The Vichy Regime
(July 1940-August 1944)

The Vichy regime was the French government from July 1940 to August 1944, which succeeded the Third Republic. It was proclaimed by Marshal Philippe Pétain following the military defeat of France and the vote by the National Assembly, on July 10, 1940, of extraordinary powers to Pétain, who held not the title of President of France but rather President of the Council.

The “French state” (L'État Français), as it called itself in contrast with the “French Republic”, willfully collaborated with Nazi Germany, to a high degree: raids to capture Jews and other “undesirables” were organized by the French police not only in the northern zone, occupied by the German Wehrmacht, but also in the southern “free zone”, which was occupied only after the Allies' landing in French North Africa in November 1942. Vichy's authority legally extended itself to both zones.

While Pétain collaborated with the Germans, Charles de Gaulle claimed to incarnate the legitimacy and the continuity of France. Following the liberation of France after Operation Overlord, de Gaulle proclaimed the Provisional Government of the French Republic (GPRF) in June 1944. After the Liberation of Paris in August, the GPRF installed itself in Paris on August 31. The GPRF was recognized as the legitimate government of France by all the allies on October 23, 1944.

Overview

On June 10, 1940, the National Assembly, faced with imminent military defeat by Germany, gave full power to Marshal Philippe Pétain. In 1940, Pétain was known mainly as a World War I hero, the winner of Verdun. As last President of the Council of the Third Republic, Pétain suppressed the parliament and immediately turned the regime into a non-democratic government collaborating with Germany.

Vichy France was established after France surrendered to Germany on June 22, 1940, and took its name from the government's administrative center in Vichy, southeast of Paris. Paris remained the official capital, to which Pétain always intended to return the government when this became possible. While officially neutral in the war, Vichy actively collaborated with the Nazis, including, to some degree, with their racial policies.

It is a common misconception that the Vichy regime administered only the unoccupied zone of southern France (incorrectly named “free zone”, zone libre, by Vichy), while the Germans directly administered the occupied zone. In fact, the civil jurisdiction of the Vichy government extended over the whole of metropolitan France, except for Alsace-Lorraine, a disputed territory which was placed under German administration (though not formally annexed). French civil servants in Bordeaux, such as Maurice Papon, or Nantes were under the authority of French ministers in Vichy. René Bousquet, head of French police nominated by Vichy, exercised his power directly in Paris through his second, Jean Leguay, who coordinated raids with the Nazis. Some historians claim that the difficulties of communication across the demarcation line between the two zones, and the tendency of the Germans to exercise arbitrary power in the occupied zone, made it difficult for Vichy to assert its authority.
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On 11 November 1942, the Germans launched Operation Case Anton, occupying southern France, following the landing of the Allies in North Africa (Operation Torch). Although Vichy's “Armistice Army” was disbanded, thus diminishing Vichy's independence, the abolition of the line of demarcation made civil administration easier. Vichy continued to exercise jurisdiction over most of France until the collapse of the regime following the Allied invasion in June 1944.

Until August 1945, the Vichy regime was acknowledged as the official government of France by the United States and other countries, including Canada, which was at the same time at war with Germany. Even the United Kingdom maintained unofficial contacts with Vichy for some time, until it became apparent that the Vichy Prime Minister Pierre Laval intended full collaboration with the Germans.

The Vichy government's claim to be the de jure French government was challenged by the Free French Forces of Charles de Gaulle, based first in London and later in Algiers, and French governments ever since have held that the Vichy regime was an illegal government run by traitors. Historians in particular have debated the circumstances of the vote of full powers to Pétain on July 10, 1940. The main arguments advanced against Vichy's right to incarnate the continuity of the French state were based on the pressure exerted by Laval on deputies in Vichy, and on the absence of 27 deputies and senators who had fled on the Massilia ship and could thus not take part in the vote.

Within Vichy France, there was a low-intensity civil war between the French Resistance—drawn from the Communist and Republican elements of society—against the reactionary elements who desired a fascist or similar regime as in Francisco Franco's Spain. This civil war can be seen as the continuation of a division existing within French society since the 1789 French Revolution, illustrated by events such as the Bourbon Restoration and the White Terror enforced by the Chambre introuvable; the 1825 vote of the Anti-Sacrilege Act by the ultra-royalist comte de Villelè; the 1871 Paris Commune and the violent repression which followed, including the creation of the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur in expiation of the “Commune's sins”; the May 16, 1877 crisis; the Dreyfus Affair; the conflict during the application of the 1905 law on the separation of the Church and the State; the 6 February 1934 riots, etc. A part of French society had never accepted the Republican regime issuing from the Revolution, and wished to reestablish the Ancien Régime. This was made apparent by the leader of the monarchist Action française, Charles Maurras' glee, who qualified the suppression of the French Republic as a “divine surprise”.

The fall of France

France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939 following the German invasion of Poland. After the eight-month Phony War, the Germans launched their offensive in the west on 10 May 1940. Within days, it became clear that French forces were overwhelmed and that military collapse was imminent. Government and military leaders, deeply shocked by the debacle, debated how to proceed. Many officials, including the Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, wanted to move the government to French territories in North Africa, and continue the war with the French naval fleet and the resources of the French empire. Others, particularly the vice-premier Henri Philippe Pétain and the commander-in-chief, General Maxime Weygand, insisted that the responsibility of the government was to remain in France and share the misfortune of its people. The latter view called for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

While this debate continued, the government was forced to relocate several times, finally reaching Bordeaux, in order to avoid capture by advancing German forces. Communications were poor and thousands of civilian refugees clogged the roads. In these chaotic conditions, advocates of an armistice gained the upper hand and overwhelmed the resistance of those who wished to continue the war. The Cabinet agreed on a proposal to seek armistice terms from Germany, with the understanding that, should Germany set forth dishonorable or excessively harsh terms, France would retain the option to continue to fight. In reality, this was probably a pretextual understanding. Once the government breached the psychological barrier of seeking terms from Germany, the armistice was
virtually inevitable.

France's armistice with Hitler

France capitulated on 22 June 1940. The United States and the Soviet Union would not enter the war until 1941. Thus, the United Kingdom was left as the only world power at war with the Axis.

Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned over the decision and, on his recommendation, President Albert Lebrun appointed the 84-year-old Pétain to replace him on 16 June. The Armistice with France (Second Compiègne) agreement was signed on 22 June. A separate agreement was reached with Italy, which had entered the war against France on 10 June, well after the outcome of the battle was beyond doubt.

Hitler was motivated by a number of reasons to agree to the armistice. He feared that France would continue to fight from North Africa, and he wanted to ensure that the French navy was taken out of the war. He could not know, of course, that the tide of opinion within the French government had turned decisively against this course of action. In addition, leaving a French government in place would relieve Germany of the considerable burden of administering French territory. Finally, he hoped to direct his attentions toward Britain, where he anticipated another quick victory.

