

‘Civil Wars of the Mind’: The Commemoration of the 1789 Revolution in the Parisian Press of the Radical Right, 1939

Every fifty years, glass in hand, France celebrates the principles and laws that have made her a country of few inhabitants watched by prolific neighbours. Dancing fills the streets, the lamps are lit, and fireworks throw into the sky their golden flowers. . .

Pierre Gaxotte, ‘La Révolution, terre de mensonge’, *Je suis partout*, 28 July 1939.

À bas la gueuse! Vive le Roi!

Léon Daudet, ‘La Plus belle page et la plus laide de notre histoire’, *Action française*, 15 May 1939.

Historians in France have, for some time now, been fond of proclaiming that we are living in an ‘age of commemoration’, an era in which the old certainties of the Cold War, ideological commitment and national sovereignty have been challenged both by local and by global developments. If the ascendancy of the idea of Europe has chipped away at the autonomy of the nation-state, argues Pierre Nora, so has the decentralization of French politics since the 1970s, it has accelerated the decline of so-called ‘official’ and ‘singular’ national history, clearing the way for the rise of the heritage industry and regional and sectarian ‘memories’, multiple by definition and forged through the concomitant growth in historical consciousness among sub-national groups.¹ Such groups, however, do not so much discover their past as construct it in the light of current concerns and sensibilities. The historian must ask, then, in the words of Stanley Hoffmann, ‘[t]o what contemporary uses are memories put?’²

I would not wish to assert that all historians, professional or otherwise, have somehow manufactured the past with no recourse to available evidence, but to suggest that the very process by which historical interpretation makes sense of the essential unfamiliarity of the past is within the realm of the already familiar: it is not that the past is invented, *per se*, but rather that it is seen through the prism of the present. The relationship between past and present is thereby a dialogic one: just as French nascent Communists saw in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution the next stage of the Jacobin dictatorship of 1793, so generations of rightist critics of socialism have understood the turmoil of the French 1790s as the birth of the ineluctable logic of the 'Bolshevization' of modernity.³ This general concern about the way in which histories are conceived in the French context has animated the studies both of Robert Gildea and of Pascal Ory, who have delineated the myriad ways in which politics in the present have often been articulated via a specific vision of the past.⁴ This paper will focus on one episode in this process of structuring and reconstructing useable pasts for present purposes; it is, in that sense, an analysis of one of the 'civil wars of the mind' that have afflicted modern France.

It is often asserted that in France politics is heavily historicized. Indeed, if '[t]he tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living', according to the diagnosis of Karl Marx, then France would be a particularly psychologically damaged patient.⁵ Certainly, the preoccupation with the 'time-honoured disguise' of history has been almost palpable in France. No one, for example, would dispute the centrality of the enigmatic date of 1789 to French political culture and identity. It is clear that, in the two-hundred years or so since the fall of the absolutist monarchy, the categories of Left and Right in politics have been decided with respect to which side of the revolutionary divide one falls.⁶ Theodore Zeldin has argued that, since the late eighteenth century, 'France . . . [has been] divided into two clear groups — those for the Revolution and those against it — and all that is needed is to decide who fits into which group: the struggle . . . [is] always the same one.'⁷ Jacques Le Goff has found evidence for the significance of 1789 in French national life in the fact that for the French the contemporary period begins with the storming of the Bastille — in this view, 1789 is the beginning of the French present.⁸ Some

historians even account for the pervasive appeal of Charles de Gaulle in the 1940s by claiming that

[i]n his person and ideas he blurred the old divide between those who were for and those who were against the Revolution. No one could be sure where de Gaulle would have stood had a time-machine transported him to 1789.⁹

At any rate, it is certain that the great Revolution of 1789 was heralded by the Third Republic after 1880 or so — from the Chamber of Deputies to the *école* — as the birthplace of the modern French nation-state. If the Republic had a holy history, then its bible would surely have been the work of Ernest Lavissee, who was commissioned by the government in 1884 to produce a textbook that would teach the history of France to young pupils in their new free and secular primary schools. By 1895 it was in its seventy-fifth edition.¹⁰ Lavissee's own historical vision was quite explicitly and self-consciously the handmaiden of Third Republican political legitimacy. Certainly, in the late nineteenth century, the Third Republic's attempt to turn 'peasants into Frenchmen' involved not only an expansion of mass politics and mass bureaucracy but also the transmission of a *certaine idée* of the nation's past to the school children who sat in its newly expanded classrooms and who saw a map of *la patrie* for perhaps the first time.

Despite its reputation as the regime that 'divided the French least', the Third Republic had not achieved total historiographical hegemony by the time the sesquicentenary of the Revolution was celebrated in 1939. In spite of the extravagant, if belated, efforts of the regime to celebrate the supposed genesis of *liberté, égalité et fraternité* in France — fifteen million francs were secured to celebrate several great days of the Revolution — not all agents of national culture wished to remember the famous events so fondly.¹¹ For Pierre Gaxotte, columnist for *Je suis partout*, at least, the *feux d'artifice* of the commemorative celebrations spoke more of artifice than of fire. Indeed, in the discourses and the actions of the radical Right, the summer and autumn of 1939 were used as an opportunity to deconstruct the national myths engendered by generations of secular and republicanized education in French primary schools, and to offer instead a critique of French history that situated 1789 at the birth of a decadent modernity. These journalists and intellectuals saw

nothing of promise in such a centralizing, urbanizing and cosmopolitan process; instead they viewed the Revolution as the moment when France became destined to be overwhelmed by the *malaises* of class-consciousness, racial degeneration and the blurring of the boundaries between the sexes. This paper will explore such counter-revolutionary attacks in the pages of arguably the two most virulent and influential newspapers on the extreme Right — *Je suis partout* and *Action française* — and to document the ways in which their contributors' renegotiation of the French past betrayed fears of the subversion of the traditional hierarchies of class, race and gender. Outraged by the Popular Front government of 1936 and triumphant over Franco's recent victory in Spain, these writers sought to demolish the legitimacy of the Third Republic, only months before the regime itself was to fall in the débâcle of June 1940. A study of the ways in which the intellectuals linked with these two extremist newspapers chose to commemorate the sesquicentenary of the 1789 Revolution reveals a number of significant processes. Firstly, such a reading demonstrates the prominent role that practising historians played in contemporary (cultural) political battles; secondly, it shows how the distant past of the Revolution was mediated and given meaning by a consideration of the current domestic and international crises of 1939; and, finally, a consideration of these discourses emphasizes the way in which the memory of a contested eighteenth-century past was displaced both by a pondering of an even more remote past of alleged medieval purity embodied by *Jeanne d'Arc*, and by the recent and painful memory of the First World War.

History, Memory and the Commemoration of 1789

In some ways, the republican version of the Revolution had become much more radical by the decade after the First World War. Pascal Ory writes of a certain 'gauchissement' of respectable interpretations of the Revolution by the early twentieth century, and evidence for such a left-leaning historiography is easily found.¹² By the 1920s the two masters of the history of 1789 and its aftermath were undeniably Albert Mathiez and Georges Lefebvre, founder and director respectively of the new journal devoted solely to histories of the Great Event: the

Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française was founded in 1924 and has continued publication to this day.¹³ Both Mathiez and Lefebvre focused on the way that the Revolution had provided an opportunity for the 'social question' of class relations to be solved and both presented the Terror as a necessary defence of the Republic.¹⁴ It was the comprehensive and optimistic accounts of the Revolution by these two historians, that held a grip on scholarly opinion in the interwar period. The main sources of knowledge about the Revolution of 1789, by the time that the sesquicentenary rolled around on the eve of the Second World War, were thus firmly republican and openly proclaimed the so-called 'social interpretation' of the Revolution, seeing 1789 as a positive date in the French past, however troubling aspects of its violence might have been.

Outside the sanctuary of respectable academic circles, however, a competing version of the 1789 Revolution was gaining bitter ground.¹⁵ Despite 'the establishment of a relatively secure consensus in support of the democratic political system', the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed a rise in the fortunes of a specifically royalist historiography, championed by Jacques Bainville and his populist best-sellers.¹⁶ In particular, Bainville scorned the way in which the 'official' histories of France were used to strengthen the legitimacy of a republican 'way of seeing'.¹⁷ Despite the fact that Bainville was himself despised, when he was not ignored, by those within the historical profession in France (both Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre hated his work), he published marketable narratives.¹⁸ By the time of his death in 1936, Bainville had accumulated a small fortune from the sales of his books and his 1931 study of Napoleon was probably the most widely read history of the Great Man's life in the interwar period.¹⁹ It is worth remembering, too, that if the university rejected these royalist historians, the Académie Française, that august and conservative guarantor of French cultural *grandeur*, looked upon them more favourably. Bainville was admitted to the institution in 1935, Charles Maurras in 1939 and Pierre Gaxotte in 1953.²⁰ The proliferation of fascist-style leagues in the 1920s and 1930s could thus furnish themselves with a specifically anti-republican vision of French history with which to change the present and the future. For their part, however, the mainstream fascist movements in France on the eve of the Second World War — Colonel de la Rocque's Parti Social

Français and Jacques Doriot's Parti Populaire Français — generally left such historical proselytizing to rightist historians such as Bainville and to the highbrow intellectuals of *Action française* and *Je suis partout*.²¹

The government committee that organized the sesquicentenary festivities of 1939 thus operated against a background of competing visions of the revolutionary past. In order to cement a republican reading of events it planned the commemoration of several *journées* from the revolutionary calendar, most notably the opening of the Estates-General (5 May 1789), the declaration of the National Assembly (17 June 1789), the Fête de la Fédération (14 July 1790), the French victory against the Prussians at Valmy (20 September 1792) and the proclamation of the First Republic (21 September 1792).²² The initiative to create such an official commemoration was seized as early as March 1936 by the Institut International d'Histoire de la Révolution Française, which created a special committee for the purpose headed by its own president — Radical politician and historian of revolutionary Lyon, Edouard Herriot — and which included a number of guardians of the national heritage from the Musées Nationaux.²³ These men met with Education Minister Jean Zay on 14 January 1937 in order to discuss how the national purse might fund their plans for the celebration of the Revolution, which included not only public ceremonies but also public lectures and public exhibitions.²⁴ Despite the committee's initial wish that twenty million francs be devoted to the commemorative events, the Chamber of Deputies only debated the issue of funding in April 1939 — some three weeks before the first planned ceremony — and agreed the reduced figure of fifteen million francs.²⁵ Despite the administrative zeal with which the government and historical societies anticipated public remembrance of the Revolution, then, fiscal reinforcement lagged way behind.

Nonetheless, the organizational and ideological vigour of those in charge of planning the celebrations was actively imposed on the masses of France. In a series of circulars sent to departmental prefects, Jean Zay demanded that the provinces follow the Parisian lead, not only by tuning in to the radio-broadcasted speeches to be delivered by the President and Prime Minister of the Republic, but by giving a local and regional flavour to the anniversary festivities. Indeed, prefects were ordered to form

their own committees of commemoration from local notables and these bodies were to affirm 'the union of French people in a solemn homage to the Revolution and its principles'.²⁶ It was clear that Zay was keen that the public remembrance of the Revolution be a conduit for national unity rather than a force for division. Indeed, when trying to convince the national deputies to vote the funds for the 150th anniversary, Jean Zay was to argue that the money was necessary 'so as to commemorate a national anniversary in a spirit of unity and unanimity'.²⁷ This concern with national unity was often seen through the prism of the contemporary crises of 1939, and in particular the precarious state of European international relations. As Jean Zay reminded the prefects in July of that year, 'I don't need to draw your attention to the national interest attached to the possibility thus offered to all French people to demonstrate, especially in the present circumstances, the solidarity that unites us.'²⁸ The ostentatious military parades planned for the 14 July celebration in Corsica were only the most visible of the departmental activities designed to cement popular unity in the cause of *la défense nationale*.²⁹ Notably, however, the nationalist deputy Jean-Pierre Plichon had earlier urged the government to divert the funds for the commemoration of the Revolution to the construction of a new fleet of aeroplanes, perhaps to be named after 'the founders of the Republic'.³⁰ Surely the cause of national defence would be better served through the creation of a competent airforce than by 'vague speeches, illuminations, garlands and lemonade'?³¹ Plichon was silenced, amid applause from the Communist Left, when Jean Zay retorted that the precise meaning of the Revolution was indeed the defense of national integrity, something that would be remembered explicitly in September during the commemoration of the battle of Valmy. If Plichon wished to disassociate himself from the memory of 1789, he should come right out and say so.

