose prewar splendor remained. While many of these hotels were closed following decolonization, their exteriors have retained their original beauty, maintaining them as cornerstones of Vichy’s *quartier thermal*, and a testament to the city’s glorious past.

The fact that the *quartier thermal* has almost not been altered by any commemorative initiatives related to World War II, makes it an even more ‘authentic’ witness to the prewar past. As the site of the Vichy government, the neighborhood has been of little interest to resisters, who have been more interested in places evocative of the Resistance. Two memorial initiatives have brought back the memory of the war to the neighborhood, yet in such a discreet and ambivalent manner that they failed to really impact the residents’ historical consciousness about the site and have been of little value to tourists. The plaque erected on the wall of the Opera house is so small that it is almost invisible, whereas Klarsfeld’s plaque, by standing on the pavement in front of the *hôtel du Parc* rather than on the hotel, can easily be missed (see Chapter 9).

Thanks to the neighborhood’s deceiving urban landscape and the city’s politics of memory, the war has been successfully erased from the *quartier thermal*. Valérie Haas’ survey in the 1990s, found that close to ninety-five percent of the *Vichyssois* interviewed considered the *hôtel du Portugal* (the headquarters of the Gestapo) as a random building.<sup>1393</sup> The survey I did in 2013 and 2014 confirms that while some residents know that many hotels in the *quartier thermal* were requisitioned, most *Vichyssois* have no additional knowledge of the extent and nature of these requisitions and of the local experience of the war more generally.<sup>1394</sup>

Although historians tend to prioritize the textual and temporal over the spatial, their growing interest in memory studies have led many of them to also reflect on the role of space in collective remembrance. Many of these scholars have drawn on the work by Maurice Halbwachs who, in the early twentieth century, investigated the role of space in the formation of group

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<sup>1392</sup> Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel: France, Memory and The Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001), 193.

<sup>1393</sup> Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d’une ville,” 361.

<sup>1394</sup> The survey included about ten short questions that aimed to assess the people’s knowledge about the Second World War. About forty *Vichyssois* answered the questions.



memories and identities. Many of his works analyze the extent to which group memories are anchored in a spatial framework. In *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte*, for instance, he shows how the inscription of narratives in specific places helped produce and sustain collective representations. By creating itineraries for pilgrims, the sites (rightly or wrongly) associated with the memory of Christ contributed to perpetuate his memory.<sup>1395</sup> In *La mémoire collective*, his most famous work on collective memory, he shows how temporal and spatial frameworks are mutually influential and that it is the combination of the two that forms the basis for collective remembering.<sup>1396</sup>

Drawing on Halbwachs' conception of space, in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, Pierre Nora seeks out the roots of French identity by identifying the sites (in the broadest sense of the term) that locate, generate and crystallize collective memories. While the nature of *lieux de mémoire* are varied – they can be songs, rituals, institutions, etc. – many are space-related, such as landscapes and monuments. By creating a shared “géographie mentale,” the different sites of memory, endowed with meanings and values, act as common frames of reference for the expression of shared narratives, as well as shared hopes and fears.<sup>1397</sup>

In recent scholarship on place and memory, much emphasis has been placed on stories of displacement and destruction. The focus on globalization in the last twenty years has led historians, sociologists, geographers, and anthropologists to ask questions such as: How do displaced communities recreate a sense of belonging in a place that they do not necessarily want to call their own? How do the shifting social relations and increasing immigration affect how residents make place meaningful?<sup>1398</sup> Scholars have also investigated questions such as: How do communities overcome the destruction of sites that they strongly associate with? How do communities living nearby sites of death cope with the memory of the crimes committed next door?<sup>1399</sup> People who have not endured any traumatic experiences, and who live in a city or a

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<sup>1395</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaires des évangiles en Terre sainte* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971).

<sup>1396</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

<sup>1397</sup> Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984, 1986 & 1992).

<sup>1398</sup> See for example: Vijay Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Hariz Halilovich, *Places of Pain: Forced Displacement, Popular Memory and Trans-local Identities in Bosnian War-Torn Communities* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Sean Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement. Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>1399</sup> See for example: Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); William Logan and Keir Reeves, eds.,

village that has never been destroyed, are of little interest to historians, often on the lookout for instances of rupture, disruption, and traumas. These communities' strong attachment to the physical heritage of certain sites or neighborhoods, as is the case for many *Vichyssois* towards the *quartier thermal*, however, still warrants investigation.

## 2. The *quartier thermal* as a reassuring and comforting environment

Many books and brochures recently published by local authors, and by the city itself, have highlighted Vichy's beautiful urban environment. *Vichy il y a 100 ans en cartes postales anciennes* by local author Fabienne Texier, with the collaboration of the director of Vichy's municipal archives, Aurélie Duchezeau, is only one example of such books amongst many others. This very beautiful hardcover book features more than 350 old postcards of Vichy, most of which are from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In her study on Israel, postcards and nation-building, Shelley Hornstein shows how "[a] postcard of a place records an architectural site in situ that eventually becomes an iconic representation of that place in time."<sup>1400</sup> Postcards, she writes "play a critical role as visual and textual messengers of the developing reality, as they chart anecdotally the phases of Israel's history of nationhood."<sup>1401</sup> Through photography strategies, such as framing, lighting, and editing, postcards can convey a certain image and history of a place that stirs popular imagination and settles into collective consciousness. Hornstein demonstrates how a very specific, highly romanticized, and decontextualized, vision of Israel, as the Jewish homeland, has been conveyed by the postcards issued between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>1402</sup> Although what is at stake in Vichy is different, less contested, less political, and much less controversial, publishing a collection of selected postcards is nonetheless revealing of the image that the *Vichyssois* want the external world to have of their city. Unsurprisingly, most postcards currently sold in Vichy also feature an idealized Vichy, a *Second Empire* and *Belle Époque* style city nestled within a luxuriant natural setting.

Local museums are also revealing of how the city wants to present itself to the outside world. Old stones, historic stamps, African art, theatrical props, and contemporary photographs

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*Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Erica Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton, and Monica Eileen Patterson, eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>1400</sup> Shelley Hornstein, *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory and Place* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 64.

<sup>1401</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>1402</sup> Ibid., 61-80.

are among the main items permanently or temporary exhibited in Vichy's museums and exhibition spaces. While one might be struck by the lack of coherence between the different exhibitions, what is more surprising, however, is the absence of a history museum. Or is it really that surprising? Given that the war is not considered part of the city's history, and that the city's 'real' history is to be experienced and admired along the streets of the *quartier thermal* and, to a lesser extent, the Old town, Vichy has never considered it necessary to have a history museum. The city itself is an open-air museum.

The creation of guided and self-guided tours of the *Vichy thermal* in the 1980s and 1990s has been another way to promote the city's prewar urban legacy and spa heritage. In 1980, Jacques Corrocher, president of the *Centre de Recherches Archéologiques de Vichy et de sa Région*, created a guided tour of the spa neighborhood for the tourists eager to discover the sites that had established the city's reputation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>1403</sup> Following this early initiative, many other guided tours have been created, including "Vichy et Napoléon III," and "Vichy Second Empire." By providing stories about life in Vichy during the *Second Empire* and anecdotes about Napoléon's visits and cures, guides make landscapes meaningful; a sense of place being only created through discourses, images, and stories. Stories, Michel de Certeau has argued, "traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories."<sup>1404</sup>

Until quite recently, while Napoléon III was presented in a positive light, he was only considered as one important figure of the city's history amongst many other great men and women, who also had contributed something to the city's fame. In the 1939 guide for instance the historical section only includes one and a half line about the emperor: "Napoléon III fit, en 1865, plusieurs séjours à Vichy et contribua à embellir la ville en créant de nouveaux parcs."<sup>1405</sup> In comparison, twenty-one lines are devoted to Madame de Sévigné, "la divine marquise."<sup>1406</sup> In May 1961, for the hundredth anniversary of Napoléon's first visit to Vichy, Arthur Honegger and Jacques Ibert's adaptation of Edmond Rostand's 1900 drama *L'aiglon* was broadcast in the Opera

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<sup>1403</sup> The tour was privately run until 1989. Then it was run by the Information Tourist Center. Nathalie Combaret, "La mémoire de la période de l'occupation dans la ville de Vichy" (MA thesis, Université Clermont-Ferrand, 2003).

<sup>1404</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday life* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988), trans., Steven Rendall, 115.

<sup>1405</sup> *Guide pratique de Vichy et sa région 8<sup>e</sup> édition 1940-41* (Collection des Guides POL, 1940), 17.

<sup>1406</sup> Ibid.



House.<sup>1407</sup> Eight years later, in 1969, an exhibition about Napoléon III was organized in Vichy.<sup>1408</sup> These two events, however, stood rather as exceptions in a period when Napoleon III did not yet occupy a particular place in the hearts of the *Vichyssois*.

Since the 1980s, however, the popular passion for the emperor has only grown. In the 1992 tourist guide for instance, only one sentence is devoted to Madame de Sévigné (“En 1676 et 1677, Madame de Sévigné chante les louanges de la cure Vichyssois qui, en guérissant une fâcheuse paralysie des mains, lui permet de retrouver l’usage de sa brillante et précieuse plume”), whereas two paragraphs focus on Napoléon:

Entre 1861 et 1866, Lebobé et Callou, fermiers du domaine thermal de l’Etat, auront la lourde responsabilité d’organiser les cures successives de Napoléon III. Ceci provoquera un développement considérable du thermalisme vichyssois. En même temps, la ville se transforme profondément pour prendre le visage accueillant que nous lui connaissons.

Sous l’impulsion personnelle de l’Empereur, l’Allier est contenue par une digue qui permet de remplacer le marécage par un parc de plusieurs kilomètres. Les chalets et pavillons construits par le Baron Haussmann permettent le logement du prince et de sa suite sur les boulevard et les rues nouvellement tracées. Les distractions ne sont pas oubliées avec le Casino inauguré en 1865, oeuvre de l’architecte Badger.<sup>1409</sup>

In 1983, the association *Amis de Napoléon III de Vichy* was founded by Dr. Jacques Frémont, with the objective of promoting the Napoleonic history of the city.<sup>1410</sup> Since then public talks about Napoléon have been organized regularly.<sup>1411</sup> In addition, under the association’s initiative, busts of the emperor were erected in the city, including one in the city’s most famous park, itself renamed *Parc Napoléon*, and one in city hall. Finally, as mentioned earlier, several guided walks about Napoléon in Vichy were created.

Vichy’s promotion of its *Second Empire* heritage has benefited from the fact that several scenes of popular films were shot in Vichy. The *Aletti Palace*, one of the most luxurious hotels in

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<sup>1407</sup> INA. Television news. Chaîne 1. “L’Aiglon. XI festival de Vichy” (August 18, 1961).

<sup>1408</sup> “À l’exposition Napoléon qui s’ouvre demain...,” *La Montagne* (August 9, 1969).

<sup>1409</sup> Touristic guide edited by Vichy’s *Office de tourisme* (1992), 4.

<sup>1410</sup> Since 2004, the president has been Alain Carteret. In 2003, he published *Napoléon III bienfaiteur de Vichy et de la France* (Saint-Etienne: Edition de la Montmarie, 2003).

<sup>1411</sup> In less than a year –from September 2013 to May 2014 – the association organized four conferences and public talks about Napoléon. September 21, 2013: public talk by Christian Humbrecht about the 1812 campaign in Russia; October 26, 2013: public talk by Bernard Chevallier about the artistic talents of Hortense, Napoléon III’s mother; January 25, 2014: public talk by Alain Carteret about the anti-Napoléon III caricatures; May 17, 2014: Public lecture by historian Philippe Valode about “les apports des deux Empires à l’histoire de France.”

the *quartier thermal*, has served as a backdrop for films such as *Bon Voyage* (about the withdrawal of the French government to Bordeaux in the Spring of 1940, featuring French actors Isabelle Adjani, Virginie Ledoyen, Yvan Attal, and Gérard Depardieu), and *Coco Chanel* (which traces the life of France's most famous fashion designer). In both cases, the *Aletti Palace* was used to shoot scenes that actually took place in other hotels, Bordeaux's *Hôtel Splendid* for *Bon Voyage*, Deauville's *Hôtel Normandy* and Paris' *Ritz* for *Coco Chanel*.<sup>1412</sup> With "ses boiseries, ses marbres, ses lustres, son charme de vrai palace d'autrefois," filmmaker Jacques Santamaria writes in "Filmer Vichy," the *hôtel Aletti* "était tout indiqué."<sup>1413</sup> To Christian Duguay, *Coco's* film director, the main asset of Vichy is that: "[la ville] possède à la fois un côté ludique et calme, l'architecture est magnifique et les ambiances sont restées."<sup>1414</sup>

Other famous sites from the *quartier thermal*, such as the *hôtel des Ambassadeurs*, the *Établissement thermal*, and the parks have also frequently been used as location shots, in *Coco*, but also in *Les Maigret à Vichy* (1967), *Le cri du hibou* (1987) and *Clémence* (2005). Frank Butcher, film director of *Clémence*, explains why he thought this neighborhood was ideal for his story: "Il y a des lieux anciens magnifiques dans cette ville. Les parcs, la galerie des arts, les thermes sont des sites somptueux qui respirent l'histoire et qui m'ont paru idéaux en tant que lieux de rencontre avec une femme, comme c'est le cas dans le film."<sup>1415</sup> Other films that were shot in Vichy's *quartier thermal* include *Je suis timide et je me soigne* by and with Pierre Richard (1978), as well as *Le Comédien* (by Christian de Chalonge) and *Mon père avait raison* (by Roger Vadim), both in 1996.<sup>1416</sup>

Many visitors of the *quartier thermal* willingly succumb to Vichy's romanticized narratives. Most tourists not only visit the *thermes*, taste the different waters, and shop for Vichy products (*pastilles*, water, absinth, candy boxes dating from the early twentieth century, vintage posters and old postcards of Vichy in the 1920s or 1930s), but they also go to the old-fashioned and antique stores and attend *bals musettes*, making the whole experience both more 'authentic' and more 'real'. As a neighborhood that offers a very easy access to the city's romantic prewar

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<sup>1412</sup> Nicole Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: A. Sutton, 2009), 30 & 35.

<sup>1413</sup> Jacques Santamaria, "Filmer Vichy," in *Vichy Toujours* (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 2004),

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<sup>1414</sup> Cited in Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z*, 35.