Conditions of armistice and 10 July 1940 vote of full powers

The armistice divided France into occupied and unoccupied zones. Germany would occupy northern and western France including the entire Atlantic coast. The remaining two-fifths of the country would be governed by the French government with the capital at Vichy under Pétain. Ostensibly, the French government would administer the entire territory. The French Armed Forces were reduced to an “Armistice Army” of 100,000 soldiers, and the 1.2 million French prisoners of war would remain in captivity. The French had to pay the occupation costs of 20 million Reichmarks per day, at the
artificial rate of 20 francs to the Mark - fifty times the actual costs of the 300,000-strong occupation garrison. The government had also to prevent any French people from going into exile.

France was also required to turn over to German custody anyone within the country whom the Germans demanded. Within French deliberations, this was singled out as a potentially “dishonorable” term, since it would require France to hand over persons who had entered France seeking refuge from Germany. Attempts to negotiate the point with Germany were unsuccessful, and the French decided not to press the issue to the point of refusing the Armistice, though they hoped to ameliorate the requirement in future negotiations with Germany after the signing.

The French government broke off diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom on 5 July 1940 after the destruction of the French Fleet at Mers-el-Kebir by British naval forces following an ultimatum that gave the French Fleet many options to remove themselves from the theatre of war and prevent the boats being used by the Germans. This move by Britain hardened relations between the two countries and led to more conflict between the former allies before U.S. entrance into the war.

On July 1, 1940, the Parliament and the government gathered themselves in Vichy, a city in the center of France, which was used as a provisional capital. Laval and Raphaël Alibert started convincing the representatives of the French people, both Senators and Assemblymen, to vote full powers to Pétain. They used every means available: promising some ministerial posts, threatening and intimidating others. The charismatic figures who could have opposed themselves to Laval, Georges Mandel, Edouard Daladier, etc., were on board the ship Massilia, headed for North Africa. On July 10, 1940, the Parliament, composed of the Senate and the National Assembly, voted by 569 votes against 80 (known as the Vichy 80, including 62 Radicals and Socialists), and 30 voluntary abstentions, to grant full and extraordinary powers to Marshal Pétain. By the same vote, they also granted him the power to write a new Constitution.

The legality of this vote has been contested by the majority of French historians and by all French governments after the war. Three main arguments are put forward:

- non-respect of the legal procedure
- the impossibility for the Parliament to delegate its constitutional powers without controlling its use a posteriori
- the 1884 constitutional amendment making it impossible to put into question the “republican form” of the regime

Partisans of Vichy claim, on the contrary, that the revision was voted by the two Chambers (the Senate and the National Assembly), in conformity with the law. Deputies and senators who voted to grant full powers to Pétain on this day were condemned on an individual basis after the Liberation.

The argument concerning the non-respect of the procedure is grounded on the absence and on the non-voluntary abstentions of 176 representatives of the people (the 27 on board the Massilia, and additional 92 deputies and 57 senators some of whom were in Vichy, but not present for the vote). In total, the Parliament was composed of 846 members, 544 deputies and 302 senators. One senator and 26 deputies were on the Massilia. One senator did not vote. 8 senators and 12 MPs voluntarily abstained. 57 senators and 92 MPs abstained involuntarily. Thus, out of a total of 544 deputies, only 414 voted; and out of a total of 302 senators, only 235 voted. 357 deputies voted in favor of Pétain, and 57 refused to grant him full powers. 212 senators also voted for Pétain, while 23 voted against. The dubious conditions of this vote thus explain why a majority of French historians refuse to consider Vichy as a complete continuity of the French state, notwithstanding the fact that although Pétain could claim for himself legality (and a dubious legality), de Gaulle, as the Gaullist myth would later make clear, incarnated the real legitimacy. The debate is thus not only of legitimacy versus legality (indeed, by this fact alone, Charles de Gaulle's claim to hold legitimacy ignores the interior Resistance). But it rather concerns the illegal circumstances of this vote.

The text voted by the Congress stated:
“The National Assembly gives full powers to the government of the Republic, under the authority and the signature of Marshall Pétain, to the effect of promulgating by one or several acts a new Constitution of the French state. This Constitution must guarantee the rights of labour, of family and of the fatherland. It will be ratified by the nation and applied by the Assemblies which it has created.”

The Constitutional Acts of 11 and 12 July 1940 granted to Pétain all powers (legislative, judicial, administrative, executive — and diplomatic) and the title of “head of the French state” (chef de l'Etat français), as well as the right to nominate his successor. On 12 July, Pétain designated Pierre Laval as Vice-President and his designated successor, and appointed Fernand de Brinon as representative to the German High Command in Paris. Pétain remained the head of the Vichy regime until 20 August 1944. The French national motto, Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité (Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood), was replaced by Travail, Famille, Patrie (Work, Family, Fatherland); it was noted at the time that TFP also stood for the criminal punishment of “travaux forcés en perpetuité” (“forced labour in perpetuity). Paul Reynaud, who had not officially resigned as Prime Minister, was arrested in September 1940 by the Vichy government and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1941 before the opening of the Riom Trial.

Democratic liberties and guarantees were immediately suspended (administrative interments, censorship, re-establishment of the felony of opinion (délit d'opinion, i.e. repeal of freedom of thought and of expression), etc.) Elective bodies were replaced by nominated ones. The “municipalities” and the departmental commissions were thus placed under the authority of the administration and of the prefects (nominated by and dependent on the executive power). In January 1941, the National Council (Conseil National), composed of notables from the countryside and the provinces, was instituted under the same conditions. Both the United States and the Soviet Union recognized the new regime, despite Charles de Gaulle's attempts, in London, to oppose this decision.

State collaboration with Nazi Germany

Historians distinguish between a state collaboration followed by the regime of Vichy, and “collaborationists”, which usually refer to the French citizens eager to collaborate with Nazi Germany and who pushed towards a radicalization of the regime. “Pétainistes”, on the other hand, refers to French people who supported Marshal Pétain, without being too keen on collaboration with Nazi Germany (although accepting Pétain's state collaboration). State collaboration was illustrated by the Montoire (Loir-et-Cher) interview in Hitler's train, on October 24, 1940, during which Pétain and Hitler shook hands and agreed on this cooperation between the two states. Organized by Laval, a strong proponent of Collaboration, the interview and the handshake were photographed, and Nazi propaganda made strong use of this photo to gain support from the civilian population. On October 30, 1940, Pétain officialized state collaboration, declaring on the radio: “I enter today on the path of Collaboration...” On June 22, 1942, Laval declared that he was “hoping for the victory of Germany.”