If the official organizers of the sesquicentenary wanted the commemorative events to consolidate national unity amid the crises of 1939, so too did they intend the celebrations to be an explicitly international affair, one that would show 'the political and intellectual influence of France in the world' and especially over the French colonies.³² Indeed, committees designed to pay homage to the 1789 Revolution sprang up all over the world — the Greek committee was particularly active, seeking to outline

the influence of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic code on Greece and gathering archival and printed material on Greek eyewitnesses to the events of 1789 in France.³³ In addition, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a key role in the celebrations organized for the *métropole*, inviting foreign ambassadors and French representatives overseas to the ceremonies in Paris, and urging the French expatriot community to celebrate its roots. For the general purpose of reminding the world of *le rayonnement français*, foreign countries were divided into three categories: those whose 'official position' rendered a public commemoration difficult (such as Italy and Germany); those in which institutions could be trusted to portray the Revolution in a sympathetic light (such as Britain and Belgium); and those in which it would be easiest to involve governments and populace alike (such as the French colonies).³⁴ In his speech on 5 May 1939, President Albert Le Brun fondly remembered the Revolution that had 'opened new horizons for our colonies' and had 'revealed to the whole world the civilizing mission of France'.³⁵ If the national defence of France was in jeopardy in the turbulent international *crise* of 1939, it would be best protected by invoking the order and strength of the French Empire.

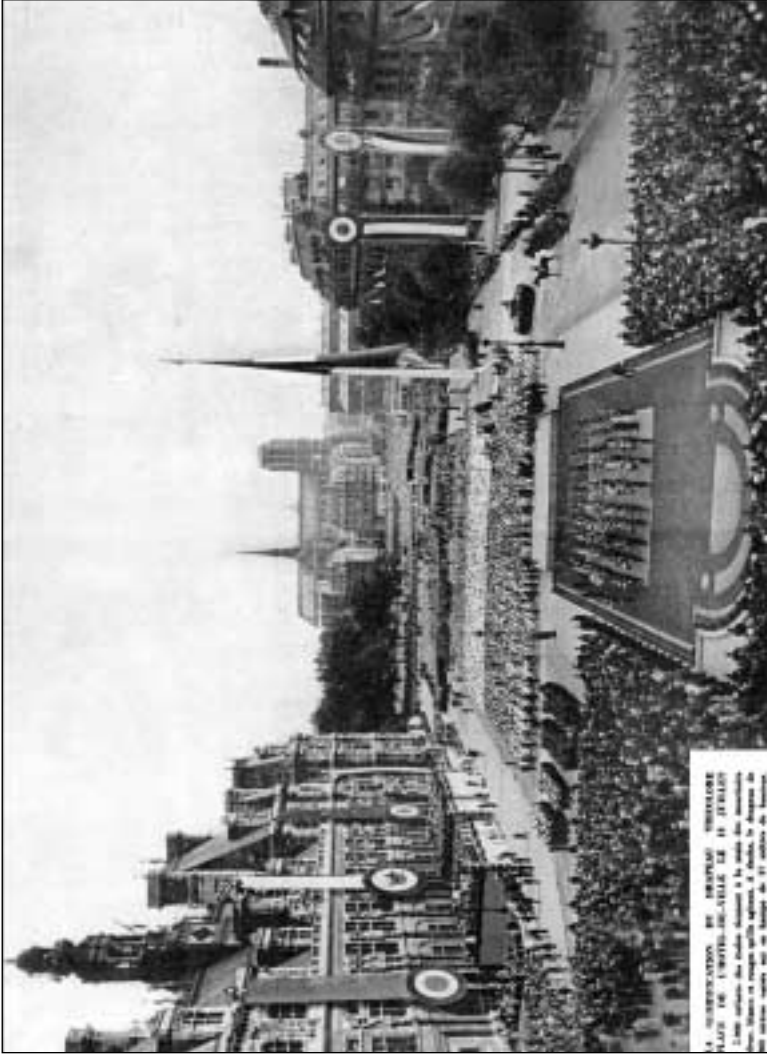
The format of the remembrance ceremonies did indeed betray the government's deeper concerns over the current international crisis of German expansionism and France's place in the world. (See Figures 1 and 2.) The celebration of 14 July, the most spectacular of the entire commemoration, had a distinctly military flavour: according to many newspaper sources, one and a half million French men and women crammed into the *grands boulevards* of the capital in order to view the international parades of the French imperial forces and gathered on the terrace in front of the *Palais de Chaillot* in order to hear the Presidential address.³⁶ In the words of the photo-journal, *L'Illustration*, this festival 'comprised a triple homage: to the flag, to the army, to the Empire'.³⁷ Indeed, in the speech made during these celebrations, President Albert Le Brun emphasized that the parades of the day demonstrated two things: the imperial 'civilizing mission of France' and the way that the fires of the Revolutionary armies continued to burn in French soldiers.³⁸ Prime Minister Edouard Daladier was even more explicit. He announced to the watchful crowds that the armies on show represented 'the guardian of your liberties'. They had fought at Verdun in the First World War and

would, if necessary, fight for 'human dignity' wherever it needed to be defended.³⁹

From the beginning, however, the events were plagued by bad weather, public *malaise* and rival visions of what was important about the Great Event. The rousing speeches of the leaders of the Republic were made less regal by the ubiquitous presence of umbrellas.⁴⁰ Moreover, republican politicians in general were apparently rather indifferent to the anniversary ceremonies. According to Pierre Caron, director of the Archives Nationales in 1939, the ministerial presence at the festivals after the initial ceremony of 5 May 1939 dropped away noticeably and many of the reserved seats for the festivities of 23 June remained vacant.⁴¹ Caron, writing from the ironic and perhaps deflated viewpoint of 1946, concluded that 'in the opinion even of the organizers, all the ceremonies were fiascos'.⁴² Perhaps, like the film-maker Jean Renoir, ministers would have preferred the government to have built a fleet of 'beautiful automobiles' in honour of '89' and 'the rights of man'.⁴³

To make matters worse, the French Communist Party had organized its own festivities, designed to celebrate a Revolution of the masses that was not yet over, rather than a smug remembrance of Great but irrelevant Men, and to that effect they orchestrated marches, speeches and large groups of French schoolchildren acting out scenes from various revolutionary events.⁴⁴ Indeed, in April 1938, the group of PCF deputies had presented the Chamber with a proposition with respect to the 150th anniversary of the Revolution. It was a vision of the past which not only emphasized a more democratically inclusive republican tradition, but also posed the question of commemoration within the contested present of the 1930s. The Revolution was important, in the first place, for liberating 'all enslaved peoples' and for showing the 'way of victorious struggle against oppression and for liberty'.⁴⁵ Despite the relapse into authoritarianism during the nineteenth century, 'the people of France always remained essentially loyal to the principles of liberty, justice and fraternity' and, moreover, had expressed such loyalty in 1830, 1848 and 1871. The Communists reminded the Chamber that the fascist threat in France was not just articulated as an attack on French institutions, but on the French past. If Nazi Minister Joseph Goebbels wanted that '1789 be erased from history', then so did the home-grown French fascists who

Figure 1
 'La
 Glorification
 du drapeau
 tricolore
 Place de
 L'Hôtel de
 Ville le 12
 juillet',
 L'Illustration,
 22 July 1939,
 418



In order to cement a republican reading of events, the official government committee planned the commemoration of several journées from the revolutionary calendar, including, on 12 July, the orchestration of five thousand school children who stood in front of the Hôtel de Ville in central Paris waving red, white and blue handkerchiefs thus forming a giant and gesticulating tricolour.

had staged a mock *coup d'état* in February 1934.⁴⁶ Moreover, the best way of commemorating the Great Event of 1789 was to involve the entire populace in ceremonies and rituals. The Revolution owed much to the masses — the storming of the Bastille had protected the Third Estate just as the storming of the Tuileries in 1792 had helped to end the monarchy — and must not forget them in its plans for remembrance in 1939. The Communists thus argued for schoolchildren, 'who represent the future', to sing revolutionary songs and for the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen to be made visible in every classroom in France.⁴⁷ In this way, the communist deputies sought to privilege the revolutionary tradition in France over the republican one, and demanded that the best way to protect republican democracy in France was to fight the menace of fascism in all its manifestations.

The Response of the Radical Right

This process of commemoration in 1939 was eagerly watched by the multitudes of journalists and intellectuals in France who published in the ample and politicized press of Paris. Indeed, interwar Paris had witnessed a proliferation of newspapers representing every shade of political opinion and each had its distinct views and readership.⁴⁸ The importance of an examination of the press cannot lightly be dismissed where a study of public opinion and popular ideology is concerned. As H.R. Kedward has argued, '[p]roducing a newspaper . . . [has been] a well-established political reflex in France, and should not be seen as an avoidance of more effective action'.⁴⁹ Given the exclusion of most of those on the radical Right from formal political power in France, it was only to be expected that the newspaper provided those on the extremist margins of French political culture with an important vehicle for their non-conformist ideas. *Je suis partout* and *Action française* were only two among many publications on the radical Right that promised their readers a blend of counter-revolutionary royalism and the seductive mass politics of fascism. In both intellectual and genealogical terms, *Je suis partout* had evolved from the more staunchly royalist *Action française* — both Pierre Gaxotte and Bernard de Vaulx had been Charles Maurras's personal secretaries for several years during