The fact that Coco Chanel was a *donneuse d'eau* in Vichy during the summer of 1906 may have also influenced Duguay's choice to shoot in Vichy.

<sup>1415</sup> Cited in Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z*, 33.

<sup>1416</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

history, the *quartier thermal* gives visitors the opportunity to live the same type of experiences they would have had if they had gone to a reconstructed village situated at the time of France's *Belle Époque*, minus the dressed up actors. While a visit of the *quartier thermal* might disappoint those interested in the Second World War, it will satisfy all those looking to experience the prewar past and getting a sense of what the 'old refined France' was like. According to retired history teacher, Robert Liris, the "héritage architectural d'une fantaisie française et cultivée" is what seduces many of the young businessmen who come to Vichy to attend conventions.<sup>1417</sup>

When attentive to the cultural practices that are constitutive of the *quartier thermal*, it becomes clear that the neighborhood is much more than a frozen witness to the good old days, well packaged for tourists. Considering the space of the *quartier thermal* as not just a being, but also a "doing," in Derek Gregory's words,<sup>1418</sup> moves us beyond an understanding of the neighborhood as a space designed and showcased for the outside world. As a lived environment it is made meaningful to nostalgic *Vichyssois* through cultural practices, such as shopping and drinking tea in shops and tea stalls that date back to the *Belle Époque* (the very same as the tourists go to), listening to music at the old *kiosque à musique*, walking through the *parc des sources*, constructed under the initiative of Napoléon I, and joining the yearly festivities honoring Napoléon III.

Since 2008, a two-day festival to the glory of Napoléon III, featuring reenactments of the emperor in Vichy, has been organized yearly in Vichy. Successful historic reconstructions depend on the degree of the reenactment's authenticity and its capacity to create sensory stimulation.<sup>1419</sup> According to Stephen Gapps, "somehow, the physicality of these places is believed to have the capacity to reanimate the people of the past. It certainly animates people in the present."<sup>1420</sup> One asset of Vichy is that the *quartier thermal* speaks for itself and does not require any sort of transformation. Of course, successful reenactments also require convincing costumes and props. The festival organizers have certainly not neglected this point: women wear colorful and stylish dresses, with matching gloves and shoes, and a sophisticated hairstyle, with flowers or feathers. Men are equally refined, with black dress coats, white vests, and black well

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<sup>1417</sup> Robert Liris, *L'ordinaire de Vichy, 1940-1942* (Belgrade: Pesic and Sinovi, 2011), 86.

<sup>1418</sup> Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imagination* (Oxford: Blachwell, 1994).

<sup>1419</sup> Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories and Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2007), 89; Stephen Gapps, "Mobile Monuments: A view of historical reenactment and authenticity from inside the costume cupboard of history," *Rethinking History* 13:3 (2009), 402-403.

<sup>1420</sup> Peers, *Playing Ourselves*, 89.

fitting pants. Every year, at the sight of the imperial couple, bursts of joy ring out from the crowd: “Vive l’empereur! Vive l’empereur!” The illusion is perfect. During the weekend, the audience is offered the opportunity to experience life in the *Second Empire*. With the parades, games, workshops, lectures, there is something for everyone. For the grand finale, Napoléon, Eugénie and their imperial suite are invited to the majestic ballroom of the Opera House for an evening of festivities.

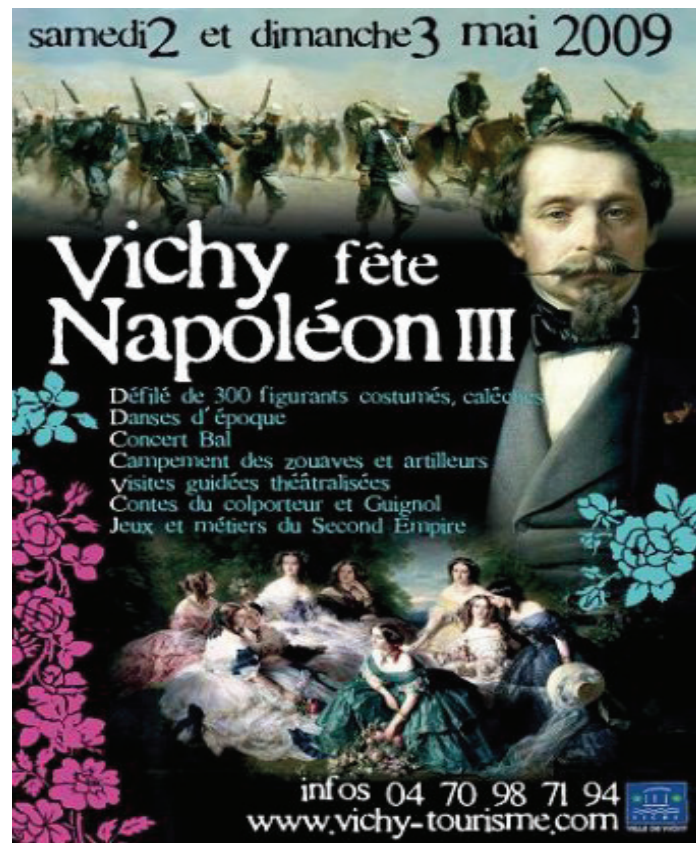


Figure 30. Poster for the 2009 edition of the Napoléon III festival in Vichy





Figure 31. Napoléon III and Eugénie enter the *parc des sources*<sup>1421</sup>



Figure 32. Ball in the Opera House (2014 edition)<sup>1422</sup>

<sup>1421</sup> Photograph from the online article “Grandes fêtes Napoléon III de Vichy.” <http://www.allier-auvergne-tourisme.com/festivals-manifestations/manifestations-historiques/fetes-napoleon-500-1.html> (Accessed August 1, 2016).

<sup>1422</sup> Photograph from the website of the local newspaper *La Semaine de l'Allier*: <http://www.lasemainedelallier.fr/2014/10/23/vichy-napoleon-iii-vedette-de-cinema/> (Accessed August 1, 2016)

Since the 1970s, historical reenactment has become extremely popular in many countries across the world. Not only are reenactments of battles regularly organized by history enthusiasts, but more and more museums now include costumed performances on specific historical themes.<sup>1423</sup> In “The Uses and Abuses of Historical Reenactment,” Alexander Cook reflects on the consequences “of sending modern subjects into an imitation historical setting and using their responses as the basis for historical narration.”<sup>1424</sup> Few scholars have studied whether (and how) reenactment could enhance people’s understanding of historical events and processes. While many questions about the power and limits of this phenomenon remain,<sup>1425</sup> we know one thing for certain: historical reenactments tell us more about the present than past.

In the 1970s, for example, the boom in historical reenactment was evidence that at that particular time, for many different political, social, and cultural reasons, people felt empowered to reclaim their own histories. “An increasingly democratic access to the past had the effect of making possible individual, embodied representations that were signs of newfound political expression,” Stephen Gapps writes in “Mobile Monuments.”<sup>1426</sup> For minorities whose past traumas may have not been widely acknowledged, reenactment has been a means to get their voices heard. In the case of North American aboriginal reenactors for example, acting out the past has allowed them to “articulate identity and cultural differences: to assert, in the face of centuries of scholarly and popular historical narratives, their ancestors’ worth and dignity; to contest stereotypes and misinformation; and to insist on the right to tell their own stories, in their own voices.”<sup>1427</sup> While performance is an important means of reclaiming one’s own history, it can also seek to achieve other goals. Vichy’s Napoléon festival is not meant to help the population reclaim its own history or to gain knowledge about Napoléon III.<sup>1428</sup> Rather, it seeks to turn the public’s gaze away from memories of a past, which some are still able to remember, towards a past that none can actively recall.

While the initiative of making Napoléon III an identity marker for Vichy has mostly stemmed from grassroots associations, especially the *Association des Amis de Napoléon III de*

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<sup>1423</sup> For an introduction on historical reenactment, see: Vanessa Agnew, “Introduction: What Is Reenactment?,” *Criticism* 46:3 (2004), 327.

<sup>1424</sup> Alexander Cook, “The Uses and Abuses of Historical Reenactment: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History,” *Criticism* 46:3 (2004), 448.

<sup>1425</sup> Agnew, “What Is Reenactment?,” 329.

<sup>1426</sup> Gapps, “Mobile Monuments,” 405.

<sup>1427</sup> Peers, *Playing Ourselves*, xx-xxi.

<sup>1428</sup> Most *Vichyssois* actually know very little about the history of Napoléon III. Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spatiales d’une ville,” 343-355 & 359.



*Vichy*, it has nonetheless also greatly benefited from a favorable political context. Claude Malhuret, mayor since 1989 and a firm opponent to the memorialization of Vichy in Vichy, readily welcomed the different initiatives aiming to bring back Napoléon to Vichy, most certainly because this shifted the focus away from the Second World War.<sup>1429</sup> Although the shift in emphasis was probably unconscious, with hindsight it seems obvious that in the 1980s the *Vichyssois* revitalized Napoléon to upstage Pétain.

Recently, some residents have started to question the excessively positive narrative about the emperor. Faithful to the republican ideals of his party, the mayor's opponent and Radical member, Christophe Pommeray, is careful to always remove the bust of Napoléon in the City Hall when he celebrates weddings, so that "le regard de Napoléon, l'anti-républicain, ne rencontre pas celui de Marianne."<sup>1430</sup> The 'anti-Napoléon' minority of Vichy, however, has, so far, had little – if any – impact on the public narrative about the emperor. To this day, few Vichy's residents, for example, know that Vichy's therapeutic water proved largely ineffective on Napoléon III:

Le 7 août 1864, l'Empereur quittait Vichy. Le 30 du même mois... après une nuit de souffrances atroces, le baron Larrey pouvait examiner avec un soin tout special son imperial malade et diagnostiquer la présence du calcul vésical qui allait priver le souverain de revenir se soigner à Vichy, qu'on accusait dès lors d'être contraire à sa santé.<sup>1431</sup>

Similarly, few people in Vichy know that in 1870, like in many other places in France, Vichy's population celebrated the fall of the Empire.<sup>1432</sup> Discredited by the defeat and criticized for his behaviour, Napoléon no longer enjoyed unanimous support – not even in Vichy, where in the early 1860s, he had been very warmly welcomed by the mayor and "une foule enthousiaste."<sup>1433</sup> The fact that Napoléon had not come back to Vichy in four years might have reinforced the population's resentment. Shortly after the fall of the empire, the streets that had been renamed in the honor of the emperor were given back their old names. In total six streets lost their imperial

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<sup>1429</sup> During a public speech in 1991, for example, Malhuret emphasized the significant role of the emperor in modernizing the city and making it world class and underlined the great work accomplished by the emperor in the social and economic fields and talked about the current trend in scholarship that has sought to rehabilitate Napoléon III. Cited in Haas, "Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d'une ville," 341.

<sup>1430</sup> Christophe Pommeray, informal conversation with author (August 2015).

Since Ernest Lavisse's *L'Histoire de la France contemporaine*, most historians have divided the Second Empire into two periods: the authoritarian Empire from 1852 to 1860 and the liberal Empire from 1860 to 1870.

<sup>1431</sup> Jean Deguisson, *Napoléon III et Vichy* (Paris: Imprimerie du Palais, 1934), 11.

<sup>1432</sup> Haas, "Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d'une ville," 357.

<sup>1433</sup> Deguisson, *Napoléon III et Vichy*, 5.

names, amongst which the *Boulevard Napoléon*, which was renamed *Boulevard national*, the *Boulevard du Prince Impérial*, which was renamed *Boulevard de l'Hôtel de Ville*, and the *Avenue de l'Impératrice*, which became the *Avenue de la Liberté*.<sup>1434</sup>

Nostalgia is often described as escapist and romanticizing: the desire for a past long gone can offer an easy escape from contemporary problems, but does not solve them.<sup>1435</sup> Several scholars have underlined how nostalgia can also be empowering. Maurice Halbwachs, for instance, has explained how nostalgic memory frees individuals from the constraints of time and allows them to select positive experiences from their past.<sup>1436</sup> In the same vein, recent scholars, such as Leo Spitzer or Mieke Bal, have shown how nostalgia was essential for destabilized groups to reconstruct or reinforce their collective identity.<sup>1437</sup> In Vichy, the nostalgia for the time when the city was 'reine des villes d'eaux' and the construction of a selective local history, in which Napoléon III has been given the main role, can be seen as liberating in the sense that the *Vichyssois* have created a local identity based on the history of their choice, not one based on the representation of themselves by outside groups. The linguistic war aiming at forbidding the use of the term 'Vichy' in the sense of Pétain's government is equally indicative of the city's desire to write its history according to its own rules.

According to David Lowenthal, "both nostalgia and heritage rely on interpretations of history to compensate for a present malaise."<sup>1438</sup> To create an identity tied to one's place of residence comes down to activating the defence mechanisms geared toward managing the perceived external threats.<sup>1439</sup> To control one's space therefore gives a certain impression (illusion) of controlling one's history. In Vichy, the creation of a very strong identity around the memory of the city's glorious days, embodied in the figure of Napoléon, is evidence of the population's desire to exclude the post 1940 period from its collective consciousness, but not only.

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<sup>1434</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (March 2, 1871).

<sup>1435</sup> Christopher Lasch defines nostalgia as "a betrayal of history." Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," *Harper's* (November 1984), 65-70.

<sup>1436</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Alcan 1925).

<sup>1437</sup> Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, eds., *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 1999).

<sup>1438</sup> Cited in Amy Mills, "Boundaries of the Nation in the Space of the Urband: Landscape and Social Memory in Istanbul," *Cultural Geographies* 13 (2006), 371.

<sup>1439</sup> On this, see: Harold Proshansky, Abbe Fabian and Kaminoff, Robert, "Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3:1 (March 1983), 57-83.

The people most attached to the *quartier thermal* and Napoléon's most fervent enthusiasts are, of course, not a homogeneous population. Yet, it appears that certain categories of people are more likely to develop a strong attachment to this space and to assign a Napoleonic reading to it than others. Haas' research shows that the *Vichyssois* who are relatively new in town are more likely to develop a strong attachment to the city's spa legacy: "Ainsi, l'image thermale semble essentiellement utilisée par des sujets dont l'enracinement dans la ville est faible. Ceux-ci utiliseraient une représentation relativement stéréotypée de Vichy et connue à l'extérieur."<sup>1440</sup> Philippe Gendre, director of the Tourist Information Center, provides further details to Haas' findings. According to him, not all newcomers are likely to strongly identify with the *quartier thermal* and the city's Napoleonic story. Based on his observations, the people coming to Vichy in their old age are the ones who are the most receptive to the city's romanticized narrative about its past and its self.<sup>1441</sup> This sense of belonging is often bound up with childhood and family memories, especially for the newcomers who had come to Vichy with their families during the last golden age of the resort in the 1950s. According to Denis Tillinac, "Je crois qu'il en va de Vichy comme des écrivains à la Larbaud ou à la Chardonne : on les goûte à partir de la trentaine lorsqu'un semblant de vie a déposé dans l'âme des sédiments propices à la nostalgie."<sup>1442</sup> But the desire to reconnect with happy(ier) times is not the only reason why some *Vichyssois* have grown deeply attached to this Second-Empire neighborhood.