The composition of the Vichy cabinet, and its policies, were mixed. Many Vichy officials such as Pétain, though not all, were reactionaries who considered that France's unfortunate fate was a kind of divine punishment for its Republican character and the actions of its left-wing governments of the 1930s, in particular of the Popular Front (1936-1938) led by Léon Blum. Charles Maurras, a monarchist writer and founder of the Action française movement, judged that Pétain's accession to power was, in that respect, a “divine surprise”; and many people of the same political persuasion judged that it was preferable to have an authoritarian, Catholic government similar to that of Francisco Franco's Spain, albeit under Germany's yoke, than have a Republican government. Others, like Joseph Darnand, were strong anti-Semites and overt Nazi sympathisers. A number of these joined the Légion des Volontaires Français contre le Bolchévisme (Legion of French Volunteers Against Bolshevism) units fighting on the Eastern Front, which later became the SS Charlemagne Division.

On the other hand, technocrats such as Jean Bichelonne or engineers from the Groupe X-Crise used their position to push various state, administrative and economic reforms. These reforms would be
one of the strongest element arguing in favor of the thesis of a continuity of the French administration before and after the war. Many of these civil servants remained in function after the war, or were quickly reestablished in their functions after a short-term moment during which they were set aside, while much of these reforms were retained and reinforced after the war. In the same way as the necessities of war economy during the first World War I had pushed toward state measures which organized the economy of France against the prevailing classical liberal theories, an organization which was retained after the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, reforms adopted during WWII were kept and extended. Along with the March 15, 1944 Charter of the Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR), which gathered all Resistant movements under one unified political body, these reforms were a main instrument in the instauration of post-war dirigisme, a kind of semi-planned economy which made of France the modern social democracy it is now. Examples of such continuities include the creation of the “French Foundation for the Study of Human Problems” by Alexis Carrel, a renowned physician who also supported eugenics. This institution would be renamed after the war National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) and exists to this day. Another example is the creation of the national statistics institute, renamed INSEE after the Liberation. Another, last example, is the reorganization and unification of the French police by René Bousquet, who created the Groupe mobile de réserve (GMR, Reserve Mobile Groups), a police force charged of striking fear amid the civilian population. Starting in the summer of 1943, the GMR would be the most effective force used against the Resistants in the maquis. After the war, they would be renamed in 1944 Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS, Republican Compagnies of Security) which are the current anti-riot police used by the Republic.

Vichy's racial policies and collaboration

As soon as it had been established, Pétain's government took measures against the so-called “undesirables”: Jews, métèques (immigrants), Freemasons, Communists — inspired by Charles Maurras’ conception of the “Anti-France”, or “internal foreigners”, which Maurras defined as the “four confederate states of Protestants, Jews, Freemasons and foreigners” — but also Gypsies, homosexuals, and, in a general way, any left-wing activist. Vichy imitated the racial policies of the Third Reich and also engaged in natalist policies aimed at reviving the “French race”, although these policies never went as far as the eugenics program implemented by the Nazis.

As soon as the “French state” was proclaimed by Pétain, the internment camps already opened by the Third Republic were put to a new use, before ultimately inserting themselves as necessary transit camps for the implementation of the Holocaust and the extermination of all “undesirables,” including the Roma people who refer to the extermination of Gypsies as Porrajmos.

The Third Republic had opened various concentration camps, first used during World War I to intern enemy aliens. Camp Gurs, for example, had been set up in the south-western part of France after the fall of Catalonia, in the first months of 1939, during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), to receive the Republican refugees, including Brigadists from all nations, fleeing the Franchists. But as soon as Edouard Daladier's government (April 1938-March 1940) took the decision to outlaw the French Communist Party (PCF) following the German-Soviet non-aggression pact (aka Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) signed in August 1939, these camps were also used to intern French communists. Drancy internment camp was founded in 1939 for this use. It later became the central transit camp through which all deportees passed before heading to the concentration and extermination camps in the Third Reich and in Eastern Europe. Located on the outskirts of Paris, this camp was under control of the French police until July 3, 1943. The German then took day-to-day control as part of the major stepping up at all facilities for the mass exterminations. SS-Hauptsturmführer Alois Brunner directed it until August 1944. He was condemned in absentia in France in 2001 on charges of crimes against humanity, and is believed to be the world's highest-ranking Nazi fugitive still alive hiding in Syria.

When the Phoney War started with France's declaration of war against Germany on September 3, 1939, these camps were used to intern enemy aliens. These included German Jews and anti-fascists, but any German citizen (or Italian, Australian, Polish, etc.) would also be interned in Camp Gurs and others. Common law prisoners were also evacuated from the prisons in the north of France, before
the advance of the Wehrmacht, and interned in these camps. Camp Gurs then received its first contingent of political prisoners in June 1940, which included left-wing activists (communists, anarchists, trade-unionists, anti-militarists, etc.), pacifists, but also French fascists who supported the victory of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Finally, after Pétain's proclamation of the “French state” and the beginning of the implementation of the “Révolution nationale” (“National Revolution”), the French administration opened up many concentration camps, to the point that historian Maurice Rajsfus wrote: “The quick opening of new camps was creative of employments, and the Gendarmerie never ceased to hire during this period.”

Besides the Spaniards and political prisoners already detained there, Camp Gurs was then used to intern foreign Jews, stateless persons, Gypsies, homosexuals, people involved in prostitution, indigents... Vichy opened its first internment camp in the northern zone on October 5, 1940, in Aincours, in the Seine-et-Oise department, which it quickly filled with PCF members. The Royal Saltworks at Arc-et-Senans, in the Doubs, was used to intern Gypsies. The Camp des Milles, near Aix-en-Provence, was the largest internment camp in the Southeast of France. 2,500 Jews were deported from there following the August 1942 raids. Besides the concentration camps opened by Vichy, the Germans also opened on French territory some Ilags (Internierungslager) to detain enemy aliens, and in Alsace, which had been annexed by the Reich, they opened the camp of Natzweiler, which is the only concentration camp created by Nazis on French territory (annexed by the Third Reich). Natzweiler included a gas chamber which was used to exterminate at least 86 detainees (mostly Jewish) in the aim of constituting a collection of preserved skeletons (as this mode of execution did no damage to the skeletons themselves) for the use of Nazi professor August Hirt.

While it is certain that the Vichy government and a large number of its high administration collaborated in such policies, the exact level of such cooperation is still debated. Compared with the Jewish communities established in other countries invaded by Nazi Germany, French Jews suffered proportionately lighter losses. Former Vichy officials later claimed that they did as much as they could to minimize the impact of the Nazi policies, although mainstream French historians contend that the Vichy regime went beyond the Nazi expectations. Maurice Papon, who became head of the Parisian police in 1958, during which he oversaw the 1961 Paris massacre, and Budget Minister under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, was condemned in the 1990s for crimes against humanity.

With regard to economic contribution to the German economy it is estimated that France provided 42% of the total foreign aid.

In August 1940 laws against antisemitism in the media (the Marchandeau Act) were repealed.

