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From Israelite to Jew: Anti-Semitism in Vichy France & Its Impact on French-Jewish Identity After WWII

Rukmani Bhatia
Wellesley College, rbhatia@wellesley.edu

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**From Israelite to Jew:
Anti-Semitism in Vichy France
&
Its Impact on French-Jewish Identity After WWII**

Rukmani D. Bhatia

Advisor: Venita Datta

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Introduction

French Jews were . . . excluded from the national community, shaken in their identity, driven out of the workplace, often reduced to financial ruin, and left to the Germans by the Vichy regime.¹

In the words of historian Renée Poznanski, the Vichy government did not protect its Jewish citizens during WWII, but rather segregated them from French society, making them social pariahs and easy prey for the Nazis. France lost twenty-five percent of its Jewish population to extermination while the average loss in Western Europe was forty percent.² Vichy leaders after the war focused on the fact that they had saved seventy-five percent of Jews in France; however, history sees these numbers as a failure. The issue is not how many Jews Vichy saved but rather how many Vichy did not save.

Prior to German occupation, the Vichy government passed laws that oppressed Jews. Anti-Semitic legislation passed by Vichy was not dictated by the Germans, but was instead a product of French anti-Semitic traditions.³ On October 3, 1940, Vichy passed a law defining a Jew as someone with three grandparents of Jewish race without any German pressure on Vichy.⁴ Vichy legislation, while harsh toward all Jews, was particularly oppressive toward foreign Jews, as they

¹ Poznanski, Renée. *Jews in France During World War II*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001, 479.

² Poznanski, 476.

³ Rousso, Henry. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, 7.

⁴ Rousso, 38. This law was more strict than the laws in the Occupied zone.

could be interned or deported more easily than French Jews.⁵ The majority of Jews exterminated from France were not French but foreign-born Jews.⁶

After WWII, Charles De Gaulle and other French leaders created a myth of the war in which the majority of the French people were involved in the resistance movement.⁷ This policy allowed for France to rebuild itself and move toward a unified state in the aftermath of the war. Even Jews returning to France from concentration camps were anxious to forget the experience that had singled them out and distinguished them from other French citizens.⁸ Historian Henry Rousso refers to this reaction by the French as “resistancialism” in his book, *The Vichy Syndrome*.⁹ Rousso describes the French construction of memory after WWII as the “Vichy syndrome,” a term borrowed from psychoanalysis to deal with the trauma of the Occupation. The goal of the “resistancialist” myth was to minimize the role of Vichy during the war while also linking the French nation to the Resistance. According to Rousso, this myth had four stages. The first period corresponded to the direct aftermath of WWII, or the mourning phase, which spanned from 1944 to 1954. From 1954 to 1971, during which memories of Vichy’s actions and the war

⁵ Weisberg, Richard H. *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*. New York: New York University Press, 1996, 56.

⁶ Poznanski, 478.

⁷ Rousso, 16.

⁸ Rousso, 111.

⁹ Rousso, 10.

were repressed, the subject of the Vichy regime seemed less controversial. This myth was shattered between 1971 and 1974 during the third phase, which Rousso calls a return of the repressed.¹⁰ The younger generations, which had not lived during the war, began to question Vichy's actions during the war and the role of Jews in French society.¹¹ This awakening resulted in a transformation of the Jewish identity in the new generation during the fourth phase, particularly in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in June 1967.¹² The final phase, which ended in the late 1990s, was one of obsession, characterized by the reawakening of Jewish memory.¹³

In this thesis, I examine the anti-Semitic legislation passed by the Vichy regime to understand its impact on Jews during WWII as well as how events after the war caused a change in French Jewish memory. I further compare Vichy legislation to German legislation to illustrate the reactions of both French and foreign-born Jews, in addition to the reactions of the larger French population, to these laws passed during the war.

My thesis consists of three chapters. The first traces the events leading up to the rise of the Vichy Regime. This chapter analyzes the anti-Semitic legislation passed by Vichy, positing that the policies of Vichy were not driven by German influence, but arose from French sentiments.

¹⁰ Rousso, 10.

¹¹ Rousso, 99 - 100.

¹² Rousso, 135.

¹³ Rousso, 10.

The second chapter studies the reaction Vichy legislation had on Jews in France as well as on the greater French community. It further explores life in France for Jews in the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones as well as the reactions of non-Jews living in France. The third chapter examines the memory of Vichy, illustrating the creation of the myth of the Resistance, and the shattering of the myth. It studies the cultural and political circumstances of French society in the 1970s and 1980s, which led to the explosion of the resistancialist myth created by De Gaulle. The final chapter also explores the transformation of Jewish identity in France.

The focus of my analysis is in understanding the role French anti-Semitism played in Vichy. Jews have been central to modern French national identity since the French Revolution granted them equal citizenship, which was grounded in the republican idea of a separation between the public and private spheres. Jews could publicly assimilate into French society and still practice their religion freely in private, a distinction heavily debated during the Dreyfus Affair. Partisans of Alfred Dreyfus, who was Jewish, fought for the republican ideals of liberty and equality as well as the ability to participate in public life despite one's private beliefs, while those against Dreyfus, many of whom were also anti-Semitic, focused on traditional, conservative ideas of French nationhood.¹⁴ The Jewish community was not perceived as a race but rather as a

¹⁴ Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years, 1940 – 1944*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 109.

community outside of the true French nation.¹⁵ The French Catholic Church saw Jews as a threat to the traditional values of France, further separating the Jewish community from traditional French society.¹⁶ This debate revealed a modern French anti-Semitism that was based on culture and was dependent on the assimilation of Jews in French society rather than an anti-Semitism that was based on racial differences.¹⁷ The Dreyfus Affair, on one level, questioned the ability of a Jewish man to be a loyal officer in the military and, on a larger scale, the ability of Jews to be “true” French citizens. Opponents of Dreyfus believed that Jewish people could never assimilate fully and become “truly” French. In this thesis, I study how the Vichy government, in relation to anti-Semitic legislation, handled the idea of allowing Jews to participate in French society while still practicing their faith and culture in their private homes.

I also examine the motives of the Vichy government itself. Unlike the republican government that had prevailed during the Dreyfus Affair, Vichy was the antithesis of its predecessor, the Third Republic, and its leaders espoused policies of the previously disenfranchised, conservative groups of France. Marshal Pétain changed the French motto during the Vichy regime from the republican “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) to the conservative motto

¹⁵ Birnbaum, Pierre. *L'affaire Dreyfus: La République en Péril*. Gallimard, 1994, 21 – 22.

¹⁶ Curtis, Michael. *Verdict on Vichy: Power and Prejudice in the Vichy France Regime*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002, 36.

¹⁷ Rodrigue, Aron. “Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities After the Dreyfus Affair.” *Jewish Social Studies, New Series*. 2. No. 1 (1996), 1.

of “Travail, Famille, Patrie” (Work, Family and Nation).¹⁸ The traditionalist ideas of Vichy were on par with key anti-Dreyfusard arguments, particularly with regard to the distinction between Jews and “true” French citizens.¹⁹ While the Vichy regime did not seek to exterminate Jews, as did the Germans in the context of the final solution, the regime treated Jews as second-class citizens. Vichy anti-Semitic legislation was different from German legislation as “Vichy xenophobia was more cultural and national than racial, in a French assimilationist tradition,” as the noted historian of Vichy France, Robert Paxton observes.²⁰ Vichy legislation changed the role of Jews in French society and made them lesser citizens. The regime acted under the pretense that Jews could never assimilate as French citizens and passed legislation that singled them out, making it impossible for Jews to assimilate in society. Vichy itself functioned differently than its republican predecessor. Pétain was the central authority of the regime, which “functioned like a court” around him.²¹

I specifically explore the difference in treatment of French-born and foreign-born Jews by the Vichy regime. Through an examination of Vichy laws passed between 1940 and 1942, it is possible to discern the different treatment of French and foreign Jews. For example, foreign-born

¹⁸ Jackson, 143.

¹⁹ Rousso, 6-7.

²⁰ Paxton, Robert O. *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940 – 1944*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, 175.

²¹ Jackson, 145.

Jews were the first to be deported to Nazi camps while French-born Jews did not risk arrest during the first two years of the occupation.²² Vichy leaders were more careful to protect French-born Jews. Furthermore, the difference between a French-born and foreign-born Jew was dictated by Vichy policy, since all citizenship granted to Jews after 1927 was revoked; moreover Jewish children born to foreign parents were thus deprived of their citizenship.²³ There still remained laws that all Jews had to obey, regardless of their citizenship, including laws that required registration, thereby treating French-born Jews as inferior citizens.²⁴

Through my study of French anti-Semitism prior to WWII and by studying how Jews were characterized during the Vichy regime, I have better understood the changes in French-Jewish identity within the context of French national identity. The French-Jewish community's shift away from assimilation in the 1970s and 1980s was initiated by the acts of the Vichy Regime during the Second World War that drove a wedge between their Jewish and French identities. The Vichy Regime's goal was to weaken the Jewish communities in France by showing their inferiority to "true" French people. Yet in the aftermath of the war and in the awakening of the

²² Poznanski, 478.

²³ Poznanski, 479. This legislation is in direct contradiction of the Nationality Code of 1889, which stated that any persons born in France, regardless of their parents' citizenship, were considered French citizens. (Jackson, 108).

²⁴ Paxton, 177.

memory of Vichy, Jewish identity in France became stronger. Many Jews no longer sought assimilation but showed pride in their heritage and culture.

Chapter 1: Strange Defeat: The Rise and Rule of Vichy

It was a strange form of wisdom that did not ever ask whether, in fact, there could be any worse catastrophe, for our culture or for the system of our economic life, than to let ourselves be conquered by a robber society.¹

According to Marc Bloch, noted historian, member of the Resistance and a Jew, Marshal Philippe Pétain signed the armistice of 1940 as a means of saving the French people from further turmoil without thinking of the suffering linked to the armistice itself. After Pétain agreed to Hitler's terms, France would lose its sovereignty to the German forces. While the armistice physically divided the nation into the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones, it was the lack of national spirit and unity that actually divided France, a discord that had existed in the decades leading up to the Second World War.

The Great War left a deep scar on France with the death of over 1, 400,000 French soldiers and over 1, 000, 000 men left crippled.² France faced the challenges of rebuilding the nation while also rebuilding national confidence and restoring morale. The latter task was not easily accomplished since the cost of the war was ever present in daily life through the presence of thousands of cripples and war widows as well as the ruined cities throughout France.³ The

¹ Bloch, Marc. *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 131.

² Weber, Eugen. *The Hollow Years: France In the 1930s*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996, 11.

³ Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years, 1940 – 1944*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 86.

French people were weary of the war, to the extent that Edouard Herriot, Prime Minister of France during the 1920s, came to the conclusion that “a country like ours can’t always be asked to stretch its will to the point where . . . it might break . . . it needs a rest.”⁴ France constructed the Maginot Line, a military fortification, as a means to protect the nation from future German invasion.⁵ Ostrich-like, the French hid behind the Maginot Line.

Historian Eugene Weber has called the years following WWI the “hollow years,” a time during which the population declined, given the fewer marriages and births during WWI, in large part because France lost 10% of its young male population.⁶ National unity, which had been so strong when France entered WWI, was sorely missing in the 1930s. The republican government proved ineffective in the economic crises of the 1920s and 1930s, causing a growing number of citizens to turn to socialism, communism or pacifism in search of governmental stability.⁷ German violation of the Versailles Treaty, specifically the clause prohibiting rearmament, made another war inevitable, despite the overwhelming opposition from the French population.

France declared war against Germany on September 3, 1939 after the German invasion of Poland. For nine months, France fought a “drôle guerre”; a phony war with no unified national

⁴ Edouard Herriot [Quoted in Weber, 17.]

⁵ Weber, 166.

⁶ Weber, 12.

⁷ Weber, 22.

front with a nation that did not believe in the war. On May 10, 1940, the Germans invaded France, exposing France's inefficient and outdated military tactics.⁸ The lack of adequate military ability, coupled with a demoralized army, resulted in a military debacle of stupendous proportions. This stunning reversal of fortunes for one of the victorious nations of the First World War was what Marc Bloch called "l'étrange défaite."

Thus, when on June 23, 1940, Marshal Philippe Pétain, a decorated war hero of the Battle of Verdun and last Prime Minister of the Third Republic, signed an armistice with Germany ending the fighting in France, the majority of the French nation was pleased, or at the very least, relieved to be saved from another brutal war.⁹ The agreement gave the Germans the right to occupy the northern region and Atlantic coast of France while the southern region was left unoccupied and under the nominal control of the Vichy government until 1942, when the Allied landings in North Africa led the Germans to occupy all of France.¹⁰

During its two years of relatively independent rule, the Vichy regime passed legislation that it defined as strengthening the French nation. Vichy promoted conservative values and traditional views of the French nation and the French citizen through its slogan of "Travail, Famille, Patrie" (Work, Family, Nation), which replaced the revolutionary motto "Liberté,

⁸ Weber, 175.

⁹ Weber, 279.