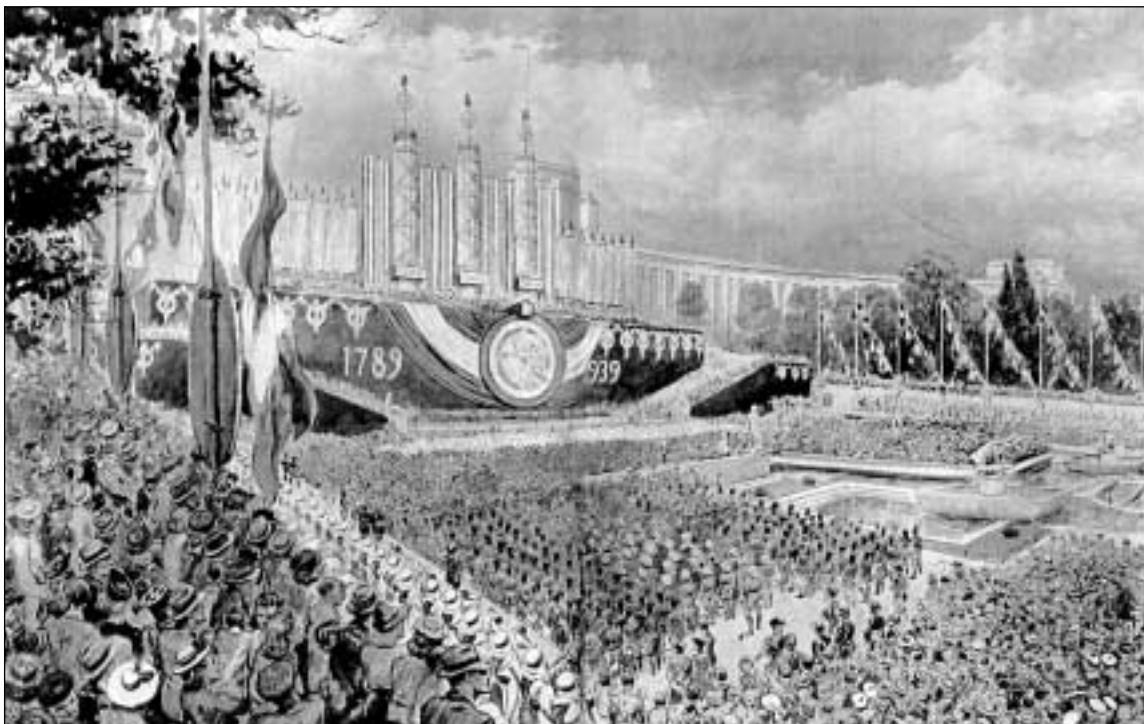


Figure 2

Artistic impression, by J. Simont, 'L'Unité de l'Empire français proclamée solennellement sur la terrasse de Chaillot',
L'Illustration, 22 July 1939, 424-5

and after the First World War.⁵⁰ *Action française* itself — that notorious product of the Dreyfus Affair, both as a newspaper and a political movement — had settled into a sort of complacency in the 1930s. Charles Maurras, its founder, had, after all, spent the exuberant night of 6 February 1934 — with its fascist riots and street fighting — at home writing poetry to Léon Daudet's wife, Pampille.⁵¹ Some commentators believed, in fact, that the *Action française* had always been a sham political party, all bark and no bite, and that 'the organization existed purely and simply to sell the newspaper'.⁵²

Certainly, by 1939 *Je suis partout* was a much more stridently acerbic and energetic cultural product than its spiritual guru, and a publication much more willing to embrace the charms of European fascism. Several contributors to *Je suis partout* had become members of Doriot's PPF with some, like cartoonist Ralph Soupault, editor Claude Jeantet and literary critic Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, playing key roles in the organization.⁵³ Moreover, when the defeat of France came in the summer of 1940, the Maurrassian *Action française* sheltered under the nationalist conservatism of Vichy while *Je suis partout* quickly achieved a highly visible place in the cultural world of occupied Paris, openly praising Doriot's re-energized PPF and lending full support after 1941 to the Doriot-inspired Légion des Volontaires Français, whose thousands of anti-communist volunteers fought in German uniform on the Eastern Front. In the spring of 1942, *Je suis partout* editor Robert Brasillach gave the closing speech at a PPF conference in Paris, in which he declared that '[i]n a fascist Europe there is only place for a fascist France'.⁵⁴ Indeed, by the end of the 1930s the writers at *Je suis partout* had largely abandoned the monarchism, if not the wider world view, of Charles Maurras and much preferred the sweaty charisma of Jacques Doriot.

When readers subscribed to *Je suis partout* and *Action française*, they bought into a certain vision of the past as well as a diagnosis of the present. It was a version of history that self-consciously rested upon the words and reputations of royalist historians working outside the sacred walls of the Sorbonne. Jacques Bainville, up till his death in 1936, contributed many articles to *Action française* on the history and politics of France.⁵⁵ Similarly, historian Léon Daudet wrote the editorials for *Action française* despite Maurice Pujo's general editorship, and, for the

duration of 1939 at least, most of them pondered the vicissitudes of his nation's past. For its part, *Je suis partout* early in 1939 ran a special subscription offer in which, should a reader introduce a friend to the newspaper, he or she would receive a complimentary 'great historical study' written by Jacques Bainville, Louis Bertrand, Pierre Gaxotte, Octave Aubry ('académicien vulgarisateur' in the words of Pascal Ory)⁵⁶ or a host of other non-republican historians.⁵⁷ Even the apparently innocuous crossword puzzles in the newspaper conformed to a counter-revolutionary viewpoint — the conundrum that appeared in the first issue for 1939 contained clues that pertained only to former kings of France.⁵⁸ If these subtleties were lost on *Je suis partout's* audience, then the historical vision of the newspaper was more frankly illustrated in its list of special issues, which included a lament on the failed 'fascist' revolution of 6 February 1934 and a celebration of the life of Louis XIV.⁵⁹ Franker still was Pierre Lucius's diagnosis of French *malaise*, in which the author explicitly stated that what France needed in order to allay the moral, social and political crisis of the 1930s was a new version of its own past. Just as the Nazis in Germany had reinvented themselves, however dubiously, in the image of Saxon dukes, and as the Fascists in Italy had brought to life the Ancient Romans, France needed to remodel itself along the lines of a corporate *ancien régime* society in which the divisiveness of modern class conflict would disappear.⁶⁰ The centrality of a specifically historical vision in *Je suis partout* was not confined to the pages of the newspaper itself. In February 1939, for example, Pierre Gaxotte held captive an audience of *Je suis partout* readers in a lecture hall with his thoughts on the 'French supremacy' of the eighteenth century. After the French Revolution, and in spite of material gains and scientific discoveries, 'Man never ceased to lose his liberty, his value and his dignity.'⁶¹ Modernity had meant class conflict, a domineering state apparatus, compulsory military service, and the imperialism of totalitarian dictatorship.

This arsenal of historical opinion and knowledge was used by the editorial teams at *Action française* and *Je suis partout* to launch an attack on the official sesquicentenary memory of the Revolution in 1939. From the start, the contributors to these newspapers expressed their contempt for the state-orchestrated celebrations. Pierre Gaxotte thought that the government programme of events was 'as gay as a funeral service at the

synagogue in the rue de la Victoire' and smirked that at least Edouard Herriot, Radical Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, and President of the organizing committee, could celebrate the regime that had allowed him to fill his portly belly.⁶² Furthermore, what strange regime should want to remember the mutinous French Guard, the end of French maritime strength and the beginning of a long demographic decline? When Léon Daudet recalled the 'Terror' waged on the part of bandits and pillagers between 1789 and 1793 he had to laugh: this bloodfest could not possibly be the 'emancipation of the human spirit' heralded by the Third Republic.⁶³ If Edouard Herriot and the other leaders of the regime now wanted to distinguish between the 'two revolutions' of 1789 and 1793 they were misguided: the Revolution was a 'bloc' of violence and terrorism which had succeeded in dividing French society against itself for the past century and a half.⁶⁴ Writing in *Action française*, Firmin Bacconnier held that the Revolution was celebrated only by those who had benefited from it, most notably Jews like Jean Zay and Léon Blum who had displaced the 'real' French (especially peasants and workers) in their own country.⁶⁵ In addition, it was obvious, to these writers at least, that since 1790 all laws in France, especially those concerning the family, had a socialist inspiration, and had resulted in the protracted *crise de dénatalité*.⁶⁶ Perhaps Hitler himself should send a telegram of congratulations to the French for having invented the principles of modern nationalism which had served Germany so well in recent years.⁶⁷ Finally, the commemoration of the Revolution was as boring as it was erroneous. The official pomp was contrived, the speeches inane and the public celebrations had the empty but stiff air of a school room. At root, according to Pierre Gaxotte, 'one celebrates the cult, but one no longer believes in the gods'.⁶⁸ Even the republicanized populace, in his view, now had difficulty celebrating a regime that had fostered class divisiveness, racial integration and the breakdown of the traditional family. (See Figure 3.)

Ironically, this vitriol was mostly absent from PPF commentary on the commemorative events of 1939, especially where official republican celebrations were concerned. Despite being the most ostentatiously fascist of the populist movements on the extreme Right, and holding the general opinion that the 1789 Revolution was the birthplace of Marxist materialism, Jacques

**LE 150^{ème} ANNIVERSAIRE
DE LA REVOLUTION**

AVANT LA REVOLUTION

Grâce à neuf siècles de Monarchie, LA FRANCE ETAIT LA PREMIERE NATION DU MONDE.

Depuis 150 ans le territoire national n'avait pas connu les horreurs de l'INVASION.

LE PEUPLE VIVAIT HEUREUX ET LIBRE, dans l'Etat libre.

La POPULATION de la France EGALE à celle de l'Allemagne, était DOUBLE de celle de l'Angleterre.

La CIVILISATION FRANÇAISE était en avance de deux siècles sur celle de toute l'Europe.

Les voyageurs étrangers disaient : « LA FRANCE EST LE PLUS BEAU ROYAUME QUI SOIT SOUS LE CIEL ».

APRES LA REVOLUTION

LA REVOLUTION a fait guillotiner, massacrer et noyer en série et indistinctement : Ouvriers, Paysans, Serviteurs, Prêtres, Aristocrates, Savants, Femmes et Enfants.

LA REVOLUTION A DECLANCHE soudainement une guerre générale qui a duré 23 ans, et qui a épuisé et dévoté la France.

Depuis lors, en 150 ans, LA FRANCE A SUBI SIX INVASIONS.

Les FRANÇAIS sont morts par millions sur leur terre mal défendue.

Nous payons CENT FOIS PLUS D'IMPOTS que sous les Rois.

Voilà l'œuvre de la REVOLUTION !
Voilà l'œuvre des BANDITS, des SADIQUES et des FOUS que des menteurs professionnels appellent « les GRANDS ANCESTRES ! »

Français, voilà l'anniversaire qu'on veut nous faire célébrer !

A bas la Révolution ! Vive la France !
L'ACTION FRANÇAISE.

The 150th anniversary of the Revolution

Before the Revolution

Thanks to nine centuries of monarch, FRANCE WAS THE WORLD'S PREMIER NATION.

For 150 years the national territory had not known the horrors of INVASION.

THE PEOPLE LIVED HAPPY AND FREE in a free state.

The POPULATION of France EQUAL to that of Germany, was DOUBLE that of England.

FRENCH CIVILIZATION was two hundred years ahead of the rest of Europe.

Foreign travellers used to say: 'FRANCE IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL KINGDOM UNDER THE HEAVENS'.

After the Revolution

THE REVOLUTION guillotines, massacred and drowned indiscriminately: workers, peasants, servants, priests, artisans, scholars, women and children.

THE REVOLUTION TRIGGERED OFF on purpose a general war which lasted 23 years, and which exhausted and diminished France.

Since then, in 150 years, FRANCE HAS BEEN INVADED SIX TIMES.

FRENCHMEN have died in their millions on their own badly defended territory.

We now pay ONE HUNDRED TIMES MORE TAXES than under the Kings.

These are the deeds of the REVOLUTION!

These are the deeds of BANDITS, of SADISTS and of MADMEN that professional liars call 'the GREAT ANCESTORS'!

Frenchman, that is the anniversary that we're supposed to celebrate!

Down with the Revolution! Long live France!
Read ACTION FRANCAISE.

Figure 3

Affiche printed in Action Française,
3 July 1939, p. 4

English translation of text in Figure 3

Doriot's party gave the sesquicentenary celebrations scant attention in 1939.⁶⁹ Moreover, the reports in *Emancipation Nationale* of the republican parades of 14 July were largely enthusiastic. PPF journalist Paul Guitard found himself caught up in the dense crowd of excited onlookers on that date, and swooned before the 'beauty of the uniform' all around him.⁷⁰ The presence of colonial troops, as well as Scots in kilts and the Irish Guard, was welcomed and celebrated by Guitard, who was reassured by the 'brio' of these soldiers, the defenders of French power and

force. Indeed, despite the fact that the Third Republic had chosen not to celebrate the recent tricentenary of the birth of Louis XIV – something that irked those in the PPF as much as it did the monarchists at *Action française* – the commentators at *Emancipation Nationale* were prepared to accept the 150th anniversary of the 1789 Revolution as a republican celebration. They, too, professed to feel pride at certain aspects of the French ‘republican’ tradition, for example the victory at Valmy as well as imperialist conquests under the current regime, and were willing to agree with Edouard Herriot that the Revolution was not a ‘bloc’.⁷¹ There was, in their view, a distinction to be made between the struggle for ‘liberty’ in 1789 and the Terror of 1793.