**Eugenics Policies**

In 1941, Nobel Prize winner Alexis Carrel, who had been an early proponent of eugenics and euthanasia and was a member of Jacques Doriot's French Popular Party (PPF), went on to advocate for the creation of the Fondation Française pour l’Etude des Problèmes Humains (French Foundation for the Study of Human Problems), using connections to the Pétain cabinet (specifically, French industrial physicians André Gros and Jacques Ménétrier). Charged of the “study, under all of its aspects, of measures aimed at safeguarding, improving and developing the French population in all of its activities,” the Foundation was created by decree of the collaborationist Vichy regime in 1941, and Carrel appointed as 'regent'. The Foundation also had for some time as general secretary François Perroux.

It was at the origins of the 16 December 1942 Act inventing the “prenuptial certificate”, which had to precede any marriage and was supposed, after a biological examination, to insure the “good health” of the spouses, in particular in regard to sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and “life hygiene” (sic). Carrel's institute also conceived the “scolar book” (“livret scolaire”), which permitted to individually follow each students' grades in the French secondary schools, and thus classify and hierarchize them according to scholarly results. Beside these eugenics activities aimed at classifying the population and at “improving” its “health”, the foundation was also at the origine of the October 11, 1946 law instaurung occupational medicine, enacted by the Provisional Government of the French Republic.
The foundation also initiated studies on demographics (Robert Gessain, Paul Vincent, Jean Bourgeois), nutrition (Jean Sutter), lodging (Jean Merlet) as well as the first polls (Jean Stoetzel). The foundation, which became after the war the INED demographics institute, employed 300 researchers from the summer of 1942 to the end of the autumn of 1944. “The foundation was chartered as a public institution under the joint supervision of the ministries of finance and public health. It was given financial autonomy and a budget of forty million francs—roughly one franc per inhabitant—a true luxury considering the burdens imposed by the German Occupation on the nation’s resources. By way of comparison, the whole Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) was given a budget of fifty million francs.”

Alexis Carrel had previously published in 1935 the best-selling book titled *L’Homme, cet inconnu* (Man, This Unknown). Since the early 1930s, Alexis Carrel advocated the use of gas chambers to rid humanity of its “inferior stock,” endorsing the scientific racism discourse. One of the founder of these pseudoscientific theories had been Arthur de Gobineau in his 1853-1855 essay titled An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races. In the 1936 preface to the German edition of his book, Alexis Carrel had added a praise to the eugenics policies of the Third Reich, writing that:

“(t)he German government has taken energetic measures against the propagation of the defective, the mentally diseased, and the criminal. The ideal solution would be the suppression of each of these individuals as soon as he has proven himself to be dangerous.”

Carrel also wrote in his book that:

“(t)he conditioning of petty criminals with the whip, or some more scientific procedure, followed by a short stay in hospital, would probably suffice to insure order. Those who have murdered, robbed while armed with automatic pistol or machine gun, kidnapped children, despoiled the poor of their savings, misled the public in important matters, should be humanely and economically disposed of in small euthanasic institutions supplied with proper gasses. A similar treatment could be advantageously applied to the insane, guilty of criminal acts.”

Alexis Carrel had also taken an active part to a symposium in Pontigny organised by Jean Coutrot, the “Entretiens de Pontigny”. Scholars such as Lucien Bonnafé, Patrick Tort and Max Lafont have accused Carrel of responsibility for the execution of thousands of mentally ill or impaired patients under Vichy.

**The Statute on Jews**

The Statute on Jews A Nazi ordinance dated 21 September 1940 forced Jewish of the “occupied zone” to declare themselves as such in police office or sub-prefectures (sous-préfectures). Under the responsibility of André Tulard, head of the Service on Foreign Persons and Jewish Questions at the Prefecture of Police of Paris, a filing system registering Jewish people was created. Tulard had previously created such a filing system under the Third Republic, registering members of the Communist Party (PCF). In the sole department of the Seine, encompassing Paris and its immediate suburbs, nearly 150,000 persons, unaware of the up-coming danger and assisted by the French police, presented themselves to the police offices, in accordance with the military order. The registered informations were then centralized by the French police, who constituted, under the direction of inspector Tulard, a central filing system. According to the Dannecker report, “this filing system subdivised itself into files alphabetically classed, Jewish with French nationality and foreign Jewish having files of different colours, and the files were also classed, according to profession, nationality and street” (of residency). These files were then handed over to Theodor Dannecker, head of the Gestapo in France and under the orders of Adolf Eichmann, head of the RSHA IV-D. They were then used by the Gestapo on various raids, among them the August 1941 raid in the XIe arrondissement of Paris, during which 3,200 foreign Jews and 1,000 French Jews were interned in various camps, including Drancy. Furthermore, the French police noted on this occasion, on each identity documents of the Jewish people, their registration as Jews. As Italian political philosopher
Giorgio Agamben has pointed out, this racial profiling was an important step in the organization of the police raids against the French Jewish community.

On 3 October 1940, the Vichy government voluntarily promulgated the first Statute on Jews, which created a special, under-class of French Jewish citizens, and enforced, for the first time ever in France, racial segregation. The Statute first made mandatory the yellow badges, a reminiscence of old Christian anti-semitism. Police inspector André Tulard participated to the logistics concerning the attribution of these badges. The October 1940 Statute also excluded Jews from the administration, the armed forces, entertainment, arts, media, and certain professional roles (teachers, lawyers, doctors of medicine, etc.). A Commissariat-General for Jewish Affairs (CGJ, Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives), was created on March 29, 1941. It was first directed by Xavier Vallat, until May 1942, and then by Darquier de Pellepoix until February 1944. Mirroring the Reich Association of Jews, the Union Générale des Israélites de France was founded.

The police also oversaw the confiscation of telephones and TSF (télégraphie sans fil) radios from Jewish homes and enforced a curfew on Jews starting from February 1942. It attentively monitored the Jews who did not respect the prohibition according to which they were not supposed to appear in public places and had to travel in the last car of the Parisian metro.

Along with many French police officers, André Tulard was present on the day of the inauguration of Drancy internment camp in 1941, which was used as the central transit camp for detainees captured in France, in the huge majority by the French police itself. All Jews and others “undesirables” passed through Drancy before heading to Auschwitz and other camps.

**The July 1942 Vel’d'hiv round-up**

In July 1942, the French police, under the orders of René Bousquet and his second in Paris, Jean Leguay, organized, along with responsibles from the SNCF train company, the Vel'd'hiv raid which took place on July 16 and 17 July. The police arrested 12,884 Jews — including 4,051 children which the Gestapo had not asked for — 5,082 women and 3,031 men, all sent to Drancy. By its own, this action represented more than a quarter of the 42,000 French Jews sent to Auschwitz in 1942, of which only 811 would come back after the end of the war. In 1995, president Jacques Chirac recognized the responsibility of the French state for this raid.