¹⁰ Jackson, 356.

Égalité, Fraternité” (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). Much of the legislation passed was xenophobic and anti-Semitic. Vichy deported thousands of foreigners, particularly foreign Jews, and transformed French Jews into second-class citizens. This chapter will examine both the establishment of the Vichy government and its legislation passed to “purify” France, specifically with regard to the Jews of France.

Changing Politics: The Popular Front and the Fall of the French Republic

The years leading up to Vichy were politically unstable. The republican system, which had made the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity synonymous with France, was strained by the events of the 1920s and 1930s. After the Great War, France underwent a period of growth and reorganization into a more liberal society. One such manifestation of this liberalization policy was the August 1927 law that made the naturalization process of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe easier.¹¹ However, the increasingly liberal policies could not negate the impact of WWI. The aftermath of the Great War led to political, social and economic instability, the economic depression, and the rise of the Communist Party and of extra-parliamentary leagues.¹²

¹¹ Paxton, Robert O. and Marrus, Michael. *Vichy France and the Jews*. New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1981, 25.

¹² Jackson, 66-67.

Despite the lack of unity throughout France, the nation remained fairly stable during the 1920s, but that stability was soon lost during the Depression of the early 1930s.¹³ Support for the right and left parties was evenly spread during this period of crisis. The left narrowly won the election of 1932 but its reign was short-lived.¹⁴ Extra-parliamentary groups formed in response to political and economic instability and especially to the Third Republic's inability to react quickly to crisis. These leagues mobilized their thousands of members to march on parliament on February 6, 1934, an event that led to the resignation of the leftist government. It was replaced by a right-wing coalition. However, in the wake of these events, politicians and intellectuals on the left feared the rise of fascism, leading to the formation of the leftist creation of a Popular Front coalition.

This coalition included the Communist, Socialist and Radical parties.¹⁵ The Popular Front's leader was Léon Blum, a Socialist, former Dreyfusard and a Jew. The right-wing parties loathed the Popular Front and its ideals. As Marc Bloch noted, there existed "a deep fissure that was opening almost before our eyes in the fabric of French social life. The country was splitting

¹³ Paxton and Marrus, 34.

¹⁴ Paxton and Marrus, 35 – 36.

¹⁵ Paxton and Marrus, 36 – 38.

into two opposed groups.”¹⁶ This atmosphere created the setting for a political and social civil war, destroying any shred of national unity.

Furthermore, Bloch notes, “It would be difficult to exaggerate the sense of shock felt by the comfortable classes, and even by men who had a reputation for liberal-mindedness, at the coming of the Popular Front in 1936.”¹⁷ The discontent with the Popular Front and its liberal agenda, as well as persistent anti-Semitism, resulted in the fall of Blum’s government in 1937. A conservative government took over power for the years leading up to WWII, working to return the nation to some sense of conservative normalcy. All of its attempts were thwarted, however, with the declaration of war with Germany on September 3, 1939.

The Creation of the Vichy Government

After France declared war on Germany, it spent nine months engaged in a “*drôle guerre*” without actively fighting until the German invasion of France on May 10, 1940. Paul Reynaud, a conservative, became the Prime Minister on March 19, 1940, believing that the French Republic could withstand the invasion. Reynaud appointed WWI hero Marshal Philippe Pétain as vice-president of the Council of Ministers in an attempt to bolster national morale. Pétain was a living symbol of France’s military success. His role at the Battle of Verdun had not been forgotten,

¹⁶ Bloch, 165.

¹⁷ Bloch, 165.

during which time the French people had fought together to protect their beloved nation.¹⁸

Verdun embodied the national unity that had disappeared from France after the Great War.

Unlike Reynaud, however, Pétain believed the war to be lost in May 1940. His focus was not on trying to win the war but rather to obtain an acceptable peace for his nation. Pétain believed that the French people would be abandoned if the government left metropolitan France.¹⁹ In his opinion, the French government had to focus on French interests, not international ones. Furthermore, Pétain feared the harsh nature of the German invasion, remembering the events of WWI, and believed an armistice could provide some measure of protection for the French people from the German army. He did not see an armistice as something that would harm France or reduce France's power as a nation. Rather, Pétain stated on June 13, 1940 at the Council of Cangé, one of the many places the Council of Ministers moved during the German invasion prior to the armistice, "In my view, an armistice is the necessary condition for the perpetuation of France eternal."²⁰

Reynaud stepped down as head of the government in Bordeaux the evening of June 16, 1940 and proposed Pétain as his successor. This new government, the last of the Third Republic,

¹⁸ Jackson, 28.

¹⁹ Aron, Robert. *The Vichy Regime: 1940 - 1944*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1958, 10.

²⁰ Pétain, Phillippe, Council of Cangé. July 13th, 1940.

was formed constitutionally with the sole purpose of asking what the German peace proposal would be.²¹ For Pétain, an armistice did not constitute a defeat; rather, continuing a war France was certain to lose and that the people did not want to fight would only cause more despair for the nation. Moreover, this decision was not cowardly, but rather a wise tactical decision that would allow for France to be preserved as a nation.²²

While some ministers were opposed to admitting defeat, Pétain went forward with the armistice and signed it on June 22, 1940. The agreement divided France into two zones: the Germans controlled the northern zone, including the entire Atlantic coast of France while Vichy controlled the southern zone, roughly two-fifths of France. The armistice went into effect three days after it was signed. The same day Pétain addressed the French people to explain his reasons for accepting the armistice, stating:

Le gouvernement reste libre, la France ne sera administrée que par des français . . . Je ne serais pas digne de rester à votre tête si j'avais accepté de répandre le sang des français pour prolonger le rêve de quelques français mal instruits des conditions de la lutte . . . Français, vous l'accomplirez et vous verrez, je vous le jure, une France neuve surgir de votre ferveur.²³

²¹ Paxton, Robert O. *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940 – 1944*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, 6.

²² Aron, 67.

²³ Pétain, Phillipe, June 25, 1940, Bordeaux.

Thus, Pétain believed the armistice was in the best interests of the French nation. He did not want to spill the blood of his people to prolong the dreams of a few men. He affirmed that Frenchmen would still govern France and that the nation would arise anew after the war. This speech did not soothe all the worries of French citizens, but most French people were relieved. A small group of individuals joined General Charles de Gaulle in his resistance movement, while a few others simply did not agree with Vichy. Nevertheless, Marc Bloch expressed the opinion of many French citizens upon learning of the agreement with Germany when he noted, “We find ourselves today in this appalling situation – that the fate of France no longer depends upon the French.”²⁴

While the majority of the nation did not believe in the war, there remained a minority who thought the armistice was an unacceptable defeat for France. Charles de Gaulle, the future leader of the French Resistance, disagreed with Pétain’s bleak outlook for France. As he stated in his now famous speech of June 18, 1940, “Croyez-moi, moi qui vous parle en connaissance de cause et vous dis que rien n’est perdu pour la France.”²⁵ De Gaulle did not see the armistice as the sole outcome for France, nor did he believe it to be in France’s best interest. De Gaulle was

²⁴ Bloch, 174.

²⁵ De Gaulle, Charles. BBC Radio Address, June 18, 1940.

aware that this was not a war limited to France, but one that spread throughout the world. He declared,

Mais le dernier mot est-il dit? L'espérance doit-elle disparaître? La défaite est-elle définitive? Non! . . . Car la France n'est pas seule! . . . Elle a un vaste Empire derrière elle. . . . Cette guerre n'est pas limitée au territoire malheureux de notre pays. Cette guerre n'est pas tranchée par la bataille de France. Cette guerre est une guerre mondiale. Cette guerre n'est pas limitée à notre malheureux Quoi qu'il arrive, la flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s'éteindre et ne s'éteindra pas.²⁶

De Gaulle believed that the French nation was not too weak to defend itself against the German invasion and that France's allies would come to her aid, provided that the French continued fighting the war. His convictions led to his founding the Free French movement from London.

Given the limited power and influence of those opposed to the armistice, Pétain moved forward with his plans for the Unoccupied Zone. The center of government was moved to Vichy, a spa town in the south of France. On July 9, 1940, the government at Vichy was not whole. Thirty deputies had fled to North Africa and seventy Communists had been unseated in January.²⁷ A vote of 624 to 4 of the members of the National Assembly who had not fled or been removed agreed to suspend the Third Republic's Constitution of 1875 and revise constitutional laws. The new government also passed a bill that named Pétain the Chief of the French State.

²⁶ De Gaulle, Charles. BBC Radio Address, June 18, 1940.

²⁷ Paxton, 29.

The vote was 569 to 80, with 17 members abstaining from a vote.²⁸ This new position granted Pétain full governmental powers, with complete control of the armed forces as well as the right to “negotiate and ratify treaties.”²⁹ The formerly separated executive and legislative powers were now fused together in one position. Pétain proceeded on July 10 to form the Vichy government. Unlike the republican regime, the Vichy government was different from its predecessor, most notably in blurring the line separating government from administration as well as changing the motto, symbols and ideals of the French Republic to those of the Vichy state.

This new constitution focused on the rights of labor, family and county, which replaced the republican motto of liberty, equality and fraternity. Some members of the new government, like Pétain’s second in command, Pierre Laval, wanted to end the republican regime; likewise, Pétain “was equally hostile to the Third Republic.”³⁰ They believed the Third Republic was to blame for the military defeat. As Bloch observed, “Every conceivable sin is laid at the door of the political régime which governed France in the years before the war.”³¹ Therefore, the Parliament was dissolved and the French republican government no longer existed.³²

²⁸ Paxton, 32.

²⁹ Constitutional Act No. 2, France, *Journal Officiel de la République française*, 1940, No. 168.

³⁰ Aron, 64.

³¹ Bloch, 156.

³² This view was contested by de Gaulle who maintained that the French Republic had never ceased to exist.

The National Revolution

The collapse of the Third Republic provided the political environment that allowed for the conservatives to use the Vichy regime to break the mold of the Third Republic. Thus, France underwent a “National Revolution” in which the meanings of citizenship, nationhood and society all changed. Pétain believed his changes improved France. As he stated during his trial after WWII, “France may change words and labels. She is building but she can build usefully only on the bases I have laid down.”³³

The National Revolution combatted the ideas of laissez-faire economics, mass societies and parliamentary governments, all keystones of the republican regime.³⁴ The conservatives wanted to create an elitist society that would be maintained by a hierarchical system of authority. The Catholic Church began to receive political support from the Vichy government, shifting the Church-State model away from the republican secular view.³⁵ The motto of the regime of “Travail, Famille, Patrie,” was directly linked to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The education system, which had essentially been stripped of its religious ties during the Third Republic, restored religious instruction to its schools.³⁶

³³ Pétain, Philippe, *Le Procès du Maréchal Pétain*. Paris: Michel. 1949, 9.

³⁴ Paxton, 142.

³⁵ Paxton, 149.

³⁶ Paxton 150 – 151.

Vichy also worked to restore the importance of the French family in society. In order to combat the population decline of earlier decades, Vichy posited the idea of the family unit as the focal point of society, rather than focusing on individual rights, the hallmark of the republican regime. While the idea to provide benefits for families with numerous children occurred under the republican government, Vichy focused much more attention on the family unit.³⁷ The regime's policies toward increasing the importance of families was in direct contrast with the divorce law of 1884, written by Alfred Naquet, a Jewish republican. While Vichy never repealed the law, it did pass legislation that restricted the grounds for divorce as well as the time frame in which one could ask for a divorce.³⁸ Women's roles in society became limited to the domestic sphere, reversing any progress made during the belle époque by the "femmes nouvelles," as well as the changes that occurred in the work place during the Great War, when women replaced the men called up for duty in factories.

The National Revolution also focused on the idea of "France for the French," a tenet which stemmed from the heightened levels of xenophobia present in France during the 1920s and 1930s.³⁹ When France was flooded with refugees from Eastern Europe and Spain, the Third Republic had loosened naturalization laws in 1927. Vichy leaders, like Raphaël Alibert, argued

³⁷ Paxton, 166.

³⁸ Paxton, 167.

³⁹ Paxton, 168.

during the war that because of this republican legislation, it had been too easy for foreigners, particularly Jews, to become French.⁴⁰ While Vichy legislation to restrict the rights of foreigners and Jews was not new or even specific to the conservative party, since the Third Republic had passed legislation in May 1938 that limited the rights of foreigners, Vichy's xenophobic and anti-Semitic laws were an integral part of its identity and program. Its legislation went much farther than the Third Republic's legislation, stripping foreigners and Jews, both French and foreign, of their rights and even acquiescing to their deportation.

Vichy Anti-Semitism

On the eve of WWII, France had a total of 330,000 Jews of which 195,000 were French-born and 135,000 were foreign-born.⁴¹ French Jews were not a homogenous group. Some 90,000 were French "Israelites" whose families had been firmly rooted in French soil and had a high degree of integration and assimilation into French society. They were a part of the bourgeoisie, with the highest concentration of French Jews living in Paris, prior to WWII.⁴² The other 105,000 had been naturalized as French citizens, and while they had ties to Judaism, they also had ties to the French society. The majority of foreign Jews came to France either looking for

⁴⁰ Paxton, 171.