Indeed, PPF attacks were not targeted against republicans in 1939 but against the Communists of the PCF. What annoyed Doriot and his followers most was the alleged communist ‘monopolization’ of the memory of the Revolution and its aftermath. After all, they argued (wrongly), that the very first public plans for a sesquicentenary commemoration had been put forward by the PCF and, since France had been ‘russified’ since 1936, such proposals were bound to be accepted.⁷² In addition, these Communists, as ‘agents of Moscow’, had specifically wanted to celebrate the Terror and the revolutionary tribunals which were, in their minds, forerunners of Stalinist persecution.⁷³ In February 1939, Camille Fégy had complained that, ‘for the last five years the communists have served us the French Revolution *à la sauce tartare*’, emphasizing the ways in which the Revolution prefigured the rise of Bolshevism.⁷⁴ The PPF association of the Revolution with Marxist ideas and manipulation accounts for the subject of Ralph Soupault’s cartoon which appeared in *Emancipation Nationale* on 14 July 1939, and which presented Edouard Daladier and Neville Chamberlain on bended knees before an impregnable Bastille in the shape of Stalin.⁷⁵ (See Figure 4.) Even more infuriatingly for those in the PPF, the French Communists had also tried to appropriate the commemoration of the 1934 fascist riots. Emphasizing the left-wing response to the rightist agitation on the night of 6 February 1934, the PCF had chosen to honour instead the communist demonstrations of 9 February and the successful CGT-inspired strike of 12 February.⁷⁶ It was not, therefore, the republican regime that was guilty of the manipulation of history on the eve of the Second World War, according to Doriot’s men, but the communist



Figure 4

Cartoon by Ralph Soupault *Emancipation Nationale* 14 July 1939, p. 1

This cartoon was an accompaniment to an editorial article by Jacques Doriot, entitled 'Le Pacte d'illusion', which described the futility of Anglo-French negotiations with Stalin over a mutual defence agreement in the case of German aggression. In Doriot's view, the USSR was interested in the security of no European nation except itself, simultaneously negotiating with Berlin-Rome and London-Paris. The Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact of August 1939 did not surprise Doriot in the least. Interestingly, the editorial did not specifically mention the Bastille or the 1789 Revolution.

agents of Stalin. In the world of the PPF, anti-communism was a more pervasive passion and concern than anti-republicanism, not least, perhaps, since the party had to operate within the rules of parliamentary democracy in order to guarantee its own continued existence.

Colonel de la Rocque's Parti Social Français, too, gave every indication of embracing the republican remembrance of 1789. Throughout 1939, the PSF organ, the recently acquired *Petit Journal*, gave only limited coverage of the public commemoration of 1789 but reported favourably on the regime's remembrance parades and ceremonies of May, June and July of that year.⁷⁷ The Bastille Day celebrations, in particular, were heralded in the newspaper as a magnificent occasion in which all of Paris,

'thrilled with confidence and exhilaration', looked with pride on the military procession on the streets of the capital.⁷⁸ In the provinces, too, the French population welcomed the opportunity to engage in republican rituals: school children in Limoges marched in the colours of the flag and the enthusiastic crowds in Marseille were some of the largest in the country.⁷⁹

Colonel de la Rocque did express ambivalence towards the events of the revolutionary period, however. In his Bastille Day editorial, la Rocque considered the dual nature of the 1789 Revolution: 'this Revolution that bloodied our soil, desecrated our spiritual values and, at the same time, liberated our territory and saved the unity of our country'.⁸⁰ In his diagnosis, the Revolution itself was not so much a cause of political and social change in France, but a symptom of outmoded *ancien régime* structures riddled with 'feudal abuses' and 'moral decay'. '[T]he events of 1789 to 1793 corresponded to the muddled reaction of a profoundly poisoned, yet still vigorous, organism, momentarily deprived of any cerebral co-ordination, of any muscular equilibrium.'⁸¹ This revolutionary period had paved the way for rule by mediocrity and the ascent of individualism, an insidious development which severed the loyalty of the French both to the Church and to the family. Still, in the words of la Rocque, the 1789 Revolution had facilitated the entry of the masses onto the political stage and it is 'on such a republican base that the edifice of tomorrow will be built'.⁸² Colonel de la Rocque's wonderful physiological metaphor effectively allows him to blur his position on the republican/counter-revolutionary divide. By suggesting that the *ancien régime* of absolutist monarchs was corrupt and decadent, la Rocque was able to posit himself in favour of revolutionary (and republican) change while still maintaining a critical stance on the excesses of the Revolution itself and on its legacy of individualist materialism. Perhaps this tricky position is illuminative of the wider political machinations of the PSF in the context of 1939: having been banned as the paramilitary Croix de Feu in 1936, the revamped and explicitly *parliamentary* PSF had relaunched itself in that year as a firm supporter of republican political processes if not republican virtue and, in the face of its rising popular support, endeavoured to appeal to mainstream currents in the voting population.⁸³

Counter-revolutionary Attacks

For the contributors to *Action française* and *Je suis partout*, however, the Third Republic remained a most hated enemy and its efforts to commemorate the Revolution were to be undermined at every turn. Their rejection of 1789 and its commemoration did not prevent the editors at *Action française* and *Je suis partout* from writing vociferously and at length about both the Revolution and its memory in France. In fact, in developing an explicit 'counter-commemoration',⁸⁴ *Je suis partout* devoted a special issue to 'La Révolution de 1789' at the end of June, which included articles on the war-mongering nature of the Revolution, its corruption and destructive appetites.⁸⁵ Inevitably, perhaps, the focus of *Je suis partout's* wrath centred on the most famous of days in the French calendar, that which commemorated the storming of the Bastille in 1789 and which, for some time, had been the national *fête* of the French nation. For Romantic republicans like Jules Michelet, 14 July 1789 may have represented the moment when the spirit of the people had animated the Revolution, but for the embittered counter-revolutionaries at *Je suis partout* and *Action française* it signified a fall from reason and sense — an event that made the Terror of later years inevitable.⁸⁶ In itself, however, the liberation of the Bastille on *quatorze juillet* was also a rather strange event, given the paltry number of inmates and their alleged craziness. An unrepentant Pierre-Antoine Cousteau was gleefully to maintain, after the Liberation of France in 1944, that on 14 July the French nation celebrated only an empty shell of a tradition, since, in 1789 'there were eight people in the Bastille, and two of them were madmen'.⁸⁷ Indeed, one of these madmen was ironically celebrated in the special issue of *Je suis partout*. The so-called 'Major of Immensity' had apparently written a diary for the month of July 1789, which the editors at *Je suis partout* decided to publish. In it, the prisoner bemoans his life in the Bastille, yet is seen to enjoy a diet consisting of oysters and turkey. When the rabble come to free him, the Major assumes that the entire Revolution has been staged for his personal benefit.⁸⁸ The publication of such a 'document' was typical of the ways in which the editors at *Je suis partout* sought to deflate the most famous national myth of the Revolution. Indeed, in an editorial the following month, Pierre Gaxotte commented cynically that 'the legend of the 14 July was fabricated from the

15th'.⁸⁹ Far from being an organic festival of national unity, it seems, the *quatorze juillet* was a monument to the manipulation of history under the Third Republic.

To these intellectuals, however, the 1789 Revolution was not only a mismanaged farce: it was also a bloody force of destruction and oppression. On 14 July itself, Pierre Villette shamed the anticlerical excesses of the Revolution which had dismantled the indigenous Catholic culture of such places as Brittany, the Vendée, Alsace and Lorraine and made a mockery of the festival of national unity.⁹⁰ After all, the Revolution could not rely on the spontaneity of the French populace for its success; the revolutionary leaders needed to secure their power through coercion rather than by consent and to this end they established a political police in the guise of the Committee of General Security formed in October 1792.⁹¹ The Terror, when it came, was just as eager, we are told, to behead the common people — even women — for speaking out against the regime.⁹² Repression came not only from above, but from below as well, in the form of the September Massacres, whose victims included at least two hundred men of humble origins — painters, wheelwrights, horse dealers, florists and teachers.⁹³

Even more heinous in the eyes of the contributors to *Je suis partout* and *Action française* was the fact that the Revolution did not limit itself to acts of random violence, but cynically embarked upon a state of international war in order to consolidate its regime.⁹⁴ According to Léon Daudet, the Revolution of 1789 triggered the organized violence of the Jacobins which was continued under Napoleon: from the early 1790s to 1815 France suffered twenty-three years of war and conflict abroad and at home.⁹⁵ Pierre-Antoine Cousteau of *Je suis partout* (and sibling of the more famous deep-sea diver) was even more explicit about the ambitions of the new revolutionary regime: he liked to remind his readers that Danton had described war as 'the baptism of liberty'.⁹⁶ (See Figure 5.) Judging from the cartoon in the centre of the page on which the article was featured, it would seem that the beleaguered *belliciste* and increasingly anti-Munich Paul Reynaud, then a conservative deputy (Democratic Alliance) and Minister of Finance in the Daladier government, thought the same.⁹⁷ Violence, then, was not a contingent but an integral part of the Revolution. 'Terror is the essence of the Revolution. It represented neither an excess nor a necessary

defence, it is just that the Revolution itself was, at root, an enterprise of expropriation and extermination.⁹⁸ Jacobinism, in fact, was not much different from Bolshevism in his view: once power had passed from the monarch to the 'soviets of the mob' nothing short of mass murder was bound to occur, in the name of bringing the Revolution even to those who did not want it.⁹⁹

These writers on the radical Right were thus unambivalent about the 1789 Revolution and its bloody aftermath. As far as they were concerned, the Revolution was to be mourned rather than celebrated, since it had pushed France forward into an era of cosmopolitan rootlessness and warfare. These intellectuals' understanding of the significance of Napoleon I in French history was, however, marked by a distinct ambiguity.¹⁰⁰ Should Napoleon, responsible for the *coup d'état* of 1799 and the self-coronation of 1804, be seen as the heir or the destroyer of the French Revolution? Was the anti-royalist Napoleon a figure to be derided or was his self-styled secular kingship a mark of French *grandeur*, a force that imposed order on an anarchic period of revolutionary upsets?¹⁰¹ In general, the intellectuals at *Je suis partout* and *Action française* subscribed to the image of

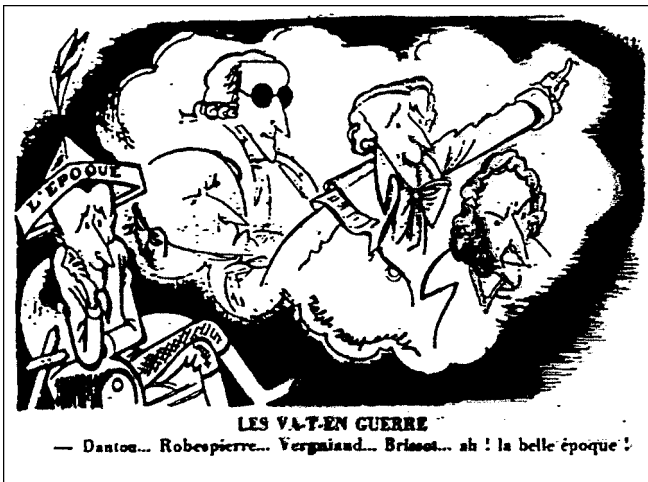


Figure 5

Cartoon by Ralph Soupault Special issue entitled 'La Révolution de 1789' *Je suis partout* 30 June 1939, p. 5

Napoleon contained within Léon Daudet's 1939 publication, *Deux idoles sanguinaires: la Révolution et son fils Bonaparte*, published by Albin Michel. (See Figure 6.) Daudet saw the reign of Napoleon merely as the second and misguided instalment of the Terror of the Revolution. What is more, Napoleon refused to reinstate primogeniture and secularized the university. The Napoleonic regime was headed by a silly and self-proclaimed 'Robespierre on a horse' who initiated a laughable 'caricature of the monarchy' and who embarked upon 'vain campaigns which resulted in two things: Trafalgar and Waterloo'.¹⁰² Moreover, for those connected with *Action française*, Napoleon was a figure whose destruction of east-central Europe had triggered the development of new nationalisms that had resulted in the eventual unification of the German nation into one powerful state.¹⁰³ Far from bringing *grandeur* to France, Napoleon had wrought only catastrophic defeat. Daudet's task in this angry book was to expose the 'immense mystification' of the *légende napoléonienne* which had marked the search for 'Great Ancestors' in modern France.¹⁰⁴ What the intellectuals of *Action française* and *Je suis partout* particularly objected to in the character and actions of Napoleon was, above all, the *bellicisme* that had seen the Great Man continue the wars of 1792 until the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1816. It is perhaps unsurprising that these writers would object to the same qualities in Napoleon that they currently abhorred in the statesmen of Third Republican France.