The attachment of some long-term residents to the *quartier thermal* is revealing of their vision of what a *Vichyssois* should be, i.e. someone who fits into the neighborhood's geography, that is, mostly a conservative (white) petty bourgeois. Although one should not make sweeping generalizations, people in the *quartier thermal* tend to have strong views about Frenchness and nationalism.<sup>1443</sup> One key feature of the development of collective identities is the spatialization of one's "own" territory. The city, Robert Park wrote, is "a state of mind."<sup>1444</sup> In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre underlines the interdependence of space and subjectivity: people define

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<sup>1440</sup> Haas, "Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d'une ville," 196.

<sup>1441</sup> Philippe Gendre, interview by author (July 25, 2014).

<sup>1442</sup> Denis Tillinac, "Un destin de sous préfecture," in *Vichy toujours*, 104.

<sup>1443</sup> Based on my observations and those of Marie-Béatrice Baudet, a journalist from *Le Monde*, who was in Vichy for an article about the *hôtel du Parc*, and who went to talk to people in the neighborhood. Marie-Béatrice Baudet, informal conversation with author (June 2015). Baudet said that she was "shocked" that many people in the neighborhood had very conservative ideas.

<sup>1444</sup> Robert Park, *The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Nature in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

space and space defines people.<sup>1445</sup> Frozen in time and reminiscent of a period when this neighborhood attracted the elite, the *quartier thermal* stands as a hideout for the most conservative residents.

Quite ironically, even when Vichy was a cosmopolitan resort with tourists of different colors and religions, some *Vichyssois* expressed contempt and fear towards the visible ‘otherness’. The meeting between the native elite from the colonies, who came to Vichy to take a cure, and Vichy residents grabbed the attention of a cartoonist in 1882. His cartoon pictures two local women, one a milk delivery woman and the other a washerwoman, whose gazes were drawn to men with exotic looks. The women’s dialogue goes as follows:

Woman 1: Bon dieu, ma chère, de quel pays sont-ils, ceux-là ?

Woman 2: D’un pays où les hommes ont chacun 4 ou 5 femmes.

Woman 1: ‘Ah seigneur ! Pourvu qu’ils n’en fassent pas venir la mode à Vichy.’<sup>1446</sup>

This drawing conceals many messages, and presents a certain ambiguity. According to Eric Jennings, it reveals both “l’esprit de clocher de ces ouvrières,” as well as “leur bon sens à vouloir maintenir des relations de genre ‘françaises’” in the face of foreign and ‘threatening’ models. The cultural shock is thus modulated by considerations of class, race and gender.<sup>1447</sup> Jean-Michel Belorgey talks of “une intolérance à ce qui vient d’ailleurs, alors même que, ou précisément *parce qu’on en vit.*”<sup>1448</sup>

Whether the municipality and the *Compagnie fermière* have striven to keep the neighborhood frozen in time in defense of a very conservative idea of Frenchness is difficult to say. Their prime motivations in keeping the *quartier thermal* as is rather appears to have been for tourism reasons. In any case, despite different motivations, the conservative population attached to the *quartier thermal*, the municipality, and the *Compagnie fermière* all share the goal of preserving the place and this has therefore led to their fruitful ‘collaboration’.

When walking through the neighborhood today, one cannot fail to notice that it has aged badly. In the 1980s, the neighborhood started to display signs of decline. The neighborhood’s deterioration has been due in large part to the tense relationship between the city and the

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<sup>1445</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>1446</sup> Cited in Eric Jennings, *A la cure, les coloniaux ! : thermalisme, climatisme et colonisation française, 1830-1962* (Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 220.

<sup>1447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1448</sup> Jean-Michel Belorgey, “Vichy dans les têtes,” in *Vichy toujours*, 39.

*Compagnie fermière* over the last thirty years.<sup>1449</sup> While in Vichy, Denis Tillinac spent some time with a young woman, who shared her views of Vichy with him:

En sa qualité d'adolescente, mon accompagnatrice trouve Vichy fade et de mauvais goût. Comment justifier à ses yeux limpides les coupoles et créneaux des Établissements thermaux, - et ces harmonies délavées en beige pale, rose bonbon, bleu pastel, vert amande ? (...) Ce parfum de fleur fânée qui traîne dans les parages des anciens palaces, elle le trouve saumâtre.<sup>1450</sup>

Similarly, filmmaker Jacques Kirsner, who, stayed at the supposedly luxurious *hôtel Aletti* while he was filming the film *Pétain* in the 1990s, described the hotel as a “palace décrépit à la limite du sinistre.”<sup>1451</sup> Despite its deterioration, the spa neighborhood has retained its symbolic power. For three quarters of the *Vichyssois* interviewed as part of Haas’ 1999 survey, the city is confined to the parks, the old Vichy and the *quartier thermal*.<sup>1452</sup>

### 3. A curse in disguise?

The strict control over the management of space in the neighborhood has given the city’s inhabitants the impression that they retained a stronghold not only over *their* space but also over *their* history. By creating a deep connection to the city’s highly historicized and positively charged landscape, the *Vichyssois* have anchored their collective identity in the city’s most glorious past. The fact that today the city looks very much like it did a century ago has contributed to a rhetoric of continuity from the mid nineteenth century (when Napoléon III first came to Vichy) to today, giving people a reassuring sense of stability between past and present and excluding the war from the city’s history.

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<sup>1449</sup> The bad maintenance of Vichy’s spa neighborhood by the *Compagnie Fermière* has always been a source of great concerns for the municipality, which accuses the company’s members of being largely disinterested in the city. Yet the city’s range of action there is limited, as the space is owned by the state and officially managed by the *Compagnie*. In the late twentieth century the city managed to buy the Opéra from the *Compagnie*. Yet, most other buildings, including the springs, the *parc des sources*, and the *galleries Napoléon* are still the state’s propriety. As such, the city is not allowed to make renovation work the way it would like to. In 2015 and 2016 there were rumors that the state might be willing to sell the *domaine thermal* to the city. Yet nothing has been done yet. On this, see: Christophe Pommeray et al, *Vichy à Vendre* (Vichy: Allier République éditions, 2010); Jacques Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989 : un quart de siècle entre deux mondes* (Molinet: Edition Neuville, 1994).

<sup>1450</sup> Denis Tillinac, “Un destin de sous préfecture,” in *Vichy toujours*, 104.

<sup>1451</sup> Jacques Kirsner, “Ah ! monsieur le Maréchal...,” In *Vichy toujours*, 28.

<sup>1452</sup> Valérie Haas has shown that most *Vichyssois* tend to see local value in the city arising from the spa heritage: to 60,6 percent of the interviewees the *Second Empire*, materialized in the *quartier thermal*, is the most “beautiful” period of the city’s history. Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d’une ville,” 223-226 & 350.

While in the first decades of the postwar period, the city hoped that it would soon regain its title of ‘reine des villes d’eaux’, its journey back to fame was cut short by the social and structural changes brought about by decolonization and the loss of French Algeria more particularly. Vichy’s beautiful urban landscape only prolonged the city’s dreams and illusions. Although Vichy’s architectural armor is believed to have been a blessing in disguise because it successfully moved attention away from the unwanted legacy of the Second World War, it might actually have been a curse in disguise for it prevented the population from realizing (1) that the city was changing, and (2) that the memory of the war would eventually need to be addressed.

Many historical sites in Vichy are suspended between two temporal strata. Most of the sites which, thanks to their visible connection to the city’s glorious past, could offer a refuge from the unwanted war memories are, in fact, the latter’s very own repositories. While the *Second Empire / Belle Époque* architecture first secures a visual cue, reminding people of the city’s successful prewar history, the superimposition of this visible history with the invisible, yet very real, war legacy, of which most *Vichyssois* and French visitors are aware, eventually produces a sense of profound disorientation. As rightly observed by Umberto Eco, “On peut oublier non par manque mais par excès. Si l’on ne peut détruire le signifié d’une affirmation émise à haute voix, du moins peut-on prononcer en même temps une autre affirmation qui fasse que les deux voix se superposent. C’est la meilleure façon de tout embrouiller.”<sup>1453</sup>

Such disorientation has affected residents and tourists alike. To Jacques Kirsner, film director of *Pétain*, the mystery of the place has been both a source of inspiration and a source of fear and anxiety:

Tous les jours, me promenant, fréquentant le bar des Ambassadeurs ou l’Astorg, je croisais Darnand, Laval, Bousquet, Pécheux... Je ne leur parlais pas mais, mine de rien, j’écoutais leurs conversations. C’était souvent passionnant ; hélas ! jamais Darnand, le chef de la milice, n’évoqua l’assassinat de ma sœur. Et Bousquet n’aborda pas plus, à ma proximité, la rafle du Vel’ d’Hiv. Je les dévisageais, fasciné. Certains avaient grossi, profité de la mort, de l’après guerre, d’autres au contraire s’étaient vidés, amaigris, flasques. (...) [Un jour], je vis s’approcher le fantôme de Laval, avec la volonté de nous expliquer son fameux discours « Je souhaite la victoire de l’Allemagne contre le bolchévisme ». Il fallut toute mon habilité, mon sang froid pour, l’air de rien, l’écarter sans le vexer.<sup>1454</sup>

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<sup>1453</sup> Umberto Eco, cited in Haas, “Mémoire, Identités et Représentations socio-spaciales d’une ville,” 371.

<sup>1454</sup> Jacques Kirsner, “Ah ! monsieur le Maréchal...,” In *Vichy toujours*, 28-29.



Kirsner's regular encounters with ghosts led to his "falling out" with the city: "Au vrai, à partir de ce jour, le charme brisé, le désamour s'installait entre Vichy et moi."<sup>1455</sup> To most visitors, though, the absence of visual and mental landmarks about the war and their inability to properly make sense of this place, shrouded in mystery, have fuelled their fantasies.

As I was doing fieldwork in the *quartier thermal* in the summer of 2014, I met a group of six tourists from Lyon. While vacationing in the Auvergne region, they decided to come to Vichy in search of traces of the Second World War. Standing in front of the *hôtel du Parc*, they were talking about Pétain's apartment and debating the location of a plaque, mentioned by a local policeman.

Tourist 1: [Showing the *hôtel du Parc* to his friends] Oui, c'est là. C'est le 23. L'appart' de Pétain, apparemment on ne peut pas le visiter. Il paraît qu'il est intact. Avec tous ses meubles et tout.<sup>1456</sup> Ils disent pas trop où c'est l'appart'... Parce qu'après certaines personnes pourraient...

Tourist 2: Oui mais bon, c'est l'histoire.

T1: La police m'a dit qu'il y avait toujours les tunnels pour accéder au Carlton. Au Carlton, ils passaient par en dessous, en secret. (...) Et il paraît qu'il y a une plaque avec le nom de tous les membres du gouvernement.

As I was sitting on a bench nearby, I intervened in the discussion. I introduced myself and told them that Pétain's apartment was indeed not open to the public, and that it belonged to the *Association pour la Défense de la Mémoire du Maréchal Pétain*.

T1: La police m'a dit 'C'est intact. Il m'a dit 'c'est meublé, c'est intact.' Et le tunnel, alors il est là ? Quelqu'un m'a dit qu'il y avait encore des sous terrains sous le Carleton, mais je ne sais pas si celui qui va à l'*hôtel du Parc* est encore là...'

Some tunnels and basements have indeed been left untouched. However, because they are private properties it is hard to know exactly where these are or their physical status.

T1: Et la plaque où il y a le nom des membres du gouvernement de Laval ?

A: Il n'y a pas de plaque avec les noms du gouvernement...

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<sup>1455</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>1456</sup> In 2014, the ADMP authorized me to visit the apartment. Contrary to what this tourist believes, Pétain's apartment was not kept in the state in which it was found in 1944. Only one room was left untouched. The rest was restored to the period of the 1940s. The pieces of furniture the ADMP bought in 2009 were recently put back in Pétain's former office.

T1: Si, le policier m'a dit qu'il y avait une plaque avec tous les noms. Par là. Il m'a dit 'Vous descendez des escaliers et il y a une plaque avec les noms des membres du gouvernement...'

A: Il y a une petite plaque au monument aux morts mais ce n'est pas...

T1: Et ben allons voir.

A: Mais c'est pas du tout sur...

T: C'est où ? Le policier, il connaît bien, il m'a donné toutes les infos. Il m'a dit qu'il y avait les noms du gouvernement. (...)

A: Peut être qu'il parle de la plaque de l'Opéra sur les 80 parlementaires qui...

T: Et ils ont été assassinés ?

A: Non. Enfin, certains l'ont été par la suite, mais en juillet 40 ils ont seulement été exclus du gouvernement. Ils n'ont donc jamais fait partie du gouvernement de Laval. Donc si vous cherchez...

T1: Oui, c'est peut être ça.

A: Mais il n'y a pas de liste, c'est juste une plaque qui commémore leur acte de bravoure et...

T1: Et elle est où alors cette plaque ?

I explained to them where it was, on the left of the entrance of the nearby Opera House.

T2: Faites des conférences et des visites, on va y aller ! C'est intéressant!

A: Il y a des guides qui font des visites de...

T3 : OK. Ce doit être intéressant. C'est fou quand même. Ils occultent complètement cette période à Vichy... Tout à l'heure le policier nous a dit que l'appart' de Pétain était au 23, mais quand on est arrivés là, on s'est dit que ça ne pouvait pas être là puisqu'il n'y a aucune indication...

T1: Le policier a dit aussi qu'à certains endroits, il y a encore des traces de balles... Je voulais prendre en photo mais je n'en ai pas vues...

A: Ermm... Je ne sais pas. En tout cas il n'y en a pas ici [ie. à l'hôtel du Parc].