In total, the Vichy government helped in the deportation of 76,000 Jews, although this number varies depending on the account, to German extermination camps; only 2,500 survived the war.

**August 1942 and January 1943 raids**

The French police, headed by Bousquet, arrested 7,000 Jews in the southern zone in August 1942. 2,500 of them transited through the Camp des Milles near Aix-en-Provence before joining Drancy. Then, on 22, 23 and 24 January 1943, assisted by Bousquet's police force, the Germans organized a raid in Marseille. During the Battle of Marseille, the French police controlled the identity of 40,000 people, and the operation succeeded in sending 2,000 Marseillaise people in the death trains, leading to the extermination camps. The operation also encompassed the expulsion of an entire neighborhood (30,000 persons) in the Old Port before its destruction. For this occasion, SS Karl Oberg, in charge of the German Police in France, made the trip from Paris, and transmitted to Bousquet orders directly received from Himmler himself. It is another notable case of the French police's willfull collaboration with the Nazis.

**French collaborationnistes and collaborators**

Stanley Hoffmann in 1974, and after him, other historians such as Robert Paxton and Jean-Pierre Azéma have used the term collaborationnistes to refer to fascists and Nazi sympathizers who, for ideological reasons, wished a reinforced collaboration with Hitler's Germany. Examples of these are Parti Populaire Français (PPF) leader Jacques Doriot, writer Robert Brasillach or Marcel Déat. The
Vichy regime also implemented compulsory work in Germany for young Frenchmen (service du travail obligatoire or STO), a move which pushed some of these young men to join the Resistance instead.

A number of the French advocated fascist philosophies even before the Vichy regime. Far-right organizations, such as La Cagoule, had contributed to the destabilization of the Third Republic, particularly when the left-wing Popular Front was in power. After France's military defeat, some of these sympathisers actively assisted the Vichy regime; some even directly assisted the German in taking Jewish private property, destroying synagogues and other Jewish monuments, and in shipping Jews to German concentration camps. A prime example is the founder of L'Oréal cosmetics, Eugène Schueller, and his associate Jacques Corrèze.

Collaborationists may have influenced the Vichy government's policies, but ultra-collaborationists comprised the majority of the government only until 1944. In order to enforce the régime's will, some paramilitary organizations with a fascist leaning were created. A notable example was the “Légion Française des Combattants” (L.F.C.) (French Legion of Fighters), including at first only former combatants, but quickly adding “Amis de la Légion” and cadets of the Légion, who had never seen battle, but were supporters of his dictatorial regime. The name was then quickly changed to “Légion Française des Combattants et des volontaires de la Révolution Nationale” (French Legion of Fighters and Volunteers of the National Revolution). Then, Joseph Darnand created a “Service d'Ordre Légionnaire” (S.O.L.), which consisted mostly of French supporters of the Nazis, of which Pétain fully approved.

**Relationships with the Allied powers**

The United States granted Vichy full diplomatic recognition, sending Admiral William D. Leahy to France as American ambassador. President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull hoped to use American influence to encourage those elements in the Vichy government opposed to military collaboration with Germany. The Americans also hoped to encourage Vichy to resist German war demands, such as for air bases in French-mandated Syria or to move war supplies through French territories in North Africa. The essential American position was that France should take no action not explicitly required by the armistice terms that could adversely affect Allied efforts in the war.

- The USSR maintained, until 30 June 1941, full diplomatic relations with the Vichy Regime, broken after Vichy supported Operation Barbarossa.
- Canada maintained, till the beginning of November 1942, full diplomatic relations with the Vichy Regime, until the Case Anton.
- Australia maintained, until the end of the War, full diplomatic relations with the Vichy Regime and entered also into full diplomatic relations with the Free French.
- The United Kingdom, shortly after the Armistice (22 June 1940), attacked a large French naval contingent in Mers-el-Kebir, killing 1,297 French military personnel. Unsurprisingly, Vichy severed diplomatic relations. Britain feared that the French naval fleet could wind up in German hands and be used against her own naval forces, which were so vital to maintaining world-wide shipping and communications. Under the armistice, France had been allowed to retain the French Navy, the Marine Nationale, under strict conditions. Vichy pledged that the fleet would never fall into the hands of Germany, but refused to send the fleet beyond Germany's reach, either by sending it to Britain, or even to far away territories of the French empire, such as the West Indies. This was not enough security for Winston Churchill. French ships in British ports were seized by the Royal Navy. The French squadron at Alexandria, under Admiral René-Emile Godfroy, was effectively interned until 1943 after an agreement was reached with Admiral Andrew Browne Cunningham, commander of the Mediterranean Fleet.

President Roosevelt disliked Charles de Gaulle, who he saw as an “apprentice dictator.” Robert Murphy, Roosevelt's representant in North Africa, prepared starting in December 1940 (a year before the United States' entrance into the war) the landing in Morocco and Algeria. The US first tried to
support General Maxime Weygand, general delegate of Vichy for Africa until December 1941. This first choice having failed, they turned to Henri Giraud a short time before the landing in North Africa on November 8, 1942. Finally, after François Darlan's turn towards the Free Forces — Darlan had been president of Council of Vichy from February 1941 to April 1942 —, they played him against de Gaulle. US General Mark W. Clark of the combined Allied command made Admiral Darlan sign on 22 November 1942 a treaty putting “North Africa to the disposition of the Americans” and making of France “a vassal country.” Washington then imagined, between 1941 and 1942, a protectorate status for France, who would be submitted after the Liberation to an Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT) as Germany. After the assassination of Darlan on 24 December 1942, Washington turned again towards Henri Giraud, to whom had rallied Maurice Couve de Murville, who had financial responsibilities in Vichy, and Lemaigre-Dubreuil, a former member of La Cagoule and entrepreneur, as well as Alfred Pose, general director of the Banque nationale pour le commerce et l'industrie (National Bank for Trade and Industry).

Creation of Free French Forces

To counter the Vichy regime, General Charles de Gaulle created the Free French Forces (FFL) after his Appeal of 18 June, 1940 radio speech. Initially, Winston Churchill was ambivalent about de Gaulle and he dropped ties with Vichy only when it became clear they would not fight. Even so, the Free France headquarters in London was riven with internal divisions and jealousies.

The additional participation of Free French forces in the Syrian operation was controversial within Allied circles. It raised the prospect of Frenchmen shooting at Frenchmen, raising fears of a civil war. Additionally, it was believed that the Free French were widely reviled within Vichy military circles, and that Vichy forces in Syria were less likely to resist the British if they were not accompanied by elements of the Free French. Nevertheless, de Gaulle convinced Churchill to allow his forces to participate, although de Gaulle was forced to agree to a joint British-Free French proclamation promising that Syria and Lebanon would become fully independent at the end of the war.