This reading of the violence of the revolutionary and Napoleonic period is indeed illuminated by a consideration of the response of the rightist press to the international events of 1939. The pages of *Je suis partout* and *Action française* throughout 1939 were dominated by two inter-connected themes — the triumph of Franco in the Spanish Civil War and the growing urgency of the 'German problem'. Since the outbreak of the war in Spain, the writing team at *Je suis partout*, in particular, proclaimed the merits of Franco and his freedom-fighters, in what they termed 'the war of Spanish liberation'.¹⁰⁵ In their view, the 'international civil war'¹⁰⁶ in Spain, if won by the wrong side, threatened to make possible 'Jewish revenge' and to turn all of Europe into a Soviet colony.¹⁰⁷ Despite their joy at the Spanish republicans' defeat, however, the writers at *Je suis partout* were increasingly concerned about one of the powers whose military strength had



Figure 6

Cartoon by Ralph Soupault *Je suis partout* 11 August 1939,
 p. 9

Book of the Week

*Two bloody idols: the Revolution and its son Napoleon Bonaparte by
 Léon Daudet (Albin Michel)*

In this cartoon the Revolution is depicted as the 'hag Republic' (*la gueuse*) — a sort of anti-Marianne figure — which had been a fixture of anti-republican satire since the 1880s.

facilitated the victory of Franco. Indeed, the year was overshadowed, in their view, by the deepening urgency of the 'German Problem' east of the Rhine. As early as January, well before the German annexation of Czechoslovakia and before German demands on Danzig had been rejected by Poland, the journalists at the newspaper pondered the inevitability of war. For the populace, it would seem, such a conflict was bound to be a fact before it happened. According to Pierre Gaxotte, at least, Parisians were now refusing to repaint their apartments, since, 'what good would it do if there's going to be a war?'¹⁰⁸ Fear of

Germany was palpable and, despite the fact that *Je suis partout* would reinvent itself in February 1941 as the leading fascist-collaborationist and openly pro-Nazi Parisian weekly, the editors of the newspaper were decidedly wary of Germany during the diplomatic adventures of 1939. In fact, they took the trouble to prepare a compilation of their earlier consternation about the strength of German nationalism for an issue of the newspaper in March 1939. In it, readers learned that the journalists at *Je suis partout* had warned of the danger of 'the eternal Germany' from the moment that Hitler seized power in 1933.¹⁰⁹ Fear of Germany was not based so much on ideology for the writing team at *Je suis partout*, but on geopolitics. Indeed, they asserted, 'Hitler, having formed the "Greater Germany" [and placed French security in jeopardy] has automatically become our "Great Enemy."' ¹¹⁰ Pierre Gaxotte affirmed in May 1939 that 'our war aims would be to break the German nation and not simply the German government'.¹¹¹ Despite their flirtations with fascism, then, the intellectuals associated with the newspaper had kept a significant element of the Germanophobia that they had inherited from the 'traditional nationalists' of *Action française*.

At the same time, they were not prepared to risk the lives of French soldiers (fewer in number than they would have liked due to the crisis of *dénatalité*) to preserve the integrity of 'fictitious' European nations like Czechoslovakia. For that reason, they, along with Maurras and his *Action française*, supported the Munich Accords of September 1938 and continued to rally support against the belligerent ('belliciste') members of the French government, who were ready to drag France into a conflict that would result in 'universal revolution', since that was the eternal goal of the Red Army and its agents in France, the PCF.¹¹² Indeed, after the stunning electoral success in 1936 of the Popular Front and the simultaneous efforts of the French government to consolidate the alliance with the Soviet Union, the radical Right had exhibited a greater fear of internal subversion than foreign invasion. For them, as for Doriot's PPF, it really was a case of 'better Hitler than Blum'. In this way, these writers conformed to the observations about the French Right and Nazi Germany made by Charles Micaud in his 1943 study of the Parisian press. The traditional nationalist fear of an aggressively expansionist Germany, and the willingness to combat the German nation in battle, had been replaced by the terror of a civil

war engendered by internal communist dissent, even after the international crisis over Danzig.¹¹³ As Pascal Ory has argued elsewhere, the old opposition of Left and Right was replaced during these tortured years, at least where relations with Germany were concerned, by 'the new cleavage of pacifism versus resistance'.¹¹⁴ Even the erstwhile republican PSF managed only a lukewarm call for 'a policy of conditional resistance to Pan-Germanism' (it was tempered by a partial acceptance of the need for *rapprochement*) and, at any rate, this party of *ancien combattants* from 1914, did not in any way advocate standing up to German aggression in central Europe.¹¹⁵

Heroes, Heroines and Victims

The pages of *Je suis partout* and *Action française* during 1939 were not only filled with an attempt to negate the gaiety and self-congratulation of the sesquicentenary commemoration of the Revolution: the contributors to these newspapers wanted not so much to forget the events of 1789 but to mould them into a different narrative.¹¹⁶ Rather than celebrate the perpetrators of revolutionary change, therefore, these writers chose to celebrate its victims. After all, the special issue of *Je suis partout* devoted to the 1789 Revolution had been dedicated to those who had struggled against the 'barbarism of the revolution', and, in particular, to the peasants of the Vendée and to Charlotte Corday, the young woman who put a knife into the heart of revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat.¹¹⁷ Several columns in *Je suis partout* and *Action française* advertised masses for the souls of the victims of revolutionary ardour, those who had paid 'with their innocent blood for the illusions, the mistakes and the crimes of that fatal period in history'.¹¹⁸ One of the most celebrated victims of the Revolution had been Marie-Antoinette herself, a figure whom the writers at *Action française* and *Je suis partout* sought to rescue from the contempt of posterity. In this fashion, Bernard de Vaulx favourably reviewed a recent book by Léon Daudet which presented Marie-Antoinette as 'an essentially pure woman, in whom grace shines with a unique brilliance'.¹¹⁹ It is true, conceded Daudet, that the queen was frivolous and vain, but she demonstrated, too, a keen understanding of the fiscal dilemma of France and exhibited a considerable charm over the people

of *la patrie*. De Vaulx happily considered another sympathetic biography of one of the Revolution's lost heroines. In discussing Jean de la Varende's current book on Charlotte Corday, de Vaulx was quick to dismiss allegations that the actions of Corday had been inspired by female hysteria: instead, she was a woman 'as virile as her father', simply one who could not tolerate the inertia of the new revolutionary regime just as she had been unable to tolerate the impotence of the King.¹²⁰

Ultimately, for the journalists at *Je suis partout*, the Vendée, site of a bloody civil war in 1793, was a more fitting *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory) for the Revolution than the Bastille, and it was not surprising that the newspaper, in the issue that formed a counter-celebration to the national *fête* of 14 July, featured a nostalgic homage to that piece of countryside south of the Loire, devoting articles 'to the memory of the heroes and their sacrifices'.¹²¹ The events between March and December 1793 in the Vendée had posed the most pertinent counter-revolutionary threat to the new French republic, but, perhaps more significantly, they illustrated the brutality that the new regime would impose in order to bring the Revolution to 'the people' whether they wanted it or not. In the bloody conflict of that year and the extensive reprisals of the next, 200,000 French men and women are said to have died.¹²² It is not surprising, then, that the memory of the Vendée insurrection should have become the central unifying motif of the counter-revolutionary tradition throughout the nineteenth century. As Robert Gildea comments, 'the martyred and victimized Vendean region was idealized as a microcosm of Ancien Régime society, happy peasants living harmoniously under the protection of the Catholic Church, monarchy and nobility.'¹²³

The journalists at *Action française* and *Je suis partout* celebrated the words, as well as the actions, of those who toiled against the Revolution. Antoine Rivarol, in particular, was singled out as the most talented of the counter-revolutionary thinkers, and as one who understood that 'the sovereignty of a people is no more than a fiction', since any such power is necessarily an abstract entity, in need of a strong ruler in order to have real effect.¹²⁴ Another journalist chosen for honours was François-Louis Suleau, who maintained his public defence of the King right up until his own beheading in August 1792.¹²⁵ The French Revolution was, therefore, not without its heroes and

heroines in the eyes of those on the radical Right — writers and activists like Corday, Rivarol and Suleau merely formed an anti-canon of revolutionary Great Men and Great Women, a group of thinkers who stood against the Revolution rather than for it. Moreover, the impending context of Occupation was to provide the same group of intellectuals new scope for dismantling the republican myth of the Revolution. In 1944, the literary fascist Pierre Drieu la Rochelle celebrated Charlotte Corday more explicitly in a play he wrote for the sesquicentenary of her murder of Marat.¹²⁶ Similarly, *Je suis partout* mourned the 150th anniversary of the civil war in the Vendée the previous year, suggesting that its story of bloodshed would serve to remind the newly embittered population of France of the bankruptcy of the republican ideal.¹²⁷

It was not only the highly contested eighteenth-century past which attracted the polemics of these authors. In order to shield themselves from the brewing storm in the heartland of Europe, the intellectuals at *Action française* and *Je suis partout* sought in 1939 to commemorate a more distant past of purity and harmony. Writers for both publications used the traditional *fête de Jeanne d'Arc* in May to enshrine the *pucelle* as the most appropriate expression of *le pays réel*. For men like Charles Maurras, after all, *Jeanne d'Arc* had always represented the spirituality of the French 'people', their 'natural' *völkisch* patriotism and their rural roots.¹²⁸ In the words of Léon Daudet, the famous virgin represented the most beautiful page in French history, and the Revolution the most hideous.¹²⁹ *Action française* devoted an entire issue of the newspaper in May 1939 to a remembrance of *Jeanne* and it was specifically designed to counter the official republican *légende révolutionnaire*. The nation would not find unity in the divisive memory of 1789, incited Maurice Pujos: it was much better to rally behind the real 'heroine of the national defence, who represents an example in this present crisis: as much for her wisdom as for her patriotism and honour'.¹³⁰ The writers at the newspaper took great joy in the public ceremonies surrounding the Vatican's decision to promote to the status of basilica, in her honour, a church in *Jeanne's* home town: the ceremonies were attended by locals in regional costume engaged in an act of national and religious worship.¹³¹