⁴¹ Gordan, Bertram M. *Historical Dictionary of World War II France: The Occupation, Vichy, and the Resistance, 1938 – 1946*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998, 200,

⁴² Hyman, Paula. *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906 – 1939*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, 27.

work during the 1920s or as refugees during the 1930s.⁴³ No real connection existed between the French and foreign Jewish communities, because French Jews thought of themselves as French first and Jewish second. French Jews had assimilated to French culture. Furthermore, French Jews believed that the rise of anti-Semitism after the national unity that had existed during WWI was due, in part, to the increased numbers of foreign Jews who were unable to assimilate into French society.⁴⁴

Thus, Vichy legislation, in the wake of the rising anti-Semitism of the 1930s, targeted the Jewish community, both foreign and French-born Jews, which represented an easy target group for the loss of the war. In the words of Marc Bloch, writing in 1940, “It is the fashion today to say that the Jews were behind the Left-Wing movement.”⁴⁵ Specifically, Vichy leaders claimed that the failed Popular Front government had perpetuated ideas of the Republic under the leadership of Léon Blum, a Socialist, Jew and former Dreyfusard, and that these ideas were responsible for France’s defeat. Vichy saw the presence of Jews in society, particularly in prominent government positions during the Third Republic, as a threat to the safety of the nation.

⁴³ Poznanski, Renée. *Jews in France During World War II*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001, 1.

⁴⁴ Poznanski, 3.

⁴⁵ Bloch, 165.

Vichy leaders continued to promulgate the anti-Semitic ideas of Edouard Drumont and other anti-Semites of the Dreyfus Affair. The anti-Semitic sentiments differed from the Nazis in that Vichy leaders focused on the cultural aspects of anti-Semitism rather than racialist ones. While the Nazis believed the Jews were an inferior race that needed to be eliminated from the Earth, Vichy leaders believed that the Jews did not fit into French culture because they could never assimilate to French society.⁴⁶ French anti-Semitism did not seek to expulse French-born Jews from French soil. Deportation was a solution only for foreign Jews. Nevertheless, Vichy did deprive French-born Jews as well as foreign ones of their rights, making them second-class citizens. A Jew, according to the Vichy regime, could never be as faithful to the French nation as a citizen whose ancestors were born on French soil, despite the fact that many French-born Jewish families had lived in France for several generations.⁴⁷

Vichy Legislation

Vichy leaders, in the hopes of maintaining national purity, passed xenophobic laws. Laws passed in the Unoccupied Zone were applicable to the Occupied Zone as well.⁴⁸ The day the regime was established, those without a French father were prohibited from holding cabinet positions. Over the course of the next few months, Jews were barred from more occupations,

⁴⁶ Hyman, 200.

⁴⁷ Hyman, 203.

⁴⁸ Zuccotti, Susan. *The Holocaust, The French, And the Jews*. New York: Basic Books, 1993, 53.

including the medical and legal fields. A variety of professions were open only to those deemed to be French for three or more generations.⁴⁹ Furthermore, all naturalizations from 1927 onward were to be reviewed by a committee created on July 22, 1940.⁵⁰ In the four years that it existed, this committee stripped 15,000 people of their citizenship and national identity. While this act was not inherently anti-Semitic in nature, since Jews only made up less than five percent of those naturalized between 1927 and 1940, some 6,000 of those denaturalized were Jews.⁵¹ This type of legislation eased the transition from anti-foreign laws to anti-Semitic laws.⁵²

The Vichy regime's infringement on the rights of naturalized citizens and foreigners arose from its desire to make France a "pure" French nation. Attacking the Jewish community and making its members second-class citizens also attained this goal. From July 1940 to November 1942, when the Allied landing in North Africa led Germany to occupy all of France for tactical reasons, Vichy had complete control over its legislation, including anti-Semitic laws passed in the Unoccupied Zone. The anti-Semitic legislation passed during this period was a conscious choice made by the leaders of the regime. According to Vichy leaders, the flood of Jewish immigrants from the 1930s had weakened the French nation. The Jewish community was

⁴⁹ Jackson, 150.

⁵⁰ Curtis, Michael. *Verdict on Vichy: Power and Prejudice In the Vichy France Regime*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002, 105.

⁵¹ Poznanski, 28.

⁵² Poznanski, 27 – 29.

seen either as warmongers, wanting France to fight in a war that was already won by the Germans or as too weak to fight and protect France like “true” citizens.⁵³ While Vichy leaders alleged after the war that the goal was not to kill Jews but simply to displace them from French soil, the fact remains that Vichy assisted the Germans in separating, interning and deporting foreign Jews from France to German camps.⁵⁴

The goal of Vichy legislation was to remove non-French Jews from France and make French Jews inferior citizens. These laws were, overall, more stringent than the German legislation that had been passed in the Occupied Zone, restricting the rights of Jews before the Germans did so in the Occupied Zone. In the Occupied Zone, an ordinance was passed on September 27, 1940 defining a Jew as a person of the Jewish religion or with more than two Jewish grandparents. Jews were required to place a placard in their storefronts identifying their shops as Jewish and were forbidden to return to the Unoccupied Zone.⁵⁵

In October 1940, Jews throughout the Occupied Zone were required to register, regardless of citizenship, through a census and were issued identity cards stamped “Jew.” As for Vichy, on October 3, 1940 the Jewish Statute was ratified. Pursuant to this new legislation, Jews could not be hold public offices in the Conseil d’État, the Cour de Cassation and the courts of

⁵³ Paxton, 167 – 170.

⁵⁴ Poznanski, 479

⁵⁵ Poznanski, 31.

first jurisdiction. More importantly, a Jew was a person with three grandparents of the “Jewish race” or someone with two grandparents and a spouse of the “Jewish race.”⁵⁶ The definition of a Jew under this new statute broadened the German definition from the act of September 27 to include anyone of Jewish heritage, not just those whose families practiced the religion.⁵⁷

Immediately following the law defining a Jew in France, Vichy passed another statute the following day, stating:

Foreign nationals of the Jewish race may, from the promulgation date of the present law, be interned in special camps by a decision of the prefect of the department of their residence. Foreign nationals of the Jewish race may at any time be assigned a forced residence by the prefect of the department in which they reside.⁵⁸

Vichy had passed a law in the alleged free zone that made foreign Jews outlaws, solely based on their heritage. This law, coupled with the statute passed one day earlier, transformed the identity of many naturalized Jews, stripping them of their French citizenship, making them foreigners in their own country. Pursuant to this act, these foreigners could then be legally removed to internment camps. Additional articles were added to these statutes until 1942, increasing the limitations on professions accessible to Jews. Among these were quotas on the number of Jewish

⁵⁶ Klarsfeld, Serge. *Le statut des juifs de Vichy: 3 octobre 1940 et 2 juin 1941 : documentation*. Paris: F.F.D.J.F. 1990, 4.

⁵⁷ Zuccotti, 56.

⁵⁸ Weisberg, Richard H. *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*. New York: New York University Press, 1996, 56.

lawyers and doctors allowed to practice. Furthermore, Jews were banned from teaching and forbidden to engage in the public arts. On May 9, 1942, both French and foreign Jews were barred from publishing anything. Furthermore, no Jew could work for the press or radio.⁵⁹

The Vichy regime passed another law on June 2, 1941, which took precedent over the statute of October 3, 1940. The new act was created to close any loopholes that existed in the former statute, stating the race of a Jewish person was linked to the religious practices of his or her grandparents. Children of mixed marriages could now be categorized as Jewish under the new act, as could individuals with Jewish grandparents who themselves had converted to Christianity.⁶⁰ The treatment of French Jews worsened with this new statute, as they could now be interned like foreign Jews because the statute defined all Jews as people with Jewish grandparents.⁶¹ Therefore, even French-born Jews could be interned if their grandparents were practicing Jews.

Vichy was more thorough than the German authorities in the Occupied Zone. The laws of the Unoccupied Zone painted the Jewish community with a broader brush than any prior German legislation. While in language, the Vichy legislation appears to be racial while the German legislation appears to be religious, race in France had a different connotation than in Germany.

⁵⁹ Poznanski, 113.

⁶⁰ Zuccotti, 61.

⁶¹ Zuccotti, 61.

The Jewish race meant people who belonged to a separate community that could not become French. Despite the use of the word race, Vichy leaders did not espouse the racial anti-Semitism promulgated by the Nazis. The French used race in a more broad, vague way – a French race, a Catholic race, a Jewish race – rather than in a pseudo-scientific way. Nevertheless, Vichy’s legislation was more encompassing than the initial German legislation. Vichy’s definition of a Jew stripped some French citizens of their identity. These Jews had previously thought themselves to be solely French, yet the new laws made them Jewish. Marc Bloch stated it best when he wrote in 1940:

I have, through life, felt that I was above all, and quite simply a Frenchman. A family tradition, already of long date, has bound me firmly to my country. I have found nourishment in her spiritual heritage and in her history . . . I have never found that the fact of being a Jew has at all hindered these sentiments.⁶²

While Vichy treated all Jews worse than non-Jewish French citizens, foreign Jews received harsher treatment for the two years that Vichy had control of the Unoccupied Zone. The difference in treatment is evident in the creation of the General Commission on Jewish Affairs (CGQJ) by Vichy on March 29, 1941. The CGQJ was created in response to the German push for a Jewish office in the Unoccupied Zone and was headed by Xavier Vallat, who was a self-proclaimed anti-Semite. Yet even with Vallat’s anti-Semitic tendencies, he made some exceptions for war veterans or those who had proved themselves “loyal” to the French nation.

⁶² Bloch, 178.

While exempted naturalized Jews escaped deportation, they were still treated like a second-class citizens. These exceptions caused prominent Jewish leaders to believe that this commission would act as a buffer between the Germans and the Jews of France, thus explaining why so many French Jews, in particular, did not protest the laws but simply followed orders, even going to stations to register themselves in the Unoccupied Zone. They could not imagine the French government would let the Germans harm them, let alone themselves do harm to their own people.⁶³ What these individuals did not know was that Vichy's authority was slowly dwindling under the German command.

Vichy Collaboration with Germany

During its two-year reign, Vichy passed laws in conjunction with the German authorities. Some laws were linked to the armistice of June 22, 1940, which granted the Germans the right to arrest and deport any person, Jewish or otherwise, who had broken German law and sought asylum in France. Vichy published anti-Semitic propaganda that had the effect of separating Jews from the rest of French society and isolated them before they were arrested and deported. While Vichy did not actively exterminate Jews on French soil, the regime complied with German demands related to the treatment of Jews and allowed them to be led to their deaths. French police conducted the arrests of Jews prior to 1943. The internments and the transfer of Jews from

⁶³ Poznanski, 32.

the Unoccupied Zone were facilitated by the French administration.⁶⁴ The first mass round up had occurred in Paris on May 14, 1941 with 3, 747 foreign Jewish men being arrested at one of five assembly points, placed on a train and transported to the camps in Pithiviers and Beaune.⁶⁵ The only recorded exception to this practice were the arrests on December 12, 1941, when the German military police arrested 750 middle class French Jews in Paris, among them René Blum, brother of Léon Blum. They were sent to Compiègne, from where they were deported to Auschwitz. These French Jews were intellectuals and businessmen.⁶⁶ The Germans had made no distinction between foreign or French Jews in their arrests, while the Vichy-driven arrests were focused on foreign Jews. Nevertheless, Vichy did not protest the deportation of these French Jews, showing how Vichy's alleged sovereignty, which allowed it to "protect" French Jews from deportation, was dependent on German lenience.

Furthermore, Vichy had many internment camps that were used as intermediary camps prior to the deportation of Jews to German concentration camps. For example, Poitiers, which was in the Occupied Zone, was installed and controlled by the French administration and illustrates the collaboration between the French administration and the German occupation,

⁶⁴ Zuccotti, 67.

⁶⁵ Zuccotti, 83.

⁶⁶ Zuccotti, 87.

especially regarding the complicity of the French in the German Final Solution.⁶⁷ Drancy was one of the more infamous internment camps with criminally poor living conditions.⁶⁸ It was run by French administrators, deporting Jews interned there to Germany until July 2, 1943, when the Germans, under the management of Aloïs Brunner, a high-ranking Nazi official, took control. Roughly 67,000 Jews were interned there and deported. Less than 3 per cent returned after the war ended.⁶⁹

Vichy Support and Authority Wanes

Throughout much of Vichy's early reign, the majority of the French population was happy or complacent with the legislation against foreigners and Jews. The propaganda issued by the regime was successful in connecting with the deep-rooted anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner traditions of French society. Vichy managed to maintain support from the general French community despite interning hundreds of people. However, with the increasing number of Jews rounded up, especially women and children, Vichy authority and support declined. A key turning point in how Vichy was seen by the greater French community was the Vélodrome d'Hiver round-up, on July 16 and 17, during which 13,152 Jews, among them 4,051 children, were

⁶⁷ Curtis, 162.

⁶⁸ Zuccotti, 86.