However, there were still French naval ships under French control. A large squadron was in port at Mers El Kébir harbor near Oran. Vice Admiral Somerville, with Force H under his command, was instructed to deal with the situation in July 1940. Various terms were offered to the French squadron, but all were rejected. Consequently, Force H opened fire on the French ships. Nearly 1,000 French sailors died when the Bretagne blew up in the attack. Less than two weeks after the Armistice, Britain had fired upon forces of its former ally. The result was shock and resentment towards the UK within the French Navy, and to a lesser extent in the general French public.

Tensions with Britain in Syria, Madagascar

The next flashpoint between Britain and Vichy came in June 1941 when a revolt in Iraq had to be put down by British forces. Luftwaffe aircraft, staging through the French possession of Syria, intervened in the fighting in small numbers. That highlighted Syria as a threat to British interests in the Middle East. Consequently, British and Commonwealth forces invaded Syria and Lebanon, capturing Damascus on 17 June.

One other major operation of British forces against Vichy French territory was the Battle of Madagascar. It was feared that Japanese forces might use Madagascar as a base and thus cripple British trade and communications in the Indian Ocean. As a result, Madagascar was invaded by British & Commonwealth forces in 1942. It fell relatively quickly, but the operation is often viewed as an unnecessary diversion of British naval resources away from more vital theatres of operation.

German invasion, November 1942

President Roosevelt continued to cultivate Vichy, and promoted General Henri Giraud as a preferable alternative to de Gaulle, despite the poor performance of Vichy forces in North Africa—Admiral François Darlan had landed in Algiers the day before Operation Torch with the XIXth Vichy Army
Corps, but was neutralised within 15 hours by a 400-strong French resistance force on November 8, 1942. Nonetheless, Roosevelt and Churchill accepted Darlan, rather than de Gaulle, as the French leader in North Africa. De Gaulle had not even been informed of the landing in North Africa. The United States also resented the Free French taking control of St Pierre and Miquelon on 24 December 1941 because, Secretary of State Hull believed, it interfered with a U.S.-Vichy agreement to maintain the status quo with respect to French territorial possessions in the western hemisphere.

After the November 8, 1942 putsch in North Africa by the French resistance, most Vichy figures were arrested (including General Alphonse Juin, chief commander in North Africa, and Admiral Darlan). However, Darlan was released and Eisenhower finally accepted his self-nomination as high commissioner of North Africa and French West Africa (AEF), a move that enraged de Gaulle, who refused to recognize Darlan's status. After Darlan signed an armistice with the Allies and took power in North Africa, Germany violated the 1940 armistice and invaded Vichy France on 10 November 1942 (operation code-named Case Anton), triggering the scuttling of the French fleet in Toulon.

Giraud arrived in Algiers on November 10, and agreed to subordinate himself to Darlan as the French African army commander. Even though he was now in the Allied camp, Darlan maintained the repressive Vichy system in North Africa, including concentration camps in southern Algeria and racist laws. Detainees were also forced to work on the Transsaharien railroad. Jewish goods were “aryanized” (i.e. stolen), and a special Jewish Affair service was created, directed by Pierre Gazagne. Numerous Jewish children were prohibited from going to school, something which not even Vichy had implemented in metropolitan France. The admiral was killed on 24 December 1942 in Algiers by the young monarchist Bonnier de La Chapelle. Although de la Chapelle had been a member of the resistance group led by Henri d’Astier de La Vigerie, it is believed he was acting as an individual.

The real power in mainland France devolved into the hands of Laval. After Admiral Darlan's assassination, Giraud became his de facto successor in French Africa with Allied support. This occurred through a series of consultations between Giraud and de Gaulle. The latter wanted to pursue a political position in France and agreed to have Giraud as commander in chief, as the more qualified military person of the two. It is questionable that he ordered that many French resistance leaders who had helped Eisenhower's troops be arrested, without any protest by Roosevelt's representative, Robert Murphy. Later, the Americans sent Jean Monnet to counsel Giraud and to press him into repeal the Vichy laws. After very difficult negotiations, Giraud agreed to suppress the racist laws, and to liberate Vichy prisoners of the South Algerian concentration camps. The Cremieux decree, which granted French citizenship to Jews in Algeria and which had been repealed by Vichy, was immediately restored by General De Gaulle.

Giraud took part in the Casablanca conference, with Roosevelt, Churchill and de Gaulle, in January 1943. The Allies discussed their general strategy for the war, and recognized joint leadership of North Africa by Giraud and de Gaulle. Henri Giraud and Charles de Gaulle then became co-presidents of the Comité français de la Libération Nationale, which unified the Free French Forces and territories controlled by them and had been founded at the end of 1943. Democratic rule was restored in French Algeria, and the Communists and Jews liberated from the concentration camps.

The Roosevelt administration was notably cool, if not hostile, to de Gaulle, especially resenting his refusal to cooperate in the Normandy invasion of 6 June 1944 (Operation Overlord). With the Vichy leaders gone from French territory due to the US, British, and Free French invasion and advance, on 23 October 1944 the U.S., Britain and the Soviet Union formally recognized the Provisional Government of the French Republic (GPRF), headed by de Gaulle, as the legitimate government of France.

At the end of April 1945, Pierre Gazagne, secretary of the general government headed by Yves Chataigneau, took advantage of his absence to exile anti-imperialist leader Messali Hadj and arrest the leaders of his party, the Algerian People's Party (PPA) [26]. On the day of the Liberation of France, the GPRF would harshly repress a rebellion in Algeria during the Sétif massacre of May 8, 1945, which has been qualified by some historians as the “real beginning of the Algerian War.”
Independence of the S.O.L

In 1943, the Service d'ordre légionnaire (SOL) collaborationist militia, headed by Joseph Darnand, became independent and was transformed into the “Milice française” (French Militia). Officially directed by Pierre Laval himself, the SOL was led by Darnand, who held an SS rank and pledged an oath of loyalty to Hitler. Under Darnand and his sub-commanders, such as Paul Touvier and Jacques de Bernonville, the Milice was responsible for helping the German forces and police in the repression of the French Resistance and Maquis.

In addition, the Milice participated with area Gestapo head Klaus Barbie in seizing members of the resistance and minorities including Jews for shipment to detention centres, such as the Drancy deportation camp, en route to Auschwitz, and other German concentration camps, including Dachau and Buchenwald.

Death toll

There were, in 1940, approximately 300,000 Jews in metropolitan France, half of them with French citizenship (and the others foreigners, mostly exiles). About 200,000 of them, and the large majority of foreign Jews, lived in Paris and its outskirts. Among the 150,000 French Jews, about 30,000, generally native from Central Europe, had been naturalized French during the 1930s. On this total of 300,000 Jews, approximatively 25,000 French Jews and 50,000 foreign Jews were deported. According to historian Robert Paxton, 76,000 Jews were deported and died in concentration and extermination camps. Including the Jews who died in concentration camps in France, this makes for a total figure of 90,000 Jewish deaths (nearly a quarter of the total Jewish population before the war).