The PPF, too, devoted considerable space to a celebration of the Fête de Jeanne d'Arc in May 1939, specifically compliment-

ing the Action française movement for its efforts in reclaiming the heroine for the French Right. In the PPF parade to commemorate this 'noble warrior', Jacques Doriot led a legion of workers, bourgeois, intellectuals, war heroes, young men and young women, on a march down the rue de Rivoli in central Paris.¹³² The PSF, too, expressed an enormous adulation of *Jeanne* in May 1939, covering many aspects of her life and legacy, as well as advertising the route of the PSF parade in her honour well in advance.¹³³ Even the conservative-republican *Le Temps* preferred this national heroine to the likes of Robespierre and Napoleon. One front-page article in May asserted that the legacy of *Jeanne* furnished the Republic with all that it needed: 'we see in her our regiments, our flag, all our military force, she is a symbol of our power and discipline; but we also see in her the French family . . . she speaks to French people of every age and class, united even when the security of the country is called into question'.¹³⁴

In the figure of *Jeanne d'Arc*, then, the ideologues of the Right were able to find both a military prowess and a comforting maternal presence to rival the republican Marianne. In all, the allegedly 'organic' nature of this commemoration of the saint was deemed altogether more fitting than the rather contrived affair of the sesquicentenary of the Revolution. In some respects, the privileging of *Jeanne* over Marianne was also demonstrated by the Communist Left, who utilized the myth of *la pucelle* in their own distinctive commemoration of the Revolution.¹³⁵ Indeed, at least since the mid-nineteenth century, the image of *Jeanne* had been claimed by Catholics, secular republicans and integral nationalists alike. Rather than demonstrate the triumph of counter-revolutionary over republican commemoration, then, the ubiquity of the memory of *Jeanne d'Arc* in 1939 suggests the failure of the radical Right to develop a distinctive programme of remembrance of its own.¹³⁶

Despite the efforts of these journalists on the radical Right to ponder a remote past of alleged purity that would heal the wounds of civil discord in France, a more jarring and painful memory of recent events kept getting in the way. In August 1939 and again in November of that year, the memory both of *Jeanne d'Arc* and of the 1789 Revolution was overshadowed by the more recent tragedy of the Great War of 1914–18, a conflict which had filled French fields with the blood of millions of men. *Action*

française and *Je suis partout* commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of general mobilization with a mixed air of melancholy, nostalgia and defiance. In *Action française*, Georges Gaudy remembered the 1914 of his youth, when he was filled with patriotic ardour but had ultimately failed to understand the 'terrible significance' of events.¹³⁷ His portrayal of the *patrie* gripped by the outbreak of war is, nonetheless, one dominated by the unity — town with village, north with south — of the French population. The French nation draws its sword 'which is, for those who have witnessed it, a sublime spectacle, thrilling . . . the flash the steel . . . has touched the spirit of Frenchmen near and far'.¹³⁸

Robert Brasillach, in the editorial column for *Je suis partout*, conceived a letter to an imaginary youth awaiting mobilization for a new conflict. Despite the fact that the First World War would be a veritable 'twin sister' to such a young man, 'you are the first, among the French, not to remember it directly, and that is why I'm writing to you'.¹³⁹ The recipient of this letter has no memory of 'babies shot against the wall of Louvain' or 'the nightly bombing raids', nor of the 'criminal' peace of Versailles, which threatened European stability not only by punishing the Germans but by dismantling that bulwark against central-European disorder, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Third Republic, in other words, had pursued an illusory peace in 1919 and lied to the French populace about the likelihood of its efficacy. As Pierre Villette was to remark on the eve of the armistice-day commemoration several months later, 'halted on 11 November 1918 the hostilities were renewed at the start of September 1939'.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, both *Action française* and *Je suis partout* marked the anniversary of the 1918 armistice with sadness: they reported that remembrance ceremonies were carried out in villages and towns all over France in a state of melancholy for lost male youth.¹⁴¹ The intrusion of this memory of the Great War amid the sesquicentenary celebrations of the 1789 Revolution suggests the ambivalence that the intellectuals on the radical Right felt towards war: on the one hand, they were keen to celebrate what they deemed the innocence and unity of the French nation during the 1914–18 conflict; on the other, they used the anniversary of mobilization and armistice to point to the bankruptcy of the Third Republic to protect *le pays réel* of France in the new context of the late 1930s.¹⁴² In other words, a

residual nationalism and profound love of *le poilu* was mingled with the hatred of the *bellicisme* expressed in the Chamber of Deputies.

Conclusion

The anniversary of the 1789 Revolution was thus commemorated in the press of the radical Right through the filter not so much of the distant past but of contemporary international events. In particular, these writers were anxious that the *bellicisme* of the Third Republican leaders would lead France to the brink of a new apocalypse. Indeed, the two greatest crimes of the revolutionary decade, in the eyes of these intellectuals, were the willingness to shed French soldiers' blood in international conflicts and the propensity to stir up the turmoil of civil unrest, especially in the Vendée. Pierre Gaxotte commented in April 1939 — just after the government had announced its plans to celebrate the famous anniversary — that he found it hard to believe that a regime would want to commemorate a revolution that was marked by rebellion and *la guerre civile*.¹⁴³ At the same time, such an irony was, in the world-view of Gaxotte, appropriate to a regime that was itself intent upon fomenting civil disorder — by seeking an ever more binding alliance with the Bolshevik state of the Soviet Union, by introducing the 'divisive' Marchandean law (against racism in the press) which 'privileged' Jews over 'ordinary Frenchmen', and (he might later have added) by suppressing its own national Communist Party after the outbreak of war in September. It was, in this sense, entirely fitting that the French state should commemorate one *guerre civile* in the midst of another.

It was certainly the case that the contributors both to *Action française* and *Je suis partout* in this sesquicentenary year conceived of the historiographical battles for ownership of the 1789 French Revolution as representative of a wider civil war in France, one in which the opponents of revolution had been disempowered socially and politically, at least since the establishment of the Third Republic in the 1870s. Thus the angry and bitter voices raised in the press of the radical Right in 1939 were in part fighting against the political marginalization to which the Republic had consigned them. In a climate of international

uncertainty, these rightist commentators simultaneously used their rejection of the Revolution to sustain their attack on the nature of republican mismanagement in 1930s France, and used their disdain for contemporary parliamentary democracy to demonize the Revolution as its point of origin. In their own search for a useable past, these marginal figures attempted to construct a counter-canon to the revolutionary republican one, championing counter-revolutionaries such as Antoine Rivarol and François-Louis Suleau, and asserting that medieval warrior Joan of Arc was a more fitting icon for French national identity than the guillotine. Political protest on the radical Right in 1930s France was thus based in part on a specifically historical vision founded on the words of professional and amateur royalist historians connected to the press of Paris.

If the historical vision of the PPF and PSF was similar to that of *Action française* and *Je suis partout* where the 1789 Revolution was concerned, there were, at the same time, significant differences in how these mass parties on the extreme Right covered the commemorative events of 1939. Above all, the press of the PPF and PSF was willing to accept the sesquicentenary as a republican celebration of the French past, and turned its anger instead to the 'threat' of communist subversion. Both parties were only too aware of the context of international uncertainty against which the commemoration took place, but neither used the remembrance of the Revolution as a platform from which to attack the 'bellicisme' of the republican regime. Finally, it must be remembered that the status of the PPF and PSF as political parties — rather than amorphous intellectual currents — made these groups highly vulnerable to government censure. After March 1939, Prime Minister Edouard Daladier could enforce rule by decree and the PSF had experienced the repression of the regime at least once in its chequered history. In other words, it was not in the political interest of either group to make the Third Republic itself the target of anti-republican invective.

The fall of the Third Republic after the military defeat of June 1940 was to permit the temporary triumph of these anti-republican voices on the radical Right. The years of *les années noires* which followed were to witness, amid the turmoil and compromise of collaboration, an attempt on the part of some of the intellectuals associated with *Action française* and *Je suis partout* to dismantle not only the idea of republicanism but its

very institutions. In varying degrees, both publications lent their support to the anti-republican policies of Vichy France, in which the structures of parliamentary democracy were dismantled, trades unions and youth organizations banned, anti-Semitic legislation passed, and armed police created specifically to quash dissent among French citizens.¹⁴⁴ Ultimately, then, the 'civil wars of the mind' of the 1930s were thus to spill over into an armed conflict that sowed the seeds for what Henry Rousso would much later describe as the 'Vichy syndrome', a conflict in which the old fault-lines of French politics — Catholic versus anticlerical, Left versus Right, universalist versus particularist — were to find a bloodier battleground than the realm of ideas.

Notes

1. P. Nora, 'L'Ère de commémoration', in P. Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, III (Paris 1992), 977–1012.

2. S. Hoffmann, in H. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge 1991), vii.

3. See F. Furet, *Un passé d'une illusion: Essai sur l'idée communiste au vingtième siècle* (Paris 1995).

4. See, in particular, R. Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven and London 1994), and P. Ory, *Une Nation pour mémoire: 1889, 1939, 1989 trois jubilés révolutionnaires* (Paris 1992). This paper works within the parameters suggested by both of these authors and is intended to flesh out their ideas in more detail with respect to the words and actions of the radical Right.

5. K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York 1963), 15.

6. See, for example, Gildea, *op cit.*, 298.

7. T. Zeldin, *A History of French Passions: 1848–1945. vol. 1: Ambition, Love and Politics* (Oxford 1993), 570.

8. J. Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York 1992), 1.

9. Richard Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War, 1945–1990* (London 1993), 104.

10. S. Citron, *Le Mythe national: L'histoire de France en question* (Paris 1987), 247–89.

11. For an overview of the planned celebrations, see P. Ory, 'La commémoration révolutionnaire en 1939', in R. Rémond and J. Bourdin, eds, *La France et les Français, 1938–1939* (Paris 1978), 115–36.

12. Ory, 'La commémoration révolutionnaire en 1939', 119.

13. Mathiez succeeded Alphonse Aulard to the Sorbonne Chair in the History of the Revolution in 1925 and Lefebvre inherited it in 1937. See Ory, *Une Nation pour mémoire*, 54.

14. See A. Mathiez, *The French Revolution* (New York 1964), translated by C.A. Phillips from the original work first published in 1922; and G. Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution* (Princeton 1971), translated by R.R. Palmer from

the original work entitled *Quatre-vingt-neuf* first published in the sesquicentenary year of 1939.

15. Pascal Ory comments on the number of interwar historians working at the margins of 'l'institution universitaire', many of whom developed contrary viewpoints on the Revolution to those expressed in Mathiez and Lefebvre's work. See Ory, *Une Nation pour mémoire*, 61.

16. W.R. Keylor, *Jacques Bainville and the Renaissance of Royalist History in Twentieth-Century France* (London 1979), xi.

17. *Ibid.*, 38. As Keylor points out, early in the century the Action française created their own 'anti-academic' institution modelled on the Sorbonne. The lectures given by this Institut d'Action française included those on Joan of Arc and Rivarol.

18. In 1917, Albert Mathiez responded to the publication of Bainville's recent *L'Histoire de deux peuples* by calling him a journalist and propagandist without the credentials of a 'real' historian, Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, 95.

19. *Ibid.*, 4. For the sales figures of *Napoléon* from 1931 to 1968 see *ibid.*, 328. Bainville's influence was widespread — the mainstream conservative newspaper *Le Temps* (Paris) offered him a regular front-page editorial to express his views, on the condition that Bainville cut his ties with Maurras and *Action française* (Paris). Bainville refused.

20. Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, 241; *Action française*, special issue on Maurras's admission to the Academy, 9 June 1939; P.-M. Dioudonnat, *Je suis partout, 1930-1944: Les maurrassiens devant la tentation fasciste* (Paris 1973), 448. As an index of the conservatism of the Académie Française in the 1930s, Pascal Ory points to the fact that the majority of its members supported Italy's invasion of Abyssinia since they thought Mussolini acted in order to spread Christian civilization in the world. See Ory, *La Nation pour mémoire*, 62.