They headed towards the Opera House. This discussion reveals two characteristics about tourists:

(1) that they are desperately looking for urban markers (in the forms of monuments, commemorative or descriptive plaques) to help them establish a route; (2) that they are interested/obsessed with untold stories as well as stories of murder and torture.

Of course, one should not generalize about visitors' expectations; however, the mystery of the place has contributed to an unhealthy curiosity that celebrates dark stories over critical history. At the Tourist Information Center,

Les questions fusent et tout le monde ... a oublié d'oublier. On veut savoir où l'on torturait. (...) [Certains touristes] (...), des amateurs inavoués d'histoire collaborationniste se révèle[nt], avec le plus parfait

mauvais goût, demande[rs] d'une cartographie gestapiste, soulevant sans vergogne les dessous des cartes de la collaboration.<sup>1457</sup>

The stories of torture, which took place in the basements of some of these otherwise luxurious buildings, are of particular interest to people. In “History, Heroism, and Narrative Desire: The ‘Aubrac Affair’ and National Memory of the French Resistance,” Susan Suleiman writes that “the public’s taste for ‘affairs’ and ‘secrets’ ... risked reducing the Resistance to no more than a ‘series of detective stories’.”<sup>1458</sup> Similarly, the silence about Vichy in Vichy risks reducing Pétain’s regime to an object of curiosity and dark fascination.

While people’s obsession with Pétain may have decreased with time, it has not disappeared. Retired history teacher Robert Liris shares a memory that well illustrates the ongoing fascination about Pétain, fuelled by the secrecy around his time in Vichy. One day, he was having lunch with a friend of his, a Parisian journalist, at the *pavillon Sévigné*, where Pétain had resided for a few weeks. All of a sudden the journalist “se mit à toucher les meubles” and exclaimed: “Robert, quand je pense que Pétain a touché tout ça !”<sup>1459</sup> This journalist is not a Pétain supporter, nor is he a sympathizer of the extreme-right, and yet being in Vichy, in a place formerly occupied by Pétain, provoked an immediate – somewhat unhealthy – reaction.

Due to the lack of a clear understanding of what happened in Vichy during the war, rumors have spread rapidly. Some local residents have imagined that the two or three holes engraved on the gate of their property were the traces of a hail of machine gun bullets shot during the liberation, whereas they are, in fact, the traces of a metallic rosette riveted in three locations, which rust had caused to fall off. Other *Vichyssois* have spread false information about their basements, which, they wrongly believe, were used by the Germans.<sup>1460</sup>

Ghost stories have also proliferated in Vichy. One common ghost story that circulates in the city concerns a mansion that is believed to be haunted by the spirits of young prostitutes who are rumored to have been murdered during a wartime drunken orgy for German and French officers. Those circulating ghost stories in Vichy do not fall into the category of uneducated people, or supernatural enthusiasts. While the *Vichyssois* are unsure whether these stories have a basis in truth, none rejects them as completely ridiculous. Ghost stories are known to “proliferate

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<sup>1457</sup> Liris, *L'ordinaire*, 51.

<sup>1458</sup> Susan Suleiman, “History, Heroism, and Narrative Desire: The ‘Aubrac Affair’ and National Memory of the French Resistance,” *South Central Review* 21.1 (2004), 64.

<sup>1459</sup> Robert Liris, interview by author (January 28, 2014).

<sup>1460</sup> Liris, *L'ordinaire*, 51.

rhizomatically”<sup>1461</sup> and Vichy’s ghost stories are no exception to the rule. The haunted mansion story has been especially stubborn and as a result, the house has proven difficult to sell. One of its recent owners reportedly left after a few years, because of the presence of “bad vibes.”<sup>1462</sup>

The fact that we live in a world dominated by rational discourse in which supernatural beliefs are understood as nothing more than “leftovers from a previously romantic primitive culture” has trivialized the study of the supernatural in the academy, especially in the disciplines that are considered scientific.<sup>1463</sup> Historians often dismiss them as irrational and ahistorical. Yet, Avery Gordon, among a few other social science and humanities scholars, has underlined the importance of investigating the irrational manifestations of the past in the present.<sup>1464</sup>

Rumors, gossip and ghost stories are rich historical sources. Such stories do not convey any truth per se but do reflect unease with a particular place.<sup>1465</sup> In Estela Schindel’s words,

rather than producing knowledge understood in a positivistic way, as empirically proven data, they provide evidence of an unease that official narratives cannot convey. (...) They draw attention to the latent legacies of the past that might not be completely accounted for within more ideologically informed, rational approaches to commemorating the past. The ghost stories seem to be indicators of voids, silences or failures in other approaches to knowledge. It is out of the anxiety created by the impossibility of finding consistent narratives for what has been seen or heard that such haunting stories emerge.<sup>1466</sup>

By challenging and destabilizing official narratives, such stories reveal how an unsolved past affects the present.

Ghost stories render possible the existence of a “third space” where “the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity”.<sup>1467</sup> In his article on cultural translation, Ken-fang Lee takes up Homi Bhabha’s concept and compares the notion of the “third space” to a state of “in-betweenness,” allowing for “a different strategy to defend against the appropriation

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<sup>1461</sup> Estela Schindel, “Ghosts and companeros: haunting stories and the quest for justice around Argentina’s former terror sites,” *Rethinking History* 18:2 (2014), 240.

<sup>1462</sup> Informal conversations with neighbors. Summer of 2014.

<sup>1463</sup> Diane Goldstein, Sylvia Grider and Jeannie Banks Thomas, *Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007), 9.

<sup>1464</sup> Avery Gordon, *Ghostly matters : Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>1465</sup> Schindel, “Ghosts and companeros,” 261.

<sup>1466</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>1467</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York : Routledge, 1994), 37.

and interpellation of dominant cultural hegemony.”<sup>1468</sup> In Vichy, however, none of the ghost stories, or rumors, have been acknowledged and reflected upon.

## Conclusion

Many scholars have underlined how space acquired significance for people only when it entailed an emotional dimension. Space is not meaningful in itself. The physicality of a house, its walls and bricks, Edward Said writes in *Orientalism*, is “far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel.”<sup>1469</sup> Space, he adds, “acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here.”<sup>1470</sup>

The positive/poetic meaning assigned by some *Vichyssois* to the *quartier thermal* has been a means for them to compensate for the present malaise related to the common association between the city and the regime. By infusing the landscape with “localized meanings that resist nationalizing narratives,”<sup>1471</sup> the residents have claimed a need for an identity detached from the image of Vichy as the cradle of French collaboration. According to Sharon MacDonald,

substantiating a community’s history through material culture has become the dominant mode of performing identity-legitimacy (...) Because of the selective and predominantly identity-affirmative nature of heritage-making, it typically focuses on triumphs and achievements, or sacrifices involved in the struggle for realization and recognition. Events and material remains which do not fit into such narratives are, thus, likely to be publicly ignored or removed from public space.<sup>1472</sup>

The one sided version of history the *Vichyssois* have constructed has, however, been made increasingly redundant by the emergence of a new imaginative geography, associated with the war, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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<sup>1468</sup> Lee Ken-Fang, “Cultural Translation and the Exorcist: A Reading of Kingston’s and Tan’s ‘Ghost Stories’,” *MELUS* 29 (2004), 106.

<sup>1469</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 55.

<sup>1470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1471</sup> James Opp and John C. Walsh, *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>1472</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009). 2.

## CHAPTER 11 - Changes Under Way: Returning the war to Vichy

Many scholars of memory studies have underlined the human desire to be ‘there’, to step on the ground where great historic events took place. People have a particular interest in experiencing sites where extreme violence occurred. William Logan and Keir Reeves’s book, *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage’* starts with the following observation:

Most societies have their scars of history resulting from involvement in war and civil unrest or adherence to belief systems based on intolerance, racial discrimination or ethnic hostilities. A range of places, sites and institutions represent the legacy of these painful period: massacre and genocide sites, places related to prisoners of war, civil and political prison, and places of ‘benevolent’ internment (...). These sites being shame upon us now for the cruelty and ultimate futility of the events that occurred within them and the ideologies they represented. Increasingly, however, they are now being regarded as ‘heritage sites’, a far cry from the view of heritage that prevailed a general ago when we were almost entirely concerned with protecting the great and beautiful creations of the past.<sup>1473</sup>

Vichy is not a traumatic site when compared to concentration and death camps, or martyr villages, such as Oradour-sur-Glane. Tourists have, however, expressed a strong interest in ‘seeing’ the war in Vichy. In the early 1990s, French journalist Eric Conan reported on the “curiosité croissante des curistes, de plus en plus nombreux à demander où se trouvaient le siège du gouvernement, tel ou tel ministère, le Commissariat aux questions juives, la Milice, etc.”<sup>1474</sup>

Yet, as we saw in Chapter 9, the question of the memorialization of the war in Vichy remains largely unresolved at the level of local politics because of the mayor’s firm refusal to engage with the war’s legacy. In response to the municipality’s inaction, some individuals have

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<sup>1473</sup> William Logan and Keir Reeves, eds., *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage’* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1. On difficult heritage, see also: Estela Schindel and Pamela Colombo, *Space and the Memories of Violence. Landscapes of Erasure, Disappearance and Exception* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Laurence J. Kirmayer, “Landscape of Memory: Trauma, Narrative and Dissociation,” in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, eds., Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 173-198; Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Mats Burström and Bernhard Gelderblom, “Dealing with difficult heritage: The case of Bückeberg, site of the Third Reich Harvest Festival,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11 (2011), 266-282.

<sup>1474</sup> Eric Conan, “Vichy, malade de Vichy,” *L’Express* (1992), 37-38. According to him the Germans and the Americans are “parmi les plus curieux.” The interviews I did and the analyses of the Tourist Information Center, however, suggest that the French are by far the most curious.



taken initiatives to offer local residents insight into the recent past of their city and to meet the visitors' numerous expectations.

### 1. Returning the war to the *quartier thermal*

In the last thirty years, an increasing number of *Vichyssois* have observed the *quartier thermal* in a new light. By desacralizing and shifting the focus away from the most visible history of the place, it has become possible for unwanted memories to be re-attached to the buildings that are architecturally frozen in the *Belle Époque*.

In the 1980s, Jacques Corrocher created and developed the *Vichy thermal* itinerary for tourists; yet because the *Vichy thermal* is also the site where Pétain had established his government, tourists frequently asked questions beyond the tour's main topic. Seeking to address the visitors' demands, Corrocher, in collaboration with Charles Dudognon, a student at Clermont-Ferrand university, created a guided sightsee focusing on the Second World War. In 1986, experimental tours led by Dudognon were organized. Despite very low promotion, word spread quickly and 129 participants joined the walk. In 1990, in front of the enthusiasm of tourists and a segment of Vichy's population, the city decided to have the guided tour officially run by the Tourist Information Center, alongside their other, more traditional, walks.

In the early 1990s, the ADMP reported positively on the guided walk: "Le principe de ces visites-conférences mérite d'être encouragé quand on sait la timidité des autorités municipales à évoquer le passé de leur ville."<sup>1475</sup> In a 1991 issue, letters from readers, like the following, were reproduced:

En cure à Vichy, j'étais très curieuse de savoir ce qui se disait à la promenade-conférence : Vichy-Capitale, 1940-1944. La jeune fille qui animait le groupe a manifesté beaucoup de doigté, de respect et, il faut le dire, un certain courage à faire passer le message 'bouclier' et à évoquer 'la contrainte dans laquelle était tenu le Maréchal'. Enfin ! le sujet n'était pas tabou. La promenade s'est terminée devant les fenêtres de l'appartement du Maréchal (NDLR : acquis par l'ADMP). J'ai discuté un peu avec la conférencière. Je l'ai senti favorable au rétablissement de la vérité. J'étais très émue et heureuse.<sup>1476</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no official transcript of the guides' speech or unofficial recording of these early 1990s visits, making it impossible to assess whether the guides expressed pro-Pétain views.

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<sup>1475</sup> *Le Maréchal* N160 (Fourth trimester, 1990).

<sup>1476</sup> Ibid.

There is evidence, however, suggesting that Corrocher and Dudognon did not aim to rehabilitate Pétain. First, Corrocher has repeatedly explained that he and Dudognon had felt the need to fill in a void in the narrative, which they felt was increasing with the passing years, and had wanted to offer Vichy's residents and tourists the opportunity to finally know more about Vichy under Vichy.<sup>1477</sup> One might argue that Corrocher's good intentions are suspect, yet given the mayor's obsessive fears pertaining to the management of the war legacy in Vichy, it is very unlikely that the tour would have been officially incorporated in the city's tourism program had it been found to have some rehabilitative motives. Furthermore, the public talk Dudognon did in 1987 about Vichy during the war was poorly received by the Petainists. Out of the numerous participants, some were reported to have expressed disappointment at Dudognon's neutral tone. According to a local journalist in attendance at the event, it came close for the questions and comments to become "trop 'particulières'" and for the debate to "tourner à des affrontements verbaux." The journalist underlined the control and the composure of the young guide:

"Vichy, capitale de l'État française": sujet qui, près d'un demi-siècle après, reste terriblement "chaud". C'est pourtant celui qu'avait choisi M. Charles Dudognon pour sa conférence donnée, samedi, au Centre culture Valéry Larbaud. Et bien! On peut dire que le jeune chercheur local a réussi dans son entreprise: appuyée sur une iconographie copieuse, son commentaire a échappé aux coups de gomme comme aux traits trop empâtés.<sup>1478</sup>

Nevertheless, it is highly possible that some guides might have taken up some of the Petainist theses. First, the attitude of certain *Vichyssois* during Dudognon's conference bears witness to the survival of a Petainist memory in Vichy, even if it was no longer publicly asserted since the 1970s. Second, for the city's guided visits, the Tourist Information Center has always hired volunteers that it has never worried to properly train, leaving it up to them to convey the message they wished.<sup>1479</sup> It is thus quite possible that certain guides might have stuck to an aronian type of discourse, despite the initial will of Corrocher and Dudognon to propose a historically "objective" walk. This would justify the positive response of the ADMP in 1990 and 1991.

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<sup>1477</sup> Nathalie Combaret, "La mémoire de la période de l'occupation dans la ville de Vichy" (MA thesis, Université Clermont-Ferrand, 2003); Jacques Corrocher, interview by author (February 13, 2014).

<sup>1478</sup> "Un jeune chercheur se penche sur le passé de sa ville – Quand Vichy était capitale de l'État français..." *La Montagne* (June 22, 1987).

<sup>1479</sup> According to some of the guides. Informal conversations with author (summer of 2014).