Proportionally, this makes for a lower death toll than in some other countries (in the Netherlands, 75% of the Jewish population was exterminated). This fact has been used as arguments by supporters of Vichy. However, according to Paxton, the figure would have been greatly lower if the “French state” had not willfully collaborated with Nazi Germany, which lacked staff for police activities. During the Vel'd'hiv raid of July 1942, Laval ordered the deportation of the children, against explicit German orders. Paxton pointed out that if the total number of victims had not been higher, it was due to the shortage in wagons, the Resistance of the civilian population and deportation in other countries (notably in Italy).

Liberation of France and aftermath

Following the Allied liberation of France with Operation Overlord, Pétain and his ministers were taken to Germany by the German forces where they established a government in exile at Sigmaringen. After the liberation, France was swept for a short period with a wave of executions of Collaborationists. Women who were suspected of having romantic liaisons with Nazis, or more often of being Nazi prostitutes, were publicly humiliated by having their heads shaved. Those who had engaged in the black market were also stigmatized as “war profitiers” (profitiers de guerre), and popularly called “BOF” (Beurre Oeuf Fromage, or Butter Eggs Cheese, because of the products sold at outrageous prices during the Occupation). However, the Provisional Government of the French Republic (GPRF, 1944-46) quickly restablished order, and brought Collaborationists before the courts. Many convicted Collaborationists were then amnestied under the Fourth Republic (1946-54), while some civil servants, such as Maurice Papon, succeeding in holding important functions even under Charles de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic (1958-).

Three different periods are distinguished by historians:

- the first phase of popular convictions (épuration sauvage): executions without judgments and shaving of women's heads. Estimations by police prefects made in 1948 and 1952 counted as many as 6,000 executions before the Liberation, and 4,000 afterward.
- the second phase (legal epuration or épuration légale), which began with Charles de Gaulle's
June 26 and 27 1944 ordonnances on epuration (de Gaulle's first ordonnance instituting Commissions of epuration was enacted on August 18, 1943) : judgments of Collaborationists by the Commissions d'épuration, who condemned approximatively 120,000 persons (Charles Maurras, leader of the royalist Action française, condemned to life sentence on January 25, 1945, etc.), including 1,500 death sentences (Joseph Darnand, head of the Milice, and Pierre Laval, head of the French state, were executed after trial on October 4, 1945, Pierre Pucheu was inculpated at the end of 1943, Robert Brasillach, executed on February 6, 1945, etc.) — many of which were later amnestied.

- the third phase, more lenient towards Collaborationists (the trial of Philippe Pétain or of writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline)

Finally came the period for amnesty and graces (e.g. Jean-Pierre Esteva, Xavier Vallat, creator of the General Commission for Jewish Affairs, René Bousquet, head of French police, etc.)

Other historians have distinguished epuration against intellectuals (Brasillach, Céline, etc.), industrials, fighters (LVF, etc.) and civil servants (Papon, etc.).

Philippe Pétain was charged with treason in July 1945. He was convicted and sentenced to death by firing squad, but Charles de Gaulle commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. Most convicts were amnestied a few years later. In the police, collaborators soon resumed official responsibilities. This continuity of the administration was pointed out, in particular concerning the events of the Paris massacre of 1961, executed under the orders of head of the Parisian police Maurice Papon, who was convicted only in 1998 for crimes against humanity.

The French members of the Waffen-SS Charlemagne Division who survived the war were regarded as traitors. Some of the more prominent officers were executed, while the rank-and-file were given prison terms; some of them were given the option of doing time in Indochina (1946-54) with the Foreign Legion instead of prison.

Singer Tino Rossi was detained in Fresnes prison, where, according to Combat newspaper, prison guards asked him for autographs. Pierre Benoit or Arletty were also detained. Collaborationists were brought to the Vélodrome d'hiver, Fresnes prison or the Drancy internment camp.

Executions without trials and other forms of “popular justice” were harshly criticized immediately after the war, with circles close to Pétainists advancing the figures of 100,000, and denouncing the “Red Terror,” “anarchy”, or “blind vengeance”. Journalist Robert Aron estimated the popular executions to a number of 40,000 in 1960, provoking de Gaulle's surprise, who estimated the real number to be around 10,000, which is the figure today admitted by mainstream historians.

Approximately 9,000 of these 10,000 refer to summary executions in the whole of the country, which occurred during battle. In absolute value (numbers), there have been fewer legal executions in France than in neighboring, and much smaller, Belgium, and fewer internments than in Norway or the Netherlands.

The 1980s trials

Many war criminals were judged only in the 1980s: Paul Touvier, Klaus Barbie (who worked after the war for the CIA), Maurice Papon (above-mentioned), René Bousquet, head of French police during the war, and his deputy Jean Leguay (the last two were both convicted for their responsibilities in the July 1942 rafle du Vel'd'hiv, or Vel'd'Hiv raid). Famous Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld spent decades trying to bring them before the courts. A fair number of Collaborationists then joined the OAS terrorist movement during the Algerian War (1954-62). Jacques de Bernonville escaped to Québec, then Brazil. Jacques Ploncard d'Assac became counsellor of Salazar in Portugal.

In 1993, former Vichy official René Bousquet was assassinated while he awaited prosecution in Paris following a 1989 complaint for crimes against humanity; he had been prosecuted after the war, but
had been acquitted in 1949. In 1994 former Vichy official Paul Touvier (1915-1996) was convicted of crimes against humanity. Maurice Papon was convicted in 1998, released three years later, and died in 2007.

**Historiographical debates and responsibility of France: “the Vichy Syndrome”**

The official point of view of the French government is that the Vichy regime was an illegal government distinct from the French Republic, established by traitors under foreign influence. Indeed, Vichy France eschewed the formal name of France (“French Republic”) and styled itself the “French State,” replacing the Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité Republican motto, inherited from the 1789 French Revolution, with the reactionary Travaill, Famille, Patrie motto.

While the criminal behavior of Vichy France is acknowledged, this point of view denies any responsibility of the state of France, alleging that acts committed between 1940 and 1944 were unconstitutional acts devoid of legitimacy. The main proponent of this view was Charles de Gaulle himself, who insisted, as did other historians afterwards, on the unclear conditions of the June 1940 vote granting full powers to Pétain, which was refused by the minority of Vichy 80. In particular, pressures exerted by Pierre Laval have been denounced by historians, alleging that thus, the vote did not satisfy Constitutional legality (See subsection: Conditions of armistice and 10 July 1940 vote of full powers).