⁶⁹ Zuccotti, 86.

arrested and eventually deported.⁷⁰ 800 people returned after the war from this round up; none of the deported children ever returned.

The first two years of Vichy rule and German occupation elicited a variety of reactions from the French. Among the Jewish community, the reactions varied as well. As for the non-Jewish community, some supported Vichy's mission while others recoiled at the idea that their government could treat its own citizens in such a manner. It was the arrests and deportations of over 13,000 people in mid-July that showed the community what Vichy and the Germans were capable of doing.

All the tensions present during the decline in Vichy authority came to a head with the round up of July 16, 1942. In the next chapter, I will examine the reactions of the Jewish community to the various laws passed by Vichy. I will also examine the reactions of the greater French population and how support for Vichy shifted with the round up.

⁷⁰ Poznanski, 261.

Chapter 2: The Jewish Community in France During Vichy: Reaction and Responses

A single injustice, a single crime, a single case of inequality, if it is accepted universally, legally, nationally, and comfortable, is enough to dishonor a people.¹

As French poet, Charles Péguy, wrote, the actions of a few can dishonor a nation. The Vichy regime's actions during WWII reflected poorly on the entire French nation. While it cannot be said that every French citizen agreed with Vichy's legislation or policies, very few rose up in protest of the crimes committed against the Jewish population in 1940 and 1941. Many agreed with Vichy's policy to deport foreigners and treat Jews poorly. Indeed, Vichy's anti-Semitism was not a product of German influence but rather of French traditions. Even the French Jewish population did not rise up against Vichy, instead seeing the influx of foreign Jews as the reason for the new wave of anti-Semitism in France. These *Israelites*, as they preferred to be called as opposed to "Jews", obeyed Vichy laws to register, stop work and, in the Occupied zone, wear the Star of David because they still believed that the French government would not harm an assimilated people.²

¹ Péguy, Charles, *Notre Jeunesse*, Paris: 1910 [Quoted in Lambert, Raymond-Raol, *Diary of a Witness: 1940 – 1943*. Washington D.C: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2007, 128.]

² Poznanski, Renée. *Jews in France During World War II*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001, 32.

In this chapter, I examine the reactions to Vichy laws of various Jewish groups. This study will demonstrate the different identities within the Jewish community in France before Vichy's broad definition of Jews was enforced. This chapter will further illustrate the effects of the Vichy legislation on these diverse Jewish constituencies. Finally, it will also examine the reactions of the broader French population and reflect on the differing effects the legislation and, more importantly, the round ups, had on the non-Jewish French population.

Jewish Identities in France

France had a heterogeneous Jewish population on the eve of WWII. The Jewish community consisted of French-born Jews, naturalized foreign Jews and Jewish refugees from eastern Europe. Each of these sub-groups had a different perspective on their Jewish identity, all, however, clashed with the definitions of identity the Vichy regime would establish in 1940. French Jews had been long-established citizens, dating back to the French Revolution, when they were granted rights as individual citizens of the French Republic.³ The Jewish community in France had welcomed the rights of citizenship and embodied the social practices and norms of non-Jewish French citizens through generations of assimilation.⁴

³ Cohen, Erik H. *The Jews of France Today: Identity and Values*. Boston: Brill Publishers, 2011, 5. Jews had lived in France for much longer, but were only granted equal rights during the Revolution.

⁴ Poznanski, 4-5.

This community became known throughout France as the *Israelites*, who were of Jewish descent but did not practice Jewish traditions.⁵ The *Israelite* commitment to the nation continued throughout the republican history of France. This loyalty was evident in the involvement of the *Israelite* community in the French civil service and the army under the Third Republic. Native-born Jews had replaced involvement and their identification as Jews, with a devotion to France and the Third Republic.⁶ Many became successful in the years following their emancipation as equal citizens. Over the span of the nineteenth century, French-born Jews became successful in economic and political endeavors, opening banks and holding positions of power and influence in the civil service.⁷ Members of their community also excelled in the sphere of arts, writing novels, plays and operas. No aspect of French life was untouched by the native-born Jewish community, as its members assimilated well into traditional French society.⁸ Pediatrician Robert Debré remembers growing up in early twentieth-century Paris, saying “it did not seem then that the anti-Semitism to which people alluded, relating with horrors its ravages in other times and places, could reach us and trouble our human relations.”⁹

⁵ Cohen, 24.

⁶ Cohen, Richard. Introduction of Raymond-Raoul Lambert, *Diary of a Witness: 1940 – 1943*. Washington D.C: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2007, xvi.

⁷ Zuccotti, Susan. *The Holocaust, The French, And the Jews*. New York: Basic Books, 1993, 9.

⁸ Debré, Robert, cited in Zuccotti, 10 – 11.

⁹ Zuccotti, 10.

France's relative tolerance of Jews compared to other European countries resulted in the immigration of Jews to France during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These foreign Jews did not have a major impact on the population because they numbered in the thousands and settled in poor neighborhoods, planning on becoming devoted French citizens through the naturalization process.¹⁰ This section of the Jewish population was not considered *Israelites*, as these Jews did not have the long ties to French soil, but rather were seen by the French, both Jewish and gentile, as foreign Jews, even after naturalization. These naturalized Jews were more noticeable throughout French society than the *Israelites* because they spoke with German or Eastern European accents. This distinction became important during periods of turmoil in France, like the Dreyfus Affair or economic recession, when some French citizens became focused on strengthening the nation through cultural homogeneity. Naturalized Jews became targets of hatred and scapegoats for France's issues during periods of instability.¹¹

A third component of the Jewish community in France at the time of Vichy was made up of refugees fleeing from Eastern Europe to France in search of a more stable and more tolerant society. In the twentieth century, before WWII, 150,000 to 200,000 foreign Jews entered France. These Jews had different traditions and identities than the naturalized Jews or the *Israelites*.

¹⁰ Zuccotti, 11.

¹¹ Zuccotti, 12.

Moreover, these immigrants did not bother to assimilate to French society but rather tried to re-create the life they had led in the East on French soil.¹² Sarah Kofman, the French-born child of Polish immigrants, remembers growing up in Paris according to Jewish traditions. Kofman writes “My father was a rabbi, and we rigorously observed all the kosher prohibitions. We lived in terror of using the wrong plate or utensils or of inadvertently switching on the electricity on the Sabbath.”¹³ Refugees like Sarah Kofman’s family spoke Yiddish, not French. Their different lifestyles resulted in the creation of self-sustaining communities in areas like le Marais in Paris.

This distinction between the native-born French Jewish community and the refugee community created tensions in the 1930s, during the period of rising anti-Semitism in France. The native-born community saw the refugee Jews of the East as the reason for the change in tolerance toward Jews. The French-born Jews believed their assimilation had modernized and advanced their community, while the foreign refugees were old-fashioned. The foreign Jews also had strong political opinions on Germany’s actions in Europe. Those who believed in communism or socialism belonged to political groups like the “Kultur ligue,” which was a mainly communist organization.¹⁴ The refugees did not hesitate to go to the area of La Mutualité, in the fifth arrondissement of Paris, when the International League against Anti-Semitism

¹² Zuccotti, 20.

¹³ Kofman, Sarah. *Rue Ordener Rue Labat*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, 13.

¹⁴ Poznanski, 10.

organized a huge rally against racism to show their support.¹⁵ The political awareness and presence of foreign Jews in France caused *Israelites* to fear that anti-Semitism would rise in response to these refugees' loyalty to Zionism rather than France.¹⁶

The rise of the number of refugees in France in the years leading up to WWII resulted in a rise in anti-Semitism. French citizens linked France's social and economic struggles to the failure of the "Semitic" Third Republic and the failed Popular Front government of the 1930s, led by Léon Blum, to return France to its former status as a major world power. The impact anti-Semitism had on Jews in France varied depending on one's degree of assimilation. French-born Jews, having assimilated well into French society, did not experience a change in day-to-day life in the years leading up to the war. Philippe Erlanger, a French-born Jew whose family had lived in France since the eighteenth century, describes the anti-Semitic sentiment in France during the years leading up to WWII in the following manner: "This problem of anti-Semitism worried me, but I didn't feel myself personally involved. Like car accidents, this type of calamity was always for others. In truth, I didn't really believe in it."¹⁷ However, the account of Jean-Marie Lustiger, son of Polish Jewish immigrants and a converted Catholic, was different from that of Erlanger.

¹⁵ Poznanski, 11.

¹⁶ Lustiger, Jean-Marie [Quoted in Zuccotti, 21.]

¹⁷ Erlanger, Philippe, *La France Sans Étoile: Souvenirs de l'Avant-guerre et du Temps de l'Occupation*. Paris: Plon, 1974, 39.

Lustiger, who later became a French Cardinal for the Catholic Church, stated, “At the gates of the Lycée Montaigne, I was punched in the head because I was a Jew.”¹⁸

Yet what was remarkable about the different treatment of Jews in France was that regardless of whether one was a native-born Jew and accepted in French society or a foreign Jew who was seen as the cause of France’s current social and economic problems, the Jewish community as a whole maintained a strong degree of confidence in and loyalty to the French government and nation, even during the beginning of WWII, despite the strong anti-Semitic climate in France.

Jewish Reaction to Vichy Laws: Occupied Zone

The Jews of France appear to have fallen asleep in a happy optimism, ignoring deliberately all the possibilities and consequences of Zionism and make of assimilation a narrow and absolute doctrine . . . But the times have changed . . . the international conditions are no longer the same . . . Far from closing itself in an ivory tower, French Jewry needs to expand this narrow notion by recognizing all the obligations offered by the present times.¹⁹

Raymond-Raoul Lambert, the Jewish head of the Union Générale des Israélites de France, which was created in the Southern zone in order to record the affairs of the Jewish community by Vichy, wrote about the apathetic nature of the native-born Jewish community, which had

¹⁸ Zuccotti, 29.

¹⁹ Lambert, Raymond-Raoul. "Pour Une 'Union Juive de France'." *L'Univers Israélite*. August 30, 1935, 791.

allowed itself to believe that the government would protect its members as it would any other French citizen. However, while this sentiment was shared throughout France, the reactions were different in the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones.

After the armistice in June 1940, most French citizens who had fled to the southern part of France during the German invasion, returned to their homes in the Occupied Zone, including 30,000 Jews. Many, including Jews, had never left for the South during the war. After the passage of the first Jewish Statute in the Occupied Zone in October 1940, native French-born Jews with means had the ability to leave France altogether, or, at the very least, go to the Unoccupied Zone, yet thousands remained.²⁰ Raymond-Raoul Lambert wrote in his diary a few weeks after the racial laws took effect “I will never leave the country for which I was almost killed [in the war].”²¹ Many Jews, both French-born and foreign, were slow to react to the oppressive laws in the Occupied Zone, believing the French government would intervene. The reality of the situation was that Vichy leaders created the anti-Semitic legislation in the Unoccupied Zone. Indeed, Vichy anti-Semitic legislation was conceived before that of the Germans in the Occupied Zone.

²⁰ Zuccotti, 45.

²¹ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 85.

The Vichy laws defining Jews passed in October 1940 and June 1941 outraged many native-born and naturalized Jews, but they did not weaken their loyalty to France. Lambert wrote of his dilemma on June 4, 1941 after the Jewish Statute had been broadened to include more assimilated Jews into the Jewish category about plans to flee France for the United States, writing:

I wonder whether life will be possible for my sons in Europe in a material sense. So I am taking the first steps toward finding temporary asylum in New York. It pains me to do so, but do I have the right not to assure my sons a future? I shall remain French until my death, but if the French nation legally expels me from its bosom, do I have the right to decide that my sons should be pariahs?²²

Even when native-born Jews literally lost their identity as French citizens under Vichy decrees, many still believed they were French first, not Jewish. These French Jews did not define themselves as Jewish; their primary form of identify came from their French citizenship. The identities Vichy was trying to impose on the Jewish community were not able to overcome the years and generations of assimilation, patriotism and loyalty to France.

It was this belief in the French nation that led many native-born Jews to underestimate Vichy's capabilities; for many, the registration was believed to be the most severe act the French government could impose because it broke from the French ideal of secularism, which had been an integral part of French society since the Revolution.²³ Joseph Kessel, a French naturalized

²² Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 41.

²³ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 42.

journalist, had escaped to Lisbon in June 1940. However, he was not content outside of France and returned to Paris in September 1940, ignoring the fears of his family of returning to German-occupied France. In February 1941, Kessel wrote to his brother, stating, “despite everything, France is not finished, not Nazified, not anti-Semitic.”²⁴ Kessel was not the only one who believed the anti-Semitism came from the German authorities. Lambert wrote about the June 1941 Statute, declaring, “One has the feeling that even the details of the law are inspired or dictated by the German authorities,”²⁵ despite the fact that this law was created solely by the Vichy leaders. Jewish refugees, who did not hold French citizenship, tended to react differently to the legislation than native-born and naturalized Jews. Approximately 5,000 Jews fled from the Occupied Zone between June 10 and 25, 1940, most of them refugees. The refugees had no illusions or misguided perceptions of what the Germans were capable of doing, since they had fled from oppressive legislation to come to France.²⁶

The Jewish statutes brought some sense of solidarity to the Jewish population of France. Even for the native-born Jews, who were completely integrated into French society, there existed a sense of loyalty to their Jewish origins and solidarity with their Jewish brethren. Thus, in Paris in October 1940, after the passage of the Jewish Statute, 149,734 Jews registered their names,

²⁴ Zuccotti, 47.