The visits that I have undertaken between 2012 and 2015 did not convey a pro-Pétain message. Furthermore, they were carried out in a calm atmosphere, which contradicts what Malhuret stated some years back: “Alors que toutes les autres visites se déroulent tranquillement, [‘Vichy Capitale’] se déroule chaque fois dans un climat tendu. Dès que des questions sont posées l’assistance se divise régulièrement en deux camps et il n’est pas rare qu’on s’injurie.”<sup>1480</sup> There will always be visitors (and locals) to defend the ADMP’s theses, or those of the negationists, but according to the current guides’ testimonies<sup>1481</sup> and according to my own observations, it seems safe to say that the passions have been calmed. Moreover, this problem is not typically Vichy’s. All ‘sensitive’ places are at risk of attracting a revisionist clientele.

That said, the tour can be criticized on several grounds. First, by only showing visitors sites in the spa neighborhood and by limiting the number of sites dealing with the Second World War to the sites of power (mostly ministries), it restricts visitors’ understanding of wartime Vichy.<sup>1482</sup> From a more practical point of view, the headsets that the visitors are asked to wear to better hear the guide are outdated and they sometimes hinder more than facilitate the auditory experience. Another criticism that can be directed to the guides is that their presentations’ content are often very anecdotal. However testimonies from the guides and my own observations indicate that overly anecdotal narratives are what visitors enjoy the most. The majority of the people who attended the same tours as I did were more interested by the ‘random facts’, such as the love stories of some or other ambassador than by the ideological or political considerations that the Vichy regime brings forth and that have been at the heart of Second World War scholarship for the past forty years. Although the walk has many flaws, at least it exists. Not only does it assert an important chapter of the neighborhood’s history, but it also answers the visitors’ demands to see Vichy in Vichy, if only superficially. The *Vichy 1940-1944* tour, which attracted more than 1,600 individual visitors and sixty-two groups in 2013, has been one of the two most popular tours since the late 1990s.<sup>1483</sup> It is therefore also one of the most profitable for the city.<sup>1484</sup>

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<sup>1480</sup> Claude Malhuret, *Vichy au coeur : Notre ville à l’aube du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Vichy: Association de financement de la campagne électorale de Claude Malhuret, 2001), 53.

<sup>1481</sup> Informal conversation with guides.

<sup>1482</sup> An audio guide could easily make up for that. By including information about all the significant sites across the city, it would allow visitors to have a more comprehensive experience and to better understand how the war was experienced by the population, the most part of whom did not live in the spa neighborhood.

<sup>1483</sup> The statistics were provided to me by Philippe Gendre, director of the Tourist Information Center. The other most popular tour is *Vichy patrimoine*.

<sup>1484</sup> A ticket costs 7,5 euros. All guided tours are only available between June and September, two or three times a week for the most popular ones.

Another grassroots action to bring back the war was initiated in the 1980s at the *Petit Casino*, the former headquarters of the milice; yet this initiative was cut short by the municipal council before it could even materialize. The *Petit Casino* is a prime example of the erasure of the Vichy regime from the history of the city. Within twenty years, it went from being the milice's torture center to being the city's cultural center. While this place has been etched into the memory of all the *Vichyssois* who were there during the war, it has now sunk into the abyss of forgetting. Several articles about the building were published in the local press before and after the inauguration of the new cultural center, but the site's wartime history was rarely mentioned. In 2000, an article about the *Petit Casino*, published as part of a local series "Un lieu, une histoire," omitted the period between the 1930s and the 1960s.<sup>1485</sup> In the 1980s, paintings of *francisques*, the *État français*' symbol, and of black gammas, the milice's symbol, were discovered on the roof of the *Petit Casino* by a man who was in charge of an art course at the center. During the war, to occupy their time, the *miliciens* would gather on the roof, where they painted *francisques* and *back gammas*; so this discovery was not surprising in itself. Yet, after all these years trying to erase the war traces in Vichy it was quite unexpected. The art teacher thought that it might be a good idea to feature the paintings, and he undertook renovation work. According to local retired history teacher, Robert Liris, as soon as the municipality became aware of the matter, it ordered the paintings to be removed.<sup>1486</sup>

Cinema further contributed to shift the focus away from the *Belle Époque* by emphasizing the wartime setting of the *quartier thermal*. As previously underlined, many films shot in Vichy's *quartier thermal* have focused on the imperial and belle époque architectural beauty of Vichy: *Les Maigret à Vichy* (1967), *Le cri du hibou* (1987), *Bon Voyage* (2002), *Coco Chanel* (2008). Since the late 1970s, however, there has been another cinematographic trend: filming *Vichy* in Vichy. The city has changed little since the early twentieth century, and little modification is needed to capture the look of wartime Vichy. According to filmmaker Jacques Santamaria,

Si l'on accepte de considérer que le décor spécifique se situe dans un périmètre délimité, en gros, [le quartier thermal], on voit tout de suite que la ville peut se revendiquer une spécialité : l'Histoire. Deux périodes sont en lice, le Second Empire et l'Occupation. S'il y a concurrence pour la première (avec, disons, Biarritz), Vichy est sans rivale pour la seconde... Le Grand Casino [i.e. the Opera House], le

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<sup>1485</sup> "Le Petit Casino une très intéressante construction," newspaper unknown (August 29, 2000).

<sup>1486</sup> Robert Liris, *L'ordinaire de Vichy, 1940-1942* (Belgrade: Pesic and Sinovi, 2011), 52-53.

Parc des Sources, le Pavillon Sévigné, naturellement l'Hôtel du Parc ne sont pas situés autre part.<sup>1487</sup>

Some of the films about the war shot (in part or in whole) in Vichy include Costa Gavras' *Section special* (1974), which is already mentioned in Chapter 8, Pierre Beuchot's *Hôtel du Parc* (1991); Jean Marboeuf's *Pétain* (1992), based on Marc Ferro's book, *Pétain*; and Serges Moati's documentary-fiction *Mitterrand à Vichy* (2008), based on Pierre Péan's book, *Une jeunesse française*. For Marboeuf's *Pétain*, while Pétain's apartment, the German embassy in Paris, and execution rooms were reconstructed in the deserted bottling plant in Saint Yorre, in the suburbs of Vichy, many other scenes were shot in real locations, such as the Opera House, the *Grand Café* and the *kiosque à musique* in the *quartier thermal*.<sup>1488</sup>

## 2. Water is memory

Fabrice Dubusset, an artistic director and theater enthusiast, grew up in Vichy. As a teenager, he learned that members of his family had worked for Pétain's government, albeit not of their own free will – his grandfather, for example, was requisitioned as one of Pierre Laval's drivers. It is this particular aspect of his family history, about which he knows little, that led him to “réfléchir à ces questions de mémoire, à ce trou de mémoire ici. [À Vichy], on ressent une absence, en tout cas pour ceux qui sont attentifs à ce genre de choses. Surtout les artistes, on ressent quelque chose dans l'air, quelque chose qui est impalpable mais qui est présent.”<sup>1489</sup> In the 1990s, he started considering using theater as a way of critically reflecting on the management of the war memory in Vichy, and to encourage people to do the same.

His foray into using theatre in this manner dates back to the mid-1990s when he considered working around the concept of ‘collaboration’: “l'idée c'était de travailler avec des Allemands, des Italiens et des acteurs français et de changer la signification du mot collaboration, de faire une collaboration artistique.”<sup>1490</sup> Yet, the municipality, which gives a small yearly subsidy to Dubusset's theater company and provides his actors with a space for rehearsal, expressed its disagreement with the initiative. Aware of the possible backlash such a project

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<sup>1487</sup> Jacques Santamaria, “Filmer Vichy,” in *Vichy toujours*, 4.

<sup>1488</sup> Nicole Périchon, *Vichy de A à Z* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: A. Sutton, 2009), 30.

<sup>1489</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1490</sup> Ibid.

could have for his young company, Dubusset opted to abandon it.<sup>1491</sup> About ten years later, however, he returned to the idea of working on the Second World War and adapted Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Qu'une tranche de pain* (1967), about a German filmmaker who tries, and fails, to write a screenplay about Auschwitz. Although not explicitly about the 'Vichy problem', it is evident that through this play, Dubusset was addressing the city's, as well as his own, inability to productively engage the memory of Vichy in Vichy. Dubusset knew that Vichy was still not receptive to such a production and so he chose to perform the play in Clermont-Ferrand instead.

In 2013, through mutual friends, Dubusset met French author, Chochana Boukhobza.<sup>1492</sup> From this meeting was born the idea of a collaborative work in the form of a theater play featuring life stories of *Vichyssois* resisters. Although the municipality did not endorse the new project or provide financial assistance, it did not interfere in its realization either.<sup>1493</sup> The following year, the artistic and memorial project *Water is Memory*,<sup>1494</sup> whose centerpiece was *Treize*, a play written by Boukhobza and directed by Dubusset, was presented in Vichy. Through this initiative, Dubusset has situated his work within the emerging trend of 'theater memory'. Drawing on recent examples of theater adaptations of books such as Primo Levi's *Si c'est un homme*, or Wladyslaw Szpilman's *The Pianist*, Annick Asso argues that theater has become "un espace de 'co-mémoration', un lieu de mémoire et de transmission."<sup>1495</sup>

Dubusset chose to stage his troop's performance at the *Concours Hippique*, a Vichy landmark. In 1866 the *Société Hippique française* organized the first horse jumping competitions in France. A few cities, including Lyon, were selected across France. Lyon, however, withdrew its participation. Vichy volunteered to take its place. Within a few months, an equestrian stadium, with a 600-meter racetrack and boxes able to accommodate up to 250 horses, was built close to the city's center. The first jumping competition took place from June 26 to July 3, 1887. It was a

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<sup>1491</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1492</sup> She is the author of several novels, including *Un été à Jérusalem*, which won the *Prix Méditerranée* in 1986; and *Le Cri*, for which she was a finalist for the 1987 *Prix Femina*.

<sup>1493</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1494</sup> Inspired by the comings and goings of the water, the idea was to convey the image of a return of the past, dictated not by human will, but by a natural force, against which one can not fight. What is metaphorically implied here is that because there is a lot of water in Vichy, many memories are likely to resurface.

<sup>1495</sup> Annick Asso, "Le témoignage comme mode de représentation de la Shoah au théâtre," in *Culture et mémoire : Représentation contemporaines de la mémoire dans les espaces mémoriels, les arts du visuel, la littérature et le théâtre*, eds., Carola Hähnel-Mesnard, Marie Liénard-Yeterian, and Cristina Marinas (Paris: Editions de l'École polytechnique, 2008), 491.



great success, and the competitions continued until 1914. During the Great War, the stadium was made available to French troops.<sup>1496</sup> During the Second World War, it was requisitioned for the refugees (see Chapter 1), before being used by Pétain's military groups, the GMR, between 1941 and 1944. At the liberation, the *Comité départemental de Libération* turned it into an internment camp (see Chapter 4). The last prisoners left the camp in the summer of 1945. The horse jumping competitions resumed two years later. To this day, Vichy's jumping competition remains one of the most important jumping tournaments in France, and the stadium is the only stadium in Europe to have a grass track, thus making the site unique.<sup>1497</sup> Dubusset chose this highly symbolic site to contest the municipality's refusal to inscribe the memory of the war in the urban landscape, and to force spectators to acknowledge the multi-layered history of one of Vichy's most notorious sites.

The play featured the story of thirteen local residents, who joined the Resistance for different reasons, at different times, and with different outcomes. To Dubusset, it was essential to have a wide range of characters, each with their own doubts and fears, "pour montrer que ça n'a pas été tout blanc ou tout noir."<sup>1498</sup> Each resister was in a horse box, in which (s)he played a seven-minute *scénette* in front of a group of ten spectators, who had been crowded in the same box, only a few centimeters away from the actors. In Dubusset's words, the relationship between the characters and the spectators was "presque charnelle. Cette proximité donne vie au personnage, elle implique le spectateur. L'idée de la pièce c'était que la mémoire s'approche de [et s'accroche à] toi,"<sup>1499</sup> like the smell of onion that lingered on the spectators' clothes immediately after the latter had stepped in one of the female character's box, where she was peeling vegetables to make a soup.

Each of the thirteen monologues was both historically accurate – Boukhobza did research in the municipal and national archives, and emotionally powerful, as suggested by the two extracts below. Dubusset wanted the piece to be emotional and personal enough for audiences to connect with the characters.

Roger Kespy:

Ils m'ont cassé la gueule, brûlé à l'électricité, arraché les ongles.

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<sup>1496</sup> For a history of the equestrian stadium, see: Jacques Legendre, *Un siècle de Concours hippiques à Vichy – 1887-1993* (Vichy: Imprimerie Copie express, 1994), 123.

<sup>1497</sup> Official website of the city of Vichy: <https://www.ville-vichy.fr/decouvrir-et-sortir/loisirs/hippisme/stade-equestre-du-sichon> (Accessed July 30, 2016).

<sup>1498</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1499</sup> Ibid.

Ils me parlent d'une voix douce en m'écrasant les doigts à coups de marteau.

Je ne parlerai pas...

Haletant, haletant, entre deux râles, deux hurlements, alors que tout se brise en moi, que mes yeux s'aveuglent de larmes et de sang, dans cette nuit affreuse, cet épouvantable tourment, je ne puis que crier à Dieu, pourquoi ? Tu m'as-tu donné un cœur trop fort, pourquoi bat il encore malgré ce qu'ils me font ? Tu m'as abandonné, pourquoi ? Fais quelque chose, maintenant ! Que mon souffle s'arrête. Ote-moi la vie ! Je ne peux plus souffrir.

Certains de mes amis ont caché une capsule de cyanure dans une dent. En tombant entre leurs mains, ils se sont donnés la mort. D'autres ont couru vers la fenêtre et se sont jetés dans le vide.

D'autres se sont pendus.

Moi, ils me surveillent. Jour et nuit... Même me suicider, je ne peux pas...

Ils n'auront rien. Aucun de mes camarades ne sera mutilé à cause de moi. Ils peuvent m'arracher un bras ou les deux, me couper une jambe, faire encore et encore couler mon sang.

Je partirais avec mes secrets...

Le 12 avril 1944, ils nous font monter dans un camion Jean-Louis, Claude, Frédéric et moi.

Nous arrivons dans les bois de Marcenat.

Le vent est sur ma peau, comme une caresse. On me jette sur un tapis de feuilles mortes.