21. This is not the place to debate the nature of French fascism in the interwar period but readers should be aware that not all historians of France accept that de la Rocque's 'authoritarian conservative' PSF (formerly the Croix de Feu) was fascist. René Rémond and Zeev Sternhell's insistence on the leftist origins of fascism in France make the conservatism of the PSF inconsistent with fascism in their view, and thus these scholars see the PPF (whose *chef* had formerly been a Communist) as the only significant fascist movement in France. On the other hand, Robert Soucy asserts the close ties between conservative and extremist 'rightism' in this period and sees the PSF — with its 600,000 members in 1936 — as the most significant movement in French fascism. See R. Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-39* (New Haven and London 1995).

22. As outlined by Education Minister Jean Zay in a letter to the President of the Republic, 18 April 1939, Archives Nationales (hereafter AN) AB XIX 3054. Note that the declaration of the National Assembly was in fact celebrated on 23 June 1939.

23. The full list of members included Edouard Herriot, Philippe Sagnac (co-president of the Institut Internationale d'Histoire de la Révolution Française), Henri Verne (Directeur des Musées Nationaux), Jean Bourguignon (Conservateur des Musées Nationaux), L.A. Gaboriaud, J. Jaujard (Sous-Directeur des Musées Nationaux), André Pierre (Vice-Président de l'Institut International d'Histoire de la Révolution Française), Jean Robiquet (Conservateur des Musées Nationaux), B. Mirkin-Guetzevitch (Vice-Président de l'Institut International

d'Histoire de la Révolution Française and Vice-Président de la Société d'Histoire de la Révolution Française) and Henri de Montfort (Secrétaire Général de l'Institut International d'Histoire de la Révolution Française and of the Société d'Histoire de la Révolution Française). See AN AB XIX 3054.

24. Undated 'note sur la commémoration du 150e anniversaire de la Révolution française', AN AB XIX 3054.

25. *Journal Officiel, débats parlementaires*, (hereafter *JO*) 16 March 1939. Pierre Caron, Director of the Archives Nationales, had written to Jean Zay on 7 March 1939 to complain about the failure of the republican government to cough up the necessary funds. See AN AB XIX 3054.

26. Jean Zay's circular to departmental prefects, 14 February 1939, AN AB XIX 3056.

27. *JO*, 16 April 1939.

28. Jean Zay's letter to departmental prefects, 7 July 1939, in which he urged them to publicize as widely as possible the Presidential radio broadcast of 14 July. See AN AB XIX 3056.

29. Letter from Defence Minister to Education Minister, 3 July 1939, in which Jean Zay was reminded that 'in the present period of external tension, the demonstration of 14 July envisaged for Ajaccio would have profound repercussions throughout Corsica'. See AN AB XIX 3056.

30. J.-M. Plichon, *JO*, 16 April 1939.

31. It is true that the regime was to spend Fr 15,000 on lighting up the Eiffel Tower for the 14 July celebrations. See AN AB XIX 3054.

32. Undated 'note sur la commémoration du 150e anniversaire de la Révolution française', AN AB XIX 3054.

33. *Ibid.* Other countries in which commemoration of the 1789 French Revolution was planned included Denmark, Uruguay, Egypt and Tunisia.

34. Georges Bonnet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Jean Zay, 20 February 1939, AN AB XIX 3054.

35. A. Le Brun, 'Discours prononcés le 5 mai 1939 à Versailles à l'occasion de la commémoration de l'ouverture des Etats Généraux', AN AB XIX 3055.

36. Ory, *La Nation pour mémoire*, 131. Figures cited by *Pathé-Journal*. For an account of the 14 July celebrations see Caron, 'Le Cent-cinquantième de la Révolution française', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française* (1946), 103-5.

37. P.-E. Cadilhac, 'La Fête de l'unité nationale', *L'Illustration* (Paris) 22 July 1939, 419.

38. See the text of the speech by Albert Le Brun, *Le Figaro* (Paris) 6 May 1939, 4.

39. See the text of the speech by Daladier, *Le Figaro* 15 July 1939, 4.

40. For an account of the wet speakers, see *Le Figaro* 15 July 1939, 4.

41. Caron, 'Le Cent-cinquantième de la Révolution française', 110.

42. Ory, 'La Commémoration révolutionnaire en 1939', 118.

43. *Le Journal*, 18 May 1939, AN AB XIX 3054.

44. Ory, 'La Commémoration révolutionnaire en 1939', 122.

45. 'Proposition de résolution', 12 April 1938, AN AB XIX 3054.

46. Goebbels cited *ibid.*

47. The PPF organ *Emancipation Nationale* (Paris) remarked on the irony of the communist enthusiasm for the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

since it was a document which guaranteed the sanctity of private property. See Pierre Dutilleul, 'Le 14 juillet français', *Emancipation Nationale* 14 July 1939, 9.

48. C. Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939: A Study of Public Opinion* (New York 1964), 7. Micaud cites figures that 6,700,000 of the 10,700,000 daily newspapers then bought in France were published in Paris. Robert Soucy has suggested that, despite the problems evident in assuming too tight a correlation between the content of this politicized press and public opinion, it would be foolish to assert no correlation at all. See R. Soucy, 'French Press Reactions to Hitler's First Two Years in Power', *Contemporary European History* vol. 7 (1998), 23. Moreover, the official measure of French public opinion, the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP), which was founded in 1938 and published its first findings in 1939, most commonly used a sample of only 2,500 people in making their conclusions about popular opinion. See *Sondages: Bulletin d'informations de l'Institut Français d'Opinion Publique*, 1 January 1947, 5.

49. H.R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance, 1940-1944* (Oxford 1985), 52. Indeed, the 1930s were in many ways the heyday of the Parisian press, since the post-Liberation period was to witness a steady decline in the numbers of daily newspapers bought by the French reading public.

50. Apparently de Vault and Gaxotte shared many bottles of *astispumanti* together over their heated conversations about politics. See B. de Vault, *Charles Maurras: Esquisses pour un portrait* (Cahiers Bourbonnais), 32.

51. E. Weber, *Action française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford 1962), 338.

52. J. McCearney, 'Maurras and the Decline of the Action française', in W. Craw and W. Kidd, eds, *French Writers and Politics, 1936-1944: Essays in Honour of E.G. Taylor* (Glasgow 1987), 19.

53. P.-M. Dioudonnat, *Les 700 rédacteurs de Je suis partout, 1930-1944: Dictionnaire des écrivains et journalistes qui ont collaboré au grand hebdomadaire de la vie mondiale devenu le principal organe du fascisme français* (Sedopols 1993).

54. Georges Blond, Pierre-Antoine Cousteau, Alain Laubreaux and Charles Lesca also attended the conference. For an account of the conference proceedings, see H. Poulain, 'Cinq mille Parisiens acclament à Magic-City les orateurs et les idées de *Je suis partout*', *Je suis partout* (Paris) 9 May 1942, 3.

55. See Charles Maurras's tribute to the works and life of Bainville, in C. Maurras, *Jacques Bainville et Paul Bourget* (Les Editions du Cadran 1937).

56. Ory, *Une Nation pour mémoire*, 63.

57. See *Je suis partout*, 6 January 1939, 2. As early as 1906, the unofficial publishing house of the *Action française* commissioned a number of anti-republican histories that would expose 'the partisan nature of academic historical scholarship'. See Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, 36. Gaxotte himself was the original editor of Fayard's series of historical works.

58. *Je suis partout*, 6 January 1939, 7.

59. See the list of special issues in *Je suis partout*, 3 February 1939, 2. They included 'Le six février', 17 May 1934; and 'Le tricentenaire de Louis XIV', 17 June 1938. The tenth anniversary of the February riots was celebrated on the front page of *Je suis partout*, 4 February 1944, under the title 'Dix ans d'occasions perdues', written by Lucien Rebatet.

60. P. Lucius, 'Pour sortir du désordre: Consulter les archives de la France', *Je suis partout*, 17 March 1939, 10.

61. G. Blond, reviewing Gaxotte's lecture, in *Je suis partout*, 3 February 1939, 3. Alain Laubreaux gave an equally flattering review in *Je suis partout*, 10 February 1939, 11.

62. P. Gaxotte, *Je suis partout*, 24 February 1939, 1.

63. L. Daudet, 'Délivrés de la Révolution!', *Action française*, 2 April 1939, 1.

64. L. Daudet, 'Herriot continue à jeter du lest', *Action française*, 22 May 1939, 1. See also L. Daudet, 'Un bloc de sang et de pus . . . la Révolution', *Action française*, 5 May 1939, 1; and L. Daudet, 'La thèse des deux Révolutions', *Action française*, 15 July 1939, 1.

65. F. Bacconnier, 'Le 150^e anniversaire de la Révolution', *Action française*, 30 April 1939, 4. An unsigned article in *Action française* on 9 May 1939, 4, made bitter and ridiculous anti-Semitic remarks against the Education Minister Jean Zay, head of the executive committee for the sesquicentenary celebrations.

66. Collective editorial, 'Pour la défense du patrimoine', *Je suis partout*, 18 August 1939, 1. In this article, the writers at *Je suis partout* proclaimed that 'the true family code is one that will re-establish patrimony in all its prerogatives' and that 'one will save the nation in re-creating the family'. It was clear that, in 1939 at least, the editorial team at *Je suis partout* associated the demographic decline with the paltry military strength of France. For several weeks from the beginning of March, they ran an inquiry into their readers' attitudes to the birth rate under the title '60 millions de Français, c'est la paix!'. See *Je suis partout*, 3 March 1939, 3. See also C. Maurras, 'La Politique', *Action française*, 6 May 1939, 1. Both publications felt that the recent *code de famille* was a first step to putting right what the Revolution had damaged. See L. Daudet, 'A propos du code de la famille', *Action française*, 26 July 1939, 1.

67. 'Pour la défense du patrimoine', *Je suis partout*, 18 August 1939, 2.

68. P. Gaxotte, *Je suis partout*, 2 June 1939, 1.

69. The PPF organ *Emancipation Nationale* featured only one article in 1939 specifically on the republican regime's decision to celebrate the anniversary of the Revolution. In addition, it carried two or three articles on the 14 July parades of that year. For Jacques Doriot's own opinion of the merits of the Revolution, see his speech to the Marseilles congress of the UPJF, *Emancipation Nationale*, 14 April 1939, 1.

70. P. Guitard, '14 juillet 1939', *Emancipation Nationale*, 21 July 1939, 7.

71. P. Guitard, *Emancipation Nationale*, 19 May 1939, 1; and P. Dutilleul, 'Le 14 juillet français', *Emancipation Nationale*, 14 July 1939, 9.

72. P. Dutilleul, 'Le 14 juillet français', *Emancipation Nationale*, 14 July 1939, 9.

73. P. Dutilleul, 'Le 14 juillet français', *Emancipation Nationale*, 14 July 1939, 9.

74. C. Fégy, 'Le Cent-cinquantième anniversaire de la Révolution française ne doit pas donner lieu à un chienlit marxiste', *Emancipation Nationale*, 24 February 1939, 2.

75. J. Doriot, 'Le Pacte d'illusion', *Emancipation Nationale*, 14 July 1939, 1.

76. A. Lanoux, 'La Révolution malade de la goutte . . .', *Emancipation Nationale*, 17 February 1939.

77. See Marcelle Tinayre, '5 mai 1789: les Etats Généraux', *Le Petit Journal* (Paris), 5 May 1939, 1 and 4. The liberalization of the press was celebrated in André Voisin's 'Il y a cent cinquante ans le "Courrier de Provence" de Mirabeau',

Le Petit Journal, 30 May 1939, 2; and Georges Jubin's 'La grande décade de 89' honoured the decision of the Estates General to declare itself the National Assembly in June 1789. See *Le Petit Journal*, 17 June 1939, 2.