²⁵ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 45.

²⁶ Zuccotti, 48.

addresses and received the stamp “Juif” on their identity cards. These Jews included refugees, naturalized foreign and native-born Jews. Roughly 90% of the Jewish population of Paris had obeyed the law and registered, including those whose names and attributes would not incline anyone to believe them to be Jewish.²⁷ Since the French police carried out the registration process in the Occupied Zone, Jews felt some measure of false security and did not believe any harm would come from registering.²⁸ Wealthy native-born Jews managed to protect themselves through their network of social and political contacts, obtaining falsified identity paper, but foreign Jews were less fortunate.²⁹

Native-born Jews failed to see the extent of French collaboration with the Nazis for the first two years of the Occupation. The native-born Jews also continued to believe the French government would be able to protect them from German demands. It was only in July 1942 when women and children were forced from their homes and deported that Vichy’s authority came under mass scrutiny. Only after the infamous Vélodrome d’Hiver round up were people able to understand that Vichy itself was unable to protect its people from German demands and that perhaps they were also willing to acquiesce to German requirements. The founding of the Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, on March 29, 1941, run by French official Xavier

²⁷ Zuccotti, 54.

²⁸ Zuccotti, 54-55.

²⁹ Poznanski, 484.

Vallat, to ensure that anti-Semitic legislation was enforced, furthered the belief that the French would protect the Jewish population from the Nazis.³⁰ Despite popular belief of this commission protecting Jews from anti-Semitic legislation, the commission was the birthplace of the Jewish Statute of June 2, 1941.³¹

Vélodrome D'Hiver

July 16, 1942 in France marks one of the most shocking events of the Second World War: the arrest and deportation of 13,152 Jewish men, women and children from Paris.³² Round ups of foreign Jews were not unusual in either the Occupied or Unoccupied Zones, as foreign Jews could be interned under the Vichy Jewish statute. However, this round up was different. The Germans demanded 30,000 Jews be deported from France. Vichy leaders agreed to deport 10,000 Jews from the Unoccupied Zone and 20,000 from the Occupied Zone. The arrest lists included naturalized citizens and French-born children. The former group was to come from the internment camps where foreign Jews had been detained in the southern zone. The latter group was to be arrested by the French police in Paris. René Bousquet, secretary general of the Vichy police, was happy to comply since it would unify French police forces throughout both zones so

³⁰ Poznanski, 68.

³¹ Poznanski, 69.

³² Poznanski, 261.

that both forces would be under his command.³³ Not only were Vichy officials willing to arrest the number of Jews Germany demanded, they also wanted to include children whom the Germans had not requested. The Germans hesitated, since prior deportations occurred under the guise of sending arrestees to labor camps and rounding up children would expose this fiction. The request to arrest the children came from Pierre Laval, Pétain's minister of state, because he feared the public relations disaster created by orphaned children.³⁴ The French police forces went ahead with Laval's demands, despite the fact that the Germans had not responded affirmatively on the issue of children.

The early morning of July 16, 1942 was the beginning of a nightmare for many Jews in Paris. At 4AM, 4,500 French policemen spread throughout Paris, armed with index cards detailing the names and addresses of the Jews to be arrested.³⁵ Those arrested had specific instructions to bring their identification cards, food for two days, one pair of shoes, two pairs of socks, two shirts, one sweater, sheets, blankets, a plate and utensils and toiletries.³⁶ The round up did not go smoothly for the police. Rumors of the round up had spread throughout Paris. Hélène Berr, a native-born Jew whose family had lived in France for several generations, documented

³³ Poznanski, 255.

³⁴ Poznanski, 255.

³⁵ Zuccotti, 104.

³⁶ Zuccotti, 105.

life in Paris during the Occupation in her journal. Writing on July 15 1942, the evening before the round up, she observed, “Something is brewing, something that will be a tragedy, maybe *the* tragedy. M. Simon came round this evening at 10:00 to warn us that he’s been told about a roundup for the day after tomorrow, twenty thousand people.”³⁷ Some people believed the rumors and hid or attempted to evade arrest. Other people took their own lives. Annie Kriegel, a French historian who escaped the round up at age fifteen, remembers the horrors of that morning, stating, “I heard screams rising to the heavens . . . screams like you used to hear in hospital delivery rooms. All the human pain that both life and death provide.”³⁸

The police, in order to avoid further chaos, began moving the arrested people to their designated destinations. Jews without children were placed on buses and taken to Drancy before being transported to Auschwitz. Families with children were placed in the Vélodrome d’Hiver, where they lived for one week in horrendous conditions. Over 8,000 people were kept in a poorly ventilated, dark stadium without sufficient food or water. A Red Cross nurse recalled the conditions, stating, “Those cries of grief, of horror, of fear . . . the memory is of those cries, that horrible odor, the tears of children and that constant blue light day and night.”³⁹ The detainees stayed in these awful conditions before being transported by bus to the Gare d’Austerlitz, where

³⁷ Berr, Hélène. *The Journal of Hélène Berr*. New York: Weistein Books, 2008, 97.

³⁸ Kriegel, Annie, quoted in Zuccotti, 104.

³⁹ Zuccotti, 111.

trains would take these families to two French internment camps run by the French gendarmes, Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande.

The conditions in the camps were no better than in the Vélodrome, but the situation became more inhumane on July 31. The Germans had still not agreed to the deportation of the children, but French authorities had decided to begin the deportation process. All individuals over the age of fourteen were to be transported to Auschwitz. Annette Muller-Bessmann was nine years old when she was arrested with her brothers and mother in the July 16 round up. She was one of the few to survive as her father, who had evaded arrest, managed to convince a nun to move Annette and her brothers into a home for sickly children awaiting deportation. The same nun then helped Annette and her brothers escape to an orphanage, saving their lives.⁴⁰ The memories of the camps remained with Annette who later recalled the separation at Beaune:

The children hung on to their mothers, pulling on their dresses. They had to separate us with rifle butts, with truncheons, with streams of icy water. It was a savage scramble, with cries, tears, howlings of grief. The gendarmes tore the women's clothing, still looking for jewels or money. Then suddenly, a great silence. On one side, hundreds of young children, on the other the mothers and older children. In the middle, the gendarmes giving curt orders.⁴¹

The adult deportation was completed by August 7, leaving only 3,500 detainees in the French camps, all of them children.⁴² The Germans agreed to the deportation of children to Auschwitz in

⁴⁰ Zuccotti, 239 – 240.

⁴¹ Muller-Bessmann, Annette. [Quoted in Zuccotti, 113.]

⁴² Zuccotti, 112.

early August. The children were first moved to Drancy. Odette Daltroff-Baticle was an adult prisoner at Drancy when the trains of children arrived. She recalled: "I will never forget the faces of those children . . . they are serious, profound and, what is extraordinary: in these little faces, the horror of the days which they are living is branded. They have understood everything, like adults."⁴³ Shortly after arriving at Drancy, the children from the Vélodrome again boarded a train, but this time their final destination was Auschwitz. By August 31, all the children from the Vel d'Hiv who had left French soil had met their death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Jewish Reactions: Unoccupied Zone

The Jews of the Unoccupied Zone had different reactions to the anti-Semitic legislation than those in the Occupied Zone. The Unoccupied Zone did not witness a mass exodus of Jews leaving the area like the Occupied Zone.⁴⁴ While Jews in the Unoccupied Zone had similar sentiments to those in the Occupied Zone, thinking that Vichy policies would be less harsh than German policies and further that Vichy anti-Semitic laws were derivatives of Nazi legislation, Vichy anti-Semitic legislation had more substantial effects on Jews in the Unoccupied Zone.⁴⁵ Three-fourths of the Jews affected by the Vichy Jewish Statute of October 3, 1940, which

⁴³ Daltroff-Baticle, Odette. [Quoted in Zuccotti, 115.]

⁴⁴ Poznanski, 66.

⁴⁵ Poznanski, 68.

restricted employment, lived in the Unoccupied Zone.⁴⁶ The southern zone was rampant with anti-Semitism through the Legion of Veterans, who used the radio to blame the Jews for the French defeat and claim that Jewish ideals had undermined the moral foundations of the French family.⁴⁷

The propaganda and anti-Semitic legislation in the Unoccupied Zone was received with overall indifference from the general population. However, on an individual level, people were sympathetic toward Jews and recognized the realities of the legislation.⁴⁸ This attitude further perpetuated the belief that Vichy would not cause serious harm to Jews; despite a culture of anti-Semitism, people still treated individual Jews properly. As time went on, the restrictions of Jewish activity in the Occupied Zone became mandated in the Unoccupied Zone as well. With the expansion of the Jewish Statute in June 1941, all Jews in the southern zone were now required to complete the census form by a Vichy law, even if they were native-born French Jews.⁴⁹ The files created from this data-collection were similar to the ones already in existence in the Occupied Zone. The southern zone began the practice of regional expulsion of all Jews in June 1941 as well, under Vichy mandates. Coastal areas and the Vichy-Cusset-Bellerive region,

⁴⁶ Poznanski, 75.

⁴⁷ Poznanski, 75.

⁴⁸ Poznanski, 76.

⁴⁹ Poznanski, 70.

where roughly 1,500 French and foreign Jews had migrated after the armistice, were to be purged of Jewish presence.⁵⁰ These Jews were not interned, but they were displaced from their homes and communities, and forced to move away from the coasts of France that were strictly off-limits.⁵¹

Non-Jewish Reaction to Vichy Laws

Anti-Semitism had always existed in France at some level. Its prominence varied depending on the economic and social conditions of different periods. During WWI, due to the “union sacrée,” the French set aside any prejudices and fought with their Jewish countrymen in honor of their nation. The 1930s, however, presented a growing immigrant population of Jews and, consequently, a growing anti-Semitic sentiment throughout society. Vichy’s legislation to limit the Jewish communities’ presence in French society was welcomed by those who had long-hardened resentments. Jewish shops were broken into, Jewish slurs were scrawled in graffiti on Jewish residences and Jewish people were subjected to insults in their everyday life.⁵² However, not all French people were anti-Semitic. Many were ashamed of the laws expelling Jews from the workplace or the requirement in the Occupied Zone to wear a Star of David. Many French

⁵⁰ Poznanski, 72.

⁵¹ Poznanski, 72 – 73.

⁵² Paxton, Robert O. and Marrus, Michael. *Vichy France and the Jews*. New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1981, 179.

people helped hide Jews from the police, often taking children to the countryside to avoid deportation.⁵³ Others would warn Jews of arrests or round ups. As Sarah Kofman, a Jew who lived in Paris during the war with her family, remembers, “9 February, 1943, eight in the evening. We are in the kitchen having some vegetable broth. There is a knock. A man enters: ‘Go into hiding immediately with your six children. You are on the list for tonight.’ I never saw him again.”⁵⁴

The Church & Vichy

“In the face of the ‘Jewish problem’ almost all Catholic France was as if anesthetized.”⁵⁵

Pierre Pierrard, a French historian who lived during WWII described the apathetic reaction to anti-Semitic legislation during the war in his book, *Juifs et Catholiques Français: de Drumont à Jules Isaac*. The goals of the Vichy regime were to return to a more conservative, traditionalist society. The Republican ideas of secularization of French society were replaced by ideas based on Catholic traditions. Therefore, the Catholic Church initially supported the changes made by Pétain.⁵⁶ While Pétain did not restore the old Church-State relations, he did work to allow the

⁵³ Marrus and Paxton, 195 – 196.

⁵⁴ Kofman, 30.

⁵⁵ Pierrard, Pierre. *Juifs et Catholiques Français: de Drumont à Jules Isaac (1886 - 1945)*. Paris 1970, 298.

⁵⁶ Marrus and Paxton, 197.

Church the right to influence education until 1942, in direct contradiction of the Republican secular education system.

During the enforcement of the anti-Semitic legislation in 1940, the Catholic Church was notably silent. There was no dissent from the Catholic hierarchy in protest of the persecution of people based on their religious affiliation. The Catholic community began voicing some concern with Vichy in the summer of 1941 when Vichy legislation required the registration of Jews. The summer of 1941, a few Catholic professors at the University of Lyon attempted to launch a declaration against the persecution, but failed to gain support.⁵⁷ However, the Catholic community's concerns were linked to the application of the legislation, not the principles of the legislation itself. The anti-Semitic policies did not cause concern for the Catholic community, but the concept of persecution along religious lines did trouble the community.⁵⁸ Charity was important to the Catholic Church, but in the words of J. M. Etienne Dupy, a Catholic priest, in a letter to all religious houses in Toulouse, "the common good of the nation comes before that of the Jews alone."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Marrus and Paxton, 199.