Les allemands assassinent sous mes yeux Jean-Louis, Claude et Frédéric par rafales de mitraillettes.

Puis ils tirent sur moi. Les yeux fixés au ciel, j'entre dans le royaume des morts, là où règne la paix.

Marguerite Gelis:

Mon père était ébéniste, ma mère couturière. Et je porte le nom d'une fleur. Marguerite.

Enfant,... le monde était empli de promesses et de prés, d'amour, de lait et de rivières...

A 32 ans, j'épouse Gaston Gélis, un journaliste...

[Pendant la guerre, à Vichy,] Gaston noircit de sa colère des cahiers et des feuilles volantes.

Bientôt, écrire ne suffit plus. Ensemble, nous entrons en résistance.

Gaston essaye de recruter des conseillers politiques, des préfets, des militaires. Il s'infiltré dans les ministères et les services de l'armée, fait du renseignement. Je transmets ces messages à des contacts ou dans une boîte à lettres...

Je suis arrêtée le 27 octobre 1943. La Gestapo m'accuse d'intelligence avec l'ennemi et de sabotage de la politique franco-allemande... On m'enferme trois semaines dans une cave avec une couverture, une

écuelle, un quart, une cuillère. Pas de savon, pas d'eau pour me laver. Je ne peux pas écrire de lettres, ni recevoir de colis...

Près de moi, des résistants torturés, vocifèrent. Pour les faire parler, la Gestapo les coiffent d'un casque à clous, frappent leurs membres avec des bouteilles, les suspendent à des palans...

Un jour on me transfère à la Mal Coiffée, la prison militaire allemande à Moulins. Le 23 janvier 44, je suis à Compiègne... Le 31 janvier, je suis déportée par le convoi I.175...

Cinq jours de voyage. Puis, dans la nuit trouée de projecteurs, les portes roulent comme un tonnerre. Dans le ciel, il n'y a ni lune, ni étoile. Les seigneurs de la mort hurlent : Schnell! Schnell! Rauss, Rauss! ...

Ravensbrück... Je deviens le n° 27 415...

Les femmes qui se jettent sur les barbelés électrifiés ressemblent à des libellules. Elles agonisent sur les ronces en fer, mais leur supplice s'achève.

J'ai survécu aux poux, à la faim, aux coups, à la vermine, aux corvées de merde...

En avril, on appelle mon matricule. Le train quitte Ravensbrück. Dans les champs, tout est en fleur. Nous arrivons en Tchécoslovaquie, mais c'est toujours l'enfer. Nous sommes à MWH, les initiales de

« metalwerke Holleishen. » Nouveaux matricules ; je suis le 50 432...

Le 5 juin 1945, les partisans polonais et tchèques libèrent le camp. Ils sourient, les yeux brillants de larmes et nous appellent "maman". Nous sommes devenues de vieilles femmes.

The play was designed to bombard several of the audience's senses. All the actors recited their texts at the same time, while agonizing music, screams, and whispers played in the background to create a stressful polyphony of voices. Every seven minutes, spectators moved on to another horse box through dark and smoky alleys, while the cries and the music achieved their full volume. Dubusset used music as a natural prolongation of the actors' texts, thereby giving another dimension to the scenography, and stimulating the spectators' imagination. "Au début, les regards étaient dynamiques. Mais après un moment, les regards entre les spectateurs ne se croisaient plus. Il y avait une émotion forte. Chacun était absorbé dans la pièce."<sup>1500</sup> According to Diana Popescu, imagination has the potential to play "a significant role for the post-memory generations as it offers the possibility to work against closure and silence."<sup>1501</sup> Similarly, Dubusset's play has the potential to engage residents and to encourage them to reflect upon the legacy of the war on their city, their family and, in some cases, themselves. Dubusset's objective

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<sup>1500</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1501</sup> Tanja Schult and Diana Popescu, eds., *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-2.

was threefold: “informer les Vichyssois sur l’histoire de Vichy sous Vichy, montrer que Vichy a été une ville résistante, et de façon plus générale, faire réfléchir les gens sur le poids du passé.”<sup>1502</sup> Theater provides a good vehicle to do so. Indeed as “intervention[s] qui permet[ent] de retrouver du sens, de la cohésion dans une expérience commune,” theatrical performances “offre[nt] de recréer une mémoire de cet événement, de construire un partage de cette mémoire entre survivants, témoins et public.”<sup>1503</sup>

It is common for memory sites to “presentify [the past] in a way that resembles an ‘acting out’: a compulsive repetition, as is the case of Oradour where the flow of time is frozen by means of a disturbing restoration à l’identique.” Other sites, on the other hand, “filter the event, for example by inserting explanatory plaques, screenings of documentaries, art installations, and so on.” Only a few succeed in “re-semanticizing” these places of memory in a more critical fashion, “in a bid to hand them back to the community for new and more vital functions.”<sup>1504</sup> Although Dubusset’s playwright has not permanently impacted and altered the *Concours Hippique*, it has nonetheless succeeded in turning it into a critical space of reflection, if only for a few weeks. As such it has made room for marginal (hi)stories to emerge and for boundaries to be transgressed. Dubusset’s company “n’en est pas à son coup d’essai, mais celui-là est un coup de maître,” local leader and opponent to the mayor Christophe Pommeray asserted in 2014.<sup>1505</sup>

*Treize* was initially supposed to be performed only a few times in May 2014, but the positive response from the audience led Dubusset to add more dates and to reschedule it for the following year. In total, more than 1,000 spectators attended the performance, of which the great majority were local residents. “Beaucoup ont découvert cet aspect de l’histoire de la ville. D’un autre côté, beaucoup sont également venus me voir à la fin pour me dire ‘j’ai des documents sur cette période si ça vous intéresse,’” proudly asserted Dubusset in the summer of 2014, not yet knowing that the success of 2015 would exceed that of the previous year.<sup>1506</sup>

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<sup>1502</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1503</sup> Carole Guidicelli, “The théâtre documentaire : Pour la constitution d’une mémoire commune?” in *Culture et mémoire*, 509.

<sup>1504</sup> Valentina Pisanty, review of *Paesaggi della memoria: il trauma, lo spazio, la storia* (Bompiani: Milan, Italy (2014), published on the website of the *Historical Dialogues, Justice and Memory Network*: <http://historicaldialogues.org/2015/07/23/book-review-paesaggi-della-memoria-il-trauma-lo-spazio-la-storia-landscapes-of-memory-trauma-space-history/> (Accessed May 12, 2016).

<sup>1505</sup> Christophe Pommeray, blog entry: “J’ai rencontré Kespy” (May 30, 2014). <http://pommeray.blog.lemonde.fr/2014/05/30/jai-rencontre-kespy/> (Accessed January 15, 2016).

<sup>1506</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).







Figures 33 to 36. Screenshots from a video recording of *Treize*.<sup>1507</sup>

### 3. Other (less space-related) grassroots initiatives

In 2007, the first oral testimonies of people who lived in Vichy during the war were recorded for a video documentary produced by Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel. As *Vichyssois* themselves and as documentary filmmakers, the topic of the memory of the Second

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<sup>1507</sup> Courtesy of Fabrice Dubusset.



World War was particularly attractive.<sup>1508</sup> In their attempt to document and to address the city's memory hole, they recorded hours of interviews with various people, including mere observers, active resisters, Jews, and Pétain's admirers. Although the sample is too small to be representative of the population, it is nonetheless big enough to present different perspectives on the wartime in Vichy. A Jewish survivor, for example, reflects on how his family survived the war, whereas a former resister explained how he joined the resistance and got arrested by *miliciens*, at the hands of whom he suffered torture. Still others describe the local enthusiasm and excitement generated by Pétain's frequent visits to local schools and his frequent walks in the city's parks. The documentary also includes interviewees with *Vichyssois* from the postwar generation, thereby offering differing perceptions across the generations.

By documenting both the past and the present, the documentary's contributions are multiple. Not only does it offer additional information about what life was like in Vichy between 1940 and 1945, but it also reveals the pervasiveness of the memory of the war (and the younger generation's desire to know more about this period), in spite of, or maybe because of, the city's memory politics that have always favored silence. Despite the valuable and much-needed contribution to the scholarship on the local experience of the war, this project received little funding from the region and no public screening was organized in Vichy. The documentary was later published on DVD, which was packaged with a booklet by Henry Rousso that discussed the evolution of the memory of the war in France and in Vichy.

François Demaegdt is another person who became involved in historical and memorial work about the war in Vichy. Demaegdt's father, a Belgian citizen involved in the Resistance was arrested in Paris and deported to Dachau. Unlike many, he survived. Upon hearing his father's stories, François Demaegdt, a high school teacher in Moulins, engaged himself in helping the families who had lost a loved one in deportation. In 1997, he created a departmental section of the *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation* (AFMD). Tirelessly, he has combed through the reference works, the police reports, the municipal, department and national archives, traced the family archives, and gathered survivors' testimonies. The association has thus far successfully identified about 1,600 individuals from the Allier – or who were refugees in the department – who died in deportation. According to Demaegdt's research, one third of the Allier's deportees were Jewish, and many of them were children. Very few of them survived. Under his initiative,

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<sup>1508</sup> Paule Muxel and Bertrand de Solliers, informal conversation with author (summer 2012).

many plaques and steles were erected everywhere in the department, including in Vichy's synagogue. His research also led to the presentation of the medal of the Righteous to a couple from a small village close to Vichy: Philibert and Marie-Louise Tuloup, who, in October 1943, saved two Jewish girls who had just narrowly escaped an arrest. Finally, between 2003 and 2009, Demaegdt produced two exhibitions: *Un canton, un déporté* in collaboration with the *Conseil général de l'Allier* and another one about the deportation of Jewish children from the department.<sup>1509</sup>

While Demaegdt's motivations in retracing the history of the local deportees may be easily understood because his own father had been deported, some *Vichyssois* whose families had worked for members of the government have also expressed a desire to join the grassroots movement working to return the war to the former capital and work through their own difficult heritage. This has been the case for Fabrice Dubusset, whose family history "[l]'a amené à réfléchir à ces questions de mémoire, à ce trou de mémoire [qu'il y a] ici,"<sup>1510</sup> and of Jean-Yves Bordesoult, one of the current guides for the *Vichy, Capitale de l'État français* guided walk. Bordesoult knows little about the life of his family during the war, except that his father was requisitioned as a dentist: "Mon père n'en a jamais parlé. Jamais. Vous savez, dans les familles comme ça, un peu bourgeoises, on ne parlait pas vraiment de cette période."<sup>1511</sup> Over the years, as he was trying to gather information, he realized that his father's former clients were the best informants. He learned, for example, that his father had fixed Pétain's teeth and that he was involved in a resistance network. But his quest for information only provided partial results. Bordesoult's inability to fill in the gaps of his family history is one of the reasons why he has involved himself in the guided walks since his retirement.<sup>1512</sup>

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<sup>1509</sup> "Dans les pas d'un graveur de mémoire," *La Montagne* (July 21, 2001).

Demaegdt also contributed to the project about the *Château des Morelles*, in Broût Vernet, a few kilometers from Vichy. The Château was one the *Oeuvre de secours aux enfants'* fourteen accommodation centers for Jewish children in the unoccupied zone. By 1944, 339 children had stayed there for periods of time ranging from a few days to several months. Demaegdt counted one by one all the children who had stayed at the Morelles and documented each one's story (as far as it was possible). His research gave rise to a book, in collaboration with Jean-François Glomet, president of the *Azi la Garance* Association and with the contribution of the mayors of Broût Vernet, Hubert Chassaing, Louis Jaffuel et Pierre Houbé. "250 personnes ont, samedi, salle d'Alançon, assisté à la conférence de François Demaegdt dans le cadre de l'hommage rendu aux enfants juifs de la maison des Morelles," *La Montagne* (May 11, 2010).

<sup>1510</sup> Fabrice Dubusset, interview by author (August 8, 2014).

<sup>1511</sup> Jean-Yves Bordesoult, interview by author (February 4, 2014).

<sup>1512</sup> Ibid.

Realizing the growing popular demands to know more about the life in Vichy under *Vichy*, in the summer of 2014, the local press published a series of portraits of *Vichyssois* during the war. “Cet été, une fois par semaine, nous remontons le temps jusqu’en 1944,” the newspaper advertised. Echoing the work done by Bertrand de Solliers and Paule Muxel a few years earlier, the journalists offered witnesses a public platform to share their stories. The video interviews, often conducted at the interviewees’ home, were later uploaded to YouTube, offering a longer version of the person’s life story than the one edited for the newspaper. Louis Chavegnon was one of the *Vichyssois* featured in the series. During the war, Chavegnon, who was 11 in 1940, worked as an apprentice in a music store on *rue du Portugal*:

J’accompagnais [mon patron] à l’hôtel du Portugal, au siège de la Gestapo. Il me disait de bien écouter aux portes tout ce qui se disait pendant qu’il accordait le piano du chef des SS. Après, je devais lui raconter. Il faisait partie de la Résistance, mais moi je ne savais pas. Ce SS, c’était un sacré musicien, c’était un monsieur. Il essayait le piano puis offrait le champagne à mon patron. J’étais très impressionné, il était gentil avec nous. Après, j’ai eu du mal à comprendre comment ils pouvaient être si gentils et faire ce qu’ils avaient fait. Sur le moment, on n’y pensait pas. C’est après.<sup>1513</sup>

The pianist might have been the infamous Hugo Geissler. But Chavegnon is unsure as he has forgotten what the man looked like. Chavegnon also shared a memory of the chaos of the liberation. The night the Germans left the city while leaving behind some of their equipment, he remembers going to salvage provisions and guns with his father:

Quand on est arrivés, il y avait déjà des gens : on a trouvé des pâtes, du riz, du café, de l’huile. Mais pas par terre, dans les camions. Dans un coffre, il y avait des pistolets. J’en ai pris trois ou quatre, avec les chargeurs. Après je m’en suis débarrassé. On a ramené une pleine remorque Michelin de victuailles.<sup>1514</sup>

Jeanne Gonzales is another long term resident to be featured in the series. She recounts how her family, who lived in the suburbs of Vichy, got by during the war: “Beaucoup de gens avaient des jardins, des poules, des lapins. Chez nous, ma maman avait loué un morceau de terre chez un paysan, elle faisait des pommes de terre. On n’a pas trop souffert, on faisait la queue

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<sup>1513</sup> “Louis Chavenon, 83 ans, habitait à Vichy pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale,” *La Montagne* (July 29, 2014).