Nevertheless, on 16 July 1995, president Jacques Chirac, in a speech, recognized the responsibility of the French State for seconding the “criminal folly of the occupying country,” in particular the help of the French police, headed by René Bousquet, which assisted the Germans in the enactment of the so-called “Final Solution.” The July 1942 rafle du Vel'd'hiv is a tragic example of how the French police did the Nazi work, going even further than what military orders demanded (by sending children to Drancy internment camp, last stop before the extermination camps).

As historian Henry Rousso has put it in *The Vichy Syndrome* (1987), Vichy and the state collaboration of France remains a “past that doesn’t pass.” Historiographical debates are still, today, passionate, opposing conflicting views on the nature and legitimacy of Vichy’s collaborationism with Nazi Germany in the implementation of the Holocaust (which nobody denies). Three main periods have been distinguished in the historiography of Vichy: first the Gaullist period, which aimed at national reconciliation and unity under the figure of Charles de Gaulle, who conceived himself above political parties and divisions; then the 1960s, with Marcel Ophüls's film *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971); finally the 1990s, with the trial of Maurice Papon, civil servant in Bordeaux in charge of the “Jewish Questions” during the war, who was convicted after a very long trial (1981-1998) for crimes against humanity. The trial of Papon did not only concern an individual itinerary, but the French administration’s collective responsibility in the deportation of the Jews. Furthermore, his career after the war, which led him to be successively prefect of the Paris police during the Algerian War (1954-1962) and then treasurer of the Gaullist UDR party from 1968 to 1971, and finally Budget Minister under president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing and prime minister Raymond Barre from 1978 to 1981, was symptomatic of the quick rehabilitation of former Collaborationists after the war. Critics contend that this itinerary, shared by others (although few had such public roles), demonstrates France’s collective amnesia, while others point out that the perception of the war and of the state collaboration has evolved during these years. Papon’s career was considered even more scandalous as he had been responsible, during his function as prefect of police of Paris, for the 1961 Paris massacre of Algerians during the war – which, as with Vichy’s collaboration, France still has difficulties in recognizing its responsibility – and was forced to resign from this position after the “disappearance”, in Paris in 1965, of the Moroccan anti-colonialist leader Mehdi Ben Barka.

The regional newspaper *Nice Matin* revealed on February 28, 2007, that in more than 1,000 condominium properties on the Côte d’Azur, rules dating to Vichy were still in force. One of these rules, for example, stated that:

“The contractors do the following statements: they are of French nationality, are not Jewish, nor married to Jewish in the sense of the laws and ordinances in force” [under Vichy, NDLR]”
The president of the CRIF-Côte d'Azur, a Jewish association group, of course condemned what one of the inhabitants of such a condominium qualified as an “anachronism” with “no consequences.”

The “sword & the shield” argument

Today, Vichy supporters continue to maintain the official argument advanced by Pétain and Laval: the state collaboration was supposed to protect the French civilian population from the hardships of the Occupation. After the war, former Collaborationists and “pétainistes” (supporters of Pétain) claimed that while Charles de Gaulle had represented the “sword” of France, Pétain had been the “shield” which protected France.

The common “sword vs. shield” thesis is contradicted by rational historical argumentation. First of all, it bypasses the French Resistance, insidiously claiming that the alternative was “collaboration in France” and “resistance in London”. This is a clear denial of the engagement of civilians, in particular foreign Jews, who took an active part in the Resistance in France. Far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder of the National Front in 1972 and several times condemned for Holocaust denial, racial hatred, and negationism, thus declared in the 1960s, when he was actively engaged in the rehabilitation of Collaborationists :

“Was General de Gaulle more brave than Marshal [ Pétain ] in the occupied zone? This isn't sure. It was much easier to resist in London than to resist in France.”

“French Jews vs. foreign Jews”: myth or reality?

Although this claim is rejected by the rest of the French population and by the state itself, another myth remains strong today, and is more widespread than this one. This other myth refers to the alleged “protection” by Vichy of French Jews by “accepting” to collaborate in the deportation – and, ultimately, in the extermination – of foreign Jews.

However, this nationalist argument which pretends to legitimize the French state collaboration has been rejected by several historians who are specialists of the subject, among them US historian Robert Paxton, who is widely recognized and whose foreign origin permits a more distant and objective judgment on the matter, and historian of the French police Maurice Rajsfus. Both were called on as experts during the Papon trial in the 1990s.

Robert Paxton thus declared, before the court, on 31 October 1997, that “Vichy took initiatives... The armistice let it a breathing space.” Henceforth, on its own Vichy decided, on the domestic plan, to implement the “National Revolution” (“Révolution nationale”). After having designated the alleged responsibilities of the defeat (“democracy, parliamentarism, cosmopolitanism, left-wing, foreigners, Jews...”) Vichy put in place, as soon as October 3, 1940, the first “Statute on Jews.” From then on, Jewish people were considered “second-zone citizens”.

On the international plan, France “believed the war to be finished”. Thus, as soon as July 1940, Vichy eagerly negotiated with the German authorities in an attempt to gain a place for France in the Third Reich’s “New Order”. But “Hitler never forgot the 1918 defeat. He always said no.” Vichy’s ambition was doomed from the start.

“Antisemitism was a constant theme,” recalled Robert Paxton. It even opposed itself, at first, to German plans. “At this period, the Nazis had not yet decided to exterminate the Jews, but to expell them. Their idea was not to make of France an antisemitic country. To the contrary, they wanted to send there the Jews that they expelled” from the Reich.

The historical turn took place in 1941-1942, with the defeat on the Eastern Front. The war then became “total”, and in August 1941, Hitler decided on the “global extermination of all European Jews.” This new policy was officially formulated during the January 1942 Wannsee Conference, and implemented in all European occupied countries as soon as spring 1942. France, which praised itself
for having remained an independent state (as opposed to other occupied countries) “decided to cooperate. This is the second Vichy.” The first train of deportees left Drancy on 27 March 1942 for Poland--the first in a long series.

“The Nazis needed the French administration... They always complained about the lack of staff.” recalled Paxton, something which Maurice Rajsfsus has also underlined. Although the American historian recognized during the trial that the “civil behaviour of certain individuals” had permitted many Jews to escape deportation, he clearly stated that:

“The French state, itself, has participated to the policy of extermination of the Jews... How can one pretend the reverse when such technical and administrative means have been put to this aim?”

Evoking the French police’s registering of the Jews, as well as Laval’s decision, taken in August 1942 in all independence, to deport children, along with their parents, Paxton added:

“Contrary to preconceived ideas, Vichy did not sacrifice foreign jews in the hope of protecting French Jews. At the summit of the hierarchy, it knew, from the start, that the departure of these last ones was unavoidable.”

Paxton then evoked the case of Italy, where deportation of Jewish people had only started after the German occupation — Italy surrendered to the Allies in mid-1943. In particular, in Nice, “Italians had protected the Jews. And the French authorities complained about it to the Germans.”

Source: Wikipedia - Vichy France

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