⁵⁸ Marrus and Paxton, 199.

⁵⁹ J. M. Etienne Dupy [Quoted in Marrus and Paxton, 199]

The turning point for the Catholic Church was the mass round up and deportation of 1942.⁶⁰ Some members of the Catholic hierarchy believed these acts were abhorrent and publically denounced the massive deportations.⁶¹ Yet it was not until the summer of 1942 when open denunciation of Vichy's anti-Semitic practices became common in France, as the deportation of women and children shocked many French citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike.

The French Protestant Church reacted differently to Vichy than the Catholic Church. While Protestants had initially supported Pétain's reforms to create a more moral society, once anti-Semitic legislation was passed, Protestant leaders made clear their position against Vichy.⁶² Protestant clergy members were apprehensive of the National Revolution and its promotion of traditionalist, Catholic beliefs, remembering their own ancestors' religious persecution. However, this part of French society did not play a large role overall in the context of the war, since often, public opposition from Protestants toward Vichy's treatment of the Jews caused some people to believe that Protestants were anti-French.⁶³

Protestants, both as a community and as individuals, played a large part in the protection of Jews. The Protestant village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the southern zone consisted of

⁶⁰ Marrus and Paxton, 198.

⁶¹ Marrus and Paxton, 203.

⁶² Halls, W. D. *Politics, Society and Christianity in Vichy France*. Oxford: Berg, 1995, 69.

⁶³ Marrus and Paxton, 204.

roughly three thousand village families and peasants. Between the summer of 1940 and the spring of 1941, hundreds of Jewish refugees found their way to this Protestant village.⁶⁴ In August 1942, French police arrived at Le Chambon with three buses, demanding a list of Jews from the community's Pastor André Trocmé. The pastor not only denied the police that information, but sent members of his clergy to distant farms to warn all Jews hidden there of the arrests. For several weeks, the French police returned to the village. They never found a single Jew.⁶⁵ This remarkable success must be viewed in light of Pastor Trocmé's speech to his parish on June 23, 1940, the day after the armistice was signed. Trocmé stated that the Protestant pastor Marc Boegner, who was a member of the National Council of Vichy, had humiliated the Protestant faith and implored his parish that to follow another example:

Aimer, pardonner, faire du bien à nos adversaires, c'est le devoir. Mais il faut le faire sans abdication, sans servilité sans lâcheté. Nous résisterons, lorsque nos adversaires voudront exiger de nous des soumissions contraires aux ordres de l'évangile. Nous le ferons sans crainte, comme aussi sans orgueil et sans haine.⁶⁶

The solidarity of this Protestant village was unusual and not necessarily indicative of the practices of all Protestants in France during WWII. Most villages could not serve as safe havens for Jews nor were they able to prevent Jews from being arrested as successful as Trocmé's

⁶⁴ Zuccotti, 227.

⁶⁵ Zuccotti, 227 – 228.

⁶⁶ Trocmé, André, and Edouard Theis. "Message des Deux Pasteurs du Chambon-sur-Lignon à leur Paroisse." June 23, 1940.

village. However, this case highlights the solidarity of the Protestants, many of whom felt connected with the persecuted Jews, recognizing the common history of persecution both groups shared in France.

Conclusion

The massive round ups affected the rest of the French population as well, where reactions varied. Some continued to show indifference, others cheered on the policemen, but many condemned the round ups and helped Jews escape arrest. The events of July 16, despite efforts from the government to hide the atrocities of the Vélodrome, turned public opinion away from the Vichy regime, fueling greater support for the Resistance. These events also shook the Jewish community out of its complacent state of believing the French government would be able to protect them from German demands. The question of Vichy's involvement in the Final Solution led to great soul searching in France after the war. This problem of grappling with the memory of French collaboration during the war threatened any sort of national unity after the war and was addressed by General Charles de Gaulle, who led France after the war. De Gaulle created a myth of France's role in the Resistance, which allowed for the nation to rebuild. The perpetuation of this myth created problems for France and Jewish identity in France when the truth of Vichy was uncovered in the 1970s and 1980s.

The next chapter will examine what De Gaulle's myth of the resistance, created in the aftermath of the war, along with why both Jews and non-Jews in France allowed for it to exist for so long after the war. I will then study how the myth was shattered and its impact on Jewish identity in France.

Chapter 3: The Broken Mirror: Post-WWII Memory and Jewish Identity

If someone else could have written my stories, I would not have written them. I have written them in order to testify. My role is the role of the witness . . . Not to tell, or to tell another story, is . . . to commit perjury.”¹

The words of Elie Weisel, an author and Holocaust survivor, embody the sentiments of many survivors of the Holocaust and the Nazi-driven genocide of the world’s Jewish population. However, the act of bearing witness to the atrocities that occurred during the war and in the concentration camps requires two things: the willingness of the witness to testify and the willingness of people to listen to that testimony. In the case of France after the war, few wanted to talk about what had happened, but even fewer actually wanted to hear the stories. Some wanted to forget what happened and return to a state of normalcy, without war and without horrifying stories of the camps. But many in France wanted to believe in what their leader, Charles de Gaulle, told them, even if they knew it was only a myth. The leader of the Resistance Movement and new leader of France proposed a vision for the nation that would allow for it to reconstruct in the aftermath of the war.

Paris! Paris humiliated! Paris broken! Paris martyred! But Paris liberated! Liberated by itself, by its own people with the help of the armies of France, with the support and aid of France as a whole, of fighting France, of the only France, of the true France, of eternal France.²

¹ Weisel, Elie, “The Loneliness of God”, *Dvar Hashavu’a*, Tel-Aviv, 1984.

² De Gaulle, Charles. Hôtel de Ville, August 25, 1944.

With these few words on August 25, 1944 after the liberation of Paris, Charles de Gaulle established the myth of the post-Vichy era. De Gaulle, in that same speech denied Vichy any legitimacy, by stating,

The Republic has never ceased to exist. Free France, fighting France, [and] the French Committee of National Liberation have by turns embodied it. Vichy was and is null and void. I myself am the president of the government of the Republic.³

De Gaulle's plan of how to portray the role of the French government and its people during the war created a myth in which the French could be absolved of all guilt for their actions in WWII.

The French population chose to believe that what occurred during the war was at the hands of the Germans and a few renegade Frenchmen. De Gaulle's desire for a unified state allowed the French people to believe that the Vichy regime had simply consisted of a few misguided individuals acting on their personal beliefs, not those of France.⁴ This view is what historian Henry Rousso calls the "Gaullist resistancialist myth."⁵

While the preceding chapters focused on the anti-Semitic legislation of the war and reactions to these policies, this chapter examines the history of the memory of Vichy, in order to understand how its actions and laws were perceived after the end of WWII. It also focuses on the myth created by de Gaulle and the ways in which it affected life after the war. Furthermore, this

³ De Gaulle, Charles. Hôtel de Ville, August 25, 1944.

⁴ Rousso, Henry. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, vii.

⁵ Rousso, 18.

chapter will examine the shattering of the myth and the uncovering of the realities of the French involvement in the atrocities of the Second World War resulted in a transformation of Jewish identity in France.

Rising from the Ashes of War: Rebuilding the French Nation

WWII had an unprecedented effect on France. The events of the 1930s had already weakened the nation, which then suffered a series of terrible blows during the war. France lost 90,000 soldiers with another 2 million troops taken prisoner.⁶ The nation was occupied by foreign troops after a crushing and humiliating military defeat. During the Second World War, the French people had no time to mourn the tragedy that befell them before finding themselves caught in another catastrophe. The facts of the war state that the Vichy regime and the collaborators with the Nazis were directly responsible for the imprisonment of 135,000 people, the internment of 70,000 suspects and the dismissal of 35,000 civil servants. Moreover, the Vichy regime arranged for the deportment of 76,000 French and foreign Jews.⁷ The events presented by de Gaulle, however, described a France that had relentlessly fought the German Occupation. De Gaulle established the Resistance as a quasi-sacred symbol for France.⁸ Thus,

⁶ Rousso, 5.

⁷ Rousso, 7.

⁸ Rousso, 19.

the postwar French citizen clung to the image of a resisting France, knowing all the while that the image was false.

In addition to the desire to believe the nation had fought against the Occupation until the liberation, the French people also wanted to return to a state of normalcy and forget the exceptional circumstances of the Occupation. De Gaulle and his government made efforts to link WWII directly to WWI. Monuments from the First World War now included the names of those killed between 1939 and 1945. On April 2, 1945, de Gaulle celebrated the thirty years' war.⁹ The greatest shock to the nation came in April 1945, when the first trainload of camp survivors arrived in Paris.¹⁰ People had anticipated the survivors would be in similar condition to that of the prisoners of war. Olga Wormser-Migot, who was involved in the repatriation process at the Gare d'Orsay, stated, "when the Gare d'Orsay was suggested as a place to receive the survivors, no thought was given to their condition. It was assumed that after completing the necessary formalities, they would be able to return home and resume normal life . . . how could we have known?"¹¹

⁹ Rousso, 25.

¹⁰ Rousso, 25.

¹¹ Wormser-Migot, Olga. "Le Rapatriement des Déportés," *La Libération de la France*, 1995, 372.

Many saw the survivors as nuisances. Some, who had managed to survive only based on the hope of bearing witness to the atrocities they had seen, met with rejection and repression. The *Journée de la Déportation* was not established until 1954 and the stories of the survivors were not sought until three decades after the war.¹² This day to commemorate deportations was not limited to Jews but also to remember political deportees. Emmanuel Mounier, a French philosopher, observed in September 1945 of the returning Jews, “Some of them are even disfigured. Their complaints are tiresome for those whose only wish is to return as quickly as possible to peace and quiet.”¹³

Furthermore, not all survivors wanted to discuss the camps. They had been removed from their homes, stripped of their national identity and ostracized from their communities. The same desire for normalcy that existed within the greater French community existed among the Jewish survivors. Telling their story only separated them again from their communities and made them the “other.” Despite the wartime anti-Semitism of the French government, the returning Jewish community was able to reaffirm its identity within French society.¹⁴

¹² Rousso, 26.

¹³ Mounier, Emmanuel, September 1945. [Quoted in Rousso, 26]

¹⁴ Rousso, 133.

De Gaulle's government was focused on creating a sense of unity across the nation. In his memoirs, de Gaulle discussed his triumphal procession down the Champs-Élysées on August 26, 1944 as the moment when he knew national unity could be achieved again:

This moment was one of those miracles of the national consciousness, one of those gestures which sometimes through the centuries illuminate the history of France. In this community, with only a single thought, a single enthusiasm, a single cry, all differences vanish, all individuals disappeared.¹⁵

Survivors telling stories of the horrors of the camps in France and Eastern Europe and the reality that the French government had been complicit in the deportation of its own citizens conflicted with de Gaulle's goal to focus on nationalism and rebuilding the "union sacrée." De Gaulle did set up legal recourse for those who acted under the authority of the Vichy regime as a means of dealing with the obvious issues of French collaboration after the success of the Resistance. These courts pronounced 6,760 death sentences, 3,910 in absentia. Of the 2,853 death sentences of those collaborators present in France for their verdict, de Gaulle pardoned roughly 73%. Only 767 of those convicted were killed, among them Pierre Laval, whose involvement in the Vélodrome d'Hiver round up was well known and who, moreover, became a scapegoat for the Vichy Regime.¹⁶

¹⁵ De Gaulle, Charles. *Mémoires de Guerre III: Le Salut 1944 – 1946*, Paris: Plon, 1954, 573.

¹⁶ Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years, 1940 – 1944*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 577.

Yet even with these trials and the convictions of Frenchmen as collaborators with the Nazis, the myth still prevailed that the French nation had been resisting since June 1940. The struggles of France during the Occupation were not represented by de Gaulle as a civil war, with part of France involved in a resistance movement and the other part collaborating with the Germans, but rather as part of a thirty years war that began in 1914.¹⁷ Thus, the events of WWII were subsumed in the unifying legacy of the First World War. De Gaulle succeeded in creating a myth through the syllogism accepted by most French people: the Resistance equaled de Gaulle and de Gaulle equaled France; therefore, France equaled the Resistance.¹⁸

Shattering the Myth: Evidence of Collaboration

The awakening of Jewish memory began in the 1960s. Several events factored into this awakening, including the trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the main Nazi organizers of the Holocaust, in 1961. The Six-Days War, from June 5, 1967 to June 10, 1967 in the Middle East also increased the sense of self-consciousness among Jews in France, particularly after the French government did not actively support the Israeli cause.¹⁹ The French government's

¹⁷ Jackson, 602.

¹⁸ Jackson 604-605. It should be noted that not all French people accepted the myth of the Resistance, since not everyone shared the same collective memory based on varying experiences. However, the number of dissenters from the myth are not known but historians acknowledge that a large portion of the French population believed in the myth.

¹⁹ Jackson, 613.

withdrawal of support for Israel became connected with the facts of French collaboration during the war. The lack of support for Israel increased tensions in the Jewish communities of France, as the memories of Vichy's anti-Semitic actions were reawakened. These tensions provided the setting for the myth to come undone.