<sup>1514</sup> Ibid.

comme tout le monde avec nos tickets de ravitaillement.”<sup>1515</sup> Stories of suffering and fear were also included in the series. Thérèse Gitenay was four when the government settled in Vichy. For her, the war is first a memory of constant anguish. She admitted to the journalist that she had been unable to talk about it for many decades: “Je suis restée cinquante ans sans pouvoir en parler.” But in the presence of the journalist, her memories “revenaient au galop”; they “s’entrechoquaient et se complétaient. Sur la toile cirée de la cuisine, Thérèse avait griffonné ce qu’elle veut raconter.” One of Gitenay’s most persistent memories of the war concerns a German soldier who hugged her for no particular reason:

Les Allemands, on les entendait défiler toute la journée. Ce bruit, je l’ai toujours dans la tête...  
Un jour, on était à Vichy pour danser devant des soldats. À un moment, un soldat m’a serré fort contre lui, j’étouffais, il ne parlait pas français... Ça m’a traumatisée. Il avait la tête bandée, je le revoie toujours. Plus tard, je me suis dit qu’il avait sans doute laissé chez lui une petite fille qui me ressemblait.

The fear of the Germans, who, in 1940, did not remain long in Vichy, was replaced by the fear of lacking, hunger, and disease.

Pour manger, c’était une catastrophe. A Vichy, avec les ministères, il n’y avait rien. Avec nos tickets de ravitaillement, ma mère nous mettait dans une file, quand on arrivait il n’y avait plus rien. Mon père allait parfois tuer le cochon, chez les grands-parents à Ferrières-sur-Sichon. Il partait la nuit en bicyclette, sans lumière.

The weakest had difficulties adapting to the degrading life conditions: “je me souviens de camarades qui perdaient leurs jeunes frères ou sœurs. Il y avait des épidémies, des problèmes d’hygiène. Il y avait l’impétigo, les poux, la gale, les punaises de lit.” As underlined in Chapter 1, not all the *Vichyssois* easily lived through the war. Gitenay has even more vivid memories of the liberation. She was eight at the time. The lynching of collaborators marked her for life:

J’ai le souvenir d’un, dont la corde a cassé et qui est tombé sur le toit du lavoir, en face de la prison. Je n’ai pas oublié le bruit. Ils les avaient pendus sur les poteaux électriques, dont un qu’ils étaient allés chercher à l’hôpital des bonnes sœurs. Les deux autres étaient à la prison, ils les avaient trainés par terre, avec juste un drap blanc pour cacher les parties. Puis ils ont été pendus par les pieds... C’était atroce de voir ça à

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<sup>1515</sup> “Jeanne Gonzales, 80 ans, a vécu la Seconde Guerre mondiale à Saint-Yorre,” *La Montagne* (August 19, 2014).

8 ans. Il y avait un monde fou ; nous, on était en première ligne, avec l'école. Je n'ai jamais oublié.<sup>1516</sup>

The newspaper received more responses to its call for testimonies than expected. As a consequence, the series was extended until the end of September. Although these testimonies only provide decontextualized memories of moments in the daily life of a restricted number of *Vichyssois*, they nonetheless offer a valuable follow up to the work initiated by de Solliers and Muxel. They also contribute to humanize the experience of the war in Vichy. Some of the testimonies were given by children or grand children of first-hand witnesses, revealing both the younger generations' desire to be offered a platform to talk about their (grand) parents' memories, but also that this type of initiative unfortunately comes too late. The testimonies of first-hand witnesses could be valuable historical sources for all the people involved in bringing the memory of the war back to Vichy and in writing a history of the local experience of the war, yet most first-hand witnesses have now died. Those who are still alive are so old that their memories are often fragmented and unconnected, making it difficult for the researcher to rely on their testimonies.

The latest historical and memorial project to have been initiated in Vichy is the *Centre international d'Etudes et de Recherches de Vichy*, an association founded by a group of five *Vichyssois* in April 2016. The association's mission, as defined in the promotional document its founders circulated in the spring, is to "contribuer, sans tabous et de façon raisonnée, non seulement à faire progresser la connaissance de la période, mais également faciliter son inscription apaisée dans la mémoire nationale et locale afin que, pour paraphraser Henry Rousso, ce passé douloureux finisse par passer." While their national (and international) ambitions might be too high given the low support they have so far received from the city, their initiative is worthy of interest. In addition to organizing public conferences and meetings, they also hope to "contribuer à la collecte de témoignages, écrits ou oraux, d'acteurs de la période et recueillir des archives privées, en dépôt dans les familles, et aider à leur intégration dans le patrimoine public, en collaboration avec les services des archives départementales." Assessing how their work might impact the city's historical consciousness (if at all) is impossible, as their first event (a public talk by prominent scholars) has not yet occurred.<sup>1517</sup> It is nonetheless significant to note that within a

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<sup>1516</sup> "L'angoisse permanente d'une fillette. Thérèse Gitenay, 78 ans, habitait Cusset pendant la seconde Guerre mondiale," *La Montagne* (July 8, 2014).

<sup>1517</sup> The event is scheduled for November 2016. The speakers include French historians Olivier Wieviorka and Dominique Vergez-Chaignon.

few weeks, more than 200 people (most of whom are *Vichyssois*) had already become contributing members.<sup>1518</sup>

Whether or not Vichy should have a museum about the Second World War is an oft-raised question. More than 110 museums about the war were built between 1980 and 1999 across France. These local initiatives resulted from the laws on decentralization that abolished the requirement of authorization from the prefect for the installation of commemorative plaques.<sup>1519</sup> Vichy's mayor has always opposed the construction of a museum in Vichy. He explained his reasons in 2001:

Pourquoi ne suis-je pas favorable à un musée supplémentaire [à Vichy] dans l'immédiat ? Parce que depuis douze ans je prépare chaque année le budget de la ville et je crois pouvoir dire que je commence à bien le connaître. Ce budget ne nous permet pas de tout faire, sauf à augmenter la pression fiscale, ce que personne ne souhaite. (...) [Un musée sur Vichy-capitale] part d'une réflexion défendable (...) : Vichy souffre d'une mauvaise image liée à la période de la collaboration. Pour exorciser cette image, il faut parler du problème et un musée serait le moyen de le faire. Pourquoi pas ? Malheureusement (...) cette période fait encore partie de nos tabous et suscite toujours autant de réactions passionnées. Que se passera-t-il si demain Vichy décide de créer un musée consacré à cette période ? Quelles que soient les précautions que nous prendrons, quels que soient les spécialistes dont nous nous entourerons, il y aura toujours des esprits forts pour estimer que c'est une entreprise révisionniste. Et même s'ils ne représentent qu'un faible pourcentage des visiteurs ... il se trouvera toujours des commentateurs pour enfourcher ce cheval et lancer la polémique. Car notre époque se prête magnifiquement aux polémiques publiques. Pour ma part, il n'est pas question que je fasse courir aux Vichyssois et à l'image de Vichy les risques d'un soi-disant remède qui pourrait se révéler pire que le mal... Un jour peut être, un jour futur, il se peut qu'il y ait à Vichy un musée de la période 40-44. Mais dans d'autres conditions.<sup>1520</sup>

Similar concerns about the possible backlash of a memorialization of the war have been expressed in places with a strong Nazi legacy, such as Nuremberg and Bückeburg in Germany. Nowhere was doing nothing the solution.<sup>1521</sup>

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<sup>1518</sup> Michel Prommerat (one of the founders), informal conversation with the author (June 2016).

<sup>1519</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, trans. George Holloch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 124.

<sup>1520</sup> Malhuret, *Vichy au coeur*, 52-53.

<sup>1521</sup> On this see: Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*; Burström and Gelderblom, "Dealing with difficult heritage."



Several well-established historians have voiced their opinion about whether the city should have invested in the construction of the museum. Both Marc Ferro and Jean-Pierre Azéma have stressed the necessity to have a museum on the war in Vichy. In Azéma's words: "Un musée serait, ici, le meilleur moyen, je pense, de procéder à une sorte de catharsis. (...) Le refuser, c'est avoir peur de son ombre." He offered some suggestions as to what such a museum should include:

Point n'est besoin, comme c'est le cas dans bien des musées de France, de noyer les visiteurs sous trop d'informations (...) Il faudra quelques bons panneaux, très clairs, pour bien montrer ce qui s'est passé. Sans oublier, par une historiographie, d'indiquer comment Vichy a été appréhendé. (...) Il faut raconter la *Alltagsgeschichte*, comme disent les Allemands, c'est à dire la vie quotidienne qu'on néglige trop. Puis les bouleversements que Pétain et le gouvernement ont fait subir à la ville. (...) Et puis il faut appréhender les autres régions de l'Allier, évoquer la résistance (...), rendre hommage à ceux qui ont été exécutés par les séides des SS mais aussi de la Wehrmacht. Signaler enfin que la libération s'est déroulée sans réels problèmes, que la passation des pouvoirs entre les [vichystes] et leurs successeurs n'a pas fait de difficulté ici, comme, d'une manière générale, dans les autres régions de France.<sup>1522</sup>

Similarly, according to Jacques Kirsner, who produced Jean Marboeuf's film, *Pétain*, in 1993, the construction of a museum in Vichy would have allowed the city not only to work through its difficult heritage but also to expand tourism activity and earn money out of it:

une telle initiative eût connu un grand succès touristique, économique. De toute la France, des théories de touristes auraient convergé pour visiter le musée de la défaite, de la délation, de la réaction, le refrain 'Maréchal nous voilà' aurait pris un tout autre sens. La ville aurait tiré parti, revanche, de la tragédie que Pétain lui a fait supporter. Hélas ! On a préféré la politique de l'autruche. La mémoire courte. Ça ne marche pas. Vichy trimballe donc, de génération en génération, cette incurable maladie, si bien que, sénile, barbotant dans son mensonge, la ville se meurt.<sup>1523</sup>

In 2003, Hamlaoui Mekachera, *secrétaire d'état aux anciens combattants*, stated that France could support the construction of a museum in Vichy, "mais actuellement il n'y a aucun projet consistant et élaboré sur la table," he pointed out. Even though Mekachera acknowledged France's duty in the memorialization of the Vichy regime, he highlighted that the local

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<sup>1522</sup> Interview with Jean Pierre Azéma published in *Vichy toujours*, 55-56.

<sup>1523</sup> Kirsner, "Ah ! monsieur le Maréchal...", In *Vichy toujours*, 28.

communities also had a role to play and that each of the actors (state, region, municipalities) should invest according to their capacities and their means.<sup>1524</sup> In 2016, a museum was still clearly not on the city's agenda.

### Conclusion

The belief that the city should work through its difficult heritage and memorialize the war first manifested itself in Vichy in the late 1980s. Over the last five to ten years it has only developed further – the national appeasement with regards to the *Vichy* years have provided residents with the opportunity to revisit their past with less national pressure.

Many of the grassroots initiatives of the past twenty years have striven to re-inscribe the memory of the war in Vichy's urban landscape through innovative and participative projects, as if breaking the city's architectural armor was a prerequisite for 'unwanted' memories to productively come back to Vichy. According to Don Mitchell, there is never a "single universal, unchanging truth or authenticity of *genius loci* in any place."<sup>1525</sup> The dominant meaning of a place, he underlines, overlaps with "myriad other meanings that may be attributed to or derived from a landscape by its 'users'."<sup>1526</sup> That, he is cautious to add, "does not mean that all meanings are created equal. For in any contest over meaning, the key issue will always be one of power."<sup>1527</sup> Today, the hierarchy of meanings in Vichy is not difficult to determine – the memory of the war is still considered by many *Vichyssois* to be undesirable, yet this status quo is increasingly being challenged. It is, however, too early to assess whether the recent trend of destabilizing the status quo will be short-lived, or intensify.

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<sup>1524</sup> "Hamlaoui Mekachera (secrétaire d'état aux anciens combattants) rend hommage aux 80," *La Montagne* (July 10, 2003).

<sup>1525</sup> Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography – a critical introduction* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 120.

<sup>1526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1527</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

In 2012, Radical politician Christophe Pommeray observed that since 2010 the misappropriation of the term ‘Vichy’ was diminishing: “D’une cinquantaine d’occurrences hebdomadaires, l’utilisation indélicate du nom de la ville est passée à moins de dix.”<sup>1528</sup> This shift has, in fact, been underway since the first decade of the new millennium. Between 1990 and 1999, 210 articles from *Le Monde* included in their titles the word ‘Vichy’ in reference to the ‘Vichy regime’, whereas between 2000 and 2009 only thirty-four articles referred to the Vichy regime in their titles. Although the ‘misuse’ of the term Vichy has declined, the reasoning for this shift remains to be determined. Contrary to what Pommeray and other *Vichyssois* appear to believe, it is unlikely that this shift is a product of the fight in which some local leaders have long been engaged. My contention is that it rather reveals that with the start of the new millennium, the French people have shifted their interest away from the Vichy regime. If we were to add one final category to Henry Rousso’s periodization of the memory of the Vichy regime in France, it would likely be ‘appeasement’.

Regardless of this change, Vichy’s current municipality has stood firm in its position of not altering the management of the war’s legacy under the pretext that it is too risky an endeavor and that it could complicate the city’s ability to “move forward.”<sup>1529</sup> The two arguments, however, are largely inconsistent. First, the risk emanating from further memorialization appears to be limited. Beyond the opposition of ADMP members and extreme-right local sympathizers, it is difficult to see what risks the city might incur if the war were memorialized in a more visible manner. Second, arguing that the city wants to move forward is rather ironic given that Vichy has long resided in the past. The fear provoked by the fraught legacy of recent pasts (most notably World War II and the Algerian War) has led the *Vichyssois* to look further into the past. In the post World War II period, every time the city has felt threatened, it has evoked late nineteenth and early twentieth century memories of thriving spa industry. Currently Vichy is working towards having the city inscribed on the UNESCO world heritage list of “the great spas of

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<sup>1528</sup> Cited in “Vichy, c’est une ville,” *La Montagne* (October 7, 2012).

<sup>1529</sup> According to Malhuret “la condition du succès pour notre ville consiste (...), tout en conservant le souvenir, à se tourner vers l’avenir.” Malhuret’s response letter to the article “Vichy et Pétain, le malaise continue,” published in *La Semaine de l’Allier* (November 10, 2010).