78. Colonel de la Rocque, 'Les ailes de la Victoire', *Le Petit Journal*, 15 July 1939, 1.

79. 'La Fête nationale a été célébrée avec éclat dans toute la France', *Le Petit Journal*, 15 July 1939, 6.

80. Colonel de la Rocque, 'Le 150e anniversaire de la Révolution', *Le Petit Journal*, 14 July 1939, 1.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. See Soucy, *French Fascism*, chap. 4.

84. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 1001.

85. *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939. This number of the newspaper was very favourably reviewed by Léon Daudet in *Action française*, 1 July 1939, 1. Daudet thanked 'notre confrère hebdomadaire', and especially Pierre Gaxotte's contributions to it, for being 'étincelant'.

86. See C. Berlet, '14 juillet: journée sanglante', *Action française*, 13 July 1939, 4.

87. P.-A. Cousteau, *Après le deluge* (Paris 1956), 47.

88. A. Laubreaux, 'Le 14 juillet du Major de l'immensité: Souvenirs authentiques et apocryphes', *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 4.

89. P. Gaxotte, 'La Révolution: Terre de mensonge', *Je suis partout*, 28 July 1939, 1.

90. Dorsay, '14 juillet 1939, fête de l'unité nationale!!!', *Je suis partout*, 14 July 1939, 2. Charles Maurras gave a series of talks in the Vendée area during the year of the commemoration. See *Action française*, 27 May 1939, 5. See also C. Maurras, 'La Révolution est un bloc', *Action française*, 12 June 1939, 1.

91. G. Ollivier, 'La Police politique a dirigé la Révolution', *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 2.

92. L. de Gerin-Ricard, 'Le Peuple contre la Terreur', *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 9.

93. *Ibid.* Writing from the perspective of the Occupation of France, 1940–4, Charles Maurras had cause to remember that the 1789 Revolution involved nothing but the 'massacre of people, pillaging of goods, violence to girls and women undressed and flogged in public, execution and exhumation of priests and nuns, purifying and vengeful fires'. See C. Maurras, *La Contre-Révolution spontanée* (Lyon 1943), 28.

94. P. Gaxotte, 'Les Deux moteurs de la Révolution: Guerre et inflation', *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 1.

95. See L. Daudet, 'Deux idoles sanguinaires', *Action française*, 26 June 1939, 1, and L. Daudet, 'Contre la Révolution et pour la paix', *Action française*, 13 July 1939, 1.

96. P.-A. Cousteau, 'La République, c'est la guerre', *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 5.

97. Paul Reynaud was intent upon increasing the budget funds devoted to the defence industry and was therefore seen by the appeasers of the radical Right as a war-monger. It is interesting to note that the label Reynaud had in the attached cartoon, which reads *L'Epoque*, is an allusion to the writings in the newspaper of

the same name by the only nationalist deputy to have voted against the Munich Accords in September 1938, Henry de Kerillis, who was much maligned in the pages of *Je suis partout* throughout 1939.

98. Cousteau, 'La République, c'est la guerre'.

99. *Ibid.*

100. Jacques Bainville's Napoleon was an ambiguous figure. In the words of William Keylor, Bainville's Napoleon 'had one foot in the legitimist camp, he was never quite able to extricate his other foot from the camp of revolution'. Despite the 'tragic grandeur' of Napoleon, then, it would have been better for France if he had never lived. See Keylor, *Jacques Bainville*, 243–4; see also P. Geyl, *Napoleon: For and Against* (Harmondsworth 1982), 336–47.

101. Pieter Geyl writes that the traditional royalist Right 'was bound to reject Napoleon, in so far as it had to look upon him as an interruption or a deviation' to the monarchy. Geyl, *Napoleon: For and Against*, 336.

102. See the review of his own book, L. Daudet, 'Deux idoles sanguinaires', *Action française*, 26 June 1939, 1. Interestingly, the PPF was willing to embrace Napoleon as a hero. Paul Guitard remembered 'l'épopée bonapartiste' as a great episode in French history. See his article on Joan of Arc in *Emancipation Nationale*, 19 May 1939, 1–2. The PSF, too, was willing to see in Napoleon a defender of 'the Revolution of liberty . . . of national honour', rather than a force for 'the Revolution of massacres and the guillotine'. See 'Napoléon: Corse et français', *Le Petit Journal*, 17 July 1939, 1.

103. See, for example, C. Maurras, *Napoléon, avec la France ou contre la France* (Paris 1929), 11–15. The opinion was shared by Bainville and Daudet.

104. Daudet, 'Deux idoles sanguinaires', 2. Daudet reacted smugly to demands that governmental action be taken to prevent such dissidents from publishing texts that besmirched the reputation of Great patriotic Men, writing in *Action française* that there was no measure any government could take against 'la vérité historique, si cruelle qu'elle soit'. See L. Daudet, *Action française*, 4 July 1939, 1.

105. *Je suis partout*, 13 January, 1939, 7.

106. Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany*, 230.

107. P.-A. Cousteau, 'Attention aux bellicistes: Le parti de la guerre se replie sur de nouvelles positions', *Je suis partout*, 6 January 1939, 1.

108. P. Gaxotte, 'La Barbe!', *Je suis partout*, 27 January 1939, 1.

109. See *Je suis partout*, 31 March 1939, 5.

110. Dorsay, 'Sous le climat de la "guerre blanche"', *Je suis partout*, 26 May 1939, 1.

111. P. Gaxotte, 'Le Discours d'Hitler: Le patriotisme français et le pan-germanisme', *Je suis partout*, 5 May 1939, 2.

112. R. Brasillach, 'Pas d'union sacrée avec la canaille!', *Je suis partout*, 31 March 1939, 1. For the position of Maurras throughout the Munich crisis of 1938, see Weber, *Action française*, 421 and 508.

113. The editorial staff at *Je suis partout* met the German invasion of Poland with the notorious headline 'À bas la guerre! Vive la France!'. See *Je suis partout*, 1 September 1939, 1. See the continual enunciation of the German threat in P. Gaxotte, 'Contre l'unité allemande', *Je suis partout*, 1 September 1939, 1; and 'La Guerre et la paix', *Je suis partout*, 15 September 1939, 1.

114. Ory, *Une Nation pour mémoire*, 179. While Doriot's PPF was keen to disassociate itself from 'bellicism' in 1939, it invested very little energy, in com-

parison with *Action française* and *Je suis partout*, in attacking the alleged war-mongering of the governments of the Third Republic. Certainly, the discussions of the 1789 Revolution in *Emancipation Nationale* and *Le Petit Journal* make virtually no reference to the 'bellicisme' of the 1790s or the First Empire.

115. See Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany*, 130–1.

116. Indeed, for Pierre Gaxotte and the other counter-revolutionary spectators of this grand commemoration, it was a matter of finding a *different* eighteenth century from the one too often associated with the Revolution. P. Gaxotte, *Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris 1982), 267. For Gaxotte the eighteenth century is marked by a period of seventy years ('en histoire, un siècle a rarement cent ans') and in this work he intends to show their 'caractère original, personnel, spécifique'.

117. See *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 1. See also L. Daudet, 'Le cent-cinquante-naire de 1789', *Action française*, 13 May 1939, 2. The popular novelist Jean de la Varende serialized his recent sympathetic biography of Charlotte Corday in the arch-conservative *Le Figaro* between 17 and 22 March 1939.

118. See *Je suis partout*, 16 June 1939, 3. See also the advertisement for a mass in Puy featuring Jacques Doriot as a special guest, *Action française*, 20 July 1939, 2.

119. B. de Vaulx, in a review of L. Daudet, *Les Lys sanglant*, in *Je suis partout*, 20 January 1939, 8.

120. B. de Vaulx, 'Charlotte Corday: Expliquée par la Varende', *Je suis partout*, 17 March 1939, 8. In another review in the same issue of the newspaper, Raymond Gengembre wondered if Jean de la Varende was not in love with Charlotte Corday, since he wrote of her in such intimate prose which lovingly described 'touching details of her toilette and hairstyle'. See *Je suis partout*, 17 March 1939, 10.

121. J. de la Varende, 'La Vendée réelle', *Je suis partout*, 14 July 1939, 8.

122. R. Tombs, *France: 1814–1914* (London 1996), 9.

123. R. Gildea, *The Past in French history* (New Haven and London 1994), 27. See also J.-C. Martin, 'La Vendée, région-mémoire', in P. Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, I, 595–617.

124. B. de Vaulx, 'Les Journalistes indépendants ont sauvé l'honneur de la presse', *Je suis partout*, 30 June 1939, 9.

125. Ibid.

126. P. Drieu la Rochelle, *Charlotte Corday (pièce en trois actes)* (Paris 1944).

127. P.-A. Cousteau, 'L'insurrection de Vendée', III, *Je suis partout*, 9 April 1943, 4.

128. M. Winock, 'Jeanne d'Arc', in P. Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, III, 710.

129. L. Daudet, 'La Plus belle page et la plus laide de notre histoire', *Action française*, 15 May 1939, 1.

130. M. Pujo, 'Fête nationale de Jeanne d'Arc: Cortège traditionnel', *Action française*, 10 May 1939, 1.

131. See R. Brecy, 'Après les solennités de Domremy à la gloire de Jeanne d'Arc', *Action française*, 6 May 1939, 1.

132. P. Guitard, *Emancipation Nationale*, 19 May 1939, 1.

133. See the large number of articles in her honour in *Le Petit Journal* on 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 22 May 1939.

134. Unsigned, *Le Temps*, 16 May 1939, 1.

135. See P. Ory, *Une Nation pour mémoire*, 183. Ory describes the PCF's mobilization of the imagery of the virgin in the commemorative work of the Union des jeunes filles de France and discusses the success of their event at the Buffalo stadium in which 30,000 people participated.

136. *Ibid.*

137. G. Gaudy, 'Le vingt-cinquième anniversaire de la mobilisation', *Action française*, 31 July 1939, 4.

138. G. Gaudy, 'Le vingt-cinquième anniversaire de la mobilisation', *Action française*, 4 August 1939, 4.

139. R. Brasillach, 'Lettre à un mobilisable de vingt-cinq ans', *Je suis partout*, 4 August 1939, 1.

140. Pierre Villette, 'C'est un anniversaire . . . et voilà tout!', *Je suis partout*, 10 November 1939, 1.

141. See also C. Maurras, 'La Politique', *Action française*, 12 November 1939, 1; L. Daudet, 'Le 11 novembre 1918', *Action française*, 11 November 1939, 1.

142. *Le Petit Journal* was the only publication considered here to link the memory of the First World War to that of the 1789 Revolution. On 14 July 1939 they chose to recall not only the storming of the Bastille, which they portrayed in a favourable light, but also the twentieth anniversary of the victory parades of the Allies through the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs Élysées. The author recalled men crying like children on the occasion of the parade in 1919, and mothers holding their little children closer to the tricolor flags as the procession passed, so that they could feel the silk in their fingers. In this instance, the parade is recalled with pride rather than sorrow, and is remembered as 'the most beautiful, the most sublime, day of our history'. See Ernest Laut, *Le Petit Journal*, 14 July, 5.

143. P. Gaxotte, 'Le Décret de protection juive: la meilleure façon de troubler l'unité française', *Je suis partout*, 28 April 1939, 3.

144. Having at first accepted the war against Germany, Colonel de la Rocque and his party did an about-face after the defeat of June 1940. Thereafter, at least until the summer of 1942, the PSF was a supporter of the Vichy regime and in 1941 openly advocated collaboration with the occupying Germans. Doriot's PPF established itself as one of the foremost fascist-collaborationist groups in occupied Paris and collaborated until the end.

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