May 1968 marked the start of the myth's unraveling. A variety of events resulted in the destruction of the idea that France was blameless during the Occupation. France witnessed the clash of the right and left in May 1968, with the traditionalists of France competing with the liberal and libertarian ideologies of the nation that desired reform if not a revolution.²⁰ The younger generation drove this movement. The generational revolt occurred when French students, who had not lived during the war, challenged the Gaullist regime, which was directly linked to the memory of the war. They reawakened memories of the Occupation and collaboration by comparing the French riot police to the SS and used slogans stating they themselves were all German Jews. The revolt used memories of the past against the regime, which had portrayed itself as the custodian of war memories.²¹ The youth did not see the government as the admirable heir to the Resistance but rather sensed something invented in de Gaulle's efforts to anoint himself as the embodiment of the Resistance.²²

²⁰ Rousso, 98.

²¹ Jackson, 613.

²² Rousso, 99.

This environment allowed for Marcel Ophuls's film, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, released in 1971, to make such a large impact on French society. The film was revolutionary because it used eyewitness testimony instead of archival material to illustrate the myth and lies surrounding the ideas of Vichy France.²³ Furthermore, the point of the film was to subvert every aspect of the myth of the Occupation. Ophuls's film gives the impression that the viewer is seeing witnesses tell lies, since the gap between their words and their actions during the war is great. Ophuls's work exposed De Gaulle's myth.²⁴ The film makes clear that the basis for the actions of the Vichy regime arose from French, not German influence. Ophuls's portrayal chips away at the image of a France united against the Occupation and shows that all the legislation passed during the Vichy regime had French origins.²⁵ *The Sorrow and the Pity* was the beginning of the wave of information about the Occupation. In November, 1971, Georges Pompidou, French president from 1969 until 1974 and de Gaulle's successor, granted a pardon to Paul Touvier, who had been sentenced to death in absentia after the war for his involvement in the round up of the Vel d'Hiver.²⁶ Touvier was a member of the "Milice," the paramilitary branch of the Vichy regime. Catholics had hidden Touvier, a devout Catholic, after the war.²⁷ Pompidou's reason for the

²³ Rousso, 102.

²⁴ Rousso, 102 – 103.

²⁵ Rousso, 104.

²⁶ Jackson, 614.

²⁷ Jackson, 614.

pardon was an attempt to close the open wounds left by the war and draw a veil over the past when France stood divided.²⁸ However, his pardon only showed the weakness of the Gaullist myth.

French Politics & the Desire to Hide Behind the Veil of Ignorance

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a global reawakening of Jewish memory. The Six-Day War in June 1967 was the catalyst for this heightened Jewish consciousness.²⁹ Memories of the Holocaust were integral to the global awareness of Jewish identity and it was inevitable that the memory of life in the Vichy regime would be awakened. Between 1970 and 1981, the realities of French anti-Semitism during the Occupation were uncovered. The 1970s saw a rise of support for Israel from the Jewish communities in France in the 1970s. By the late 1970s, Vichy had become an obsession with the French, particularly the young people. The obsession was both manifested in and exacerbated by the trials of war criminals that occurred in the decades following. In 1964, the French Parliament passed a law, ending the Statute of Limitations of crimes against humanity, thereby paving the way to try collaborators who had evaded conviction for their part in the round ups and deportations of Jews.³⁰ This law thus allowed for men to be tried for crimes they had committed during the war, regardless of how much time had passed.

²⁸ Jackson, 614.

²⁹ Rousso, 132.

³⁰ Jackson, 615.

One key trial in French post-war history was that of Klaus Barbie. Barbie, also known as the butcher of Lyons, was head of the German Security Police in Lyons from November 1942 until August 1944.³¹ He was responsible for the torture and deportation of hundreds of Jews and members of the Resistance, both Jews and gentiles. Barbie is notorious for his role in the torture and death of French Resistance hero Jean Moulin. After the war, Barbie managed to flee from France through an escape route created by the Catholic Church for former Nazis.³² It later became known that Barbie had worked for the American Army's Counter intelligence Corps in Germany after WWII, who had then used the Catholic escape route to get Barbie out of Europe.³³ He was tried for war crimes and condemned to death in 1954 in absentia. However, Barbie was discovered in South America in 1971 by Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klausfeld and extradited to France in February 1983.³⁴

The government prosecutors argued that the actions Barbie took against members of the Resistance did qualify as crimes against humanity and that Barbie could therefore be tried for those acts.³⁵ However, the court saw these crimes as acts of war and found that Barbie could not

³¹ Suleiman, Susan R. *Crises of Memory and the Second World War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, 79.

³² Suleiman, 79.

³³ Suleiman, 79.

³⁴ Jackson, 616.

³⁵ Suleiman, 82.

be charged for war crimes so many years after the fact. Instead, Barbie was tried for the crimes he committed against Jews, which were seen as crimes against humanity. Barbie's trial began in mid-May 1987 and ended after eight weeks. Barbie was found guilty of forty-one counts of crimes against humanity and he was sentenced because of the nature of his crimes, not the identity of his victims. His actions were in accordance with the Nazi Final Solution, allowing them to be legally defined as crimes against humanity. Yet his trial caused resentment among survivors towards the resistance fighters, the latter of whom publically expressed their anger toward of the trial that was unable to bring Barbie to justice for the murder of Jean Moulin. The Jewish survivors saw the trial as a victory, as the memory of the Holocaust was finally receiving the attention it deserved, rather than being overshadowed by the celebration of the Resistance or the death of one man.³⁶ Simone Veil, a deportee from France, survivor of Auschwitz and member of the Constitutional Council of France, said in an interview that she believed the Barbie trial to be educational but, regardless of the outcome, "human justice will not be satisfied."³⁷

The 1964 law also allowed for men like Jean Leguay, a Vichy civil servant, to be tried for his work in rounding up Jews in the Occupied Zone under the direction of René Bousquet, secretary-general of the French police under Vichy. Leguay was indicted in March 1979.

³⁶ Rousso, 205.

³⁷ Veil, Simone, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 11 February 1983.

Bousquet himself was indicted in 1991 for his part in the round up and deportation of Jews, but was assassinated before his trial in 1993.³⁸ These men had not been seen as threats to the Liberation after the war. They had been tried for minor charges at the Liberation, minimizing their role in the deportation of Jews until the late 20th century when the truth of Vichy officials' roles in the deportations came to light.³⁹

Eighteen years after Pompidou's pardon of Paul Touvier in 1971, Touvier was discovered in Nice and arrested. His trial in 1992, for shooting seven Jews, among them the head of the Dreyfusard Ligue de Droits de l'Homme, on June 29, 1944, had been stalled when the defense presented him as a Vichy collaborator, acting on behalf of the French authorities during the war. Touvier's defense was that he worked for the Vichy regime, not the Nazis and therefore could not have committed crimes against humanity. The Paris Court of Appeals found in his favor and declared that Touvier's actions occurred under the decree of the Vichy regime, which could not have been inspired by a policy of ideological hegemony and therefore, Touvier's crimes were not against humanity.⁴⁰ The trial proceeded only after another appeals court decided Touvier had been acting under German orders and therefore his actions were crimes against humanity.⁴¹

³⁸ Jackson, 616.

³⁹ Jackson, 616.

⁴⁰ Jackson, 617.

⁴¹ Jackson, 617.

Touvier was tried for his actions during WWII, but not as a member of the Vichy regime; his actions were linked with the goals of Nazi Germany.

The rationale behind the differing judgments shows the absurd nature of the myth of Vichy as well as the process of gaining justice for Vichy's actions. The judicial system did not connect the actions of the Vichy regime with crimes against humanity, despite the evidence showing the leaders planned for the internment, torture and deportation of Jews. The French judicial system, in order to convict Touvier in April 1994, distorted the history of the war, showing the extent to which de Gaulle's myth penetrated all parts of French life after the war that even trials to convict men of crimes against humanity were tainted by the myth. These trials uncovered the tensions between Resistance memories and Jewish memories. The cases often blurred the crimes of the Vichy state with the crimes of the Nazis. The differences in Vichy's definition of Jews from that of the Nazis and the fact that Vichy never explicitly stated that Jews were enemies of the French state made it possible for French defendants to argue their crimes were not crimes against humanity since they were acting under orders from Vichy, not the Nazis.

Jewish Identity & French Citizenship

WWII left a deep scar on the Jewish community of France with the extermination of 20% of its population. While France had a lower percentage of Jews killed in the camps than other European countries, the betrayal of the nation could not be forgotten. France had been a place of

refuge for Jews prior to the war, which made the anti-Semitic policies and practices of Vichy on the Jewish community more notable.⁴² Yet even with the memory of the anti-Semitic practices and the silence surrounding the horror of the camps in France and deportations to the East, the Jewish community in France worked to reaffirm its identity within French society. In the aftermath of the war, the support provided by parts of non-Jewish French society during the war most likely played a role in the desire of many Jews to continue to assimilate in the nation that had ostracized them.

The French government did work to right the wrongs done by the Vichy regime through the repatriation of those Jewish citizens who had been stripped of their status during the war. The government also had many memorial days for the deportations and the camp survivors in an effort to acknowledge the wrongs of Vichy. Furthermore, the anti-Semitism that had existed in France at a heightened level prior to the German occupation had virtually disappeared. Anti-Semitism was now a taboo and only expressed among the most unrepentant on the extreme right. Even after the rise in anti-Semitism in newly liberated Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria resulted in the immigration of roughly 300,000 North African Jews to Paris in the 1950s and 1960s, France

⁴² Rousso, 133.

did not see a resurgence of anti-Semitism.⁴³ Rather, the influx of Jews in France further complicated the identities in the already heterogeneous Jewish community.

However, even though the returning French Jews may have wanted to assimilate and become *Israelites* again, there was a noted change. The French government supported the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Through this support, the government facilitated the reconciliation of many French Jews with the rest of the French nation. This support also gave rise to anti-Zionism, which arose in parts of French society, mainly among Communists ensnared in Stalinist logic, as a reaction to the creation of Israel.⁴⁴ All these factors played a role in the change in French-Jewish identity after the war.

The true turning point in the transformation of the *Israelites* in France into Jews was the Six-Day War launched by Israel on June 5, 1967. During this war, the French government showed support for the Arab countries and de Gaulle condemned the Israeli attack a week after the cease-fire on June 10.⁴⁵ In November 1967, de Gaulle, when speaking of the French government's position with regard to Israel, stated:

Some people even feared that the Jews, hitherto dispersed, but who had remained what they had always been, an elite people sure of itself and domineering, might, once reassembled on the site of their former grandeur, transform into ardent and conquering

⁴³Hyman, Paula. *The Jews of Modern France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 194.

⁴⁴ Rousso, 134.

⁴⁵ Rousso, 135.

ambition the very moving wishes that they had been formulating for nineteen centuries: Next year in Jerusalem.⁴⁶

These statements created new problems for de Gaulle from the Jewish communities in France. Despite the majority of the French being pleased with the Israeli victory, the shift in French foreign policy and de Gaulle's seemingly anti-Semitic sentiments were worrying for Jewish people across the country. De Gaulle's words echoed some Vichy ideas, like treating the Jewish community as a homogenous entity, which was certainly not the case. Furthermore, his words implied that all Jews in France followed Jewish traditions in the same way, yet many assimilated French Jews in had no real connection to their Jewish past and traditions. Some members of the Jewish community felt that they had once again been defined as "French Jews" rather than "Jewish Frenchmen", which reminded them of the definitions used by Vichy. The reaction to de Gaulle's statements in Israel was to compare his government to that of Vichy and Israeli newspapers proclaimed the headline "Charles Pétain."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Charles De Gaulle, *Discours et Messages, Vol 5: Vers le Terme, 1966 – 1969* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 232.

⁴⁷ Rousso, 137.

The Transformation from Israelite to Jew

“For me, France is nothing more than a passport.”⁴⁸

A young French-Jew from an old French-Jewish family told Andre Harris and Alain de Sédouy, two historians studying Jewish identity in France, in an interview that he felt no true connection to France. The men were conducting a study in 1979 in France called *Juifs et Français*. The authors discovered that contrary to past traditions of *Israelites* in France, who assimilated with their non-Jewish French compatriots, members of the Jewish community in France had become Jews.⁴⁹ There was a sense of pride within the Jewish community about identity as well as a sense of betrayal by France for what happened during the war and the years following when the government and the population had ignored the devastating events of the war.

Young people in Jewish communities in France in the 1960s and 1970s were children of survivors, but they considered themselves to be citizens of the world, whose only component of Jewish identity was the Holocaust.⁵⁰ The key distinction between this generation’s understanding of identity and that of their parents is that these youths did not wish to break with their Jewish identity but rather did not want to be burdened by Jewish existence.⁵¹ In 1977, thirty percent of

⁴⁸ Cohen, Erik H. *The Jews of France Today: Identity and Values*. Boston: Brill Publishers, 2011, 43.

⁴⁹ Cohen, 43.

⁵⁰ Benbassa, Esther. *The Jews of France: A History From Antiquity to the Present*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 190.