Europe.” This campaign is a contemporary example of the city wanting to be dominantly associated with this specific period in its history.<sup>1530</sup>

Immediately after the war, the city strove to counterbalance the negative image of Vichy as the headquarters of the Vichy regime with the more positive image of Vichy as “la reine des villes d’eaux.” For millennia Vichy’s water had had a positive connotation across France and Europe. In the same way that “le pinard participe à cette contre-construction d’un individu-type méridional dépassant les poncifs péjoratifs et dévalorisants élaborés depuis le second XIXe siècle,”<sup>1531</sup> the *Vichyssois* hoped that the city’s water would act as a powerful counter-image in the eyes of the French people, some of whom accused the city of having been too accommodating with Pétain’s government.

In parallel to the efforts to boost spa activity, the *Vichyssois* also felt the need to construct a strong local war narrative in which they presented themselves as heroes and victims, with a stronger focus on victimhood. While the city stopped caring about establishing a strong local memory of the war as soon as spa tourism had recovered, the victimhood myth continued to be regularly mobilized throughout the postwar period, as a pinprick reminder to the French that they ought not to forget Vichy was a victim not only of Pétain’s governments and the Germans, but also of the postwar governments, which allegedly failed to relieve the city from its ‘undeserved’ burden. Over the last seventy years, the victimhood myth became the city’s spearhead. In 2010, Vichy’s mayor continued to argue that “Vichy a souffert deux fois du gouvernement de Pétain. Lorsque les Vichyssois ont été chassés, expropriés de leurs maisons, de leurs hôtels, de leurs bureaux, pour faire place à ‘l’État français’, et depuis, lorsque se produisent des amalgames ou des confusions autour du nom de la ville.”<sup>1532</sup>

The victimhood myth is a largely accommodating myth, which fails to account for the other side of the story, namely that many *Vichyssois* benefited from the close proximity of the government and that as a whole the city’s long term residents were very accommodating. Although I would not go as far as Adam Nossiter who argues that the Vichy regime “could not

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<sup>1530</sup> “Vichy et quinze autres cités thermales candidates au classement de l’UNESCO” *La Montagne* (July 9, 2014); “Vichy déposera sa candidature à un classement Unesco d’ici deux ans,” *La Montagne* (May 20, 2015).

<sup>1531</sup> Stéphane Le Bras, “Vin, littérature de guerre et construction identitaire. Le cas des soldats languedociens pendant la Grande Guerre,” *Siècles* [Online], 2014. <https://siecles.revues.org/2806>

<sup>1532</sup> Malhuret’s response letter to the article “Vichy et Pétain, le malaise continue,” published in *La Semaine de l’Allier* (November 10, 2010).

have existed anywhere else,”<sup>1533</sup> the fact remains that the relationship between the city and the regime is more complicated than commonly acknowledged in Vichy. Nevertheless, like most myths, Vichy’s victimhood myth also includes elements of truth: the city was not responsible for the establishment of Pétain’s government in Vichy; many *Vichyssois* did suffer greatly during the war; some local residents did join the Resistance; and in the postwar period, some French people did express suspicion and jealousy towards the *Vichyssois*. The narrative’s basis in truth and the power of self-victimization to “function as a powerful galvanizing form of identity”<sup>1534</sup> have facilitated the survival and persistence of this myth in Vichy.

Throughout the postwar period, many factors impacted how the Second World War was remembered in Vichy. The evolution of the national mythology about the Resistance and the Vichy regime was of course one of them. The decline of spa tourism was another one – probably the most important of all. In the postwar period, spa tourism experienced changing economic fortunes. Its irreversible decline since the 1960s has transformed the city in a significant way, depriving it of one of its main sources of revenue and of its spa identity. In 1977, only 26,822 *curistes* came to Vichy. The figure dropped to 19,009 in 1983, and by the early 1990s, the number of *curistes* was down to some 12,000 per year.<sup>1535</sup> A number of factors contributed to the decline of Vichy’s spa activity.

First, throughout the twentieth century, the development of medicines based on chemicals has made significant progress and has allowed the eradication of many of the diseases that used to be treated in Vichy. Further, more and more doctors now look down on medical spa treatments as old-fashioned and ineffective.<sup>1536</sup> Second, the transportation revolution has allowed people to travel faster and further in a short period of time. A three-week cure in the same place has become a burden, all the more so as sunshine is not guaranteed in Vichy and the pleasures of sea and mountains obviously even less so.<sup>1537</sup> Third, the French *Sécurité sociale* repeatedly cut back

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<sup>1533</sup> Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel. France, Memory and the Second World War* (London: Methuen, 2001), 131.

<sup>1534</sup> Richard Derderian, “Algeria as a lieu de mémoire: Ethnic Minority Memory and National Identity in Contemporary France,” *Radical History Review* 83 (2002), 32.

<sup>1535</sup> Christian Jamot, “Vichy: du tourisme à la ville, de la ville au tourisme,” *Geocarrefour* 76 (February 2001): 133-138.

<sup>1536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1537</sup> André Touret, *Destins d’Allier 1945-2000 : population et économie : les grands événements et l’évolution de l’opinion* (Nonette: Edition Créer, 2005), 68.

the financial aid offered to patients for medically prescribed spa cures, which had a devastating impact on the working and middle class clientele.<sup>1538</sup> The questionable management of the *Compagnie fermière* likely further accelerated the city's decline. The municipality has complained about the Company's lack of initiative for the past forty years. In the early 1970s, the *Compagnie* reportedly failed to make the investments laid down in the agreement the group had signed with the State, putting at risk the future spa seasons.<sup>1539</sup> In 1980, the municipal council demanded that the city be "considérée comme partie prenante au contrat établi entre l'État et son Fermier," and "se trouve légitimement associée à la responsabilité de son propre destin."<sup>1540</sup> Little, however, has changed since the early 1980s, and the *Compagnie fermière* remains in charge of the city's thermal complex.<sup>1541</sup>

Another important factor in the abrupt discontinuity in spa tourism in Vichy was the loss of French Algeria in 1962. As Vichy's economy depended in large measure on colonial tourism, the Algerian independence unsurprisingly had a significant impact on the city. The fear provoked by the prospect of a grave economic crisis in the event that Vichy lost its most important clientele led to a rightward shift of the population. Inevitably, this political shift greatly affected the local collective memory of the Second World War.

During the spa 'crisis' of the late 1940s, the city had mobilized a strong local memory of the war. Deprived of its spa identity, it sought to create an alternative identity. As the war had just ended, and as the city felt that it was in an awkward position with regard to its (in)action in the face of the Vichy regime, it is unsurprising that a local memory of heroism, innocence and victimhood emerged. In the 1960s, when the city's spa identity was again endangered, the city could have evoked similar memories of the Second World War. The national context was

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<sup>1538</sup> Jamot, "Vichy: du tourisme à la ville, de la ville au tourisme," 133-138.

<sup>1539</sup> According to Jacques Lacarin, the then mayor of Vichy, "la convention de 1971 prévoyait un certain nombre d'investissements et de dispositions de nature à faire face aux problèmes de l'heure. Malheureusement, les engagements prévus ... ont connu un retard d'exécution qui n'a pas permis d'enrayer la chute de fréquentation, laquelle a chuté en 25 ans, de plus de 30,000 à 13,000 curistes." Jacques Lacarin, *Vichy 1965-1989, Un quart de siècle entre les deux mondes* (Molinet: Edition Neuville, 1994), 180.

Other complaints can be found in the minutes of the municipal council's meetings. In 1966, for example, the municipal council complained that the city has not been consulted in the decision not to open the *établissement des Bains Lardy*. The councillors tried to put pressure on the *Compagnie fermière* through their request for the *Commissaire du gouvernement* to intervene. Yet, the struggle was in vain. AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (February 14, 1966).

<sup>1540</sup> AM (Vichy). Minutes of the municipal council's meeting (February 15, 1980).

<sup>1541</sup> About the current debates regarding the management of the thermal domain, see Christophe Pommeray, *Vichy à vendre* (Vichy: Allier République Editions, 2010).



particularly favorable to the remobilization of a 'positive' war memory, as the Gaullist myth was gaining in strength and popularity. Yet, the opposite happened.

While in France, Algeria's independence signified the rapid decline of the extreme right and the return of the Gaullist myth, in Vichy, a pro-Pétain memory encompassing audiences beyond the extreme right gathered strength. During the Algerian war, Pétain's role in preserving the empire between 1940 and 1944 was systematically emphasized, whereas de Gaulle was criticized for 'selling out' the colony.<sup>1542</sup> Although most analogies between the Second World War and what was happening in the colony were largely inconsistent, those with strong views on French Algeria were easily seduced by the Petainist discourse. While local former Vichy supporters and Pétain's admirers had entertained a pro-Pétain memory in Vichy since the late 1940s, this memory had been marginal and rarely publicly expressed. Its development in the late 1950s and 1960s resulted from the emergence of a new trend of Petainism, born of the Algerian War. The arrival of several thousands of *pieds noirs* with strong right-wing convictions furthered its crystallization. The decolonizing process brought about social, cultural, and political changes, from which emerged more critical reading grids and interpretations of the Second World War. Yet what happened in 1960s Vichy suggests that, in some cases, decolonization also had the opposite effect.

In the post 1970s period, the local Petainist memory went underground, yet no other memory rose to occupy a central place in the local collective remembering of the war. In the absence of pro active memorial policies and in view of the population's overall disinterest in the memory of the Second World War, the city became the counter example of what was happening in many other places across Europe, where 'difficult heritage' was being worked through and memorialized. The revived national interest for the Vichy regime in the late twentieth century revived the (unfounded) fears of stigmatization and ostracism. The city, which had still not recovered from its identity crisis following the irreversible decline of spa tourism, chose to take refuge in inaction. Only the victimhood myth was reactivated.

Over the past ten years, however, some *Vichyssois* have been willing to return the memory of the war to Vichy. A twofold and contradictory dynamic seems to be at the origins of

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<sup>1542</sup> Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 79.

this new interest for the wartime period. While the weakening interest for the *Vichy* past among the French people may have locally been perceived as an opportunity for the city to finally write its own history detached from national mythology, the fading away of *Vichy* on the national stage may have also been perceived as potentially detrimental. Vichy's glorious days have long been over; by becoming a major site in France's Second World War scholarly and memorial landscape, Vichy may have the potential to renew its image and expand its economy.

Most of the cultural brokers who have worked at returning the memory of the war to Vichy have anchored their projects in Vichy's urban landscape. The guided tours *Vichy 1940-1944* in the *quartier thermal* and Frabrice Dubusset's play, staged in the *Concours Hippique* are strong examples of this emerging trend. Vichy's architecture, reminiscent of the *Second Empire* and the *Belle Époque*, has facilitated the exclusion of unwanted memories from the local historical consciousness. By providing tools to residents and visitors to look at the landscape through new lenses, these projects have allowed the emergence of new imaginative geographies, which could function as powerful devices for a more critical reading of the history (and the history of the memory) of the war in Vichy.

The extent to which these new imaginative geographies are a first step towards the creation of hybrid spaces where different meanings co-exist proficiently and where, for example, the memory of the war can meet that of decolonization is difficult to tell. For now, although the above-mentioned curatorial initiatives have offered provocative and insightful entryways into the city's multi-layered past, they have yet to significantly challenge the myth of innocence and victimhood. By remaining largely silent on the population's accommodating behavior during the war and on the ambivalent feelings of many *Vichyssois* towards Pétain and other members of the government, they have not yet fully addressed the complexity of the wartime context in Vichy and the postwar challenges posed by this particular situation. Finally, no project has explored French Algeria's legacy in Vichy, even though it is *this* event (not the Second World War) that has been the most defining event in the city's recent past.

To date, what seems to be blocking the memorialization of the war in Vichy is not so much that the Vichy regime remains a controversial topic in France – *it is not*, but rather that the city has been unable to grapple with the many challenges posed by the Algerian War and the colony's independence, especially with how the Algerian War transformed Vichy's society and impacted the local memory of the Second World War. While Vichy's current mayor, Claude

Malhuret, has no sympathy whatsoever for the Petainist theses, he does not want to risk antagonizing a large part of his conservative electorate either, thus making his continuation of the status quo a politically pragmatic and intelligent strategy. While in many cases, the passing of the generation who directly experienced the Second World War allowed for the emergence of less passionate narratives about the war, in the case of Vichy, the passing of the World War II generation did not enable a more distanced narrative about the war. What may be needed for the status quo to be significantly challenged is the passing of the French Algeria generation.

For several decades now, scholars have looked at the local to provide new insight on broader economic, social, political, and social transformations and trends. This case study about the evolution of the memory of the Second World War in the city of Vichy has been particularly informative in furthering our understanding of the processes at play in the evolution of the memory of the Second World War in France. It has revealed many interactions between local and national memories. The local silence surrounding the war memory has often been a defense strategy against the over mediatization of the Vichy regime. This was particularly so in the immediate postwar period and in the last two decades of the twentieth century. My work, however, has also demonstrated that there are other, distinctive, sources of the contemporary local uneasiness with the legacy of the war, which arise out of “a multiplicity of social, cultural, political, and economic trends and developments of an eclectic but intersecting nature.”<sup>1543</sup> One of the most important factors of Vichy’s malaise with regards to the war memory is the Algerian War. As bizarre as it may sound, France’s colonial history is indeed key to understand World War II memory in Vichy. This observation shows the extent to which the development and crystallization of collective memories are determined by events that have little, if anything, to do with the event that is being remembered.

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<sup>1543</sup> Jay Winter, “The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the ‘Memory Boom’,” *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 1:0 (March 2007), 364.

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Catalogue of the Pétain items stored in the archives of the *Compagnie fermière*

Minutes of the annual general meetings (1939 – 1950)

United States:

Los Angeles. USC Shoah Foundation. Visual History Archive

Washington. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Photographs

**Newspapers and magazines**

*Centre médical (Allier)*

*Les Cahiers Bourbonnais*

*Le Centre républicain*

*La Dépêche*

*L'Espoir*

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<sup>1544</sup> I would like to thank Pascal Chambriard for providing me access to some of the *Compagnie fermière*'s archives.

*L'Express*  
*Le Figaro*  
*La Gazette des Champs Capelet*  
*Le Maréchal*  
*Le Monde*  
*Le Moniteur*  
*La Montagne*  
*Le Parisien*  
*La Patrie*  
*Le Patriote*  
*Le Point*  
*La Semaine de Vichy*  
*Le Soir d'Algérie*  
*La Tribune*  
*La Tribune de Genève*  
*L'Unité*  
*Libération*  
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*Paris Presse*  
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