⁵¹ Benbassa, 191.

Jews in France identified themselves as *Israelites* yet in the late 1980s, that number was only five percent.⁵² The word *Israelite* had a pejorative connotation despite being originally a distinguishing term between middle-class French-born Jews and immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The influx of North African Jews also helped change the perception of Jewish identity in France. Unlike previous Jewish immigrants who assimilated to French customs, this Jewish community did not lose ties with its Jewish practices. Their religious traditions were linked with teachings in the home rather than with institutions, as the eastern European Jewish immigrants' traditions were linked.⁵³ Furthermore, the rate of education for North African Jews was remarkable, with only three percent being uneducated. The upward social mobility for this group was striking, based on the importance of education, and the role of North African Jews in French society quickly changed. In the mid-1970s, Jewish youth of North African origin, male and female, were heavily represented in secondary and higher education.⁵⁴ Education was important for the general Jewish community, as overall Jewish education rates, including French-born and immigrants, in France were sixty-three percent. Before WWII, there were four Jewish schools in

⁵² Benbassa, 197.

⁵³ Hyman, 195.

⁵⁴ Hyman, 197.

France but in 1986, after the influx of immigrants, eighty-eight Jewish schools existed.⁵⁵ The Jewish community in France focused on education as a vehicle for social mobility for their children, so that they might work in French civil society and liberal professions.⁵⁶

After the awakening of Jewish memory, the memory of the Holocaust became incredibly important. Claude Lanzmann, a French filmmaker, began working on a documentary to uncover the horrors of the Holocaust in 1974. He spent eleven years compiling footage for the film, *Shoah*, which was released in 1985. This film uses interviews from survivors of concentration camps, people who lived near those camps as well as interviews with certain members of the SS. Lanzmann's film is not focused specifically on the treatment of French Jews or even foreign Jews exterminated from France, since most of his interviews occur in Poland. However, *Shoah* is critical in understanding what happened during the war, because it depicts the inhumane conditions prisoners suffered as well as the harsh realities of the Final Solution. The point of *Shoah* is to recreate the past and bring back the dead through the survivors, perpetrators and "others" given a chance to speak in this film.⁵⁷ The questions the film posed about the anti-Semitism of Polish people and its connection to the Nazi death camps was striking to the French,

⁵⁵ Benbassa, 198.

⁵⁶ Hyman, 197.

⁵⁷ Rousso, 238.

as similar questions were emerging in France, about French collaboration and the anti-Semitic traditions that allowed thousands to be deported.⁵⁸

The emergence of Jewish memory in the 1970s and 1980s in France also allowed for Jews to write about their experiences. Children who survived wrote many memoirs on what they saw and what they had escaped. These memoirs portray the events of Vichy France and German Occupied France in ways that the films cannot: these books do not attack the Vichy government nor do they excuse its actions. Rather, these memoirs simply tell their stories, and the stories of those they lost in the war.

Sarah Kofman, a daughter of Jewish immigrants in France, wrote about her experiences as a rabbi's daughter in Paris during the war. She speaks about the Yellow Star Jews had to wear in the Occupied Zone, stating "It was no longer just by our noses or circumcised genitals that we Yids could be recognized. 'Starred' as we were, and packed into the last cars on the Métro in third class, we were becoming easier and easier to round up."⁵⁹ Kofman's case describes the life of a child hidden with a non-Jewish French woman, who protected her mother as well. While many non-Jewish French people aided Jews in escaping arrest, Kofman describes the woman as kind, but still anti-Semitic. As Kofman states "She never stopped repeating that I'd been badly

⁵⁸ Rousso, 238 – 239.

⁵⁹ Kofman, Sarah. *Rue Ordener Rue Labat*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, 17.

brought up: I obeyed ridiculous religious prohibitions but had no moral principles.”⁶⁰ This account shows that even when people recognized the cruelty of the Vichy regime, to the extent that they would risk arrest themselves by hiding wanted Jews, anti-Semitic prejudices still continued to exist. Kofman remained conflicted about her Jewish and wartime identity throughout her life and committed suicide in 1994.

Dealing with the Memory in the Present

Il est, dans la vie d'une nation, des moments qui blessent la mémoire, et l'idée que l'on se fait de son pays. Il est difficile de les évoquer, aussi, parce que ces heures noires souillent à jamais notre histoire, et sont une injure à notre passé et à nos traditions.⁶¹

In 1995, fifty-three years after the round up, President Jacques Chirac apologized for the French collaboration in the Vel d'Hiv. In 1992, during the fiftieth anniversary of the round up, President François Mitterrand stirred controversy by resolutely refusing to accept French complicity in the events, claiming as de Gaulle had before him, that Vichy was not a legitimate French regime. The memory of the Occupation and of Vichy today are no longer distorted by a myth of a glorious France, united against the German invader. While the actions of Vichy against Jews will never be forgotten, the wounds seem to have healed. Some films, like *Bon Voyage* (2003), present the idea of the Vichy regime being a collection of confused men. The film trivializes the

⁶⁰ Kofman, 47.

⁶¹ Chirac, Jacques. *Discours Prononcé Lors de Commémorations de la Rafle du Vélodrome d'Hiver*, July 16, 1995.

role of Vichy and the authority of its leaders, ignoring the realities of Vichy's role in the round up and deportation of thousands of Jews. It treats the subject in a lighthearted manner, perhaps suggesting that the French had sufficiently come to terms with their past to be able to enjoy the film.

On the other hand, the 2010 film, *La Rafle*, is a stunning portrayal of the Vel d'Hiv round up in July 1942. While Roselyne Bosch's depiction of the event was not accurate enough to satisfy historians like Annette Wieviorka, the film did elicit a positive response from the French public.⁶² The film illustrates how some Jews took the threat of a round up seriously while others believed the police would only arrest men, leaving women and children in their homes. Bosch further depicts the varying sentiments of the greater French population with some people jeering the arrested Jews and applauding the French police while others tried to protect the children and admonish the police for their actions. One problem with the film is that it implies that Parisians must have hidden the Jewish families who escaped arrest, but the reality is that a large majority of the ten thousand Jews who avoided arrest had fled to the Unoccupied Zone when rumors of the round up started.⁶³

⁶² Wieviorka, Annette. "La Rafle," Drame Pédagogique et Hymne à la France." *La Tribune*, March 15, 2012.

⁶³ Wieviorka, March 15, 2012.

Bosch shows the severe conditions of the Vélodrome and in the French internment camps to which the arrested Jews were subjected. Her film depicts Vichy's execution of the deportation of children by showing René Bosquet, the secretary general of the French police, persuading the Germans to deport the children. By following the stories of children, *La Rafle* shows the horrors of the camps and the painful truth of the fate the Jews faced when they left France to go to the death camps in the East. Most importantly, it unabashedly depicts the role the Vichy regime played in the planning and execution of the round up. The serious nature of this film shows that memories of the Occupation and of Vichy's willingness to collaborate with the Germans will never again fade. In the words of Chirac, "Sachons tirer les leçons de l'Histoire. N'acceptons pas d'être les témoins passifs, ou les complices, de l'inacceptable."⁶⁴ Through memoirs and films, as well as the acknowledgment of the truth, French memory of the Occupation is no longer based on myth. French Jewish identity has undergone a transformation from the years prior to WWII and the concept of "French First and Jewish Second" no longer defines French Jews. "Israelites" have become "Juifs".

⁶⁴ Chirac, July 16, 1995.

Conclusion

La France, patrie des lumières et des droits de l'homme, terre d'accueil et d'asile, la France, ce jour-là, accomplissait l'irréparable. Manquant à sa parole, elle livrait ses protégés à leurs bourreaux.¹

The events of WWII were inarguably horrible and, as President Jacques Chirac stated on the fifty-third anniversary of the Vélodrome d'Hiver round up, France betrayed its own subjects. The actions of the Vichy Regime in collaboration with the Nazis resulted in the systematic execution of thousands of Jews deported from French soil. After the arrests, round ups and deportations ended, there was a deafening silence throughout France. The French people remained silent about what had transpired during the rule of Vichy regime. The French government leaders were, in the wake of the war, so desperate to rebuild the nation both physically and morally that they constructed a myth that allowed the nation to reunite again. Charles de Gaulle had wanted all of France to rise up against the Germans and fight the Occupation through his Resistance movement in 1940. The reality is that very few people joined him until after 1942, when, in the wake of the Allied landings in North Africa, the Nazis controlled all of France.

The France de Gaulle had wanted to unify against the Germans did not exist. The French nation had no national unity leading up to WWII, but rather was deeply fragmented both politically and socially. The failures of the Popular Front government were blamed for France's

¹ Chirac, Jacques. *Discours Prononcé Lors de Commémorations de la Rafle du Vélodrome d'Hiver*, July 16, 1995.

loss in the war by Vichy leaders, who tried its leader, Léon Blum, in 1942. Furthermore, France had become a site for refugees from Eastern Europe in the 1930s, creating a shift in the immigrant population and an increased number of Jewish people in France. These changes sparked French xenophobia and anti-Semitism, which had been quelled during the earlier part of the twentieth century, in particular during the years immediately preceding the First World War. The absence of this “union sacrée” allowed for the historical prejudices against Jews and foreigners to emerge.

Given these factors, the French nation was unable to effectively combat the German invasion of May 10, 1940. The Third Republic was unable to lead the nation. As a result, Philippe Pétain, the decorated hero of Verdun, was appointed leader of the government by Paul Reynaud, the last prime minister of the Third Republic. Pétain sought to negotiate an armistice with the Germans to spare the nation and its citizens from further hardship. On June 22, 1940, Pétain signed the armistice, which allowed the Germans to have control of the northern half of France while the southern zone would be controlled by Pétain’s government, which was officially established on July 9 as the “l’État français” in the spa town of Vichy.

The armistice was thought to be the end of the war for France, yet for its Jewish population, the armistice was only the beginning. The Vichy regime implemented a national revolution with the goals of renewing France and making the nation great once again. Vichy’s

plans were to counter the republican ideals that had long symbolized France. Among the various ideas was the idea of “France for the French,” an ideal that responded to the heightened sense of xenophobia and anti-Semitism that had existed in France since the 1930s. The Vichy regime took these sentiments and created policies and legislation that distinguished “true” French citizens from recently naturalized citizens, immigrants and Jews. The legislation banned Jews, regardless of their citizenship, from many careers; it also allowed for the internment and deportation of foreign-born Jews. What was most remarkable about the legislation passed by the Vichy government was its independence from the German authorities. In fact, the policies of Vichy were harsher than those implemented by the Germans in the Occupied Zones, particularly regarding the definition of a Jew. While the definition provided by the Germans was linked to the practice of the Jewish religion, the definition used by Vichy in its Jewish Statute was based on the cultural heritage of a Jewish person, regardless of whether the person was a practicing Jew.

Vichy’s policies stripped many Jews, both French-born and naturalized, of their French identity, making them Jewish and nothing else. Many Jews had believed themselves to be a part of the French nation and did not think of themselves as Jews but rather as French men and women of the Jewish faith. This connection to the nation explains why so many Jews registered with the police and followed all the decrees of the regime: they did not believe their government

would do them any harm in the Unoccupied Zone and would fight to protect them from the Germans in the Occupied Zone. Yet this belief was shattered in the summer of 1942 with the round ups in Paris that deported over 13,000 men, women and children. The Vélodrome d'Hiver round up illustrated the inability of the French government to protect Jews in France. Later study of the incident makes it clear that Vichy officials themselves had persuaded the Germans to allow the deportation of children to occur, as the orphans could pose a public relations problem. During the war, many non-Jewish French people helped Jews in avoiding arrest, hiding them from the police. Some non-Jewish French citizens joined the Resistance movement, both in France and from London, particularly after 1942 when all of France was occupied by Germany. However, it is clear that the majority of the nation had stood by, complicit in allowing Vichy to treat Jews as second-class citizens. Many in France allowed the deportation of Jews to be legalized by Vichy without any moral qualms. France was not a unified nation fighting the Germans during WWII; rather, it was a nation divided and led by a group of men who used the loss in the war to carry out their own traditionalist agenda by collaborating with the Nazis.

Yet after the war, de Gaulle created the myth of a France that had been united during the Second World War. Many French people wanted to believe this myth. The national unity that had been created after the war by de Gaulle existed only so long as the truth of Vichy remained hidden and Jewish memories remained unshared. With the awakening of Jewish memory came

the unraveling of de Gaulle's "resistancialist" myth. Once this myth was shattered, Jewish perception of identity and citizenship changed. Pride for Jewish heritage replaced the desire to assimilate to French traditions. The separation of Jews from their French identities by Vichy led Jews in France after the war to define themselves as Jews. After de Gaulle's myth shattered, the true memories of the Occupation and Vichy spread throughout France. The memory of the suffering of Jews during the war allowed the transformation from French Jews to simply Jews to occur. The Jewish community underwent a transformation in the 1970s and 1980s that changed Jewish identity in France from "Israelite" to "Juif."²

² Hyman, Paula. *The Jews of Modern France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 207.

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